

Anne Ardolino

I started writing this poem many years ago—in fact, I keep adding to it as things happen. It was done as a protest against police brutality. In particular, I was left permanently enraged after my friend Clayton Patterson was nearly beaten to death by an out-of-control policeman. (And what was Clayton’s crime? Videotaping a fire). Meanwhile, he was not in anyone’s way, nor had he broken any laws. Apparently, this policeman was angry at Clayton over the videos he had taken of the Tompkins Square police riots. And so, this poem is dedicated to each and every ROGUE police officer who ever existed—in this or any other lifetime.

Suck Death

Suck Death,
Bite down hard on it,
Break your fucking teeth on it,
Choke on it
As it slides down your gullet
Into your belly,
Then out through your blood strings,
To every part of your existence,
And may tiny little droplets of it,
Ooze from your pores,
Making your skin
Shine with the grease.
SUCK DEATH YOU FUCKING PIGS.
Fuhrman the vermin,
Volpe the plunger,
Michael Dowd and his sleazy crowd
Should not be allowed
To step on the ground.
We should construct giant toilets.
We should have public flushings.
And take that thin blue line,
Sharpen it to a fine
Point,
And then stick it where the sun don’t shine.

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Clayton’s Lower East Side Sideshow

Why do they do it?
Call him?
Perhaps
because he comes.
He’s had his ears pierced by sirens
his skull cracked
by the wooden dildo of an impotent police officer,
his teeth broken from the bone,
and both of his eyes blackened
(for seeing the truth).
Balancing on the tips of the toes of madmen,
he’s run with them past the devil,
just to get there in time.
Meanwhile,
take it from me,
no one believes they’ll be part of this odd theater,
the decision only made
during the most lonely,
last minute hour,
when it finally occurs to them
they want the tragedy documented after all,
their own “syllable of recorded time”
recorded.
And is he
an emotional pawnbroker?
The jury’s still out on that one.

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No Room

(Poem to Clayton Patterson)

Some hapless creature
was murdered at four this morning
I heard it flash orange across the sky
as the screams echoed widely
over the first arch of Dawn,
and I understood
it
 was
 already
 too
 late.

Even so,
out of respect,
I would have collected the bones,
put flowers over the eyes,
but they'd have never fit in my basket
you remember the one
I made for my dreams,
woven from the threads of unexplainable beauty
I found being neglected
in the middle of night,
way back in the days
when I roamed free
and could see in the dark
and could live on my own blood.
Ah, but things change, don't they, Clayton?
I need that basket myself now,
for somewhere to put the mess,
the one I can't clean,
since I don't take coke anymore.
Why, I haven't even dusted my piano since the old cat died,
but in my defense,
it might not be unfair to ask,
"How could I take a chance
on tossing something
he may have touched
and in this way
made sacred?"