



DEAR
LEADER

DAMIAN
ROGERS

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*For the ones
yet to come*

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Say oh leader of the lost
promise me the company
of the dark, oh the passing
smell, the shimmer of evil oh
it grows like a snake
moves like the strongest
most beautiful dream in the world

– Joanne Kyger

ONE

FROM THE WINDOWS THE ALLEY

Some days
I'm not on.
I hide inside
the city.
Someday I'll say
thank you
for your invitation
to come see
the pilot whales
skim the coast
of Cape Breton.
Don't tempt me.
I'm working
this summer
on inventing
the life I am
already living.
It takes practice
to see myself
without a mirror.
The ivy leaps over
the fence.
Next year
will be different.

THE NEW MONUMENTS

I was born with the head of an owl and the eyes of a cat.

The ninth abandoned palace of the marquise was like a velvet-lined
meth lab.

I learned later she wasn't real royalty, just an out-of-work actress.

I'm not used to living with so little sleep.

Sleep is what keeps me from seeing things straight.

I don't want to go on forever, exactly like this, always a Damian.

Where is the better party you are going to now?

Maybe there will be no grandchildren playing in the long grass.

If you insist on standing up there, at least remove that marble hat.

THE COMING SIXTH WORLD OF CONSCIOUSNESS

When he was 38 years old, he found himself
in a stranger's basement confronted by a calendar
that stopped dead on the day he was born.

When he was full grown, he bought snow
tires, was tender to houseplants, sang
to his son about apples all afternoon.

Many years ago, he climbed to the top
of an important Mexican pyramid
that is now closed to tourists.

He had almost no interest in gods, thinking
their existence beside the point. Though he loved
the desert, he had no real plans to live there.

Let's keep wasting our lives and burn
our trash as we go. Some say you don't miss
your water until your well runs dry, but I bet

there's always something else to drink,
even if it's dust. All this chatter about how to be
a man, as if there were some alternative.

Everything we've done is for the best.
Consider the cosmology of Cracker Jack.
The corn was here before you.

TURN YOUR WINDOWS ON

Fill the clawfoot with too much hot water.

Unscrew the light bulbs they say will kill us.

Open the refrigerator and empty its contents into the stove.

Slice eye slits into a quince and hang her head up to dry.

Wallpaper the bedroom with the funny pages.

Lock your hair up in pink plastic curlers and learn to swing a
rolling pin.

Invite the poorly dressed representatives of boring religions in for a
game of darts.

Blow out your speakers playing various versions of 'Whiskey in the Jar.'

Buy a condemned movie theatre in Benton Harbor with your credit card.

Rename your pets after the neighbours and call them in for dinner
from the porch.

Replace your curtains with tinfoil to trap the light inside.

MINOR REGIONAL NOVEL

I walked to the corner vegetable store
with its glorious bounty and bottled tea.
I walked past the post office twice forgetting to send
that package on my desk to a new friend.
I haven't listened to a record in weeks.
I'm worried I've made too many mistakes.
I wish I'd bought that book of Li Po poems I didn't buy.
Tomorrow I will have croissants and coffee
and learn the names of the lucky winners.
Have you talked to the doctor? The paperwork
is unfinished. You didn't fill the forms out right.
When I interviewed André, he was painting a mask
from memory. When he finished, his face was green
and he wore a ceremonial cape with an elfin hood.
People are partying down the street in defiance of spring snow.
Everything you're afraid will happen already has.

ODE TO A ROLLING BLACKOUT

Teachers in Oklahoma seek to stop students
from discovering the gateway of digital drugs.

We're all having a hard time, but some problems
are preferable to others: the problems of the very rich,

for example. Some swear the pile is the only known
enemy of the hole. O pretty girls tripping on night,

enjoy this next round, as your pupils pour out
past last call. One of you will soon stop caring

for your hair and your delicates will start to sour.
You will pick your teeth clean with your coke nail.

Now you crackle like a coal, lips slick with petroleum.
Little pots of hot pink clink like crystal as you travel

down the black tube toward morning. Did you kiss
the devil's ass in the alley? Please, no more questions.