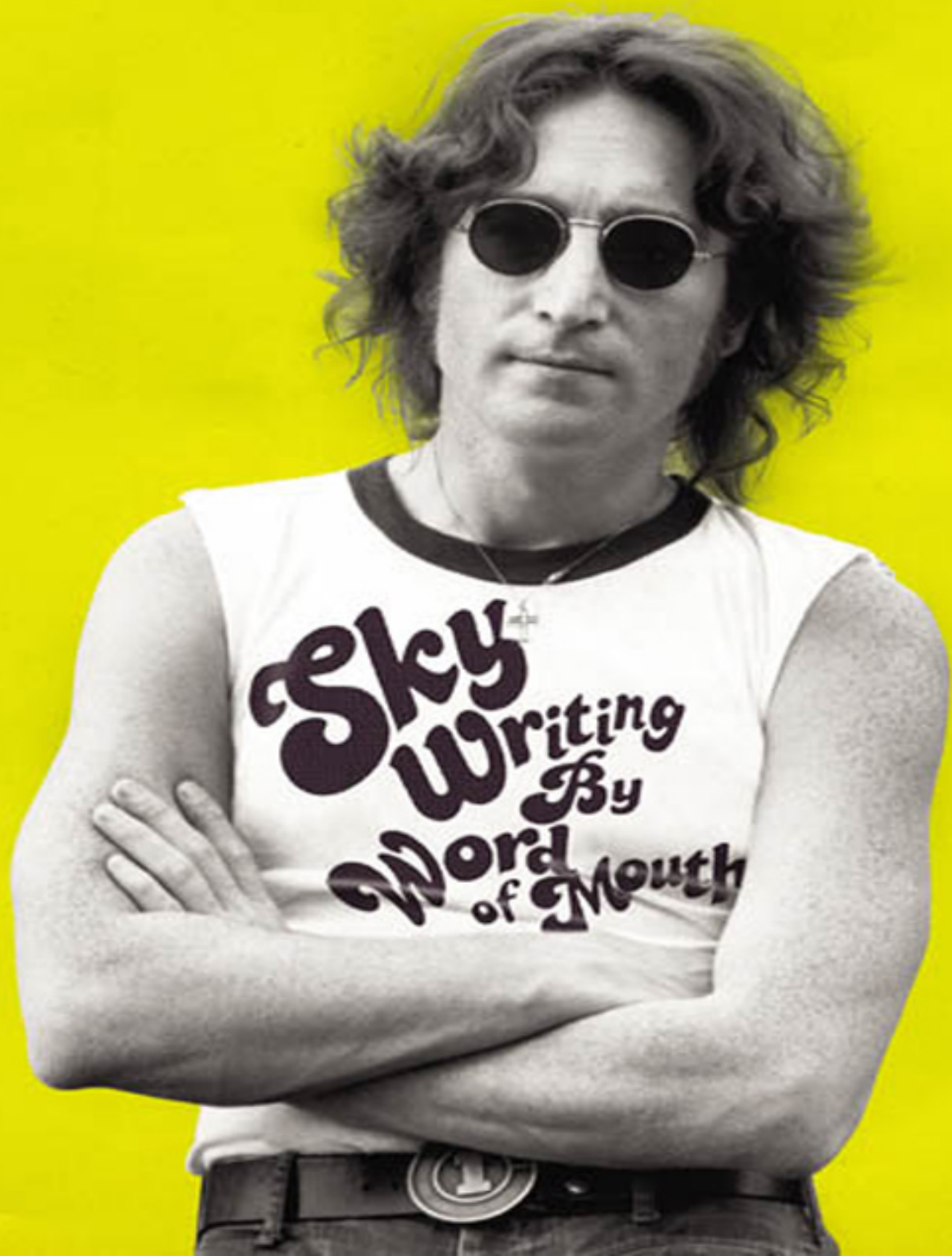


VINTAGE LENNON



Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

Also by John Lennon

Title Page

THE BALLAD OF JOHN AND YOKO

“All We Were Saying Was Give Peace a Chance”

“We’d All Love to See the Plan”

“We Fought the Law and the Law Lost”

“The Mysterious Smell of Roses”

TWO VIRGINS

AN ALPHABET

SKYWRITING BY WORD OF MOUTH

Skywriting by Word of Mouth

Subtitled "Lucy in the Scarf with Diabetics"

Up Yours

Puma Eats Coast Guard

Puma Eats Scapegoat

Spare Me the Agony of Your Birth Control

"Demented in Denmark"

"It Nearly Happened in Rome"

"A Paradox and a Matching Sweater, Please"

"The Air Hung Thick Like a Hustler's Prick"

"A Conspiracy of Silence Speaks Louder Than Words"

"Nobel Peace Prize Awarded to Killer Whale"

"The Art of Deception Is in the Eye of the Beholder"

"Be Were Wolf of Limitations," or ... "The Spirit of Boogie
Be Upon You"

"A Word in Your Orifice," or ... "Bebe Seagull Bites Dust"

The Incredible Mediocre Rabbits

Europe on Five Camels a Day

"Death Is Switching Channels on TV"

Chapter 23 or 27: In Which a Harvard Graduate Faints at
the Sight of Enlightenment ...

