

# Living Our Days

Gaining a heart of wisdom

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## Half Way to Entirely

C.S. Lewis described the human condition as a process of always becoming

more of what we already are. These are cautionary words for me at this point in middle age, particularly as I consider the possibilities. In Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, the Teacher speaks regretfully of a seemingly harmless woman who has come to the end of her life, not as a "grumbler," but as "only a grumble."

*It begins with a grumbling mood, and yourself still distinct from it: perhaps criticizing it. . . You can repent and come out of it again. But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine. (74, 75)*

Thanks be to God, it seems that this tendency can work in positive ways as well, and the poet Hayden Carruth bears witness to this, declaring in his "Testament": "**Now I am almost entirely love.**" Whatever sifting and sandpapering process brought him to that state, his words inspired Jennifer Wallace as she collected an offering of her own poems.

In Almost Entirely: Poems (Paraclete Poetry) the reader is treated to the process of a woman becoming. As one who is "predisposed by nature to question everything," (17) Wallace reconciles her doubts with the presence of a God who is well able to take in hand her persistent wondering. In the process, God shows up in both surprising and ordinary ways within the pauses:

- In the foreordained turning of the head to view a crow in flight or a "squirrel passage, or a person with whom I share an ever-present reaching toward." (20)
- In a poignant pondering of "life's second half":

"Tell me, someone:  
with the spade of days remaining,  
how to turn the soil

and where.” (34)

## Finding Joy in the Cup of Shadow

Far-from-glib reflections excavate grief and plumb the depths of disappointment with God, borrowing words from C.S. Lewis’s *A Grief Observed* to lament that faith can sometimes feel like “the rope that holds until we need it.” Wallace riffs on Psalm 23 when her “cup of shadow” (24) overflows, and she asks for grace to unbolt the door and walk into a season we’re so tempted to deny.

For most of us, by the time we reach middle age, the jarring truth has been well-established that “the world won’t behave, not even for me.” (39) We are ruefully accustomed to the phone call that describes the disappointing diagnosis of a parent, a friend, a spouse. These are the days when we awaken to an early dawn and begin to take attendance:

“Whose time will come next?

*Storm taken.*

*War taken.*

*A tiny fracture in a cell.”*

Even now, there is grace to find joy in a dusty yellow warbler who hops “in the autumn dogwood near the gate . . . on its way to Venezuela” (49) and to rejoice in the memory of a beautiful, normal day (77).

In every season of life, we dwell in the conflicted joy of The Two Pockets:

“In one is the message, ‘I am dust and ashes,’ and in the other, ‘for me the universe was made.’” Receiving the second in light of the first is the course of health and wholeness. This is enough. A simultaneous comprehension of these two truths will set us on a path that is almost entirely hope.

*Many thanks to Paraclete Press (here in beautiful New England!) for providing a*

*copy of this book to facilitate my review, which, of course, is offered freely and with honesty.*

**I am a participant in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, an affiliate advertising program designed to provide a means for sites to earn advertising fees by advertising and linking to [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). If you should decide to purchase Almost Entirely: Poems (Paraclete Poetry), simply click on the title within the text, and you'll be taken directly to Amazon. If you decide to buy, I'll make a small commission at no extra cost to you.**

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## PUBLISHED BY



### Michele Morin

Michele Morin is a teacher, blogger, reader, and gardener who finds joy in sitting at a table surrounded by women with open Bibles. She has been married to an unreasonably patient husband for nearly 30 years, and together they have four sons, two daughters-in-love, two grandchildren, and one lazy St. Bernard. Michele loves hot tea and well-crafted sentences, poems that stop her in her tracks and days at the ocean with the whole family. She laments biblical illiteracy and advocates for the prudent use of “little minutes.” She blogs at Living Our Days, and you can connect with her on Facebook or Twitter.

