

Getting Religion

Getting Religion

A Collection of Poems

By Doug Tanoury



FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



Getting Religion

FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



DETROIT, MICHIGAN USA



Printed on recycled paper

© Doug Tanoury 2003
All Rights Reserved

Please note that the copyright on all of the work in this book remains the property of the author and poet Doug Tanoury. Any unauthorized use is forbidden. If you wish to use any work published in this collection in any publication please contact dtanoury@comcast.net for permission.

Cover Photograph courtesy of Roger Hall, Inkart Productions <http://inkart.net/photography/b-w/cyber-cem/index.htm>

Getting Religion

| | |
|---|----|
| A Wedding Wish For Stacey | 4 |
| Astrophysics Of Missing You | 5 |
| Touch Me | 7 |
| February Morning..... | 9 |
| To Step Beyond | 10 |
| Evening Prayers..... | 11 |
| Music | 12 |
| Rolling In The Aisles | 13 |
| Somewhere..... | 14 |
| Eternal Rest | 15 |
| Missa Aeterna Christi Mumera | 16 |
| Voice of Bartemaus | 17 |
| Voice on the Water | 18 |
| Getting Religion | 19 |
| Agnus Dei | 20 |
| Under An Ash | 21 |
| Gloria..... | 22 |
| Old Barn..... | 23 |
| The Presence Of Your Absence | 24 |
| The Wedding Poem For Terra..... | 25 |
| Tongues of Fire..... | 26 |
| Narcissus & Echo | 27 |
| Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum - A Song For St. Mary's..... | 28 |
| About Doug Tanoury..... | 29 |

Getting Religion

A Wedding Wish For Stacey

I remember
There was a time once
In the smallness of new beginnings
Where every heartbeat brought new wonder
And each day uncomplicated joy
I wish these gifts of childhood to you
Just as I feel them now
As I see you flower like and
Wrapped in white blossoms

And in my chest this instant
Coursing through a cloverleaf
Of arteries and the figure eights
That blood vessels make
Intertwining and wrapping their way
About my heart like snakes on a caduceus
Is the sure and certain knowledge that only the
Pure certainty of love in us
Is undying and eternal

So it will be this moment
Here in this church
That will stay with us forever and you will
Hear me whispering for a lifetime
My lips endlessly forming these words
Just above a Bach concerto playing
Sweetly in the background
And you will remember
The little bits of us
That never die

Getting Religion

Astrophysics Of Missing You

At the center of our galaxy there is
A black hole so massive
Fifteen millions of our suns
Could fit within it.

I tell my daughter:
*"I dreamt
I had a daughter who got married
And never called me.
Aren't dreams strange?"*
I smile at the sound of her laughter.

The black hole was discovered by observing
Telltale orbital anomalies of nearby stars
And odd behavior of light of a certain wavelength-
Now ultra-violet or infrared, I don't recall.

She loves him, so I love him,
But if she should ever grow to hate him...
I ask about her husband.
Courtesy and propriety first, I say.

Astrophysicist believe the black hole
Is the residual material?
Of first generation stars
That formed most galactic matter.

"How is baby Alex?" I ask.
"Fine" She replies.
"And little Mini-Me?"
"Oh, Dad, he's gotten big."

This black hole at the center
Of the Milky Way is a primordial
Remnant of the current universe
And is a byproduct of its evolution.

We say goodbye and the line falls silent.
I hang up the and walk from the kitchen
To the living room and flop down on the loveseat.
I lay with head and feet elevated on its armrests.

Getting Religion

Awakening

Sometimes I awaken from a sound sleep
And wonder if I have died, for I rise effortless
And seem more to float than lift myself
From my bed and the house
Is a silent as a tomb.

I must remind myself that death is uninterrupted
But sleep is not and a glance at the clock reveals
It is slightly after 1:00 a.m.
It is as if when my death comes
I will somehow be unaware of my passing
And it will be somehow unbeknownst to me
And revealed as an unexpected surprise.

The story will be recounted
With all the per functionary phrases and
Obligatory exclamations:
*"Honest, I was minding my own business...
And all of a sudden...I was mortified."*

In the hallway, somewhere between the
Bedroom and the kitchen, the words of
A Gospel comes to mind:
*"He who loves his life will lose it and
He who hates his life will find it."*

I whisper them through the darkness,
Like a chanted incantation:
*"I hate my life.
I hate my life.
I hate my life."*

Getting Religion

Touch Me

Touch me
And I will purr
Deep throated
And profoundly
Like our gray cat.
My torso resonating,
My chest vibrating.

