

The journal of a Calvin Webber. Discovered: Leeds, United Kingdom.

January 19

I have decided to take up journaling again. Doing so feels a bit silly, I rarely find myself in situations worth documenting. But Dr Bell says it might help me sleep, and I trust the man. Today I went to the store. The sale on eggs had ended. I returned a book to the library and walked home the long way.

January 24

Today, at lunch, I imagined it might be nice to get some fresh air. So I took my sandwich out to the park nearby. I thought I might even take a stroll before heading back to work. My ambitions were misplaced. The winds were cold today and cut through my jacket while I tried to enjoy my meal. Without gloves, I ate my sandwich quickly to try and spare my fingers from the chill. I forewent my walk and headed back to work early. So much for that.

I went to the store again.

Bread
Eggs
Milk
Mustard
Gloves (?)

March 13

I find keeping the habit difficult. I am in a new flat, which might be the cause of the recent troubles with sleep. The place is smaller but quiet. That is what I wanted. My last address became too harsh once the upstairs neighbors acquired a child. Here there are no children. No dogs.

March 17

Last night I awoke to church bells ringing from the street. This concerns me.

March 19

Today I saw the same man twice. Once on my way to the office, he was headed in the same direction as me. Then again, near the building's entrance when I went outside for lunch. He wore a nice grey wool coat.

Bread
Eggs
Milk

Coffee
Cheese
Salt

I forgot the milk.

March 20

I awoke again to bells coming from the church on the corner. My time has it as three-thirteen. I counted five chimes. I will have to inquire with the monsignor as to why there should be bells at three-thirteen in the morning.

March 22

I stayed in all day. Rain.

March 27

My nerves are getting the better of me. There were the sounds of neighbors moving in below. I am on the fourth and highest floor. I would have thought it difficult for downstairs neighbors to be so loud. I called Bell.

Milk
Sugar
Lightbulbs
Toothpaste
Tin

I do not know what “TIN” is.

March 28

I saw the man in the hat and coat again today. Our office is by the stations. Perhaps he commutes nearby.

March 30

I finally read the name of the church. It faces away from my window. In dark lettering over the entrance: “Saint Orinto”.

I asked the monsignor about the bells.

He was very polite.

I explained that I had been hearing them at three-thirteen in the morning. He listened without interrupting, I appreciated that. Then asked me whether I’d been drinking.

I told him no.
He asked me if I'd been sleeping.
I told him, rather less confidently, that I had been trying.
He then looked at me for a long time and then assured me that the church bells do not ring between the hours of midnight and five, as a courtesy to the neighbors.
I asked him what I had been hearing.
He said that there are many sounds at night.
I said I knew that.
He said, "Of course."
I disliked being told, "of course."

April 3

The man in the grey coat was standing across the street when I left work.
He was looking up at my building.
I thought to ask him what he was doing.
When I raised my hand, he raised his.
I did not wave.
He did.
I went back inside and waited fifteen minutes before leaving.
I felt foolish afterward.
I have decided not to mention this to Bell.

Iodine
Bread
Eggs
Milk
Tin
Soap

April 6

The bells rang again. Three-thirteen. Five chimes.

I counted twice.

I considered calling the police but decided against it. There is no sensible way to argue if the monsignor will not confess. And I doubt it is the upstanding thing to do, summoning the police on a church.

April 7

I am not ill, this is ridiculous.
I am a grown man. I have a respectable job. I pay taxes. I own three pairs of trousers that fit me well.

I will phone Dr Bell this week.

April 8

I heard what must have been workmen on the roof. I was not notified of any work being done. I will have to speak to the landlord. That is a shame, I hate speaking to him. However, their work did not disturb me. It was the midday hours, and I had finished on the phone with Dr Bell.

Toothpaste
Bread
Butter
Milk
Apples
Flour

I forgot the milk.
What good is a list.

