

DON'T WORRY

By Bryan William Myers

WHY WE LIKE IT: *A scruffy interior monologue of sorts in which the author, holed up in Da Nang, Vietnam for 8 months during the pandemic, begins to sort out his world. He's a jaundiced writer on the road to burn out and apart from the usual discomforts and inconveniences imposed by lockdown, he faces his toughest critic: himself. Reality and fantasy blend seamlessly in this well told example of CNF. We feel a strong a sense of isolation and what began as an excursion into a disjointed past becomes an existential quest with cameos by Will Shakespeare and Jim Morrison. The prose, sometimes loose, sometimes cloistered, makes for a beautiful read:*

Quote: 'We've had plenty of time to think about everything. Maybe this is the most prescient era since the Greeks were holding plays in stoned amphitheaters, gaseous chemicals giving oracles visions of the future. Leading up to the Mayans and the Aztecs and the Incas. And the Chinese emperors crackling peanuts between their toes. I still can't believe I've been here for eight months. It's surreal.'

(Spacing is author's own.) Eds.

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"I can't seem to find the right line..." —Jim Morrison

I'm sitting at the end of the world, here in Da Nang, Vietnam. I've been stuck here since January when I'd arrived from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Since then, I've seen the Tet Holiday/Chinese New Year come and go. I spent a week in Hoi An, just trying to get away from all the tourists.

That was a bad idea. They were everywhere.

I rode bikes into town nearly everyday as a respite from myself being trapped in my room as I waited for more freelance copy editor work or writing gigs or any work at all. I was then still in touch with my (ex) Chinese girlfriend who explained that everything back in her country had devolved to one simple word: "Panic".

She said the stores were all closed and if they ran out of food, they had rice flour. For dumplings. I lay in bed, thinking about something just as simple as the other side of the coin: Yeah, it'll all be over in four months. You watch.

Mysteriously enough, that had been Elon Musk's same prediction.

And now it's nearly seven months later. I'm no more closer to becoming the next Kurt Vonnegut as I'd been before ... and all I've got tonight are these few Vietnamese beers, same as always, Jim Morrison, and a leaky AC unit that probably won't be fixed for the second time until the end ... no wait, that's Jim Morrison's line ... until this is all over.

When will that be?

It's hard to tell as I've been putting off writing, for quite a bit.

I mean, what's the point?

Existentialist despair.

Ah, the melody of a sad-sack.

Last time we were stuck in lockdown—here in Da Nang—I wrote like a madman. A full-length book of poetry, a new novel. A few short stories and four short plays. I just got a rejection

for the book of poems—manuscript, not a book until it's published. Who knows if it ever will be? Maybe it'll end up like Jim Morrison's spoken word album, released some ten years after his death when his former bandmates needed some new royalty checks to beat that almighty capitalist system's downgrade in the wake of Nixon's economic policies that might have underhandedly destroyed the planet and all life on Earth. Can't blame a few guys for needing to eat...

And, well. What else is there to do but talk shop? Yeah. Then I sent out that novel manuscript to two literary agents. And what else is there to do but keep writing? I started a new novel about running amok here via Tinder and dating websites and meeting Vietnamese girls on the beach. Another full-length book of poems. Some more plays. They kept saying, earlier this year on the internet, that Shakespeare wrote a lot of shit during the plague. But I can't really say how true that is because the only thing I know about Shakespeare is that I used to stare at a statue of his head back in the Philadelphia Central Library on Vine Street, thinking, you know what, I'll write better than you one day. Just wait. I'll catch up to you and I'll be that drunk anarchist with long hair, looking for you in the alleyway after one of your performances and I'll come up to you, shouting: "HEY. HEY OLE WILLY BOY. I SAW YOUR PLAY. HEY, WAIT UP!"

And I'll be waving my arms like a burned-out Kerouac.

He'll spin on his heels, William Shakespeare, making little noises with his pointy shoes, bells, frill around his neck. I can see him now. Raising his eyebrows, courting a few lovely ladies to an after-party at an undisclosed location where I'd never be invited.

"BILL. HOLD ON. LET'S TALK SHOP."

And I'll put the bottle to my mouth, taking a swig of some cheap distilled whiskey. My breath will be bad. And his security guards will come out swinging.

“AH! JUST WHAT I’D BEEN LOOKING FOR. A LITERARY DUEL.”

They’ll punch me in my gut, there will be at least two of them. And they won’t say a word. As William Shakespeare will head up the alley on a winding cobblestone street and there will be dim lighting and no security cameras. So they’ll give me a good beating, those Old English brutes.

They’ll leave me there. And I’ll moan, rolling over and reaching for the whiskey bottle.

“Great,” I’d say, “my first readers, my first true audience.”

And I’ll try to sit up but I won’t be able to.

“Just want a cigarette...” I’ll say into the darkness as a crow flies in the night, searching for a fresh turd. And I’ll lose consciousness while William Shakespeare opens a bottle of crappy white wine just to please his girlfriends, some hangers-on who know nothing about plays or being a writer in the 21st century. At the end of it all.

“Who was that guy?”

