

GAIL KING



**TAKE YOUR WAR
AND
GO TO HELL**

TAKE YOUR WAR AND GO TO HELL

by Gail King

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TAKE YOUR WAR AND GO TO HELL 11/9/02

Hundreds of thousands march in Florence
to stop a crazy man who wants war
we laugh again about Belushi and Aykroyd
but our taxes pay for bombs
November haze over the vineyards and Mount
 Jackson
the road along a river that history could have
 made Russian
they would not have liked this climate
too cheerful in California even in the dead of
 winter
here where heroes die a sudden crazy death
and villains mask as the guy next door

kept awake by
freight train winds
and a thousand frogs

night and the trees
that trigger motion detectors
on and off
like the frogs
who are suddenly inexplicably silent

then on they go again
in their joie de vivre

water from the sky
Oh My

and so we wait
this winter storm
hoping the blossoms
are not thereby depleted
before sun
regains dominance

in the morning
a comet
or a moon that hides face
behind clouds
that lie down
cats by the log splitter

a neighbor up early
stokes the fire
while I prepare for the happy voices
the community of the bus ride
a contentment that we know each other

and in those mornings, everyone
part of a synergy
a perfection in time
and place
and motion

STUBBORN

we argue through it
the winter will be heavy
the summer too hot
sky too blue
harvest too sparse
we know we are many
trying to make it
dark clouds appear

this little house warm enough
on a very dark street
trees could fall
hill could slide
children imagine earthquakes
having never felt one
sky falling

I refuse to succumb
stubborn
can't spell
memory failing

cat balances
the peaked roof over a fence line
with four feet to manage
two far behind his head
the edge of no concern
knows when a bird is too fast or clever

changes in the air
I allow an artichoke to flower
where a bee struggles for pollen
unending work to control or not continues
the tightrope

balance poles set
old rockin' chair's got me
makes more sense
than it once did

as if the kettle might boil
another evening by the fire
brass lamps and copper kettle
new cast iron stove
turns on with a click

we no longer work for a living
now forced to live for a living
still tend a little garden
try to tidy when someone might notice
on my own none of this would matter much

all in a day's work used to mean a lot of work
now work is how one entertains the day
later on it could mean just getting out of a
chair
plan ahead they say
make sure your money lasts

handy to have money
but sometimes it also gets in the way
holding on I do little
credit myself for removing things
from my refrigerator door

somehow again the miraculous overlooked
like the copper pot that reflects the light
well used it asks us to forget the present
for now there is no intent to boil
but to hold space and be beautiful

BLUSTER

a lot of bluster all around
windy afternoons and storms at the capitol
the white house
and on the hill
clamor and calamity
spies in the oval

sudden heat wave
dries wild stalks on narrow path
gold streamers at the party

thin bamboo bends in breezes
rain's return has us moving furniture
neighbors culling the blackberry
the old bay that straddled the line
uprooted
pushed and pulled on either side
finally gives way

ANOTHER MARCH

I was out in the just before it rains rain
the sky had turned a difficult grey
a sound far off
trees rustling a river or
was it really raining somewhere
having gathered spent camellia
red and brown dried and wet
someone's garden gold
wild onion to pull absent bees
wait this still moment
too precious to miss

WHITE CAMELLIAS

white camellias
come out at once
winter's rain keeps them white

so quick in sun to brown
I have used a bamboo pole
to strike them from the bush
intolerant of their waning

though the river swells and threatens
I can only watch from the door
perhaps a hundred or more
in brilliant bloom
pure white in the pounding rain

HARD

It hit me not so very hard
not hard like the death of Lennon or Hendrix
not like Bowie or Prince
not like Elvis or Michael
but it hit hard
when I heard Chuck Berry died

did I remember his songs
or just the way he danced across the stage
riding his guitar

hard like the death of real rock and roll
new bands incomprehensible
from an unknown America

not my America
not my President
there have been few
that felt like my President
not Nixon not Johnson not Bush
not Baby Bush not Ronny
is this even my world anymore
without Chuck?

hey conductor you must slow down
please let me off this bus!

