

# Joseph Lease

## America

Try saying *wren*.

It's midnight

in my body, 4 a.m. in my body, breeding and olives and cherries. Wait, it's all rotten. How am I ever. Oh notebook. A clown explains the war. What start or color or kind of grace. I have to teach. I have to run, eat less junk. Oh CNN. What start or color. There's a fist of meat in my solar plexus and green light in my mouth and little chips of dream flake off my skin. Try saying *wren*. Try saying *mercy*.

Try anything.

### America

*the sin most insistently called abhorrent to God is the failure of generosity, the neglect of widow and orphan, the oppression of strangers and the poor, the defrauding of the laborer—*

We're going back home to  
night pushes through money

We're going back home to  
every vote counts

**America**

It's the end (of something), the name in the leaves, you were there with a glass of blue  
when my face split in half—voices you heard one night in one town, just beyond the  
strips of light—leaves on grass, leaves on grass, astonishing sky—

Morning smells like piss, it's the end of the word, and I never quite "believed" (enough),  
or just at the wrong moment—

**America**

If birds  
If  
The sky  
Is the  
Sky  
If birds  
Tangle  
Prayer  
I  
I'm

**America**

America says fight the bosses. America told Ada. You can speak. You can speak.  
A million years away, the algebra of need, addicted to the Dow, to the camera, to  
the sound of wind, the summer sky, the winter sky.

Oh I  
Need you're so soft

Lavender

Sky

Sky like whiskey

**America**

Wake up, you're not the truth—

“in April 2002, Dick Cheney stated directly that the ‘War on Terrorism’ will probably never end, at least not in our lifetimes”—leaves everywhere on grass, astonishing sky, oh well—wake us,

wake us

and we—

**America**

Want my

back porch, want my front porch, want my milkweed,  
my willow tree, want a new body, want a new mouth,  
Christmas tipsy, kiss, yes—

I want to live forever, why not, why

not admit it—

**America**

What we're talking about is nothing less than rescuing a democracy that is so polarized it is in danger of being paralyzed and pulverized. And this is and you are and we are: say we are the people: we are people, the people:

say democracy: say free and responsible government, say popular consent:

say a democracy so polarized, say polarized, say paralyzed:

say free and responsible government, say informed public, say journalism,  
journalism, journalism—

**America**

*Airbrushed*  
*Gwyneth at*  
*the Renoir*  
*Hotel*  
*St. Pauli*  
*Girl*  
*California Check*  
*Cashing*  
*Leaves and*  
*Shadows*  
*City of God*

**America**

While California's colleges and universities were shedding 8,000 jobs, the Department of Corrections hired 26,000 new employees to guard 112,000 new inmates.

Say it—there is still magic in the world—it's in your wallet—use your Visa Card—your next purchase could be free—

**America**

as if

there were no rules and dreams were safe—

write to your congressional representative,

write to your congressional representative,

write to, keep imagining—and you can't

get to the real world, they keep showing

the real world on TV

**America**

*And—as if this phrase had never been abused in our lifetimes—to the ideal of a free society.* It's midnight in my body, 4 a.m. in my body, breeding and olives and cherries. Wait it's all rotten. How am I ever. A clown explains the war. Oh notebook.

**America**

You

Are past the boundary now, past the world that

Made the world, you are past the water's skin, past

The edge of coming home: you are free and you are Drunk and guilty—like a picture in a glass, like the Fullness of the sun, like a body come undone, you

Are past the water's skin, long and long and run

Away—

**America**

“Give in.”

NASDAQ +12.90. Dow close: 10,617.78.

Hey kids, big sexy corporation!

Don't be a quitter—

**America**

O Captain, my

Captain, citizen, citizen.

Feels like. You killed someone or no. You didn't. You did. You're responsible, irresponsible. Didn't do it, can't remember. Feel like you might have. Might have. Killed someone. Won't remember. Don't want to remember. Don't want to be told again—

Try saying *wren*.

Try saying *mercy*.

Try anything.

**America**

If birds

If

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Prayer

I

I'm

**America**

my scream is a brand name:

blue—for a while—

elm trees and summer and birch trees and sky, elm trees and summer and birch trees  
and sky: expensive houses, expensive houses dying: this lack of justice I acknowledge  
mine—

America, one extra summer night—he wants to (you know) feel like a giant eyeball—

**America**

*the sin most insistently called abhorrent to God is the failure of generosity, the neglect  
of widow and orphan, the oppression of strangers and the poor, the defrauding of the*

*laborer—*

We're going back home to  
night pushes through money

We're going back home to every vote counts we're changing the rules  
we're expecting disaster funding the nightmare sure starve the poor  
try our new prayer try our new blue Sunday try our new football game  
turn off the shooting try our new daydream and  
try our

new rights