

The Pandemic Papers, vol. 2

new poems

by Bob Monahan

Dedicated to my loving family
who I am so blessed to ~~be~~ have been born into
and

my tribe, Fit For Service family.

Gang gang!

I love you all so much! xoxoxo

"We convince by our presence."

- Walt Whitman

The Stain: Before & After

I had a friend in the late 90s who only drank when the moon was waxing, and stuck to weed when the moon was waning. He was an odd duck, and wow was he good at seeming sane, even stable. I like guys like that to this day. M&M types. Shiny and colorful, sweet outer shell, with an inside all dark, creamy, molten madness. The ~~name~~ allusion to a contemporary rap artist is not lost on me.

If I rapped I'd be Peanutbutter M&M, which are a helluva lot tastier and more sophisticated than those plain jane, dude is insane, what was his name, so much to lose, with nothing to gain,

and I'm not sorry, momma, you and I both know I wasn't raised the same, I didn't shoulder the blame, carry the shame. I never asked you to explain why you left. I didn't ever need to see the pain in my face when I looked in the mirror, or party it away with fear in my brain, tears in my eyes as I ~~scrubbed~~ scrubbed at the stain, that I thought ~~wine~~ beer and champagne would make go away, but to this life now I'm choosing to live in love and in light of day I find strength to forgive. There is no hiding away from yourself once you pull that family album off the shelf, and start to discover that it isn't just you, that it's your mom's ~~mom~~ and dad's mom and dad and their moms and dads, too. I once knew a guy who seemed pretty put together. Later, I found out he was just better, at masking his pain, concealing the stain of his family name, which remains in his veins.

The Unicorn

In truth, we are the unicorns.
Your horn may not be visible to the naked eye.
Your hot breath, the sound of your hooves
clip-clopping may not pull others
from their shadowy outposts.
When you run and jump and fly across
a canyon, rocks tumbling and dust clouding up
from where you sprung from the earth,
that's when they will notice.
That's when you will know
you are a unicorn.

October 22, 2020
Duluth, MN

Letting it In

Drinking up the sweetness that is this cup of
chai beside me, still reeling at the notion that
I can't go back. Not to her, him, the place I was
before everything chnaged with a phone call.

Not to the dude ranch uninvited like drunk doctor
stumbling through snowy, moonlit field, dropping

gauze from his doctor bag, stethoscope hanging
cut like an intestine. We are starting to know

deep in our bones that we have lost the war.
Which war depends on the one you were fighting,

but it's time to raise the white flag. Surrender,
as if I need to explain. Surrender now and you

may be spared. It's alright. It's completely
normal to be scared. I gave up on my friends cuz

they didn't scare me one bit. Don't expect to be
taken into custody. They don't want your body,

they need yourx mind. The door opens and the smel
of cheap bourbon and woodsmoke wofb over the doc.

He needs help. The farmer and his man-boy servant
get him to a chair next to the stove and as soon

as they pull his second boot off, the doc begins
to snore violently. They leave him and go back

to canning tomatoes. It is a harsh night to be
staggering all over the fields, drunk and sick

to deaath of fighting to survive. Surrender.
They can have your body, but never your mind.

Surrender. Let in the light that seeks your soul.
Surrender and let what was many parts become whol

Ocotber 29, 2020
Duluth, MN

I Save Myself

I pull myself from the wreck, cheek gashed from chin to earlobe, we're all victims of violent crimes, mostly self-inflicted, perpetrated by shadows in the dimly lit corridors of our souls.

I look back and the car seems to be illuminated by bluish light. It could be a dream I don't know. It was snowing. I don't remember if I was driving much less where we were going. We?

We were only there for an hour, the details of which melt like snowflakes on the palm of my hand. If you stare into a flame long enough, they say it can purify your soul. They say this long after you're gone and long before you exact your return.

I save myself for all the ones who didn't give themselves a chance. I save myself in the spirit of rebirth. Holding my own newborn body as it kicks and screams, begging to be put back into the eye of the dream.

