

“Odin Comes to Me”

A poem

By T.D. Smith

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.”

— 1 Corinthians 13:12

Odin came to me.

All-father,

One eyed,

All wise.

He came to me in the streets of modern day America

In Virginia.

He came to me in the parking lot

Of a church

During a festival,

Of all places.

He was old-looking,

Decrepit.

Far from pleasing

To any of my mortal senses.

He wore tattered, beggars clothing.

He reeked of old booze and urine.

His garments

Plaid,

Flannel,

Torn,

Smelling in the burning sunlight.

He spoke to me as I walked to my parents' car,

Which I was to drive away,

Alone.

A garbled, jumble

Of what I assumed were words.

I did not understand them

Grammatically

In syntax.

Yet,

Whether it was

Icelandic,

Or Old Norse,

Or random mad ramblings,

I knew what he meant,
Reading the human language
In his movements,
His gestures,
As he reached out,
Begging,
Desperately.

Fighting my learned instinct,
That maxim of modern man
To ignore,
To leave Lazarus sitting aside street,
Letting only dogs lick poor Job's sores,
I approached him.

He looked me in the eye.
I met his gaze.

He had but one good,
Functioning,
Eye.

The other was weathered,
Useless,
Cloudy,
And with cataract,
A growth protruding from retina.
Red veins all about
What I imagined
Had once been a bright, blue iris,
Carrying infections borne
Out of lack of charity,
Proper care,
Consideration,
Throughout his extremities.

Rather than being repulsed,
I was intrigued,
Touched.
Something moved in my heart.

How could I,
Having so recently exited such building as yonder,
Participating in ancient,
Divine,
And sacred
Rites,
Pass by poor beggar who

Sang out to me,
Reached out?

I slipped him a bill
From out my fold.
As my hand met his he held it fast,
Tight,
With surprising grip.
I looked him in his one good eye,
My eyes darting
Involuntarily,
To his once good one.

He spoke in garbled tongue once again,
Some blessing,
Or curse,
I knew not.
I cared not.

I was giving to this poor creature
With no regard for what would become
Of my person
As a result.

I cannot describe what had come over me
What mad insistence in the gray matter
Between the holes in my skull
Shouting down to my heart,
Or vice versa,
The message burning,
Beckoned me to do so.
I can only tell
That I answered it,
Jumping to fulfill it.

The old man then spake unto me,
Once again,
And I did not understand his words,
But,
Nonetheless,
He did so,
Again.

I took his hand and drew him near to me,
And,
Wrapping my arms about
The pitiful man's shoulders,
I embraced him,
Telling him he was welcome,
Loved,

Still a member of our race yet.

Then,
I led him inward,
Into the festival,
Much to the chagrin
Of yonder
Pharisee,
And scribe,
And fed him,
Not with the twenty he now held
Crumbled in hand,
But with additional gold
From within my coin purse.

A great plate,
A meal fit for a king of Asgard,
I piled up and purchased
For him.

He sat beneath tent,
Sheltered,
Safe from harmful ray,
And ate.

At length he stood.

“He is thirsty!”
I thought.
And I rose,
Turning,
Going,
Disregarding the disgusted stares,
For I held no cares,
Nor did he.

As I rose, so did my dining companion
And he smiled,
A wide grin,
Almost as wide
As the brim of the hat
I could have sworn I saw atop that head,
Yet when looking upward I saw nothing.
“Must have been a shadow,
Some trick of yonder fading light”
Said I.

Then turning, I went on to bring him beer,

A fine drink of mead
For Grímnir,
On this hot September afternoon.

But returning,
He was gone,
Nowhere in sight,
For mortal eyes to behold,
Disappeared,
Not to be found,
Tho I looked,
All about campus
And within vestibule
And behind altar.

I did not see Odin again
Until years later.

Then stood my mother,
Wise,
Loving,
Far-seeing
In her knowledge
And experience
Of this world.

And fresh from surgery.

She stood,
Eyepatch covering
Eye,
And as she did,
Looked at me,
Her son,
And I back at her.

And as I stood looking,
Suddenly a flash of recognition,
De Ja Vu.
I knew
It was Odin stared back
Through
My mom.

