How To Be Alone

Pádraig Ó Tuama

It all begins with knowing
nothing lasts forever,
so you might as well start packing now.
In the meantime,
practice being alive.

There will be a party
where you’ll feel like
nobody’s paying you attention.
And there will be a party
where attention’s all you’ll get.
What you need to do
is to remember
to talk to yourself
between these parties.

And,
again,
there will be a day,
— a decade —
where you won’t
fit in with your body
even though you’re in
the only body you’re in.

You need to control
your habit of forgetting
to breathe.

Remember when you were younger
and you practiced kissing on your arm?
You were on to something then.
Sometimes harm knows its own healing
Comfort knows its own intelligence.
Kindness too.
It needs no reason.
There is a you
telling you another story of you.
Listen to her.

Where do you feel
anxiety in your body?
The chest? The fist? The dream before waking?
The head that feels like it’s at the top of the swing
or the clutch of gut like falling
& falling & falling and falling
It knows something: you’re dying.
Try to stay alive.

For now, touch yourself.
I’m serious.

Touch your
self.
Take your hand
and place your hand
some place
upon your body.
And listen
to the community of madness
that
you are.
You are
such an
interesting conversation.

You belong
here.