

Bob Dylan 80th Birthday talk – May 23, 2020 -Ancient Dragon

It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)

Bob Dylan, from "Bringing It All Back Home" 1965

Darkness at the break of noon
Shadows even the silver spoon
The handmade blade, the child's balloon
Eclipses both the sun and moon
To understand you know too soon
There is no sense in trying

Pointed threats, they bluff with scorn
Suicide remarks are torn
From the fool's gold mouthpiece the hollow horn
Plays wasted words, proves to warn
That he not busy being born is busy dying

Temptation's page flies out the door
You follow, find yourself at war
Watch waterfalls of pity roar
You feel to moan but unlike before
You discover that you'd just be one more
Person crying

So don't fear if you hear
A foreign sound to your ear
It's alright, Ma, I'm only sighing

As some warn victory, some downfall
Private reasons great or small
Can be seen in the eyes of those that call
To make all that should be killed to crawl
While others say don't hate nothing at all
Except hatred

Disillusioned words like bullets bark
As human gods aim for their mark
Make everything from toy guns that spark
To flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark
It's easy to see without looking too far
That not much is really sacred

While preachers preach of evil fates
Teachers teach that knowledge waits
Can lead to hundred-dollar plates

Goodness hides behind its gates
But even the president of the United States
Sometimes must have to stand naked

An' though the rules of the road have been lodged
It's only people's games that you got to dodge
And it's alright, Ma, I can make it

Advertising signs they con
You into thinking you're the one
That can do what's never been done
That can win what's never been won
Meantime life outside goes on
All around you

You lose yourself, you reappear
You suddenly find you got nothing to fear
Alone you stand with nobody near
When a trembling distant voice, unclear
Startles your sleeping ears to hear
That somebody thinks they really found you

A question in your nerves is lit
Yet you know there is no answer fit
To satisfy, insure you not to quit
To keep it in your mind and not forget
That it is not he or she or them or it
That you belong to

Although the masters make the rules
For the wise men and the fools
I got nothing, Ma, to live up to

For them that must obey authority
That they do not respect in any degree
Who despise their jobs, their destinies
Speak jealously of them that are free
Cultivate their flowers to be
Nothing more than something they invest in

While some on principles baptized
To strict party platform ties
Social clubs in drag disguise
Outsiders they can freely criticize
Tell nothing except who to idolize
And then say God bless him

While one who sings with his tongue on fire
Gargles in the rat race choir
Bent out of shape from society's pliers
Cares not to come up any higher
But rather get you down in the hole
That he's in

But I mean no harm nor put fault
On anyone that lives in a vault
But it's alright, Ma, if I can't please him

Old lady judges watch people in pairs
Limited in sex, they dare
To push fake morals, insult and stare
While money doesn't talk, it swears
Obscenity, who really cares
Propaganda, all is phony

While them that defend what they cannot see
With a killer's pride, security
It blows the minds most bitterly
For them that think death's honesty
Won't fall upon them naturally
Life sometimes must get lonely

My eyes collide head-on with stuffed
Graveyards, false gods, I scuff
At pettiness which plays so rough
Walk upside-down inside handcuffs
Kick my legs to crash it off
Say okay, I have had enough
what else can you show me?

And if my thought-dreams could be seen
They'd probably put my head in a guillotine
But it's alright, Ma, it's life, and life only

Tight Connection to My Heart (Has Anyone Seen My Love)

Bob Dylan, from "Empire Burlesque" 1985

Well, I had to move fast
And I couldn't with you around my neck
I said I'd send for you and I did
What did you expect?
My hands are sweating
And we haven't even started yet
I'll go along with the charade
Until I can think my way out
I know it was all a big joke
Whatever it was about
Someday maybe
I'll remember to forget

I'm gonna get my coat
I feel the breath of a storm
There's something I've got to do tonight
You go inside and stay warm

Has anybody seen my love
Has anybody seen my love
Has anybody seen my love
I don't know
Has anybody seen my love?

You want to talk to me
Go ahead and talk
Whatever you got to say to me
Won't come as any shock
I must be guilty of something
You just whisper it into my ear
Madame Butterfly
She lulled me to sleep
In a town without pity
Where the water runs deep
She said, "Be easy, baby
There ain't nothin' worth stealin' in here"

You're the one I've been looking for
You're the one that's got the key
But I can't figure out whether I'm too good for you
Or you're too good for me

Has anybody seen my love
Has anybody seen my love
Has anybody seen my love
I don't know
Has anybody seen my love?

