

*The Strange
Malady of Mr. 3*



*and other poems by
Johnmichael Simon*

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Johnmichael Simon

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Printed by Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
P.O. Box 21, Metulla, ISRAEL

www.cyclamensandswords.com

ISBN No. 978-965-7503-05-8

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THE STRANGE MALADY OF MR. 3

We're worried about Mr. 3, he seems
to be drifting away downstream
millennium floods have borne him far
but distances deceptive are
and like a leaf rusting on a heap
he moulds between nostalgia and sleep.

Oh for a cup of bitter medicine to sip
a blow to the vitals, a financial slip
the funeral of a lifelong held belief
a small love recalled, lost beyond relief
to revive Mr. 3 before we lose him in the rain
that obliterates all writing in the sand
all joy, all pain, all land.

The hourglass trembles, oh Mr. 3 please wake
the sand grains drip insistent morbid snake
and all the forests can't reverse the creep
or halt the planet's slow brown suicidal leap.

But no,
Mr. 3 is blinkered, dreams his lotus dream
and like a falling star, he leaves but fragile gleam.



MRS. ROSENGARTEN AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Off-axis and wobbling. The morning overcast, my neighbor whistles to his dog pouring some kibble into his bowl, refilling water. Mrs. Rosengarten who doesn't drive since her son was conscripted is calling for a taxi to take her to her sister, she's haggling about the price. The woman who sells newspapers from a baby pushcart is resting on a bench outside number twenty four, she's smoking her second cigarette today. Most of the men are in the army now. A flight of storks flaps overhead on its way to Europe, they haven't heard the news. The water ration's cut again and yesterday our Geiger counted rising doses from the milk and eggs. Down the road a panel van converted from an ice-cream wagon blares klezmer music from a loudspeaker, moshiach, moshiach, moshiach, ai yai yai yai yai yai. Yesterday it was the old goods van whining its recorded message; sewing machine, washing machine, bed, table, old goods old goods. The radio's playing Beethoven's Emperor concerto again, it's the third time this week. Holland's disappeared under the rising waters but we knew that would happen and there's another volcano where New Zealand used to be. Mrs. Rosengarten has won the latest skirmish with the taxi driver, who is charging last month's price but this will be the last time. It's minus fifty five across the western seaboard. Off-axis twenty seven degrees and wobbling. I think I'd better sell grandmother's antique closets to the old goods man. When the messiah arrives you won't be able to give them away for free.



VIEWS FROM A DIFFERENT CAMERA

The route march of electrons inside a wire
 illuminating continents in lacy patterns
 to hang up there, a paper lantern
 of rose water, peppermint and cloud
 the National Geographic of a Lunar earthrise.

Bees eyes. A medieval feast of shimmering flavors
 fragrance under petals repeated multifaceted times
 across a planet of jasmine, rosemary, pungent eucalyptus
 until you lose yourself, plunged shoulder deep
 into a fur-lined cotton-candy foxglove
 a brown honeyed blur
 a thousand times each day as you
 die of sweetness.

Sometimes you just want to live your life
 as if nothing cared. To wake into a sun-filled
 morning a thousand millenniums long. Time to
 imbibe wonder drop by drop, slowly ponder
 each crystal pool. Dive under the ocean's waves
 with whales and shrimp. Wipe your fingers across
 the face glass of tomorrow, watching icons come and go
 like galaxies. A beating heart.

Zoomed in like Saturn's rings
 sharp etched across a hive of stars.



