

War and Peace

by Darryl Price

War

The once shining lake was busy draining itself. All the better
cared for boats were looking like disjointed discarded single shoes
in a messed up paint

chipped closet. No one was thinking well okay a leaky sole is
better than a wounded heel. You get the picture, it was pure
roadkill. Turns out war causes

everyone to turn into their favorite cartoon animals. That part
they got right. They were right to draw it on all the crumbling
buildings and more than right

to reward it with its own special day with masks and everything,
but you couldn't convince the public. Nothing convinces the public.
All they want out

of this particular post life is to bite down into something warmish
and finish the whole argumentative night off with a great big slice of
Fall TV shows.

Hey they voted for it on both sides of the Atlantic. Only some of
us chose to listen to some new music, not the kind you have to dress
up for, but the kind

you have to show up for inside of yourself, to wake up to. Well
perhaps that's too sarcastic if you care what other people think, it's
not meant to be, it's only

a tiny pebble rolling down an ancient hill after all. The real
mudslide began a long time ago when the dinosaurs decided to
evaporate and the hordes of

walking fish decided to investigate the mountains of trash left
over from that startling exit to see if they might have an appetite for
monumental change,

too. Then we came charging along with our viciously trained
tanks rolling over everything and flattening the script. If we had
found a way to also roll up

the sky it would have been done, to hang on some guy's wall while he masturbates to Wagner. Again, too cruel or too polite? The war brought us

together. It forced us into a hole. It washed us out again and again. We gathered our things and told our feet to not look back, but some did any way.

Peace

They brought their own sorcerer to the table to try to cheat the truth out of seeing its own reflection, but the good guys are always relaxed enough to know when to

get the shotguns down from above the fireplace. They can smell the deceit like it is burning right under their noses, even if its planned in an office on Wall Street

months in advance. They make the necessary sounds of joy and offer that incense to the Great Spirit rather than wait to be ambushed by unscrupulous con men who

like to collect power jolts like vintage automobiles. All of your stuff will be divided and sold when you are dead, it will lose its resemblance to you and

become nothing more than petrified veins to be mined by workers who would rather kill sacred trees than starve. They're not the problem. Snakes are not the

problem. Sharks are not the problem. Guns are not the problem. You have to be able to walk right up to them and smile and mean it, even when they turn into

hideous monsters without any pity in their pale watery eyes. You have to know the truth, even when they offer you everything for nothing. You have to see the

beautiful horizon inside them, the same sun, the impossible light, then you may have a chance to actually sit down and talk. You might even make bees move

out of the way so you can taste the honey without getting stung, and more importantly without harming the bees. Then everybody goes back to their

business with renewed interest. Because nothing was chosen over someone else's home. Nothing was invaded. Nothing was destroyed. The only thing that

was done was a story was told that included everybody in their own skins. It proves it can be done. But not if you come to the table already armed with

hatred. You will be caught in the nose hairs of the chief and disqualified of your power like a child. Yet like a child you may begin again in wonder and be glad.

Bonus poem:

Paris Is Alive (a draft)

We are all living cities of light, only some of us are turned off.
When

We get there, we get there. We find we fit in the shape we were
All along. They can blacken the skies with their poisoned cups of
spilled over anger.

They can disrupt the freedom of music of the spheres with their
own rain of

Out of tune hate filled bullets. But they can't see in the mirror
that is

Each and every face. They can't hear the human pain more
unbearable than their own

Perceived punishment for living. The master they serve is eating
them alive. The master they

Store in a scowl is rewriting the pages backwards in the hopes of
reaching total

Annihilation, not Paradise, but hell. And still ordinary laughter
will crack the spackle of doom.

It starts anywhere with a smile. It travels with a kiss, a hand
holding a

Hand. This is what the people know. It's not a religion. It's not a
military

Quest for power. It's a poem, a song, a feeling. And it has no
boundaries.

When we get there, we light up. We are all amazing cities of light.
It's

Dancing. It's laughing and crying. It's dreaming. It's being
together inside our hearts. They can

Chop off as many flowers as there are blades of grass. It only
takes one of us,

Even one of their own, to start a new garden. Just ask the moon
and stars.

The Gut

The gut knows when
you are with the
right person. You are
the guts of the pumpkin in the field
or in the street, in the car, or
in your own head.

Why do you believe
what others spout when
your guts tell you
something different? The gut knows you better than
you know yourself. It reaches from the bottom
to the top. The

gut is a moralist,
but most of the
best comedians are. Don't
make the gut angry--write that down--because
you won't like what it does to your
nervous system. The gut

never loses its way.
My guts named you
as the sole benefactor
to my love then
promptly kicked me stranded by the side of the road when it
came time to tell

you this news. Oh
the gut knows you
probably won't listen to

its new sensation any more than you once
listened to its old, but that's not my
conundrum. Don't worry.

I'm on my way
out of here. If
only things could have
been different. Maybe our guts would have been
enough to see it all through, but something's
telling me, dream on.

