

DEATH BLENDER

if I have to tell you again, then that'll be another fucking time.

upon pressing a perverted ear to time's death conch spiral

we were invited by billboards to start praying.
at stop signs, over tannoys, through whip cracks punctuations
we were awake.
your barista would hold eye contact a second too long,
leave some Sybillean symbol dusted into your coffee with arcane minerals
obscene conjugal intimations.
even common conversation was pickled in the sensuality of doom.
we walked around as deathly and as gauntly alluring as a young man at his first conquest.
there was no longer anything to win, nor gain. there were simply moments containing,
like reflections in a soap bubble, entireties and totalities, the sum measures of lives,
as fragile as the sum measures of lives, bursting like over-ripe fruit, on the window-sill.

someone said to get moving, that the weather was beginning to curdle, that the hour was
approaching. beads of anxious sweat began to percolate under Time's arm-pit; it occurred to me it
had been a while since I'd been to the beach.

the day was limpid, sunless and limp dick, and when the sun broke, it did so like a well timed joke,
and still the grey remained, like a ground to its figure.- see through it like pond scum. jaundiced and
taught under the ceremonial sheets. it was the grey of hangovers, of clocking on, the grey which
accompanies the breaking of bad news like good china in the front room. it was the grey which
announces the day but relinquishes the promise of night - the events of day hidden from the sun. it
was the barbarity of things which must be and always will, laws which slide through bone like
pistons, and abolish thought. it was a grey for looking into the cross-section of a breathing machine,
and asking questions.

the streets were empty. now and again a dog with no owner would emerge from an alley, cut
diagonally by sunlight. it would look up and down the intersection and disappear once again into
the shade. it was an unkind warmth that took more than it gave that beat me down that day, and the
low dying light cut ribbons of light across the streets. concrete turned to green turned into sand, I
sank a little more into the earth with each grade. now the sun was ripening into the creme of time
bleached and peeling wallpaper, but the sand was still hot under me. I took off my shoes. there was
no one else around, but I wondered what I'd say to one if one lay down beside me in the sand. by
this time, I hadn't spoken to another human being in around three months, and yet even the most
complex and depraved of intimacies would have seemed natural. life's playing field had been
levelled, and even the subs on the bench were walking the pitch with whistles. when time is done
and the buildings fall, the exclusionary logics fall with them. if I'd have seen someone I'd have
sooner thought them myself than someone else - that's how long it's been. no uniforms, no
markings. I would have welcomed another to myself like a necessary limb. I looked up and down
the beach, and there was no one. and sitting down on the dry, as the tide rose, and the sky closed the
sun, and the pathetic fallacies of better poets began to lour like a scowling, matronly face up above,
I placed my hand down in the sand, and found the death conch spiral, and placed it to my perverted
ear.

here's what it said -

world of horror

the old one stirs in louring nimbus and casts a boorish leer on the coast
from behind a trembling nictitating membrane
white horses whipped like stiff cream peaks
into frozen marble busts of agonised anglicized faces
a coke can whips past like a tin can bullet
dapper dan strips his glad-rags to his ankles and prays for clemency
and mother earth trembles on her flank
like either the
climax that birthed us
or the post coital shake that terminates in death.
I sit on a deck chair by the beach
in a pressed Ralph Lauren shirt
and drink my coffee
Columbian espresso
a mottle of demerara.
work starts in a quarter
and I want to get some meditation in
while I've still got the head for it.
I flick a grain of sand from my patent leather shoe
while a mobile home careens into the ocean.
I produce a newspaper
and pray
for buttered toast.

*a team of swiss watchmaker's attempt to fix the doomsday clock
or at least set it to snooze.*

*cats are lying with dogs
and their offspring
are a highly intelligent new species whom we fear
may one day outmatch us.*

all this intends to make me perspire.
the old one brandishes an oil tanker in hand
and with a firm, yet gentle application of pressure
undoes it like a bone into marrow and toothpicks.
the leviathan flexes its back and cities sink into sand.
it's our job to go mad with it.
but
I neither pray for death or waste my breath explaining it in fine english.
of late, I've been attempting to synthesise the poetry of tabloid headlines
with the demotic of those who despise tabloid headlines
the braggadocious repetition of untruth
so heavy that you begin to believe
that untruth might truly have some virtue.

I finish my coffee.
there's no cunt worse than a cunt who comes late to work.
when I sit up from the deck chair it ruffles in the wind
is caught and cast up to the heavens.
I throw the coffee cup after it
and at the crest of its parabolic
the divine will of unseen, inscrutable violence
which some called magic
and that we call science
slips their fingers through the handle
and carries it off
with an outstretched pinky.
there is an ugliness about the place
sure
but at least it is an orderly ugliness.
I check my watch
and the hands are spinning this way and that
(I read somewhere it's to do with altered electromagnetic fields but
who's to say, really?)
I take a guess and make it ten thirty.
I'm enjoying time now
now any time is good as any
and it's that sort of equity I've been praying for since my prayers fell silent.
the old one winks at me.