GOING FISHING

It's a carnival booth world,
 armed with poles and magnets
 we're fishing for lost continents

Atlantis under the plains
 of Salt Lake City, Pangaea,
 a number of Ararats, scattered

Bones of Lemurian warriors
 in Nashville, Greenwich, Mecca
 and Tiberias, moldering, slimy

Carbon-dated yet distinctly
 reminiscent of a fossil found
 in Drakensberg, anthropological

Arrowhead of Flintstone quoting
 his now famous pre-kindergarten
 national anthem. They say that

At any meeting of ten scholars
 there are twenty dissenting opinions:
 the Paleolithic length of the pole

The magnetic pull of pre-Cambrian
 Eden giving exactly the right tilt
 to six thousand years of recorded expulsion

Adam and Eve discussing Jungian
 consciousness, dinosaurs and demons
 relegated back to the laboratory of a

Non-existent big bang theory
 now finally disproved; she holding his pole,
 homo erectus, magnet dipping precisely into

The continent where Jonah swallowed his whale—
 quad erat demonstrandum
 the Loch Ness Monster!



GINGER TEA CEREMONY

A brewing storm outside rumbled
like a headache in the sky
Sonya was pouring tea, laughing at a joke,
the heavens opened like a burst dam,
bucket loads, horizons of it
Let it rain for forty days and forty nights
she laughed, clean the pollution out
of our rivers. Our eyes bathed
to see clear again. No more war,
party politics, cigarette stubs, traffic
jams, no more investigators, spies,
secret police, customs duties on marijuana
- all washed away.

Do we have enough tea and ginger biscuits
for forty days and forty nights? I snuggled
into Sonyas's arms. We were so young,
already legions of gum booted rescue workers
were sloshing through the rising water to
salvage us. Helicopters whirled overhead,
sharp headlights jabbed through the
sleeting rain. Throw your books down,
come out with your hands up.

And the tea was cold, the ginger biscuits
waterlogged.



KATARINA'S ORBS

Silver orbs in Katarina's garden
 linger under willows, beside bougainvilleas
 they bob and dance when Katarina
 photographs a tea party or a game
 of croquet. Serene visitors from nowhere land
 they nod and float, faceless yet all eyes
 peering queering spheres
 at Katarina alone

She has spied them too, in France
 captured them under trees by the Caspian sea
 silken balloons snapped waltzing in a Baltic breeze

And yes, Katarina has a cat that talks
 and labyrinths of manuscripts recited by
 knights and ladies from her past lives

In her garden, stretching to a misty lake
 Katarina crouches by mandrakes and spider rings
 where faeries dance moondances while Venus smiles
 and even street lamps wear coronas in the mist

And Katarina has a book of poems she's composed
 that bob and dance, invite the orbs in all of us
 to come and join her in her sweet séance
 and if you dare to brush aside her bougainvillea fronds,
 step through the willow curtain to her secret song
 you'll dance with Katarina's orbs all incarnation long



MACNAMARA'S THEORY OF RELATIVITY

As in a train compartment, stationary,
painted landscapes trundle past on boards
as MacNamara ponders Life and Time

Mr. Magoo, villagers call him
with his crazy notions, bushy eyebrows
blackboard fingers chalking calculus and moons

But MacNamara knows something they don't
knows that Time is not a thing we travel along
but rather moves outside of us. No that's not quite

what he means, refilling his tankard, wetting whiskers
in Guinness foam, face stained white, as his fingers
move peanuts and crisps across the counter

Time, he declares flipping a peanut, is not like that
at all, - not like this, or this.. but more like...
It's closing time says Paddy the barman, drink up

And so the Nobel Prize for physics went to
a pair of Vodka slurping Russians



THE WIND IN THE PILLOWS

There's a wind that blows cobwebs from stars
candle tallow from twinkles on Mars
there's a breeze that shakes clocks from lace curtains
and a sneeze that wakes lanterns and urchins

There's a princess who sleeps on a pea
and a turtle that climbs up a tree
there's a dormouse who eats marmalade herrings
and giraffes who wear chocolate earrings

There's an apple tree playing Rachmaninoff
and a teapot-spoon-moon that is running off
there's a cow who jumps over librarians
and plays tennis with octogenarians

While that breeze wafts princess into slumber
the giraffe munches pickled cucumber
and to quote Oscar Socrates' uncle
it's an ill wind that blows no one a chuckle



HEEBIE'S WORLD

I didn't write this poem. Heebie did.