"Florence de Bortcha Has Nuptials"

Grueling Bi Centennial Scatters Entrails

"A Reason for Breathing"

"Hang This Garlick Round Your Neck and You'll Never
Marry"

Experts Dance at Soc Hop Ball

The Importance of Being Erstwhile

"Never Cross a Horse with a Loose Woman"

The Life of Reilly, by Ella Scott Fitzgeraldine

Chapter Forty-One: A Complete Change of Pacemaker
Never Underestimate the Power of Attorney

AFTERWORD by Yoko Ono

Copyright

About the Book

WITH AN AFTERWORD BY YOKO ONO AND ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

John Lennon wrote the material collected in *Skywriting by Word of Mouth* during Yoko Ono's pregnancy with Sean Lennon. After John's assassination in 1980, his manuscript was stolen from the Lennon's home. *Skywriting* was finally published in 1986, and it displays all of Lennon's extraordinary creativity and inventiveness with language. It includes Lennon's only piece of autobiography, 'The Ballad of John and Yoko' as well as short works of fiction, accounts of falling in love, marriage, the break-up of the Beatles and life in America.

About the Author

John Lennon, MBE, was born in Liverpool in 1940. He was a singer, songwriter, author, and peace activist who gained worldwide fame as one of the founding members of *The Beatles*. He was shot by an obsessive fan and died in December 1980.

Also by John Lennon

In His Own Write & A Spaniard in the Works

JOHN LENNON

Skywriting By Word of Mouth

WITH AN AFTERWORD BY YOKO ONO

VINTAGE BOOKS
London



at last he could see the mountains

THE BALLAD OF JOHN AND YOKO



I'D ALWAYS HAD a fantasy about a woman who would be a beautiful, intelligent, dark-haired, high-cheek-boned, free-spirited artist (à la Juliette Greco).

My soul mate.

Someone that I had already known, but somehow had lost.

After a short visit to India on my way home from Australia, the image changed slightly—she had to be a dark-eyed *Oriental*. Naturally, the dream couldn't come true until I had completed the picture.

Now it was complete.



Of course as a teenager, my sexual fantasies were full of Anita Ekberg and the usual giant Nordic goddesses. That is, until Brigitte Bardot became the “love of my life” in the late Fifties. All my girlfriends who weren't dark-haired suffered under my constant pressure to become Brigitte. By the time I married my first wife (who was, I think, a natural auburn), she too had become a long-haired blonde with the obligatory bangs.

Met the real Brigitte a few years later. I was on acid and she was on her way out.



I finally met Yoko and the dream became a reality.

The only woman I'd ever met who was my equal in every way imaginable. My better, actually. Although I'd had numerous interesting "affairs" in my previous incarnation, I'd never met anyone worth breaking up a happily-married state of boredom for.

Escape, at last! Someone to leave home for! *Somewhere to go*. I'd waited an eternity.



Since I was extraordinarily shy (especially around beautiful women), my daydreams necessitated that she be aggressive enough to "save me," i.e., "take me away from all this." Yoko, although shy herself, picked up my spirits enough to give me the courage to get the hell out, just in time for me to avoid having to live with my ex-wife's new nose. She also had had side-interests, much to the surprise of my pre-liberated male ego.

They got the new nose. And I got my dream woman. Yoko.



Having been brought up in the genteel poverty of a lower-middle-class environment, I should not have been surprised by the outpouring of race-hatred and anti-female malice to which we were subjected in that bastion of democracy, Great Britain (including the now-reformed Michael Caine, who said something through his cute Cockney lisp to the effect that "I can't see why 'ee don't find a nice English girl"). What a riot! One of "our boys" leaving his Anglo-Saxon (whatever that is) hearth and home and taking up with a bloody Jap to boot! Doesn't he know about *The*

Bridge on the River Kwai? Doesn't he remember Pearl Harbour!