Sometime later,
I gaze upon
Jupiter
Deus Pater,
Father,
Red and mighty,
Jovian King of planets,
Hallowed
And now projected,
Large and commanding,
Represented by human instrumentation,
Onscreen.

And it occurs to me,
There he is:
Odin,
Still one-eyed,
Still king,
All-father,
His red eye enormous
And blaring,
Piercing my soul,
All our souls,
And meeting my gaze once again!

And later, still,
I look upwards in times of
Struggle,
Of strife,
And see him
Hiding in the moon,
Winking,
One-eyed,
At me.

He has looked after me,
Continues to look after me
And mine.

I know not what divine favor I won
That the wandering All-father
Came to my neighborhood
That hot September afternoon
But now
I know
I won *some* favor
By merit
Of food purchased,

Of hospitality,
Of humane,
Human,
Embrace.

Now lamenting in strife,
I gaze up,
Beholding the stars
And among them the moon,
Pale,
Beautiful,
Winking,
And one-eyed.

He is smiling down upon me
And his smile
Triggers a flash,
Memories distant
Come a flooding,
And I see,

Not with my human eyes
But by the same one,
The red one,
With which he
Sees far,
The inner,
The mental,
The spiritual.

For his "bad" eye is
Not so!
But better,
Stronger,
Further seeing than any other,
Spiritual.

The flashes come back
And I see:
Grandfather,
Long ago now,
In my formative years,
His smiling warmth,
His lazy eye,
Looking on his grandchildren,
Alongside his good one.

And at once
The moon
And he
Are smiling down
And with, me.
I am aware then,
That always he is with me,
Not just now.

It invigorates me,
Energizes me,
Keeps me going
Stronger now
Than before.

For Odin is a god
Of warriors.
And I will remain his soldier
Until war is won
And dragon,
Or I,
Or both,
Lay slain.

I will fight on,
Stay brave,
Stay bold,
Even unto death,
His warrior unto bitter end,
And meet him thereafter
On his fields.

Then,
At long last,
He will lead me inward,
As I led him,
To banquet,
And,
We shall have that drink,
Sharing that sweet draft,
That many a year ago now
He called a rain check upon
At church festival.

His blessing leaves me pondering.

Tales of old
Are told
Of god
Of Odd
(Of the Arrow)
Of
Hero
Hadingus,
Who,
Dying,
Not in combat,
Not a warrior's demise,
(So-called!)
Were not greeted
By All-seeing Odin,
On his Asgardian battlefields,
By his assembled warriors,
And brought into
His mead halls.
Such was only worthy of a hero slain in battle.

I know
With all my heart,
All my being,
That the old tales
Are wrong.
For we are ALL soldiers,
Warriors,
Fighting our way through this life,
And some among us
Are braver, bolder,
Veritable generals
Leading the fight
In war Trojan,
Nay,
Ragnarok!
Fighting battle most pure,
Good,
To whatever end,
Be it our demise,
Or that of the gods themselves.
And these have more difficulties,
Trepidations
In the battles before them
Than do others.

Therefore, all who live
Who fight,
Who remain warriors til the end,
Are brave,
Bold,
Are worthy.
Worthy of that recognition and reward most golden,
Of spoil and splendor
In Odin's most hallowed halls.

And I know
When my battle is complete,
Fighting finally over,
Won
Or
Lost,
I will see them,
Odd,
Hadingus,
Grandpa,
Mom,
All the others,
And finally,
Most of all,
Odin,
All-father,
In those vast, Golden halls
Of
Valhalla.

There I will meet, greet, and know him,
Just as I am also known.

In the meantime,
I will continue on,
Fighting
In faith, hope, love,
And
From time to time,
I will see Odin
When he comes to me
Periodically
When I need him most,
As I did,
Coming to him,
When he needed me,
That Lord of Host.

I will see him,
If dimly,
Mirrored,
Hatted,
Wide-brimmed,
One-eyed,
Smiling.
Here
Or
There,
And always with my heart,
That one
And far-seeing eye
In all of us,
And turning,
Will come face to face with
Him,
Perhaps right here,
Or,
Just around the corner.

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