

DUSK CHORUS

A photograph of a weathered, yellowish wall with a small window featuring dark wooden shutters. A tiled ledge is visible at the bottom of the frame.

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The moral right of the author has been asserted

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DUSK

Oil Painting

Dusk is approaching
with its hues of purple and gold:
a bruise echoing the day.

The sun settles down into the evening,
oil sinking into turpentine,
thick smear of orange-gold
streaked in frayed ribbons
with knots of blue scraps
tied into the fabric of the day.

Black jots of people scan the horizon
for their brushstroke leading home;
it is a cruel pointillism that
places them here, in this picture.

Shimmer

On the mountainside of Belfast
you have carved a constellation:
the rock shimmers to your eyes,
the night is but an echo of your smile.

All statues are awake this evening,
their creamed marble tones
honoured to reflect
on such whispers of beauty;

each star a celebration,
suspended in the sky
by the memory of your grace:
the sun blushes in comparison.

Punch This Season

Invisible teeth are biting these weeks,
only doing their seasonal job
to the best of its description;
pinchers blow under the door
and attach the outside to my skin,
employed to gnaw as the year recedes.

The sun has become a ghost
that refuses to haunt
and rot this enamelled chill;
so plug in the electrical punch
of artificial heat, and let the decay
burn through autumn's mouth.

Lay down your battlements
in the hollow of evening, of another day
fraught with gaining footholds.

Let the wine scatter across your firmaments:
the clock brings eventual redemption.

The Light has Come to Stay

Time moves forward: at least,
that's the direction we choose
to call linear progression.

Time moves, to leave a sliver of pupil
peeking out
through which any errant light may slip;

although the whole dark, substantial weight
of the night is pulling down on them,
that thin little crack remains, allowing
the facility of sight to persist.

The sun is a stubborn security light,
its flickering death throes zoning
across the back walls of the day.

Take the Sun

And if she danced,
there would be sunsets
where the evenings paused
in splendour,
slow settling of
Seville orange into scarlet,

footsteps of light
on the horizon
spinning the orb of day to night.

Her red whispers
glistening twilight:
a constellation of fire-flies,
a sword in the sky.

City Breathing

The city is blinking at me:
no wink of solicitation,
the tip of drink in my direction
welcoming me within;
just the steady, unhurried drawl
of its electric eyelids,
too slow for a flicker,
too clinical for a flutter,
without smile or sparkle.

I blink back; not to mirror
a posture of regard, only
to bear some recognition
of our counterpoints:
myself against the streets
and the nascent twirl
of invisible machinery
marking our time together.
The night's breath condenses.

Silence

Silence, I think
we should be acquainted:
take me into your hold
as one so tainted;
take your coat and wrap
it around my night.
Peaceful sleep, purity
until morning light.

Silence, tend me
with your loving heart;
I cannot hear the beat,
it has no moving parts.
Silence, tame me
and make the flame hold still,
reassure me, relieve
my flickering will.

Lost to the Night

I am Sid Vicious in the Hotel Chelsea
swimming in a drug of sweet winter;
tasting like oblivion
as I wait, lost to the night.

The night of black bra and panties
with lunar white resting on her belly,
the seas of the moon filling
with junkie blood, and stainless tears.

Her skin appears to have found peace,
while I want to spin her round my earth,
roll her love right through my sky.
The orbit is over. We die.

Capturing my Dreams

Cascade of night
approaches my slumber,
pillow creases whispering
tales of twilight,
unconscious thoughts upon the
remaining day;
in rest, I search for visions,
nocturnal ambition
goading my senses at play.

Murmurs come to me,
yesterday disappears.

Dipping and curling,
rumbling through colour and shape,
evolving into a half-imagined reality,
a form independent of nightmare or fantasy;
magic appears to us in our sleep,
showing us the road to travel on.

Sleep Becomes Her

Sleep becomes her,
a gentle state;
pink rest of childhood
overthrows her visage.

Sleep
is a solitary adventure,
becoming lovelier when
shared with such beauty.

Nature provide our heat:
a summer embrace
envelops our pasture,
sealed by a moment's peace.

How I yearn for that moment
to expand its arms pass tonight
and extend its love
into Forever!

Bedtime for Modern Days

The daily grinds mean nothing at the end of days:
perhaps in summary, I will be judged
for not completing my audit in time,
one more example of sloth, in a lifetime
spent half-asleep.

I am restless, in the pure definition of the word:
without rest, not agitated or fidgeting, just
wanting to lie down and allow the night to wash
its calming shadow over my thoughts.

To sleep is divine; to think of sleep is a prayer.
Man must have his peacetime, his solitude
away from the non-stop mechanics
of this fully functioning world.

