

**POEMS
THAT ARE
MORE RECENT**

~

David Herz

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by David Herz

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BRING BACK THE DEAD, BRING BACK THE GODS

Bring back the dead
Bring back the Gods
 neither has left
 nor do they breathlessly await our call
everything is here
it's not confusing don't think about it

In the hard to reach cave at Tuc d'Audoubert
a male clay bison in rut has been following a
female
for sixteen thousand years
bearing a sculptor's fingerprints
with scattered footprints on the still soft clay
floor

scholars why only scholars?
Conclude at ritual dances
You and I know these are ritual dances
not clodhoppers at a gallery opening

each sixteen thousand year old footprint
is deliberate
not thought out
either practiced
or done then and there

at the propitious moment
for a God and likely Goddess
who were one and both there
to guide human steps

The dead, were there
 they are here
but unfaced
 acknowledge them
Start now

I believe mighty spirits
male and female
and Gods the divinities the divine
are found outside shrines and cathedrals

around the corner of your living room
in a moment of empty silence
you sitting back on your couch
not waiting nor unfocussed nor trying

can't imagine it today
with fashion being designer fancy
 no ancient practiced gestures
 no meaning to any fluff of fabric
The sacrificed have not gone
to a better place
they have not found peace
 they vomit our puerile garbage
 these dead need something else from us

I don't quite know what
I do know everything we offer them now
is empty
an insult
an escape...

lay out a pillowed welcome
admit ignorance
regret at how our society
tortures death
and the dead
squeezing all the life out of them

say their names
resuscitate their faces
light a candle

GRANDPA AND COUSIN DAN

badaboom

my cousin liked to say

dominos tumble their neighbors

a bird thumps the window

stunned but alive

caffeine fires neurons and

warms my chest

I am not fooled by expectation

just happy as a puppy

no preservatives

no memories

a shout in the dark

perfumed with violets

daylight savings time

skewers our clocks

fine tuning works with a dial

but not on a wooly mammoth

Cousin Dan dropped dead at 51

I never returned his small sledgehammer

because he would not let me in the door

a lawyer's mistake

in our grandfather's disbursements

made for misunderstandings and hurt feelings

look what money in the mind will do

we spoke to our grandfather on the phone

32 years ago on the night of his death

he wanted me to come to his Sutton Place apartment

he asked me in Yiddish he never spoke to me in
Yiddish

but we were in Paris

there is something I must do about his soul

not with

I can't touch it

the insistence in his voice

yes a mission
the sound has a creamy consistency
 I need an aside here to distract
from how immense it is
or just so difficult

grandpa what can I do other than remember you
and have compassion for your endless fury

Dan buried his coal black cat Blanche
in the Père Lachaise cemetery
beside Heloise and Abélard
who are not in their tomb

I know no plan except the tug of urgency
in memory of Grandpa and Dan
souls linked by genes and stuff ineffable
a blinding bond in every way

I've read too much into his wish
 just come here David
he said
was I unable
two days later we flew to New York
for his spare funeral
and to uncork the wine cellar
in his living room

such callous youths
he was still present but barely

no one or almost
makes the right bardo choices
our ghosts are here
while the great spirits
are
everywhere

PRETENDED SOLITUDE

I don't need you

I don't

irritating silence

where's the concord of voices?

Accord from the ineffable

a cop out

I can't claim a pipeline

to anything greater than myself

it's what I need

now!

The Great God Pan!

Is not dead

that goat legged terror

would be welcome

anyone anything bringing panic

to every thing under creation

has my yes

I can live in that mule eyed fear

in or far from the madding crowd

no longer smug

no information on how close to death

I might be

remain in life

be a bit more bubbly

till that new dawn of approval

which I suspect

is not real

though gorgeous

distracts us

HELP ME I'VE BEEN SAVED

Help me I've been saved
a' flutter my fingers
a' dancin' my legs
a' twitter my brain
I can no longer sit
and it's now hard to see
I feel a St Vitus twitch
come take possession of me
it must be emotion
I hope it's emotion
extracted from the mass of me
by an arcane twist of fate or flesh
quietude or another state
where nothing capitalist happens
the forms we've chosen
exclude others
because we didn't choose them
we accepted the presentation
that fit us like a skin
being naked until then
Lord why have you forsaken us
Your blessings rain infinite
yet featureless and numbing
are my days
the radiance the glory the
promises of promises to come
it's all a sucker punch to the gut
I dare beg you to turn my hair green
make my every step an embarrassment
my every effort a wrench and a cry
if I stand here any longer I fear
I will fade away

