All Hallows’ Eve

A Small Offering

Tonight, the living dress as ghosts,
and the ghosts, perhaps,
remember what it was to be alive.

The windows fill with candlelight.
Children borrow the faces of monsters
and discover that even monsters
may knock upon a door
and be answered with kindness.

There is wisdom in this little custom.

For one evening,
we admit that the world is stranger
than our ordinary hours allow,
that the dead have not entirely departed
while their names remain among us,
and that fear, when met with an open hand,
may sometimes leave carrying sweetness.

I think of those
whose doors have gone dark.

Of the houses without windows,
the tables with an empty chair,
the names still spoken
in kitchens far from home.

I think of the living, too,
who carry their dead
without ever setting them down.

And tonight,
I wear the colors of a distant sky:

blue for the morning
that belongs to no conqueror,
gold for the fields
that remember the hands
which planted them.

A small thing, perhaps,
to wear a color
when another must defend a country.

But not every gesture
is made in the belief
that it will change the world.

Some are made
so that the world may know
we have not looked away.

And still, there is room for joy.

There are candles to light,
doors to open,
children to astonish,
and small offerings of sweetness
passed from one hand to another.

There are flowers
which do not know
that winter is approaching,
yet give their fragrance freely
to the cooling air.

Perhaps we might learn from them.

To offer what warmth we have
without asking whether it is enough.

To remember the departed
without forgetting the living.

To recognize that even sorrow
need not occupy
every room within the heart.

And if we must be haunted,
let us be haunted
by our better angels.

By the kindness
we received without deserving it.

By the mercy
we might yet extend.

By the faces of those
who taught us, however briefly,
that the world was worth loving.

Tonight,
may every wandering soul
find somewhere to rest.

May every frightened child
find an open door.

May those who have lost their homes
live to see another morning.

And may we,
who have been given this hour,
remember to be gentle
with one another.

For the darkness
has never required our permission
to arrive.

But the light—

the light
is something
we may still give.

Slava Ukraini.

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