I fall asleep on a cog and feel its jerk
moving in time with the city clock:
a tick to rouse my slumber,
a tock to rock my lullabies.

Tonight there's a sweat of bed sheets across me
as the hours are roped in the rising dearth of light;
I collapse into the little death of human mystery
and ponder at the awakening powers of misery.

No one cries themselves to sleep in the real world,
the idyll of the fairytale is woven to give
sweet dreams: so sleep now, as a child
that does not question the dark,
but accepts that it is meant to rule over shut eyes.

Cosmic Curtain

The edge of space
invades the night,
pursed lips
blowing fever down
from the clouds,
flying up blindness
into our silky eyes.

Starlight
runs like milk
down the back of
a denuded negress.

Insomnia Shorts

i.

So many words about
insomnia, and yet none
have sent me to sleep.

ii.

Inhale the passing of dead skin cells:
the smell of sleep upon your passage,
a hint of sweat baked into dry-weather sheets.

iii.

The night watch of waves:
asleep in water, rolling
a slumber round the moon.

Rest, and may you stay in rest
between the crest and the shore.

Sleep in Sanctuary

Anonymous night,
come and drown me in your delirium:
thick padded coat with stitched fantasies.

Let me cast off the trails of day
and wade into your rising seas.
Make me an island, a castle
with reinforced moat of steel
to protect me from slings and arrows.

Only when dawn comes creeping up
with heavy foot, may my drawbridge fall
with great reluctance.

Night, shield me from the Trojans,
for I am but one man, standing against
six billion warriors; my scent, thick and wet
in their nostrils, charged up for the hunt.

Night, I will reach up and pull
your blackness around my bed,
sheltering blanket of sweet refuge.
I hide in your promised sanctuary
and pray the stars do not betray me.
The eye of the moon is upon me
and the trumpets echo now.

Furrows

The sheets never stay
flawless and crease-free
beneath me:

my very presence,
persistence of movement
bringing friction

to the bed hearth,
crankles in the plicature
of linen and down

aligned with a flexion
of limb and spine,
contorted throughout night.

The Night Birds

The flutter of nearby cuckoos
merging into swarms,
streets echoing with their cackle:
coarse, rough banter,
a pumice stone
against sleeping skin
turned into sound;
noisy scribbles
against urban papyrus.

There's the shriek of the female
battling it out
with the woof of the male;
mating calls, battle cries,
whooping and looping
past traffic lights at green
and poorly situated town apartments.

There is no sleep
in the hunting hours
of the night birds.

Tightly

Evening bends towards me in greeting:
I am comfortable under the weight of the moon,
being gently kissed by violet starlight
against night falling as apple blossom.

The scars of the day are healing:
tears in silver-orange fabric
placating, lacerations down turned
in funeral pose of respect.

The tightness of dusk has come
to rest beside my travels;
elegant in temporal sway,
swinging repose of security.

I am an old dog in his basket,
favourite bone at paw, gnawing
into the soft marrow of the day,
cherishing his honeysuckle.

Sunshine Bed

If you have brought sunshine with you,
leave it at the foot of the bed;
in fact, tuck it undercover,
so sleep can see its radiance.

The fields of green, the skies of blue,
please place them all under my head:
on them my dreams will soon hover,
I will trip on their soft cadence.

I surrender while passing through
the landscape I long to retread;
in here, the mind can discover
valleys of eternal patience.

Although I leave the day behind
there is no darkness of the mind.

Home for Stars

Every star needs to fall
into a constellation;

an expanse of light
shrinking to a pinpoint,
drops melting through the dark
as if silent skies were water.

The blessed union of imaginary lines
crafting a framework of belonging;
the lattice, the cradle,
the makeshift bed
to find contentment in;
the persistent home
resistant against all comets,
a corner of the sky to call home
and be called to.

Asleep, as a Corpse may Dream

I tried reading some Bukowski,
but I just wasn't feeling it;
so I corpsed out like a dead poet
on this funeral bed of mine,
the night wind pressing against
a rented window, mourners
pacing down a church isle.

The blood not reaching
my vital organs: my tattered heart,
bruised liver, withered brain,
with eyes on the verge of drowning;
they were two barrels perched
on top of a waterfall.
I was cold and wanted peace.

It came in the form of sleep.
The morning came next,
to rape me of my dreams.

DAWN



Awake to This

Down in the broken townland
of uncomfortable progression, the sun
is surprised to find no one alive to greet it:
no soul that has set alarm or themselves
against the night, in order to witness
the slow fracture of dawn
trickle down the black mountainside.