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May 29, 2018 Michele Morin Book Review, Poetry Aging, Grief, Jennifer Wallace, Middle Age, Midlife, Paraclete Press, Poetry

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## 16 thoughts on “Half Way to Entirely”



### Shallow Reflections

May 29, 2018 at 6:11 am

The message from this book speaks to me, Michele. I feel polar opposites so much of the time – looking forward to my life as I age, and worrying about illness and loss. I try to deal with it by sharing my humor, but underneath is the scary reality of aging. I don’t want to become a ‘grumble.’ I will be checking out Jennifer Wallace’s book to find validation and inspiration.

★ Like



### Michele Morin

May 29, 2018 at 8:11 am

Having watched my mum age into so much more of what she had already been all her life has been hugely educational for me, Molly. I catch myself mid-grumble sometimes and ask myself if this is what I truly want to become. The old saying, "You become like what you behold," is true of both the positive and the negative.

★ Liked by 1 person

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**Betsy Cruz**

May 29, 2018 at 8:04 am

You hit the nail on the head, Michele! We've devinitely learned by now that the world won't behave to suit us! But God. He brings light to the shadows. I appreciate always your thoughtful commentary.

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 8:08 am

This was a hugely insightful collection of poems, and it's always a joy to share good words with fellow readers!

★ Like

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**Sandra**

May 29, 2018 at 8:38 am

Always keeping our eyes on the good things as God has instructed us just helps us continue one step at a time to being the person we should be. Keeping our eyes on the other things will take us more than one step back each time.

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 11:31 am

That's the truth, Sandra. And it's much easier to make huge sweeping decisions about the way we live our days than it is to make the right choice in the moment. Great to hear from you!

★ Like

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**Char G.**

May 29, 2018 at 8:58 am

Oh! I want to be almost entirely love!!! What a great declaration...now to make it be!

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 11:30 am

Isn't that just a sweet way of expressing it? And we have to be so careful right now to guard our responses so the outcome will be close to where we hope to be in a few years.

Always moving forward!

★ Like

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**Char G.**

May 29, 2018 at 11:33 am



So true Michele

★ Like

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**Mary Geisen**

May 29, 2018 at 9:02 am

Aww-middle age!! It has caused me to reflect on where I've been and where I'm going. I love the idea of the two pockets. I'm not one to settle into what was and sit in a place of familiarity for too long. Life is short and I want to make the best of it.

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 11:29 am

Yes, we've got a lot of living and serving ahead of us, and it's great to be doing it in light of those two-pocket truths.

Blessings to you, Mary (and congratulations on your wonderful new challenge!)

★ Liked by 1 person

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**debbieputman**

May 29, 2018 at 10:05 am

This sounds like a good companion to Jean Flemings Pursue the Intentional LIfe.

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 11:11 am

Ooooh! I'll have to check that one out!

★ Liked by [1 person](#)

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**Barbara H.**

May 29, 2018 at 11:55 am

Some years ago while working in a fabric shop, I had a number of older lady customers. Some were very sweet and some were...not. I hoped I would end up as one of the sweet kind, and it dawned on me that I was then in the process of becoming whatever I was going to be in later age. Hopefully it will be more love and less grumble.

“The world won’t behave, not even for me.” What an apt way of putting it! Yes, I have made that discovery, too. The juxtaposition of the two pockets spurs much food for thought as well.

★ Like

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**Michele Morin** 👤

May 29, 2018 at 12:15 pm

This misbehaving world always brings out the worst in me, and isn’t it true that it’s the little inconveniences that make us unpleasant as we complain under our breath—but not TOO softly, because we must make it known to anyone within earshot that things are not going well . . .

Oh, Lord, have mercy!

★ Like

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**dawnweaver**

May 29, 2018 at 12:15 pm

The two pockets... Like grass that withers and yet possessing everything! Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ! 'for all things are yours, the world or life or death or the present or the future all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. I Cor.3:22,23 What a paradox! Thank you for sharing this book 😊

★ Like

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