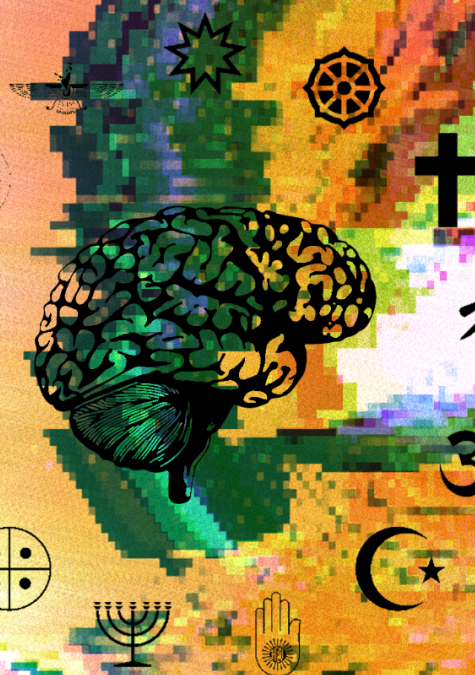


Fever Dreams

Poems About
Mental Illness



By Maxwell MacArthur

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Religion's like a fever dream. No, wait;
It's *mental illness* that I meant to say.
Now schizophrenia is my bad fate
And then anxiety arrives too late.
It's nice to meet you. Now be on your way.

What's that? You'll stay? That's very nice of you.

A lot of people leave at first remark
Of schizophrenia. They have no clue
That folks like me just want to rendezvous
With sanity. So where's the matriarch?

And who is that? The Tara colored white.
The patriarch has bought her for a price
To sell her back, thus dimming Tara's light.
In any color, Tara still will fight
And sing the dharma *Always Will Suffice*.

Our twenty stanza fever dream is next
And we will hear more from this patriarch.
The patriarch's malicious ways have vexed
Me to the point that it has reached this text.
Instead of him, we love the matriarch.

A Fever Dream in Twenty Stanzas

The setting is a city built by bombs,
And lined by oceans lined by sand and palms.
Another building falls upon the street
Where FluotracenCorp declares their win
And there rewrites the seventh deadly sin,
Condemning those who won't accept defeat.

One thousand times one hundred forty four
Are lined to see the crowning of the whore,
The CEO of FluotracenCorp.
He takes his crown, injects it, gets his fix,
And then invents six hundred sixty six.
That's all it takes for fantasy to warp.

*For fantasy is now reality
And that's a Fluotracen guarantee.
Six hundred sixty six is all you need,
So lineup now; submit, conform, receive
The things you need for Heaven's great reprieve.
Six hundred sixty six dismisses greed.*

A little girl named Dymphna now receives
The thing upon her wrist which she believes
Will cure her of her lifelong mental ills.
She takes the microchip which will affix
The number of six hundred sixty six
Upon the lips she needs to swallow pills.

Then Adrian of Nicodemia
Begins a bout of schizophrenia.
So take a dose of Fluotracen now.
A milligram is all you need to eat.
What's that you say? You don't accept defeat?
Then bow to me and I will show you how.

But Adrian does not accept defeat
And, hearing voices, dances to the beat
Of clashing cymbals and resounding drums.
“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord,”
He says unto the uncreating horde,
“Until the day that Jesus finally comes.”

But FluotracenCorp will not give in.
They fight against the one named Adrian
With bombs and tanks and military men,
But Adrian is indestructible
So long as he has no deductible
And there's no way for him to pay. Amen.

Then, opening a factory to sell
Technology and medicine as well,
The CEO, who drowns himself in Styx,
Takes over all the countries industries
And forces men and women, when he'd please,
To buy it with six hundred sixty six.

And those without six hundred sixty six
Must go without the precious river Styx.
So, many take the microchip in hand
And those refusing perish in the street
For lack of medicine and lack of heat
In FluotracenCorp's new Holy Land.

