

MY NAME IS LEGION

a monologue
by

David Ives

(A MAN dressed all in plain white linen: loose pants and a shirt. Barefoot.)

THE MAN

(reading from a scroll)

*“And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying,
and cutting himself with stones.*

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

*And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou
Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.*

For Jesus said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

*And Jesus asked him, what is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is
Legion: for we are many.*

*And the man besought him much that he would not send the devils away out of the
country.*

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

*And all the devils besought Jesus, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may
enter into them.*

*And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and
entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they
were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.”*

(THE MAN puts the scroll down. A moment.)

I don't remember anything before the cliff. Nothing – until I found myself standing there staring down into a vast lake. As if I'd been born into the world full-grown on that bare rock, a man of thirty years. A man just as naked, just as filthy as any newborn babe. The sky above me very hot and bright. The water below me filled with the bodies of dead pigs. That was the first thing my newborn eyes saw. Swine. Scores of fat grey lifeless pigs, bobbing in an inland sea.

Then somebody touched my arm and said, "Are you all right?"

It was *Him*. Of course. Yeshua. The one they call The Christ. This close. Looking at me. Not smiling. No, never that, He was never given to that. Saying "Are you all right?" Or something like it. Very stern. Severe. Looking into my eyes. That way He had. Seeing through me.

Then without waiting for an answer He walked away. He knew I was all right so He could move on. He did have other business to attend to. Paralytics. Blind people. Raising the dead. Then I felt an itching all over my body and realized I was covered in lice. My hair and pubic hair. My beard. The bristles on my legs. My skin was so alive with them you could hear them crackling as they crawled over me, fat from sucking my blood.

That was when I saw the crowd there, staring at me. Fifty or sixty, maybe a hundred people, all keeping their distance. Afraid of me, of course. I didn't know why yet. I didn't know they had heard me screaming in the streets of the town every night, had seen me threatening children, waving my sex at women, shrieking at people out on the roads. So violent that ropes and chains couldn't hold me. They'd let me run wild only because they couldn't control me.

I didn't know that crowd, but they knew me. They'd known me for thirty years.

It was only later I learned what had happened that day. An innkeeper told me the story, not knowing the story was about me. A story about a man possessed by a legion of devils. A man who spent thirty years wandering the streets, insane. Then another man (this would be *Him*), another man came along and cast the devils out, sending the demons into a herd of pigs. The maddened swine hurled themselves over a cliff into a lake, leaving the possessed man whole.

I was that man. That possessed man. Or had been him.

And there was this man they call The Christ staring into my eyes.

Let me follow you, I said. I didn't even know why I said it. *Let me follow you.*

No, he said. For now, you just tell people. Tell them what happened here.

When He walked off, some of the people went with Him. Part of His gang, who rowed Him back across the lake.

Other people just stood there waiting to see what I would do. I've seen that look many times since then. I recognize it now. It's the look people have at the arena, waiting to see a lion rip a man apart, or a sword stuck down somebody's throat. Waiting to be entertained. I was the entertainment. I was the show for that particular day. As *He* one day would be the afternoon show up on a hill with three crucifixes. Him now a hanging piece of meat for people to throw apple cores at...

"YOU KILLED MY PIGS!"

A man screaming in my face. A gentile. Obviously.

"You killed my pigs! You'll pay for this!"

Of course I had no idea what he was talking about. Not yet.

He had a wooden staff, a crook this thick, and he started to pummel me with it. So the crowd got its entertainment after all – watching me beaten to my knees by a pig farmer. A fitting entrance to this world. Screaming for help. My first word in my new world.

“HELP ME, PLEASE! WILL NOBODY HELP ME?”

Those are the only words a lot of people ever get out in this world. In essence. *Help me, please.* The unspoken eternal cry of the people. The bloodied people, the ones with heads cracked by angry shepherd’s crooks.

“WILL NOBODY HELP ME?”

Then it was evening and the crowd was gone and I was naked and cold and bloodied, lying on the ground on the edge of the cliff. You could smell the dead pigs now. They had baked in the lake all day, floating in their excrement.

In the dark, a woman came. Of course a woman. Isn’t it always? Bringing me a rag to cover myself with and a hunk of stale bread. She said she was sorry it was all she could do and slipped away. Well, bless her, whoever she was. So I ate the bread, my first meal as myself, and then went down to the water and bathed in the lake amongst the pigs. Why not? They had carried a part of me, hadn’t they? The worser part.

When I came out of the water I found that the lice had left me. A miracle? Maybe the grease of the dead swine. Who knows. I wrapped myself in the rag and started walking. Middle of the night now. Clear sky. Stars. I had never seen stars before. Not really *seen* them.

They were...they were hideous.

My brother took me in, but only for a night. He gave me a place in his yard with – fittingly enough – his livestock. I had shamed the family too long for him to welcome me. But as a brother he owed me a place amidst the goat shit. He gave me a razor, maybe to cut my throat with. But I shaved and begged a cloak before they sent me away. He and his wife did not want me in their lives. So be it. I did not want their lives.

And so I wandered. The wandering Jew.

Did I want to find *Him*? The man who'd changed me? Of course I did. But not for the reason you may think. And I did find him...

The stories got it wrong. Left out a few facts. Put things out of order. Maybe on purpose. Things being complicated enough. Because -- when I did find him -- I joined His band. We were a natural match, so it seemed. I being His creation.

We were going up to Jerusalem for the Passover when he said it to me again one day.

“Are you all right?”

“Yes, Rabbi,” I said.

Oh, He knew why I was there. To be His instrument. Maybe that's why He cured me in the first place.

That was the day I negotiated for thirty pieces of silver from the high priests. One for each year I'd lived in darkness. But I didn't want their money. I wanted what I got several days later, seeing him hanging from a tree on the side of a backstreet hill called Golgotha.

Payback, you might call it. But it's what He wanted, wasn't it? Isn't that why He came here? His mad mission to “redeem the world”?

He was mad, you know. Quite insane. That's what He made me see. Once he'd loosed the scales from my own eyes. Had made me sane.

Call it payback or call it redemption. By the way, those writers got another thing wrong. I did not run off and hang myself. But then they were sentimental moralists. They had to say something like that. That I got my comeuppance for betraying the Savior of the world.

Instead, I took the silver and started a business – pig farming. Pork for the gentiles. I never touch the swine myself. And I'm doing very well. A local success story, and He's the one who gave me a second chance.

Bless His heart.

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