

*There are times when one should only use contempt  
with economy because of the large number  
of people who necessitate it.*

- François-René de Chateaubriand

*It's always night, or we wouldn't need light.*

- Thelonus Monk



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LEEDS SURREALIST GROUP  
2023

# PREHENSILE TAIL

No.5

2023



PROPHECIES, SIGNS & PORTENTS

FOR THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND  
AND TWENTY-FOUR



# PROPHECIES, SIGNS & PORTENTS FOR A CENTENARY TO BE IGNORED

The sphincter of the sphinx will grow larger in the sky spewing its turds everywhere! But like le petit pot de bouillon, the magic words to make it stop have been forgotten. Be quick and remember those words, else all will drown in its endless shit.

The faceless owl who is America's current president will unleash its wrath; it will land on Michael the Archangel's shoulder and whisper: "The human race's fate will be determined on the day this key is used; this one key will reveal any unknown truths, your hair will remain curly and you will only bear faceless children." On the last night of October the petals on every flower will fall for the last time, darkness will disappear from the face of the earth, and there will only be light, eternal burning light, followed by infinite silence, and the planet will become an eerie and extreme desert.

Before May is out, lethal feathers shall rain down from the sky.

The beasts with feathered horns will rise from the South. Their tails will cast shadows on clarity and shed light on desperation. Afterwards, we will all be imprisoned with invisible bars.

Wedge in furrows, folded among roots, balanced in grove canopies, pressed into grotto crevices, they will shun the brick, steel, and glass in their masses and embrace the harsh indifference of the wild, never returning.

Toes will wander in the night, with no heed for their masters' wishes. The cuckoo-pint will join them on their marches and elaborate upon all that lies before it. As each thing becomes beloved it is therefore ruined. A sobbing will arise, even if it tickles slightly.

Mistaking a turkey barbecuing on a spit over a fire-pit for a phoenix rising from the flames of extinction, the six-toed guardian angel of Surrealism's legacy will attempt to hypnotise the seared bird with a broken pocket watch pulled from its own gizzard.

A vast crevice will close upon the golden chains that bind night to day and shimmering feathers will grow from our backs into wings that will transport us to a city with walls of blue agate.



The ground will be scorched by two blasts of heat. There will then be ten days of drought followed by ten days of rain. Afterwards, the harvest will be plentiful.

Hedges will fill with crouched figures watching, smiling... Gardens with people placing their own heads on spikes. Fields will fly but shall not be touched.

An old, bearded woman from Eastern Europe, exalted since birth, will fall from power, brought down by her taciturnity and lack of charisma. She will be unable to maintain a following and will find herself aligned to a minor anarchic anti-social movement.

Her fame and influence will dwindle and her impact on the celestial anarchy of the West will slip into insignificance.

Beyond the sand dunes of the desert, beyond the swells and troughs of the deep blue sea, in a land of dragons that is yet to be discovered, two dolls will play hide-and-seek in a field of dandelions. Disturbed by the beating of a giant drum, they will lift a trapdoor barely concealed under the dirt and will descend to a domain of darkness. In the nursery, the illustrated alphabet pinned to the wall reads "D is for Disappeared".

Remember, do not gaze into the eye of the beholder should they offer. It won't be advantageous to your situation and they are the sort of person who wears their sunglasses indoors. With laser beams, mirror balls and smoke machines, bells, tinsel and gaudy baubles, the beholder will hold a party in their pants and thankfully you won't be invited. However, you will have to swill with plenty of gin and bromide every day, just for the sake of your sanity.

On feet unshod we'll learn too late  
To tread the earth with gentle gait  
The carbon mirror will reflect  
The pooling crimson of neglect  
Great wheels will churn their fiery broth  
In flames quiet footsteps will be lost

A silent explosion will shake the core of the world, shining a light from the highest mountain in the heart of the continent, seconds will become years and sulfur drops will raise from the depths of hell.

On the first day of the twelfth month, fires will rage against celebratory impostures. Ocular intensity and magnifying mirrors will bring alphabetic conflagration on land and sea, to the delight of children and demons.



Has the sun got its hat on? At dawn, Midsummer's Day, the sun, whilst still obliging its contractual duties, rising at dawn and setting at dusk, will avert its gaze. What will offend it so?