The angels then descend upon the land.
The demons rise, each one to take the hand
Of one who takes six hundred sixty six.
One thousand times one hundred forty four
Are now the center of the angels' war
Against the neo-liberal's politics.

*Thus FluotracenCorp has been attacked,
But we will fight until our foes are backed
Into the corner that we all call Hell.
Although this Hell is metaphorical,
We'll use it as we use rhetorical
Devices to push Dymphna down the well.*

But Dymphna crawls back up and out the well.
She tells the world, "There's no such thing as Hell,
For FluotracenCorp has made it up.
So take your Fluotracen pills but don't
Give in to demons holding on who won't
Allow you bread or wine from offered cup."

So those who took six hundred sixty six
Start throwing off the whore's deceiving tricks
And thus no longer can they buy or sell
For, throwing off six hundred sixty six,
They take upon their backs a crucifix
And put on righteousness, escaping Hell.

But FluotracenCorp will not give in.
While promising deliverance from sin,
They quickly ambush Adrian again
And take from him his home, his church, his school,
Then try to sell it back like he's a fool,
Like there's no way for him to pray, "Amen."

An angel grabs a demon's other hand
So that the man whose hand it holds can stand,
And thus, escaping falling into Hell,
The man takes hold of one who's falling down
To make sure she won't fall to hell and drown
In flames that burn and flames that freeze as well.

Then she resolves to grab another hand
And save the city in this Holy Land
Where FluotracenCorp has reigned supreme.
She grabs the hand of someone who takes hold
Of someone else and brings them in the fold.
It spreads like Hell fire, louder than a scream.

Soon, Adrian and Dymphna join the line
Of folks who're holding on to redefine
The power of the demons (who've let go).
The line then reaches from the angel to
The crown which rests upon the whore's wazoo,
Which, as they reach for it, begins to glow.

One thousand times one hundred forty four
Are all in line now, reaching for the whore,
And grabbing onto his egregious crown
To take it from him and to kill his soul,
To take his life force and to eat the scroll
Which tastes of honey colored golden brown,

Of which it's said, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh,"
And which devises nighttime out of day.
The scroll descends upon the land.
One thousand times one hundred forty four
Are proof of the decrowning of the whore
As they have witnessed it from where they stand.

The setting is a city rid of bombs,
Where buildings are renewed as tall as palms.
The whore is gone and fantasy can warp
Into reality again and then
The people of the land will say "Amen,"
For that's the end of FluotracenCorp.

When Zoroaster taught of black and white,
It seems that he forgot about the Dao,
For, using metaphors of dark and light,
He taught his followers to fight the fight
Of good and bad and holier than thou.

And now there's me, a product of the time,
Who can't remember where he got it from.
Supposing that I won't commit a crime,
But figuring that I am in my prime,
I know I'll have to change what I've become,

For Zoroaster didn't have ill will,
Although his legacy survives today.
Now, fixing this will be no joy or thrill
And it won't aid us to employ a pill,
But it is time we imitate the Way.

Our rhyming couplet fever dream is next
For Zoroaster doesn't know the times.
Thus Zoroaster deigned to have perplexed
Me to the point that it has reached this text,
An atmosphere of Zoroasters crimes.

A Fever Dream in Rhyming Couplets

The Cubes were everywhere where Esther reigned.
King Xerxes threw a feast and entertained
His servants and the princes of his throne,
But Esther, hearing it, began to groan,
For, last time Xerxes feasted, Vashti left,
And Esther took the throne as in a theft.
So who would take her throne amid this feast?
Of Esther's worries, Cubes became the least.
So Esther walked the palace halls and thought
That, for her throne, the battle must be fought.
One thousand folks conspired against her throne
And Esther felt that she was all alone,
For no one in the kingdom was her friend,
Not even those on whom she would depend
Before she clambered up Queen Vashti's throne.
Yes, Esther was, in every way, alone.
But then the thought occurred to Esther that
When she became the new aristocrat,
Perhaps it was a ruse to take her life.
Perhaps the king just took her as a wife
In order to dispose of her today,
But Esther vowed to live on anyway.