In this Heebie world
 Name dropping's flag is furled
 no Yin no Yang no Connemara
 no Arlington no McNamara
 all you're allowed is Heebie
 and Jeebie if you're dead

No Tucker no McMillian
 no Buckeroo no Jillian
 no Tintin and no Clinton
 say Monicker and you're dead

No Herbert and no Klonimus
 survival means anonymous
 no Gilbert and no Sullivan
 drop all those titles all of 'em

And remember when you've gone
 your stone inscribed 'anon'
 you join a host of unnamed ghosts
 that Heebie dreamed upon



COUNTING

I count stairs
birds, kerb stones
children on a bus
spectators at a stadium
I count breakers on the beach
seconds, years, minutes

The world whirls by relentless
a missed step, a missing child
a stampede at a soccer match
or at the Hajj

One more, one less

I count blood, floods, earthquakes
revolutions of the moon, passers by
I count stars
repetitions of amen
the number of begats

Compressed into myself
I count teeth, hair
the hours until my next meal

Water leaking from
the wall of my cell
drip, drip, drip

Winter comes
water turns to icicles
I count heartbeats



A PLANET CALLED LULU

*Bang bang Lulu
Lulu's going away
who we gonna bang bang
when Lulu's dead and gone?
Sixties campfire ballad version*

Before we arrived, music was woodpeckers
pollution was vulture's dung heaps
lions picked their teeth with victim's bones
anthills crumbled, glaciers tumbled

Out in space planets collided soundlessly
pulsars imploded invisibly and black holes
still undiscovered, swallowed everything
in reach - in short, banging has been around...

Since we arrived, Lulu's become more organized
her body hair shaved for timber, her green
hills mined and quarried for chemicals, grinding
and bumping she was drilled in intimate places

We sucked her body fluids to run our sexy little
vehicles, each pod containing a single pea
careening directionless like termites on tar tracks
bang, crash, growing graveyards of rusting iron

We desecrated all her secret places, tore her
album of folk music to shreds, she's past saving
now, skirts up to her balding chemotherapy scalp
everything exposed, derelict mine shafts, extinct pub songs

And now we're off to conquer other worlds
we've packed our chromium saws into bio degradable
bags, with nuclear engines we'll dump our waste into
space as we go, singing our bawdy verses to wake and bang

even a most innocent Venus
unaware her masters have arrived



PAINTING BY NUMBERS

stretched out inside its frame
a naked canvas map
thin almost invisible lines
delineate its continents, islands and seas
with numbers where the colors go

strewn across a table
wooden blocks hiding faces
significance downturned
waiting to be the ones selected
and blanks
to fill the missing links

shimmering under glass
silken ladders twist around themselves
rungs where angels ascend
speak across spaces
where emptiness holds

secrets
of all that Noah packed
into his ark



POST AQUARIUS REALITY

Skinny as a telephone pole with a blip
somewhere in its middle, I think woodpecker
but coming closer, spaghetti moving on six-inch
high heels and an incongruous teenage pregnancy

You're swinging home from school with your friends
satchel-backed chorusing something from the
pop charts as if nothing unusual has happened

You tell me when I inquire that he, motorcyclist lover,
traveling at a neck breaking one forty had an
unforeseeable collision with a safety fence
and you're going to keep the baby

There's a bright star coming up over the horizon
dear neighbor's daughter, one that never sparked
in my baroque youth, nor that of your tight-crested
class mistress mother

One that Woody Woodpecker could not have imagined
if he had hopped into our gleaming facebook universe

Looking around to discover if there's life on other
planets or just a hard-beaked reflection of his and our
own teenage rebelliousness now only an SMS away



IT'S A SMALL WORLD

The hand that wrapped the five pound beef cut
wrapped the world
folded Gaza, Afghanistan, Baghdad inside newsprint
of Al Jazeera, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg,
flags unfurled

