

WE ALL SAW IT COMING



Bill Yarrow

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COMING**

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FORGIVE ME, LEONARD COHEN

There's a price
on everything

and that's how
the dark begins.

CALL TO ARMS

As the commodities market is closed
for repair and as young girls in filigree
slips will one day clutter its brackish aisles
I call upon all cashiers in dungarees who bag
skeins of possibility to contact their flaccid
pastors who alert to maladroit nuance
will bedevil the stingy hinges to revision.

As the accommodation lobby is locked
for holiday and as fey valedictorians with filigree
degrees will one day flourish in its aisles
I call upon the multifarious baristas who
defend the flag children in rags to denounce
the nefarious precinct captains for they are
mismatched overly gregarious and will not serve.

As the consolation mall is marked for demolition
and as blue-collar bankers with filigree fears will one day
reconfigure its darkened aisles I call upon those whose
sinister principles tax the weakness of their conscience
to divest themselves of the rhetoric that bloats their coats
with Sagittarian wind and with rare debauchery marry
themselves to anyone spiritually innocent of crime.

As the turbidity district is targeted for annexation
and as the army of misanthropes with filigree
whips will one day co-opt its mosaic aisles
I call upon all those deracinated by dreaming big
and all those assassinated by dreaming small to burn
their fish-oil capsules to shred their certificates of privilege
and to reach inside alarm and pluck temerity out.

TARIFF HAPPY

Be subversive in your chores.

Knock at the door of indecency and demand to be let in.

Factor in your final calculations the weight of longing among the self-impressed.

Do not fob off.

Keep a second set of books for Raphael.

Inculcate imprudence.

Wash with emotion, then with good soap.

Expose those for whom freedom is greed.

Scour the future so as to inure it.

Keep lists.

Change the air in your protocol every time you crave a tattoo.

Lock your knees at funerals.

Hands off the secret levers of the world.

Watch out for the kids of Narcissus.

SEMI TIRESIAS

I knew my mother would die by the weekend
when she declined to answer my questions
about her parents or her youth

I knew my uncle would die a pauper
when he grew obsessed
with drafting a will

I knew my grandmother was becoming senile
when she lost her appetite
for playing cards

I knew my father was irreversibly old
when he crashed into a mail truck
trying to turn into our drive

I knew America would be a colony again
when it forsook consensus
for impasse

WE ALL SAW IT COMING

We all saw it coming
the snakes in ascendance
the dark satanic milling around
the troops of the nouveau greedy
the safety nets on fire
the cesspool of superiority
flooding the brazen stage

We all saw it coming
the peat moss racists
the neonatal Nazis
King Leer
Queen Get-rude
the bully trident planted
the ratcheting down of sense

We all saw it coming
the tide of crude insurgence
complacency swept away
virtue's camel toe exposed
the nipple slip of decency
the gangbang of the plebiscite
the fondling of the tit of turpitude

We all saw it coming

I don't mean we
I don't mean we saw it coming

I mean I, I saw it coming
and did nothing

STIMULATED BY MIRACLES

I.

The Almighty Creator created Angels by His divine power
and in His great righteousness gave them their own choice
that they might continue in eternal happiness through
obedience

and might also lose that happiness
not through destiny
but for disobedience

His great righteousness would not compel them to either
but gave them their own choice for that is righteousness
that to everyone be allowed his own choice

II.

Now many a man will think and inquire whence the Devil came?
Be it, therefore known to him that
God created as a great Angel him who is now the Devil

but God did not create him as the Devil
but when he was wholly fordone
and guilty towards God

through his great haughtiness and enmity
then became he changed to the Devil
who before was created a great Angel

III.

It is read in historic narratives that John the Evangelist would
marry
and Christ was invited to his nuptials

Then it befell that at the nuptials wine was wanting

Jesus then bade the serving men fill six stone vessels with pure water
and he with his blessing turned the water to noble wine
This is the first miracle that He openly wrought in His state of man

Now John was so stimulated by that miracle
that he forthwith left his bride in maidenhood
and ever afterwards followed the Lord

IV.

It is probable that some of you know not what circumcision is:
God commanded Abraham that he and his offspring
should hold His covenant that there might be some sign on their
bodies

to show that they believed in God
and commanded him to take a sharp-edged flint
and cut off a part of the foreskin

and that token was then as great among believing men
as is now the holy baptism
excepting Christ turn it to a spiritual sense

V.

They were not ripened for slaughter yet they blessedly died
Snatched from their mothers' breasts, they were instantly
committed to the bosoms of Angels

The wicked persecutor could not by any service
so greatly favor those little ones so greatly
as he favored them by the fierce hate of persecution

They are called blossoms of martyrs because they were
as blossoms springing up in the midst of the chill of infidelity
consumed as it were by the frost of persecution

Found poem. From The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church by
Ælfric, translated by Benjamin Thorpe, 1844.

BEHAVE YOURSELF

"I won't do that again." Sure you will. You can't help it. You can try to control yourself but you will fail because you can't help but be true to who you truly are. Your behavior is yourself. "We are the deed's creature," said Middleton and he was right. Behavior is fixed at ten years old. After that, it's all behavior mod, that is to say tweaking by ambition, humiliation, punishment, fear, or gold of one kind or another. Put away the towel. Fish are slippery. The end. We are invariably ourselves. Repeated behavior? That's just redundancy. All behavior is serial behavior.