THE BRIDAL CHAMBER

conflict sucks
very terrifying that it happen
between people that are close and affectionate
to each other
I'm waiting for the bridge to fall
the coyote
I thought cocktail
to wail
like the creature that emerges from the belly of
the spaceman
in Alien
coyotes howl, yip and scream
and wail like a woman in danger
love suspended
 a silken mobile of cherubs
driven to and fro in the breeze
and une belle entente as the door to terror
 not just hell
clumps of tallow on the parquet
the candles in the procession spreading
love and warmth and the everyday je ne sais quoi
fill you fill me with joy
leave those foolish transhuman billionaires
who sacrifice joy for longevity
sacrifice or simply murder
us humans
for their love of the machine...
come to me
our souls won't commingle
that's on the next shelf
but my ring and index running
soft furrows over your skin
and the look we hold
into each other's eyes
the joy of you approaching
the joy of you there
we've become virgins in the bridal chamber
for an afternoon or so

NOTHING TOMORROW GETS IN THE WAY OR ENLIGHTENMENT
PASSED BY A FLITTER

enlightenment passed by a flitter and a flutter quite certainly enlightenment I saw the universe and the particular things in front of me as one music birdsong the banal and the bright having lost their appellation and merged into me until the phone rang not even a real one an internal distraction pulled me from this to that hopping like a water strider from this pinprick place to the next to you wanting to be next to you because the considerations mentioned above no longer have weight or importance I subsume into you I won't explain this it needs to sense itself into your understanding and speaks of good company not necessarily friends having coffee but friends with whom you can reveal a certain & strong aura of vulnerability and these friends would likely be women they are ever so much more easily wounded and accepting of gentle mockery which I dross onto a friend of thirty years who plows on the world an ever fallow field and her bicycling through its runnels watching out for a blinding fog either theophany or danger a call to the dry mists that obscure our view of ourselves a pasty rain of uncooked very fine noodles beads of meteoritic matter too fine for your fingers to hold and I have small hands help me up onto this landing is the picture I get of me and the elderly lady settled in her ways reminding me to respect my encroaching rheumatisms and arthritises bless this body still supple or so after 71 years though it takes a while to touch my toes standing straight why are they so far away though I can lotus myself without touching my legs genetics good people and encouraged to go in the direction of ease but

advancing years have made that stunt shorter
lasting the real stunt the major move being
resisting distraction as Mr Crawford so juicily
said distractibility is the mental equivalent of
obesity so to trundle my head gotten fat by hip
hopping alongside the above water strider from
idea to picture to unfinished sauerkraut
preparation and death steals in moves in runs her
plum bob through the center of my being takes my
ethereal temperature and carts my soul away oh
Lord not yet I will recite prayers like my
namesake David to ward off Samael the angel of
death but I will behave I will send no soldier to
his death for I covet his wife and I covet you
more

WE ARE SPIES

we are
spies who come in from the cold
and believe we will be killed
for doing so

we fear the immense friction that is
not there
some of us refuse to move

we the spies are going blind
some of the 'mes' the 'usses' wish to be killed
or rather show the bravado
of inviting murder from someone else
who will not be blamed

I see Jesus crawling up the side of the building
hanging onto the fire escape
he is trying to escape the pen of Dostoyevsky
there are other Jesuses okay with that
he is hard to pin down

there is a flake of Jesus here and a breeze of him
there
his Work will not be denied
though often overlooked
we recognize him from time to time

there is a lot of that good in us
and that is why you know this is true

GLOOM IS IN THE BEHOLDER

I admit this day of gloom
no not a day
this instant

for gloom does not have the power to stay
in retrospect it sits there
like a crippled raven on a fencepost
who despite appearances
is not observing you
it's resting and gathering strength
to fly off

gloom is not out there
it may have rained for weeks
not 24/7 but close
and yet
this is not gloom

the stops between raindrops
which were not unceasing
though to hear it told it seems so
is the bad film we make
that gives gloom presence
this poem is here to pull you
from that sullen place

REAL PARANOIA

by the dawn's early light

I see boll weevils
they're back

with a new form of havoc
no insecticide can handle
not even the arsenic of old

their long beaks pierced cotton bolls
to funnel in their eggs

13 generations hatched every year
none affected by superstition

their cotton pickin' indifference
changed the face of agriculture!
made us grow peanuts
we made peanut oil

today's weevil beak pierces
no bolls of cotton
it drills into our bolls of derma,
and for the skinless
through chitin and calcium carbonate

the hole ruptures the veil
and instantly
inside and outside are joined
and inseparable

we don't know what goes in or out
our cells are too small
for our nerves
our skin so tender a shelter
cannot keep us from their probosces

illusion and fact
foibles and acts
reality and likeness

distinctions and rightful discriminating
lose their contours
we are little glowing babies
in the amniotic ocean
that keeps us alive
plagued by the poisons
of our constant excesses

