

Happens to the Heart (SONG)

I was always working steady
But I never called it art
I got my shit together
Meeting Christ and reading Marx
It failed, my little fire
But it spread the dying spark
Go tell the young messiah
What happens to the heart

There's a mist of summer kisses
Where I tried to double-park
The rivalry was vicious
The women were in charge
It was nothing, it was business
But it left an ugly mark
I've come here to revisit
What happens to the heart

I was selling holy trinkets
I was dressing kind of sharp
Had a pussy in the kitchen
And a panther in the yard
In the prison of the gifted
I was friendly with the guards
So I never had to witness
What happens to the heart

I should have seen it coming
After all, I knew the chart
Just to look at her was trouble
It was trouble from the start
Sure, we played a stunning couple
But I never liked the part
It ain't pretty, it ain't subtle
What happens to the heart

Now the angel's got a fiddle
The devil's got a harp
Every soul is like a minnow
Every mind is like a shark
Me, I've broken every window
But the house, the house is dark
I care, but very little
What happens to the heart

Then I studied with this beggar
He was filthy, he was scarred
By the claws of many women
He had failed to disregard
No fable here, no lesson
No singing meadowlark
Just a filthy beggar guessing
What happens to the heart

I was always working steady
But I never called it art
It was just some old convention
Like the horse before the cart
I had no trouble betting
On the flood, against the ark
You see, I knew about the ending
What happens to the heart

I was handy with a rifle
My father's .303
I fought for something final
Not the right to disagree
I should have seen it coming
You could say I wrote the chart
Just to look at her was trouble
It was trouble from the start
Sure we played a stunning couple
But I never liked the part
It ain't pretty, it ain't subtle
What happens to the heart

Meeting Jesus reading Marx
Sure it failed my little fire
But it's bright the dying spark
Go tell the young messiah
What happens to the heart

—Leonard Cohen,
(Thanks for the Dance, 2019).

Happens to the Heart (POEM)

I was always working steady
But I never called it art
I was funding my depression
Meeting Jesus reading Marx
Sure it failed my little fire
But it's bright the dying spark
Go tell the young messiah
What happens to the heart

There's a mist of summer kisses
Where I tried to double-park
The rivalry was vicious
And the women were in charge
It was nothing, it was business
But it left an ugly mark
So I've come here to revisit
What happens to the heart

I was selling holy trinkets
I was dressing kind of sharp
Had a pussy in the kitchen
And a panther in the yard
In the prison of the gifted
I was friendly with the guard
So I never had to witness
What happens to the heart

I should have seen it coming
You could say I wrote the chart
Just to look at her was trouble
It was trouble from the start
Sure we played a stunning couple
But I never liked the part
It ain't pretty, it ain't subtle
What happens to the heart

Now the angel's got a fiddle
And the devil's got a harp
Every soul is like a minnow
Every mind is like a shark
I've opened every window
But the house, the house is dark
Just say Uncle, then it's simple
What happens to the heart

But I never called it art
The slaves were there already
The singers chained and charred
Now the arc of justice bending
And the injured soon to march
I lost my job defending
What happens to the heart

I studied with this beggar
He was filthy he was scarred
By the claws of many women
He had failed to disregard
No fable here no lesson
No singing meadow lark
Just a filthy beggar blessing
What happens to the heart

I was always working steady
But I never called it art
I could lift, but nothing heavy
Almost lost my union card
I was handy with a rifle
My father's 303
We fought for something final
Not the right to disagree

*Sure it failed my little fire
But it's bright the dying spark
Go tell the young messiah
What happens to the heart*

June 24, 2016

—Leonard Cohen, (*The Flame: Poems and Selections from the Notebooks*, 2018),