

Still Life With Cyclops



Jay Passer

for P.G.

"Woe to thee
that sidles askance
to thine blind eye."

Grateful acknowledgment to the editors of Beatnik Cowboy, Silver Birch Press, and Five Fleas Itchy Poetry, where some of these poems previously appeared.

This collection was composed entirely on an iPhone 7.

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artwork by Odilon Redon: "Le cyclope", c. 1914

Note to Pythagoras

Please
reschedule my birth for Late Jurassic
I'd like to feed a pterodactyl with the infant body
of myself.

I could use a change of pace.

Dinner Plans

I ordered
a new
eye
from Shanghai,
via Amazon-

I got an ear
instead.
Just another
hole in the
head;

scratch sushi
tonight.

How Ya Doin'?

I've been better
but I've been a lot worse-
I'll take the better

I'm a Mural

in a shoebox, mouse hole
the interior of a photon

charge, mass, spin
as per commission

I'm the paint job on a space shuttle
orbiting the planet

What the Hell Happened

I took out the trash
I took off my glasses
I took down my shorts
I took to my bed
before I realized
I forgot to feed the cat
which might explain why my pillow's torn to bits

Rereading Kafka at Age 58

I don't recommend it.

I Need to Speak With the Person in Charge

You can't audit the dead
or bring back treasure excavated from dreams.

What you can do
is quit putting me on hold.

Cyclops

Even with only one eye
I'm gazing at the ladies
strutting in the sunlight, ignorant of my existence
as if I were a post
a power pole
or a tree like any other tree lining the sidewalk
but I can't complain
the doctor said the surgery went well, I can return to
forging thunderbolts
in no time.

Privileged

My glasses broke, so I donned my prescription Ray-Bans.
I used to be half-blind; now I'm just in the dark.

3 People Annually

are killed by falling coconuts
so stick out your tongue
you might get lucky

Cookout on Mont Sainte-Victoire

I met with Picasso, Gris, Braque and Mondrian;
even Modigliani dropped by for s'mores.

Then, certain that the Surrealists had all committed suicide,
we graciously thanked Monsieur Cézanne for setting the table.

The Oracle

I throw the coins
As per instructions
It's my turn
In audience of
A serpentine face
Atop belly-dancer body
I ask the current
Woman I'm seeing
Is this the end
Or have we just met?
Just pay attention
To the Oracle, she says
The snake turns to an ox
To a tiger then a rooster
Quite effortlessly and
Without panoply
Hands on the table
Manipulating yarrow stalks
It's quiet suddenly
Time for the Oracle
Time for four horsemen
For rabbit-footed swine
And rat-headed monkeys
Fu, she declares, Return;
The time of darkness is past
Thunder in the earth
Movement is spontaneous
No blame: this
Cerberus in sheepskin
Has spoken

In tongues of dragonfly
Okay, thanks for asking
I turn to my lover
I'm thinking maybe sushi
Order an Uber will ya?

Torah

It's a book
written by a human being
with 70 faces.
And even when all is good
God gets pissed off
He regrets making us in the first place.
Rabbis run around arguing, pointing fingers and publishing theories.
Meanwhile the jihad is in full swing
and not one animal is ritually sacrificed anymore.
Instead, multitude of millions are butchered daily
to keep people in line at McDonald's
and to mollify their psychotic children with Happy Meals.
Amidst weekly readings, cryptic messages, and countless interpretations
the congregation ignores kosher practices.
They vape in the sanctuary
and want bacon on their double cheeseburgers.

The Ark

When I was 5, we used to get gas at the ARCO station. There was a promotion where pairs of plastic animal toys were distributed to customers with little kids. The animals were supposed to represent Noah's passengers on the Ark. "But you have to buy the Ark," my father didn't fail to point out. "Do you have to buy Noah?" I asked. My father looked at me. "Don't get smart," he said. Nobody mentioned Noah's wife.

(I had to Google her. Naamaah. In the promotional description, the couple is referred to as "Mr and Mrs Noah".)

It took a fossil-fuel company, dismissively destroying the environment, to reiterate the grief of a regretful God, promoting the biblical event as a plastic toy play set for children.

Full vintage collections are available on eBay for as low as \$65.

The Genius

is just a stickler for details.

An aardvark loose in a candy shop prior to the Apocalypse.

