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Anarchy LLC:  
A Cabaret for Our Time

*Master of Ceremonies:* Ladies and Gentlemen . . . and Non-Binary Folk! (And let me state at the very outset that our only prejudice here is—*for a good time!*)

*(Applause.)*

Welcome to the little entertainment we offer you tonight. A time for laughter. A time for love. A night of enchantment! An evening of songs! And a time to poke a little fun at the nuttiness of our times, our silly brothers, our funny sisters, ourselves at our odder moments, our crazy political uncles, and our even weirder aunts!

*(Laughter.)*

And so we begin!

*A prim suburban woman enters, waving a “My Cat for President!” sign. She takes a militant pose and sings:*

“Liberty, equality, justice – oh my!

That's what a liberal believes, like I!

I get up each morning, determined and woke.  
The bear of oppression I daringly poke!  
Write letters to senators and persons of power,  
post on social media fraught screeds by the hour,  
send off frantic emails, march hard in the streets,  
deny myself 'processed' and even more treats.

Recycle my plastics, I sort all my trash,  
I use only cards and don't carry cash,  
I'd eliminate even my car if I could,  
but there is a limit, say, even to 'should.'  
How would I get to her dance class my Tandy?  
And I live in the suburbs! Isn't life dandy? . . .

But I vote Democratic and hate all Republicans.  
I watched *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* with my munchkins –  
Kamala, Natalie, Barack, and Sven.  
They call me 'Doris' – no 'Mommy' for them!  
We are all Equal! (I prove it each time  
any of them falls out of political line!)  
Parental oppression is the last one they'll see!  
Liberation from birth is the last liberty!  
Why should a person, by one or by lot,  
put up with existence when they had no choice,  
no vote, no discussion, no election, no voice?  
Be free we must, whether we like it or not!  
I respect you on principle, as long as, of course,  
you're a liberal like me – *or I'll make you by force!*

Liberty, equality, justice – oh my!  
That's what a liberal believes, like I!

Who cares if we destroy the world while we get it?  
If we cannot have what we want, then forget it!  
The earth, she is heating, the earth, she is hot.  
*I am what I believe! . . . Or not!*  
I tolerate every religion because  
they're all nothing but nonsense! (Applause.)  
I humor their craziness. After all, Science  
shows that no gods exist, no reliance  
or certainty but we are born and we die,

and there is no justice to be found in the sky.  
'Reality' is not even available to us:  
we're jungles of illusions and deserts of dust.  
Justice I define as this: everyone's equal  
to pursue being – what? – you guessed it! Unequal!  
Freedom is the sweetener of this bitter pill:  
there is nothing but dark energy, dark matter, and will.

Liberty, equality, justice – oh my!  
That's what a liberal believes, like I!"

*A middle-aged man in a tuxedo, carrying a martini, takes center stage. He toasts the audience, and croons:*

“‘Shareholder capitalism’ – now *that* is for *me*,  
at the end, as you must know, of all history!

‘Would you like to be richer than God, my good man,  
while you lie in the sun for a mocha-dark tan,  
the market and an algorithm *en plein* innovation,  
while enjoying your sweet-as-a-C-suite vacation?

Let the envious gnash! – We're a liberal democracy,  
you can do what you like – screw *you*, and make *me*  
twice richer tomorrow than I was yesterday,  
by a zillion kazillion in derivatives, shares  
of mega-trillion companies that know how to play  
those markets, baby! – Take me off anywhere,  
Paris, Rome, San Francisco, Timbuktu, Florence, Kars,  
from the *Titanic* to the moon – heck, beyond, baby, Mars!’

Hog on *foie gras*, chug *Cliquot*, hire a *bateau* of girls,  
in the paradise promised to his churls by The Prophet.  
(After all, from Abydos to Scylla to Tophet,  
Dollah is Allah and His Blessing is My Profit!)  
I'll make ivory, gold, mink my comfort, my luck,  
fell the elephant, hunt the lion; when I feel bored or stuck,  
I'll condescend the world's loveliest women to . . .

Well,

it's not nice to brag. - But I couldn't be jollier,  
frankly. The world's a heaven if you're rich, my good friend: tell  
that to the wretched of the earth, for whom the world is, well, hell.

Our world is ruled by implacable law:  
Make everyone poor, and the world would not lapse;  
make everyone rich, and the world would collapse.  
Nobody'd grow coffee, pump gas, run the stores,  
Prime my Amazon, bake me cakes – it would be, friend, a mess  
to get a sprinkled caramel cardamom latte with 'Smores!  
Wealth is for the few, alas. As the poet once said:  
“We're all lying in the gutter,  
but some of us are looking at the stars.”

My friend: Do you want to be happy? Do you want to live  
in a world  
that cannot shame, blame you, and comes running at your call?  
You want to look yourself in the mirror? You want to get the girl?  
You want this? Be rich, my man. Or don't be born at all.”