Is it the obsidian altar deep in the cemetery, set for dinner and scattered with the bones of Ortolan bunting, the remains of dinners long past. If gazed upon, its black surface shows only the mistakes of your past.

Is it the scrofulous gaggle of foolish cat-meat men? They will walk past each day, each a queasy green hue of the virgin's diseases, each shouting nonsense and empty threats, each one ringing as hollow as their heads. They stumble along as they herd their flea-ridden pock-marked cats across the desert of the street, knocking on each door with the persistence that would even try the sun's patience.

Biblical analogies of massive proportions will occur, nightmares in the skies so real, most of you will hardly believe they are happening. Some truths will come to be, some lies will too, and just as the afternoon's clock shows the 14th hour on the last Tuesday of October, all language will be erased from the earth.



"Come ye Judys!" The entrepreneur will cry: "Exchange your emeralds for thwacks from the brutal stick! Come ye Punches! A fistful of crypto and in return, a beating from the police. Come ye dogs and pilfer great strings of data!" The web by then a ceded terrain, a rash of tall, striped phallic tents will radiate out from Palo Alto, as human discourse becomes nothing more than the futile violence of hand-puppets.

Tunnels shall be dug from the footstools to the lungs of the citizens.

It will become commonplace to grow decorative wings and practice tai chi in the afternoon. Many people will fall over backwards in the summer months. This will be widely ignored.

As storm clouds gather in the North, Reynard will drink freely from the global fount. Caution will be needed, beware the machinations of the two-headed lizard and the grazing goat.

Following a sudden and rapid decline in the population of black cats, the most pressing question facing humanity will be to establish once and for all whether they bring bad luck or good luck, and if their impending extinction will result in a future of eternal happy prospects or unremitting ill fortune.

Battle lines will be drawn between cultures that revere black cats and fear what is to come, and those that despise them and foresee an end to all the world's troubles with their demise.

When there are no more black cats, but fate still bestows both misery and joy, those looking for a new entity to blame for their misfortunes will direct their suspicions towards white felines with black spots. Rumours will start to spread across all cultures that these creatures pronounce curses by talking to their reflections in mirrors. All mirrors and reflecting objects will therefore be banned.

The horned beast, the predator in plain sight, will finally be branded. The creatures living in blissful ignorance amongst him will, due to said blissful ignorance, ignore the sign. Without even knowing it they will have contributed to the slow and inevitable demise of all their achievements.

When the buck moon wanes, we will cancel our sight with polished screens, licking our own reflections like leopards. Shedding its alphabet, the earth will be tilted upon its axis by animal hordes, and painted devils will manifest as angels.

Through the auspices of an improbable ruse, the Great Sphincter will appear with much fanfare and preside over a papal flea circus. After the fleas have staged their inaugural performance, a fat toad in a top hat will squat upon a polished screen and croak at the stupefied audience, each with a paper fish pinned to their back.

## IDYLL

A beautiful, typically English summer day, enjoying the driving rain. But what's that behind you? It's not Buttons, not Sooty, not even Mr. Punch. Be quick! Run fast! No, faster! The black dog, be it Barguest, bulldog, or tea-cup poodle, and in full attack.

It chases you across verdant woodland paths where metal flowers poke through the bracken to scratch away your flesh and then, suddenly, through the derelict streets strewn with soiled mattresses, rubble, and half-eaten takeaways.

Find the stones balanced in neat foolscap piles, drive nails into the ground, dance round the stones. It's your only escape. Dance harder, dance faster, wave your hands, whirling round. Strip off your clothes. Don't care for the maiden aunts out walking their elderly pugs, their shock and disgust will be fleeting and they will soon join you in priapic ecstasy.

...as told by an itinerant tintinnabulary



# OLD GROWLER'S ALMANACK

The abyss, already open, will widen to welcome the unwary, ignorant, naïve, and confused.

The Seven Sins, while never deadly nor ever the borderline over which those seeking transgression must cross, will continue their dominion of a false ethical framework, when the true challenge will remain fixed to the need to unearth the marvellous.

Wildfires will rage, both a continuation of destruction, a clearing and a cleansing; consumption without end, flames driven underground, creating the very Hell our ancestors spend their own eternities in fear of.