April 10

There is a scratching noise behind the wall in my bedroom.
I assume it is the pipes. The building is old.
Everything in the building makes a noise.
Pipes knock, floors creak, radiators hiss. Doors swell in their frames.

Walls scratch.

The last is probably the pipes as well.
I will speak to the landlord.

April 11

I went to the store, I had nothing to buy. I wanted to stand in the aisles.

April 12

I spoke with Dr Bell on the phone.

I asked him if nerves can make you forget something.

He said yes.

I asked him if nerves can make you imagine something that never happened.

He said yes.

I asked him, "How are you supposed to tell then?"

He laughed.

I did not.

April 13

I have slept well the past two nights.

I saw the man in the coat and hat. I was walking to work, he was outside the station.

These encounters have begun to embarrass me. I try not to meet his eye.

He says to me, "You're late."

I thought that was a strange joke.

I laugh.

He does not.

Wafers

Milk

Butter

Soap

Coffee

Tin

String

April 14

I slept very poorly.

At three-twelve I hear the scratching.

At three-thirteen I hear five chimes.

At three-fourteen I hear footsteps above.

April 15

St. Orinto is closed.

There is not a sign saying when it will reopen.

I went to the store today.

Apples

Bread
Eggs
Coffee
Sugar
String

The cashier asked if I was making a recipe.

I said yes.

She asked what I was making.

I said I wasn't sure yet.

She laughed.

I did not.

I have begun to wonder if Bell is the problem.

That is unfair.

Dr Bell has always been perfectly sensible.

I bought new curtains for the bedroom. To keep out the moonlight.

April 17

I phoned Dr Bell.

He asked whether I had been sleeping.

I said no.

He asked whether I was eating well.

I said yes.
He said, "Good."

He advised me to take the next week off. To rest.
I agree with him.

April 19

There is something wrong with the tin.

I did not buy the tin. It is a blue biscuit tin with white flowers on the face. I found it under the bed.

There were four candles inside. I do not care for candles.

I burn them.

Not all at once.

That would be wasteful.

April 22

I have discovered something about the chimes.

They do not come from the church.

They come from beneath it.

I do not know how I know this.

April 23

The man in the coat was buying milk.

Tomato paste

Bread

Milk

Eggs

Cheese

Salt

Candles

I do not remember writing candles.

April 24

The store is closed today.

Holiday.

April 24

I go to St. Orinto.

I try the door.

It opens.

Inside, there are no pews.

There are no statues.

There are no candles.

There is a long staircase descending.

I do not go down.

April 26

I call Bell.

He does not answer.

April 27

I went to the store today.

Cream

Bread

Milk

Coffee

Pins

Candles

String

I showed the cashier the list.

She asked if I had forgotten something.

I said no.

She said, "You always forget something."

I asked her what she meant.

She looked frightened.

I left without Milk.

April 28

I spoke to the man in the coat. We discussed the weather.

He said he was waiting for someone.

I did not like the look on his face.

April 30

There is writing in the tin. I had not noticed it before.

Underneath the lid there were the words.

"AS ABOVE SO BELOW."

May 2

The man in the coat was talking to the cashier.

She laughed.

May 3

I found a grocery receipt in the kitchen along with four candles.
I do not remember buying them.

On the receipt were nine words

“I DO NOT KNOW HOW BUT THEY FOUND ME.”

May 5

I count the steps it takes from the store to my flat.
It is not a very pretty number.

I have begun to understand the lists more

I wish I didn't

Honey
Bread
Milk
Eggs
Sugar
Tin
String
Candles

May 7

The scratching has moved beneath the bed. The footsteps remain above.
I live on the fourth floor.

I will stop writing. If something needs buying, I will remember it.

May 13

Three-thirteen, I hear the chimes. Only there are nine this time.

I wrote it down immediately.

