

# The Golden Hour

Category: Scars

written by Frances Milat | April 28, 2024

It is autumn in Melbourne. The nights are cool, but the late afternoon holds the glowing sun in the cup of its hand before it sinks behind the rippled sea. This is my favorite time of day—the hour or so before the sun sets, when I walk home under a golden canopy of giant plane trees and watch the sky prepare for night.

Sometimes, I just need to get through the day. Today has been one of those days. I give everything I have to each day. Yet all around me—in my family, my city, my hospital—women are at their limit, feeling unsafe. Like me, they're searching for understanding and light.

The last month has been particularly challenging—marked by a violent attack on innocent women in an Australian shopping center on an ordinary Saturday afternoon. At work, my patients have shared stories of fear within the walls of their homes: stories that stopped me in my tracks, that triggered a cascade of referrals, that changed the lives of some women forever. I have needed to find moments to pause and just breathe. I know I'm not alone in feeling like this.

A sense of personal safety is a fundamental human need. How do we start to feel safe again? Such work needs an empathetic, trauma-informed response. Our leaders need to listen to women, to survivors, to experts.

I know that healing follows a nonlinear path. It begins when our stories are validated and when we find the right people, including health professionals, with whom we can share our stories. We heal when we feel safe and have choices. We heal when we nourish and move our bodies. We heal when we spend time in nature.

This takes me back to my favorite part of the day, the last hour of daylight. While many of us busy ourselves with long work hours, the natural world continues exactly on schedule. There may be no better example of that process than Melbourne in autumn, when the yellow light of late afternoon filters through the changing trees and transforms our streets and gardens into liquid gold.

I like to walk at this time of day, to close out the working day, to find space and clarity in my thoughts. As the yellow light of the afternoon gives way to darkness, the birds settle in safe, sheltered places to roost for the night. For me, healing has meant reclaiming this sacred time of day, listening to the innate wisdom and rhythm of the natural world. The natural world reminds me that leaves may fall and days may shorten but, in time, tiny green buds will once more grow.

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