

TO ZOE LEONARD

(Leonard's poem: I want a president)

Just like you I want a president who has been unemployed
And layed off and has stood on line at the welfare office.
But I also want a president who has experienced rush hour
In front of the bathroom and has groaned with pain
While sprinting to the bus. I want someone who has been
Trapped in the office dress code and forced to have three jobs
To make ends meet. I want a person who has endured burnout.

Just like you I want a president who has been sexually
Harassed, gay bashed, has survived rape, lost a lover to Aids and
Endured a rehab clinic. But I also want a president who has
Lain in a sleepless bed due to the boss and has been spat on
By colleagues. I want a candidate who never thinks that humans
Are sprinting dogs. I want a person whose name never makes it to a
Party invitation and who has tried to commit suicide.

Just like you I want to know why this isn't possible.
I want to know why a president is:
Always a power-hungry boss, never a starving servant,
Always a negative bully, never a positive victim,
Always a screaming star, never a tree whisperer,
Always a lying villain, never a truthful angel.
But I do know, you don't know the answer.

DIEGO – THE DESPERADO

I'm from papercuts cutting out the soul of myself
whose one-dollar-eye mirrors my love of money.
From ancestors with skillful juggler hands
(some homeless as well as hopeless).
And from concertina-loving ears.

I'm from dress-devoted bodies in snippet-look
and wonderfully bright gaudy-fashion.
From pirate-adoring hearts and curse-appreciating
mouths. And from carious-doting teeth.

I'm from a childhood where walls had a mouldy rash
and the roof shed bitter tears. From a home
with pierced curtains, world-weary furniture
and heartbroken plates. And from a fridge fasting;
not just after carnival, but several weeks a month.

I'm from buddy-less birthdays with used toys as gifts.
From raspberry and sunflower pencils colouring
my dream home. And from imaginary dance parties
with teenage girls in black and Opium-perfumed skin.

I'm from Mum's forced vegan meals with low-cost
ingredients and the shop's cheapest snacks.
From Dad's gambling-addicted and book-free mind,
just reading obituaries to find the next breaking site.
And from trustworthy crowbars and slim jims.

I'm from the intensive months I learnt the burglary
Business. From the lucky times fellow folks
helped me out with a hiding place. And from the years
in jail with abstinence syndrome.

HOLLYWOOD'S HIDDEN HISTORY
(In memory of Cari Beauchamp 1949 – 2023)

Cari: the gender archaeologist, history nugget digger and movie script excavator
Finding out half of early Hollywood were women's writings. Her helping hand
To deceased sisters: the Frances Marion and powerhouse biography "*Without lying down*".

Frances: the 200+ screenwriter, wealth and fame director, twice Oscar-winner,
Hollywood's top moneymaker till mid-1930s.
Yet, foot-noted, ankle-anchored, leg-cuffed for decades.

Both: women's rights advocates, single-handedly son-raisers,
Male motto lovers ("*searching for a man to look up to without lying down*")
And career success believers thanks to the helping hands of fellow women.

Golden State births sixty-one years apart, just skipping diamondiferous year.
Los Angeles deaths, a golden fifty years apart. Frances aged 84,
Cari 74. Alas, a decade shorter lifeline – tin-stripped.

CLOUDY COMPLAINT

You see me and my siblings most days of the year.
Still, your cocky ears don't bother listening to us.
We vomit out rain, hail, and snow more often and harder.
We cough up storms, hurricanes, and tornados on a larger scale.
We spit out fog turning into smog, again and again and again.

"Just overplaying everything, only oversizing the whole lot",
You say while hiding your head in your business routine.
As if we were in the mood for playing to the gallery.
We'd rather be ghosts made of cotton on a sunny day or
Fair cumulus clouds foxtrotting in the sky

Than having stiff jobs that stress us out.
And your voyeuristic eyes? Not even our cousin, Miss Sunset
With yellowish face, orange necklace and a blush
Like a lobster can make you figure out that Father Sky is on fire.
You see the beautiful sundown, not the aerosols dancing:

A pandemonium in the air. The particles, blood-thirsty like
Serial killers, feast on your lungs, break your brain to pieces
And tear your heart to bits. And yet, silly you, you
Admire your soon-to-be early death. Alas, you're the perfect
Embodiment of the Walking Dead.

THE CAR TOTEM PRAYERS

Written on the commemorative plaque:

Beloved Car, come into our lives twenty-four-seven
as we remember your Father so dearly
and the divine patent 37435.
Come to us with your power.

Beloved Car, come into our lives twenty-four-seven
as we give thanks for the safe travels
with our relatives and friends.
Come to us with your speed.

Beloved Car, come into our lives twenty-four-seven
as we place our memories of the dead before you,
knowing that your wheels will reunite us one day.
Come to us with your freedom.

Beloved Car, come into our lives twenty-four-seven
since you are the Lord of the living and the dead.
We remember our loved ones with stickers on your metal.
Come to us with your body.

Beloved Car, send into our lives twenty-four-seven
your Holy Spirit to give us hope and comfort
in times of crisis – minor and major.
Come to us with your energy.

In the name of Carl Benz, and the patent,
and the Holy Spirit of 1886 – Amen.

*

Carved into the wood:

We confess that we have turned the car into a status symbol.
Descendants, please forgive us for the climate crisis.

We confess that we have loved the car far too much.
Descendants, please forgive us for the soul-eating smog.

We confess that we have disfigured the Earth with veins of asphalt.
Descendants, please forgive us for the dirt-drinking floods.

We confess that we have put the lives of our families and friends at risk.
Descendants, please forgive us for the orphanage.

We confess that we have disregarded our health by speeding.
Descendants, please forgive us for the emotional and financial burden.

We confess that we have turned lucky number five into a curse.

Descendants, please forgive us for the quintet: blue, red, white, pink, and black.

We confess that we have handed out depression, blood, sorrow, sorrowful blood, and death.
Descendants, please wash away the five colours and our sins and save the Earth.

Not in the name of Carl Benz, not in the patent, not in the Holy Spirit of 1886 – Amen.