The English press had a field day venting all their pent-up hatred of foreigners on Yoko. It must have been hard for them: what with the Common Market and all, they'd had to lay off hating frogs, wogs, clogs, krauts, and eye-ties (in print, that is), not to mention the jungle bunnies. It was humiliating and painful for both of us to have her described as ugly and yellow and other derogatory garbage, especially by a bunch of beer-bellied, red-necked "aging" hacks; you are what you eat and think. We know what they eat and are told what to think: their masters' leftovers.



It was hard for Yoko to understand, having been recognized all her life as one of the most beautiful and intelligent women in Japan. The racism and sexism were overt. I was ashamed of Britain. Even though I was full of race and anti-female prejudice myself (buried deep where it had been planted), I still bought that English fairy story about the Yanks being the racists: "Not us, old boy, it just wouldn't be cricket." The "Gentleman's Agreement" runs from top to bottom. But I must say I've found on my travels that every race thinks it's superior to every other; the same with class (the American myth being they have no class system).



It was a horrifying experience. I thought of asking Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Lane for advice, but never did (they were the only other biracial couple I'd heard of in Britain). The press led the howling mob, and the foul-mouthed Silent Majority followed suit. The hate mail from the cranks was

particularly inspiring; I tried to publish it at Jonathan Cape but they thought ... Still, it made a change from the begging letters which always coincided with whatever well-publicized particular problems we were facing at the moment, e.g.,

I'm sorry to hear of your wife's recent miscarriage. We, too, have suffered the same tragedy as you, sir, but unlike your good selves do not have the wherewithal to purchase a nice semidetached in the south of France, and as you have so much money, you would be making a 100-year-old spastic and his deaf wife and little crippled children very happy. Sir, it's not too much to ask, ... etc.

Or:

I, too, was planted and wrongfully arrested by the world-renowned British police [another myth down the drain], and also recently narrowly escaped death in a car crash in Scotland, and wondered if you could see your way to helping a blind priest and his invalid mother get to church on Sundays ... etc., etc., etc.

And was Jerusalem builded there? I doubt it.



Apart from giving me the courage to break out of the Stockbroker Belt ... Yoko also gave me the inner strength to look more closely at my other marriage. *My real marriage*. To the Beatles, which was more stifling than my domestic life. Although I had thought of it often enough, I lacked the guts to make the break earlier.



My life with the Beatles had become a trap. A tape loop. I had made previous short excursions on my own, writing books, helping convert them into a play for the National Theatre. I'd even made a movie without the others (a lousy one at that, directed by that zany man in search of power, Dick Lester). But I had made the movie more in reaction to the fact that the Beatles had decided to stop touring than with real independence in mind. Although even then (1965) my eye was already on freedom.

Basically, I was panicked by the idea of having “nothing to do.” What is life, without touring? Life, that's what. I always remember to thank Jesus for the end of my touring days; if I hadn't said that the Beatles were “bigger than Jesus” and upset the very Christian Ku Klux Klan, well, Lord, I might still be up there with all the other performing fleas! God bless America. Thank you, Jesus.



When I finally had the guts to tell the other three that I, quote, wanted a divorce, unquote, they knew it was for real, unlike Ringo and George's previous threats to leave. I must say I felt guilty for springing it on them at such short notice. After all, I had Yoko—they only had each other. I was guilty enough to give McCartney credit as a co-writer on my first independent single instead of giving it to Yoko, who had actually co-authored it (“Give Peace a Chance”).



I started the band. I disbanded it. It's as simple as that. Yoko and I instinctively decided that the best form of defense was attack—but in our own sweet way: *Two Virgins*, our first LP, in which the sight of two slightly overweight ex-junkies in the nude gave John and Yoko a damned good laugh and apoplexy to the Philistines of the

so-called civilized world! Including those famous avant-garde revolutionary thinkers, Paul, George and It's Only Ringo. I bear them no ill will. In retrospect, the Beatles were no more an important part of my life than any other (and less than some).



It's irrelevant to me whether I ever record again. I started with rock and roll and ended with pure rock and roll (my *Rock and Roll* album). If the urge ever comes over me and it is irresistible, then I will do it for fun. But otherwise I'd just as soon leave well enough alone. I have never subscribed to the view that artists "owe a debt to the public" any more than youth owes its life to king and country. I made myself what I am today. Good and bad. The responsibility is mine alone.

All roads lead to Rome. I opened a shop; the public bought the goods at fair market value. No big deal. And as for show biz, it was never my life. I often wish, knowing it's futile, that Yoko and I weren't famous and we could have a really private life. But it's spilt milk, or rather blood, and I try not to have regrets and don't intend to waste energy and time in an effort to become anonymous. That's as dumb as becoming famous in the first place.



an apple pie bed.