It's poor form, elevating objective reality to high pedestals.

Ant colonies,
the Queen's seamstress,
moon expeditions,
stars jolted off axes,

Vincent's ear removed with a switchblade in the blinding Arles sunshine.

Hey You

bury me with ripe lemon, a pair of tweezers,
and your photo in a gilt-edged frame.

I'm done trying to outsmart
the next hundred years of human beings.

Minimalism

The less I have to lose,
the more I want to keep it that way.

New to Basil

first job
in the City
as soda jerk,
operating the
ice cream scoop
to the croon
of Nancy Sinatra,
high-stepping
on Clement St,
first hard licks,
ballet studios
Irish pubs
comedy clubs
Chinese ducks,
on 12th Ave by
Park Presidio:
Pizza My Heart
after night shift
rounds of suds
for a hot slice,
the first taste
of basil-pesto,
tomato and feta
ultra-thin crust
heavenly west
of North Beach,
just take the turn
at Coit Tower
skyward.

Portrait

Good night

Be well

I'll paint the mouth smiling

And the eyes dancing

On the face of

First thing tomorrow morning

There Is None

Bullshit all you want
We're alone on this planet
That's right, you and me
And mom and dad
Include sister and bro
Lover, scapegoat
Mr and Mrs Noah
And all the pairs of animals
Yet to be slaughtered
Hundred billion futures gone
Shat into the sewers
The pretty little birds too
Not a flower left either
It's a thing
A scorched-earth thing
Why bother with catastrophic floods
Just shut the lights off for the night
Dr Death
Beckoning us to
Come inside
It's a thing
A porn thing
A snuff thing

The Bewitched

Her hands, elegant as the wings of a swan-
her eyes, cold and sharp as flint.

She smiled so sweetly that I left the house, shot an eagle,
and made feather consommé.

Portrait of a Sociopath Unleashed on Pico Blvd

at Walgreen's
I have needs,
reading glasses
African soap
Halloween candy
and certain
medications-
I told them
back at the
facility:
the worries
are following me
like black ink
spilt from a
harpooned
squid,
but
he wasn't a man,
he was The Man,
and he looked
at me funny
so funny
I saw my
funny face
gleaming,
reflected off
the shiny badge
of Your Officer;

welcome to
Shangri-La
on Pico and
Robertson
my Arcadia
amidst traffic
strangleholds,
freedom's
sibilant siren
and donut shop
copy shop
smoke shop
surf shop
and lingerie,
liquor store,
Rx oasis and
synagogue
kabobs,
fitness tattoo,
gotta be a
racetrack some-
where, I can
smell the hors-
d'oeuvres,
horse-meat,
and tender,
amputated
hands of jockeys
on the grill
smoking,
trifecta paid out
in galleons
and fission
submarines-

undersea storm
densifying:
I'm scattered
and stumble,
I have needs
beyond the
angelic;
Chihuahua girl
staring,
pocket Pekingese,
tiny tongue lolling,
brain screaming
My kingdom
for a lollipop!
for a script!
beatific ventricle,
cartwheeling
through
rush-hour
gridlock and
drop-cloths
of nightfall...
clownishly
eschewed
back at the
ward:
my bar of
African soap
replaced by
thimblefuls
of salt,
knowing nurses
so loving at the
bath,

swishing away
quietly, human
nocturnes
in contrast to
starched sheets
ammoniac bleach
and tinny TV
the gurney
the heavy restraints
the sparkling cuffs
the suffocated
heart

Old Bones Singing

old bones singing a factory song of deliverance
meat-packer ribs and slow odes to vulturous skies
railroad sans passengers, buffalo exempt...
old bones singing sad blues of extinction.

Portrait 2

quarantine must be lonely
bear with it for the moment
keep it close if
only to brighten
the path
the day we recover our senses
steadily walking away
as one
in infinite return

Watching You Sleep

I've seen
Planes smash into skyscrapers
Forest fires in snowfall
Men and women
Overdosing and convulsed in death
And like clockwork
The very next day,
Sky bluer than newborn eyes
Cats napping
Birds alighting
But nothing
Compares to this
Brushing back a loose
Lock of hair
As morning radiates
Upon the face of
My love



Jay Passer is the author of 14 collections of poetry and prose. His work has appeared in online and print publications worldwide since 1988. A native of San Francisco, he currently resides in Venice, California.