The man who grills sliced turkey in Geneva
is married to a widow from New York
and diplomats who've missed their lunch, hoarse
voices in Assembly, yellow, fezzed, keffiyeh'd
brown and smoking Camels, consume Souvlaki
with a plastic fork

They're practicing long speeches, votes, abstentions
while car bombs splatter beef blood back at home
and in a pause between rhetoric, kneel and genuflect
towards a reconstructed dome

The hand that picked the flowers brought to classroom
brightened little freedom fighters' day
the missile that exploded killing dozens
was manufactured just across the way



P A R K B E N C H H E R O

Give me a black bottomed fry pan
 give me an unplastered wall
 dirt underneath my fingernails
 with a spittoon in the hall

Clothes from a Goodwill on Main Street
 roll my own smokes with a lick
 words from last year's Reader's Digest
 second hand boots for my feet

Civilization's a bummer
 news is for kindling my fire
 give me a slut and a bottle
 and a corner to quench our desire

But I'll tell you just this for the asking
 I don't have no curse in my heart
 I don't pack a gun in my holster
 don't covet what I haven't got

In the long run we're all bodies wasting
 as our souls march to higher estates
 worms won't care if it's me that they're tasting
 or Lincoln, Bob Dylan, Bill Gates



CLEAN NEW WORLD

On screen, a Japanese scientist
beautiful in humbleness
is demonstrating his invention

An appliance into which he throws
plastic garbage bags, bottles, packaging;
he presses a button
after a few minutes
a stream of converted oil,
petroleum or kerosene
flows from a pipe into a beaker

Now he's showing his machine
small enough for any kitchen table
to children in other countries
explaining how it may be used
to clean the world
recycling heaps of clutter
back to their original constituents

And I wonder if in some moment
of brilliant ingenuity someone could
possibly create a similar device
which might recycle metropolitan sprawl
poverty, overpopulation
child abuse, drug dealing
back into two naked
lovers reclining under
apple trees
in a sun filled garden



MISSILE

I'm boiling. A speck of spittle, undigested. Blood I never owned was spilled. I'm ballistic. Dream of infidelity and revenge. Traitors lurk in my bedroom. Wear my clothes. Eat beside me at my table. Indigestible words, mirror consonants. Streets all lead to dumps, while in their top storey aerie, prehistoric raptors write manuscripts on leather torn from victims' backs. But I can see through all this subterfuge. Sense you there behind the scenes, twisting knobs, your lacquered fingernails tapping messages disguised as charms. I'm armor and made of swiftest lead. Impenetrable. I'm nuclear, a bunker buster. My crosshairs centered one inch above your nose. Listen to me once, my final warning. Look up at me, bare your desire. Whisper counterfeit love letters in my eyes. I'll buy them. Weapons cast aside. I'll lay my carpet at your feet. Disgusting world. I love you.



DARK OPERA

Baritone:

Squat teats across horizon's breast
 appear cylindrical and dark
 malignancies, Jurassic beasts
 like fungus growths on Noah's ark

Chorus:

The visitors are here, are here
 the visitors are here
 they've traveled far from distant stars
 these judges ranged behind the bar
 to give their verdict whether we are
 guilty as charged (or worse by far)

Tenor:

Slugs, snails beside the water's melt
 a gleam of sulfur and of pitch
 from Betelgeuse, Orion's Belt
 here scarecrow alien, there a witch

Chorus:

The jury has gone out, gone out
 all eyes and ears and pods
 soon verdict comes, alas so soon
 as vampire clouds obscure the moon
 they shuffle in, anonymous
 "Guilty as charged" - unanimous

Soprano:

Oh Sodom. How you would rejoice
 for only one dissenting voice



L O N E R

A hermit crab in some abandoned den
 might scoff at our attempts to build our nests
 on top of one another, so that when
 we want to go to bed we need to press
 a button marked sixth floor or number ten
 then wait for several neighbors to egress

