



A faster jet leaves
its stream overhead
in a southerly direction

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Victorian Evening

The conversation is unclear, near
Can you moisten the air
Droplets, for the words to jump
From one to the other, steady

Still, & the rains have waived
Left grey skies, cold breezes
Discoloured leaves, warm fires
Chestnuts and fingerless gloves

My hesitation is dear, fear
Can you harness the light
Sprinkle sunshine; beams
For these words to overbalance

Wait, you may not...

If you would just listen
Or hear
Not just that of which you want
To hear

Or leave the condescending voice
Behind
Instead to care of what is on
My mind

It's hard enough anyway without your
Flippant laugh
If only once to be serious and not so
Crass

I did not mean to hurt
Why would I
That's not where I'm coming from
But should I

Fridays on my mind

If you want to lose your way
Again
Or stand outside in falling
Rain

That's ok, really it is almost
Kind
Just let yours be, the love
I find

Halfway through the morning
Did I forget to take the tablets
An inventive infusion
Or a rush of blood
Unsteady hands, fuzzy hair

Take a cup of coffee
Settle, wait for the caffeine
To take hold
Sit in the chair by the fire
Read your book:
The memoirs of Cocteau

Of course these are
Also your thoughts
They are universal – yes ok
He wrote them down

And sat over his coffee
With Marcel Proust

To consider their merits
Before publication

These though are
Your thoughts
Your own unsteady
Movements captured

Time now to return
To the task; the letter
The video - the application
Of the facial mask

Step up from the armchair
To the leather covered
Fully adjustable
Five wheeled

Industrial standard
Office chair

& Together
Press the keys

Ctrl
Alt
Delete

Looking out for each other

Half an Aspirin
If that's all it takes
To steady the tear
In your eye

I will ask the doctor
For sure
I neither wish
That anything should happen

At a stroke
Leaving
Either
Me or you without

The use of a pen
Or the laughter
After
Making love

Emergence

The loneliness of non-chosen solitude
Concrete where once there was meadow

Only my life can I explain & even that
Is by no means certain in the storytelling

My mother called her time alone contentment
This came after a hard, physically tough
& demanding journey

I hear the wind through the grasses
I am certain of the leaves falling
From their trees

You ask me if I am OK on my own all day
I wonder, for that is all I can
How it will be for you

It affects everyone we know

We had advance warning; time to
Press the tuxedo, chill the martini
Undress the olives & prepare; ready
To celebrate our winning of the war

The balcony is art deco, as is the radio
And the gramophone player: we talked
We kissed, we danced & listened gaily
Of the momentous news from the front

For the fiftieth anniversary we put the
House on the market, included all
Of our belongings; and the photographs
Lest we should forget to remember

The swimming pool had its own room
To change or to take a telephone call
Perhaps there had been a butler or a
Handyman or a maid in a pinafore

You cope with all the ups and downs
Of this terrible war: endlessly you
Question how could you help, how on
Earth could you make a contribution

And so to the night of the party: to lift
Everyone's spirits you offer to read a poem
In your soft thoughtful voice, maybe by
Wilfred Owen, or one of his dead mates

Movie Maker

From dark to shadow to light
To sunshine
From nothing to doubt to hope
To certainty

Unveil my little story
In less than ten minutes
Though by the summer
It could be half an hour

From a muddle to a mess to an idea
To fruition
From grey to black to blue
To deepest sunset red

I recall the circle
The hero the villain
The defining moment
And a good number of tests

From autumn to winter to spring
To summer
From gold to white to green
To heavenly skies of blue

Write about what you know
Remember
The words of
Yevtushenko

*A poet's autobiography is his poetry
Anything else is just a footnote*

The stuff of dreams

You would have enquired further
I said I thought it wrong to trespass
Not to invade someone else's privacy
But it was just an excuse, the lack
Of adventurous spirit anywhere within

Yet the images are carried with me
The once deeply overgrown garden
Trimmed back to the stubble
And the bare earth beneath
The ivy and clematis once in flower
Are now undone, but still clung

From all sides of the cottage
And the roof and the window panes
All along the veranda
Where I guess you listened to the radio
Or sat drinking lemonade with your sister
- Each to share a light sandwich

Deep in free conversation
Awash with plans to build
Your own writing room
With wicker chairs
And potted plants

Right in the middle of the garden
That falls away to the stream
Towards the tall church spire
Are those the original curtains
Do they hold all of the stories
That you told

Through endless summers
And early winter mornings
- A view out over the frost
With your steaming tea
And fresh, home baked
Hot buttered scones

She was sixteen ...work in progress

She was sixteen I'm sure you know that
And to come from town
Was quite a way
You could not have believed

It would be tit for tat
To chase the girl
Yet no desire to play
... O sail-away

I know
You have to be around for everyone
And that you have a swathe
Of friends

But if you give out the special song
You may expect
The girl in return
To make her own explicit demands

And to invite at least three that I know of
There may have been more
Certainly
Before the police arrived

