

REVOLUTIONARY LETTERS



*Diane Di Prima*

#1

I have just realized that the stakes are myself  
I have no other  
ransom money, nothing to break or barter but my life  
my spirit measured out, in bits, spread over  
the roulette table, I recoup what I can  
nothing else to shove under the nose of the maitre de jeu  
nothing to thrust out the window, no white flag  
this flesh all I have to offer to make the play with  
this immediate head, what it comes up with, my move  
as we slither over this board, stepping always  
(we hope) between the lines

April 1968

#2

The value of an individual life, a credo they taught us  
to instill fear, and inaction, "you only live once"  
a fog in our eyes, we are  
endless as the sea, not separate, we die  
a million times a day, we are born  
a million times, each breath life and death:  
get up, put on your shoes, get  
started, someone will finish

Tribe

an organism, one flesh, breathing joy as the stars  
breathe destiny down on us, get  
going, join hands, see to business, thousands of sons  
will see to it when you fall, you will grow  
a thousand times in the bellies of your sisters.

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#3

store water; make a point of filling your bathtub at the first news of trouble: they turned off the water in the 4th ward for a whole day during the Newark riots; or better yet make a habit of keeping the tub clean and full when not in use change this once a day, it should be good enough for washing, flushing toilets with when necessary and cooking, in a pinch, but it's a good idea to keep some bottled water handy too get a couple of five gallon jugs and keep them full for cooking

store food--dry stuff like rice and beans stores best goes farthest. SALT VERY IMPORTANT: it's health and energy healing too. keep a couple pounds sea salt around, and, because we're spoiled, some tins tuna, etc. to keep up morale--keep up the sense of "balanced diet" "protein intake" remember the stores may be closed for quite some time, the trucks may not enter your section of the city for weeks, you can cool it indefinitely with

20 lb brown rice  
20 lb whole wheat flour  
10 lb good beans--kidney or soy  
5 lb sea salt  
2 qts good oil

dried fruit and nuts  
add nutrients and a sense of luxury  
to this diet, a squash or coconut  
in a cool place in your pad will keep six months

remember we are all used to eating less than the "average American" and take it easy before we ever notice we're hungry the rest of the folks will be starving used as they are to meat and fresh milk daily and help will arrive, until the day no help arrives and then you're on your own.

hoard matches, we aren't good at rubbing sticks together anymore a tinder box is useful, if you can work it don't count on gas stove, gas heater electric light keep hibachi and charcoal, CHARCOAL STARTER a help kerosene lamp and candles, learn to keep warm with breathing remember the blessed American habit of bundling

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#4

Left to themselves people  
grow their hair.  
Left to themselves they  
take off their shoes.  
Left to themselves they make love  
sleep easily  
share blankets, dope and children  
they are not lazy or afraid  
they plant seeds, they smile, they  
speak to one another. The word  
coming into its own: touch of love  
on the brain, the ear.

We return with the sea, the tides  
we return as often as leaves, as numerous  
as grass, gentle, insistent, we remember  
the way,  
our babes toddle barefoot thru the cities of the universe.

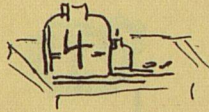
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#5

at some point  
you may be called upon  
to keep going for several days without sleep:  
keep some ups around. to be  
clearheaded, avoid "comedown" as much as possible,  
take vitamin B along with amphetamines, try  
powdered guarana root, available  
at herb drugstores, it is an up  
used by Peruvian mountainfolk, tastes  
like mocha (bitter) can be put in tea  
will clear your head, increase oxygen supply  
keep you going past amphetamine wooziness

at some point  
you may have to crash, under tension, keep some downs  
on hand, you may have to cool out  
sickness, or freak-out, or sorrow, keep some downs  
on hand, I don't mean  
tranquilizers, ye olde fashioned SLEEPING PILL  
(sleep heals heads, heals souls) chloryll hydrate  
(Mickey Finn) one of the best, but  
nembatal, etc. OK in a pinch, remember  
no liquor with barbituates

