

Safe Subjects by Yusef Komunyakaa

How can love heal
the mouth shut this way?
Say something worth breath.
Let is surface, recapitulate
how fat leeches press down gently
on the sex goddesses eyelids.
Let truth have its way with us
like a fishhook holds
to life, holds dearly to nothing
worth say -pull it out,
bringing with it hard facts,
knowledge that the find underbone
of hope is also attached
to inner self, underneath it all.
Undress. No don't be afraid
even to get Satan mixed up in this
acknowledgment of thorns:
meaning there's madness
in the sperm, in the egg,
fear breathing in its blood sac,
true accounts not so easily
written off the sad book.

Say something about pomegranates.
Say something about real love.
Yes, true love -more than
parted lips, than parted legs
in sorrow's darkroom of potash
& blues. Let the brain stumble
from its hiding place, from its cell block,
to the edge of oblivion
to come to itself, sharp-tongued
as a boar's grin in summer moss
where a vision rides the back
of God, at this masquerade.
Redemptive as a straight razor
against a jugular vein -
unacknowledged & unforgiven.
It's truth we're after here,
hurting for, out in the streets
where my brothers kill each other,
each other's daughters & guardian angels in
the opera of dead on arrival.

Say something that resuscitates
us, behind the masks,
as we stumble off into neon lights
to loveless beds & a second skin
of loneliness. Something political as dust
& earthworms at work in the temple
of greed & mildew, where bowed lamps
cast down shadows like blueprints of graves.
Say something for us who can't believe
in the creed of nightshade.
Yes, say something to us dreamers
who decode the message of dirt
between ancient floor boards
as black widow spiders
lay translucent eggs
in the skull of a dead mole
under a dogwood in full bloom.