Nine

Nine

Nine

I will not think about that too much.
I am sitting very still.
Still so that I can hear.
I hear the chimes, the footsteps, the scratching
And the breathing.
There is breathing outside my door. It is soft, slow breaths.
I press my face to the floor. I try to see a shadow.
There is breathing and two feet.
I do not sleep.

May 15

Elderberries
Bread
Milk
Eggs
Butter
Salt
Apples

I did not write this.
The kitchen is empty.

May 19

The scratching has stopped.
I wish it hadn't.

May 20

I called Bell.

He asked whether I was taking the tablets he had prescribed.

I said yes.

He asked whether I was eating properly.

I said yes.

He asked whether I was spending much time alone.

I said no.

There was a pause.

Then Bell said, "Calvin, you are alone."

I thought that was a strange thing to say.

I asked him if he had heard the bells.

He asked,

"Bells?"

May 21

I went back to St. Orinto.

Moonlight poured in through the stained glass.

I had not noticed— strange vignettes frozen in the large windows.

An old man picking at his face.

Angels assaulting a calf, consuming its flesh.

A small child falling down a well.

The vivid painted colors blanched by the bone-yellow light outside.

I looked for the monsignor.

I went down the stairs.

I counted them.

At the last step there was a door.

And the smell of burnt sugar.

There was no light except the illumination of the moon, far behind me, up the one hundred and ninety-three stairs.

I put my ear to the door. The wood was cool and damp.

And the sound of breathing.

May 22

I woke up this morning.

I do not remember going to sleep.

May 23

There is a pattern to the scratching.

I will not document it here though.

I was foolish to keep a journal.

May 31

Five
Four
Four
Six
Four
Seven

I do not know what this means.

Sausages
Bread
Milk
Coffee
Tin
Mirror

The cashier would not look at me.

I asked her why the eggs no longer go on sale.

She began laughing.

I do not know what I said.

June 2

I called Dr Bell today.

I was happy when he answered.

I told him I had not been sleeping well.

I told him I had stopped eating.

I told him I had told him I had not been to the store.

I told him I had not left the flat in days.

He said nothing.

I could only hear his breathing.

Quiet. Slow. Wet.

I listened for ten minutes, then hung up the phone.

June 3

Five
Four
Six
Three
Six

Nine

Nine

Nine

June 6

To Grasp
To Contain
To Bind
To See
To Remember

June 7

I DO NOT KNOW HOW BUT THEY FOUND ME

June 8

I talked to the man in the coat.
He told me his name.
I cannot remember it.
I did not write it down quick enough.
He addressed me by name.

I asked him how he knew my name.

He said, "IT IS GOOD TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS."

I asked him where he lived.

He said nothing.

He looked cold. Perhaps he is ill.

June 9

The footsteps are moving.
Nine steps. I count them twice.
They are in the hallway now.
They are below.

I must speak to the landlord.

June 10

I

June 11

II

June 12

III

June 13

III

June 14

HH

I found a receipt:

Iodine
Milk
Salt
Yeast
Razors x 2
Onions

“HE LIVES ABOVE YOU”

June 15

HH I

June 17

HH II

June 18

HH III

June 19

HH IIII

I know what is beneath the church.

I know what is on the fifth floor.

June 20

I must keep writing.

They are watching.

The walls are breathing.
Perhaps it is the pipes.

Perhaps it is the neighbors.

June 21

I

June 22

II

June 23

III

There was a funeral today.
I watched from my window.
All were in coats.

June 24

IIII

June 25

HHH

St Orinto is closed.
Silly. I forgot.
There was no funeral.
Just the bells.

June 26

I must keep writing.

June 27

I

June 28

II

June 29

III

June 30

III

The bells rang twice.
Followed by the scratching.
THEN breathing.
Followed by footsteps.

Odd.

July 1

HHH

July 2

HHH I

July 3

HHH II

July 4

HHH III

The man in the coat has been staying with me. He leaves me notes. I have not seen him. He leaves early for work. I doubt he sleeps much.

July 5

HHH IIII

July 6

I burn candles at all hours.

