



## IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TESTICLES

BY

GLENN PAPE

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

*In 'IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TESTICLES,' Glenn Pape has written his own obituary--authentically in the third person. It is consistently hilarious, lightheartedly introspective and at times ruefully touching. I believe he has crafted one of the best lines this issue. "...to raise the specter of his testicles – / two small items which he never fully grasped." Some works cannot be explained or elaborated on, they must be experienced. His language is playful, triflingly erudite (in spite of what such a title might portend) as he weighs-in and wanders through a lifetime of recollections, insights and observations...gather together to celebrate the words of Glenn Pape.*

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE TESTICLES (OBITUARY: GLENN PAPE, 5/2/51 – TBD)

What do you say about a man who,  
after carefully working his way down  
a long slippery silk rope for decades,  
reaches the bitter end only to find  
the final knot has been untied  
and there's nothing left to cling to,  
nothing left but to let go and cannonball  
into that insatiable pit below,  
with its worrying whiff of frightened coyote  
and irritating squawk of the great unknown?

What do you say?  
“We knew it had to happen  
but it came as such a shock.”

He was, indeed, a man. More specifically,  
he was a cisgender middle class white male which,  
given the intricacies of contemporary culture  
and the documented history of men gone  
horribly wrong,

is more than likely at some point  
to raise the specter of his testicles –  
two small items which he never fully grasped.  
But this is not a warm towel, a cupped hand  
or silken purse – it's an obituary,  
and not the proper place for testicles.

More than just being a man, Glenn was an Everyman.  
Much like you, he owned a few nice shirts.  
He liked to make lists. He was jealous of his dog.  
The pain he felt at night was real.  
Much like you, the mundane things  
most people knew about him  
buzzed along the surface of his skin.  
The truly interesting things sizzled beneath –  
those tasty little secrets he'll be feeding to the worms.

I was in a unique position to know him on a deeper level.  
I can tell you he never felt comfortable with his name.  
He hated heights and was repulsed by dried fruit and jelly.  
Over the years I saw him grow big, then small, then big,  
then small again. He once was fat as a puddle.  
He imagined that he was a bit of a rebel, and one time,

in Kalamazoo, he ran a red light on purpose.

He liked to claim, though it was mostly bluster,  
that he lived his life as a simile:  
“I eat like a pig, drink like a fish, and,  
when the opportunity arises, I fuck like a bunny.”  
That bluster often made me wonder  
if he was ever able to just drop the charade  
and take an honest look around  
at the teeming world surrounding him.

But this is his obituary, and so the intent must be to focus on his legacy,  
although it’s important not to fool ourselves this late in the game.  
The small contributions he made through his career and  
the subtle influence he had on his friends will quickly fade away.  
The only lasting gifts that bear his imprint will be the traces of him  
carried in the genes of the family he helped create,  
through years of bumbling fatherhood spawned  
by a couple lucky nights of feral lust.

And so, (surprise!), the testicles rise again,  
those persistent nagging capsules  
which cradle the spark of life,  
those tiny Rosetta stones which, sadly,  
he once believed were the key to everything.  
And with their return, we face this simple truth:

It’s not about the testicles. It never was.  
It’s not even about life anymore.  
He’s dead. Glenn Pape is dead.

He lies there, much as you will one day,  
inert and boring as a cubic yard of stagnant air.  
He is survived by his wife,  
who loved him in spite of everything,  
and the two children they raised together,  
both of whom are interesting, kind and worthwhile.

The service will take place in a pretty room  
with soft lights and comfortable chairs.  
Flowers are welcome, but please, no potted red geraniums –  
the memories they trigger would be unbearable,  
the scent alone would be enough to pull him from his coffin.

In lieu of a prayer, every attendee will be asked  
to spend a few silent moments wondering about

the sort of violent upheaval of the soul it might take  
to truly appreciate the life of a total stranger.

After the formalities,  
crustless cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches  
on white bread, cut to resemble small clouds,  
will be offered, along with a variety of smoked meats.

Chiseled on his tombstone,  
in classic Times New Roman font,  
Glenn has requested the following sentiment:

“THAT WAS DELICIOUS.  
IS THERE DESSERT?”

**THE POET SPEAKS:** *The impetus behind “It’s Not About the Testicles (Obituary: Glenn Pape, 5/2/51 – TBD) was pretty straightforward, and maybe a tad morbid; at the age of 72 I’ve spent too much time over the past two years attending memorial services, and it occurred to me that I needed to act quickly if I wanted any say in how my own memorial might unfold. Putting the pieces in the poem together helped me review my personal mythology with, I think, a healthy mix of cynicism, humor, and gratitude.*

*After spending 35 years in business and non-profit organizations, I came to believe that clear and simple communication is actually the most difficult thing people attempt on a regular basis. Communication is, for me, what poetry should be about: Here’s a new image! Here’s a new way of looking at something familiar! Here’s a new twist on an old emotion! Take it – it’s for you!*

*If I find myself writing something that’s exclusively self-exploration, that might have some value, but I should probably just keep it in the bathroom. If I write something that in some way connects with someone else, that communication is what makes life rich and full.*

*The poets I cherish the most, therefore, are those who communicate with the greatest clarity: Dorianne Laux, Mark Doty, Louise Glück, Alberto Rios, Stanley Kunitz to name just a few*

**AUTHOR BIO:** I am a recently retired man in my 70’s, living with my wife and a lovable terrier mutt who looks like a cross between Bernie Sanders and a loofah. We are settled comfortably in an old house in Portland, Oregon.

Although I was first captured by poetry (reading and writing it) in childhood, it was only upon reaching my mid-fifties that I put any effort into submitting my work. In the past few years I have been published in the “North American Review,” “The Sun,” “Poet Lore,” “Pulp Literature,” and “The Rhysling Anthology,” among others.

My hobbies include cheering for my favorite roller derby team (the Break Neck Betties), and riding the roller coaster of victory and failure by following the Chicago Cubs.