The dew forms, the bird giggle,
the flowerheads turn; and yet
humanity instead turns
on their TV to find beauty;
readymade, easily digestible,
pop-in-the-mouth nuggets
to soothe your curiosity
like electro-antacid tablets.

I want to awake early
and use the camera of my mind
to snare panoramas of intensity;
burn my internal film
with eternal images of first light,
the victory of time, coupled with
the bakery smells and myself,
alone in a city of death.

In Bed, with Dreams Unrealised

In bed, where dreams lie unrealised:
a paramount of dirt sheets and body odour,
developing luxury sores
from chaffing against night and day.

Too long have bodies rested,
atrophied.

Break the fast and rise.
Greet the morning with your own sun
Qualm hunger with living.
Thirst.

A Public Alarm

These sheets are conspicuously thin
inside their tepees of linen construction;
the reality of dreams swept aside
against a flashlight mornings
bearing down on bewildered eyes,
acclimatising figures
rubbing their collective consciousness
against the beginning of day.

Turning

In winter, there are small seeds of spring
lying in curled dormouse pose,
dormant and patient; wait,
wait until the tides of the season
have drawn out from frozen shores.

Blue vacancy arrives, dawn becomes violet
as the slow thaw of renewed spirits
and sleeping embers collide.
The months dig into the stitches of snow,
sifted by the turn of the world:
old Father Time with his ageless shovel
choosing to fill in or take away
from the speckled grave of the months.

The false revolution of the sun lies down
in April grasses and stifles the wind.

Euphoria

It is dawn and I have awoken
to the grey becoming bronze,
familiar wash of spring blue
soaks the rolling eye of earth,
nature blinks another day
out into the horizons.

The simple delight of catching daybreak
climb over the dampened rooftops,
mildew slates glisten with all the elegance
of functional architecture.

There is no dawn chorus
in the big city.

Our nests filled with the cavalcade
of motor car and pedestrian talk,
morning chatter of daily commutes
filled with echoes of the previous night
and the splutter of shift workers
tying up their starts and ends;
an ever reliant engine ignites
and the grim driver curses its obedience.

The sustenance of hot water
collapses into sinks, showers and coffee mugs
while millions contemplate retirement

over their bowel-conscious cereals,
and I lie on in bed,
waiting for the cattle roar
to drive the herd forward.

I'll Rather Wait

I'll rather wait until dawn
than expect the sun to set each day.
Lifting the veil of darkness
like a first kiss
alerting so many uncharted senses,
the passion of daylight
flitting across our slumber.
To be awakened each morning
by nature's lips
pressed so softly into
the bosom of our beds,
springtime has come
and blessed us with release
from nocturnal meanderings.

Driving On

When everyone else is experiencing
his or her little deaths,
the writer keeps on typing:
it is the mating cry
of a bachelor bird in flight,
pealing out before the new day's dawn,
muffled by the occasional traffic
of motorcars and homeward drunks.

We drive on in silence
when we have no words of our own;
or borrow wise words,
staled by repetition,
to shout out into vacuous streets,
deaf from civility.

The writer continues typing,
hoping that someone will hear his words
amongst the whisper of dreams.

An Agreeable Orbit

The first, very first rays
do not need to penetrate:
the topsoil has been lifted,
grass and weed removed.

The light is fresh, original
without taint from hail or cloud,
leaf or branch, unfiltered
by nature or civilization.

Now here is the initial touch,
prime in its primary sense
rich in reaching for the hope
of equilibrium, peace.

Now hope that through this
contact the sun and the earth
will conquer space and find
an agreeable orbit today.

A Shift of Seasons

Up before sunrise,
waiting for the dawn of you
to come grace my winterland;
a shift of seasons comes upon me
when you shine your smile my way.

The permanence of desire,
to awake beside a still-fighting flame
that knows no extinguishing air;

come light your fire around me,
let us set up camp in each other
and settle down for the rest of our hours
together, peacefully.

I have seen your star in my sky
and it has guided me home.

The Clock has made a Mistake

This morning, the city slept in.
Each pavement was a pillow
and each street, a linen bed.
The cars chose rest over rust
and the traffic lights had
no one to blink to.
Even the buildings seemed sedate,
without a whisper at their windows
or a shout at shut front doors.

I only awoke
when the church struck eight;
but now, in the late winter air,
I think the clock had made
a mistake.

All the drunks have gone asleep,
yet none have been replaced
with the sober and the half-sober,
just myself, half-mad and wondering
where the city has got to.

Island

The birds should not be chittering
at 3.49am of an early March morn.
It is hardly morning, mind.

