**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.