

THE VILLAGERS AND THE FOOL

This is not a poem. It is not a story. It is not a narrative. It is a dream. A dream is sometimes peaceful, other times disturbed; full of questions seeking answers - which are not guaranteed.

Its cast is small: the Fool, and the villagers.

The villagers represent a cross-section of humanity: from the pious to the petty; from the attractive to the disfigured; the wealthy to the poor; from those in homes to those waiting at the door.

The Fool coexists with the villagers but seldom mingles. He has adopted his name from comments the villagers have thrown at him, in disgust and anger. Emotions he refuses to acknowledge. His continual unremitting belief in the power of love, the universal power of love, offends their sense of the "real"; poverty and hard work, hatred living in which there is no room for forgiving. The Fools don't believe he is important. He finds the wealth of humanity in his inclusiveness in all things human.

A situation poised for and rife with misunderstanding.

This morning, the Fool was sitting in the town square. He was approached by a woman, middle-aged, well dressed; she addressed him thus, "People call you foolish, say you cannot understand. I don't believe them. I think you choose silence in order to think, to place things in order. Is this true?"

The man considered her question, said nothing; then, after a pause replied, "Do I choose silence, yes; the babble of social intercourse leaves me irritated and unimpressed. Is there something you would ask of me?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am recently separated; the marriage was fraught with arguments and disputes. I thought a separation would resolve things; it doesn't. Instead of fighting someone else, I fight with myself. I am sad, lonely and utterly confused. Others tell me what to do. I don't want that. I want to understand."

The fool replied:

*You feel at war with yourself;
is this the source of your confusion?*

THE WOMAN NODDED, YES.

*It is a process, conflict between your selves
Your emotional state, your mental state
And your body seeking to assert itself.
A conflict that can only be resolved
Within and by yourself; and through
That process will you find peace.*

*The mind will play tricks,
Your emotions will cause you distress
(Say, Do we not see a reflection of ourselves,
And in our disorientation or despair
Say, "There is our enemy"?)*

*There is no hero; there is no enemy.
Only an individual trying to sort themselves out.*

*Is there not, traditionally, a taint of nobility
Ascribed to going to war? Esprit de Corps,
[and all that], The thrill of action
(or preparation for)?
The noble intentions stand ready.
Foolishness and nonsense!*

Of the battle, we shall be brief.

*There was death and needless destruction,
Hearts racing, senses numbed, lives lost.
Battles are better remembered than reported live;
Best told in the eulogy, painted on the memory.*

*There is my definition.
As the sole combatant,
Against an ill-defined enemy.
Fate, Happenstance, Circumstance,*

(Frame it heroic)

*“The war to survive has been brutal,
frightening, but it had its own sound:
a sound that filled the empty pauses,
that gave meaning to the struggle.”*

*I can name my own list of characters.
“They”, I define as the Command,
the component figures of consciousness:
In particular, The Thinker, the Fighter, the Poet.*

(You are making this up, as you go!)

*Yes! The Thinker, the Fighter, the Poet stand huddled.
There is no conversation, the frightened eyes say it all.
Thinking, frightening and scribbling poetry insufficient?*

We need one more character.

*A shabby, uniformed figure approaches them
“Who are you?” They demand.*

I am

*I am that quiet voice that lurks
on the fringes of your consciousness:
whispering words of warning,
admonishing you to take that next faltering step;
That strain of steel resolve hovering just above Reason
and a mite short of Faith.*

*I dwell in that haunting piece of music
that resonates in your ears,
even when you are surrounded by silence,
or overwhelmed by the sheer noise
and the roar of the world.*

***“Yes,” the woman replied,
Yes, that is what I need.”***

*I can be found in your favourite book,
that obscure piece of art.
Found most often in the humblest of surroundings,
suspended in the void between fractured words
in broken sentences, dangling phrases;
in words unspoken.*

Remember this!

Silence has no name, no content

***Silence has no name, no content
Other than what we put into it***

*Can you feel it?
The silence has a new quality;
no less deep, but less threatening:
a distinct, qualitative difference.*

*It cannot harm you.
It cannot touch you.
Together we are strong
enough to face it.
We start again.
we salvage our strength,
our pride.*

*Silence has no name.
It has no content
Other than what
We put into it.*

*Now was the time to start again,
consolidate, construct.
There is pervasive energy now,
a purpose to continue.
It is not a time of jubilation,
but of quiet thanks and determination.
There is still much to do.*

Time passes. People change, get sick, die. The Fool remains aloof, watching, observing, assessing; saying little. After his last encounter individual villagers have begun to acknowledge him, talk to him.

On this day, he saw a man sitting alone, desolate, in despair. He felt the man's pain; his utter dejection and despair.

He approached the man, and said softly, "Sir, can I help in any way?"

The man turned his tear-stained eyes to him, and said "I am dead. I am empty; the world is a desolate place. Talk to me of hope".

"Hope," the Fool replied, "in what sense?" "What happens when hope dies; all you have is a feeling of nothingness. How do you continue?" Someone has died?". The fool enquired. "My wife, my life.", replied the man.

The fool was quiet for a moment, then said:

"Hope? What is "hope"?"

*Amidst the broken plates, glasses,
Dreams, hopes, there lies the question.
One to which we all need, demand an answer.*

*"Can there be a reasonable expectation
of the inevitability of the return of hope?
Can I leave it to Chance, A roll of the dice
Thrown once, twice, thrice?"*

*To deny belief in hope and forgiveness,
would be to cravenly surrender to -*

and drown in - the ocean of despair.”

Hope does not die

The man turned to him, “How can I believe that?”

*To have reason to believe that hope is achievable
and hope that the application of reason is a pathway
to experience the re-birth of hope.*

We will celebrate our shared humanity!

We will sing our fractured song of praise.

We will shout “Hallelujah!”

“Tis our gift as human beings

*We, the living: unpredictable, inconsistent,
perverse (even) as we may be
in our faltering yet stubborn adherence
to an absurd faith in the power of Love and Life.*

We live, succeed, and achieve.

We have a final line of defence.

We create, we procreate;

dream impossible dreams

- and do our best to

make them happen.

We share, make records of,

*and transmit those things we value.
We influence, argue; agree, and disagree.
We assimilate and accommodate
information and experiences
as we grow individually and collectively.
In such a collective consciousness is our power.
as one passes the (sometimes, barely flickering)
torch of hope to another.*

The man has sat silently, listening; he says

*“You believe this to be true?
After the contempt heaped upon you
By the people of this village?”*

The Fool pauses to consider, and replies

Yes, friend, I do.

*You are feeling the loss of one you loved
It is painful, isn't it?*

The man nods

You loved your wife, deeply?

The man nods

Do you feel lost and desolate?

Man nods

She is part of you now;

Who you are;

Who you will be;

Eternally part of you.

The man considers, nods his head; smiles a sad smile

You, sir, are correct.

I thank you; I truly thank you.

The Fool takes his hand and says

Thus, however, our lives end.

WE can face OUR nemesis, and say:

We can and will make a difference.

(smiles)

Of course, We'll never know.

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