Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

David Kirby: Two Poems

David Kirby · Tuesday, October 7th, 2025

Penelope's Suitors

Honestly. Not the brightest guys in the world, were they?
Her husband sails off to Troy, and beautiful Penelope's
there just ripe for the picking, only she keeps putting them off,
putting them off, putting them off: every day, Penelope sews
a funeral shroud for her father-in-law, and every night
she takes the stitches out. For three years. "Not making
much progress, is she?" say the suitors, who just sit around
all day like low-level mob guys in a Brooklyn social club,
clucks too dumb to run numbers or shoot anybody,
so the boss has them make coffee all day and rack pool balls.
Only in Ithaca, Penelope's the boss. Then again, isn't life
always a challenge? Don't you wish that everything important
had a star by it like the ones they use in elevators to show you
where the lobby is? Usually it's 1 or G, but in your fancier
hostelries it can be 2, and look at you, you haven't had
your coffee yet, and all you want to do is find
the complimentary breakfast buffet that isn't really
complimentary, but who cares? It's where the coffee is,
damn it! You don't want the fitness center or the pool,
you want your goddamned coffee! Statistics help:
did you also know that 70% of crimes are committed
by people under 40 because they don't have anything—
house, spouse, car, family, future—and that 54% of adult
Americans, or about 135 million people, are functionally literate
at the sixth-grade level or below, meaning they have
difficulty understanding the directions on a medicine bottle,
can't answer questions about a newspaper article they've
just read, can't say what a simple graph or chart means?
Statistics can actually make you a better person and not
a dumb cluck if, for example, you are over 40 and say to yourself
I'm not going to commit a single crime, much less 70%
of them. Genghis Khan said conquering was easy

but that getting down off your horse was the hard part,
by which I think he meant that it was no fun to bury your dead
as well as the dead of your enemies and then set about
managing diverse populations, maintaining order and justice,
setting up such infrastructural niceties as taxation
and public health systems, and quashing rebellion among those
of your enemies who didn't end up dead after all.
But I also think he just meant it was more fun
to keep moving. That was the suitors' problem. They just
sat there. If you're moving, you don't have to think.

*

Keith Flynn and David Kirby

The Poem That is a Cathedral

We've lost the world, you say, we've lost everything
except the poem that is a cathedral,
though instead of rosaries and reliquaries
and mummified saints, there is a great gathering
of the unwashed, the perfectly coiffed
and perfumed among them, catfish sizzling outside
in an iron skillet over an open fire and a band
playing soul and blues and rock and roll
on instruments that change shape as they are licked
and fingered. Hail Marys are last chances here,
with dice made of bones skittering against
a brick wall in the alley and a wide, lonesome
river crawling south, filled with broken hopes.
On the shore, this poem takes off its shirt
and lands belly first in the mud, paddling slowly
toward the holy water, singing itself clean.
I say where is it, I need this poem, we all do,
and you say listen, someone is writing it now.

*

(Featured image from Pexels)

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 7th, 2025 at 6:16 pm and is filed under Poetry
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.