

Book of Longing

Leonard Cohen

Published by Penguin Books

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LEONARD COHEN



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PENGUIN BOOKS

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10

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THE BOOK OF LONGING



I can't make the hills
The system is shot
I'm living on pills
For which I thank G-d

I followed the course
From chaos to art
Desire the horse
Depression the cart

I sailed like a swan
I sank like a rock
But time is long gone
Past my laughing stock

My page was too white
My ink was too thin
The day wouldn't write
What the night pencilled in

My animal howls
My angel's upset
But I'm not allowed
A trace of regret

For someone will use
What I couldn't be
My heart will be hers
Impersonally

She'll step on the path
She'll see what I mean
My will cut in half
And freedom between

For less than a second
Our lives will collide
The endless suspended
The door open wide

Then she will be born
To someone like you
What no one has done
She'll continue to do

I know she is coming
I know she will look
And that is the longing
And this is the book

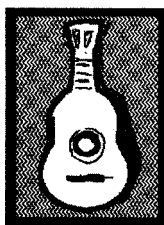
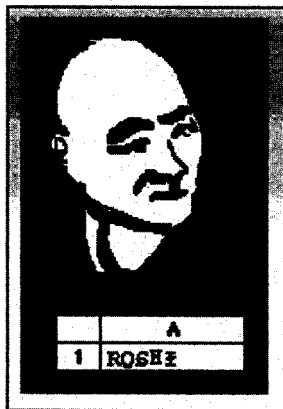
MY LIFE IN ROBES

After a while
You can't tell
If it's missing
A woman
Or needing
A cigarette
And later on
If it's night
Or day
Then suddenly
You know
The time
You get dressed
You go home
You light up
You get married



HIS MASTER'S VOICE

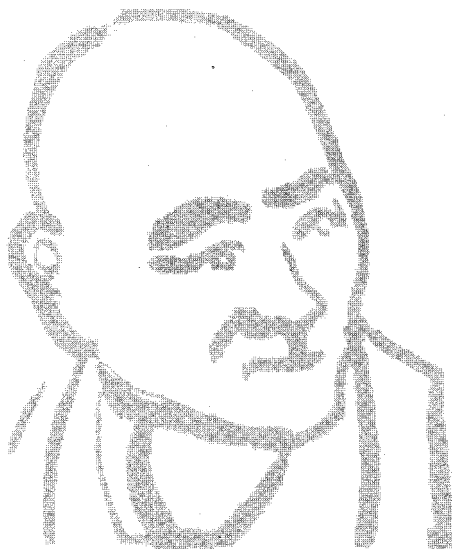
After listening to Mozart
(which I often did)
I would always
Carry a piano
Up and down
Mt. Baldy
And I don't mean
A keyboard
I mean a full-sized
Grand piano
Made of cement
Now that I am dying
I don't regret
A single step



ROSHI AT 89

Roshi's very tired,
 he's lying on his bed
He's been living with the living
 and dying with the dead
But now he wants another drink
 (will wonders never cease?)
He's making war on war
 and he's making war on peace
He's sitting in the throne-room
 on his great Original Face
and he's making war on Nothing
 that has Something in its place
His stomach's very happy
 The prunes are working well
There's no one going to Heaven
 and there's no one left in Hell

– Mt. Baldy, 1996



ONE OF MY LETTERS

I corresponded with a famous rabbi
but my teacher caught sight of one of my letters
and silenced me.

"Dear Rabbi," I wrote him for the last time,
"I do not have the authority or understanding
to speak of these matters.

I was just showing off.

Please forgive me.

Your Jewish brother,
Jikan Eliezer."



YOU'D SING TOO

You'd sing too
if you found yourself
in a place like this
You wouldn't worry about
whether you were as good
as Ray Charles or Edith Piaf
You'd sing
You'd sing
not for yourself
but to make a self
out of the old food
rotting in the astral bowel
and the loveless thud
of your own breathing
You'd become a singer
faster than it takes
to hate a rival's charm
and you'd sing, darling
you'd sing too