Although, it seemed the Cubes felt otherwise
As they began to rise into the skies.
Now, Esther watched them as they moved about
Throughout the skies, but she began to shout
When one fell down and others followed suit.
It seemed the other people weren't astute.
The Cubes fell down, but when they hit the ground,
They did not make a sound, did not resound,
But rather reappeared inside the sky
To fall again, attempting to decry
Queen Esther's life, but she would not back down.
While running through the courts, she dropped her crown.
The Cubes fell down around her as she cried
Out loud for anyone who wouldn't hide
Their face from her unsympathetically.
Then Vashti came to Esther hastily.
"I think you're having visions," Vashti said,
"It may seem real, but it's inside your head."
But Esther knew the Cubes were real so she
Continued on toward where she could be free,
But Vashti followed and continued on
And soon enough, Queen Esther's Cubes were gone.
"But why's you choose to help me?" Esther asked.
"Because you were in need, so I was tasked

By no one else but me with helping you.”

“I hope that I can pay you back whats due.”

“I ask for nothing in return but this:

That you will help another stay in bliss

And take your crown-I have it here-

And keep protecting those who you hold dear.”

These poems are becoming sacrilege.
This holy roller coaster's upside down
And I do *not* know if I can abridge
The roller coaster of my heritage
So gravity arrests my thorny crown.

And down it falls onto the grassy ground
And in its spot a lotus flower blooms.
The poems over water it; it's drowned,
And every time I've looked at it, I've frowned
From drowning, surely never from its fumes.

The flower causes me anxiety,
Though from its fumes and not its glowing light.
It is not hard to hide the light for free,
But hiding fumes is difficult for me.
And so I shake my heart all day and night.

Our fever dream in fourteen lines is next.
I cannot hide this flower till it's done.
This flower will and does and has annexed
Me to the point that it has reached this text.
The only thing I know: this is no fun.

A Fever Dream in Fourteen Lines

See Arjuna where battlefields perform
The dance of inner terror of his mind.
See God show Arjuna His truest form:
Eternity is in his eyes as God
Reveals at once the pictures from abroad,
For God shows Arjuna the universe declined
As He consumes it, aiming for reform.
See gods, in fear, invoke what He designed.

See Arjuna with apathetic eyes
Instructing him on places where he lies
Inside the war that won't let him arise.
See God remind him of his crying flesh
That longs for Arjuna to compromise.
See Apathy consume his world afresh.

I stand inside a whirling hurricane,
Inside the eye where everything is still
And see the storm that holds me like a chain.
I know with certainty that I am sane.
I know the hurricane is just a shill.

Is not a hurricane an act of God?
Or is it just my karma acting up?
I can't accept that it is me who's flawed
And so it must be karma which has clawed
Into my water logged communion cup.

I take a sip. It's water. Where's the wine?
It must just be my illness acting up.
I don't know if I'll live, but I'll be fine.
I'll build a water sodden Buddha shrine
To drown in wine from my communion cup.

Our one iota fever dream is next,
But I don't know if I'll survive through it.
This hurricane is evil and has hexed
Me to the point that it has reached this text.
And I don't know if I'll survive through it.

A Fever Dream in a Single Syllable

Zun.

Though Eden's Garden wasn't born in me,
I'll try to make a Pure Land in my mind.
From *mental illness*, one is never free,
But we can hope and strive so it will be
That, for a while, our fear is left behind.

While Tara lives, the patriarch is dead,
And Zoroaster taught me naught at all,
For Zoroaster doesn't know the dread
Of elders arguing inside my head,
But one day we will all have wherewithal.

The roller coaster and the hurricane
Have told me that I have to take a pill.
For that I'm grateful, though the pill is pain,
For pain will fade and pills will heal my brain
So I can live where everything is still.

Now I don't know exactly what is next,
But now I know that I'll survive through it,
For Eden's Garden rose and retroflexed
Me to the point that it has reached this text.
So now I know that I'll survive through it.