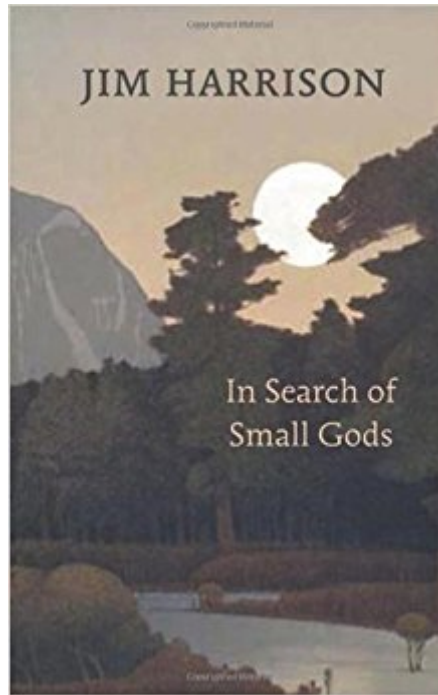


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In Search Of Small Gods



Synopsis

“Jim Harrison has probed the breadth of human appetites” for food and drink, for art, for sex, for violence and, most significantly, for the great twin engines of love and death. Perhaps no American writer better appreciates those myriad drives; since the publication of his first collection of poetry . . . Harrison has become their poet laureate.” —Salon.com

In Jim Harrison’s new book of poems, birds and humans converse, biographies are fluid, and unknown gods flutter just out of sight. In terrains real and imagined—from remote canyons and anonymous thickets in the American West to secret basements in World War II Europe—Harrison calls his readers to live fully in a world where “Death steals everything except our stories.”

In Search of Small Gods is an urgent and imaginative book—one filled with “the spore of the gods.” Maybe the problem is that I got involved with the wrong crowd of gods when I was seven. At first they weren’t harmful and only showed themselves as fish, birds, especially herons and loons, turtles, a bobcat and a small bear, but not deer and rabbits who only offered themselves as food. And maybe I spent too much time inside the water of lakes and rivers. Underwater seemed like the safest church I could go to . . .

Jim Harrison is the author of thirty books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including *Legends of the Fall* and *Shape of the Journey*. A long-time resident of Michigan, he now lives in Montana and Arizona.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When you read this brilliant book, don’t ignore the acknowledgements section. (Yes, I even read the copyright page...) What you’ll discover is that poems from this book have been published in a

dizzying range of publications, including the canonical "Poetry," the radical "Earth First! Journal," Garrison Keillor's folksy "Writer's Almanac," and the needs-no-introduction "Playboy." These publications suggest many of Harrison's themes: art, nature, the joys of physical bodies rubbing against each other (or not!), not to mention the intention of the title: the active search for small gods. For Harrison, the small gods--and the evidence of the gods--are animals, plants, birds, a remote spring in the woods, the charge one feels walking into a secret canyon. One particularly beautiful poem is "I Believe," which begins "I believe in steep drop-offs..." and goes on to enumerate the many things that the poet believes, including leaky wooden boats, brush piles, and "the fluttering of unknown gods that I nearly see / from the left corner of my blind eye." The book itself is organized into three sections, the center section being a collection of densely imaginative prose poems. I've read all of Harrison's thirty-some books (fiction, poetry, essays, memoir), and it's the poetry I return to again and again. "In Search of Small Gods" has earned a permanent place in my library.

In my opinion Harrison's prose has always been poetry so it seems natural he should write beautiful touching poetry. I believe he has said before that poetry should not be truly understood; this book touches my soul and my heart and remains enigmatic. I live in Montana and am drawn to the land here as I am his poetry.

Jim Harrison conveys a love and deep appreciation of nature. His novellas, novels, memoirs and poems all are steeped in his life-long passion for being outside. His "thicket" paradise-- alone basking in the wonder an un-named creek somewhere in N.America--gives him the inspiration to write like no one else. If you love this realm of pure nature, and our place in it, you will love his books.

You never finish a book of poetry. Unless it's very bad and Jim Harrison's "Small Gods" isn't half bad in fact it's pretty good. How good? As good as a California beach when the surf's up or a plate of pasta with black truffles. So I'll keep "Small Gods" on my night table.

Jim Harrison is one of our most versatile writers and this book of poems is no exception. His prose poems range from the hysterically funny -- like his impersonating a famous physiologist to gain access to the world's fastest female runner -- to the stream-of-consciousness style of "Advice." Those small gods of daily life are exposed again and again in this book. Harrison has done the searching for us.

For me, this is a book that needs more than one reading, it is a book that sits on the night stand offering itself frequently, it is a book that shades itself with the reader's mood, it is a book that is easy to reject yet begs of acceptance, it is a book for easy reading until a meter is inflicted, it is a book with ripples on the surface running deep. I would recommend.

I checked this book from the library but after reading it this morning, I know it's one I have to keep nearby and refer to often. Harrison is a poet that crosses gracefully through that veil between the goings on of nature and the earth life of humans, barely ruffling it behind him. Gorgeous poetry and prose, each selection like a prayer offering in his search for small gods. A wonderful book, a gift to yourself and to a good friend.

The late Harrison is, as always, the quintessential American poet. The simplicity of Hemingway dances with the roughness of Raymond Carver and the childlike wonder of Mary Oliver. Jim Harrison was a true master and has become one of my most evident inspirations and favorite writers.

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