



Drone Strike In North Waziristan

by Stone Riley
in December 2012
A political painting with poems
Acrylic paint on canvas,
48 x 24 inches = 122 x 61 cm

Poem 1: While Painting

My son and his wife just had
a baby,
a beautiful new astonishing
human child.

Last month two women
went out to a water well
at night
and were rendered into
bloody pieces.

I cannot pretend that these
two things
are different sorts of things,
pretend that
they are not the same type
and quality of fact,
for they are human facts.

I cannot say,
Oh one is mine and one
not mine,
for my one human heart
strains to encompass both
and strains to examine them
with the fear and hope
and joy and shame
and trembling pity
that are all alike the province
of
one human heart.

(Flip Side)**More Poems For Our Struggle**

Poem 2: Don't Stop Walking

Don't stop walking when there is no way ahead. Your walking makes the path. The place you started from was cleared by others. Others soon will follow you and pass and step ahead.

Poem 3: Songs Of Heroes

a poem of endings

An old blind man up by the table's head rises carefully to stand on wobbling legs. Some good girls and boys assist this blind old gentleman to find the chair that some have run to set in a shady spot beneath a tree. Our local champion poet brings the painted harp and gives it, bowing by his knee.

And so he strikes the first note on the strings. He begins to sing amid the ringing chime. This reedy thinning voice cries out the tale of great Odysseus who came home.

Poem 4: Journey To The West

a poem of clear consciousness

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Hope is not the mouse's scurrying feet and owl's sharp beak, no more than these are fear. What is the purpose of the poppy's fate then, or the logic of my heart blood's heat, or yet the celestial motive of the sky's Great Bear? How do we live? Why has the Cosmos brought us here?

When I was full of hope, I thought that was the beginning and end of all things. Then, full of yearning to be loved, I dreamed love was the wellspring of delight. But then, immersed in deep despair, I chose to live this life for purposes that were far too obscured in smoke and flame for me to know and name. Why did I, in that dark hour, choose to live this life? Why did I not yet fly away?

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Faith is not the prisoner's chain, nor doubt the prophet's holy flame, nor greed the mother's teat touched to the sleeping baby's lips, nor is blessed charity the tyrant's grip. All this is life, but what is life? What is the melting of all opposites?

There is a man I truly hate; there is a woman whom I love. That man is dead as he once wished for me, the

woman never met although my eyes search through the worlds for only she. Where is this woman who'll return my glance? Where is that ancient foeman now when in my hands I hold his broken blunted lance? And where am I? Where is this land wherein I stand alone? What is this place? Is this my home? I simply call this place my Skysealand.

One year when I was young and starting out across this continent, I strained my eyes to look ahead to map the way. That year, each Monday I would take a poem from an ancient wisdom book and I would fold up the coded rhyming wisdom neatly into my purse.

Then for seven days I'd search the curving trunk of every tree and every mottled turtle's shell that I might pass beside the way for explications written there by unseen hands for me. Well, the Gods were generous and kindly gave some of their secrets up, but the boy I was then did not know their language well.

An eagle's mighty flight; a turtle shell; amid the lovely ripples of a brook, the various colored pebbles very artfully arranged; I made the best of it I could. Indeed, several turnings of the way and crossroads were very helpfully pointed out to me in advance by these magic signs.

But now I've come a good way further on and, even though the sunlight and the stars and meadow flowers and hills and snow now all sing and whisper to me audibly; and even though the web of jewels of which all things are made stands manifest and visible and palpable to my fingers; yet even so, more hidden secrets still remain.

Buddha says that all is bliss. Solomon recommends a carefully considered trust. Christ says you should take his word on faith. Ganesh and Krishna both respectfully suggest that you can dance your life with happy grace. But for me, Merlin stands with a lantern held high in his hand, leaning on a wooden staff up on a windy mountain top. That wind blows down to gently touch my face and it speaks to me in a woman's voice and all she says is just: "come".

No, love is not the thing, nor hate; not victory nor defeat. Whatever guides my fate, whatever it may be that lures me on, whatever it may be, it is not anything that I can know so as to name.
