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If You Do This Work

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If You Do This Work

Read to Blues Backbeat by Steve Ray or BBK

If you do this work
keep your bags packed
you are seldom at home anywhere
always a guest
careful not to break the family dishes.

If you do this work
expect to be hounded
harped
badgered and bullied
by those who expect a unified vision
which means their vision.

If you do this work
you will not be busy
because busy will not mean anything
you will be living
with a heart of steel
and the soul of *do it, do it, do it.*

If you do this work
expect to be a traitor
to your race
and all those things you promised
but didn't know you promised
when you were born.

You will be agitated
but peaceful at the center of it
you will be haunted by the historical now
you will be given less
than your colleagues
by the institutions that say they support you.

If you do this work
expect many will doubt your testimony
judge your character
insinuate you are an ego without restraint
that you are a complainer
that what you experience yourself
and through others
is a fantasy
rather than life.

Expect to discover that imagining the
lives of others IS real.
Expect the heavy hand of self-examination
to judge you as the others judge

and worry about giving witness
but sounding like you feel sorry for yourself.
Expect your family to watch you
the way horses watch
with their eyes cocked to the side
so you KNOW they wonder
how to get you off their back
and head for the barn.

If you do this work
you are a cross road
a wreck, a radical
not liberal or conservative
you will not be invited to cheer
at a tea or coffee
(power is your friend and enemy)
an artful dodger
dancer and dance
entranced by humanity
and in love
but aware that love
is not enough.

If you do this work,
you will be tested
by everyone you count on
and they will be right to test you
you will become a storyteller
and the listener of stories
with your whole body and being
you will be on fire
and hold a bucket of water yourself
since others will be either too frightened or transfixed
to save you.

If you do this work
your colleagues and work mates
will assume you have a hidden agenda
no matter how hard you try
to either not have an agenda
or to wear a sign with your **AGENDA**
in big bright letters.

You will be bold in spite of yourself and others.

If you do this work,
you better be part sky, part earth, part wind, part water, part fire
and honor the seven directions.

If you do this work
know what the seven directions are.

If you do this work

you will see things
feel things
be things
you have not yet imagined
and join a brotherhood and sisterhood
that is always in the making
that is flesh and bone
and you will have lunch with Kachinas
and dance with the delight of Hoo Doo
and light up like a star-eyed hipster
while the shoppers in the mall want sleep
and to be content with nothing --
you will never be content.
If you do this work
I warn you
that it will be real
work
that your hands and heart will grow strong but scared
that you will have to learn so many languages
your tongue will knot up
and you will see your body wear out
with the rub and tug of agitation
you will know the death of many things
and the coming to life of many things
and you will never be finished
never done
without security
but with shelter
when you ask for it
and mainly you will recognize
that for all the discomfort
toil and wrestling
the smacks to the soft soul
the breaking of bones
the stops and starts of the heart
that whatever it costs
it is the work
and whatever else you might do
is not work but killing time
and time does not die
and as my friend is fond of saying
it is good work if it is worth it
and this work is.

Rx