

BUT UNTIL THEN and other poems...

By David J. Thompson

***Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes:** 'There's a sink in my room and / a bathroom down the hall that smells / like bleach, wet cigarettes and cabbage.' There is something about this itinerant troubadour whose depths I can't quite plumb. 'Lord Byron' and 'the Kardashians' taking you places only 'a stationary bike' might. Don't skip a line of "The Hill Called Golgotha" and I'll save you reciting mine. Next: 'ex-wives'... and...'nearly empty bowls of oatmeal.' But my favorite "Lip Gloss and Laxatives" is pure gold. (Spacing is poet's own.) HS*

But Until Then

Since my wife kicked me out
I've been staying in a cheap hotel
near the train station downtown.
There's a sink in my room and
a bathroom down the hall that smells
like bleach, wet cigarettes and cabbage.
If I slip the bellhop a few extra dollars,
he's happy to bring me a pint of Jim Beam
and some girlie magazines. I'm waiting
for my wife to call begging me to come home,
but until then, I keep the Gideon's Bible open
on the nightstand, my revolver in the drawer,
and the lights on all the time.

Omens

On his way to Delphi,
Lord Byron saw an omen,
a flight of a dozen eagles,
which he knew was a sign
from the gods that success
and fame as a poet were soon to follow.

This morning at the gym
all I saw was about an hour
of the Kardashians as I rode
away on a stationary bike.

Unlike Byron, the only message
I heard from those three goddesses,
Kim, Kourtney and Khloé, was
that my ass was getting real sore,
and I just wasn't going anywhere
at all, no matter how hard I pedaled.

The Hill Called Golgotha

I live on the outskirts of Jerusalem,
a nice neighborhood, quiet and safe,
but my apartment is right on the trail
the guys being crucified have to walk
between the jail and the hill called Golgotha.

This morning I was out on the porch
with my coffee and a bagel when
that poor Jesus guy came by. Clearly
those damn Romans had roughed him up
earlier, he was bleeding all over. In fact,
they even had to have a guy help him
carry the cross he was so beat up.
And like that wasn't bad enough,
they made that poor bastard wear
a purple cape and a crown of thorns
to make fun of him being King of the Jews
which even Fox News says is something
that Pontius Pilate just made up.
Everybody was laughing at the puny guy
struggling along, but I didn't think it was funny
at all. I went back inside, put on *Kind of Blue*,
and fixed myself a stiff Bloody Mary.

A while later, right around noon,
I was fixing a grilled cheese for lunch,
when it suddenly got pitch black outside.
I just stood there in the dark, afraid to look
outside, and wondering just what the hell
was going on in this crazy goddamn world.

Coffee Gone Cold

At breakfast the day she left me
my ex-wife, the poet, was clanking her spoon
around in a near empty bowl of oatmeal
when she told me didn't want to hurt
my feelings, but after all these years,
she really needed to taste the French toast
of new desire. That's great, I said taking
the last, big swallow of coffee gone cold.
Would you like some confectioners sugar
sprinkled on that, too?

THE POETS SPEAKS: *I really don't know why I write poetry any more than I know why I like baseball or Indian food. When I was in high school I was drawn to the lyrics of songwriters like Bob Dylan, John Prine, and Hank Williams, but I didn't write my first poems until I was forty years old. At that time I was reading Charles Bukowski, Raymond Carver, and Richard Brautigan, and they helped me get started once I realized that the possibilities of poetry were much greater than I previously imagined.*

BIO: *David J. Thompson is a former prep school teacher and coach. His poetry/photography book Grace Takes Me is available from Vegetarian Alcoholic Press. A series of 1400 of his postcards is now part of the permanent collection of The Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois.*

