

# POEM OF THE WEEK

## ***THE VILLAGERS AND THE FOOL***

### ***PARTS 1 AND 2***

*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; and 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, a conflict between yourselves  
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 help 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.*

*That 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 sound:  
a sound that filled the empty pauses,  
that gave meaning to the struggle."*

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

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

*Yes! The Thinker, the Fighter, and 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.*

2

***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 and 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, and 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 rebirth 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.*

### ***THE VILLAGERS AND THE FOOL [PART 3] - COSMIC CONNECTIONS***

***Scene: the local tavern. The Fool sits alone, quietly contemplates the other people, and the environment; stares into his beer for a few moments; and then exclaims, "Cosmic Connections". The others look at him, baffled, some outraged, that their conversation had been interrupted.***

*"Is the Cosmos not our parents,"*

*Said the fool,*

*"Do we not look unto the stars*

*For guidance? They are our teachers,*

*the guide that responds to us as we respond to it"*

*I speak of battles*

*To be lost or won.*

*Give it a break.*

*Find a new tune, and sing a new song.*

*It's not terrible; don't get me wrong.  
You can repeat a theme for only SO long?*

***The people in the tavern are listening to him, with varying degrees of intensity; sufficient to indicate, "Please continue"***

*the fool continues*

*I've got news to tell you;  
news that might distress you.  
News, regardless.  
It's your angels and demons.  
They're calling for a truce.  
They're tired of arguing, and fighting;  
frustrated, disillusioned.  
Tilt at your damn windmills.*

*As for your search for what is right,  
proper, moral, and of reason;  
they couldn't care. They want to rebel;  
have their own stories to tell.  
Anyway, they say, even should you find this thing,  
this truth; How will you know?  
Is it going to come up to you,  
ever so respectfully,  
Look you in the eye; say,  
"Mr Bush, I presume". Yeah, right.*

*you have sought for decades;  
tripped and risen; handled derision.  
Might I ask, who you're going to tell;  
Will they understand? Will they want to?  
Do you have the words: words to heal, reveal;  
identify those words that conceal?  
Do you want the good news or the bad?  
Your angels and demons are consorting;  
brazenly having fun.  
Unless it's in sound bites or ads, nobody cares.*

*Be my demons and angels consorting;  
it will not last; they will revert to the status quo.  
Peace and harmony is boring;  
its weakness is its strength,  
its strength is its weakness.  
Understanding, or willingness  
to understand; that's the question?  
How open are WE to change?*

***"In silence, the final assault is awaited."  
That's the way I would like to frame it;***

*dramatic, apocalyptic; a dash of nobility,  
success or failure, come what may.*

*The end of one thing; a brand-new beginning!  
You're not fooled; I'm not fooled:  
The seeds of the old order are planted  
among the seeds of the new;  
persevere, slumber, awaiting  
the next person poisoned  
perspective to urge them  
back to life. Under the respectability  
of "I remember when" and  
"It wasn't that bad",  
it's in our tradition.*

*Be not fooled.  
Your memories are flawed,  
And it was "that bad"!  
Regardless of the repackaging.*

*It becomes a test of time.  
Which becomes established?  
Which grows faster?*

*Demons and Angels? Which do we feed?  
Do we let Time be the Master?  
Do we claim control? Can we?*

*Chaos! Chance! Choices!  
Connections! Never-ending, Demanding.  
Don't tell me you're bored,  
or lack purpose.  
Ask not what Life can do for you!  
What can you do to improve  
the quality of Life?*

*There is a moment's silence, then gradually, increasing in participation,  
volume and enthusiasm the audience applauds*

*THE END*

*Leslie D. Bush  
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