



## POEMS

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*Gerald Rice*

YEAR 10,000 BLUES

Save our lives,  
We are sinking,  
Waste-deep inside

Garbage, we haven't  
Heeded the warnings  
But now we have

Tripped over the  
*Final* final notice;  
The line has

Been crossed and  
Closed, though we still  
Wait and there is

No sign posted, Out  
To lunch and  
No hours of

Operation, everything has  
Broken, yet our fingers  
Mercilessly tack away,

Eyes blinded by black  
Screens, English has  
Lost its usage, we speak

In New Caveman Tongue  
Life is a wound;  
festered and rotted

off, falling forever  
without two weeks' notice,  
our minds cradled in

electronic aether, jacked-  
in and designer-DNAed,  
Birthed with an

internet connection  
and anemic ichor  
Trickling in our veins, sipping at

Empirical complacency  
With death-stars in our  
Eyes we spin away in

Space, the futile struggle  
Abandoned, our curtain call  
Ignored, we are overdue

For hard-reset, but  
No one will return  
after the flush.

## ON DOOMSDAY

I'm figmented  
On my own imagination . . .  
I stay drunk  
To hold logic at bay,  
What a terrible place to believe in  
Where you have to think  
Yourself up to be real,  
Death is my habit the Devil  
Speaks my cousin-tongue,  
Burning on instinct  
My ear dry to reason,  
A left-handed break  
Explains the child I shot down dead,  
Lick the bullet  
Meant to be my last,  
No man's called me nothin',  
When I grip unrelenting, iron difference,  
I think I'll have a shave this last day,  
They think I'm shot, luckied, but  
I've only had enough.

## THE CENTER

### I.

Mother,  
Why did  
You raise this  
Stillborn heart?  
What things did you  
Drown to keep  
Safe from me?

Mother,  
You are the dream  
I have forgotten  
I forgot,  
Kissed the stone  
That weaned me,  
The wheel that broke me,

Mother,  
What of  
The life not  
Mine to take?

Mother,  
Every village was  
Filled with eyes not mine  
My heart gave up looking,

Mother,  
What will be,  
If I get swept away  
From the river  
And carried out to sea?

II.

Son,  
Did you  
Live?  
Has something good  
Surfaced inside you  
Since I breathed life  
Into a secret?

Son,  
You are the dream  
I see in someone  
Else's mind,  
Curse the womb  
That blessed me,  
The breast that reminded me,

Son,  
There was a  
Life not  
Mine to keep,

Son,  
Every soldier's eyes  
Were hollow like mine  
Their aimless souls blinded,

Son,  
I will be  
Waiting in the river  
Drawing the tide in to carry  
You back from the sea.

UNTITLED #84

“Fuck you,  
“You’re here for rock  
“bottom, you horror of a  
“human being.”  
Loose the tide of agony,  
Hot-palmed, upturned in supplication,  
ready to wave off this flame  
And belly crawl a Sisyphus path  
To heaven. Old wounds—  
Tattering the soul in retelling—  
Healed, like jagged lines of unwritten poetry.  
Fire taught trees yield the fruit  
Of ash, learning hopelessness—  
Mouthful by mouthful—  
gray bitterness. The highway is  
Long and fevered with the never-  
ending furnish of the sun,  
Be selfish with your memories of water  
The barefoot sizzle should remind you  
Of what’s been come for,  
The angel on your shoulder slaughtered  
With a wink of an eye,  
The thing cooking inside you  
Boils life from your eyes  
And rolls it down your cheeks.

Give, my Pavlov Pretty,  
When silvered tongues ring  
In the bell of your ear.  
Distance cannot shape shift you  
Fast enough to fake away the pain.