The girls queued all around
Stood pretty
In their slinky skimpy kit
Outside the glazed spotlight door

Not all at your brother's bequest either
Or girls with your football friends
Who were neither skinheads
Nor hippies from the jazz-rock club

More they were
The dance floor pill pop pushers
& the doubtful diva dominatrix's
Under the dark lights of the discotheque

The pavement is being repaired

You walked ever
So slowly along James Street
In your fawn, knee length
Style less padded anorak

In your long rubber, or gloss rubber-look
Wellington style boots
You are not from around here
Or have you been here forever

With your weather worn face
You appear to have
Walked into unsteady times
The winds less though now
Than in your more recent past

The surgery, if that is where you are going
Is only a few hundred yards to walk
& once again the sun begins to shine

I truly only caught a glimpse of you
Why then to think of Chernobyl
Or Bosnia or Kazakhstan...

You know I too am not from these parts
Though I feel to settle & sit more easy here
Than how I imagine it is for you

Are you in exile, or lost; are you lonely
Do my words come too fast
- I will try to slow down

Wander about in my
Escher stepped cathedral mind
Or be moved

To recall the church & the beggar
In the Kos summer sun - yet another place
Where all I did was look

Lincoln Central 9:23

Now remember we might not ourselves lead very interesting lives, so best for the story to start by making it up or doing some research. The station is by a church in a city with a cathedral, plenty to go on there then - right back to the reformation.

On the outskirts of the city, passed the Ash & Silver birch, the flora and fauna is overwhelming; even in November leaves hold steady on the trees, the waters are without a ripple except for the local explosion with the arrival of the swans.

Through estates of corrugated buildings & corrugated containers we reach our first of many stops. This is a steady trundle no inter-city tilting express, much as the vast aeroplane that you saw earlier, you thought its size unusual & maybe bound for Iraq – your time in intelligence sure lingers.

A faster jet leaves its stream overhead in a southerly direction. Lemon, lime, orange, brown, green silver, golden, and thousands of millions of varied tints in between; this is a flat space, where you see framed the brush lined corridors.

Out away in the distance; coal fired power stations with cooling towers oozing their steam, clouds pour up & out into the otherwise clear blue sky. Swinderby station is now a private house; just one passenger climbs aboard, no one alights - truly transport in the community.

We pass a tidy house, in a tidy field with nothing else for miles around; would you, could you live there? Scrap-yards half full of redundant vehicles and the sunlight flashing, as if a stroboscope was at work.

We go by fields of unknown vegetables, and pass surveyors, stood at the level crossing with their tripod mount theodolite. Decay and caravan car parks are next to Collingham station stop, ahead of schedule we have a moment's wait, before moving off.

Past the dormer bungalows of domestic life, another level crossing at Cottage Lane; my mind wanders - who used to use this railway, what were they doing, where were they going, what was the impetus for the construction of this linear passage

For all about is fields and inconsequential hamlets, only the occasional village - surely the trains were not built to transport broccoli or sacks of potatoes or peas, or wheat or barley, or even sugar beet.

We are by the river Trent, a canal lock and two railway lines that Cross in the sign of a laid down capital X, this is British Sugar country: Newark, Nottinghamshire where the tall singular factory chimney endlessly belches out its excrement.

The Waitrose car park is crowded, even at this early hour folk want to buy the best that is about; an older couple get on board here: with his brown boots & grey flannels you might expect him to have a retired railway workers pass ...we are not disappointed.

I am struck by the quality of the ticket clerk's trousers; I watch as he strides purposefully under his close cropped head, moving with style, verve and substance up and down the carriage.

... I have not mentioned the lady sat across and two seats down, in her red plastic sandals & patchwork jacket, with silver grey hair, she reads a book: *Food is better medicine than drugs* ah for the cool breath of social rehabilitation.

Hereabouts the trees have lost some of their sparkle: Browns, black cherry reds and dusted blueberry pervade; the flicker breeze at Rolleston is calling time. It seems less than a mile but maybe I was dreaming; anyhow Fiskerton was another one person stop, with brambles, hollies & electricity pylons all in a line.

Looking to the east, into filtered sunlight; meadows with copses, the occasional willow and some upstanding upright pines; all of this is to the east of Bleasby where the horse is wearing its overcoat, standing in shadow, away from the rays of the bright sunshine.

The sludge dump mud flats are populated by blackbirds of a sort, open waters catch the sun & give off innumerable reflections. The lady who joins me is tidy, with a smart brooch on a well tailored jacket; she sits, talking to herself, making notes - actually I realize she is singing, and sorting out her Christmas present list; if this is contentment then I am in the queue.

We pull up at Londham - take a little time to settle, then slowly move away; the lady and I strike up

a conversation, she tells me about her life in the theatre, having to fend for herself, when only women with money could get a mortgage; we chatter away easily, I am going to Nottingham to watch a three minute film.

Which itself of course may not be too interesting, but today already all of this as happened, and it is not yet even eleven.

