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This was copied from The Washington Post. I don't know if you ever send such a long piece but I think WH folks might appreciate this article by the writer Anne Lamott.

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Anne Lamott. [Copied and pasted from The Washington Post] Do I think the sky is falling? Sort of. My husband and I were recently in Egypt, where the temperature reached 113 degrees, a bit warm for my tiny princess self. Medic, medic! We left Egypt one day before the war broke out in Israel and Gaza. Back home, my dearest friends struggled with health stuff, with family craziness, with damaged children both young and grown. The game of life is hard, and a lot of us are playing hurt. I ache for the world but naturally I'm mostly watching the Me Movie, where balance and strength are beginning to ebb and, on the surface, things are descending into grandma pudding. (One morning 10 years ago, my young grandchild asked, "Nana, can I take a shower with you, if I promise not to laugh?" I repeat: 10 gravity-dragging years ago.) What can we do as the creaking elevators of age slowly descend? The main solution is not to Google new symptoms late at night. But I also try to get outside every day, ideally with friends. Old friends — even thoughts of them — are my ballast; all that love and loyalty, those delicious memories, the gossip. When I can no longer walk, I will sit outside with them, gaze into their faces, and look up. That is the perennial instruction: Look up! Looking up gives us freedom and causes the shadows to slip right down our backs. Recently I was walking along the cliffs above the Pacific with one of these old friends, named Neshama. We go back 50 years. She is 84, short and sturdy with fuzzy hair like mine. Every so often, she bent down somewhat tentatively and picked up small items that she'd then tuck into a small cloth pouch that dangled from her belt. What are you doing?" "I'm picking up micro litter, bottle caps and bits of wrappers. I try to help where I can." I reminded her of an old story along these lines, of a sparrow and a horse. A great warhorse comes upon a tiny sparrow lying on its back with its feet in the air, eyes squinched tightly shut with effort. The horse asks it what it's doing. "I'm trying to help hold back the darkness." The horse roars with laughter. "That is so pathetic. What do you weigh, about an ounce?" And the sparrow replies, "One does what one can." This is what older age means; we do what we can. We pick up smaller things and move more tentatively. We've unwillingly become characters from the movie "Cocoon." Especially Neshama. Boy, is she old. We walked slowly past the reef below, foamy waves lapping at the shore with the indigo ocean beyond. So much has happened in our 50 years together; we have ridden the rapids. Her husband's early death, her grown son's and, just last month, her sister's; my father's death, my mother's and a lifelong best friend's. This last is when my friendship with Neshama deepened, during the two years when Pammy was dying, when it truly felt as if the sky were falling. Pammy and I went shopping a few weeks before she died. I needed a new dress for a concert with a new boyfriend. At the time, she was in a wheelchair and a wig. I came out of the dressing room wearing a short dress, tighter than normal, and asked if it made me look big in the hips. She looked me in the eyes, calmly. "Annie," she said, "you don't have that kind of time." That sentence shocked me into getting real about how I was spending my life. We know by a certain age the great palace lies of the culture — if you buy or do or achieve this or that, you will be happy and rich. Nope. Love and service make us rich. My mom did this with her closest friends when I was growing up, taking modest bouquets and baked goods to comrades in decline. Some were sunk into cranky dementia, alcoholism and random disorders — one with a piercing laugh that, to borrow from P.G. Wodehouse, could open an oyster at 50 paces. But my mom showed up for her. She

taught me that service makes me happy. So I try to do that every day, and to get outside. The reef below was sculptural, a bas-relief. Neshama pointed out how the surf got lacy after it hit the reef and rolled onto the sand. "A little like my brain," I said. She nodded in agreement, poked herself in the chest: same. We passed thousands of trees and crazy patches of overgrowth, and then a stretch of eucalyptus, somehow towering and delicate. You can't help but look up. The trees are tall and straight, exquisitely spaced, with funny Dr. Seuss tufts of leaves at the top, redolent of mint, earth and turpentine. I tell you, whoever is charge of these sorts of things really nailed eucalyptuses. Neshama wanted to take the shortcut to the lake. We didn't used to. There were eucalyptus pods underfoot, wet from dew, and we trod carefully. She bent tentatively to pick up some of her bits of litter and started to slip, but I caught her and we laughed. We are so physically vulnerable in older age. We have caught each other a lot, have come through some periods of darkness and unsurvivable losses, but friendship makes it all a rowing machine for the soul. We can take it, as long as we feel and give love, and laugh gently at ourselves as we fall apart. We saw some rabbits, and small lizards the exact color of the earth. And then we came around a curve of dense forest and reached the lake, dark near the shore beneath jutting tree branches, then emerald. She had come planning to swim, which I hadn't as the water is too cold for me, and she took off all her clothes, right there and then. "Do you feel shy?" I asked as she walked to the bank. "Nope. This here is what I done got. This is what me being alive looks like now." She scooped her butt over a tree trunk, like the world's most graceful Komodo dragon, lifting one leg over and then the other, and then slipped into the water. "Don't you go drown now, because I am not getting into that freezing cold water," I called to her although we both knew I would. Then she dipped down to her shoulders and swam a few breaststrokes forward, as if gliding into the arms of a sweater of cold water. She paddled slowly out from underneath the dark porte cochere of trees at the shore, turned over onto her back, and floated awhile with her face turned up to the sky."