



The Book
of
Uncertain
[Leaving]

Michael Boughn



The Book of Uncertain

A Manual

[Leaving]

“You cannot be certain about uncertainty.”

— Frank Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*

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Chapter One of Twenty of *The Book of Uncertain*



Leaving

with thanks to Branka Arsić

Dreaming, thinking and loving make up
three categories of leaving
often overlooked in the rush to get started
There are others
equally composed of phonemic
jiggling, and they, too, are overlooked
from great heights from which uncertain appears
ant-like in their midst.

Shopping for instance, which recent developments
in ontological terraforming
have rendered central to a range
of gestures reformulated in the likeness
of not leaving

Harvey leaves the mountains
enters the grid, bears light
of leaving, of breached
rule, picks apples and sells
joy at a fair price right across
the myth, follows paths
of mound building Indians in the map
he made out of thin air, jazz
love of unearthed fact
beneath the asphalt – flips through the albums
till Craig Harris, *Black Bone*, says is this yours?
and everything's alright, bathed
in music's forgiveness, generosity
of unforeseen channels of circulation
through peaks and by torrents
across borders of formidable
interdimensional accumulated
greed presses against leaving



Dreaming, thinking, and loving fall
with persistent rhythms that infiltrate
uncertain directions to the refuge
long felt to nestle among peaks
recede in shades of grey on grey, dove
grey, the grays of stones tumbled
on the beach, ashes. If loving is leaving
what's gained adds up to an incurable
distance of ashes between moments of lost
sums, a spacing of intricacies
entangled in a web of thinking
beyond *mine*

Leaving as falling is a trope
too far, invokes unconditional transitions
between levels of informational
intersections. The grandfathers
and uncles discuss their wounds
oil blue steel as someone cranks
the ice cream maker, steps
on a hot butt flipped carelessly
into the grass, sign of uncertain
family connections which lacking
ordinary forgiveness miss
love's uncertain connections
fade into smog

Dreaming, thinking, and loving are not
pushovers in anyone's book, especially
this one, indicating that what does not change
will leave. It will leave you with a strange feeling
in the pit of your belly and it will leave
unintended consequences to play out
in the lives of multitudes as they leave
for work at 6 AM headed
for a fiery crash on the 400. They dreamt
of flames last night, and tatters
fluttered in mirrored eyes
as they brushed teeth but they left
anyway, then Armageddon

Dreaming, thinking and loving may require
further registers of reception if they
are to figure significantly in present
considerations of serious investments
in uncertain. Leaving, demonologically
inflected, is sometimes confused with believing
not unlike the will to leave and will
leave



There you have it, leaving

or meeting, say, Harvey Brown, which was not auspicious. Confuse Clifford Jordan for Clifford Brown, and the deal was off, Max Roach out of the question, dead and buried in the boneyard of over enthusiastic visionary effluvia which sometimes catches, sprouts, but mostly shrivels into dry husks but leads

to Harvey emerging onto the grid from silent mountains, carrying light to Buffalo and points west, invisible to panoptical apparatus tracking excessive and unregistered aberrations in the system's message delivery components. Let's eat, he'd say, paying for all, an angel of circulation, "that rare being," Dorn said, "who made you feel intensely alive."

First the death of water, gray green slime, nitrogen blooms Then falls. No, then music but not here, not from here maybe not music exactly but as close as a word can come to joy of knows something called *living water* then falls. No, then climbs up, as if no question of up was issued and of course it was up then falls and some hitting and the earth spreads away, pebbles in an inexplicable order of devastated meaning. Falls in love is an *extasis* of helpless abandon as falls apart acknowledges uncertain depths of together Falls asleep ups the ante with dreams. Falls out of a tree pursuing angelic choir leaves uncertain in hands beyond shakes or lives as if *in the hands of* was the measure of knows



If you can't ride it
or make it pull something, kill it
and eat it is several of the constitutional
commandments bestowed
by the Supreme Being. You can shoot it
with an arrow, which provides, they say
a closer connection for the killer
to the dead animal. Or you can shoot it
with a gun which is more American
and protected by several other
constitutional commandments decreed
by God and Patrick whatshisname
who said give me liberty or give me
a new AR 15 with one of them extra
big mags so I can open carry it to the Walmart
and scare the bejesus out of them pussies

It's not certain
that leaving is an adumbration
of conditions akin to breathing
or peeing, but evidence suggests a long
history where history reeks
of inconsequential foliation
of millennial population flows
across the front yard of elusive
monuments, wretched remnants
of distanced halves

Uncertain
formulas for breaching
confidence leave little wiggle
room in the face of shopping
extravaganza's ever ready not
to be missed half-price sale
of the century



Attention wavers
lured by an Armani shirt
a taste for sharp creases
elegant fit at a price
you can afford. Leaving is not
that satisfaction, soon wrinkled
and smelling of sweat

The definition
is uncertain although familiar
to most circumstances find themselves
watching wave patterns move
toward shore, a swell occupation
if you have the Time

Can you homestead land
in Quebec is enormous
with hope the border guards contest,
value to the Queen among other
considerations of national
destiny in the balance generosity
wins

Mourning is the repressed signature
of leaving, its uncertain steps toward
distant crest, quivering gold leaf
to the light of another sun rise on the Bay
or the gray layered fading into distances
of misted self



Later Tom and Mark

followed the shrimpers to their boat
and inimical amoebas took up abode
in their bowels leaving them useless
to an army hoovering up young men
to fire at a distant jungle
while a probabilistic blip
in the dynamics of an unstable system
left me behind, healthy,
to flee the war when small notices
indicated north from Bruce's kitchen
refuge to a world of engraved Queens
and silver canoes, gifts returned
from beyond

Leaving is that quick
the desert slips into dream
forms, the road winds by torrents
through gaps in the peaks till war dims
and the border looms

Gravity magnified

risk can't be ignored when mouths
full of words leave well-enough alone
and opt for irrational irresolution
in outcomes that never come out
one way or the other because they are
already leaving for the coast
a necessary destination in designs
of destined edges
palm trees, surf roar, a bar
at the end of the pier

Leaving

the States is not an easy thing
with just two decades of minutes
to lean on, but inevitable, a kind
of graduation from the grandfathers
and uncles cleaning guns at the picnic, talk
of war's constantly subaudible
wounds never far
from mind



Loving is leaving and even to leave
loving is still without your
what they call *input*, your thinking
what-the-hell-I-have-no-idea-
where-that-comes-from thoughts,
words that aren't words or before
words, word spirits or precipitative
autonomous acoustical micro-events
demonic possession on a scale unimaginable
before Donald Trump's rise
to power

Gassed in the trenches
shot on the beach, beat
in the kitchen, fucked
by the old man, war
rages, beckons beyond
domestic beatings, war is deep
tonality, a beloved rupture rolling
through faded streets evaporating
in time's flood, deco curves, once
upon a time care lost in dust and heat

Dreaming, thinking, and loving leave you
behind, dragged along, not
even protesting, just dragged, getting
off the train in Mazatlán, 1965, 3AM
after three days and nights on a bench, just
there, wandering through streets
in a strange city over the border, who
said follow the voice of the surf? down
dark streets, wave crash louder
louder till we come upon the beach
and sleep and wake the dream
of wild, untouched beauty
shattered in the riveted morning
of a skeletal hotel