*A polyracial non-binary boy-girl wearing a pinafore and a  
reversed baseball cap walks onstage and stands, with legs spread  
and arms akimbo. They sing:*

“Trans women are women! Trans men are men!  
Nobody's fatter! Black lives matter!  
Are you an anti-racist? Prove it!  
Shut up! You whites have had your day!  
Who in your family was a slave master?  
Beg forgiveness! Hey! What did I just say?

All of western civilization  
is racist, sexist, transphobe, ablist,  
heteronormative, white supremacist.  
From the earliest of historical dates,  
slavery was the basis of the 'Untied States.'

I got my degree at Harvard, Yale,  
Penn, Stanford, Berkeley – wher-  
e'er they groom the sleek elite  
to run this country to defeat.  
The rules? They don't apply to me.  
Who do you think I am? I am

who and whatever I *think* I am.  
And you better get my pronouns right,  
or tell your over-paid job goodnight.  
You're a bigot if you say no  
and shall receive by cyberfeed  
more terror than one brain can know.

We will destroy your life, career,  
by trolling you for the next ten years.

I love to hate whatever is  
because it makes me loathe my life:  
whatever is deserves to die  
because it's founded on a lie.

To the public world I take my private knife.  
You're part of the lie if you're reading this."

*A young man wearing rimless spectacles, a black suit and a bright  
bowtie, ambles in, smirks, then breaks into song:*

"O, I'm a reactionary, yes I be!  
What? I am against this whole coun-tree.

Liberals, progressives, feminists mad –  
you're like rotten apples: not evil, just bad.  
Fat loving, sex positive, ugly, old,  
black, brown, green, deaf, sick, lame, cold,  
trans, lesbo, gay (after you *stole* the only word  
for just the sort of cheeriness I feel all day!  
And you want another one? You'll get from me the bird  
if you want to steal my "pride"! I guarantee you won't be "gay"! –  
you're all life's castoffs, a bouquet of wrecks in the hurricane  
of a world that never was, can, or ever shall be sane.

Weakness is disease. How do you handle it? Cure it!  
You don't make it the standard, then make the strong endure it.  
You burn to the socket of the iron rose of power.

Saint Foucault prosed on about *that* poisonous flower.  
A ploy, my pet, you may regret.  
Don't take us on: We have no pity.  
We live in white citadels above the dark city.  
We are not hobbled by compassion. We have no fear of death.  
We breathe a pure air in sweet trade, breath to breath.  
We are steeled by our will and know exactly what we want:  
to be tempered to iron in reality's fire,  
webbed to silk, pressed to diamond, melted into gold –  
and thrust into being where all is fire and all is cold."

*A very young man wearing a white poet's shirt appears at the edge of the stage and, after a long, painfully shy pause, speaks in a gentle and musical voice:*

“I lay my bones before the crowd.  
I walk on stones of liquid fire.  
I cross on wind the mountain cloud.  
I speak in tongues of sovereign desire.

There is no phrase that burns to sun  
Beneath my gaze in porphyry.  
No golden words that burn for one  
To lower this ice crown to me.

The debt is made the law of theft.  
The deed lies ragged at your feet.  
Will is a token. What is left  
When hunger is your only meat?

Listen: love is an honest lie  
In the shade of a street corner's kiss,  
The carillon in the winter sky,  
Echoes that we miss.

The key melts within the lock.  
The chest cracks to gem and gold.  
I listen for the morning cock  
To crow and crow in the night's cold.”

*A man about forty, in a casual suit, enters and gazes coolly across the audience. He seems about to sing, then stops before a sound comes out. He tries again, and again stops. He seems about to leave, but then returns to the fray one last time. But again, he stops before a single note comes out. He shrugs and stares at the audience for a long moment; then, having abandoned all hope of making music, he speaks:*

“What do I believe in? Nothing.  
Who do I believe in? No one.  
No, not even myself – to the sneerers among you!  
I have no knowledge,  
I have no faith.  
I am this:  
a machine of meat,  
a neural network,  
natural selection's most dubious child.

I sleep, I wake,  
I dump, I eat.  
The mastodon  
learned his lesson  
and taught me well.  
The universe  
is a brutal curse.  
It is a joke  
on everyone:  
a palindrome's  
satanic pun  
on Live,  
the Evil One.

There is no heaven  
and no hell  
beyond the dam  
of earth. As well  
believe in *me!*  
Politics  
decide which lot  
of masters rule  
and make you pay.  
'All for me,  
and none for you!'  
That is true  
of economics too.

And then there's fame:  
a billion fools  
over your  
TikTok drool:  
one zero  
times eight billion  
does not equal  
a hero.

Of course, there's lust:  
ten million gonads  
rub each other  
into dust.  
Pornography  
*trionfans*  
stalks the earth  
like a Marquis.

