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# Three Black Men

Woodger Graff Faugas

In night's deep embrace, they came,  
Three men, by despair's claim, yoked,  
To a forsaken, grim abode,  
Where shadows loomed, where sorrow trod.

Within those weathered, ancient walls,  
Their hopes lay fallow, dreams deferred.  
Oppression's weight, injustice stings -  
Tales of woe were softly heard.

The first, a rebel, bared his soul:  
"Thrice I rose against tyranny,  
Thrice exiled, paid a heavy toll.  
Is death our only dignity?"

I yearned to break the chains that bind,  
To free our kin from chains of plight.  
But now, defeated and resigned -  
My fire dims into the night."

The next, an orphan starved of care:  
"Misery's grip, my matron cold.  
Her loveless arms hold me, ensnare,  
My heart, for untold joy, does yearn.

I've toiled and strained to rise above,  
To build a life of warmth and ease.  
But fate, so cruel, devoid of love -  
My dreams are lost, and my hopes decrease."

An artist then unveiled his pain:  
"My gifts are dimmed by hunger's blight.  
Through hardship, what left, is there to gain?  
Can beauty bloom in want's cruel night?"

I long to soar on wings of song,  
To paint my truth in hues sublime.  
But misery's chains are fierce and strong,  
They bind my art, my soul confined."

In their laments, a deeper theme -  
The toll of living a dual life,  
Of wearing masks to dare to dream,  
Cleaving the self with inner strife.

To walk between two worlds, two selves,  
The price to pay for meager wealth.  
"We cloak our truth, our tongues we leash,  
To ape the ways of those with stealth."

"Is this success - to sell our soul?  
To splice our essence, play a role?  
Can we e'er be authentic, whole,  
When white masks hide our soul's true role?"

Their façade, a weight, leaden and sore,  
Disdain without and rifts within.  
To bridge the selves, to integrate,  
Seemed but a futile quest to win.

In the gaze of those who see us not,  
Our worth, in unseen battles fought,  
Yet through the thorns, our strength is wrought,  
In sorrow's soil, wisdom's sought,  
Fractured selves to unity brought,  
A tapestry of struggle, finely wrought,  
Where every thread of pain is taught,  
To weave a whole of paths we've sought.

By sharing woes in open light,  
Expressing truths so long concealed,  
The path to healing heaves in sight,  
Towards a wholeness unrevealed.

A slow and arduous road ahead,  
To gather in the self once shed.  
But in the trying, growth's fair yield -  
An integrated core unsealed.

No more a stranger to one's heart,  
No more estranged from vital core.  
Through facing demons, sans disguise,  
Authenticity may yet arise.

A story of three men in pain,  
Laid bare, that others may yet gain,  
By voicing griefs, and speaking sooth,  
We chart a path to inner truth.

Brick by brick, and tear by tear,  
We'll build a stronghold 'gainst despair.  
The courage to confront, at last,  
The traumas of a burdened caste.

With steadfast labor, care, and time,  
The fractured self may yet align,  
Forever determined, at last made whole,  
Not roles but souls, in vibrant strokes,  
By artists' hands, essence evokes.

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