BOOK / 1999



THE TIN SUN ALMANAC FOR THE YEAR THAT WILL NOT ARRIVE

Anonymous

APOCALYPSE CULT

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Anonymous, 1999

TO THE READER

This almanac is offered for a year that the compiler has been assured, on excellent authority, will not arrive. He has gone to the trouble regardless. It is a poor almanac-maker who lets the end of the world interfere with the spring edition.

The predictions within are guaranteed in the customary manner: that is to say, they will be found correct by those who remember the ones that came true and forget the rest. The weather has been obtained from the usual source, which is last year's weather, moved about.

Should the year arrive after all, the reader is asked to accept the compiler's apologies, and to consider the book as applying to the next.

JANUARY

Weather. Cold, with intervals of disappointment. Frost on the 3rd, the 9th and wherever you have left the car.

Feasts. The 1st, Feast of the Surprised: observed by those who went to bed expecting catastrophe and woke to find the milk delivered. A day of mild embarrassment. Do not telephone anyone before noon.

Prediction. A man in authority will announce that lessons have been learned. He will not say which.

For the household. This is the month to take down decorations and put up with relatives. Check the batteries in the torch. Check them again. You will not need the torch; you will feel better.

MARCH

Weather. Wind. The kind that has been somewhere worse and is telling you about it.

Feasts. The 14th, Saint Reluctance, patron of those who agreed to something in November. The 21st, Equinox, when day and night are of equal length and equally unsatisfactory.

Prediction. A thing you have been dreading will happen and be, on the whole, all right. You will have no time to enjoy this, as a thing you have not been dreading will happen the same afternoon.

For the garden. Sow early. Most of it will not come up. Sow anyway; the alternative is to stand in the garden with nothing to blame.

MAY

Weather. Fine. Suspiciously so. Carry a coat and resent it.

Feasts. The 1st, Labour Day, celebrated by not doing any. The 19th, Feast of the Unanswered Letter. Reply to one. It will not be the one that mattered.

Prediction. Experts will warn. Other experts will reassure. A third group of experts will be found to have been right all along and will be given no credit whatever.

For the health. The season of coughs is over and the season of sneezing begun. The almanac recommends, as it has for forty editions, a short walk and a low opinion of mankind. Neither has ever been known to do harm.

AUGUST

Weather. Hot. Those who complained of the cold in January will complain of this. They are the same people. They are all of us.

Feasts. The whole month is kept as the Feast of Somewhere Else, when the population travels at great expense to be uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. The 31st, Return of the Luggage, a movable feast.

Prediction. It will be the hottest month since records began, which the reader should note is not very long ago, records being a recent invention and already tired.

For the traveller. Take half the clothes and twice the money. This advice appears in every almanac ever printed and has never once been followed.

OCTOBER

Weather. Leaves, wet. A smell of smoke from no identifiable source. Fog, to give the mornings some privacy.

Feasts. The 31st, Eve of All Hallows, when the dead are said to walk. The almanac's view is that the dead have earned a rest and are unlikely to spend it visiting. Leave a light on in any case. It is courteous, and it helps with the stairs.

Prediction. Someone will remark that the nights are drawing in. He will say it as though it were news. Be patient with him. It is the only prophecy he has, and it always comes true.

For the household. Bring in what cannot stand frost. Forgive what you can. The almanac does not say these are connected. It observes that they fall in the same month.

DECEMBER

Weather. Dark at four. Rain that had hoped to be snow. One clear night, about the 20th, with more stars than seems necessary.

Feasts. The 21st, Solstice, the shortest day: after which, the almanac is obliged to report, things get lighter, whatever one's opinion of them. The 31st, Last Night, kept by staying up to witness the end of a year which will be replaced, at once, by another exactly like it.

Prediction. The world will not end. It has had every opportunity, and it has never yet taken one. The compiler stakes his reputation on this, having little else to stake.

For the household. Bank the fire. Lock the door, not against anything in particular. Count who is in the house. That is the sum that matters, and the only one the almanac has never got wrong.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR ANY YEAR

1. Expect less. You will be right more often, and the surprises will all be pleasant.
2. Keep a candle, a tin of something and a book you have already read. The first two are for emergencies. The third is for the emergency of being bored during the first two.
3. When told that this time it is different, enquire different from what.
4. Do not hoard. It encourages the end of the world by giving it something to aim at.
5. Be civil to prophets. They are frightened. So would you be, if you believed them.
6. If the worst should come, it will come on a weekday, during something else. Nothing important has ever happened to anyone who was ready for it.
7. Whatever the year brings, somebody will have to make the tea. Let it be you. It is the one office from which no catastrophe has ever removed the holder.

THE COMPILER'S FAREWELL

Here the almanac ends, as all things must and, by current report, shortly will.

The compiler has been making these books for a good many years and has predicted, in that time, some thousands of events, of which a respectable number occurred. He has never predicted the end,

because there is no trade in it. An almanac for the last year sells one edition.

He wishes the reader a fair January and no worse a December than can be helped. He will be at his desk in the new year, should there be one, preparing the next. He has already done the weather.

ABOUT THIS TEXT

TITLE	The Tin Sun Almanac for the Year That Will Not Arrive
AUTHOR	Anonymous
DATE	1999
TYPE	Book
PUBLISHER	Printed for the compiler
EXTENT	48 pages, paper covers; extracts given here
LANGUAGE	English
SOURCE	Set from a copy bought at a rummage sale. The almanac covers twelve months; we give the preface, six months, the general advice and the farewell.

In the last months of 1999 a good many people expected the world to end, or at any rate to stop working, at midnight on the thirty-first of December. The anonymous compiler of this almanac did not share the belief. He shared the mood, and he made a book out of it.

The almanac is one of the oldest forms of popular print: a cheap annual offering a calendar, the phases of the moon, forecasts of weather and fortune, and advice on planting and health. It has always been half in earnest. The Tin Sun Almanac follows the form exactly and fills it with predictions for a year that, on the cover's own account, will not take place. The jokes are dry and often very dark, and underneath them is a view of things that the theory shelves would call philosophical pessimism: the conviction that expecting little is both more accurate and more comfortable than the alternative.

It belongs with our calendar of failed prophecies and the cabinet's other gallows humor, and is perhaps the gentlest thing in that company.

COLOPHON

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