

V.B. Price

From

NINE ELEVEN:

IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME:

NOTHING WILL EVER BE THE SAME

[12 September 2001 to 22 September 2001]

12 September 2001

We're lucky not to be one of them yet,
the vaporized,
who became
atmospheric,
their fifteen seconds of fame
spread like volcanic dust around the globe,
blocking reflection;
we've always been lucky.
Even now we have death
with our pleasures,
death to make the customers
happier to buy great quilts, log hammocks,
polar tech pouches, joy stick distractions.
But we know
what it means.
"Death plucks my ear
and says, 'Live,
I am coming,'" Virgil wrote
turning his face from the porno squeals
of the killing fields
of the circus.
Death, you are here already,
our only way out,
our worst possible fear,
fast or slow, a sudden
closure, cauterizing life,
a long, thoughtful
agony that can't
be withstood for a second,
ripped from sunshine and our holy toys,
like arms torn off in a combine.

13 September 2001

It's always different,
now more than always.
The birds are the same,
but we've
mutated,
primates with venomous teeth,
thoughts like actual poison.
Our women don't mind
"collateral damage,"
"so heinous was the crime."
Our men like the idea
of anonymous slaughter.
We've used up the horror words.
We haven't run out of life, but we have
run out of our snotty disdain
for sweet illusions.
Now we're like everyone else,
caught between gallantry,
knee quaking, and tears
that no matter what
won't come loose.

14 September 2001

The bullies, the bigots,
the monkeys insane
with fear, ennobled
by its only
known over-the-counter
antidote – rage.
The mob thinkers,
the ruthless who
follow their own
rules, the thugs
in knight's clothing,
the self-righteous
sure as guillotines
are sure of gravity,
those with feasible morality,
who war has given
permission to abandon
with menacing calm
all distinction,
–do not join them, do not join them,
do not join them.

15 September 2001

The attacker slips open
the bedroom window
puts a knife to his throat
and bleeds him like a pig;
his lover thinks
the attacker was from
the Others. Enraged,
she kills an Other
at random,
as if an eye for an eye
meant any eye
for his eye;
while the first
attacker still finds
other throats to bleed.
And from the ranks of the Others
another lover arises
who becomes another attacker;
so now there are two, and soon
more, many more,
and more. And you,
the first one to be bled in bed, the first
innocent, remains
forever dead, and your
lover remains like a black pit
full of razor wire
and famished snakes
eating each other,
till nothing is left
but razors.

16 September 2001

Is it true
that anyone's cruelty
is wrong,
that wrong means
worthless results?
Why is it?
Because what works
feels like the right key
for a lock that has to be opened.
Cruelty jams all locks,
so nothing can close
forever.

16 September 2001

Horror abates.
Scars as scars remain.
Bullies find pulpits
for finery and shame.
The dead line up.
They lay no blame.
In death they can see
what we never see.
In death they cry out
stay alive,
stay alive,
“you must
love one another
or die.”

16 September 2001

The Metamorphosis
has reached a final beginning.
We can't tell if your minds
will fuse into anvils,
if we'll see ourselves
in downtown windows
young and fresh and loving again,
so hopeful and strong
we simply refuse
to dishonor ourselves
rooting in shit for something to hate,
thinking we're nothing more
than gore in the making.

17 September 2001

Humbled by Auden's view of us
as Eros and as Dust,
I have no graceful phrases;
my lyre is out of tune
dropped from a cradle
into a bog.

Auden's right.

We must choose between canyons of corpses
and patient, heartbreaking,
endlessly abrading give and take,
the polishing, slow motion torture
to be with the world
and each other
as lovers are
laughter loving,
in fathomless complicity
so all complaint
is dust
on the mirror of erotic trust.

19 September 2001

The hopeless and the meaningless:
killers that burst out of bright
blue mornings into our lives
like jet fuel flying through bodies
of buildings like germs fly
through noses and mouths
and explode into vast corruptions
of mental fatigue.
Hope and meaning?
How do we find them?
In calm meadows and mantras?
Is misery reduced
to invisibility
any less miserable to those
for whom it is huge?
Whistling in the Valley of Death
isn't hope, anymore
than fighting back is optimistic.
Defense is aggression;
it's never contained.
We have to do something
everyone screams, as they light
the fuse in their shoes
Sand cover their ears with their hands.

20 September 2001

Depression
itches through
the folds of your life,
a yeast in sweat.
Escape!
Escape!
Where to?
Where to?
Into some store of fraudulent plenty?
The quilts and shawls
of log cabin, catalogue lives
grand logo salmon, and Fed Ex pies?
What would you choose:
Morphine or the sublime
last communion with pain,
the fast guide
to the open border
not long away?
Or how about eggs and bacon
and a easy day at the sea?

21 September 2001

He's been reduced
to two parts of himself:
the cock-eyed
flatterer of fate,
and the intellectual sniper
sighting down the barrel,
not quite wide awake,
a half full guy, half empty
locked in the trunk of a junk truck,
an accurate skeptic,
a man
with his finger
on the filament
tied to the hair trigger
of the future
to detect
the slightest
wobble,
tremble,
tautness
on the verge of a plummeting
explosion
in the minds of those who've awakened
to their exclusion
from the world,
to what the powerful
drunk minds
consider good and true.

22 September 2001

We are falling out of the world
as we know it
like people jumping from fire
a hundred floors up,
free falling with more
hope in the space between fire
and the mush of their fatal thuds
than just waiting to be
cooked up
like overdressed chops.
You just
have to do something
every one says,
anything really, anything
but wait for the end,
helplessly frozen.
Jump,
it's a short term solution,
like dropping bombs,
suicidal too,
in the long run,
but perhaps
the only and happiest
thing to do
when nothing's to be done.

23 September 2001

Only one safe place
exists any more,
but let's
not call it mind,
though it does
attract the euphoric:
the uninhibited, mutual
sexual confession;
reading and writing
safe in your study at 3:30 a.m.;
on the road for breakfast at dawn
in a town you can't pronounce.
Such images
distill into a peace
that irritates
our fears so much
they try,
like acid moves down hill,
to turn safety
into vulnerability,
pleasure into
weak escape,
peace into a target
for all
images of terror.
Moving targets
are harder to hit.
Proliferate
fast; profusion,
sly and nimble,
is a mirrored maze
the monsters
can't quite,
slathering and distracted,
figure out in time
to filet you.