What if the sand caves in he might inquire
 or if a mollusk claims your home is his?
 What use then all your lofty spires
 your elevator shafts that hum and whiz?
 He'd say that in a flood, a storm or fire
 a rented shell's superior to this

But safety and locality aside
 perhaps he'd stress the lonely way of life
 his strong desire to bolt the crowd and hide
 far from those bumping shoulders, constant strife
 after all the beach is long and wide
 and every one's a hermit deep inside



CLAY

As water is forced between squeezed fingers
so is clay. Wet, grey, clammy, collapsed
from wedging. You press fingers together
to contain it, prevent from escaping but it
squirms out between tight molecules.

Outside wind rises. Here drought withers all,
dead waterfall now merely a slash of bleached
rock bisecting dark ravine, a pale tongue of salt,
reflections on walls tell of storms, floods, mudslides
on the other side. Clenched fingers. You dream
of dog's teeth.

Clay. The animal is bear-sized, off white. Your
fingers lock into its teeth, hold jaws apart from
snapping. Muscles strain, spine and shoulders
dragging teeth apart. How much longer? Animal
stench. Porous or oily? Why clay, why you?
Only a question of time before all strength departs.

Slow. You watch clay escape between your digits.
Oil turns to rock, hardens to teeth. One side chalk
the other liquid between the stars. You solidify.
Ursa Major spread across the sky from point to
point. Wheel spins between your outstretched
fingers. Wild animal hunting across your night.



SUN MAN, MOON WOMAN

Half of him is radioactive. the other porous clay. He rises, shattering day with sparks, healing, ravaging as one. Fifteen thousand victims die of him but lepers are cured. When his symphony is over, he sinks into forgetfulness. Somewhere behind a dark curtain he preaches omnipotence to cowering masses. He laughs at floods and earthquakes, throws stalactites down mineshafts and when angered his fires blister mountains into glass.

Nothing calms him, nothing, nothing. But when he pauses to catch his breath, his bride's a lady. Pale as lace, gowned in soft smiles, she's therapy and lover to his ire. And though he rants and storms, threatens to consume her with his rage, she hears him not. Her fingers cool as milk trace maps of melting snow across the scars of places that he's seldom touched. His anger turns to liquid in her soft embrace.



**CHOPIN, NOCTURNE IN
C SHARP MINOR OP. POSTH.**

Imagine
a darkening city, tired from blood shedding
wasting at the sleeves
a tired angel

A Chopin nocturne is playing
over the rooftops as we remember,
explosions, car bombs,
burning, incendiary music,
but it's not Rome

And perhaps this is a more appropriate way,
soft sad fingers across the skyline
nocturne fingers touching
silhouettes of buildings
one by one
turning the lights off

Maybe it is an angel,
you know the one I mean,
playing this nocturne
across an emptying cityscape
the last ghost watching from a rooftop
as the lights go out

From broken window panes
in a city without ears
yet somehow, still
with a posthumous echo



ILLUSIONS

Sections leading into sections – and stairs

Angels riding escalators – in pairs

Ladders disappear down adders

Spiders dangling right beside us

Penguins holding hands on landings

White bears

Chess boards, monarchs in distress boards – blocked pawns

Crosswords filled with ancient dross words – and yawns

Clock ticks, disappearing box tricks

Street plans, rainbow's incomplete bands

Questions leading into questions

Dense thorns



MAN SPLASHED ON A SPINNING BACKGROUND

Take a leap
into the pupil of a salamander's eye
into the great red spot on Jupiter
a whirlpool, a laser
a potter's wheel, a stalactite
see things change
with your perspective
so different from how you imagined,
the view from a carousel
painting familiar objects
into spectral bands
your hands pressing
into the clay
of your wobbling mid section
then suddenly you are
head-over-heels in
multi-hued vertigo
you scream out – Stop!
frozen at twenty seven minutes
past eleven, locked into
this immobile watch spring
at absolute zero, your fingertips
flung outstretched against the
furthest receding drops of light
a snowflake, eternally akimbo