There was another body back there, another life left to decipher the codex of the ordeal. To pull itself from ashes to dust to burning the baptismal birthright, an offering as much as any moon offer its white light to ~~any~~ night, rolling out of the mouth, its eyes closed tightly, lids fluttering like hummingbird wings, breath steady, the dream commencing.

I saved myself from myself, it's not like I would mind the extra time, but it's not that kind of a crime, it's a shedding more than a regretting. It's letting go and letting go and letting go. Surrender to the process, feel its ~~fire~~ loving fire roll through you.

I saved myself, but only by letting myself go. I save myself the pain of holding on. I walk through the flame, I hear someone call my name. I don't answer. I keep going towards the light, back to where I'm no one, nothing, Back from where I came.

Am I the Only One

I think and therefor I am part of the conscious mind of the collective. I feel so I am part of its heart. I breathe from the lungs of the One. On one hand, no biggie. On the other, holy chris- in heaven, we're onto something here. This oneness, a homecoming ~~for~~ of the soul, a temple from which, when you stand at the center and the sun is at the right trajectory, it hits a mirror and lasers out across the desert of time into the eye of the pyramid, like the one on the dollar bill. At that precise moment, a church tower's bells ring out in symphonic jubilation the most wonderous song ever known. Upon hearing it, people become instantly enlightened, their third eye opening fully to the majesty of the world's supreme beauty. Children become the beings of light they are meant to be, and grown-ups smile and laugh and dance in the streets because they now know that it's okay to believe in magic and all the horses in all the land become unicorns and all the animals and humans can communicate. Prisons become tremendous castles full of the most luminous beings and hospitals simply turn to dust because we breathe sunlight and eat clouds and drink water directly from the lakes and streams, and that's just because it tastes good, we don't need to drink or eat anything really because we are fed by the ~~xxx~~ divine loving source of oneness. And there is no misery unless you want it. Suffering is completely optional. And, yes, I'm getting to the sex part. Oh noooooo

What If You

What if you lay there and let me do the work?
Would that be so bad?
Your body won't mind one bit, I promise.
What if you close your eyes and pretend
that the world outside doesn't exist?
What if it went away and it was just us
floating in space on this bed?
How bad could that possibly be?
Your cheeks flush with delight as I switch off
the light, and neither of us is the least bit
concerned with what's about to happen.
That's good because I pull off one sock
then the next. Your toes wiggle and curl
with their newfound freedom.
What if you let me do whatever I want to you?
What if it feels so good you never want me to
stop...and then I stop?

By the Time

By the time it takes for you to hear this,
to really receive it, and not in a anonymous
package on the porch when you open the door
to an ominous knock late one Saturday evening~~way~~
When you ~~xxxxxx~~ actually metabolize my message,
read it and breathe it and let it into your heart
space to stay, for eternity, perhaps, or maybe
just long enough for you to interpret what it is
I'm trying to convey to that part of you that
is still open not scarred over, not boarded up
like that old video rental place on the corner
where the ghosts of VHS tapes linger like lost
souls on the tarmac of eternity. By the time you
get it, sure it may be too late. I may be on my
way to the mystery place. I may be running to
get fresh ginger for my tender tummy, gurgling
in protest of all that chinese takeout, but I
won't be there is all I'm saying. I won't be on
your lawn with a picnic basket full of finger
sandwiches and MDMA. I won't be fiddling with
the buttons on your shirt or lower down the
rabbit hole of unrequited desire. By the time you
truly know what it means to want something so
badly your nailbeds burn and your teeth itch,
I may be gone. I may be over it, but I may not be

Sweet Tea

Just in case is a good rule of thumb,
but it's a bad insurance policy. Depending
on how the tea tastes, first sips and minutes
pass before the next. Ahh, there's the
honeydew. It was hiding behind the rain water.
The tea's true beauty lies in the rest of
the cup., and yes I believe in honey, but not
in black tea. Only in green and herbal.
Black tea and black variants get the sugar
and milk treatment, though whenever they bring
out a selection, I tell them, when you come
back, honey, sugar, cream of some ilk, milk
in a pinch- ch, and just in case, some lemon
wedges on their own saucer. I can always
sugar coat them and have them for dessert,
~~in a pinch.~~

