



Dumb Supper Poem

To update the dead in your life about what has happened in the last year.

Samhain (a Gaelic word pronounced “sow-win”) is a pagan religious festival originating from an ancient Celtic spiritual tradition. It is usually celebrated from October 31 to November 1 to welcome in the harvest and usher in “the dark half of the year.” Celebrants believe that the barriers between the physical world and the spirit world break down during Samhain, allowing more interaction between humans and denizens of the Otherworld.¹

The darkness is coming on as temperatures go down. I can't help but think I can't cling to the notion that there may be a bit of summer still to be enjoyed. Yep, summer's over, the darkness is accelerating and the veil is thin. Time for a Dumb Supper poem. Again from [history.com](http://www.history.com)

Dumb Supper

The tradition of “dumb supper” began during this time, in which food was consumed by celebrants but only after inviting ancestors to join in, giving the families a chance to interact with the spirits until they left following dinner. Children would play games to entertain the dead, while adults would update the dead on the past year's news. That night, doors and windows might be left open for the dead to come in and eat cakes that had been left for them.

This could potentially be a Day Song exercise as well depending on how many people close to you have died in the last year. It need not be relatives, as Carla Bley died two weeks ago and all of her music, especially the elegiac work of the last ten years, comes into clearer focus for me and I feel close enough to her music that her death affects me personally. And

¹ <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/samhain>

she would understand. And given the nature of the Noosphere, non-local mind and mind as activity rather than brain, her passing gives me access to her essence if I approach the situation with the right attitude (humility and gratitude) and protocol. Do not waste the time of the dead. Even though they are suspended in timelessness, Jack Spicer knew “the dead are notoriously hard to satisfy.” Invoke them only with love, respect and clear intention and be sure to release them when the ritual is over. This activity should not be taken lightly.



Set the Stage

I think intention and set/setting are key to any writing experience like this. You can create a space that serves as constant reminder of what your goal is, to write a poem that updates the dead in your realm about what happened in the last year. (Note that in the Set/Setting article, they point out that intention-setting is different than having expectations. It turns out an open stance serves the poet well again here.) Like in the Celtic tradition, foods the dead liked when alive can be set out and, if not too cold, windows opened. Perhaps you can light candles and/or incense. Maybe certain dead close to you liked particular scents, or liked when you wore a certain scarf or hat. If this is evocative of the Personal Universe Deck, you're catching on. Having a deck and keeping it close and drawing cards when the process ebbs allows the recently departed to send you a message via divination. (*Carla, please tell me though the cards something I need to know for this poem.*)

Of course you must let loved ones in the household know you'll be busy during this time. Setting aside three hours seems prudent, but if you prepare correctly by slowing down starting the day before your Dead Supper poem, you'll find you can get it done more quickly, but you might want to take all the time you reserve just to be sure. If you've had a poetry



practice long enough, you'll have a clear sense when it is complete and the rest of the time could be used for reading it aloud to yourself and making sure the lineation reflects how you would read it aloud and tweaking the poem. Remember, to capture your invisible thought process as recorded during the writing of the poem — the materialization of how your own thought graph manifests via lineation is to deepen the connection between your small “s” self and the large “S” Self. It is somewhere between those two entities where the poem is found, where the mind does its best work and where the dead are awaiting their update.

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WORKS CITED:

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<https://paulenelson.com/workshops/personal-universe-deck/>