

a **M**AN took his *dog* & other poem **S**...

By Ri**ch**ard Weave**R**

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...* Blink and it's gone, ephemerally armed, as a clippity-clop Cyclops, the eye of the Zeitgeist, overseeing, undermining, embattled and winking back—you can't get ahead without his nod. *Here is Lil Gary's modest opus, over 26,000 words. Who says Lil Gary thinks small. If you enjoy padding to digressions and merry wit and patter as much as I do, let him take your time. (He could take a page from the book of a one Curtis Terse who submitted a single word poem I deigned to decline—but seriously folks, he is engaging.) Like the gossamer of all things ethereal, kindly allow him to pass through you. "Listen up because free wisdom / is worth much." ...here is something that just might stay with you...what could be better. Stick with it. (Spacing & format is poet's own.)*

A Man took his dog

for a walk and play at Scentral Dog Park.
Or so it seemed.

A dog pulled a man, a two-legged plodder
up one street, down another, until the smell
of heavily marked territory overpowered.

A man arrives at the dog park where he scanned
for a woman he fancied, or her dog, Brutus, not so much.
Neither were there; he was relegated to the Loser's bench.

A dog waited in an impatient way for the gate to open,
straining its leash, already aware of who was present,
which friends were waiting, and leapt high when the pressure
loosened and he was free to ramble and roll on grass,
to sniff and be sniffed back. To bark in friendly ways. Hi.
How goes it? Catch any squirrels or cars lately? Anyone
here in heat, wink, wink, as if I didn't know already.

A man on the Loser's bench groused: he'd forgotten a book. Didn't matter what book. Books were luck. A talisman. Magical. Magnetic in a way. Guaranteed to start a conversation. Much better than scrolling, or tweeting, or damn near anything done by Smartphone.

A dog made a new mate, a Scotty, newly arrived, with an odd sounding bark. It took a while for each to understand the other. Soon enough they were BFFs. Said his name was Doohan. Whatever. Thought: haven't seen the two-legged creature with a leash attached to it for a while. Maybe he had to go inside to pee! Such a lonely bastard. If it wasn't for me. . . he'd never get any.

A man jolts awake. The sun has relented. It's past time to go. Most are gone. He sees his dog paling with a black Scotty. Visually an odd pair. Pug and Scotty. Scotty and pug. Says to himself, at least one of us has a friend.

I laid down with dogs, or where dogs

had previously been and got blacklegged ticks instead. Lyme's disease to be exact. I'd rather have fleas. Not much of a choice mind you. Ticks or fleas.

Even so I'd rather had a chance to say no, thanks all the same. But I didn't have so I became host with a bull's eye rash on my back, a host who couldn't say no

to his guests, uninvited though they were. And I had to pay extra for the accommodations, I did. A security deposit. A damage deposit as well.

And a week's rent 6 months in advance! How's that a deal?! Bull's eye. My ass. Robbed and ruined I was. With no recourse. An Act of God it was they said.

An act of God! As if he could be bothered! Why the sudden interest in me who always crossed with the signal, who prayed when called upon, and took

no interest at all in my neighbor's ugly brute beasts. It's clear there ain't no right in this world. Nothing's right and way too much is way wrong. I have no beef

with the almighty. His ways and moods. His corduroys and wheys. I do confess I am unhappy with the recent hand dealt me. Even in Lost Wages

I could get better odds. And they are nothing but liars and cheats. Period.

Black Jack dog lays steaming in the snow,

angry at the sun and its utter failure
to provide a well-regulated heat. Some days
he's his own four-legged sauna. You needn't bother
call him. He won't raise his mastiff head.
Won't glare your way or sniff the air.
Can't see the reason for you. Would rather
hunt for his supper, take water where he finds it
on his daylong roamings. If anything,
he dreams of killing things that run from him.
He'd chase a shadow if he believed his teeth
could rip its throat. Black Dog wants
no fancy name. Has no time for no vet.
He's gone most days, and rarely deigns
to enter the house. Only when he smells wood smoke
does he wedge the door open using his head
as splitting maul. Best not disturb Black dog
when he's guarding the fire. He may not be asleep,
eyes closed, shallow breath. One of his hunting tricks.
More wolf than tail-wagger. Man's best fiend.

