

By Yusef Komunyakaa

*For Carol Rigolot*

When deeds splay before us  
precious as gold & unused chances  
stripped from the whine-bone,  
we know the moment kindheartedness  
walks in. Each praise be  
echoes us back as the years uncount  
themselves, eating salt. Though blood  
first shaped us on the climbing wheel,  
the human mind lit by the savanna's  
ice star & thistle rose,  
your knowing gaze enters a room  
& opens the day,  
saying we were made for fun.  
Even the bedazzled brute knows  
when sunlight falls through leaves  
across honed knives on the table.  
If we can see it push shadows  
aside, growing closer, are we less  
broken? A barometer, temperature  
gauge, a ruler in minus fractions  
& pedigrees, a thingmajig,  
a probe with an all-seeing eye,  
what do we need to measure  
kindness, every unheld breath,  
every unkind leapyear?  
Sometimes a sober voice is enough  
to calm the waters & drive away  
the false witnesses, saying, Look,  
here are the broken treaties Beauty  
brought to us earthbound sentinels.

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