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## **BRAVE AND STARTLING TRUTH FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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We, unaccustomed to courage  
exiles from delight  
live coiled in shells of loneliness  
until love leaves its high holy temple  
and comes into our sight  
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives  
and in its train come ecstasies  
old memories of pleasure  
ancient histories of pain.  
Yet if we are bold,  
love strikes away the chains of fear  
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity  
In the flush of love's light  
we dare be brave  
And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.

Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.  
A Brave and Startling Truth

We, this people on a small and lonely planet Traveling through causal space  
Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent suns  
To a destination where all signs tell us  
It is possible and imperative that we discover  
A brave and startling truth  
And when we come to it  
To the day of peacemaking  
When we release our fingers  
From fists of hostility  
And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it  
When the curtain falls on the minstrel show of hate

And faces sooted with scorn are scrubbed clean  
When battlefields and coliseum  
No longer rake our unique and particular sons and daughters  
Up with the bruised and bloody grass  
To lie in identical plots in foreign lands  
When the rapacious storming of churches  
The screaming racket in the temples have ceased  
When the pennants are waving gaily  
When the banners of the world trample  
Stoutly in the good, clean breeze

When we come to it  
When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders  
And children dress their dolls in flags of truce  
When land mines of death have been removed  
And the aged may walk into evenings of peace  
When religious ritual is not perfumed  
By the incense of burning flesh  
And childhood dreams are not kicked awake  
By nightmares of abuse

When we come to it  
Then we will confess that not the Pyramids  
With their stones set in mysterious perfection  
Not the Garden of Babylon  
Hanging as eternal beauty  
In our collective memory  
Not the Grand Canyon  
Kindled in delicious color By Western sunsets  
Not the Danube flowing in its blue soul into Europe  
Not the sacred peak of Mount Fuji  
Stretching to the rising sun  
Neither Father Amazon nor Mother Mississippi who, without favor,  
Nurture all creatures in the depths and on the shores  
These are not the only wonders of the world

When we come to it  
We, this people, on this minuscule and kithless globe  
Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade, the dagger  
Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of peace  
We, this people on this mote of matter  
In whose mouths abide cantankerous words  
Which challenge our existence  
Yet out of those same mouths  
Can come songs of such exquisite sweetness  
That the heart falters in its labor  
And the body is quieted into awe  
We, this people, on this small and drifting planet  
Whose hands can strike with such abandon  
That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the living  
Yet those same hands can touch with such healing, irresistible tenderness  
That the haughty neck is happy to bow  
And the proud back is glad to bend  
Out of such chaos, of such contradiction  
We learn that we are neither devils or divines

When we come to it  
We, this people, on this wayward, floating body  
Created on this earth, of this earth  
Have the power to fashion for this earth  
A climate where every man and every woman  
Can live freely without sanctimonious piety  
And without crippling fear  
When we come to it  
We must confess that we are the possible  
We are the miraculous, the true wonders of this world  
That is when, and only when  
We come to it.  
Equality

You declare you see me dimly  
through a glass which will not shine,  
though I stand before you boldly,  
trim in rank and marking time.  
You do own to hear me faintly  
as a whisper out of range,  
while my drums beat out the message  
and the rhythms never change.  
Equality, and I will be free.  
Equality, and I will be free.

You announce my ways are wanton,  
that I fly from man to man,  
but if I'm just a shadow to you,  
could you ever understand ?  
We have lived a painful history,  
we know the shameful past,  
but I keep on marching forward,  
and you keep on coming last.  
Equality, and I will be free.  
Equality, and I will be free.

Take the blinders from your vision,  
take the padding from your ears,  
and confess you've heard me crying,  
and admit you've seen my tears.  
Hear the tempo so compelling,  
hear the blood throb in my veins.  
Yes, my drums are beating nightly,  
and the rhythms never change.  
Equality, and I will be free.  
Equality, and I will be free.

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