

Vox Populi

Storyteller

In one mirror I look like an old man, an ancient drooler if you want the truth. One pinch beneath the fur gives the lie to this, unless I've found the one patch of skin on my near-carcass that doesn't sag above muscles gone permanently feeble.

In another I look like a meerkat, alertly perched on its hind legs, stretched to full height, peering about happily; I could swear I have more body than that, and if I touch around the eye sockets, they don't seem to protrude nearly so much out of my face, but how can I know with certainty?

In a third my horn is being painstakingly sawed off by men eager for the gold to be gained by grinding it down to a fine powder famed for its remedical and aphrodisiac properties; though I can see no-one about me, I begin to feel rough hands, eager, an unbearable pain in my forehead simultaneous with a gushing stream that ought to blind me but, worse luck, doesn't. I can only make out shapes, a figure wrapped in fur, a prodigious heaving bosom, less than that and progressively less in a series of receding mirrors which might possibly multiply without end.

In the near distance I can make out lights and colours as bright as a sitcom set, and the further they recede the more vividly and ecstatically they shimmer; the gap closes in my forehead; perhaps I'm happy in those reflections and considering the number of them, possibly I'm ahead on the percentages. In one mirror I'm an old crone with an apple and a pocket reflector; in another I'm wondering why I'm trying so hard to win a tennis match when I should be losing at speed in order to pursue a murderer who's trying to frame me for his crimes; in a third I wear my rue with a difference. A long succession of mirrors recede. . .

I'm prepared, I'm prepared for any eventuality I have a surplus Inter Continental Ballistic Missile in my basement, not state of the art but it'll deliver its payload to any target I aim at, you betcha! I have canisters I won't say what's in 'em, why spoil the surprise? you'll find out quick enough if you mess with me. I have a lead-lined chamber of adequate size a suitable distance underground, with three years' supply of nonperishable food in case of need and I'm accumulating more, and I don't even know how many movies and prime time tv shows stored in memory to jolly me through what are bound to be some seriously monotonous hours. Is it coming? the great apocalyptic event that'll drive all of us that survive underground 'til surface catastrophe blows over? I don't know but I wouldn't bet against it and my motto is better safe than sorry. Sorry, I don't expect there'll be any room for visitors.

Coats

They're stacked up everywhere in the long broad room that's sheeny grey. Walls ceiling floor. People don't need these anymore, don't ask why or they might tell you or worse, box 'em check the pockets first and remove any valuables they tell you that on the posters. They insist. How do you know what's valuable? That's spelled out in the detailed instructions and anyway you can figure it out for yourself. Be careful what you keep and always know the sight line of the cameras.

Sometimes if it's candy they give it to me. Once it was a lady's stockings. The jokes they made! and they tell me *I'm* nasty.

Call somebody to look if the lining might hide something. Don't laugh if *zzzipp!* with the razor up and down and it doesn't or your cheek'll sting.

rrrrrrrrr ARRR! ARRR! rrr rrr padu? padu? ch-ch-ch shum? shum? padu? rrrrrr remshi rstz mtz mtz shuuuuuuU! U! mm rrrrrrrrrrrr AWR! AWR! padu? nins gesopfen opten na mmm A! A!

era, win over hearts and minds 'til we're all out there partying like it's 1455? I don't think so, I don't have a remotely charismatic enough personality for that maybe I would have if I'd been born at the right time but as it is, how am I ever to know?

Shoes

These are easy to pack but you have to hurry. People wore each and every one who knows how long ago? I don't actually want to. One or two don't match, someone else must be packing the other one. Things happen to shoes just like people. They vanish and who knows where they turn up again?

These are black skinny heels with a name I can't remember but it's some kind of knife. I can see how the ankles would point out sharp above a smooth shiny heel that slides in and is right away six inches taller. The whole top of the foot almost could still be naked (slithery nude heel stockings maybe) even the top of each toe you could tell what they were by the ridges and spaces between, toenails just barely hidden probably painted. Everybody has toes pretty much. The way these point at the end the toe points that aren't naked must keep pretty close company. Uh-oh, hurry! you don't want to find out what comes out of that prod if it sticks you.

Anemnesis, Please

They are

.a sinister government body

.a sinister anti-government body (possibly concealed within the government itself?)

. a friendly clique within a government (generally friendly? sinister? an impossibly entangled mix of both?)

.actual aliens, as in off-earth visitors (intent? probably not simple tourism)

.a husband-wife detective team who can effectively mirror each other on opposite sides of a clear pane of glass

out to

.get me

.kill me

.confine me for my own safety/thesafety of others (compatible goals?)

.extract samples for study

.experiment on my parts

.present me with an unusual offer/opportunity/potentially advantageous crisis

.restore me to my memory and my greatness

.solicit my participation in a three-way.

I am

. a blind agent of chaos/justice (compatible goals?)

. a blind agent of dissimulation/creative change (compatible goals? technically not blind of course, I can see my reflection quite clearly even as I scribble down this note--who's that in the half shadow behind me? is the bartender tipping the wink?)

.confused in my motives but pure at heart

.pure in my motives but at heart confused

.an actual alien, as in off-planet visitor (reason for my visit? alien evidence in blood or urine stream?)

(Should i be turning myself in for my own protection or is that the last thing I should be doing? It would help if I had a functioning memory instead of nothing but these point form notes to go by. Some of them make no sense whatsoever.)