Perhaps something has aroused them,
the wind in their nests,
the unnatural pallour of streetlights

invading their branches;
a passing motor vehicle
alien to their wings.

So where is my silence?
God has sent this avian song
to soundtrack my restless night.

Where is my island, free from birdsong?
Free from trees and commuters
and artificial light.

I will find my rest
in an opened book, no?
Ah yes, perhaps, perhaps.

Spring of Spring

Succumb
to that little bird
tapping at the bark,
sending vibrations through your nest.

It has been winter
and the need to shelter
is motionlessly felt.

But she has come
with news of spring,
and has spotted leaves
on fresh pastures.

With a olive sprig in her beak,
she beckons you
to abandon your tree
and find peace elsewhere.

Hang the Sun

Take away the sun, and you eliminate
the grades of trees, every tress of grass,
every leaf angled towards the sky.

Rather, hang the sun over there,
by my bedside: it will do
for a makeshift fireplace.

Comb those clouds down
to beside the hearth,
and put aside one for a pillow.

Plant the trees neatly in four lines
encasing our trepid bodies,
and we shall shelter inside these walls.

Let a river dance past our feet
as morning finds its way
to the back of the wardrobe.

Rising

There are days, such as today perhaps,
where the birds do not land on your windowsill
to purposely awaken you; nevertheless
it is still morning outside, and the day
demands to be recognised in its entirety.

Yes, those curtains can be undrawn
and the sunlight wholly means to be
invasive; it is a powerful blessing
charming your eyes in orange allure,
she beckons to you from the outside.

So burn down your dungeons
and vanquish the black for today:
now is the time of phoenixes
rising fast across the cityscape,
circling; may you catch up to them soon.

Kids in Shop Fronts

Kids outside shop fronts
at an unfathomable a.m.;
not for the commerce,
but conversation,
held up in the night along with the stars.
The ease of crouched whisperings,
oblivious to the stranger stealing pass,
a trepidatory tread
under orange scattergun clouds,
the comfort of the morning's glittering river
left a quarter mile behind.

No jobs await;
perhaps studies,
and finally, bed.
Sleep is not a conclusion,
merely the day put on hiatus.

Sunrise at Bridge

This memory is mine, mine, mine alone,
undiluted by other eyes
and contrary perceptions,
the rare passing motorist unable
to fathom such beauty through their windscreen.

5a.m., and the world so alive
in the summer light,
the residents' sleep allowing me
to chisel out a private niche of Belfast
as I stand at the apex of the bridge;

terracotta popcorn clouds
Paul Henry could be proud of,
the Lagan shimmering like a debutante's necklace
lovingly wrapped around the city's neck;

and I, the solitary admirer
in this secret gallery.

Teasing the Sleeper

Sunday morning:
light filters through coffee-skin curtains,
slow grey presence
shifting pass uninhabited hours.
Then the creak of daybreak comes,
swinging from black-blue bruise
to pale yellow skin,
drip of orange seeds
swimming across walls,
forming a hundred golden smiles,
each one sewn into the air
with God's promise
of another day.

This light teases the sleeper,
flirts with circadian rhythms,
infringes night music,
forcing its own beat into the dance.

We wait for its pulse
to quicken our own sense of life
and utter us awake,
the sun swaying supreme
against the hustle of the night.

Release the Sun

Today we prosper against nature's black,
burning her cloak
with the defiant hollers of the day.

These hours belong to us, secreted
into a microcosm of our life together;
we make our own constellations,
ascribing futures out of desire.

We refuse to be background scenery,
only there to cast shadows
with our pale perimeters.

Now is our time
to release the sun inside ourselves:
beacon of vibrancy, breathe of vitality,
arising and awakening from this land;
for we are the wind that turns the mill,
the light that kisses the shoreline.
We are wanderers guided by our own stars
and no night shall conquer our common dreams.

Awakenings

i.

The clock strikes Eight
without reluctance
and a lone seagull caws
at the space between buildings
we call sky.

ii.

The city's gut
swells and spills
with urbanite corpulence
over a straining greenbelt:
plunder of a trembling virgin.

iii.

Away from the straight line
of red lights and speed signs,
rivers of minnows surge by,
pulled by the North Atlantic drift
towards the salmon leap.

Affective

The box encloses,
six sides of Autumn
snuffing out the light of your summers.

Punch a hole in the wall
and force a crack;
stick your fingers in
and tease the space, find
brick and mortar malleable
to your touch; widen the hole
and insert a window where your fist laid.

Open that window
and let the air moisturise your thoughts;

and then, when no one's looking,
crawl through the frame
and escape into
the dawn of the unknown.