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at some point  
you will need painkillers, darvon  
is glorified shit, stash some codeine & remember  
it's about five times more effective  
if taken with aspirin

ups, downs & painkillers are  
the essence: antibiotics  
for extreme infections, any good  
wide-spectrum one will do. avoid penicillin  
too many allergies, speaking of which  
cortisone is good for really bad attacks  
(someone who freaks out asthma-style, or with hives)

USE ALL THESE AS LITTLE  
as possible, side effects multifarious  
and they cloud the brain  
tend to weaken the body and obscure  
judgement

ginseng tea, ginger compresses, sea salt,  
prayer and love  
are better healers, easier come by, save the others  
for life and death trips, you will know  
when you see one

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#6

avoid the folk  
who find Bonnie and Clyde too violent  
who see the blood but not the energy form  
they love us and want us to practice birth control  
they love us and want the Hindus to kill their cows  
they love us and have a colorless tasteless powder  
which is the perfect synthetic food. . .

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#7

there are those who can tell you  
how to make molotov cocktails, flamethrowers,  
bombs whatever  
you might be needing  
find them and learn, define  
your aim clearly, choose your ammo  
with that in mind

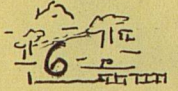
it is not a good idea to tote a gun  
or knife  
unless you are proficient in its use  
all swords are two-edged, can be used against you  
by anybody who can get 'em away from you

it is possible even on the east coast  
to find an isolated place for target practice  
success  
will depend mostly on your state of mind:  
meditate, pray, make love, be prepared  
at any time, to die

but don't get uptight: the guns  
will not win this one, they are  
an incidental part of the action  
which we better damn well be good at,  
what will win  
is mantras, the sustenance we give each other,  
the energy we plug into  
    (the fact that we touch  
    share food)  
the buddha nature  
of everyone, friend and foe, like a million earthworms  
tunneling under this structure  
till it falls

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#8

every time you pick the spot for a be-in  
a demonstration, a march, a rally, you are choosing the ground  
for a potential battle.

You are still calling these shots.

Pick your terrain with that in mind.

Remember the old gang rules:

stick to your neighborhood, don't let them lure you  
to Central Park, everytime, I would hate  
to stumble bloody out of that park to find help:  
Central Park West or Fifth Avenue, which would you  
choose?

go to love-ins

with incense, flowers, food, and a plastic bag  
with a damp cloth in it, for tear gas, wear no jewelry  
wear clothes you can move in easily, wear no glasses  
contact lenses,  
earrings for pierced ears are especially hazardous

try to be clear

in front, what you will do if it comes  
to trouble

if you're going to try to split stay out of the center

don't stampede or panic others

don't waver between active and passive resistance

know your limitations, bear contempt

neither for yourself, nor any of your brothers

NO ONE WAY WORKS, it will take all of us

shoving at the thing from all sides

to bring it down.

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#9

advocating  
the overthrow of government is a crime  
overthrowing it is something else  
altogether. it is sometimes called  
revolution.

but don't kid yourself: government  
is not where it's at: it's only  
a good place to start:

1. kill head of Dow Chemical
2. destroy plant
3. MAKE IT UNPROFITABLE FOR THEM

to build again

i.e., destroy the concept of money  
as we know it, get rid of interest,  
savings, inheritance  
(Pound's money, as dated coupons that come in the mail  
to everyone, and are void in 30 days  
is still a good idea)

or, let's start with no money at all and invent it  
if we need it

or, mimeograph it and everyone  
print as much as they want  
and see what happens

declare a moratorium on debt  
the Congressional Congress did  
"on all debts public and private"

& no one "owns" the land  
it can be held  
for use, no man holding more  
than he can work, himself and family working

let no one work for another  
except for love, and what you make  
above your needs be given to the tribe  
a Common-Wealth

None of us knows the answers, think about  
these things.  
The day will come when we have to know  
the answers.

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#10

These are transitional years and the dues  
will be heavy.  
Change is quick but the revolution  
will take a while.  
America has not even begun as yet.  
This continent is seed.