A Thimble-full of white dog whiskey

tumbles into the heart, sending its fire
rumbling into unsuspecting lungs, and serves
notice to the brain that if sirens are heard
loudly nearby, there's no real emergency,
this is nothing that's not happened before,
and, more than likely, will happen again.

Let the fire rage and the night tremble. Ignore
the stomach's mumbling. Food at best is a dumb
distraction, a merry-go-round to be avoided.
#4 Alligator char is the one cure-all. The best
numbing whiskey burns. Falls short a thumb's width
of hazmat level but nowhere near the Angel's humble

historic share. Speak not of peat monsters, unless
you are able to pronounce Laphroaig without recycling
your lunch. Heads, hearts, and tails may be distillation
phases, with hearts alone bottled and aged, but White Dog
unaged and homemade with fermented potatoes,
poitin as it's called, from pota, meaning small pot,

will never be a Unicorn. In the scrum of Islay whiskey lore
the only true brew is the one that goes down and stays.

A dog whose useless hind legs have been
amputated, scoots around a house
which meets all ADA requirements,
his backend leashed to a small cart,
a trolley if you prefer. He has never
known 4-legged locomotion, having
been born with two few. But gets around
nicely, thanks for asking. In his eyes
two vertical forms shift about slowly,
often without purpose. Their barks
are distinguishable but incoherent.
Often they do pay attention to him,
make offerings, take him sight-seeing,
and are quiet enough when he naps.
He wonders what reason they have
for being here, beyond him, what purpose.
He tries to imagine either without legs.
He tries and fails to see them in a cart
like his, hurtling out an oversized doggy
door into the backyard where the smells
are so wondrous, almost overwhelming,
where sounds resonant from neighbors
with such clarity, and the scent of wolf
two doors down is so damn tempting.

THE POET SPEAKS: *In the Spring of 2016 I consumed everything two fiction writers, Lydia Davis and Lynne Tillman had published. Though I read and wrote poetry as a teenager – Bukowski, Al Purdy among others, I haunted used book stores for early American and Canadian humorists. Once I escaped the barb wire nest of home, I fell into the clutches of teachers and circuit riding readers of fiction and poetry. My first real teacher introduced us to Simic, Tate, Kinnell, Merwin, Bly, among others, and Russell Edson. More on the latter later. I muddled along in various workshops. Wrote imitations of Robbe-Grillet in a fiction class of an embalmed writer, whose only comment on a parody of Flannery O'Connor I had written was “Mr. Weaver.*

I see now you can write.” I dropped Fiction. Graduated. Became one of the first cohorts of a MFA cult.

*Fast Forward to 2016. I read an essay by Lydia Davis in which she confesses that she did not learn to write while matriculating at the Iowa Writers Program. No. She learned from reading the poetry, more particularly, the Prose Poems, or as Edson referred to them the Fables of Russell Edson. Based on that spark I promptly made a large dent in my Visa, and quickly began to learn about the care and feeding of language. After several days I ventured outside and walked the 276 steps needed to reach the front door of the James Joyce Restaurant and Pub. There I sat at my usual spot, only this time I had *The Tunnel: Selected poems of RE with me*. A book already engorged. I was there to write. And drink Guinness. Together. 2 hours later and 10 new poems unlike anything else I had written, I paid up and went home. The next day 8 more poems. As I write this there are 440 completed poems in this series, 116 of which have been published. And many underway. I even managed to write another book of 80 *Last Words* poems. And still other poems not so easily classified.v*

AUTHOR’S BIO: The author lives in Baltimore where he volunteers with the Maryland Book Bank, the Baltimore Book Festival, and is the poet-in-residence at the James Joyce Pub. More than 100 of his Prose Poems have appeared since 2016. He is also the author of *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press, 1992), and provided the libretto for a symphony, *Of Sea and Stars*, 2005, performed 4 times to date by the Birmingham Symphony.