NURSERY RHYME WORLD

At first it all seems ridiculous
impossibilities hopscotching over each other
cow over moon, birds baked in pies
toeless pobbles falling down skies
but after a while you accept it and laugh

Later, you look outwards
to places where light accelerates into silence
stars fall into black holes
comets rehearse anniversaries of dance routines
universes wrinkle into non-existence

Or inwards, into your increasingly unpredictable
jungle, playground of surgeons and shrinks
moving aside wrinkled universes
cutting away black holes, plummeting you
in and out of patch-job dance routines

Until in the end, you fall head over heels,
toeless as a pobble, into that waiting place
where unknown blackbirds jump over each other
baked or nose-pecking as pies in the sky



CAT SLOWING TO VANISHING POINT

At a convergence of stairs
 our aging cat (an Escher spirit)
 motionless and gray
 sits staring at his water bowl
 intent on some inner reflection
 a gentle-pawed daughter of Elysium?
 perhaps some feline narcissism?
 he sits, a mewless truncated statue
 alone inside
 his silent wilderness.

We count the hours his frozen
 highness rests, has rested, may yet
 rest on, resurrecting possibly some
 hidden clump of high grass, fangs,
 blood, hunger poised as stone
 to pounce a sparrow pecking seeds.

We pass by. Not far away
 our bathroom mirror stares
 blankly back, counting its own
 approaching disappearance.
 Outside our statue
 stirs on cue, softs into an elderly
 lope down to the kitchen.

Even condemned prisoners must eat.



FLOODS AGAIN

He was sleeping in his bed when the waters rose.
She was fastening her sandals when the waters came.
They were preparing some rice when the waters rushed.

In a storm of mud and anger the waters roared.
Stream now river.
Field now river.
Path now river.
Road now river.
World now river.

Two rivers. Everything two rivers.
Rising by this door. Rushing past this window.
Roaring by these walls.
Island house!
Horizon house.
Rushing water house.

Everywhere a rushing roaring water wreckage river.

Two children in their nightgowns on a rooftop waving sheets
into the rushing roaring waters. Spots on a helicopter's map.
Time for a commercial, a cartoon. The Dow is down. Weather
partly cloudy. Bacon sizzling in the pan. School bus chugging
down the road.



PRECIOUS BUBBLE

carrying its cargo
 of creatures and creations
 up-line, temperature rising
 notch by notch towards
 the red line of no return

capsule camera
 traveling down history
 of this one-eyed planet
 now lodged in a blocked artery
 pressure building towards
 a choice of terminal events

in the tavern
 it's after midnight
 but the last drunk patrons
 refuse to go home, lean
 on each other, tankards dripping
 battle songs and invective until
 one by one the lights go out
 and the air is replaced with vacuum
 and the absolute zero of space

out there
 are millions of histories
 that never were, perhaps
 only one drowning in its own
 blood still gasping a chorus
 'we are the champions of the world'



STRAW ECHO

I thank you mister straw man
 thank you, bones shivering in temporary skin.
 I thank you mister scarecrow, knee deep in rows
 thinking your straw thoughts that nobody knows
 about grayness of weather, time running too thin
 your empty eye hollows, your twig of a nose.

I thank you ant armies
 thank you, carrying us away, straw by straw
 twig by twig, leaf by leaf, we whom wind has blown
 across the floor of some dust-blown field,
 not to re-assemble us, what for?
 After all we were men of straw,
 yet perhaps for some insect bed or nest
 where underground generations might be impressed.

So here's thanks to you my scarecrow friend
 wandering the streets, bars closed, night too young to end
 dreaming of wind-gray fields of pickings and crows
 like burnt out cigarettes, dried coffee stains and
 handkerchiefs with holes that sneeze into the wind.