I make to the premises
the only restaurant left serving
been put up onto the coastal shelf
and left to the heavens.
a trio of scream queens who seem to be lead along by
blonde dervish demons latched upon their heads
belt ineffable nonsense
but in closed captions
it read
"you fool, all hope is lost!
mother nature is dead
and from out her rotting womb
bursts pestilence!
do you intend to
stand upon ceremony
on attendance of her wake
while outside the mausoleum
the living suffer the end
of all being?"
and I said,
"I'm sorry love,
I can't hear you,
and I'm going to be late.
we're chock full this evening."

listen,

at the end of the day
or the end of the world
there's not much difference
it is what it is
know what I mean?
you're always either spending work-time or spending time working
that's the division
driving work and commerce.
you're either sat at a table, or you're waiting upon it.
whether in the lectern or seminar it makes no difference
you're inside the uterine lining of what muscles do
whether with ease or effort
the weekend fortunes of drunk waitresses and insouciant sauciers
decide if you'll hit the crib nine months down the line
or hit porcelain tonight.
dance on a fine wire of intelligence
abstain from fags and imbibes
to bribe the fates
another day sober
another chip to sit on your shoulder.
smile blithely, and caffeinated, ready for shipping orders
(but never fully buy into them)
go out
but go out in an ironed shirt and double windsor
and for christ sake
look cheerful
the old gods are watching.

learn on the job

and so it's back to the bad old days after all
hot coffee and hard soap
disappearing acts for things you didn't know existed.
it's clean up duty.
fibreglass and insulation singed by metallic lobes that went singing through double glazed
through business, entertainment, and hospitality alike.
strewn about the cobbles.
my palms thick with callus and my fingertips blank from mop the deck duties.
the sun rises and sets much the same but
the horizon has mutated.
frail organic design
now synthetic digital synth lines
if you find someplace to stand that isn't a mine or an improvised bear trap
and squint at the far distance
you'll see a jagged lattice of
timbered sky scrapers and toppled monuments.
like a thicket of haphazard spears
simply dropped by a primitive front line
who had heard the horn blow one too many.

I sweep all that up too.

still mother insists I acquire a job in finance
because crime always pays, so long as it's white collar.
she was the perpetual e-mail recipient of pan-national pyramid schemes
Birmingham to Liberia.
there's no e-mails with that hole in the net.
but
she'd taken the liberty of printing off every one she'd ever received
in the off chance they might one day be relevant.
as a result
the Sistine is dust
and the works of man, written, sculpted, or transmogrified into sound
are largely dead
however,
consigned to a battered yet stalwart lock-box, in a certain lone Anderson shelter
lies the last manuscript, the final, unblemished product of humanism since it crawled from the
womb of chaos and started sticking flags into things.
penis enlargement.
armchair callisthenics.
20 percent off what you never knew you needed.

anyway,
I suggested it might be hard to get a job in stocks

since most of what's left of the stock market is embedded in the same suppurating hell-trench as McDonalds, that one family law firm and my former boutique interior design shop, tragic losses (the latter had some very fetching throws) but most of what's left of them is bombed out fuselage and the ripped back ribs of the carcass the popped girdle of steel girders strewn down main street (or whatever it is they called it. may as well have been main street, for all that's left of it.)

I look down into it expecting perhaps a sign
or even a signed language translation of one
mobile hands mouthing from out of oblivion but
there was just blackness and fire.
the odd bit of sulphur and brimstone gets gobbled out of the crevasse on occasion,
so I step back
snort up some air
hoist a grip bag which contains my next three days, months or years
over my shoulder
like
tossing lucky salt.

I take off my cap and smack it over my thigh
and spores of ground up stuff writhe in fractal patterns and vanish through letterboxes to alter dimensions.

this is typically a bad omen.

I pass the foreman
visor hat and a rain damp fag
propped against a bombed out stoop like an old broom.

I ask if I've missed a spot,
and he says that

"unless you could bomb it again,
I'm not sure it would make much difference, son."

I think of what else is on today.

chimney soot mandala haiku

throw pennies at stray dogs

homebrew bathtub nitrous

(which, when too potent for engine fuel we fire our livers with)

also

there was the somewhat troubling matter that the local sadomasochistic themed biker gang had begun beheading pilgrims in bombastic and theatrically staged show trials on the hinterland of the city ruins.

it was a justifiable point of consternation.

some of us didn't much like the idea of being beheaded.

some of us had suggested we might do something about that

but unfortunately

most of us had worked in programming before it all went to shit

and most of the biker gang guys were

super ripped type A CEO types

who had spent most of their teenage and adult lives waiting for something like this to happen.

I guess they got tired of playing the game of progress

and wanted to try a new one.

it occurs to me I should probably find a gun or a broken bottle or something
but

I lay down the pack, shrug at the foreman and continue sweeping.

I say, "I'll give it another hour or so, see how it looks then."
he says, "sure,"
and lays down on the ground as if there's no better place to lie
because there isn't
and attempts to fall asleep.
a fine rain washes him
and I'm thinking
with as much anticipation as is afforded to anything, now
that
when he rises
he'll leave a perfect dirt angel outline of himself
dry upon the ground.
I wait around to see it
but he doesn't wake up.
I figure
just as well
that's what you get waiting around for things
so I just keep sweeping the street,
remaining attentive to any potential new foremen I might lend my services to.

to be briefly morose, in the hope you'll find me pretty

what is a joy that saddens
a revival which weakens
or an awakening which delivers sleep
but nostalgia?
the ensnarement of time.
we are entangled not so much by space, as by the past
which we learn we cannot live without
and try to resurrect it in the present.
often we don't realise this trap we lay for ourselves
until
however many miles or lives away from its locus
it sits
like a vile and effervescent spirit
crouched in the lotus.
then it transports us
back to where we belong
some fateful day in which pieces of you coalesced into something,
not quite a someone but a definition of living
to once again collapse and fragment, symmetrically.
like a bullet which
in hitting its mark
disintegrates into shrapnel.
death keeps sentinel watch over the cradle of life
and possibility tantalises with its constrictions.
if something is to happen, it means this one thing will happen,
and all other happenings, save this one, must by necessity die.
each new venture
a vector
enticing movement
but a movement which will sometime end.

the pity is that one cannot be everyone at once,
and must be someone, for all time.
and like all things which do their work in time, perish inside of it.
it's a sort of never slowing train
in which people move without moving,
can sit, speak of the least inventive things, or of the most
(there's no difference, talk is only talk)
we can laugh, fuck, or stand perfectly still
and all the while we move toward something which we hope
in wordless dreams of natal worlds
we will arrive upon together.

