



## MAYA ANGELOU

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### On the Pulse of Morning

A Rock, A River, A Tree  
Hosts to species long since departed,  
Marked the mastodon,  
The dinosaur, who left dried tokens  
5 Of their sojourn here  
On our planet floor,  
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom  
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,  
10 Come, you may stand upon my  
Back and face your distant destiny,  
But seek no haven in my shadow.  
I will give you no hiding place down here.

You, created only a little lower than  
15 The angels, have crouched too long in  
The bruising darkness  
Have lain too long  
Facedown in ignorance.  
Your mouths spilling words  
20 Armed for slaughter.

The Rock cries out to us today,  
You may stand upon me,  
But do not hide your face.

Across the wall of the world,  
25 A River sings a beautiful song. It says,  
Come, rest here by my side.

Each of you, a bordered country,  
Delicate and strangely made proud,

Yet thrusting perpetually under siege.  
30 Your armed struggles for profit  
Have left collars of waste upon  
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.  
Yet today I call you to my riverside,  
If you will study war no more.

35 Come, clad in peace,  
And I will sing the songs  
The Creator gave to me when I and the  
Tree and the Rock were one.  
Before cynicism was a bloody sear across your brow  
40 And when you yet knew you still knew nothing.  
The River sang and sings on.

There is a true yearning to respond to  
The singing River and the wise Rock.  
So say the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew  
45 The African, the Native American, the Sioux,  
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek  
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheik,  
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,  
The privileged, the homeless, the Teacher.  
50 They hear. They all hear  
The speaking of the Tree.

They hear the first and last of every Tree  
Speak to humankind today.  
Come to me,  
55 Here beside the River.  
Plant yourself beside the River.

Each of you, descendant of some passed-  
On traveler, has been paid for.  
You, who gave me my first name, you,  
60 Pawnee, Apache, Seneca, you,  
Cherokee Nation, who rested with me, then  
Forced on bloody feet,  
Left me to the employment of  
Other seekers—desperate for gain,  
65 Starving for gold.

You, the Turk, the Arab, the Swede,  
 The German, the Eskimo, the Scot,  
 The Italian, the Hungarian, the Pole,  
 You the Ashanti, the Yoruba, the Kru, bought,  
 70 Sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare,  
 Praying for a dream.

Here, root yourselves beside me.  
 I am that Tree planted by the River,  
 Which will not be moved.  
 75 I, the Rock, I, the River, I, the Tree,  
 I am yours—your passages have been paid.  
 Lift up your faces, you have a piercing need  
 For this bright morning dawning for you.  
 History, despite its wrenching pain,  
 80 Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
 With courage, need not be lived again.

Lift up your eyes  
 Upon this day breaking for you.  
 Give birth again  
 85 To the dream.

Women, children, men,  
 Take it into the palms of your hands,  
 Mold it into the shape of your most  
 Private need. Sculpt it into  
 90 The image of your most public self.  
 Lift up your hearts.  
 Each new hour holds new chances  
 For a new beginning.  
 Do not be wedded forever  
 95 To fear, yoked eternally  
 To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,  
 Offering you space  
 To place new steps of change.  
 100 Here, on the pulse of this fine day,  
 You may have the courage  
 To look up and out and upon me,

The Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.  
No less to Midas than the mendicant.  
105 No less to you now than the mastodon then.

Here, on the pulse of this new day,  
You may have the grace to look up and out  
And into your sister's eyes,  
And into your brother's face.  
110 Your country,  
And say simply  
Very simply  
With hope—  
Good morning.