LOVE STOPS

ferocious encroaching
crab-like creatures
but big as ponies
they can't be real or
I wouldn't be telling you this
 pincers and eyes on stalks
 uncivil
the tide comes up behind them
followed by waves of accountants
they all ululate at the same time
then mist out and vanish

thankfully or not
I can still have an erection
but to what purpose?
My first wife and only living love
fell out of love with me
a quarter of a century back
and at my approaching advanced age
she still turns me on
like opening a garage door by remote control
or drawing a bath with an internet connection
she is glad to see me
the friendship deep as remembrance
but the intimacy is a bud
that will not flower
and drops off the stalk
whole with a plop

I'VE BROUGHT YOU BACK

The only thing missing from this halcyon noon
afternoon

mid-August in Paris

is the tip of my tongue thrilling
to the nub of your nipples

yes

a full act of consent was signed

before I adventured there

and once curled about

that magical beachhead

I asked

is the pleasure shared

though it can't be the same

the sensation originating in disparate places

my body and yours

oh woe

why don't these things happen?

Why have these dusky days become oppressive?

In my seventies though thoroughly alive

what have I failed to learn

why am I such a such

the human race is dying out

said Jim

more driving out

all peaceful resolution

I just ate a slice of sausage

so good

low on the safe food indicator

I will never be wise

but must avoid nebbishhood

and too much cheese

I can feel the oil suppurate my pores

so what
we break down the path to death into
a thousand misbehaviors
dietary lifestyle milieu attitude
and believe to control each
will put the sickle out of reach
ah endless naiveté
so charming and pathetic
depression other than that furrow in the snow
or the abandoned road
seems tempting
faced with the feeling that
God is pulling out
setting up stakes in another
galaxy

the secret is anthropomorphize everything
even the rock pitched at your head
a supernova that loves us
despite incineration
make the universe a pathetic fallacy
at least a tad of it is true
let me read the lines on your hand
and rub my shaved cheek over yours
ah how all that is sorely missed
you've disappeared from this poem
I've just brought you back.

WAR, APPLE, AND MARIE

My country of birth sells one half of the
weapons of war in the world each year
war is simple
highly motivating
unifying and cortisol producing
the hormone that dulls your brain
and lets you act
thoughtlessly or not
it also makes you old
unless bound to serum albumin
says one study

so again war
is what all those paintball games
and other motivational silliness were about
pulsed into action by mounds of cortisol
flowing in your blood
and war is good for industry
unless your factories are targeted
you being the enemy

so me now
beside the Duchess of Oldenburg
or Queen of the Pippin apple tree
Reine des Reinettes in French
one from Russia
the other Holland
because I don't know
which is which
but would like to share
the sound of these apple names

there is one right here
staring as only an apple can
in my direction
and not worrying
about its name

it reminds me
that I love my wife

yes everything is here
do not fill in the spaces

my wife is no more

and the sounds of this band with the silly name
"Brian Jonestown Massacre"
their chord progressions bring tears to my eyes
where else for tears
the joy a vision of her procures
in line with that apple
I've lifted from the grass
all this distilled in the hot summer air
fill me with joy
too simple to be shown
or described

you get what I feel

SHE'S FINALLY GONE

I love it when cold coffee smells like cat's piss
and people are a lot more profound than I
initially give them credit for...
despite minuscule odds
I waited even when in love and happily married
for you to love me
as you claim you had forty years earlier
I was marooned in the archetype
of family patterns often overlaid with lust
love's not there
sorry
now I learn you are accompanied
something you could have shared long ago
you assumed I'd guessed
being bewitched I can't guess
spell broken I see the girders of archetype
warping,
crashing, grating on my nerves
 except archetypes don't die
they lose their hold
if you stand up like a hero
 vade retro you bastard archetype
 free my mother memory
and make me whole
my God I mean you my former love
have rubbed out my illusions
most delightful murder
it hurts though
throbs
almost a club foot that's just been operated on
it leaves a limp for evermore
and a broad canvas
for me to fill anew.

David Herz was born in Boston in 1954 and has lived in Maryland, Georgia, Chicago and New York City as well as seven years in the Brazilian cities of Belo Horizonte and Sao Paolo. For the last 46 years, he has lived in Paris, France. In Chicago he studied briefly under Del Close, at Second City, and with David Mamet. In New York City, he had Alice Notley, poetess supreme, as a teacher. He has worked at many odd jobs such as subtitling movies and Sipa Photopress Agency photographs, technical translation as well as journalism for English language newspapers. Herz practices aikido, poetry, spirituality, the love of good food, and to quote Woody Allen, the appreciation of "contours describing a set of parabolas that would cause cardiac arrest in a yak..." All done at a dignified distance.