there was someone who I realised I was becoming
who was different from who I was and the possibility frightened me,
as all possibilities frighten once they are ratified, and made into indelible history.
a happening
made into
now-what-has-happened
in the next moment what is happening will have happened
and there will be no going back.
and it is only when things are happening,
when one presumes to solve the murder in the bar carriage
when one carves one's name into the table woodwork of the restaurant car,
when one makes being alive concrete -
at its most fluid, and promising
life reveals its ordained passage into nothing and
into definition.

sitting, alone, smoking, thinking, in my private car,
the wheels would eat up the tracks and time would stop
because I was not moving with it
I was simply riding it.
all the while you sit inside of thoughts of what you are,
you are still, objectively, someone
who can only change
if thoughts are committed to action.

but when I became motive upon time and moved with it.
I realised that to become means to die
and to always be dying
and somehow that shocked me to lucidity.
because a little part of me
the deathly part
had wished to live forever
(that is what it means to live forever, to be already dead, as to be truly alive is to challenge death
knowing that one will lose)
I wished to live forever
and when I chose death and gambled my life and become alive in so doing,
I burnt the moorings to what I supposed I was, and, through doing, became at once what I am and
must be.
I was stricken, not with the bellicose, erratic maudlin sobbing of a drunk
but with a sober, dry eyed melancholy.
I saw truly
and,
truly, now
that I would die,
and there was no longer talking about it or fooling about it
I realised it, fully, in all of its dimensions.
I had been trying, in bad faith, to attain this realisation for a long, long time,
I had been going about it entirely the wrong way.
I thought it was something of value,
insofar as it was an eternal truth,
and valued it because, in my bad faith

I valued only what was eternal,
and outside the laws of life and death
as if contemplating the laws of life and death precisely
would render me exempt from them.
now I realise that value is only conferred upon mortal things
and that mortal matters are the only true matters.
I knew this
completely
as I stood with you on the waters of a nothing place,
the nothing time after one clock out or there is a drink to be had
it is always in these interstitial spaces, in which nothingness intersects with endlessness
and these two merge in the commonplace tragedy of the renewal which deceives,
the mirror one perceives in smoke; nostalgia.
time which smothers itself in the dime store scent of its own perpetual death
fading on old sheets.

that is to say nothing of the only true fact,
that as your life flowed in mine I felt a love which words do less than honour
they shame it
and so a word
if it is judicious,
is only a grasping doomed to fail
is only a grasping at precious metals in the dark
which greed greases and dooms the hold
and so a word must acknowledge at all stages its death
as I did when death, love, and the quiet mercy of silent company
rebounded through the hills which have ensnared me
and which no work of man
or totem to industry
which no pylon can rob me of
the grand destroying majestic
the shuddering loneliness
of being known by others truly
and truly knowing them.
then all masks fall and words fail
and once again
there is only ever flesh
attempting to justify flesh
through unfleshly graspings
and the petty casting of semantics
when no lines
(not even the best lines)
will catch
and no words will do.

MISANTH-

ROPE

CURED

BY

TRANSC-

IDENT

BLOWJOB

a series of tonally dissonant observations, of varying crudity

I'm well read but I mainly read myself.
I'm totally wired into the patter of your tin cans and string.
manifest glad-rags
I brought a blowtorch and pliers
lets get positively pliant.
let's get smashed avocado on toast
let's have your people talk with my people
or
let's pull our sleeves over wrists like damp squibs
and listen to the smiths.
let's not.
instead let's stay bed ridden on weekends
riddled with cynicism
and reminisce of jaundiced youth
and blowjobs gone by.

also,
you'll know this yourself
but
you can't write a love sonnet collectively.
it's always some titanicallly lonesome prick
tossing into a surgical sock
but to their credit
writing is awful hard with a hard on and one hand chained to a bed-rail.

but "it's all terrible wank
innit?"
he laughs
stepping off a pier
with a bacon bap in one hand and a copy of madame bovary in the other

with two pages stuck together
those ones at the end when the foul bitch quits complaining and dies already
leaving the common folk to get on with the hopeless
unkempt
unfashionable
and
even faintly Quixotic business
of being alive.

splash
 lichtenstein motif

hips cocked like pistols in the modern art gallery he said
/motive contingency extracted from the temporal continuum
risers to the surface and dries itself off
contemplates lunch
from the deck chair of an undying present/
and I said
aye, cool man,
but
are you gonna buy something
or leave?

I've succeeded once again in the exaction of that most elusive of truths
The Beautiful Failure
now the ouroboros sheds its skin and slithers under the porch in wait for the next unsuspecting
golden retriever of Fortune to bound along
all wag happy and complacent.
a snakebite and a jelly and shouting at the postman through a narrow hole in the multiverse
or as some refer to it
the letter box.
then
I'm tripping on the deck
fucked on venom
spastic jazz hands and victory
is at last
mine
and mine only
if you could see through the foam around my mouth you'd notice that I'm smiling.

I've sold out all my friends.
and pawned the ancestral silver.
used it to buy some Time with Them.
the revolution is dead
to celebrate
I'm going out on the lash in a ball of Stygian flame
in shoes I bought by liquidising my high principles.

thus
I can reveal all
if you'll turn to page 3

it was me
all along
and I'd like you to know it's something of a relief.
I camp for black friday
I measure the day with fags
I don't sort the green from clear
and on the rare occasions I donate to charity I'm certain it goes up some cunt's nose.
I stand hakkit and bedraggled in sweatpants outside your local Gregs
I shop at Waitrose ironically.

I will never have read enough to give up reading but
I've drank enough to quit drinking
which means, at last
I'm tied even
with Bukowski.

