

1980

# Instructions for the Next Century

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## Recommended Citation

Dunn, Stephen. "Instructions for the Next Century." *The Iowa Review* 11.4 (1980): 92-92. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2661>

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Instructions for the Next Century ·  
*Stephen Dunn*

Instead of spouse say sailing ship,  
instead of dancing say  
ancient ruins.

When you want love  
don't say sailing ship, say  
seven-or-eleven.

When you want music say sacrifice,  
for if you dance  
to that music someone will say

secret police which means  
secret police and you'll be caught  
with all the wrong words.

Say cellar door  
when they take you in. Say it  
until it means something else.

Say whipped cream when you mean  
emptiness, say blue lagoon  
when you mean nightmare.

If all day you've planned to escape  
try to be silent. The most silent  
words are ocean floor.

Say ocean floor, blue lagoon, whipped  
cream over and over;  
you will not escape

but other prisoners might hear you  
and call it sacrifice, which will be  
music to the few who remember.

These are your friends. Say seven-or-eleven  
to them. Hold them in your arms  
and call it ancient ruins.