THE APPLICATION OF BIRDS

We read in the *Devotions* of John Donne, *Spirante columba supposita pedibus, revocantur ad ima vapores* meaning "They apply pigeons to his feet to draw the vapors from his head," but the word *columba* is ambiguous; it could also mean "doves." I like the idea of applying doves to the nether extremities of a sick man better than I like the idea of applying filthy pigeons to a person's feet but what does it even mean to "apply" pigeons or doves? And how does one apply a bird to a man? And how many birds would it take to draw out those baleful vapors, to effect a cure? I know someone in need of healing. I know a man to whom the application of doves could do a positive good but philosophically he opposes letting doves into his soul so I am offering him pigeons, a basket of preening fantails. Open all your windows! Surround yourself with wings!

TOMORROW

On the febrile edge of consternation,
I hear the howling vowels of aspiration.

GO UNLOVELY TRUMP

(after Waller)

Go, unlovely Trump—
tell the horse-faced Putin
you will play his rump
and bow to his delirium
with expectations of asylum.

Go, unlovely Trump—
dupe of exploitation,
cesspool, human dump—
bid farewell to the irked nation
for your treasons are unwelcome.

Small is the worth
of bluster from facts retired:
I bid you go forth
and suffer, undesired,
and not blush ever, you, the unadmired.

EVERYTHING THE TRAFFIC WILL ALLOW

I.

there's more to life than poontang
but not when you're sixteen and
your hands are full of heavy breasts

at the six o'clock when the sky
and sea turn green, memory
in a pencil skirt walks in

midnight daiquiris, the lingerie
dawn, fishing for kisses: the bugles
call and sound like hounds

II.

baguettes in your pockets, a broomstick
in your jeans, you think of films
with canine themes

the vile politics of charity, the bloody
wonder of the sun, the earworm
still crawling the corridors of your skull

if you're in bed, get out
if you're sitting, stand up
if you're standing, walk around

dogs on leashes patrol the lawn
an eight-year old rubs the belly
of a beached blowfish to make it swell

III.

stop staring at vacancy
accept the surrender value of your bonds
stop raising: go ahead and call

when get up from your stasis
investigate the trash: you may
find a rare Tonto thermos

think, and then think better
consolidate your outstanding warrants
adjudicate your selfishness

if you apply the paste of cohesion to the perforations
in your life, all that is written in the Golden Book
of Dust shall come to pass

IV.

when's the competition?
when's *not* the competition?
every dry peeled apple eventually turns brown

feel, and then feel better
buy something home cooked
forsake the autumn mist

if you're sitting, stand up
if you're standing, walk around
if you're walking around, walk toward something

THE RISING TIDE

The new world is filled with old people with good posture and a disdain for odd postures. I'm just a rental dog myself looking for the guardian of starlight peeing on the expiring parking meters and barking up all the wrong trees.

A decade ago, I was new myself. They put me in the factory next to six-fingered Marie and gave me tea biscuits and sugar water at four-hour intervals. My hands crumpled from the iron work and only a jug-handle yoga pose could unbend me.

And so will it be with my soulless effigy as proleptic ratiocination seeps into itself and disappears, as the polished ego dips directly into dullness, as Ivan Karamazov deliquesces, as Imlac loses his footing, as Lear begins to stink, as Pangloss rises again.

JUST THE FACTS

skin cancer
walks along Zuma beach
at noon

lung cancer
goes down to the City of Hope lobby
to smoke

bile duct cancer
bellies up
to Gill's buffet

bone cancer
rides through Runyon canyon
on a gravity bike

at the hint of a cure
a thin crowd collects
on Figueroa Street

I'LL SPEAK A PROPHECY, THEN I'LL GO

When iodine coffee is promoted by surgeons
when arsonists masquerade as first responders
when phantasmagoric nuns mock the lisps of addicts
when Internet criminals arouse the spleen of gamblers
when the library asylum is redistricted by radio politics
when right-wing parapprofessionals call on extortionists for food
when the rooftop pool is overrun by media beetles
when evangelical bobcats weaponize the electorate
when legal Satans unhook Christ's suspenders
then shall the whorish country bow down to trumperry

WAYS OF SEEING: CARRACCI

I have become interested in Carracci—
Ludovico Carracci, Bolognese
contemporary of Shakespeare
early Baroque artist, cousin
of Agostino and Annibale

whose 1612 painting
Body of Saint Sebastian
Thrown into the Cloaca Maxima
is a masterpiece
of the frozen moment

Sebastian is limp in a sheet supported by
muscular soldiers. His hands hang down,
his eyes are shut. Is he asleep? More likely
unconscious. After all, he is about to be
thrown into the great sewer of Rome

Unless one rotates the image:
then he becomes beautifully
vertical, his dreaming body
like a sleeping bird floating
in warm, soft air

Then the closed fists and flexed
forearms of the executioners
are seen impotently attempting
to hold him down but nothing
human can prevent his rise



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