I hate the sound your handbag dog makes when I bounce it off the wall
it vindicates the violence of tribalism.
I hate the smell of your cheap fags
if you're determined to arrive at cancer then travel first class.
I'm sick (and tired) of people incorrectly assuming intelligence based on the correct implementation
of words like "ratiocinative," which exist to explain language which is free of words like
"ratiocinative."
I'm tired (and sick) of people assuming it is offensive to assume anything
if you don't draw precisely what you see
how can anyone judge objective proportion and perspective?

in other news
*/the fact checking committee had no coffee because all the receptionists had been promoted to
managerial positions by order of people who had never had a job.
the fact checking committee was soon rendered redundant, because the moment it was formed, facts
stopped being produced. a fact producing committee was formed soon after, to rectify this.
they have been perpetually at odds ever since/*

what I'm trying to say is
I only care to preserve the illusion
that I don't.

do *you* know a rolling stone?
two out of three out of people that answer surveys do.
they say a rolling stone gathers no moss
which is true but
they do gather STI's and the repressed rage of childhood trauma.
ask *your* nearest rolling stone
every one of them has been cast down the slope
by someone.

and so the only thing for it
really
is to move from one end of a room to another
while remaining perfectly still.

if you think you can manage that then
meet me at the bar on that street
8 sharp on March 15th.
I'll be the naked man being shown the door by the cops
in a headlock
screaming
"it's all too late
too late!"
I'll really mean it too
by then.
we will pass at the door
and
if you're moved by the spirit of the age
if you are a comrade
then
I will relay you this poem
penned upon a quaint square of bog roll
and you can start from where I left off.
the last man on earth will be a gravedigger, and he'll be set for life

I'd like, once again, to be sure.
of anything.
the puissance of prejudice
to walk into a crowded room and see not people but instruments
to be bent or stoked in the hearth.
to be sure, even of just one thing,
even if it was as simple as knowing whether it is still morally acceptable to eat avocado.
but there is no certainty.
Time is no longer the distance between moments,
it has neither the romance of games of chance
nor the beauty afforded to the nebulous.
it has been shot, stripped, skinned, cleaved from the sex to the breastplate and stuck upon the slab.
it is a lifeless thing, and
I think it's funny
now we know so precisely what we live inside of
we don't know how to live.
we fill Time up with old newspapers and the weight of our absence from their headlines
to the precise cubic capacity allotted us.

as far as I can tell
the proper way to live is by playing a hand and
no matter quite how poor the deal is
being sure
bloody-mindedly sure
that you've won.
it is the only justification for the grim penalties of fortune
which lays the most damning arcana with one hand on your leg and something else in your wallet.
it is a grim pirouette, twisting
head snapping stage front.
the pirouette, properly performed, is the agony of time,

a face which snaps to the resolution of self awareness
while all beneath swings without penance like a dervish
and pulls it once more,
back into a smear of paint on the mixing board.

I would like to know that knowing how little I know, does me no disservice,
but I know that it does.
I'll have to live with the knowing, then snap my face back out of shape and into motion,
it would be nice to sit down for once.
it would be better if you could get somewhere sitting down
but you can't
unless someone else is driving you
and they might very well decide
"we're going back to the horrors"
when you'd much rather somewhere else
but what can you do?
nothing, if you wish to stay seated.
so you say,
"sure,
I guess we're going back to the horrors, then."
you simply hope you'll get a chance to part ways with the dead-beat
to lose him in the wynds, to duck into a neutral territory, some cafe, when the one guy reading a
newspaper nods and motions you to the back. there's a car waiting, the engine is running, the
horrors are over but
you sort of know you never will, and it never is,
and you wouldn't know what to do with yourself, if you did, or if it was.

the worst moves are the habitual ones
that get rationalised through the habit of the doldrums.
but the hand is always bad
the house always wins
winning is simply a matter of perspective.
can you look a jack in the eye so hard it turns to an ace?
because
once you've lost the ancestral home
the primogeniture pawned off to some unworthy cousin
once you've lost the love of grounded nature or noble ideals
your pride and dignity and all the gifts of youth's prime
squandered, dumped in an alley can and set alight
papal smoke acrid green gone up into the neon lights
announcing that yes
there is a new king of the street
and his name is thank you, and goodnight
well
if you've given up to that
you'll be goddamned sure that no-one
right or wrong
is going to call it lost.
that's still to be decided.

God is a shitty landlord. have a kit kat while you do up his front room. you've earned it.

pretty nothings are all that will do when nothing is pretty.
on the lonesome nights when Time cleaves her thighs and rests her eyes on a trembling chandelier
and thinks of god, if she can, and the devil if she can't - you realise people don't so much become
what they are, but fall into it, like thrashing limbs in quicksand. as the weight comes up to their eyes
they figure, almost always too late, that there was never going to be any place but this, and there
was nothing to be done about it, any more than a dog can walk on two legs and tell you the time. we
never get quite where we should be - always two feet to the left with the wrong shoes on.

but hi ho
now it's
whoopee cushions and oversized boots
candy canes and pinstripe suits.
now it's lo fi eye candy
and DIY podcasts
broadcast live
from the bottom of a dee-troit drain pipe
it's hobo sticks and a handkerchief
and leaving the green grass for
broken bottles of buckfast
glinting like morning dew
on the wild side.

I chase myself through long chandler halls of goodbye
down narrow wynds
that bend and meet
like nokia snake autofellatio
that bend and meet like adam once he'd tossed away the rib.
drowned my kids post-deluvian
looking ante vitruvian

I'm in a skiff on the styx looking ritzy
and milking milton for every cent of the pittance he's worth
to tinder kids
rewriting mother earth's fall
sculpting plaster of paris busts
for the blind
place pasties over her nipples
for their sensitive third eyes.

clown outfits
red booze hound adenoids
fools gleefully run through dawn deserted streets
with molotovs
with pickaxes
recovering slivers of the brick wall for the mantle
to sit next their collection of etsy face masks
and original release pink floyd presses.
the rule of law is what a fool believes
fools knowing more than they let on to the court
and hence
outside of the laws which govern it.
it's the privilege of the court to spit on those rules
and their punishment to be subjected to them.
I say this in the middle of a non-socially distanced gathering in someone's attic.
on the table are blueprints, green soldier men moved round with poles.
we drink red wine and smoke cigarettes.
no one hears me over the sound of the French national anthem blasting from the gramophone
to conceal our gallows patter from eavesdropping devices
no one hears me
but though the sad smile painted upon my lips
would indicate desolation
I know that I am understood, and
I honk my nose in enthusiasm.

