

OSHA GID SAIS
or In Memory of Chester Palu

Writing a poem
in my second language
makes me feel a tad uncomfortable
like a Country Joe & the Fish
out of water
but I'm doing this for you, Paul
and besides we've dabbled in poetry
and language issues before
like when you asked me
for a translation of the first page
of a very long poem I'd written
and upon reading you commented
"it's the word 'perpetual' that didn't
quite work for me" - this being
the only word I'd tweaked a bit
from the straight-ahead translation
which would've been "constants" -
you always had an eye for details,
not least details which would've
slipped many others by

and for further stories
from the deep well of things we've
shared over the years,
I recall a record list (maybe one
of the last such you sent out to
a bunch of people) from early on
in our conversation;
in there was a string of French folk LPs
and you'd added some info
on the scene which spawned them
as well as the comment
"If the language barrier is tough for you -
simply hear it as another instrument"
and in a very Paul-y manner - you
somehow always sounded more *positive*
than any other dealer -
you also wrote that "This music is very
inventive/creative & wonderful!"

It's been a little over a month now
since you passed
and I have not nearly grasped the width
or full scope
of this loss - which in an odd way
is somewhat of a consolation, as if I'm
slowly easing into the understanding
of what it means that you're not here
anymore

but I know there will come a day when
losing myself in the thousands and thousands
of emails won't suffice,
when I realize that the letters & packages
containing books, magazines,
necklaces & earrings, cdrs & tapes,
bookmarks, postcards,
chocolate bars, beautiful stones,
flashlights & even a creamer
in the shape of a moose,
festival programs, newspaper clippings &
other printed ephemera, photocopied
stuff in the 100s – many of which have been
posted on walls in my house
(but the fridge magnets are mostly still looking
for a new metal home since I ditched
the fridge 12 years ago)
and on top of this countless boxes of records
traded and gifted
have suddenly ceased to fill up
my mailbox

What was sent over all this time
is certainly enough to keep me afloat
for years n' years as I'm bound to forget
one thing while I'll rediscover something else -
the aforementioned well has run dry
but the river still flows for some time more

...but there *will* also be that morning when I
wake up to the deep dry land insight that
the Paul Tescher space is empty and
there can be absolutely noone to fill it up

I don't know how you would feel about this,
but it's important for me to share
that *every single time* I've been standing out
in the darkness of the night & season
crying & talking to you out loud, there's been
something happening in the tapestries of sky
- a brief light, a falling star -
and I can't help thinking that there is something
going on there, just beyond what I can explain
or understand
and to further strengthen this mystical sideshow,
how come that since you left
there have been some of the wildest
northern lights I've seen in a long, long time?
You told me you loved them & I can just about
see you surfing them up there, like a far more
cosmic version of Griffin's Murph – your hair
& beard flying across the heavens

(now we finally get the full meaning of
Tyrannosaurus Rex's A Beard of Stars)
and I bet your smile would be ear to ear!

I had an odd feeling over spring and
early summer, a faint grumble uneasing me
- I couldn't pinpoint what caused this but it was
certainly amplified when I opened up
the very last box of records from you
and in there was an unsigned poem called
"Songs For My Funeral"
which rattled me quite a bit,
although I soon grokked - as you would say -
that this was written by Stan
whose recent death I'd
unknowingly been the first
to tell you about
and after this I didn't hear the grumble
anymore,
which in the light of things to come
is more than a little bit weird

(It is a really good poem though &
I would've loved to see the two of you
reading your stuff in some dimly lit place,
kinda like my mind's version of
the Red Dog Saloon & after you'd finished
the Charlatans would take the stage & you
could dance the night away)

I always was more longwinded than you
and this is getting out of hand,
so I'll round things off here with a quote
that's been with me for 30 years - Hunter
writing to Garcia when he'd died:

*so I'll just say I love you,
which I never said before
and let it go at that old friend
the rest you may ignore*

But I also want the last words to be my own
and here they are:
It was highly unlikely that we would ever meet
but we did
and this was a moment in the peculiar &
befuddling circumstance called life when things
do come together inexplicably
and make that same life better.

Jens Unosson
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