

# ] Nowhere Man [

Dedication: For the Family and Friends  
of Kenneth Warren (1953-2014)

Acknowledgements:

These poems are a selection from Ken's poems  
first published in Thomas Rain Crowe's anthology,  
*A Living Legacy*, New Native Press, 2016.

Ken Warren

## NOWHERE TO RUN

There's nowhere  
to run in marriage,

Working and paying everyday  
for wanting her,

But if you'd leap,  
like Screamin' Jay Hawkins,

Past the shadow curved around her,  
into whatever's left in your coffin,

You could rip free  
from her wine sack

Your Noah, your Pip,  
your keel, your breaker,

And sail with them  
into the raging wave to come.

## PEOPLE GET READY

It's like thunder,  
forced through the grapevine,  
this proposition to perfect lightning  
while the diesel's humming  
no ticket necessary  
for you to pass beyond  
locomotion into belief,  
talking out of your head,  
the speed of fourteen cross  
tones equal the seven horses  
chosen to ride your hurricane wind.

## DUKE OF EARL

Silently Earl descended on the auto  
salvage strewn about the juniper hollow.  
He laid his two faces down over the Fleetwood.  
Iridescent in the morning sky he danced  
a minute or two around the wire loops  
and slide trombone. Then she kissed him  
through the cellophane window on the passenger side,  
and so would we, ever thankful to be done dreaming  
the dream of the next alias stroking the Duchess  
in the infinitely small promise of paradise  
Speedo couldn't keep his iron rod from breaking.

## JAILHOUSE ROCK

Altered weirdly  
by American Bandstand,  
you made half a social  
revolution with a wooden chair,  
twisting it around  
the killer's fierce glare.

## NOWHERE MAN

There was art to feeling lost  
this side the stumbling stone,  
but here, believing in light  
leading home, what can we say to Diane,  
save vibrate synthetically with me,  
give way with me and open the door  
through which any vagabond may pass  
as might a puff out of nowhere  
to contend with what's written by Walt Whitman,  
Woody Guthrie, Tim Buckley, and so on past  
the purple welts in this relational system.

## JOHNNY ANGEL

Each time darkness falls,  
my harp boy, and the bird  
on your head rattles in horror  
at the word gunshot, there are  
things to realize about little wings  
that may spring from fiery marrow  
into your dream of the milkmaid;

Certainly, you may beat them back  
from her ears, on the condition,  
you hear God's goat braying  
on the killing floor, the instant  
she reveals herself to you,  
flickering, atop the clattering  
beak that rips your harp in two.

## ROCKIN' ROBIN

The sound of the eagle,  
protecting his nest from buzzards,  
pushes on a blue horizon  
and scores the misshapen  
morning star that blisters  
the oriole, it's yellow feathers  
fill only a hollow tooth—

You'll need a parachute.

## EARTH ANGEL

She sang to you, hung  
a horse shoe on your arm,  
a chain around your neck.

Songs to nature's one  
track mind were her life.  
Crickets filled her gloves.

Her hands blocked so many  
raindrops, you couldn't stop her,  
as she tumbled to the ground.

## GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

Balls of fire lie out so far beyond  
where she said her heart begins,  
you're still holding your horse  
against the queen of your tears,  
fuming behind a blindfold,  
you left no will for her to break.

## FIRE AND RAIN

From that look in your eye,  
the wine's taken you by surprise,  
far enough into these golden rings  
knotted around smoky pine,  
hardly touched by yourself,  
lonelier now with your starry companion,  
her shy kiss forever promised jesus.

His name may be strangely doodled  
in the night, yet prove next to nothing  
spiritual, unless you push four bars in  
through fire and rain to seven flames,  
no sooner spoken than the ram cast down  
in the name of marriage is understood  
to bear your lamb in the vale of poesy.

## COME ON DOWN TO MY BOAT BABY

The fisherman's daughter,  
tied to the dock, must pray  
for night to delight in  
the wreck of the nameless  
little red boat under the pale  
blue sea, so as to teach  
seventy three men how  
it feels in the end  
to cut the rope.

## After Music: Rhythm & Roots

“The kingdom of a people formed in rock,” as Robert Duncan writes in “A Reading of Thirty Things” marks not only a passing of time from the jazz age, ... but a collective shift in the way the succeeding generation would hear, make, and read poetry. Underneath the monism of rock in mass culture there lies a heady lyric complexity, a pop palimpsest directed by sound.... In other words, the soulful force of plurality within the self-experience of the poet can be understood to blast through rock and to shift by ear the use and value of smash hits into the transpersonal wave-length that dynamically extends meaning in the world.

-Ken Warren, from *A Living Legacy*, New Native Press  
2015

Ken was a critic of note. His *Captain Poetry's Sucker Punch* is essential reading for anyone who cares to understand contemporary American poetry, film, music. Unknown to many who valued his critical writing was Ken's poetry. We can see even with this small selection, that he wrote poetry with the informed ear of a musician and the insight of seasoned critical intelligence. No other poet wrote poetry with the working understanding of how pop music has altered our collective consciousness. Read his poems with the awareness that Ken was a garage band drummer (the Rhythm) with a musical reach into world culture, enabling him to uncover the mythic connective tissue of what moves us through rock & roll (Roots).

Enhance your pleasure by searching out the connections in Ken's poetry "that dynamically extends meaning in the world."

Ken's Tim Buckley reference and his "Song to the Sirens" can transform the "stumbling stone" to a reference to the New Testament: "a rock that makes them fall"; his juniper hollow to the Algonquin shaman's "magic telescope," and Great Balls of Fire to the Biblical "cloven tongues as of fire."

Enjoy his poetry, but be careful: you can get joyfully high. As his poem offers in "Rockin' Robin": "You'll need a parachute."

— Joe Napora

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