where do you find the time to think of these
things?
from out the jaundiced dawn
from a megaphone
it's generally understood that today is for muscle
and the words will come after.
but fuck it
I dropped all the plates
and have collected my severance pay from off of the dining room floor.
it's us again
I could not aspire to a loneliness more fantastic than to lie with you,
like tombstones in the dark.

the world ends when the self begins
because once a fool makes himself,
there is no room left for the world to live
and now that the world is dead

there is nothing left but for us to be ourselves again.
tragic fools singing soliloquies backwards.

so then
we'll speak of a mortal motionless.
we'll commence dealings of a deathly import
in these breathable face masks
the affectation of saddened smiles
for general entertainment.

fried

humbled under hot fat and lashing whips
lights flash and bells ring
the register sings the song of commerce
slams shut to punctuate a moment spent thinking
rather than doing
soon to be corrected.
a kitchen in service is a meditative test
clinging to one thought for one moment too long
is madness.

a young boy peels himself into a bucket
leaving the arms until last.
when all that's left is one hand mortis gripping a paring knife
another steps in to replace him
and repeats the process.

beauty dies fast by the pint in the bar hall.
some get more for their liver than tabloids
but they offer it up elsewhere.

I am a particle descending and ascending by turns on currents of air con and hot bluster.
I'm barely even there
I'm going under the
bed
skin
cover of nightfall
and walking abroad.
I am far off looking at the lights of it all.

it is here to stay

which is to say
it isn't going anywhere.
I look at it a while,
and then spit
and walk back there
because there's nowhere else to go.

good old fashioned hospitality

"hello
may I help?"
is a faithful second skin
like a harridan in leopard print
if you look close enough
you'll see varicose through the lining
thick runs along the tights
and eyelids snowed in by a snowdrift of eye tint.
smiles served like polite handjobs
more for relationship maintenance
than to bedazzle anyone
whether witness or participant.
after a few years of service in this position
your knees are too fucked and your wrists ruined
for much else.
shore up the gaps
and sew the rips that reveal what's hidden
some dull poetry
predilections and kinks
and when the domicile door shuts
and seals you in to your solitude
you even walk different
the negligee slips
the second skin coils around your feet
it peels off from the flesh like from a par boiled peach
and you walk around perversely true
with your mind naked
while the thing rolls its shoulders and pads around
spitting out wishbones
jonesing for chow down

tang of old blood in its fangs from some other night
this is it's yard time
the one true god,
the beast.
without words, it digs its talons in
and when it asks,
"how've you been?"
you don't answer it with words
but with the relieved fealty of an acquiescent moan
then fall asleep.

the gratuity of a contemptible cunt

if you want to know who fucked up your order
for lobster thermidor
it was me
the village idiot
boring the village whore with the extended eldritch lore of
perception's opening doors
you caught the seminar in snippets
through the closing pendulum swing of the service
along with the windowed glower
through hoary smoke
of the coked up kitchen porter
and the red bloated swell of my cheek
from where she slapped me
ring finger imprint
diamonds cut glass
but they can't break a prick once it's hard.

while I appreciated the ten quid tip
I felt it was more from pity, than gratitude
and quite frankly
I resented it
all the way to the bar
I resented it all the way down my throat
you have perpetuated a biweekly chore
you have secured
a biweekly hangover.

men pan for gold
women use it to buy a better man
without dirt on his hands

and I spend sixty hours a week
apologising
for being alive.

that's a more grandiloquent way of saying that my mind
is more accustomed to the squat interior spaces of sea shells
and contemplations of reincarnation
with the devil incarnate
after carnal relations and a cold dessert fag
in Nobody else's gaff
in the middle of a field in december
within the walls of an occupied city
I mean
my mind is expansive
and so it has many gaps.
gaps quite wide enough for an entire lobster to fall through
and enough blackness for it to stay hidden down there
where my good sense and faith in modernity lie
not quite dead
but dying
and dying loudly.

with that said
it was a good red right
I don't relish the sting
but I'm grateful meeting someone
who still knows how to use their hands.

DISHONOURED

WAITER

COMMITTS

SEPPUKU.

SURVIVES, AS

KNIFE WAS

IMPROPERLY

SHARPENED

asking for a friend

I used to do these readings
you'd go up and read out what I'm writing just now
and
deliver it in an unrelentingly stilted impediment
enjambment keeps the doors of perception from really swinging at a slam
anyway
I was pissed
as was my habit.
there was another guy there that night with the same sloped shoulders as I had
so I spoke with him.
these readings usually happen where most things happen
where there's too many people around to think about it.
he'd come from some nowhere place, same as I had
where the foul sea stench of the old gods infuses your clothes,
and it's all so far from television (dim windows into elysian gardens)
that you wonder how people stand sitting in front of them
you can never wring that out, once it's in you.
"some folk build mountains
others prefer to climb them"
I read that off a print
in a housewife's bathroom.

we stared blithely around at the battleground.
someone was shouting about cutting
and of
much cross pollination in the structural conversation
man.
it was a saturday
it was a pub
they didn't know how to hold the mic properly
and the speakers kept emitting high pitched, doppler feedback, that built slow and fell sudden

and their lines built slow and fell sudden.
someone at the bar turned around from the stage and ordered another round.
I followed suit
as was my habit.
a card short of a deck
ever chasing a white rabbit.
I asked the guy what his money was
I meant to say job
but it made sense anyway.
from his build it could've been anything from murder to macrame
he had the shoulders of a line cook and the hands of a pianist
which I refrained from telling him
because you notice these things but you don't say them out loud
which, I suppose, is why I rarely went to those things.
he said he worked in a factory.
I'd heard him read before
and that seemed to make sense.
he wrote with precision and economy
but the product was idiosyncratic
like if ford had made ferraris.
"cool."
I said.
"money, eh. can't live with it, can't live without it,"
he said.
I nodded.
my name got called.
"that's me, then,"
I said,
we both looked around, very briefly. there were two girls at the bar eyeing up the MC
someone had forgotten to snuff the tv.
it played a giallo horror from behind the stage
on stage offered a similar spectacle.
everyone looked like they were where they wanted to be
but it just so happened that they wanted to be bored.