Touch me
So sincerely and with a hand
Stretched so open that fingers curve
Slightly outward, and
In slow stroking motions
Awaken the sound
Of joy in me.

Touch me
Most earnestly,
Until I am paralyzed with pleasure
And happiness vocalizes
So completely
That my skin trembles
To its metered beat.

Getting Religion

Lazy Geometry

Lying prone in the backyard hammock,
In the combined shadows of the maple and the ash
I study the invisible movement of the sun toward zenith
And the afternoon light that pushes back the shade,
And when the breeze blows, just so, in the trees
I occasionally feel the sunlight on my face,
Fulgurant and fleeting,
A brightness penetrating just for a moment
The sleepy darkness of closed eyelids.

I have observed for long hours,
The serrated edges of each maple leaf,
And the teardrop foliage of the ash,
The boughs and branches rising,
Like arms of the devout uplifted in worship
They reach to touch the soft circumference
Of a summer sky,
Found only in the lazy geometry
Of a July afternoon.

Getting Religion

February Morning

May I not disturb the monochrome
Of this February morning,
Where each tree is
Gray against the snow,
And each word on the page
Becomes a stand of maples
Against the whiteness
Of winter fields.

Getting Religion

To Step Beyond

I want to step beyond the narrow margins
Of this page into some nether world,
Where words are no longer units of information,
But are cast off useless in some corner
Like the empty pint bottles of whiskey
Outside an all-night party store,
Where every expression is as null
And meaningless as an algebraic polynomial.

I want to speak only in powers of 10,
Where every utterance is magnified
With some inner mathematics,
For I know if I want to speak with God
I must talk in the sweetest exponents,
And draw geometric angles in the air gracefully
With my index finger and I must search the nectar
Bottles on the shelf for a label that reads: "*100 Proof*".

Getting Religion

Evening Prayers

My shirts
In the laundry hamper,
Their arms folded across the chest
In the contrite pose of monks
Filing into vespers.

Getting Religion

Music

In Albinoni
And all baroque masters
Who flourish and shake my desk
With trumpet, organ and harpsichord
With cello, flute and violin
I am taken for a moment
To a child's world
Of playfulness that escalates
Slowly toward full riot and
Honest innocents that moves
In stages to pure simplicity

In music weightless and light
That floats graceful
Through my ears
In Overtures
Of unending variation
In preludes
Of unexpected brilliance
I hear gleeful sweetness
My children's laughter
The giggles that grow
To shouts and yells

And I go on to ponder
The substance of sound
That touches me like a spirit
And moves through me
With ghostly freedom
That passes through my walls
Without hindrance and enters
Through unopened doors
In the softness of bassoon and flute
My daughters whisper
And in the shrill voice of violin
My son whistling

Getting Religion

Rolling In The Aisles

In my little corner of the cosmos confusion reigns
And randomness has taken a rather malicious turn.
Causality has conspired so comically against me
It would make even Shakespeare slap his thighs
And writhe with the most mad and unmanageable mirth.
It would send the audience rolling in the aisles.

But me, I'm feeling rather somber and not the least amused,
For I fail to see the humor of a fortune so befuddled,
Where providence wears the most profoundly puzzled look
Of an old woman standing dazed in the aisle at the local grocery,
Staring silent and stupefied over a stainless steel meat counter,
Unable to speak, all her plans and purposes momentarily forgotten.

Getting Religion

Somewhere

Somewhere
There is a parallel universe
Where I never met you,
Never loved you,
Never spent my life with you,
For I believe that all possibilities
Are played out

Somewhere
Our children never were
And you and I are strangers
Moving in circles so distant
Even light attenuates
And we cannot see
Each other

Somewhere
You have a husband
That always works overtime,
Who does electrical work
And fixes leaky plumbing,
Listens to country music
And bets on football games.

Somewhere
I have a wife
Who hums Telemann in the kitchen
And paints landscapes and still-lives,
Wears a straw hat, walks barefoot
And likes driving with the top down
On afternoons in late July

Somewhere
We have gotten it right
In an odd accidental way,
The randomness and quirky mechanics
Have brought us to the hard
Determinism of a universe with
“*Me*” at its center.

