

We Shall Prevail: A Poem for Unprecedented Times

We are living in a strange moment,
Nothing we have ever experienced before.
Some of us have seen war
And pressed hard on the muddy floors of foxholes.
Some of us have faced illness
And watched the drip of IV's restore life in our veins.
Some of us have lost our life savings
And wondered if just enough will still be enough
To live our lives.
All of us have lost loved loves
And felt the finality of death sting our souls.

But now we are in an unprecedented moment,
Not some of us but all of us.
Not a recitation, a Passover plague,
Or a lesson about a 14th century catastrophe
With the Angel of Death leading rats
Through the streets of dying medieval cities.
We are not in the Philadelphia of the Yellow Fever
Or the pandemic of 1918 during the First World War
Which viciously cut down young lives like a silent machine gun
With bullets forged from bacteria.

We are living in a strange, unprecedented moment
Unfortified by the Olympian fortresses of modern science
Which has yet to create a synthetic shield to a microscopic virus
That penetrates all human armor.

We are living a moment of growing, personal isolation
Increasingly instructed to self-isolate,
To withdraw from society and sports and entertainment
And even simple, familiar acts of faith.

No one is saying it out loud but the message is clear:
"You must be strong alone,
You need to be disciplined and smart,
And cautious and vigilant."

Tradition teaches to live with a pure heart,
Science says to live with clean hands.
Now is the time to collect our inner selves
And to be strong alone
Until the time comes again
When we can be strong together.

Until then
Until that day
Let us resolve that we shall prevail.

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