I felt like the guy and me,
we'd been expecting a lot more from all this than we'd received
and we were united by a dull disappointment
which made me think of dull gun metal mornings as wind knocks you to the deck by the seaside
and of the pastel wash of seaside towns
off stage and unspoken drudgery
living, which by itself, is not considered worth discussing
depression stripped of melodrama
the momentousness of standing still.
I went and said my shit.
when it was over, he left.
I ordered another drink.
and celebrated another in a long line of solemn, unannounced and unreported successes.

may she live forever in an eternally half-full bottle of baileys

petunia was lonely
she used to move in bouquets but now no-one okays
her motions for hokey kokey
petunia puts the teevee on because nobody phones
except for the BT bloke
who's overly soon to go on a good day
petunia listens for murder through floral drapes
or drain rats copulating in soft autumnal rain
every week is the same
and now it's a tuesday
shooting stars and a sweetheart stout
and a soak in some epsom to jockey for her attention
then an evening assault
peppered with recycled dialogue
wrought of all credence by toothy leers and strangely familiar longhairs
hippie beards
the fake fear of a scream queen
and the beer hall lean ins
which she'd less seen than breathed
one hand on the felt of a pool hall table
and petunia's incapable of escaping a daylight reverie
of midnight infamy
bottles and halves
hair bound in a bandana like a bouquet offered up
not to the lads
not to anyone
but
it was just fine to look fine
back in the bad old days
she says
in main to herself

but in part to the empty chair
the fizz of an out of date television
and to the empty air
reverberating with pulses
time's oscilloscope slowing down
she closes the blinds
early evening light dies with them
early evening light and the promises of the night
are not for the palely lingering
he hit the cue like a well timed joke
the pocket swallowed it
and messages, sacred messages in smoke
imparting not words but more the nascent, unworked thoughts of music
the material from which the young draw upon to make it
missives from infinity insinuated by smoke from a stolen lambert and butler
remember when you could pay with youth?
what a tab to keep track of
she turns up the tube
till it drowns out the sound of the booze and cigarettes
a cigarette is a regret that you make with other people
and how fine it was to be fine with other people
Time itself looks up from his drink and winks at her from the other side of a bar
and she smiles
behind the floral drapes and in her polyester dress
and says yes to him
and is gone.

piss and vinegar

it was around the time I began to consider a phone contract
my commitment issues resolved
into bleak acceptance.
a marriage
of ill convenience.
a marriage of halves
where the okay-fucking justifies the yoplait
it's got cave paintings in 4k
it's got every indie folk song played
since the paleolithic age
I throw it into the ocean of a blue sky focus group
and it match cuts back to bone, slots easy in a triumphant fist
twitch streaming the downfall of Raskolnikov
from an inner-city gulag bedsit
tick the box and sign over your biometrics
for future retrieval
in the golem pits, the online global village.
rewriting vital images with pithy
helvetica witticisms
there's blood in the grout
the alley cats are conniving.
a three eyed fish
was served at the green-peace cook-out
the arrival of rapture
captured
with a panoramic dolly-out
each littered polystyrene poke on the concrete
a misplaced mark of punctuation
in an ungrammatical sentence
reads a bit like this
"a fast fuck and a shotgun wedding

ends in a violent separation
and often buckshots the kids."

ESL needed

English linguistic transplants
like one of those skin grafts where they take a flayed strip from the arse
and strap it onto your forehead
god forbid
the striations indicate some experience
morbid desktop reminder of time unilateral
they would prefer to move on non-euclidean axes
they all wish to be treated as dilettantes
as freshly baptised new borns
so their mistakes are from ignorance
and not lack of intelligence
they walk around with their upper lip stiff from implants
dancing round a bloody scythe maypole
the blade of tummy tucks
the skin of shucked oysters
the arrhythmic pulse of a scallop that knows what's coming
they've no longer a face
you see
but simply a thing which beats in desperation
a muffled instrument
no longer fit for communication.
speaking in tongue twisters
parlour room antics
while tenements burn
and the foundations are cracking.
peddle the lingua franca
pass it round like a currency
precious
inert
useless metal
settle in for the nuclear winter

with some choice tomes from the judeo-christian narrative tradition
no great revelations to be found there
that you can't find warped in the mullioned windows of your alpen chalet
(furtive hands battered by snow drifts paint them red while you're still on the crème brûlée)
white wholesome heat flushed complexions
aryan enclaves
in first class
with saint nick
and the whips whip
and the collars dig
into brass necks
heaving, muscles like ropes which tie ships to shore
ships that transport stolen hordes
bloody eyes cast sideways to
comrades of burden
one muscle pulses
rope necks pulled through nautical hoops singed and burned
about ready to cut loose
from out of them
the voices that speak
do not speak
English
nor do they care to.

GOD CLAIMS IT
WAS ONLY PINK
LADIES, NOT
ROYAL GALA.
APOLOGISES
FOR ANY

INCONVENIEN- *CE.*

amen

the concept of "God" as conflated with figures of ownership and mastery.
God as the lank bloke on the corner with his hood up
God as the unexpected knife through the sternum
but God
also
and perhaps most typically
as an unexpected tax rebate
because you should never have taken it from me
in the first fucking place
but somehow
regardless
I'm grateful to you.

