

# ‘Yes, Of Course It Hurts’

**Karin Boye**

translated by David McDuff

Karin Boye’s much-loved poem was first written as a fiftieth birthday present for her fellow author Elin Wägner, in 1932. The poem, it could be said, is about the pain of daring to let go – even when that letting go will lead to a beautiful end. At Helena’s request, the poem was read at her funeral in Edinburgh in July 2015.

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## YES, OF COURSE IT HURTS WHEN BUDS ARE BREAKING

Yes, of course it hurts when buds are breaking.  
Why else would the springtime falter?  
Why would all our ardent longing  
bind itself in frozen, bitter pallor?  
After all, the bud was covered all the winter.  
What new thing is it that bursts and wears?  
Yes, of course it hurts when buds are breaking,  
hurts for that which grows  
and that which bars.

Yes, it is hard when drops are falling.  
Trembling with fear, and heavy hanging,  
cleaving to the twig, and swelling, sliding –  
weight draws them down, though they go on clinging.  
Hard to be uncertain, afraid and divided,  
hard to feel the depths attract and call,  
yet sit fast and merely tremble –  
hard to want to stay  
and want to fall.

Then, when things are worst and nothing helps  
the tree's buds break as in rejoicing,  
then, when no fear holds back any longer,  
down in glitter go the twig's drops plunging,  
forget that they were frightened by the new,  
forget their fear before the flight unfurled –  
feel for a second their greatest safety,  
rest in that trust  
that creates the world.





KARIN  
BOYE

'Ja visst gör det ont'  
was first published in  
a collection of poems  
by Karin Boye, *För  
trädet skull* (For the  
Sake of the Tree),  
Stockholm, Bonniers,  
1935.

Karin Boye's *Complete  
Poems*, translated  
by David McDuff,  
was published by  
Bloodaxe Books,  
1996. A revised  
and updated Kindle  
edition of this  
collection is also  
available.

The poems in  
the anthology are  
available on the Karin  
Boye Society website,  
[www.karinboye.se/  
verk/dikter/dikter-en.  
shtml](http://www.karinboye.se/verk/dikter/dikter-en.shtml)

## JAVISST GÖR DET ONT NÄR KNOPPAR BRISTER

Ja visst gör det ont när knoppar brister.  
Varför skulle annars våren tveka?  
Varför skulle all vår heta längtan  
bindas i det frusna bitterbleka?  
Höljet var ju knoppen hela vintern.  
Vad är det för nytt, som tär och spränger?  
Ja visst gör det ont när knoppar brister,  
ont för det som växer  
och det som stänger.

Ja nog är det svårt när droppar faller.  
Skälvande av ängslan tungt de hänger,  
klamrar sig vid kvisten, sväller, glider –  
tyngden drar dem neråt, hur de klänger.  
Svårt att vara oviss, rädd och delad,  
svårt att känna djupet dra och kalla,  
ändå sitta kvar och bara darra –  
svårt att vilja stanna  
och vilja falla.

Då, när det är värst och inget hjälper,  
Bristar som i jubel trädets knoppar.  
Då, när ingen rädsla längre håller,  
faller i ett glitter kvistens droppar  
glömmer att de skrämdes av det nya  
glömmer att de ängslades för färden –  
känner en sekund sin största trygghet,  
vilar i den tillit  
som skapar världen.

