



Poems

From the poem, *Joe Heller*
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

True story, Word of Honor:
Joseph Heller, an important and funny writer
now dead,
and I were at a party given by a billionaire
on Shelter Island.

I said, "Joe, how does it make you feel
to know that our host only yesterday
may have made more money
than your novel 'Catch-22'
has earned in its entire history?"
And Joe said, "I've got something he can never have."
And I said, "What on earth could that be, Joe?"
And Joe said, "The knowledge that I've got enough."
Not bad! Rest in peace!

Poems by Rumi, 13th-century Sufi Poet
Today, Like Every Other Day

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

Who makes these changes?

Who makes these changes?
I shoot an arrow right.
It lands left.
I ride after a deer and find myself
chased by a hog.
I plot to get what I want
and end up in prison.

I dig pits to trap others
and fall in.

I should be suspicious
of what I want.



Poems by Rumi, 13th-century Sufi Poet (continued)

Acts of Helplessness

Here are the miracle-signs you want: that
you cry through the night and get up at dawn, asking,
that in the absence of what you ask for your day gets dark,
your neck thin as a spindle, that what you give away
is all you own, that you sacrifice belongings,
sleep, health, your head, that you often
sit down in a fire like aloes wood, and often go out
to meet a blade like a battered helmet.

When acts of helplessness become habitual,
those are the signs.

But you run back and forth listening for unusual events,
peering into the faces of travelers.

"Why are you looking at me like a madman?"
I have lost a friend. Please forgive me.

Searching like that does not fail.

There will come a rider who holds you close.

You faint and gibber. The uninitiated say,
"He's faking."

How could they know?

Water washes over a beached fish, the water
of those signs I just mentioned.

Excuse my wandering.

How can one be orderly with this?

It's like counting leaves in a garden,
along with the song-notes of partridges,
and crows.

Sometimes organization
and computation become absurd.



Poems by Rumi, 13th-century Sufi Poet (continued)

Love Dogs

One night a man was crying,
Allah! Allah!
His lips grew sweet with the praising,
until a cynic said,
So! I have heard you
calling out, but have you ever
gotten any response?"

The man had no answer to that.
He quit praying and fell into a confused sleep.

He dreamed he saw Khidr, the guide of souls,
in a thick, green foliage.
"Why did you stop praising?" "Because I've never heard anything back."
"This longing
you express is the return message."

The grief you cry out from
draws you toward union.

Your pure sadness
that wants help
is the secret cup.

Listen to the moan of a dog for its master.
That whining is the connection.

There are love dogs
no one knows the names of.

Give your life
to be one of them.

The Secret Sits
by Robert Frost

We dance round in a ring and suppose.
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.