

Gordon Mitchell Smith

**The Apocalypse Survivor Recalls Having Forgotten to Be Himself and a Husband
During a Prolonged Bout of Anxiety About Shit That Ultimately Didn't Even Matter**

Despite years of end-time pains, it still hurts:
it's *our* world that withered & died, not *the*.
He thinks of fish unfed, houseplants in thirst,
endearments ignored: noticed in crises
only by symptom of death—long, sudden.

He tells past-self, in past-life, in dead-world:
Yours is the only rain in love's garden,
but no timelines change, no alt-verse unfurls.

Bed still empty come end of all seasons,
survival bloomed a welcome distraction.
But all fades rote with time; the mind treasons,
slipping thoughts into the cracks of action.

Even now, with then. Even pain, with more.
Each memory a frame; each choice a door.

The Apocalypse Survivor Masturbates

A thorough beating, he never knew love
or tenderness with self, just begrudging
perfunctory maintenance, the care of
a soft machine. Why start now the trudging?

He used to love making love: it mattered,
had stakes, justified pleasure as a gift
to give to another machine, battered
by world, beaten by self, in need of lift.

Wrapping a tattered rag around his stick,
his machine a drowsy emperor's toy,
he gives nothing, takes all; punishing, sick.
The world's end doesn't unmake the world's boy.

But somewhere inside, he is not alone.
Somewhere inside, tears fall from eyes of stone.

The Apocalypse Survivor Burns Yet Another House to the Ground

He strikes again, starving for reprimand
or scorn, or anything from anyone

in this last age. Beyond consequence and
lit up by the light of his own dark sun

he breaks this night, cracks in the smoky dawn
of his burning bodhi tree, as he sees

the illusion that his whole world hangs on:
that it does, did, will ever really be

a thing of consequence. If burned abodes
are only seen by burners, aren't missed

by builders, banks, or owners, then what bodes
for the last man, clenched in a dead world's fist?

Laughter—the very last of it—echoes,
tears clearing ash, steaming as the light grows.



Gordon Mitchell Smith is a poet, actor, and wine professional whose writing has also appeared in *Kenyon Review* and *The Los Angeles Review*. The above poems are from his in-progress verse novel, begun long before COVID-19. He left Brooklyn after the shutdown, and hopes to settle somewhere soon.