

V.B. Price

A CHRISTMAS DREAM

for Vincent Leonard Price, Jr., 1911-1993

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“...to enter into death with open eyes.”
“...to extend the human heart to life’s full measure.”

–Marguerite Yourcenar

Sinatra and Bing a-caroling,
a Hollywood December rain,
kid lights glazed
through clerestories in the sugared fog

–and you, ol’ boy, just there,
peaking out behind a Eucalyptus tree,
a rude Virgil

grinning with an infant’s squint of glee,
telling us to come along,
to pretend that we are dead, like you,
and go around the world as if we had no life to lose,

as if we’d lost it all already,
all that we adored, but had
one last chance to see it, timelessly,

for as long as we could feel it.
And so you take me by the hand
and tell me stories through the night.
We go to Rome, bathe our feet in cold white wine,

smooth the Venus of Cirene’s holy slopes,

fish the coast off Malibu,
watch ourselves together in Paris window panes,

light sweet smokes in Tijuana bars.
Then at London you veer off
and I go home, running through the bosque in the Spring,
past Jemez ponds, Los Chavez midnights and their stars, and come

to booths in old cafes and talking tables,
and, to you,
friends of my heart,

each one,
your names like breath
keeping me calm and wide awake,
even when pretending in his final game.

I can’t fake it, though, for long
playing that I’m dead. Love without desire
is pure fun for you, old man, mortal work for me.

But just at the edge of sleep, as I awake,
you, yourself, your little soul,
peaks out again behind the tree,
and as I reach for you, you move,

as always, out of reach,
and I feel you wink and smile and wave me off
as you drop a postcard from Ravenna in the sand;

in your sculptured hand it reads:
“Dear Boy,
Morpheus, divine god,
had me for a while.

But how clear I’ve been
since I awoke last week from life.
You know how I am, light as ever, always giving late advice.

It’s all about your open eyes. Just live
as if you were long gone like me,

say yes and yes and yes again, say wholly yes,
as if each moment were

the sweetest memory of your life.

When all
is said and done, dear boy,
the duty

gods like best
is fun.
love, Dad”

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“May it please the One who perchance is to expand the human heart to life’s full measure.”—inscribed on the grave marker of Marguerite Yourcenar, 1903-1987, author of *Memoirs of Hadrian*.

“Little soul, gentle and drifting....one moment still, let us gaze together on these familiar shores, on these objects which doubtless we shall not see again....Let us try, if we can, to enter into death with open eyes.”—from the final paragraph of the *Memoirs of Hadrian*.

—with special gratitude to Angelique Cook Wilcox who took the journey