I

the child walks backward
viewing her little shadow
just past noon
the shadow waves when she waves
the shadow also holds a cracker
she doesn't find it strange

II

how we come to the self
if in the mirror
or just by looking down

III

She like an old Russian peasant
bulky socks on thick legs,
does not want to smile much
life has gone on and on
what does it all matter now
the difficulties of just leaving a chair
a self grows tired of the hassle

IV

the child expects applause
for all her little performances
because it is all so wonderful
singing just happens

V

I am in the middle
do what I want
not planning any big hikes
not going to push it
saving my knees
letting the garden go jungle on me
becoming a cat lady

BETWEEN STORMS

at the Capitol
across the continent
a mad man President has a press conference
they are calling it a hurricane
likewise in California
roads flood highways close dams almost burst
LA Big Sur 5 and 50 Old Caz Road
losing the war on climate change

but today things clear
a chance to drive and be witness
daffodils and plum blossoms
wild stand of acacia in bloom
the grand view from Grand View

between storms
the world returns to its beauty
minor threats of potholes and people

in my capsule I am perfectly content for now
the President a silly old man with a monkey mind
the dam stayed put
the telephone man only took three weeks
but he came with his bucket and fixed my phone

out the window cats and dogs and kids on bikes
still knowing more troubles ahead

my summer vacation is spent
avoiding everyone else's summer vacation
except for the fireworks that never disappoint
from the chair on the deck
I watch the birds that populate the struggling
 fir
the mating of hummingbirds and butterflies on
 the so named bush
somewhere else people with giant blow up
 flamingos and turtles
jockey for parking and in the aisles of the only
 grocery store
I am just happy for Google and spell check
the world is my oyster
last night the planet Mars and a crescent moon
the outdoor cats and the indoor cats
the ones who'll eat anything and the ones who
 pick and choose
there is a river close by that I mostly visit
 when no one else does
I can hear the sirens and cycles and know there
 is much a foot
I don't crave it now like I once did
when young a summer required a beach full of
 others
now when a day lays out in the long version we
 let it
when it speeds ahead we hold on
there is the fast and slow of busy or not
summer just give me a breeze and we're good

February 2001, 2021

just as I think of the song
here comes the rain again
though spoiled by winter sun
the gas bill does not show it
I think of other winters
his brother planted poppies and built a deck
I enjoy the new high deck
January sun after surgery
an azalea then and now a white one
blooms February in the kitchen
he enjoys something in a bowl
between work and reading
I stare at our view
neighbor's houses out each window
the redwood hills
camellias
pink glory tree blooming again

we put it off and put it off
our concerns come first
the worries of the world
easy to share
thoughts of art come slow
must be authentic
must have played the hermit monk
danced before kings
crawled on our bellies
why so late to the party
unwilling to expose
so sorry when nothing comes

once I stood at the same window
a rainy day on this street
fifty years earlier
today's rain brings me there again
I am still that girl

he found a toy from his childhood
in his ex-wife's attic
he relives being Hopalong Cassidy

the cat licks my socks
quietly rubs my feet

grandson will ride many miles for an X-box
his father will ride with him
a good father who has no idea
how much this new baby
will be his job

jealous again of her flowering quince
but her bright orange lilies
must keep her awake at night

CLOUD

cloud the shape of Greenland
above the hills
makes a statement
we move through
a neighborhood of flags
where crows argue in the evergreen
and cats nap forgetting
the swallowtails that bother the bush
there was a moment when you pointed
and said the word
thus the beginning of my broad exploration
a world a universe
atom andromeda

JULY

trying so hard to celebrate
we imagine the perfect barbeque
many side dishes
lots of color
but really the dish is so so
the chips need a dip
and the cheese stands alone

neighbors secluded by their sets
watching the ships come in
deep rumble from space
she's back watching Schwarzenegger
on another mission to
I forget what
he's only half human
but we knew this

I'm just ready for bed
after lounging all day on the back forty
truthfully just a little lot

THE SORROWS OF SPRING
for Joanne Kyger

after rain
the bright nectarine blossoms
such a pleasure at the rear windows last week
now spent and dull

I am left to the chore of pulling wild onion
so loved by the bees
released from softened silt

but they want to be everywhere
each calling me to strike a balance
where they fight for dominance

too the sorrow
of a long life now over
a friend and good spirit
no longer dreams her life

ANOTHER NOVEMBER

I say hello to the wet days
California goes from no rain to rain
I find a big red and white umbrella
to place over the chair on the porch
that the cat has come to love
through warm Autumn evenings
I check the downspouts

the maples still in their glory
new shoots and sprouts all around
but we linger in our beds
find ourselves napping in the daytime
cat by the fire
belly exposed
more excuses to stay home
avoid wet roads
hope for one or two still days
when the sun acts the way we remember

perhaps these bright days have done their damage
and this is time to repair

my dermatologist says
it's years of sun
my ophthalmologist says
it's years of sun
I don't care
I can't get myself to behave
for the good of my eyes and skin

close eyes face the sunlight
explore an inner world of color
on my happy nerves that see without seeing

Gail King was an active participant in the mimeo revolution of the 60s and 70s as publisher of Doris Green Editions. She is the author of two collections of poetry, Boxes & Chairs (What Leaf Press) and Hello Life (Nualláin House, Publishers). She live in Monte Rio along the Russian River.