Love Poem

We treat each other like the gods and goddesses
we are. We watch over our kingdom as a king
and queen, with a sense of pride and passion
and just a sprinkling of judiciousness. Someone
has to hold the knights accountable. We uphold
the laws and bring to justice those who betray
them. Through this we have learned to truly love
this land and its people. We honor our duty
to serve as much as we respect those who we are
here to rule. We lead with love and strength.
We let compassion guide us. We seek beauty and
truth, and the extraordinary in the mundane.
We grow as two oak trees in a meadow, with only
our uppermost branches touching tips, and
gently as snowflakes you try to catch in your
mouth but land on your lips. We control nothing.
It's quite the state of surrender. And that is
how we're able to live in a dream of joy,
wonderment and ecstatic splendor.

Around Midnight

The qualatative difference between darkness and pain is sensational, a ceramic mug filled to the brim with hot froth, too, resembles a world inside a world beside the point which is that sleep is relief from pain. Death is water going down the drain. Sunshine is all that is left after a day of threatening rain. The wisdom to know thatto wake up in a puddle of suffering is to experience what is for many, a break from the mundane, a comfortable slow-motion train derailling in the spirit of Coltrane, blowing notes into the veins, suspended refrains of love's testament to change and the possibility of an equal and ~~enormous~~ sustained relational invitational singular astral plane.

I Have So~~x~~ Much

I Have so much work to do and so do you.
I have so many friends and you do too.
I have a way about me that puts people at ease.
You seem to be in a perpetual state of distress.
I have a hunch that you and I are less similar than we previously thought.
I have so much invested in me that a sell-off of you will only bolster my holdings and propell me deeper into the bullish daymare that I presently know as Life.
In a matter of hours, the tilt shift will begin and what we once held as closely as a mother holds her newborn child, will become delicate as crepe paper wrapped around a boquet of daffodils, What was ascending now falls to the feet of the fool. What we had is now a puddle of pure water, evaporating skyward.



Somehow This Intensity

Like a horse in full canter, I shy away from her advances as if she wore blinders and something threatened to spook her. That's also why we took the back roads home. I'm afraid of the dark, but that's everything at night around here, so pick something that dark goes well with and not trees or crime scenes. That's why I ran past that house with the TV flicker in the window. Aint no one live there for three years. That's why I can't be too close to your warm body and parts of my life don't feel like they fit together any more and it a wonder they stopped investigating the disappearance of our youth like that's how things go around here, and always have. Like a horse in full canter scenes of childhood go away from me to where lil clouds of dust is all they are and no one seems to think anything of it. There's holes in her story that seem to push out reasons why I haven't seen my brother in 14 years. It took a tornado to uncover the truth about my uncle's depression. Why can't the flood come and wash away this lonely case of estrangement we all have with our pasts? Somehow this intensity is comforting. Sometimes it's there to remind us to look at tree in moonlight and see a grandfather smiling ~~down~~ back. Lately, it's been enough to see anything or anyone looking at me with the knowing that I'm exactly who I'm supposed to be in this moment.

November 5, 2020
Duluth, MN

Dear No One

We should have seen this coming through eyes in the back of our heads. Some say it was written on the wall, others said faces tell you almost everything you need to know about a person, if you can learn to read them. I got up early regardless. I went to the well for water. She slept through the building of the fire and tea brewing. Her eyelids fluttered like moth wings. It became a chore to communicate about nothing so we did days in silent appreciation of each other and those were perhaps the most productive. We aren't talking now and it sometimes feels like a fifty foot long cave filled with lullabies my mother never sang to me. She paints petroglyphs of her dreams on the walls and is gone before being discovered. If only we could gaze into one another's eyes. Without words to fail us, if only the masks could come off, the eyes tell stories our lips can't conceal. Secrets from beyond this lifetime. Family heirlooms buried deep in our DNA

