

The job interview takes place over lunch

employer says to the teenager:

so, I've notice that your résumé appears a little thin
please share with me what you feel your value is

teenager wipes his mouth
takes a drink of water
beads falling down the glass
as beads trace down his face

composing himself with the thought of
cloudless peaceful sky
he begins to unravel the spool of his life
the answer to all his questions *why*

he says: I know how to live

excuse me?

I said, I know how to live

I know how to scavenge birdseed from parks
and stuff my pocket with bread crust from trash bins

I know what time at night is safest
to pillage dog food from saucers in green backyards
and cat food from gray tins

I know which spot under the bridge
doesn't carry too much wind
so I can wake in the morning
not drenched or frozen

I know I am not the chosen
but I know how to choose my friends

people can use the word *friend* like a Trojan horse
wanting you to let down your guard
so they can get close to you
and do the damage a friend would never do

I know how to choose my friends

I know how to recognize my father
on the street in his tattered raincoat
and his stench and stupor
and I know enough to Love him
even though we never played ball
or went fishing or talked or took walks
or ate dinner at the table



I know enough to know my father's pain
runs like maple in the cold of fall
and even though he has been consumed by it
my father *is not* his pain
it is his prison but it is not him

he is a little lost boy
walking the streets of his trauma
a monk who prays in confusion
meditates on madness
and fills his beggar's bowl
with the strangest grain of rice

I know enough to recognize my father
and still pray he finds his paradise

I know enough to recognize my mother
when she comes to me in dreams
sometimes she is a valley
filled with trees of fruit
sometimes a bright lagoon
with tears of joy waterfalling down

sometimes she is a clown
trying her best to cheer me up
even though a perfect life
stayed miles away from her

still she served me perfect meals of grace
and the peace of knowing
she never tried to hurt me
with knifing words or hateful face

I know how to recognize my mother
when she comes to me in dreams

I know what to do when
people look at me and imagine nothingness

I just remember who I am
and that I was born to walk this road
and keep on walking until
the stones turn into serenity
and my feet no longer touch the ground
because I myself have become true light
a force of will and nature
who has figured out the purpose to his plight

I know when to catch the tears
of a stranger when they're falling
in a certain way down her weary face
I know Grace

and I know how to express my life to you:

homeless, ocean foamless
I moan this poem, this aloneness
cactus plains I roam this
awesome ache I own this

I fill my lake of soul with song
and stone this water
rippling my ownness
to shore to touch my soul sound
against the toneless

lying on earth at night
I stare at my promise sky so domeless

I strike the flint of pain
against my existence
to start a fire so I can hone this groan
this bone I've known
that others gnaw at like a rabid rat
this name by which I'm known
this stigma that claws me
like caged up cat
this boiling vat pouring molten emotion
into the air I breathe
this shame that floods me
my soul a sieve
the world that dogs me of my joy
the persistent daily thief

but I do exist and so I grieve, I grieve
you best believe that when you leave
I return to what I believe

*see sometimes I feel like a motherless child
and sometimes I feel so fatherless, child
and sometimes I turn to the void and ask:
how come me here?*



and sometimes I sing:
I wish I never was born . . .
and as I sing, new life is born inside my
mountain spring, my valley stream

and I realize I was born with
fierce drumbeat inside my chest
powerful enough to part the skies

and as long as I locate my beat
and remain, no matter how long the rain
or deep the pain, or absent the sane
from my life and grain
as long as I hold onto my sacred beat
and determine to be true to I
then wherever I journey in this world
I am home and kiss the sky

I may come to have a home of wood and stone
but if I am not true to I
that touchable home may as well not exist
for if I am not true to this innerness
then all around me is less than mist

but if I find I, and honor I,
then I am truly home, home inside my truth
home inside any relationship, home in any place
on any road, in any moment, in every circumstance

one romance feeds all the rest
I must Love I enough to move
into the one home that can never crumble
I must sign the unbreakable lease
written on the brilliant page of peace
I must reside in the one place made for I
whose windows are always filled with light and sky

what do I know?
I know how to do what most others
have never done: lie in darkness and stroke the sun

it takes free fall through fate to learn to fly
and the choke of bitter nakedness
to cherish the pristine taste of bliss

I do know *this*

what do I know?

I know how to own this, homeless
room, this momentary, secondary
space that looks to have no floor
this room that seems to have no door

I know how to create that floor
construct that freedom door
move from shadows into light
and make this life my home

I know how to recite this poem I am
ignite this light I am
invite this flight I am
breathe peace, spread roots
grow stalks of Love
cook meals of soul and sound
sleep deep in silence
wake fresh, bathe clean
open windows to the wonder of life
and live
and live
inside
this home
I am.



Copyright © 2011 Jaiya John
August 17 draft
JAIYAJOHNS.COM
FACEBOOK.COM/JaiyaJohn

Jaiya John is the founder of Soul Water Rising, a global human relations mission. His tools are *words* (writing and speaking), *relationship* (gardening beauty in youth and adults), and *Loving spirit*. His latest book is *Lyric of Silence*, a poetic telling of the human soul journey. All of Jaiya's titles are available through booksellers large and small. Learn more about this mission at soulwater.org, and on facebook.com/JaiyaJohn where fresh new poetry and writing are shared regularly. Peace Always!