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 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.