

The Word

- Tony Hoagland

from *Sweet Ruin*, © University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Down near the bottom
of the crossed-out list
of things you have to do today,

between “green thread”
and “broccoli” you find
that you have penciled “sunlight.”

Resting on the page, the word
is beautiful, it touches you
as if you had a friend

and sunlight were a present
he had sent you from some place distant
as this morning—to cheer you up,

and to remind you that,
among your duties, pleasure
is a thing

that also needs accomplishing.
Do you remember?
that time and light are kinds

of love, and love
is no less practical
than a coffee grinder

or a safe spare tire?
Tomorrow you may be utterly
without a clue

but today you get a telegram,
from the heart in exile
proclaiming that the kingdom

still exists,
the king and queen alive,
still speaking to their children,

—to any one among them
who can find the time,
to sit out in the sun and listen.