APRIL FOOL BIRTHDAY POEM FOR GRANDPA

Today is your birthday and I have tried writing these things before, but now in the gathering madness, I want to thank you for telling me what to expect for pulling no punches, back there in that scrubbed Bronx parlor thank you for honestly weeping in time to innumerable heartbreaking italian operas for pulling my hair when I pulled the leaves off the trees so I’d know how it feels, we are involved in it now, revolution, up to our knees and the tide is rising, I embrace strangers on the street, filled with their love and mine, the love you told us had to come or we die, told them all in that Bronx park, me listening in spring Bronx dusk, breathing stars, so glorious to me your white hair, your height your fierce blue eyes, rare among italians, I stood a ways off looking up at you, my grandpa people listened to, I stand a ways off listening as I pour out soup young men with light in their faces at my table, talking love, talking revolution which is love, spelled backwards, how you would love us all, would thunder your anarchist wisdom at us, would thunder Dante, and Giordano Bruno, orderly men bent to your ends, well I want you to know we do it for you, and your ilk, for Carlo Tresca, for Sacco and Vanzetti, without knowing
it, or thinking about it, as we do it for Aubrey Beardsley
Oscar Wilde (all street lights
shall be purple), do it
for Trotsky and Shelley and big/dumb
Kropotkin
Eisenstein’s Strike people, Jean Cocteau’s ennui, we do it for
the stars over the Bronx
that they may look on earth
and not be ashamed.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #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 maître 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 go board, stepping always
(we hope) between the lines
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #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
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #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 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 cornmeal 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