I do not care for the dark.

Candles keep the place well lit.

It keeps shadows from coming underneath the door.

July 7

I have decided to take up journaling again.

July 8

Dr Bell phoned.

We laughed.

July 9

I am writing with the aid of candlelight. I must keep writing. I have forgotten why. I always forget. But I remember to write. The journal practically keeps itself. I will write tomorrow. The doctor says it is important to keep a journal. It helps with remembering details. Names. Dates. Lists. Perhaps I will take in the air today. Perhaps there will not be anything in front of the door. I may go to the roof. I may listen to music. I may talk with my friends. What a strange thing to say. They watch as I write. I do not look at them. They watch me from the kitchen. From under the bed. The writing is to their liking. I do not know how to feel about this. Moonlight has been coming from below. There are many gaps in the floorboards. I must talk to the doctor. I have tried to show him my journal, but he says nothing. What was his name? I see it written here: "Bell." That cannot be right. The name does not ring a bell. I laugh. Either way, that is why a journal is important. It is time to replace the curtains. The old ones are not my taste. And new razors too. I have neglected to buy more. I should make a list.

July 19

The man in the grey coat has stopped coming.

I must meet him.

I must not keep him waiting.

September 2

Dr. Bell came to see me.

He stood in the doorway.

He looked tired.

He said I had been missing appointments.

I told him I had never missed an appointment.

He said I had been dead for three months.

I laughed.

He did not.

I asked him what day it was.

He told me.

I asked him where we were.

He looked around the room.

Then he looked at me.

He said,

"You're not supposed to be here."

September 16

The weather is turning cold again.

I should go and buy a coat.

September 21

I have begun to wonder who I am writing to.

What is your name?

I will write it down.

That way I will remember.

September 22

I understand now.

Thank God.

I understand.

What sweetness it is to understand.

Bread

Eggs

Milk

September 23

The chimes rang twice.

I counted.

First five.

Then nine.

Once above.

Once below.

It was cold.

I closed the window.

September 24

Dear whoever find this,

I have decided to leave a message for you.

I wish you luck.

September 25

Bread

September 26

Milk

September 27

Eggs

September 28

Salt

September 29

DO NOT FORGET THE SALT

September 30

Sausages

September 31

The art of memory keeping evades me.

October 1

October 2

I forgot yesterday.

That is a shame.

October 3

There are no neighbors.

There is no church.

There is no saint.

There is no store.

There is no roof.

There is only you.

October 4

Are they watching?

October 5

It is hard to tell.

October 6

Try not to forget.

October 7

Perhaps you should keep a journal.

October 8

I almost forgot.

Thank you.

October 9

The man in the coat was waiting for me.

He waited outside the station.

I said good morning.

He looked tired.

He passed me a note.

He said, "Do not read it."

I looked at him.

He said he was sorry.

I forgot what he said next.

He started to cry.

Crying makes me uneasy.
He said,

“I’m sorry.”

“You were not meant to find it.”

“I was meant to stop you.”

I asked him what.

I couldn’t hear him.

The chimes were ringing.

October 10

There is a journal.

I had not noticed it before.

It sits in the kitchen. On the counter.
Next to the bread.

Is this mine?

October 11

Is this mine?

October 12

Is this mine?

October 13

Why don’t you answer?

October 14

Are you still reading?

October 15

Are they still watching?

October 16

I am an easy person to find.

October 17

I kept my address in the front.

In case I forgot.

October 18

Do you hear breathing?

October 19

Are they in the kitchen?

October 20

Listen.

October 21

I know how.

October 22

I am sorry.

October 23

They were not looking for me.

December 1

I have decided to take up journaling again.

Doing so feels a bit silly.

I rarely find myself in situations worth documenting.

Today I went to the store.

The sale on eggs had ended.

I returned a book to the library and walked home the long way.

I saw a man in a grey wool coat.

He waved.

I waved back.