I live to eat,  
I live to drink.  
I live to sleep  
and not to think.  
I live to prink  
my sensitive skin,  
to vaunt my ego  
to the sun,  
and once a day  
to rut and come.  
I am a pig.  
There is no man.  
There is no woman.  
There is no human.  
There is no soul.  
There is no God.  
There is no God.  
There is no God!  
*There is no God!"*

*A crazy old woman, in rags and barefoot, runs across the stage, shrieking, then stops and stares at a person in the front row. She shouts:*

“Who are you?  
Do you know?  
I don’t know!  
What am I?  
A horsefly  
on the nose  
of a king!  
When I’m not  
a polka dot,  
a magpie  
in the spring!  
Don’t suppose  
I am prose!  
I am worse!  
I am verse!  
Let me ponder  
today’s wonder!  
Do you think  
we will win?  
Only when



we shall end!  
There's no wisdom  
in the kingdom!  
And the republic  
is very sick!  
Whirl, whirl  
goes the twirl  
of the world!  
Spinning tops  
all around us!  
Nothing stops!  
Dark surrounds us!  
And we think  
we won't sink  
in the trough  
if we think  
straight enough?  
Who is madder  
than this Hatter!  
Off we go!  
I don't know!  
I didn't know!  
I *won't* know!  
Let the wise  
me despise!  
It never stops  
till it drops."

*She runs out.*

*A white-haired, still robust older man, dressed as from a different age, and carrying a burning lamp, enters. He speaks in a singsong voice:*

"I walk the night with lamp in hand,  
I stop each man or woman I meet  
and raise my lamp and search their face  
and ask a simple question – thus:

'Who are you? Why are you here?  
Where are you going? What do you love?  
What have you done with your time on earth?  
Are you sad? Are you happy? Are you angry? Why?'

None of these questions is fair. And so

I shame the men and women I ask.  
That isn't the point. There is just one  
reply to them. But who can know?

None reply so. Earnest, absurd,  
they, to a one, will talk for days  
justifying themselves, their lives,  
their actions, with half-desperate words.

No one wants to bear the truth  
that lies like a boulder on his back.  
They will do anything not to look  
the real in its enigmatic face.

My lamp shakes in the shiftless breeze,  
the flame flickers like a bird  
trying to escape the darkness  
flooding from the mouths of men;

it is deeper than the blackest night.”

*An old man, homeless but neatly dressed, slowly pushes a cart  
piled with his possessions onstage. He speaks:*

“Each morning, I ask:  
God, what do you wish  
from me? And I wait  
as I lie on the street  
for a sign:  
the slip of a sparrow,  
a brush of wind,  
the shaking rain  
against a dark window,  
a spear of sun  
against a wall,  
the moan of a plane.

I hear the scales  
of a flute, the call  
of a mother for a child,  
the bark of a dog.

I have even heard  
a low, sweet voice  
with a single word

in the depths of me.

And I know I am answered  
tenderly.

It is as though God said,  
'This, for you,  
this, and this . . .  
*This* is what  
you must do.'

'Of course!' I think,  
'of course it is.'  
And rise to meet  
the greeting day,  
cold or warm,  
bright or gray,  
and bow and smile  
thankfully,  
a young man crazed  
with hope,  
a mother craving  
to feed her child,  
an artist hot  
with beauty,  
an old rich lunatic  
on the brink of sharing,  
all his wealth  
with all the world,  
out of the absurd,  
out of the impossible,  
out of mad pure craziness  
of love.

And I feel embraced—  
by whom? by what?  
Whatever the cause,  
I am held in warmth,  
and strength, and care, and tenderness.

*He sings:*

And the shadows part.  
And I know

that all is well.  
That I am well.  
That the world is well.  
That all, all is well.

*He speaks:*

And my cart turns into a chariot,  
and I enter into the kingdom of my day.”

*Master of Ceremonies:* And there you have it, Ladies and Gentlemen . . . and Non-Binary Folk! An evening of song, a time for laughter, a time for love! A look at our fellows and our silly ways! A little satire, a little fun, a little wisdom for everyone! A little light in the darkest night! We hope you’ll take something home with you, useful, amusing, and maybe even true!

And so we wish you all: Good Night!

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Christopher Bernard is an award-winning poet, novelist and essayist, and a co-editor (with Ho Lin, Steven Hill, and Jonah Raskin) as well as the original founder of *Caveat Lector*. His third collection of poems, *The Socialist’s Garden of Verses*, won a PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award and was named one of the “Top 100 Indie Books of 2021” by *Kirkus Reviews*. He is also recipient of an Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award. His novels include *A Spy in the Ruins* (“one of the best American novels since Thomas Pynchon and William Gass,” Miguel de Cervantes–award winning novelist Juan Goytisolo), *Voyage to a Phantom City* (“an enormous achievement,” award-winning translator Peter Bush), and *Meditations on Love and Catastrophe at The Liars’ Cafe* (“puts one in mind of *Ulysses* as much as *Naked Lunch*,” award-winning poet Ernest Hilbert). His most recent books are the middle-grade stories, the first in the “Otherwise” series, *If You Ride A Crooked Trolley* . . . and *The Judgment Of Biestia*.