

How Freedom Feels

Have you ever felt the earth shake
and the walls cave in?
That voice in your brain
telling you
you've sinned.
Have you ever seen the crowds turn opaque?
And you don't know what they're thinking
or what they'll give or take?

Sitting naked in a street corner
with just a cup of tea and prayer beads
you feel your thighs move
and ethereal hands
reach out to feed.

I can get used to this
evolving apotheosis.
Now I hope you stay
and share my sacred space
as the dance expands.
We breathe new oxygen
from trees that grow from steel.
I'd risk it all
just to know how freedom feels.

Have you ever wandered
into the soul's dark night?
where the faces and the moon don't shine?
and you can't see the sun,
but the rain tastes like wine.
Have you ever looked
into your own eyes
and understood someone else's cries?

AIDS patients, refugees,
children and slaves
who walked through the fire
and brutal waves.
Now I see a light
calling me home
at the end of the underground railroad.

They said I should've read the signs.
They said I should've worked harder.
But I followed my DJ's vibe
and it made me stronger.

So let's rejoin the human race,
play the drums
like we own the place
and paint our memories
until they heal
cuz we all need to know.
It's time to grasp
how freedom feels.

Have you ever tasted life
like chocolate on your tongue?
Have you ever felt your voice rise
to sing songs you've never sung?

And spices fill the sky
to cultivate lotuses
in our tear-stained eyes.
I imagine
my wingspan
soaring high
dropping lies to the street lies
as I fly with solidarity
and you hold me
without judging me.

We'll light the incense
and open the blinds,
walk into euphoria.
We've never exposed
a candor this real.
But we'll go for it,
so we don't forget
this
is how freedom feels.

Tunnel Vision

Ain't no telling what we'll do
when our subway comes through
and our rhythm sparks the wires
with the pulse of our power.

Do you feel the velocity
of our vivacity?
Did you ever dream
we would witness the light
at the end
of our tunnel vision?

I wanna devour all your images.
I wanna leave my haiku on your tender areas.
I wanna sleep in the words you speak.
I wanna laugh at your shadow.
I wanna drop seeds and rhymes for you.
I wanna tattoo your eyes.
I wanna break and enter.

I wanna come out of hiding
and into your realm.
I wanna shake my religion
and scratch through the ceiling.
I wanna embrace these colors
and enhance this feeling.
I wanna love ambiguity
cuz it's more than drugs you're dealing.

I've felt the darkness
and the weight of this fallen wall.
I've felt my body bleed
beneath the cars on the street
and now I'm pushing back
against engines and glass.

Last night you looked like chickenshit
but I was hung over.
This ain't no AA meeting
and I don't need to stay sober.
Take me through the tunnels.
Don't let go

of these trembling hands
or these grimacing eyes
that mourn
and see the world
through tunnel vision.

I might fall through the tracks
and crush
under the rushing bodies.
Catch me when I crash
and don't overreact
when I stop making sense,
when I curse the ground I'm crawling on,
when I spit at rising demons,
when I break out in scriptures.

Sing your melodies
and build a sanctuary
outside the traffic
for my wounds to expose
and my voice to heal.
My tunnel vision
is about to derail.

Reclaim Our City

We're murder suspects
from Bedstuy to Prospect
baptized in the waters of the Hudson River,
anointed by the graffiti on the Q train
to revive lost passions
and break the chain.
Somewhere
beneath the blood and beer bottles
is our ancestry.

You say my eyes are two gemstones
from the next galaxy,
and my ideas
will be the end of slavery.
And I sacrifice
my wajd
to your dreaded hair
your voice of reason
as the subway gets held up at Union Square,
and only our dynamic devotion
could put the train back in motion.

I wanna get your hell raised.
I wanna get these debts paid.
You urbanize my body
in dangerous dialogues,
recalcitrant rhythms
that take down the system.
Our perilous patterns
orbit to Saturn
and glow like lanterns
and Brooklyn is effulgent
and the hookah's pungent
as you pass me the pipe
with hip-hop growing ripe
on our stereo.

Let's reclaim our city
in salvation synergy,
in vibration telepathy,
above so much inequity
is our Love Story.

The Gods of the Streets have intervened:
Revelation of rebellion,

messages from the gurus in the jail cells.
The dead hip-hop scrolls
will be what saves our souls,
outlaw oral tradition.

These Deities died
when our leaders lied
about who they considered human,
only to be reborn
from the vomit of the AIDS patients
and the fascism in the schools.
Those who break the rules
foresee a new future,
divine a *different* destiny.

Let's reclaim our city
from those who desecrate our dreams
with racism and Regents tests,
with homophobia and hatred,
with rent prices and rights abuses.

And I may be fucked up,
but I am not brought down
by this town
or the repugnant sound of gunshots.
I've found my family.
I've got my powers.
And our truths will shower
like meteors
on this city built on bigotry,
on this pavement laid on skeletons.

Reclaim our city
and envision:
Reconstruction that really rectifies,
mobilization that conquers repression,
solidarity that shatters slavery.
Cuz hip-hop *ain't* dead
if we give it life
and resurrect
the righteous vibe.

The status quo
becomes last year's show
and we are unfrozen,
enamored,
empowered.
Let's go!

Closure

I see you crying in the square,
smog and wires in your hair,
still a train ticket
falls out of your wallet
and a spark burns in your voice
and after the sky lets us rejoice
we'll remember who we are.
Times when the truth got hit by cars,
people told us we had nothing
and we felt the stigma's sting,
still I'll hold you through the hater's chatter,
I'll pull you through the urban shatter
to a place where sand meets incense
and our voices can become intense
and we find closure for our losses,
days of reprimands and bosses.

People who left promises on the subway,
souls who burned and vanished in dismay
in the ashes of the night
closure shines on our flight
and storytellers tell it like is,
insurgents are rewarded for their risks.

So don't give to the crowds
what can't be turned around.
Don't surrender your stories
to condescending armies.
Don't run away from mystery
or let the banks take your integrity.

Ride this train till it derails.
Trust the stage till you prevail.
I'll be right here on the bar rooftop,
watching you as your rhythm drops.
I'll be smiling from the ceiling
cuz stigma begins healing
when we honor who we are.
And closure anoints our stars.
Let the horizon breathe new life
into these creative eyes.

We were born with blood of gods and shamans,
bringing messages to our generation.
Let the ocean wash over you
till closure cleanses your vicissitudes,
transcending bigoted economies
we find our tranquility.

The path to emancipation
is paved in your revelation.

Clandestine Crescendo

I approached you in the bar,
smoke in my eyes,
gin on your breath.
I recalled the times in high school,
searching for secret stereos
so we could discover new bodies.
You recollected your college years,
confessed the sound still daunted you.
I pretended to be cool,
but within me,
atoms burst
into a clandestine crescendo.

You offered me a cigarette.
I sipped your martini.
Strobe lights brought out
the blue in your eyes.
Street lights eclipsed
the black in my hair.

And as the music invoked
our clandestine rhythms
and the tequila exposed
the skeletons in our closets.
I left my tattoo in your throat,
my sublime adinkra on your thighs,
and I wonder now:
“Do you still feel the sound?”
The clandestine crescendo
moves across hemispheres.

The tranquil breeze burns through the oceans.
I send you my waves,
the lessons of my past lives.
I have moved across galaxies
and bled on each planet.
I have sung to the ashes,
and painted the smoke
so you recognize me
in the elements
and you can call to me
from the forests.
I will reach
across islands
with only shadows to guide me,

leave my crescendo
inside your insecurities.

Beckon back,
and my voice will encompass you
in clandestine calligraphy,
for your eyes only.