We have arrived at the time of rogues, charlatans, and false prophets. A time when little commitment is needed, a time of facsimiles and chimeras, sleepwalkers, undertakers, grave robbers and pirates without compass or cutlass. A time when the death's head of the Jolly Roger can no longer be taken as a sign of rebellion.

There will be more outpourings of gibberish, disguised as visitations from the Oracle or mistaken for the grace of glossolalia.

Compelled by the imperative to speak clearly and loudly in signalling our refusal and discontent with this attempt to convince us that a date in the calendar shows we have arrived at the times of poetry made by all. That train, still in transit, may be subject to further delays and has certainly not arrived at the station.

We will witness the spectacle of an abacus painting a picture of what it thinks are our desires, and if we suffer in the long run from the results of these calculations, then we have only ourselves to blame, having tried hard to teach the machine the half-remembered content of our dreams, when really we all had better things to spend the gold of time on.

Perhaps we will learn that only 'you' can know your own true desire, and the hard lesson that this is not a responsibility one can delegate, no matter how gaudy the serpent tongued shysters might make their robes, slide rules and other paraphernalia.

By Christmas the public will be sick to the back teeth of burning giraffes and the parade of experts in the funny hats they use to hide the threadbare.

Surrealism, as ever, will be elsewhere, indifferent to the pretty scenery or the availability of internationally famous local produce, and certainly not queuing for a handout or a kitemark.

Bells' tongues will grow silent, recognising their role in a greater refusal.

When everything stops, nothing is done.

The true gold of time without distraction.

The possible requires the active catalyst of imagination, now a needle lost in a haystack of information and, lately, the imaginary pretending to be real.

People will instead return to the old caves to seek out ancient animals appearing before their eyes by torchlight.

The Omens urge us to ignore the warnings of tools that might reinvent themselves, and instead remind us it is we who are re-shaped through use.

These nails have many uses, from shipbuilding, windmills, bridges, barricades, or to knock in and seal the lid of a coffin.

Rumours are rife that the uprising will begin with a single accordion note and then the annexation of the Isle of Wight.

The old lady on the number 16 to Bramley mutters, "Pay attention and watch the signs, or before too long we will have Valkyries bothering us on the doorstep, again."

For the time being, Hell remains a destination populated by other people. Queues are only likely to get longer.

If Nationalism takes its logical course, we will each declare against our individual sovereignty as nations, and then begin the slow process of peace negotiations to end this endless war of all against all, once and for all.

A rainbow bridge appears across the Menai Strait and the Welsh tribe seek to return the ancestral groves to Mona.

As the waters rise, mangroves and mandrake populate the shallows and the overtaken dunes, welcoming more than rabbits to tunnel between the roots and branches.

A sanctuary and a nursery.

We have already evolved the means to destroy ourselves, although, no doubt, there are many more alternatives that instead present redemption.

Before May be out, a horse's arse the size of Wales appears above the Houses of Parliament; a hovering mirage akin to one of De Chirico's later, classical works, precursor, now ill-omen, and portent of much worse to come.

Dr Syn is seen to ride again across the Romney Marshes, dognapping becomes rife, highway robbery commonplace. An electric vehicle in a traffic jam proves no match for a well-ridden steed, a souvenir penknife, and a surgical mask.

In a certain suburb of Madrid, the population develop an obsession with the word *zócalo*. It is an affliction that spreads like wildfire, though from mouth to mouth, until in the worst of cases it is used as a prefix for every utterance. Only quarantine and patience can instead coax these tongues back towards the everyday practice of poetry.

Finally, after summer recess, the House enacts its ban on stilt-walkers: beginning with their participation in any future marathons, and slowly, by encroachment, increment after increment, by November the bonfires and bonfires are piled high with these outlawed limb extenders; accompanied by the kingdom's total number of didgeridoos, torn from private hands, as they are simultaneously declared illegal, and immediately and contentiously confiscated.

The flames play a final chorus of crackling, unearthly drones as we bid farewell to these long-loathed, antipodean instruments of torture.

Stilt-walkers, reduced to their tiptoes, aping the gait of their glory days, as an act of mute and utterly pointless defiance, enact one last circle around the dying fires.