Getting Religion

Eternal Rest

I nap in late afternoon
In the backyard hammock that is
Stretched between two trees

My body resting in state
Solemn and still
Like one deceased

My arms crossed upon
My upper chest
In a peaceful pose

Asleep under a canopy
Of foliage at the peak
Of summer fullness

And under the collaborative
Shade of ash and maple
My breath becomes whispered prayer

As I dream a cardinal chanting
From a perch on the pine tree's
Finial peak and

The trembling and shaking sounds
The bluejays make amid the maple leaves
Is the rustling of sacred vestments

And I dream too
The scent of barbecue that wafts
And drifts over me

Is holy incense that
Envelopes and clouds the sacristy
At a Requiem Mass

Getting Religion

Missa Aeterna Christi Mumera

And as she talked to me
I thought that the sound of her voice
Was closer to song than normal speech
And I no longer listened to what she said
The words lost all meaning
But only retained the qualities of sound
Pitch and tone
Note and timbre
I heard the melody of phrase
The music in each sentence
In conversation that moved
Like a concerto progressing
Through movements

And I was charmed as she talked
As if she spoke a medieval chant
In Latin resplendent and sacred
Echoing from vaulted ceilings and
Walls articulated in arched windows
Flowering pilasters
All held toward heaven
By wide marble columns
With Corinthian capitols
And it must be so when the angels
Talk to God
Their voices so sweet
He must be distracted

Getting Religion

Voice of Bartemaus

And I will say once again that darkness
Is persistent and gives way only
With great reluctance
In small spots as if to delay
And discourage

This I know for I have sojourned
Like Bartemanus a blind man
In plutonic gloom so dense
Light does not travel
Or penetrate its reaches

I have waited a lifetime
For one spark or shimmer
A lone glimmer a glint or gleam and
I will continue to call out
A voice from the darkness

Getting Religion

Voice on the Water

I studied for a long while today
The texture of the lake
With waves pasted
Impasto across its surface
Built in sweeping strokes
Of gray-green stucco

Alive and animated
And I thought:
*"The voice of the Lord
Is upon the water"*
And my thought
Became a whisper

Just beneath the wind
Audible to me alone
In solitary speech
That spreads sharp and
Angled wings like
A lone sea bird

It floats and soars
Motionless for a moment
Frozen in currents of air
And dangles and sways
Suspended somewhere
Between sky and water

Getting Religion

Getting Religion

At night we touch
With a host of hands
And hold with many arms
Like Hindu deities

Each kiss a metallic peel
As a bronze striker
Meets a brass bell
And sound is reborn
In the temple silence

I venerate her
Like a holy relic
The tooth of Buddha
A femur of St. John
Enshrined in night

Laying
Naked like the Jain
Twirling like two dervish
Arms snaking
From our torsos

In celebration of
Bodies enlightened
Flesh reborn
And miracles
Performed by
Simple touch

Getting Religion

Agnus Dei

Notes in solemn procession
A holy hymn in slow progression
Ascending up the scale

And I have wondered often
What raises song from
A sepulcher of silence

Unwinding a melody's
Shrouded wrappings laced with
The sweetness of Latin lyrics

And I am touched by grace
Uplifted and sustained
In a blending of many voices

Angels sing joyous and dance
In the sight of God's glance
That is blessing

And His gaze salvation
In sounds that are
The borders and boundaries

Of His kingdom
Where birds in the air
And lilies in the field

Rising like notes uplifted
And sustained in melodies
Sung in graceful voices

Getting Religion

Under An Ash

I sat with her
Under the shade of an ash
Watching the afternoon sun
Sink toward setting as
Evening spreads
Across an August sky
Like a picnic blanket
Cast on summer grass

And I feel I'm the first
Man and she the first
Woman for there is nothing
In the world but her and I
And leaves turning
Faded green undersides up
In the breeze and the
Grass trembling slightly

Lying in the shade
At this edge of summer
The object of all my past
To bring me to one moment
Under an ash for
God so loves creating beauty
He trades whole lifetimes
For splendid seconds

I chew a grass blade
And touch her arm
Watching the sky from
Beneath a canopy of leaves
And searching hard
For purpose and
Reason for the rest
Of my life

Getting Religion

Gloria

Voice bunched and mixed
Together like cut flowers
In Spring

And I am awed by what
Comes forth from Gloria
What life

Is born what thoughts
Arise from a word of praise
That echoes

Now in my chest and
Pulses through my veins
The light

Reflected in my eyes
A gesture and spoken
Word

And the soft sound of one
Mountain moving toward
The hills.

Getting Religion

Old Barn

Under the straightness
Of the nearby silo that is domed
Like an Orthodox cathedral

An old barn near the road
Leans twenty degrees
In a southern direction

A door hangs diagonal
Held in place
By one rusted hinge

Nothing is plumb but every
Line is bent by neglect
Twisted to dereliction

Soon it will go completely South
Its boards and beams like turkey bones
Left in a platter

Each window frames
A broken glass pane
That is a portal for swallows

Sunlight shines through wide
Seams between planks onto machinery
Painted red by rust

And sleeping in darkness
Like a farmer napping in hay
On an autumn afternoon

Getting Religion

The Presence Of Your Absence

Today, I came home to empty rooms.
Stillness and silence lie on the rugs
Like an old dog reluctant to move,
And I am reminded
By the ghost of motion,
A spirit of sound, some spectral
Scent that still haunts these rooms,
As I stand in the presence of
Of your absence.

If memory were a ragged couch
Or worn chair I would carry
It out and set it by the curb,
Yet I cannot cast out phantoms
That possess this place and
Follow me about from room to room
Like a loyal dog, unwilling
To leave me unattended.

Today, at the door I was greeted
By your memory and paused
At the threshold a moment
To acknowledge you gone,
Like a happy fixture,
A friendly furnishing
That sat in my living room
For many years, now
Replaced by empty space,
As I wait in the presence of your
Absence, there is nowhere to sit.

Getting Religion

The Wedding Poem For Terra

Time upon a once I do now recall
In memory rich with childhood wonder
The fairy tales read at bedtime
And prayers said at her bedside
Now I lay me down to rest
I hope your dreams are just the best

Heaven and hell are chambers of the heart
For when I am dead I will spend eternity
Strolling through summer afternoons
A little hand in mine as we walk
And talk quite casually of birds and trees
And bumblebees burrowing deep in blossoms

Awakening to absence that is her finding
The fullness of a wonderful womanhood
That is her finding now the meaning of mature love
And living her days in a happy place of her own making
That is crafted by her own choices and
Sustained by her own hands

I sing now no more in half whispers
My tenor rising just above the organ notes
The Kyrie and Agnus Dei
The Sanctus and Benedictus
My prayers of happiness are sung
For Latin is the language of heartfelt love

Walk once more with me down the nave
Toward the altar of this country church
Awash in the color of stained-glass light
My chest that rises and falls with each breath
Is a warehouse of fervent worship
As I walk with her toward her life

Getting Religion

Tongues of Fire

I tell her
My faith is simple
In practice

My religion rich in rewards
With one great commandment
That runs

Straight from the mouth
Of divinity to my
Earthly ears

“Don’t be an asshole”

The voice of the Spirit
Moves me to Pentecost’s
Revelation

I tell her too that a flutter
Of dove’s wings brings me
The message of every Gospel

The meaning of every
Parable travels
On tongues of fire

“You’re faith has saved you
Go now and
Don’t be an asshole anymore”

Getting Religion

Narcissus & Echo

Like Narcissus
I love
Mere images
Reflected illusion and
Mirrored movements

Shallow representations
In two dimensions
In shadows
Colorful
And real

Like Echo
All consumed
And withering
To the point
I perish

And only my voice
Continues
To live
Engaged
In endless repetition

Getting Religion

Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum - A Song For St. Mary's

At Old St. Mary's there is pipe organ that is
A vertical fantasy that fills the choir loft
It sometime plays while I study
The light filled faces of stained glass saints
Animated with sunrise high in the clerestory

And I feel each note in the wooden pew
The hair on my arms vibrates to a tingle
As candle flames tremble and sway with the music
That showers down from vaulted ceilings
And I am touched where sound meets light

When bass rattles the glass and shakes these walls
And passes through me like the Spirit of God
I place poetry in the collection plate
And watch it carried to the altar surrounded
With bread and wine and music and light

Getting Religion

About Doug Tanoury



Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing

<http://www.funkydoggpublishing.com> and Athens Avenue

<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/dtanoury1/Athens/index.htm>

This and other ebook collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be read and downloaded at: <http://home.comcast.net/~dtanoury1/Tanoury.html>

Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra's English class, *Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c) 1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.