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#11

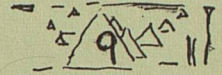
drove across the  
San Joaquin Valley  
with Kirby Doyle  
grooving  
getting free Digger meat  
for Free City Convention  
grooving  
behind talk of Kirby's family  
been here a long time  
grooving  
friendship renewed, neat pickup truck, we stopped  
at a gas station  
man uptight at the  
sight of us, sight of Kirby's hair, his friendly  
loose face, my hair, our dress  
man surly uptight, we drove  
away brought down  
(across fields of insecticide and migrant workers)  
and  
"Man" I said "that cat  
so uptight, what's he  
so uptight about, it's not  
your hair, not really, it's just  
what the TV tells him about hippies  
got him scared, what he reads in  
his magazines  
got him scared, we got to  
come out from behind the image  
sit down with him, if he  
sat down to a beer with you he'd find  
a helluva lot more to say than he'll find  
with the man who makes your image  
he's got nothing in common  
with the men who run his mind, who tell him  
what to think of us"

SMASH THE MEDIA, I said,  
AND BURN THE SCHOOLS  
so people can meet, can sit  
and talk to each other, warm and close  
no TV image flickering  
between them.

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#12

the vortex of creation is the vortex of destruction  
the vortex of artistic creation is the vortex of self destruction  
the vortex of political creation is the vortex of flesh destruction  
flesh is in the fire, it curls and terribly warps  
fat is in the fire, it drips and sizzling sings  
bones are in the fire  
they crack tellingly in  
subtle hieroglyphs of oracles  
charcoal singed  
the smell of your burning hair  
for every revolutionary must at last will his own destruction  
rooted as he is in the past he sets out to destroy

#13

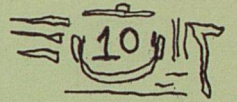
now let me tell you  
what is a Brahmasastra  
Brahmasastra, hindu weapon of war  
near as I can make out  
a flying wedge of mind energy  
hurled at the foe by god or hero  
or many heroes  
hurled at a problem or enemy  
cracking it

Brahmasastra can be made  
by any or all  
can be made by all of us  
straight or tripping, thinking together  
like: all of us stop the war  
at nine o'clock tomorrow, each take one soldier  
see him clearly, love him, take the gun  
out of his hand, lead him to a quiet spot  
sit him down, sit with him as he takes a joint  
of viet cong grass from his pocket. . .

Brahmasastra can be made  
by all of us, tripping together  
winter solstice  
at home, or in park, or wandering  
sitting with friends  
blinds closed, or on porch, no be-in  
no need  
to gather publicly  
just gather spirit, see the forest growing  
put back the big trees  
put back the buffalo  
the grasslands of the midwest with their herds  
of elk and deer  
put fish in clean Great Lakes  
desire that all surface water on the planet  
be clean again. Kneel down and drink  
from whatever brook or lake you conjure up.

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#14 (*especially for chicks*)

are you prepared  
to hide someone in your home indefinitely  
say, two to six weeks, you going out  
for food, etc., so he never  
hits the street, to keep your friends away  
coolly, so they ask no questions, to nurse  
him, or her, as necessary, to know  
"first aid" and healing (not to freak out  
at the sight of torn or half-cooked flesh)  
to pass him on at the right time to the next  
station, to cross the canadian border, with a child  
so that the three of you  
look like one family, no questions asked,  
or fewer, to stash letters, guns, or bombs  
forget about them  
till they are called for, to KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT  
not to "trust"  
even your truelove, that is,  
lay no more knowledge on him than he needs  
to do his part of it, a kindness  
we all must extend to each other in this game

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#15

When you sieze Columbia, when you  
seize Paris, take  
the media, tell the people what you're doing  
what you're up to and why and how you mean  
to do it, how they can help, keep the news  
coming, steady, you have 70 years  
of media conditioning to combat, it is a wall  
you must get through, somehow, to reach  
the instinctive man, who is struggling like a plant  
for light, for air

when you seize a town, a campus, get hold of the power  
stations, the water, the transportation,  
forget to negotiate, forget how  
to negotiate, don't wait for DeGaulle or Kirk  
to abdicate, they won't, you are not  
"demonstrating" you are fighting  
a war, fight to win, don't wait for Johnson or  
Humphrey or Rockefeller, to agree to your terms  
take what you need, "it's free  
because it's yours"

May 1968

DIANE DI PRIMA

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