

A SMALL BOOK OF TENDERNESS

The Quiet Between *Us*



Twenty-nine words for being close.

ORION SAINT

Paintings by Ivaylo Peytchev

EXPANDED ART EDITION · 2026



First Light

Forelskelse

NORWEGIAN

The state of being in love.

I meant to tell you
something ordinary.
Then you looked up
from your coffee,
*and the sentence
lost its way.*

Complicité

FRENCH

A shared, often unspoken understanding.

Across the crowded table,
you raise one eyebrow.

I lower my glass
before I laugh.

*Nobody else has heard
a word you said.*

Cafuné

PORTUGUESE · BRAZIL

A gentle, affectionate rubbing
of someone's scalp.

Your fingers move
through my hair.
The day loosens
one small knot at a time.
*I had forgotten
how softly it could end.*



Resonance

Carezza

ITALIAN

A caress.

Your thumb finds
the inside of my wrist,
where the pulse
is close to the surface.
*For a moment,
you can feel me answering.*

Presenza

ITALIAN

Presence; the fact of being there.

I turn off the lamp.
You are still awake.
We listen to a car
struggle into its parking space.
*When it finally stops,
your hand finds mine.*

Abbraccio

ITALIAN

An embrace; a hug.

We meet in the doorway,
still wearing our coats.

Your bag slips
from your shoulder.

*Neither of us
reaches for it.*

Accueil

FRENCH

A welcome; the way someone is received.

You clear a drawer
without announcing it.
I bring a shirt,
then leave a book.
The drawer sticks.
I learn how to lift it.

Douceur

FRENCH

Softness, sweetness or gentleness.

You lower the radio
when I fall asleep.
Rain keeps talking
against the windows.
*The rest of the journey
passes under your hand.*

Нежност

BULGARIAN / NEZHNOST

Tenderness; affectionate feeling.

You turn my collar up
against the wind.

We have been arguing
all the way here.

*I stand still
while you finish.*



Crossing

Tregua

SPANISH

A truce; a temporary pause in conflict.

You put the bread
between us.
I break it badly,
giving you the larger half.
We are still angry.
We pass the butter.

Geborgenheit

GERMAN

A sense of safety and protection.

I wake in a room
I do not recognise.
For one sharp second
everything is strange.
Then you cough in the kitchen.
I close my eyes again.

Доверие

BULGARIAN / DOVERIE

Trust in someone's sincerity
and good intentions.

I tell you the part
I usually leave out.
You do not look away.
In the next room,
*the washing machine
begins its final spin.*

Aconchego

PORTUGUESE

Physical or emotional comfort.

There is room for two
beneath this blanket
if we are willing
to fold a little.

*Your cold feet find mine.
I pretend to complain.*

УЮТ

BULGARIAN / UYUT

Cosiness; a feeling of warmth and comfort.

We move the chair
out of the draught.
The room is smaller
than either of us wanted.
Your socks dry on the radiator.
Mine keep falling off.

Querencia

SPANISH

Attachment to a familiar place;
also, the place one returns to.

I still take the long road
past the house
where we used to live.
The gate has been painted.
*My hand remembers
the old latch.*

Sobremesa

SPANISH

Time spent at the table
after a meal.

The plates are empty.
You draw a circle
in a scatter of crumbs
and begin another story.
*Outside, the afternoon
takes its coat and leaves.*

Patience

ENGLISH

The ability to meet delay or difficulty
with calm.

I lose the word
halfway through a sentence.
You let me look for it.
For once,
*I do not choose
a smaller thing to say.*

Hygge

DANISH

Cosy ease and enjoyment
of simple, unhurried pleasures.

The bread is a little burnt.
The candles do not match.
Someone has brought
too much cake.
We make another pot of tea.
Nobody checks the time.



Bloom in Chaos

Amparo

SPANISH

Shelter; protection.

The rain comes sideways.
You pull me beneath
the shop's narrow awning.
Your shoulder stays outside.
*Only later do I notice
which sleeve is wet.*

Zweisamkeit

GERMAN

Time or life shared by just two.

You read.
I watch the light
move across the floor.
Every so often
you turn a page
and I come back to you.

Desvelo

SPANISH

Sleeplessness; loss of sleep.

At three in the morning
you ask if I am awake.
I say yes,
though I was not.
You begin to tell me.
I turn towards your voice.

Saudade

PORTUGUESE

Affectionate longing for someone
or something absent.

In the market
I find the fruit you love
and reach for two.

*All the way home
the second one
rolls gently in the bag.*

Sehnsucht

GERMAN

A deep, sometimes painful yearning.

Some evenings
I miss a life
we have not lived:
*your shoes by the stairs,
a garden after rain,
my name from another room.*

Attesa

ITALIAN

Waiting; the time spent waiting.

The station clock
has lost a minute.
I check it anyway.
On the platform,
*I move my bag
from the seat beside me.*



Monochrome Study

Solace

ENGLISH

Comfort in sorrow or distress.

You sit beside me
on the kitchen floor.
The tea goes cold.
There is nothing useful
left to say.
After a while, I drink it.

Retrouvailles

FRENCH

A reunion after time apart.

I see you before
you see me.
For a few steps
I have the old luxury
of looking at you
without being known.
Then you turn.

Tendresse

FRENCH

Affection shown through gentle words, gestures and attention.

You remember
which cup I like.
I remember
how you take your tea.
*We have learned so much
without studying.*

Octavam

BULGARIAN / OSTAVAM

I stay; I remain.

You ask whether I will stay.

I take off my watch
and set it beside yours.

You move it a little
to make room
for a glass of water.



Devotion

Обич

BULGARIAN / OBICH

Love; deep affection and attachment.

Years from now,
when I try to tell
the story of us,
I may begin with this:
*you cutting an apple,
sliding half towards me.*

For the things we almost forget *to notice.*

Words by Orion Saint

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THE PAINTINGS

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Resonance (p. 5) · Crossing (p. 11)

Bloom in Chaos (p. 20) · Monochrome Study (p. 26)

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ABOUT THE WORDS

The meanings are brief glosses of selected senses.

The English poems are personal interpretations,
not literal translations. Word headings open their sources.

Bokmålsordboka · Aulete

Treccani · Wiktionary

Larousse · Duden

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences · Chitanka

Priberam · El Colegio de México

RAE-ASALE · Denmark.dk · Merriam-Webster