God is a shitty landlord, but his wife, mother nature, beseeches clemency with the almond eyes of morning deer and midnight women, and redeems them both

he could not go to sing songs of hope and glory
they sounded through hollow instruments
he spoke the sermon of himself in silence
and his communion was a self consumption.
his prayers were made while he shaved
or in the breaths before sleep
when a man is both carnal and replete.
when his thoughts turn to birth, and to death
not elysian fields leased to pastoral sycophants
nor the stilted poetry of a now padlocked bucolic
nor the vain pronouncements made by men atop mountains
who deny their eyes if they catch on the smokestacks
instead
his mind went
to the last words spoken by men beneath the guillotine
or
by men who stand at the base of mountains, looking up.
once men have made the summit
either they're lost for words
or the ones they do find aren't much worth saying
those who end horrors by commencing new ones
are never short of new words
new angles on the game.
they are life's anachronistic newspaper men.
and this man is a newspaper man of a sort
looking for the underside of the headline
and what grows there
in the cold and the dark.
not out of pessimism
but
we are all under the bell jar

making do, or fun.
he asks what a muscle does
when it holds underneath
without ever coming up to breathe the air of the ostensibly free
or taste the sun of the promised, who make the promises they receive a possibility.
he questions whether there are other freedoms you might conceive.
head blank from labour at river lathe
skin scorched
two pits you might once have called eyes squinting through the black
at chaos
but a chaos, unclaimed.

this man decides upon a life of principle
not to be clung desperately to
as one might, falling down the mountain
but to be held
as one holds
with belief, on the way up.
ideals are a desperate clinging as one descends but
principles are for climbing.
he believes if he acts in accordance with this principle
he will be saved from hell
the greater hell you pass through like the airport security of the soul
permitted to see where you'd like to be
but deprived of it
by a parade of paranoid arseholes
stoned by the tomes of law
blisters broiled in fire
reduced to a pariah
consigned to tapping at bulletproof, impenetrable glass.
an eternity neither sitting nor standing
but stooping
naturally assuming the posture of servitude.
no.
he'd sooner clean the shit of CEOs from the toilet bowl of burnt prospects
than live a life hunchbacked
so he'd determined he would try another way.
it's just he was having trouble putting it into words.
so it started
in earnest
when he threw out the tv.

he drove the kid to the sticks
there was no room in the back
so he strapped the LCD up on the roof.
through fields and furrows a blank display
wrought from the spoils of the earth
and infused with images of god and pornography
wended its way from concrete into mildew

sat atop the motor like a mardi gras float
through nowhere.

the kid was crying
for no particular reason
being too young to recognise particulars
but
he knew the man was fixing to throw out more than just the telly.
as far as the kid knew
he was throwing away the world
the screen was the only place that the kid had ever seen it
the world
and he figured that it all must live inside of it
and the bland look of resolve on the man's profile as he drove through the moors
was the stare of an inconsolable god.
that's what the kid saw
the kid didn't know that's just how any man looks
when he's given up taking shit.
what finely choreographed dances are conducted from the screen
played upon our faces to feign
relaxation
anger
spite
and lust
or the thing we've never seen but surmise is somewhere by the beach at the bottom of a daiquiri
happiness.
a cataleptic neuroses
caught between what we feel and how we intend to be seen.
but
to know a troubling thing
without being troubled by it
is a discipline.
and this man had mastered it.
he knew every facet of himself
he knew he could not know everything
that would be ridiculous
but he sure as shit knew what he was about
and he was sure as shit not about this
fucking
LCD TV.

he didn't need bark to bite on
or a shot of morphine
he didn't want lions not to bite on his account.
what would the fun be
then
of placing his head inside their mouths?

he didn't want to pry into the affairs of neighbours
attend after works drinks
he wanted all boundaries to cease.

it seemed to him that the works of human culture
pretty, as they might be,
were a toiling, moralising manichaeisms
but where is the dialectic for a man content with coffee and the sun
whose wordless mortal matter
the fact of his being alive
is enough
to account for his earthly whereabouts?

he had apologised in dinner shirts,
in fatigues
in pinstripe suits.
the perpetual apology of life with other people
was less about smashed plates or spoiled goods
and more of matters cosmic.
once the knowledge terrible has been shared
what is left
but to commiserate?

he was attempting to teach the kid that one day all his gods would die
and that then, he would be silent
lone mourner at the wake
it is a lonely moment of possibility
as one attends the death of one's gods.
this man was not throwing away something
(as it seemed to the kid
who was more concerned with catching Kojak at five)
but instead accepting that everything he'd done so far might have engendered more misery for
himself and for others
than if he'd lived a life by his own rules
instead of those which determined the starching of shirts and the cataloguing of receipts.
he had tried to extract poetry from them
as others have
but there was none to be found.
and with no poetry either there or painted on concrete
it must inhere in man himself
in his management of extremes.

they arrived in a clearing
canopied by douglas fir trees
he set up the tv
on a bed of kerosene
the kid wailed
the man was placid
he lit a match and threw it
through the smashed out screen.

plastic cracked
green evac smoke
stretched suckered subterranean tendrils up into early evening.
as the light died over them, a spectral voice murmured through the silence

and it said -

*it's no longer vogue to be a man
and people would rather not be one given the chance.
but if you find, having tried all other alternatives, that you must
then
if not for anyone else,
do it for the dead ones.
who combed their hair
close shaved their faces until they bled
who, once well rounded, battered themselves square through pin holes
who studied the movements of the ineffable
caught it
and served it up for lunch.
who wept sweat and labour off in the close hallway through wound like slits
before opening the front door into who they must be for their kids
who might have preferred death
who might have preferred a joint or a needle in their arm
but who cracked their egg off the headboard at day break instead
and carved pathways into rock
with their bare hands
who screamed into pillows
who suffered from (in)explicable nightmares
men who were not the men they appeared to be - they were more like human beings.
who really didn't want to be at all
but did it anyway
conscripted into a human relay race.
none of us
are young enough to have heard the pistol shot
we are older than them in a strange way
we are young but we are older than all those dead men
older than the first dead man
who like a whippet
running more on instinct than anything
heard the shot
and sprang through millennia.*

