

# 4 (four)Poems

By David J. Thompson

*Poetry editor Hezekiah writes:*

*Thompson is up to his old tricks again, not sure if it is art imitating life or life imitating art--sorry for reciting such an old nugget, when there is nothing cliché about David J. But it all appears in order in the absence of any sequence of intention...there is something about it, though--not sure what that is. If I thought I could put my finger on it, I'd only be plugging the tiniest pinholes. His little slices of life have all the edge of a finely dressed knife... "The silence that followed was like nothing / either of them had ever heard before". (Spacing and font size are poet's own.)*

Straight At My Heart

My ex-girlfriend came back  
with a can of Miller Lite  
and a pistol. She handed me  
the beer and put the revolver down  
on the coffee table. Wow, I said,  
That's ancient. Where's it from?  
Custer's Last Stand? No, she replied.  
Even better. This is the gun  
Verlaine shot Rimbaud with.  
My grandfather was stationed  
in Brussels after the war. He traded  
some Hershey bars and a few cartons  
of Lucky Strikes for it. Holy shit,  
was all I could think of to say.

Then she picked up the pistol,  
pointed it straight at my heart  
and asked, Do you love me?  
Of course, I answered while putting up  
my hands and trying to move back  
on the couch, but I sure hope to hell  
that thing's not loaded. That's funny,  
she hissed with her hand holding steady.  
That's exactly what that asshole liar Rimbaud said,  
and I guess we both know what happened to him.

## The Silence That Followed

She didn't say anything when he came in carrying a bag of groceries. I got you a bottle of wine and some of those olives you like, too, he said, setting the bag down on the kitchen counter. He turned to her. She just sat there pulling her knees to her chest, swallowed up by the chair. Oh, shit, he thought, then asked, What's wrong with you?

I was straightening up your stuff in our closet and I found those pictures you have, she said. What pictures? he asked sitting down slowly on a kitchen chair. You know damn well, all those pretty photos of your old girlfriends, she answered. He told her he'd forgotten all about them, they didn't mean a thing. She shook her head. If they didn't mean anything, she replied as if she'd been rehearsing, you wouldn't hold on to them. He slapped his palm on the table, and said while looking up at the ceiling, I can't believe you're making a big deal out of this shit. It's just some old photos, for Christ's sakes. Do I bitch about anything when your ex-husband calls drunk at all hours of the night? She glared straight at him for a few slow moments, then said in a way that made her words seem like they were written in the frozen breath of a winter night, Well, at least *he* wanted to marry me.

The silence that followed was like nothing either of them had ever heard before. So,

they just sat staring for a few moments  
out the same window where nothing was happening.  
Do you want to watch a movie tonight? she asked softly.  
Sure, he answered moving toward the refrigerator  
to get a beer. Maybe tonight we can find something good  
that we haven't already seen too many times before.

### Before You Get Up To Pee

Let me in, you hear him scream. Let me in.  
Not till you stop drinking, she yells back.  
You fucking promised, remember?  
Then comes some banging on the door,  
sounds like he's using both hands  
like Fred Flintstone. God damn it,  
he screeches at full volume. Just let me in,  
will you please just open the fucking door?

You can't help but hear all this from your couch  
where it's Friday night, and you're alone  
trying to watch an old Kevin Costner movie  
in peace. You're finishing your fourth bottle  
of Miller Lite, with plenty more in the fridge.  
You've got a bag of Tostitos. A plate full  
of sliced pepperoni, and a wad of paper towels.  
You pause the film, listen to more pounding  
on the door, then restart it, turning up the volume  
to drown out the noisy world above you.

Minutes later, you say Oh, shit! out loud  
when you realize you've seen this film before.  
After a lot of running around, Costner turns out  
to be a double agent. What the hell am I going  
to watch now? you ask yourself, then stop  
the movie. You notice it's quiet. No noise upstairs.  
She must have let him in. She always does.  
You look around your place before you get up  
to pee, grab another beer, and come back  
to surf the channels again. You find yourself staring  
at your own door where you've never even heard

anyone knock, much less let them in, in longer than you can remember.

### Cast the first stone

We were just sitting around early when Jesus came into the temple with coffee and bagels for everybody. He started teaching, nothing too heavy, you know, be nice to people, take care of the poor and the downtrodden . . . that sort of stuff. We were listening and nodding and wondering why the bagel place always stiffs you with about half the cream cheese you need, when the goddamn Pharisees came marching in to ruin a nice morning. They had with them that new woman we've all noticed around, the good looking one with all the hair and makeup and southern accent who's the new manager of the CVS here in town. The fattest Pharisee, the one with the stupid walrus moustache said they were ending their weekly singalong breakfast at Denny's when they saw this harlot come out of a room at the Super 8 with a man nobody recognized. That's my brother, you assholes, the woman said, He came to see how I was doing here. Yeah, sure, said the Archie Simmons, our local All State agent and the best bowler in town. We think she should be stoned, the fat guy said and they all crossed their arms across their chests and nodded in agreement.

Jesus took a second, then squatted down

and it looked like he was diagramming  
a backyard football play with his finger  
on the temple floor. Then he stood up,  
said calmly. "Now I don't want to go  
all *Harper Valley PTA* on your asses,  
but I bet half of you smug bastards know  
by heart where all the ice machines are  
located over at the Super 8 just from  
your personal afternoon experience,  
and I'll also bet the other half has switched  
your monthly Viagra prescription  
from CVS to Walgreen just in case  
the pretty new store boss starts looking around.  
So, whichever one of you gentleman wants  
to throw the first rock, be my guest.  
Then there was a bunch of stammering  
and grumbling, but, sure as hell, they all turned  
and shuffled out the door.

We watched Jesus walk over to the woman  
who was left standing there all alone.  
He put his arm around her shoulder  
and started talking too low for us to hear.  
She was listening with her head down  
then walked away. At the door she turned  
to give him a big smile and a wave goodbye.  
Well? we asked when Jesus came back toward us.  
Hell, he said with that grin nobody could resist.  
That dude at Super 8 wasn't really her brother,  
but since I'm the son of God I forgave her  
for that. And, oh yeah, he added, his grin  
now a full smile, I'm going over to her place  
tonight for a bottle of wine and a movie,  
so don't bother waiting up. I'm half-human,  
too, you know.

**THE POET SPEAKS:** *It was a long time ago, but I think I began writing, or at least thinking about writing, in my mid-20's in an attempt to emulate some of my favorite writers at the time like Jack Kerouac and Ernest Hemingway whose lives of travel and adventure I admired. I tried off and on, much more off than on, really, to write fiction for a number of years with neither success, nor an idea of what I was trying to accomplish. It wasn't until I was about forty when, after reading Charles Bukowski and Raymond Carver, I realized that a poem didn't have to be somehow distant lyrically lofty and require more study than a simple reading to be effective. So, then, I have been writing*

*easily accessible narrative poetry ranging from the highly autobiographical to the completely whimsical for the last 25 years*

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** David J. Thompson is a former prep school teacher and coach. He grew up in Hyde Park, New York, and now, after many years in Texas and Michigan, lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

His interests include movies, jazz, and minor league baseball. His poetry/photography book

*Grace Takes Me* is available from Vegetarian Alcoholic Press, and his latest chapbook *Shake My Ashes* is available from Alien Buddha Press. A series of 1400 of his postcards is part of the permanent collection of the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois.