Four poems by Maurice Whelan

**Job’s Book**

‘God give me the patience of Job’,

Was how I first heard the name.

And later when I read his book saw

Job was a man much wronged.

You could forget any sense of

Natural justice when his name came up.

There are a few books in the Biblical Canon

Deemed troublesome.

Ecclesiastes ― too agnostic.

Esther ― forget to mention God.

The Song of Songs ― too sexy.

And Job ― the arbitrary cruelty

Of God too offensive.

Having taken everything bar life

From this blameless man,

His wife, his children, his livelihood, his health,

God, at the end restores everything to Job.

Excuse me!

That was one great *deus ex machina*!

Now as COVID 19 swirls around us all

And justice frays at the edges,

You may find some consolation

Reading Job’s book, *The Book of Job*.

Or you may not. Reality can be cruel.

The book of him is the book of us.

And who’s to say you won’t say,

‘God give me the patience of Job.’

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**Al-jabr**

In the ninth century an Arabian mathematician

Rose high in the sky.

As he soared an original idea came to him

And made formulas for abstractions.

He called it al-jabr.

His name was Al-Khwarizmi.

Dear Mr Al-K,

The tilt of earth’s axis has increased,

Or decreased. We cannot tell.

The planet’s gravitational pull

May have weakened because

We have slipped over the horizon,

Beyond the circumference

Of the known.

It’s scary out here.

It’s very quiet.

The only sounds heart beats.

We need your help.

We need someone who can rise and soar.

We need new formulas for our abstractions.

And a nice new name!

Thank you.

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**Dream’s End**

Sleeping to the beat of the night-owl's wing,

Walking through a dream in a dim-lit place,

If a new day dawns the light will sing.

If ascending darkness leaves its sting,

The heart awash, the mind arace,

We won't hear the beat of the night-owl's wing.

Seeds’ cradles be their graves. No spring

Swaps winter’s depths for grace.

No new day dawns with lights that sing.

But dreams as maps of minds bring

To eyes shapes that hearts erase,

To ears soft beats of the night-owl's wing.

Dream music strums on silent string,

Dream’s art paints translucent face,

New days may dawn and lights may sing.

Frightened, faithful, brimming

Eyes find paths through unbound space,

Trusting the beat of the night-owl's wing.

Inhaling dawns with lights that sing.

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**This Situation**

This situation I find myself in was not meant to be.

The old we are told are first in line to go, and you can

See old age has not yet wrinkled me. But now

I have been told I am shifted up the queue.

This has struck me as unjust, and the axes

Of my universe do not now align. But this is where

I find myself. Until I am required what am I to do?

Curse the fates, the gods, the elements?

Submit to grief? By sorrows be caressed?

Place me among trees and flowers,

Because it’s where the days and hours

I’ve left are better spent. There I’ll rest.

When my words cease, recall our first hello,

Our uncountable hours of talk, that we loved

And worked with zest. And when stock was low

How well we husbanded the interest.

Most of all keep mirth alive; we laughed more

Than we cried. And when my spirit re-presents,

Lift your eyes, forget your toils, and forbid not

Falling tears when they mingle with your smiles.