*I think the fear we feel
which we all feel
is the fear that it may not have been worth it
because we cannot categorise its worth or consign it to language.
our flesh knows otherwise
it pries us loose from what logic dictates we cling to
from the desperation of an uncertain fall.
since the first ones fell we have never stopped falling
I am a man, like many men and women
who is terrified of clawing up an unrelenting, hopeless ascent
but I have shaved my face until it bled
I have pressed my shirt
I am ready to be called upon
my broken egg beaten on a pre-dawn head-board*

*I'm ready
to pretend.*

*I have a picture of my old man, in my mind
and my grandfather in my wallet
and of teachers alcoholics and poets
and I think of them
when I think of what it costs to buy things
which are invaluable.
it is a rule that men live to destroy what women die to create
but there are exceptions.
those exceptions are men
who live with principle
and who aren't afraid of setting fires.*

*we're all returning to mother
by different b-roads
we exhibit strange behaviours
but like a neurotics ticks there's one root
we're trying to go home
through the merge
sleep
dead narcotic rage
to delay the only true return there is
which is when the ends of mother earth and our end meets.*

they watch the television burn
and the man is silent.
the kid
drained of tears like a wrung out wash cloth
was asleep
with his head on the man's shoulder.
they were alone in the stand of trees
and from here
it was quite near to the ocean
though perhaps he simply imagined it
the man heard the sound of waves
and his veins raced
with the blood of opportunity.

BAG OF

SHITE SETS

SELF ON

FIRE

the headline the day it all changes

the upper class unwashed
immune to scrofula
grease the palms of blue collars
who wire scrub the skin off
sanitising a royal face
which has been licked shit smeared by the same tongue
that rimmed a corgi's arse.

love each-other
and be humble and patient.

you know yourself

cream soda in a bottle from spar
bleak concrete
but sunshine in the old one's eyes.
a child is colour blind and
sees even in greyscale
nameless, limitless value
it rushes at him
like a furtive cephalopod, from out of a pebble, or a cereal prize, whatever
ancient spectres promising knowledge forbidden
of cosmic origin.

the child wasn't me

because a child isn't I
until it sees with
eyes baptised by limitations.
what is under the bed isn't quite cyclopean
and most of the tall people who ruffle your hair
have no better ideas about the thing
than you do.

you were washed in forgetful waters when you died and
when you were again embedded in flesh
the tapering ecstasy of the deathless hung on you like
the final, orgasmic spasms of a bump of hollywood, right after the crest.
what you huff off the key
is with intent to unlock what's been lost.
and you are always eating yourself
from the tail up.
asking why the sky is blue
why must I do that
why don't you stop
why is it so hard and
why doesn't anyone have a good answer
or any answer, for that matter, to all these questions
why did death come
just when I had thought I'd figure things out and then
once again it's
cream soda out of a bottle
and an old hand in your young one, leading you through bleak, concrete streets
with the bottled sunshine you emit
stolen from paradise
reflected in their eyes.

only man dies

it was a fine rain that washed the wound
straight through one doe eye
and the scent of burning fur
blackened by the shot.
birds scattered
a moving canopy above the trees.

the foal nudged its stomach,
and made a stark, dry croak
as another shot rang out
a roll of metal pulled from the earth's womb
and fired back into it

missed
and
the foal vanished between dense columns of tree trunks.

the doe
stared into the infinite
and dark viscous matter spread from out of the black hole.

boots in mud.
single rain-drops clutching at the tips of leaves
the calm of fine rain.

boots landed by the burnt fur and the black hole
and nudged the stomach
which responded
with a final quiver and
a sighing, inelastic give
into motionlessness.

the boots took off at a pace.

the feet inside them ran to around eighty.
they played John Denver at the funeral
you know the one.

by then
mother earth had closed round the doe skull
like a scallop shell.
she pressed it once again to her breast and
scrubbed the bone like a precious tea-cup of the world's dirt and
the eye remained open
not like the eyes of a man
which, when they close
close for all time
the eye remained open
caught in the headlamps
of the inscrutable infinity
which by turns dispenses
music
and the grace of things which step lightly on fragile things.

FAMOUS NIHILIST
LOSES FAITH,
DECIDES TO

BELIEVE IN
SOMETHING.
NIHILIST
SPOKESPERSONS
WERE AT FIRST
OFFENDED, BUT
NO LONGER CARE.

the song of here we go

I want to write the book
that no one reads but everyone's heard of.
you will place it on your coffee table,
stain it with red wine
it will dry out on your radiator.
you will forget it when you move
and the new tenants will say they've always meant to get round to it.
my life drained into the chalice of a tenants glass
and spilt upon the page.
but even that fails to approach the problem of physical publishing's growing obsolescence

and so
by that time
with the forests levelled
books might very well have been requisitioned as firewood.
in which case there will be one of three blogs
with a paucity of posts
full of grandiose propositions regarding the utopian future that
I missed but
which you'll inhabit
to say nothing of the OnlyFans
which
in truth
was more of a postmodern experiment deconstructing the narcissism of modern masculinity
and shouldn't act as a blemish upon my eminent, and largely disregarded literary career.

see ya later

is it such a shame we come apart like frays in a tapestry
if, though apart
we were once a part of the same image?
we each keep a thread stuck to us and can't shake it off.
when we die
separate or otherwise
we'll take it with us into the air
the secret of scattered mandala
still imputed to each, singular grain.
an image in which we met
knew one another
and from which we both parted

but parted each with a piece of the other.