Dear no one, please send voices that sing down the moon and dance circles around a fire of all that untethers our souls from the agreements we made with the long dead ancestors of our former self. Take me across the river of delusion. I want to go where they make love to the mystical, the myths that make us, fly far out over the fields and look upon the place we were with a heart full of butterflies and the look of knowing on my face

November 6, 2020
Duluth, MN

I Want Mine

I want my poems to be different. That's why it's 10:22 on a Saturday night and not "What the fuck was that?" 'o clock. Most people are asleep tho, aren't they now? I'm only awake because the type-writer doesn't need cocaine to be heavy metal as fuck. Big yawn and the recoil of my thin wrist limply prodding each key pretending not to hurt. My wrist feels 58 today. Still mad at itself for earlier, breaking my fall because sober people do plenty of dumb shit. What do you call a Nazi that smokes pot? A libertarian.

See I knew I should've gone to bed. New me wants poems that come at a cost. Tonight it's sleep.

Tomorrow it will be a silver dollar's worth of dignity. Next week it will be another firendship.

I have no plans and I love my life. I used to wonder what the neighbors would think. Then it

dawned on me, the neighbors never once thought about me. I want my poems to be different in a way

that challenges the current inclination towards irreverence. We have our king and queen, now lets

stand with them. That's precisely why this poem is different. The veil has been lifted. We may

kiss the childbride of the golden dawn on the forehead and nudge ourselves down from the ledge

of complacency. If the drop doesn't get you, the pedestrians will. Help us topple this statue of

a former tyrant. The call has been answered. It's time to make peace with our internal kingdoms.

11/7/20

Being Real

A coconut falls from the sky and narrowly misses the head of an elderly gentleman. Had it impacted his melon, this would be the start of a very different poem. We spend countless hours extending ourselves beyond what's necessary, but who's to say what earns stripes in ~~x~~ an army of fools, a real royal flush of uselessness, layed out on the sport court of dreamless sleep like a cobalt ocean seething with unspoken complicity. The man reacts like a crack in the pavement of our known potentiality. He cannot ask why him and why now. Victimhood is a series of near misses perceived as direct hits. Deception is the foster care of our unborn innocence, the illuminatti of middle school lunch lines. Is asking for the truth something forgotten on a field trip to the Science Museum all those years back? An aching in your right wrist a reminder to take a trip to Bali before the Big One hits? I'm surprised by the sheer number of dietary restrictions imposed by our body's self-imposed sense of propriety. It strikes a little different from where I sit.

If I were to be real, I'd concede defeat. There'd be rose petals on the ground wherever you walk.

Pink, white, and red. The coconut landed on my head. I forgot who I was and became you instead.

For a minute, I thought I was dead. Then I awoke from a dreamless sleep, sitting straight up in bed.

November 8, 2020
Duluth, MN

The Power (just) The Power

We often sit around and wonder who or what took our power. We see the needle and the damage done. We see the defeat in each step. We see the problem like a train in the distance, its golden shadow emblazoned on a serpentine snow bank. The people ask how is this happening to us, they stand in lines to read writing on the wall, the great wall of uncertainty. It boggles the spirit to face the lies, it infects the mind and unwinds the past like a spool of twine down a ski hill in summertime. ~~There are no rules in the school Nouveau. No need for such trivialities.~~

The caveman's need for fire, the guiding light tho. Too many bushes were burned in the making of day to night so, if I may offer up my opinion to my fellow followers and myriad minions, if there are apostles among us clad in crinolin and cradling pages of a text that's full of killing and stained by sour wine, let them in line. Let them decide which of them want to live and how far they will go to die.

That got deep like a submarine.

Her breath smells like Listerine.

I think I am in between

face buried in a magazine,

and a sitcom I watched when I was 14.

I only come out at night.

