

GATHER ROUND THE TABLE
Poem by Pireeni Sundaralingam

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.

Remember when we could touch hands
sisters, brothers, strangers, neighbors?
Gather round our table.

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.

What happened to the shape of us?
To standing side by side on early morning trains?

Once we moved in and out of our cities,
each day, a living tide.

What happened to the ebb and flow, the river of us
spilling out from late-night theaters, concert-halls,
our breath and laughter mingling in the winter air.

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Light a simple candle.

Remember when we could touch hands
sisters, brothers, strangers, neighbors?
Gather round our table.

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What happened to the shape of us?
Moving forward, days of work, days of rest.

What happened to the shape of us?
To the landmarks of life's journey?
To graduation? To prayers at the grave?

We pace down sunless halls, circling our rooms,
goldfish trapped behind the glass.
Confined to the rectangular screen.

But the sparrow still comes to the window,
The hawk still arcs across the sky.

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.

Remember when we could hold hands
sisters, brothers, strangers, neighbors?
Gather round our table.

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.

But some shapes will not change.
The line of geese bending through the clouds,
Leaving my land for yours. I know they will return.
I know they will come back,
Calling news of your harvest for my Spring,
Gathering our world.

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.

Remember when we could embrace,
sisters, brothers, strangers, neighbors?
Gather round our table.

Gather round the table.
Light a simple candle.