

Kindness

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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