If all striving leads underground, all thoughts made of straw
 why do your hollow verses echo as I cry, no beg, for more



THOUGHTS ON FINDING AN OLD SHELL

Fossil
lodged somewhere
in frozen whorls of rock
ancient ocean creature
sleeping through the zoics
like a secret in a watch spring

Uncoiled
I hold you in my hand
lift you to my ear
attempt to listen to your whisper,
echo from the library of geologic time

Silence
like all the largest questions
unblinking in their cabinets of glass
I wonder too, where stills the impulse
poet, artist, symphonist, scientist, librettist

Endless
fragments of the puzzle
languishing on shelves



TOIL

Bequeathed from earliest days
 its ethic stitched into our skin
 painful at times when it restricts the lissome,
 commanding rise and be about it; hammer
 carry, sow, forge, clash of smithy's anvil,
 clatter of loom, rasp of lathe spinning shavings,
 hoe, broom, udders heavy to be milked,
 eggs to be collected: commanding, commanding.

Free after dark, into our dream hours we fly
 as kites, dipping, soaring, straining against the leash
 until oh joy, it snaps and away we bound
 exuberant, unrestrained, looping the loop, higher,
 higher than trees, birds, landscapes, muscling
 for stratosphere, until unannounced, wind drops
 and spiraling, dismal as a detached comet's tail
 we end up in a tree, torn, smashed, twisted relics.

Oh mother! Oh master, teacher, gather us in your
 arms, graft patches on our skin, unravel us, crunch us
 to brittle powder, reconstitute us as stones threshing
 wheat, as branches plucked and stripped, sharp as
 daggers, fashioned into lobster cages; through pain,
 through compliance. Bind us to your will.



LEONARDO'S WITCH

She came to him in a dream
all broomsticked, hair flying, bat wings

It looked more like a rib cage
than a flying machine
a girdered assembly of bone and feather
held together with spittle cement
fragile as the embryo of an axiom

He thought of pelican, pterodactyl

Just a little invention of mine, she lisped
snapping it apart with candlewick fingers
strut by strut falling to the carpet
making plinking heaps of quavers
and wishbone-like harp music

When she was done
it bore no resemblance to anything
only perhaps a thrown set
of pick up sticks

She looked at him, feline eyes flashing challenge

Now you put it together!



MORE ADVANCE REVIEWS

Johnmichael Simon serves chocolate-coconut-macaroon poems, so irresistible I couldn't stop gorging after three full reads. Mr. 3 is a mind-fattening masterpiece without a single calorie!

Wanda Sue Parrott, Co-founder National Annual Senior Poets Laureate Competition for American poets age 50 and older.

Mr. 3 is irony with a message. In despair at a world on self-destruct, Johnmichael Simon suggests that there is hope for revival, time to turn back: "a cup of bitter medicine to sip..a small love recalled before we lose him in the rain that obliterates all writing in the sand..." These poems hurl us into a surrealistic future, a post-Apocalyptic age. Nothing is spared, the generation gap, pollution, terrorism, teenage pregnancy. Yet wit, phrases of beauty and cadence show the reader that there is hope.

Wendy Blumfield, President Voices Israel group of poets in English

Inventive, full of verbal felicities and surprises, *The Strange Malady of Mr. 3* shows Johnmichael Simon at his versatile best.

**Seymour Mayne, Professor of Canadian literature,
University of Ottawa.**

Johnmichael Simon takes apart our illusions of reality, deconstructs our skin and bone collage of being, whirls us from spent stars to push-carts, in scalpel language carving both blood and beauty. Icons of perceived life dissolve in his incisive razor-scope, the shreds unraveled in quixotic prose and rhyme. We are exhorted by his "feline flash": "Now you put it together." The challenge will rivet you, unsettling the ordinary evermore.

**Katherine L. Gordon, poet, publisher, author,
editor, literary critic.**



Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
www.cyclamensandswords.com
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Printed by
Cyclamens and Swords Publishing
P.O. Box 21, Metulla, ISRAEL

ISBN 978-965-7503-05-8