“I don’t know, darling. But close the drapes. He was a ghastly sight.”

Yeah. But at least I can write.

Goodnight!

After my cigarette...

After switching the music in my ears to some Brahms piano quartets...

I can settle myself once again into this stiff wooden chair, back through time. Let’s get away from the rhyming stuff.

I am drinking Vietnamese beer. And I think that's one of the biggest reasons why I'm such a fan of modern capitalism here in Vietnam—one of the most communist countries on the planet. They tested me the other day (for free) with a needle and a cotton swab into the upper regions of my nose. And the only thing that worried me was that they might find something other than the virus in my body. Cancer. Leprosy. The sudden urges to switch between past and present tense. Even my Vietnamese landlords have been getting slightly annoyed with my antics, my mental illness. And nearly every convenience store in a three-or-four block radius has caught on to my blatant alcoholism. Things are getting rather tense.

But I felt a little bit of relief, earlier. I went for my usual stroll with two cans of beer to the beach. And I sat there, thinking about everything. I'd never planned to be here this long, for what reason could I have ever visualized the end of civilization? Well, it's hard to think that way when you're sitting on one of the most beautiful white sand beaches in the world. The presence of swimmers and couples meandering in the shadows was helpful enough. I was tired of everything, truly. Even the mosquitoes had gotten on my last nerve. What's left for the rest of us? I sat and wondered about it.

You know, being a writer is a lot of hardship. And I've had to take up some jobs that are much less than ideal. I do it all for the writing. Or for the moments of solitude. Where I can air-guitar myself into a mirror across my apartment and nobody bothers me. There have been moments of depression, to be sure. And the moments of elation—that's what I look forward to, every single day.

So that's what has been happening to me, in my life. Now.

We've had plenty of time to think about everything. Maybe this is the most prescient era since the Greeks were holding plays in stoned amphitheaters, gaseous chemicals giving oracles

visions of the future. Leading up to the Mayans and the Aztecs and the Incas. And the Chinese emperors crackling peanuts between their toes. I still can't believe I've been here for eight months. It's surreal.

I have nothing left but sudden bursts of creativity. They are often most fruitful when I do not engage with social media. A Brahms quartet and a Vietnamese beer, that's enough.

At least for tonight. And I hope I'm not boring you with these words. Isn't that the whole point of being a writer? So much writing these days is boring and uneventful. That's what I feel I have devolved to, tonight.

Social media is constantly reminding me of how bad the world is, right now. And it's ultimately distracting from who I am and what I want to be. Nothing more than alone in a room, resting. Relaxing. Waiting on that urge. To write. Paint. Sing. Dream.

Is it really so bad to be a dreamer? I'm worried, world.

Will you let me be?

Will you let me burst asunder, back into the world. Like a free spirit, or a prophet of doom. I am harmless. And I am not looking to pay any taxes for a world that's out of control. I don't want to pick up a gun and shoot anybody. Unless it's out of love. (Sexual innuendo.) I'm thinking of Jim Morrison again. The other lost souls, the anarchists—before the world got so dark.

And in the nighttime, underneath the moon.

I sat on the beach.

And drank...

If the forests catch fire, and Siberia, too.

At least I know there's still Paris in the spring.

Or maybe Nepal.

I talked to my dad the other day. He joked about possibly visiting me in southern Thailand, next year.

There's a revolution happening in Bangkok.

There's a revolution happening in Hong Kong.

Lot's of political discourse to discuss. About right-wing movements wrapped in a flag. Nationalism. Militarism. They say anarchism is bad, too.

And I wanted to read an article today about a potential asteroid heading for earth right around election day in the States.

Oh, and there are some more storms brewing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Yeah. My girlfriend and I broke up. For the fifth or sixth time.

Across the world.

Everything's the same.

Here's hoping for the best.

I'll drink to that...

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I was inspired to write this piece because it was late at night and I hadn't written anything for a few days. I've been here in Da Nang, Vietnam, for about eight months now. We are almost six weeks into a second lockdown and I wrote abstractly about my emotions as a world observer, a loner. I think the world is a very tough place for an unknown writer, just as much as it is for anybody who is young and trying to get started in their lives. I'd like to believe that being a writer is important to reflect those hardships, to say what others might be thinking but unwilling to express. So I maybe wanted to explore or vent those frustrations through writing as somebody who is a little sensitive and just wants to be creative. And how difficult that can be to make a living or even any money at all. There's a self-destructive fault to that end and that's why I brought Shakespeare into the mix.*

It was a delusion but that can be funny. I wanted to laugh. That's what writing does for me most of the time. I think it's important to be able to laugh, in life, art. For any reason at all.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Bryan William Myers has been traveling around the world since October 2018. He visited 12 countries last year. His work has appeared in various literary magazines such as Red Fez, Whirlwind Magazine, Entropy, Nightingale & Sparrow, Beatdom, Poetry Pea, Poetry Potion, the Daily Drunk, and WriteNow Lit. He's self-published 14 books. Currently, he's working on a new novella, writing plays, and getting his newest novel published called *The Basement*. His website is bryanwilliammyers.com