

As far as I can work out, this poem by [C.P. Cavafy](#) is out of copyright. It seemed appropriate to share it today:

Waiting for the Barbarians

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything going on in the senate?
Why are the senators sitting there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.
What is the point of senators making laws now?
Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,
in state, wearing the crown?
Why is he sitting enthroned at the city's main gate,

Because the barbarians are coming today
and the emperor's waiting to receive their leader.
He's given him a scroll to give him,
loaded with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today
wearing their embroidered scarlet togas?
Why are they all adorned with so many amethysts,
why are they sparkling with so many emeralds?
Why are they all so beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators turn up as usual
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
And some of our men just in from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
Those people were a kind of solution.