**“In the Dark of the Theatre”, Prologue *Dylan: A Play in Two Acts***

In the dark of the theatre we remember ourselves. And we know we are not average men and that Madison Avenue shall not sell us that we are. In the inner space of the theatre, our blood turns red. Our nerves signal us again, as via Telstar, directly across the ocean of the orchestra pit, straight to the pit of our stomachs with the pitiless speed of feeling which, if not faster, is more revealing than light.

In the ball and siren of the theatre, the dormant half of the brain wakes up. Speaks up, saying, “Who can identify with ordinary men?” For none of us is ordinary to ourselves. And it is to ourselves that we awaken, in the morning of the theatre. Nobody is Joe Doakes, but everybody is Hamlet-prince, insane, with murders to commit, with trap-door graves of Ophelia-loves to leap into, with wit and poetry on the tongue’s apt tip. And everybody is Falstaff, gross drunk, thief, liar, scoundrel, lead-weight clown, tipable but up-popable, whose wind-bag blarney has a quotable beauty. All men want to turn a flower girl into a princess. And all women, once having been turned, want to turn about and tell the teacher off. And both may relish having the mind of Shaw to do it with.

In the free country of the theatre, our private selves are as differing pearls that yet hang integrated on a one strand the force that through us runs and tethers us up together, be it called Heart or Soul or God or Being, but that enables us to seat ourselves all facing one way and pray for miracles; and if the miracle is laughter, up goes the general roar, and if the miracle is tears, out come a thousand handkerchiefs and dab two thousand eyes, and if the miracle is terror, we all have our hearts in our throats at once, and we share the fear, and the courage to face the fear, just as we do when our President takes a-life-or-death stand in our name and we spill over with pride and are shoveled full of the fuel of love, and we are never more solidly alive or crisply human. For weeks after the fire-ice event, we stride in boots, and our lives have meaning; we are newborn and the air seems cleaner, for we have identified with an action which is just and courageous, and beautiful to us for those reasons. The theatre is not one speck a thing less than that.

True, if as we walked about in the usual slim of day, we were to act like beanstalk giants, we’d be abruptly hoosegowed by the society whose Jacklike modesty we’d shaken. But that does *not* mean that if there is *no* place where we can go and remember ourselves, we won’t equally endanger that society by corroding it from within, sickening the whole apple because the core has gone brown and rots. We have as good a need, genuine as a gene, to partake of that sweet resurrecting occasion that nourishes us, in the survival kit of the theatre, as good a need as a bum has for his nightcap, a child for making shadows on the wall, or men and women for the love and respect of one another.

In the weightless crater of the theatre: that is where Hamlet’s palace is, and Lear’s asylum moor, and the town square of Thebes. There grows the cherry orchard. And there stands the butternut tree. And over it flies a wild duck. And a sea gull. And a bluebird. That’s where Desire lies to which the streetcar ran. And Willy’s Brooklyn with its skeleton house and encroaching apartments. And that’s where the bus stop is and the girl who lives upstairs of the summer bachelor. And the French planter and the Navy nurse are raising their Polynesian children there.

And that is where we live. In the reality of the theatre. Not in the fiction of society. But where we can identify. Where we are extraordinary. Where we speak like angels, feel like saints and act like heroes. Where life is as romantic and true as the telescopes tell us. Where we remember ourselves. In the passionate, compassionate, tall, large, deep, bright, dark of the theatre.