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Poem by Steve Henn

Excerpt from *Indiana Noble Sad Man of the Year*

Editor's Note: In his 2017 book *Indiana Noble Sad Man of the Year*, Steve Henn combines seemingly informal chat poems with drawings by his children. Published by Wolfson Press, based at Indiana University South Bend, the combination of poetry and black-and-white cartoons is unusual and poignant. Here's how Publisher Joseph Chaney of Wolfson Press describes Henn's work:



Indiana Noble Sad Man of the Year is Steve Henn's third book of verse.

As in his previous volumes, Henn does hand-to-hand combat with the absurdity of daily life, including our experiences with pervasive media—Facebook, cell phones, Internet ads, movies, self-promotion, and dreams.

These new poems are born of the same live performance energy that produced his first two books. Drawings and paintings by his four children serve effectively as illustrations. The book tells a father's story in a form that a child may begin to comprehend. Every confession, every raw dream, nudges us toward recognition—not asking us to acknowledge our collusion, but inviting us to empathize. Henn's poems are at once critical and confessional, often using dramatic irony to turn the spotlight on the speaker.

We're pleased to reprint this poem and the drawing of "Bacon Man" by Henn's son Oren as part of the TW Reading Series. (Note that the cover of *Indiana Noble Sad Man of the Year* was designed by Sky Santiago with art by Zaya Henn.) For more information, see the [Wolfson Press website](#) [5].



Today in 7th Period

We were in the computer lab and the kids were talking and laughing, having fun, which means they weren't getting *educated* which ought to be an awful experience via heavy reading and heavier silence, perhaps pierced by a heavy sigh, which exhaled solidifies and clunks on the carpet like a fat brick of wanting only to die, but instead they laughed and carried on, so I shouted in my middle-aged cracking voice, "perHAPS you should be working on your ReSEARCH for your BibBIES rather than"—and here normally I'd say *talking about your hot date this weekend with Johnnie Sue*—but instead I ad-libbed, saying, "rather than conversing as if... sitting at a...coffeehouse...discussing...boys and...politics"—and everybody looks over at me on my orange plastic chair in the corner by the printer like *what the hell kind of comment is that, Mr. Henn?* *Are you okay? I mean, are you having a breakdown?* I didn't know what to do, so I continued, "and your friend is wearing a scarf you find hideous, so you compliment it with bald-faced...facetiousness... and you haven't seen a squirrel in 4 MONTHS, you're wondering if the laundry is done at home because...you want to...treat yourself to... clean pants tomorrow..." I heard snickers, I'm losing them, what had started as an attempt at witty improv had grown strange, weird and oddly gregarious, like a 45-pound tumor removed from Grandma's stomach that grew a mouth and legs and started selling vacuum cleaners door to door, *so I kept going* "and your friend keeps referring to her mom as *mother*, which she's never done before, as in *mother wants me home at eight or mother says not to tell about what is in the man-sized freezer in the cellar*, and you're thinking *what's with this mother business?* and then the golden boy you love in secret from a distance by burning incense in your bedroom and clumsily consulting tarot cards haphazardly, without conviction but in desperation, walks into the coffeehouse and orders that weird tea they make by steeping tiny twigs and you jump, you wail and say, *No! You can't be serious!* *You're more alluring than all that!* and he looks at you just like, *oh, I guess you exist, but that doesn't interest me*, and there go all your imagined schemes to pull off the perfect prom!"

You could hear the proverbial pin drop.
Not a word was uttered for the rest of class.

Yessss. Still got it.

Art Information

- “Bacon Man” by Oren Henn © Steve Henn; used by permission.



Steve Henn is the author of *Indiana Noble Sad Man of the Year* (Wolfson, 2017); *And God Said: Let There Be Evolution!* (NYQBooks, 2012); and *Unacknowledged Legislations* (NYQBooks, 2011). He's been a poetry showcase reader at the Divedapper Carnival in 2018 and 2019 and a 2018 finalist for the Rattle Poetry Prize.

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