Rituals for an Uninvented Religion

Kevin Griffith
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I.

In June, when the earth is properly soft, it is customary to unearth the dead and extract their lead fillings. These you melt down into a cup, and when you drink the sacrificial wine, you inherit their strange sense of humor.

II.

Flowers are inappropriate to send to a dying man, for, as we know, no one willingly courts death. Instead, send him a mask carved with the face of evil man already dead. His twin in hell will grow jealous and order him to Heaven.

III.

In August, you must eat two fish of exactly the same type and weight, especially those which are bottom feeders. In this way you learn humility. One fish is for the man you are now, and the other is for the man you hoped you’d be.

IV.

It is always inappropriate to carry coins in a sock. No one knows why. It just is.

V.

When making a grave marker, you must mold it from wax and stick a wick in the top. If you journey to the grave yard at night and find a flame, you must make an offering of reading material, for the literacy of the dead.

VI.

If a child is born on leap day, he must be renamed every four years, because technically he did not exist for the previous three. Life is hard for the leap day child.

VII

On the day of judgment, no carnivals are allowed.
All animals must be freed to find their own heaven, 
and leaders of all nations must provide alternative forms 
of entertainment, preferably outdoors.

-Kevin Griffith

On the Recently Discovered Mass Grave of Mice

While tending their flocks, shepherds in New Zealand 
uncovered the skeletal remains of 300,000 mice.

Explanations live and die that way. 
The nameless little ones decide 
to die in places so rock-strewn 
and desolate, you’d bet is was sheer boredom 
that did it. They gather together 
among clover and good grass for flocks 
until one common denominator is found: 
a million million bones, 
each light as a child’s first question

Once, the world answered our prayers 
We had a name for shepherds 
and the like who saved us, who 
stumbled upon our souls’ last trace 
and witnessed the dance that brought us 
together, all fur and mammal heart, 
our minds heavy with the unexplainable drive 
toward the loneliest places.

But like it or not, we are all part 
of that good flock, mouse or lamb. 
Our graveyard rush is so common 
that to ask why mice die together, 
according to their own time, 
is a question as plain as your name in stone, 
as whole towns of name and stone.

-Kevin Griffith

Kevin Griffith is professor and chair in the English 
department of Capital University.