Attempts have been made on

.my life

.my property

.my honour
.my social security index
.my body mass index
.my frame outlook way of life
.my sense of self worth
.self esteem
.self preservation
.self presentation
.self integration
.self
.or am I imagining all this (is there a pill I can take?)

They'd like me to
.take a pill
.take a powder
.take a hike
.take a number
.take a long walk off a short pier into chaos, nothing and night
.take an order
.take responsibility for my own life
.take a break. Relax. RELAX!
this isn't getting me anywhere.)

If I produce an axe the forest needs it
A butcher knife is useful to a herd
Where would a flock be without shearing scissors?
Stone without chisel > clay without roaring kiln
Fish without hook > folks without leaders
Tourist paradise without credit card

Developing nation without interest schedule
Flower without patent to limit its dispersal
Blue cheese needs mold > pate de foie demands grass
Arable land needs a plow or else asphalt and concrete
Romantic impulses cry out for Hallmark cards
"I care enough to send the hairy beast"
"Do this for me and I'll grant you sexual favours"
Toast needs butter but even before that a slicer
Eggs must have water and 3-5 minutes to boil
How would the dead be *sans* furnaces and shovels?
The living without the knowledge they will die?
Fresh fruit would be at a loss without a blender
Prisoners without walls and cells and bars
Jailers without multiple locks on their off-premise houses
Universes with no God to design them
Time without end > space without bounds > eyes without blinders
Flash without pan > gin without tonic and lemon
Ecstasy without remorse > turbulence without disaster
Service without smile > gain without pain
Nude without lewd > lewd without crude > crude without oil
Oil without paint > paint without ladies > ladies without dressing
Salad without dressing > dressing without dinner
Dinners without reservation > lists without end

Mercury in the Wound

*Silver'd surface glides (wobbling frisbee spins)
into a woman dressed like a mirror*

*dazzles of varicoloured light sheen and shimmer
conceal or reveal what she is underneath?
How deep in bone marrow's glassmetal her body?
Silverine canister of mobile-tinkling flesh
Planet slightly wobbles on its orbit through the Heavens*

*Dazzles of reflection on hourglass figure
will she undress for you? seems it's impossible
Only part strategically, here you may enter
Take the racoon coat off a racoon
possess the depths of a reflecting pool
Clamps tight around you as snapping joints
in a funhouse maze full of ecchoing laughter
laughter of spheres in mad eerie spin*

*A hundred times over at least, that is you
on surface of quicksand polished clear as glass
that sheaths or is her skin? maybe no difference
What's this world coming to, where in Hell's it been?
Night sky clotted with many-sized balls
some full of mirrors and some rainbow pixels
sky is the limit? you're thinking too small
sky's just an atom, taken all in all*

*Thrash, ram, whoo! deep, by laughing joint squeez'd
You many times (many! many times) seen
liquescent, dissolving, sweat beads trickling bodies
bodies that slither away into thirsty earth*

*gleam many more on your skin? on her sheath?
on her skin? on your sheath? spooky vertigo rhyhms*

*Ev'rything covers but nothing protects you
coating half metal, half flesh underneath?
Body or quicksilver fluid shoots sharply?
Seven years bad luck if one of you cracks
If each image comes, the earth will move
Move to a new plane, fresh glist'ning planet*

*Curved replication of bodies on bodies
Globe spinning merrily, bodies sweep on
Bodies spin merrily so it appears
Globe sweeps its path in infinite space
Finite/unbounded's the more modern thought
Globe sweeps its narrow course in unbounded space
Head spinni--ohhh! did you see yourself coming?
How many times? was it good for your image?*

live down a well >> look up
circle of stars in the blackness
day and night

If the memories of places you walk through

whispered at you >> jostled you >> the specific voices faces persons
buildings >> no buildings >> rivers swamplands drainings
drone of insects a million years extinct
flap of dactyl wings >> if it all came buzzing upon you
as it sometimes does in minuscule doses which is unsettling
overwhelming >> sometimes the occasion of a religious vision
confinement to a madhouse
say the whole history of one square meter you stroll through
roared across all your senses at once >> sight hearing taste touch smell
the interpenetrations and subdivisions of these
the senses that have no name as yet
how would you move stand sit speak remain silent
well?

When life's most like a dung heap

Dream in technicolour

Picture all existence bright

Don't conceive it duller

Live your dreams, leave out the guns

The way cool CGI

Sunrise and sunset daily

More ravishes the eye

If life's too small, dream big

Your dreams will infiltrate

Only grand dreams e'er overthrew

A nasty, brutish state

New state not much better?

Back to our dreaming beds

Most of what's wrong around us

Is wrong first in our heads

Think of the wheel of a chariot. All right then don't think of the wheel of a chariot. Silly suggestion.

Martin Heavisides is the author of eight full length plays, one, *Empty Bowl*, published in *The Linnet's Wings* and given a live reading by Living Theatre in New York, two one acts and a good number of ten minute plays, short stories, flash fiction, poetry, which has been published in *Sein Und Werden*, *The Linnet's Wings*, *FRiGG*, *Mad Hatter's Review*, *Pure Slush*, *Journal of Compressed Creativity* among others. He has published one novella length collection of interlinked flash fiction and poetry, *Undermind*.