

ALLEN HAD EXCUSED HIMSELF FROM VIOLENCE SINCE I WAS A LITTLE BOY

Edmund Berrigan



Everyone went to class as if nothing was happening, and I sat there watching. I've been wondering how I can. I've been dodging muggers and the streets parted. The extreme loneliness never goes away, which is why I don't care about your algorithms. I saw you breathing... here's an ad for oxygen. I'm so sorry that you were promoted to VP. You don't have to sell yourself at every stage, there's value to private experience, like with Robert Johnson. I did like the adorable man who said "don't tell me the news" so I've been thinking about getting a cat for five years. I've been thinking about getting a new job for twenty five years. I've been thinking about dying since I was a teenager. Then I kept working, and am still working. He also wanted to know a little bit, so we told him every aspect of life is political.

I've been wondering how the world can keep going while there is a war happening since I was something that died a long, long time ago, and Bob said he was born again in a hotel room while on tour. Mom put on an owl mask, so the universe told me, and the universe is named "Nancy." There was no public memorial, the poets did not gather, you did not become a meme, your death is not trending, I didn't see an obituary, no one held you in their arms with blood and tears flowing down their faces. The times we did the Times crossword puzzle in the Irish bar at lunchtime were finite. Anselm said that the war raged on, and Tom sang that he was born in a taxi cab, and Sam sang that he was born in a little tent. Vlad and Tenaya cooked a chicken with a can of beer. It was very motherly. Allen had excused himself from violence since I was a little

boy. I've been wondering since I was in High School why I'm not more political while noting that "Everything is finite", and I've heard other sorrowful sounds, and I've been told so-and-so is dead many times, and I've heard others be told. I've seen them packing to travel, and I've been packing to travel.

Our company used to be visited, but he couldn't hear anything. Daisy called out "Funny looking" from across First Avenue. In the fog, I passed a woman on the street, who mumbled something with a threat to kill me, but instead she wrote a letter, and I was informed that I had received a NYFA grant. "It was just a lot of special effects," Karen said. I told Sarrah I had fantasies about losing an arm, and trying to figure out how I would keep playing guitar. Because I am working, but also because I am a dog. Sometimes I find myself there, and then it started out public, but then it went private, and then it was bought by a mega-company, and our American staff was down-sized — they're very tiny now — and work was outsourced to affiliates in Mumbai and Ukraine, but then Ukraine was invaded by Russia, so they stopped working for a week, and my manuscript was rejected, and they told me that they had thoughtfully decided that it wasn't as good as my first book. "I smell him in my bed."

Anselm bought *Street Legal* on vinyl and then dubbed me Alcohol. "Why don't you mind your own business, Alcohol?" said Ian. Fine, Ian, I fight soldiers, and there is doubt that Ukraine can win, and my taxes turn into weapons, and I also send them copy edits for pharmaceutical ads, and ask them to adjust the size of superscript characters that look off. We paid for the bombs, though no one had asked if we would ... it's a given. The money is extracted under penalty of imprisonment, some taken out of each check, and the money isn't touched, it just moves, electricity into electricity, transferred into bombs, and trained experts launched a Theremin — pronounced paint strokes in her husbands' portraits. After the storm, Elisa motioned towards the trees down the hill and said, "I want to see what happened." Mustafa smacked me lightly on the head and said "You a disser," because I just wanted to play cards with the girls and not help him self-aggrandize. The bombs are not named Nancy, and the universe is not a protest.

I never go to protests, often. Red Cloud was a survivor who stopped fighting. I think I'll name my next cat Anna Karenina. I think I'll name my next cat Psycho Kitty. Aluminum versus Aluminium to the Death. I think I'll name my next cat barbed wire cement enclosure bordered by mines where we bomb only the bad ones while the rest slowly starve. If I live and read poems, I am a bad person with survivor guilt. Brendan dressed up as a suspicious package for Dustin's Halloween party. I wore a Dalmatian mask. Jim drew a cartoon of himself in a bunny costume. On. That was in the past. No one invaded our party and cut us down.

Before that, Doug thought the protesters on St Mark's Place were being stupid and they didn't understand the issue. He asked Hamed why he protested with them and he joyfully said because in this country you can. I could easily not have known I was underground, but the worms will have a shorter distance to travel. I have to go invade the thesaurus, I have to go invade the New York School, I have to go invade the United States. I think I'll name my next cat ho ho ho caribou or at least Cassette Copy. Anne danced to the record while arranging the area for a lecture. It said, "We'll offer no reward when our false idols fall, and cruel death surrenders." The widow told me, "Your task is to loom larger than your limitations." A young gentleman offered to slit the throat of the dog I was walking. An arm reached through the subway window and tried to grab the souvenir batting helmet off of Anselm's head, but Megan smacked the arm away. Rosebud asked me to say hi to my old man, who'd been dead for decades. "Geez, I haven't seen him in ages," she said.

Allen left dinner because Hunter had locked himself in a hotel room and would only speak to Catullus, your vain fears of Andy Warhol smiling, and replacing all your freedoms of taste and discovery with High School. Iraq invaded Kuwait and the US invaded something to project menacingly that he wanted to see the inside of my skull. Later he told me that he wanted to publish my next book as part of a CIA program to enlighten the populous. A letter of reprimand informed me that I was endangering purveyors of Alcohol and I just stood there, stoned, and I kept walking, while I was running, and my wounds were a fountain of blood that I and my friends drank from. [REDACTED] An anonymous man offered to stab me if I didn't give some him money at Astor Place, and terrified, I gave him some. Jason said, "Why didn't you tell me?" after my naive idiocy surprised him.

In a letter, I was told that WWF wrestling was fake, and I was disappointed that yet another illusion was being shattered. Adam listened at the door after my friend continued to exist, but he couldn't hear us. The funny thing about clarity is that I've been wondering how long I can go without sheltering during a sand storm. Dad died a decade before the internet began lying and provoking all of my friends from every generation. Before that, lies had to be printed on dead trees, murdered by men in the gayest of outfits. The former Bay Area reporter who moved to Emily said "It's not fair, I Newark." Everyone still went to class as if nothing was happening, and I sat there watching them. It didn't matter that everyone thought they were God, and that God was really funny.

✎ Edmund Berrigan is the author of *More Gone from City Lights* in 2019. He is co-editor with Anselm Berrigan, Alice Notley, and Nick Sturm of *Get the Money (Collected Prose 1961-1983)* by Ted Berrigan (City Lights, 2022).

1080PRESS is a poetry press located
in Kingston, New York.