Well, they're not showing any lights tonight
And there's no moon
There's just a hot-blooded singer
Singing "Memphis in June"
While they're beatin' the devil out of a guy
Who's wearing a powder-blue wig
Later he'll be shot
For resisting arrest
I can still hear his voice crying
In the wilderness
What looks large from a distance
Close up ain't never that big

Never could learn to drink that blood
And call it wine
Never could learn to hold you, love
And call you mine

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Workingman's Blues #2

Bob Dylan, from "Modern Times" 2006

There's an evening's haze settling over the town
Starlight by the edge of the creek
The buying power of the proletariat's gone down
Money's getting shallow and weak
The place I love best is a sweet memory
It's a new path that we trod
They say low wages are a reality
If we want to compete abroad

My cruel weapons been laid back on the shelf
Come and sit down on my knee
You are dearer to me than myself
As you yourself can see
I'm listening to the steel rails hum
Got both eyes tight shut
I'm just trying to keep the hunger from
Creepin' its way into my gut

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman's blues

I'm sailing on back getting ready for the long haul
Leaving everything behind
If I stay here I'll lose it all
The bandits will rob me blind
I'm trying to feed my soul with thought
Gonna sleep off the rest of the day
Sometimes nobody wants what you got
Sometimes you can't give it away

I woke up this morning and sprang to my feet
Went into town on a whim
I saw my father there in the street
At least I think it was him
In the dark I hear the night birds call
The hills are rugged and steep
I sleep in the kitchen with my feet in the hall
If I told you my whole story you'd weep

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line

Sing a little bit of these workingman's blues

They burned my barn and they stole my horse
I can't save a dime
It's a long way down and I don't want to be forced
Into a life of continual crime
I can see for myself that the sun is sinking
O'er the banks of the deep blue sea
Tell me, am I wrong in thinking
That you have forgotten me

Now they worry and they hurry and they fuss and they fret
They waste your nights and days
Them, I will forget
You, I'll remember always
It's a cold black night and it's midsummer's eve
And the stars are spinning around
I still find it so hard to believe
That someone would kick me when I'm down

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line
Sing a little bit of these workingman's blues

I'll be back home in a month or two
When the frost is on the vine
I'll punch my spear right straight through
Half-ways down your spine
I'll lift up my arms to the starry skies
And pray the fugitive's prayer
I'm guessing tomorrow the sun will rise
I hope the final judgment's fair

The battle is over up in the hills
And the mist is closing in
Look at me, with all of my spoils
What did I ever win?
Gotta brand new suit and a brand new wife
I can live on rice and beans
Some people never worked a day in their life
They don't know what work even means

Meet me at the bottom, don't lag behind
Bring me my boots and shoes
You can hang back or fight your best on the front line

Sing a little bit of these workingman's blues

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Every Grain of Sand

Bob Dylan, from Shot of Love 1981

In the time of my confession, in the hour of my deepest need
When the pool of tears beneath my feet flood every newborn seed
There's a dyin' voice within me reaching out somewhere
Toiling in the danger and in the morals of despair

Don't have the inclination to look back on any mistake
Like Cain, I now behold this chain of events that I must break
In the fury of the moment I can see the Master's hand
In every leaf that trembles, in every grain of sand

Oh, the flowers of indulgence and the weeds of yesteryear
Like criminals, they have choked the breath of conscience and good cheer
The sun beat down upon the steps of time to light the way
To ease the pain of idleness and the memory of decay

I gaze into the doorway of temptation's angry flame
And every time I pass that way I always hear my name
Then onward in my journey I come to understand
That every hair is numbered like every grain of sand

I have gone from rags to riches in the sorrow of the night
In the violence of a summer's dream, in the chill of a wintry light
In the bitter dance of loneliness fading into space
In the broken mirror of innocence on each forgotten face

I hear the ancient footsteps like the motion of the sea
Sometimes I turn, there's someone there, other times it's only me
I am hanging in the balance of the reality of man
Like every sparrow falling, like every grain of sand

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