

Karl Sandberg

Scripture Lesson

Here beginneth the text:

*The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from Jerusalem,
and the heavens and the earth shake.*

Joel 3:16

*The roar of the lion, the voice of the
fierce lion,
the teeth of the young lions, are
broken.*

Job 4:10

And here the interpretation thereof:

There was a time
When the measure of the earth
Was lions.
And the earth was full of lions,
Created by the power of the word,
the word of a race of mighty men and story tellers
the words of mighty hunters
spoken around the stove in winter time
men lean and strong, each a colossus to my eyes, who
measured themselves against lions
in the hills blue with winter.

I thought I knew them and lions
When there was a circus came to Panguitch
and I saw a man crack his whip,
saw the lion jump through the hoop,
saw it do the bidding of the trainer
and sleep gorged in the cage.
And long I saw thus all lions,
Imagined thus myself a tamer of lions.

Different, I saw, were the men of the hills,
Different the lions,
When Marcus and Merthel came riding down from the
 winter blue mountains,
Rifles in saddle scabbards,
Their pack of hounds following after them,
A mountain lion on the pack horse,
A lion that stretched across the entire kitchen
When they brought it in to show to the invalid grandmother.

Long I looked at this lion,
Did not touch it

 (who would touch a burning bush?)
But ever after thought upon it, and saw him as in life:
 Underneath his hide the sinews ran,
 as silently as his feet did
 through the scrub oak and over the ravine,
Crouching to spring
From the unexpected place.
And, oh! from out his throat and brain when he roared —
 the sound, immense as all the ancient hills and valleys,
 set the cedars shaking, and the sage hillsides,
 rolling over lines and fences, no one ever knew where
 it would stop.

(From the ranch house near the cedar hills
We sometimes heard the roaring in the night,
And we would have laughed that
Anyone should think to fence it in or out,
 should think to say to the lion
 “Thou shalt not roar now
 for it is not convenient
 for us to hear thee roar”
 or
 “Thou shalt roar just so,
 to me but not to him,
 to us but not to them,
Thou shalt roar this far and no farther.”)

And with the passing of the years
Differently I saw the men who tracked him,
When I too felt the wild cry of blood,
The cry to go with them,
Endlessly with horse and baying dogs
 across day and night,
 not resting, fascinated,
 drawn on to hear the mortal snarling, to see his claws
 ripping the hounds, when he was brought to bay,
 to see his eyes flash,
 at that one moment,
 defiance of men and hounds and all beyond.

Yes, how different then
 for my eyes was the lion that jumped
Through the hoop
At the bidding of the trainer,
How different the world
 when emptied of lions
Except those that
 sleep gorged in a cage.