**The Privileged Secrets of the Arch**

**Music by Travis Reynolds  
Text by Stephen Anderson**

1. **On a Hot Afternoon in Jerusalem**

The sun-parched face of an old Arab  
crowned with a *kaffiyeh*,  
his nicotine-stained fingers clutching  
a smoking Galloise,  
peers directly at the  
photographer.

Is this a survivor of untold losses,  
of so many blood-curdling mourning wails  
of Arab women,  
this very same man who sips black coffee  
sugared to taste from a demitasse,  
a sweet companion to his cigarette,  
a sure soothing balm for desperate souls  
in such toxic, war-torn environments,  
here during a sweltering afternoon in the  
calmer, narrow lanes of a Jerusalem *souk*where Arabic words dance between  
walls, then flee, muted, into the open air?

Does he dream too – that Allah  
will some day  
silence  
gunfire forever?

1. **Third Planet**

Ocher hills with withered parched  
Trees, dry-as-bone streambeds,  
Mysteriously placed Stonehenge-like monoliths,  
Rusted steel sheets,  
Concrete and metal constructions,  
Lunatic war contraptions and   
Lonely pyramids in the sand  
All await  
The red carpet debut,  
Dawn of thoughtfulness,  
Enlightenment rising from global  
Wasteland ashes,

A sculpting in consciousness  
Of concepts like laying down arms,  
Creating livable environments,  
Fostering long-lasting peace on  
This third planet from the sun,  
Presumed star-pupil of the solar system.

1. **Sub-Tropicana**

You have become the North American glamour queen,  
Mecca of south coast breezes, ibiber of  
Rum punch,  
Mojitos,  
Brewer of cortaditos &  
Occasional cafes con leche,  
  
You seduced & forged glass,  
Concrete & steel into  
Modern skylines

& blended it with older art deco  
Renovations along South Beach’s  
Salsa beat that you sent  
  
Dancing, spinning right down to   
The waves off the blue Atlantic &  
  
South along cold cut sea-sprayed  
Skyscraper glass & then over the waves  
Clear out to Cuba/Cuba,  
Inviting, enticing determined balseros with rumors  
  
Of greener grass in places like Little Havana,  
Home of hands wide open for money flying in  
With affluent Latinos, Europeans, an open  
Port for asylum-seekers of all stripes to  
Come to this gyrating, buzzing Latin beat  
  
That is this Cosmopolis (with capital “C”)  
Retrofitted in pastels & neon, lover of   
Blurred identities.

1. **Basilica circa AD 2000**

A tarnished copper dome, expertly fitted

Over steel and concrete shell sheltering

Inside the ornate masterpiece of

The finest carved marble,

Exquisitely crafted wooden pews,

Polished sandstone and chiseled granite,

Richly colored murals with

Golden trim from the gilded strokes

Of master painters,

Saintly stories in stained glass

Painstakingly cut and welded with

Lead frame into whole form

By yet other Old World artisans whose

Creation, nourished by decades of

Pious devotion and religion-inspired generosity,

Rises defiantly into the new millennium

Above urban decay, gangbangers

And people searching for their

Next food pantry.

#### 5. The Privileged Secrets of the Arch

Of all of those in the park, only  
The rosy-cheeked, disheveled woman saw the  
Poltergeists weave under and  
Around the monumental park arch, so much  
So that she dropped her plastic bag  
Filled with everything she owned  
And cherished, thereby setting her  
Hands free to applaud them as they  
Set about in their anarchistic abandon  
Magically whirling debris with whistling sounds,  
Creating traces of colored lines that were  
Utterly magnificent for this lone observer  
To behold.  What a shame – she thought –  
That she must relish in this free performance  
Art alone.  And how blessed she considered herself  
That only she could enjoy such a gift in her  
Own dusty, litter-strewn amusement park while  
Others there could content themselves with just  
Simply staring at her.

1. **Song of Graffiti**

It is like fresh flowers  
Loving placed in a vase,  
  
Like free art for an otherwise  
Dull, dreary wall,  
  
Like a Japanese garden  
Raked with care around

Carefully situated stones, like  
A blues riff on a saxophone –

It is placed where crim, grit and poverty  
Raise up like Medusa’s snaky locks in

Untold ways in seedy tenements where  
Things are spawned every which way but up.

Graffiti brightens gray steel slabs  
On trains and walls in otherwise  
  
Sad-faced neighborhoods,  
Rides in like a hero, a  
  
Savior of those stepped on by  
Capitalist dreams and Horatio Alger  
  
Nightmares. Here’s where raucous blue swirls  
With red and black out-lined John and Jane Doe figures,  
  
Stylized gang tag signatures, yellow and green  
And purple geometric strokes create a  
  
Most glorious song of the dead rising  
From the ashes.