

The Intervention

by Bill Yarrow

Part One

A horde of well-intentioned poets I had met online descended upon Lake Forest where I had gone to attend a lecture entitled "Jung Love." They accosted me outside the hall and dragged me to a craft brewery where, in a back room decorated with stainless knives, they surrounded me and then drew their circle tighter. "Kid," they said solemnly, "you're publishing too much too quickly. We think that's unhealthy. We want you to slow down. You're becoming a fame whore."

A fame whore!? I shouted. *I have as much integrity as any poet here!* and then I paused as the absurdity of my words dripped, like dark irony, down my legs.

I look around the room at the sharp noses and bulbous heads of the assembled poets come to save me—from myself—but when had that ever worked? Hadn't Kleist taught us there's no rescue, none whatsoever? What were they going to do anyway—get me banned from Submittable?

I brandished my new manuscript. *You'll never stop me! Never! Never!* Wriggling free from the grip of their overdeveloped index fingers, I ran out into the octave of streets and signs, hissing, *You dare tell me what not to do? ME?* *Hear me, recreants! I'm unfriending the whole rotten lot of you!*

Part Two

—Have the nightmares subsided any? the lady in white queried.
—Do you mean have they lessened in frequency? Yes. But not in intensity. I still feel pursued by harpies. They tear at the buttons of my Beethoven pajamas! They threaten to boil my brains within my skull! Yesterday, they threatened to laminate my writing hand!
—Now, now. Take it easy. No one's going to do any tearing or boiling or laminating around here. You can rest easy.
—Where's my manuscript? What have you done with my manuscript?
—It's quite safe. We've locked it in the vault as you requested.
—Bring it to me! Bring it to me! I need to see it. There's something I need to fix.
—Why don't you try to get some sleep? You can fix it later.
— I don't have time for later! [*Shouting*] Later is just the foul excrescence of now! [*Screaming*] I'm being tortured by the muddy suddenness of sudden muddiness!!! [*Begins beating at his head, violent thrashing from side to side*]
—Ssshhh. Go to sleep, my little poet. [*Administers sedative*] Go to sleep, you benign trollop.

Part Three

—We'd like to ask you a few questions. Is that OK with you?
—[*Silence*]
—Name?
—Name. Same. Fame. Lame.
—Age?
—How old? All tolled? All bold. Resold.
—Do you know where you are?
—Are? Car. Jar. Far.
—Do you know who I am?
—Am? Yam. I yam what I yam. Popeye the sailor man. Popeye and Olive. Olive Oil. Oil for love. Oil's well that ends oil. Oil you need is love. [*Begins to dance*] Love is oil you need.
—There, there. Sit down. Please? It'll be OK if you just sit down. I promise you it will be OK. You have my word.

—Word bird. Word merde. Word deterred. Word inferred.
Word absurd. Word is turd.