I'm a maneater, sweater weathering,

hair feathering floor model,

teeth-grinding, contractually binded

by the light and the blinded by the sight.

I'm a soul wanderer by trade.

I traded shield for a blade.

I stayed up late training myself in the ways of night. I got up early to train with the light

I get myself back home.

I'm alone, but I'm not alone.

I'm no one, and I'm everyone.

I am one with and without power.

I am power.

11/8/20
Duluth, MN

How I See Myself

As a student of words, knowing full well
that they are a collective master of expression,
the masters of them, gods with pens and paper,
ink of unicorn blood. I see myself as a squire,
polishing the marble floors and dusting the
mantlepieces around the castles of their dreams.
I want to see myself from everyone else's eyes,
the mirrors in the hall of illusions, but I want
to see the truth. I want to see inside the rising
tide, the inner workings of the carnival ride.
How I see myself depends on how open I am
to the truth, how vulnerable I can be in the
photo booth, how much rain I can make, the real
testament to the pain, how much you can take
and how-- and how I left this poem for dead. 36
hours later, still no clue how it all started
or how I keep coming back to the same themes,
the romance in a cheap motel room in Nebraska
where they still give you a big amber glass ash-
tray like you're a pop star from the early 60s
and you still smoke Pall Malls, no filter. That's
why I say a fuck a poem without a point. It's all
vanity at some point, kid. All of it. We used to
fuck broads with our privates now we fuck em with
our minds and our spiritual je ne c'est quoi.
Damn this is getting good. I think I'll see how
far I can take it. The real me pours himself a
cup of tea and wonders if he should be doing
something more productive like staring at a screen
or yoga or minimizing the effects that his actions
last night are having on him now, which was nada.
I did nothing last night. I did wake up at 4:20
this morning which was like pouring a bowl of
your favorite cereal and opening the fridge to
a carton containing 17 drops of milk. That doesn't
sound right, but it is. Technically a dribble and
6 drops, but you get it. Life doesn't usually go
like that for you, but it did today. and let me
tell ya. I am proud of you boy. The high chair
tyrant has left the building, and thank the lord.
~~Homicide has never been my thing and I don't~~
~~want it to become my thing now.~~

November 14-16, 2020

Duluth MN

Sit Here Every Day

There used to be an air about her. It was a list of demands on bad days, a Truth emanating from somewhere deep within her. We used to take walks along the creek, looking for arrowheads and pretending to be explorers. She'd hide from me on occasion to make me understand what loss is for brief moments. It wasn't physical. True love has little to do with all that. I miss her presence now, though I am the one hiding, I think. We used to hold hands and run together through scary places; the night, abandoned houses, a train tunnel, backyard barbecues we smelled from blocks away. We took turns being the one pulling the other. Now I sit here everyday and wonder what is pushing her away, or if I am being pushed towards truth, over the edge of my willingness, the center line, her hand clutching mine or who is pulling who. It never got physically intimate. Shared beds and it's as if one of us died I just realized that no one is safe from love's clutches. Why let it go to your head where it can live on like a mother-in-law after her daughter is long gone. Think of your heart instead. Think of it as a vessel, one that fills up and empties out. Sometimes all you can do is dance with it in the golden garden sanctuary of eternal grace, the ones you always knew to be true will be there. It only takes your highest, most authentic self to be received. In the discoteque of forgotten dreams, that's where I'll meet you next, my love

November 22, 2020

I Miss You

I'd be lying if I said I know what to say.
Life without you is staring at an endless ocean
and not knowing its beauty or power.

I miss your presence in the way a spider wanders
around searching for a spot to ~~knit~~ weave a web.
The last time we were together, I felt entangled,
and I stopped struggling because I know it only
makes it worse.

I wish you well on your journey. The space you've
given me is a package I know is empty, wrapped in
shiny patterned paper with a bow the size of your
heart. The night we slipped into the same dream
to tell each other the truth. The way your hand
was a starfish, your hair seaweed.