Waiting for the film to finish

Strength
Is to have some guile left in reserve
Love is to give it all away

Strength is to know
That your combatant is incorrect
Love is easily to keep your powder dry

The barman practices his cricket stroke
Forward defensive with a straight eye
The caricature sits beneath his caricature
A regular's night on a regular night

The strangers silver hair shines
His red rosy cheeks shine
He carries an engaging smile
And joins in
With his easy happy laugh

Dues

The best thing about being a poet
Is meeting old friends & lovers
Whosoever would have imagined
Such occasions

Collisions
With the coincidence
Of our erstwhile chancellors
Disability to balance the books

You in your armchair
Listening to the radio
Reading the collection of poems
That your best friend gave you for Christmas

While here I am
Staring out at you, from this page
Who would have thought, all those years ago
That we would fall in love again, tonight

Commentary for a film

The poet looks behind the picture
Seeks out a story or an inspiration
A diving board
Or a precipice from which to launch

Walking through the old cemetery park
I meet a fellow photographer
We are brought here by autumn's
Horizontal sunlight

*Some people take moody pictures
But I like to use the warmth of the sun
To give the gravestones a charm, a richness
I try to create a story*

I agree
& say that I am filming for a celebration
We exchange email addresses
He carries a Nikon, large format camera

Reason: Commentary for a film part II

Of course everyone wants to be someone else
The poet he craves to be a musician
The blacksmith to become a cabinet maker
And the photographer, to turn as if by magic
Into Rembrandt or Claude Monet

So we introduce you to our town
Through the lens of a photographer
Through the words of a poet
A group of artists, journeymen
Artisans with a welcome to offer

A chance for you to be that someone other
Through a process of enrichment
Nourishment of the parts
Of self that we seldom touch
Join in with our celebration
Bring your own good
Fortune to the fore

To put my work in context so to speak

I iron a shirt
And think of a dance floor
Will I ever be alone

You sing of telepathic messages
I think of youth
A different kind of perspiration
Weeps into my eyes

What is poetry for
What is its *raison d'être*
A good question don't you think

One that I could only answer
With the words above

Movement in another time

Dance; I sweat, stutter about the dance floor
In a trance of confusion, as a metaphor for clay

Look at the bass player; his sway, his self detached
Insignificance; dance for him is just another day

The lead guitar picks easy, fingers wrap around
The frets; no worry, steady; dance is his easy way

Jimba jimba...a host of other words, from a far
Further fascination; their dance is here to stay

Dance; I, myself, o lay my lady lay, move my body
More ever than my mind; to dance my love, I pray

Before and after the movies

You laugh at my eagerness
And completeness
My desire to reach dessert

You smile at my certainty
And surety, of the goodness
In the liquorice I flirt

You fumble at my love
There open & tender
Touch me why don't you

We walk in the night
You hold my hand under the stars
In a dark clear sky
Hey - I won't hurt

Words whispered on the breeze

Up & over
The folded jackets
Of violins & strings galore

Through flickered leaf
The videos
Of motor cycles roar

Stillness of
The rolled up straw
Already giving birth to grass

If ever
We should find silence
Would that we be with luck to pass

Wide & down
Pan all around
Way across the horizons

Towards
The settle of sleep
As with a breeze

From faraway
Offshore isles
You quietly begin

To talk
About
Last night's film

Say of
Sliding off
The edge of the world

And the contrast

Between here
& Kings Cross station

I listened
With intent
To your voice

I wanted you
To softly talk
At least until forever

**Autumn artefacts... o my Hillman
almanac**

Did we ever have so much sunlight
I don't expect the inanimate objects
Can give me the answer; nevertheless

I feel you would be warmed
By the reflection
On the blue glazed vase

Even now
As it is
Quite bereft of blossom

Or by the clay formed hedgehog
With It's turned up nose, cocking a snoot
At the Ivy and the sway steady willow

Or by the Clarence cliff tea pot, forsaken
Of its function it sits still & lets the sun
Fall on its contemporaneous spout

The young girl, with a blue headscarf
She watches me, but, as yet, I have not
Started to wonder what she thinks

Up there in her plain gold frame
With a wide
White cardboard border

In sunlight I sit here
I have no needs to meet
I am steady in going nowhere

Score line 3-1

It's a funny old game
Nine against eleven
And last year
Two of our boys lost their lives
On the journey home

Today, in their memory
You play our signature song
Hi Ho Sheffield Wednesday

Your fifteen thousand, three hundred
And thirty five home supporters
And our four thousand, one hundred
And fifty four travelling fans
They raise together
In a humane & emotional tribute

No wonder that my unshaved stubble
Stands to attention
As I watch the raindrops

Fall on to my windscreen
With my eyes softly focussed
Slowly and thoughtlessly
Towards the endless oncoming traffic

Later I ponder about the American guy
Sat across from me in the coffee shop
He is here tonight to talk to our cohort
About all things literary & publishing
I wonder

He being a fellow football supporter
Will he mention this commentary
On our beautiful game