Forgetting is blissful. You leave me no choice bu
to fix this rhythmic cataclysmic cycle and subsis
on the rising tidal swish swish of inner visions,
~~the~~ with the persistant mindless ~~wish~~ tsk tsk
of the wishes made while kissing the back of your
neck.

~~These dreams don't work unless the drugs do.~~
~~It pains me to name the names to play the games~~
~~that you blame on a needle in your vein.~~
~~There's nothing left of who you once were, but~~
~~something remains. Something I need to reframe.~~

I miss you. Your body, your brain, your trust,
your brand of insane. Even as your plane ascends
my heart defends your name. Even as we slide down
different drains, we empty~~x~~ cut into the same
ocean.

November 30, 2020
Duluth, MN

Life is Hard

We don't see each other any more. Not since the shit spilled all over everything like a tidal wave of shit just came and covered everything.

Now even if we saw each other it wouldn't be the same. Not that I would expect it to be, but let's be real, only one of us is sitting here

Typing this, naked and somewhat stoned. I'm not afraid of much any more. I used to be at fear's beck and call. I'd wager your in the mood for

Something less controversial, more dancing on aleuvial beaches of amethyst, more ghosts, more storms brewing inside of you, I know. Darker, but Louder, I know. When we get there, I won't know, but I'll be curios. That's why I called you this evening, why I wanted you at 8:30 in the morning,

And why it feels so good to tell the truth after living a lie for so long. I still want to see you That's not it, and I'm pleased with the change.

I want more and I won't settle for less. That's the point of all of this. I won't leave you, but I won't wait for you either. My love is not only

Sophisticated, it's chemically dependent. I guess if this is how my life is, I'm still unashamed. Any day I don't break out in a rash is solid 8.

Which brings me to the end of my plea- however ironic- for forgiveness. Today, I journaled about the last time I told a truth instead of a lie.

Tonight I wrote this. I think it's working.

December 2, 2020
Duluth, MN

Don't You Dare

Don't you dare lose that childish innocence.
Put your nose deep in a text, but make sure it
stokes that burning urge to fill the Grand Canyon
with Jello, the Taj Mahal with kittens. Make
them want to call you when there's a jumper
because no one has ever literally talked someone
down from the ledge, so you show up with a boxcar
full of pillows. Same goes for the sleepers.
You can wake them with a bullhorn or an actual
bull's horn, but it won't shake them from their
dreamless state until you stake your claim in
the open plain of their reptilian brain. Unless
you plan to carress the cheek of the hobgoblin,
to dance the foxtrot across the ~~openingxxxxxx~~
mouth of the dragon's cave, like what's the prob-
lem, to keep a secret from the oracle. Unless
you are a mystic, please don't call a seance or
channel the ancients just because you saw it done
once in a Disney flick. Use your magick for the
ultimate good, bring out your cards and your
crystals and your potions, I dare you. Do a littl
spread, light candles and burn incense. Commune
with what scares you, what interferes with your
inferring with your inner fears, that feeling
you get in your ears, a tingling, singing
sensation, a knowing that the thing you seek
seeks you and grows ever-near. A potion so potent
it makes butter beer look like white male tears,
a solution so diluted, so masked with mootness,
so commodified. Don't you dare sink back into the
lapse of happenstance and leaving it up to chance
I wish I could say I will show you the way to the
day you wake up from the dream where all the kids
are at play and the dragons are slayed, but it's
not ~~myxxxxxxx~~ fortune to soothsay. Not my fate
or my place ~~x~~or my path from which to stray.
I've stayed the course up to here and now you
must carry the weight, my dear. It's why I needed
you to believe in the power we all have to grieve
the loss ourselves at the hands of time, for on
the VCR of life, there is no rewind. Now that I've
arrived, I just have one question: where do I sig-
?

December 3, 2020
Duluth, MN

Find me in the matrix:

@bomopoems on IG and Venmo*

***all proceeds will be reinvested in the
future of humanity as a whole. Thanks u.**