

The First Book. Lucifer in Starlight

*How you are fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning.
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid nations
low. You said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven; I will
exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will ascend above
the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most
High. But you are brought down to hell, to the depths of the
pit...*

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ARGUMENT: *How the two lovers from William's Farewell, having suffered an unrecoverable loss, wandered across the country; and of the strange things that befell them on their way.*



CHAPTER 1

Autumnal

IT WAS about four o'clock when we arrived. The fields lay deep in fog. The tarmac of the avenue sped quietly beneath us, marbled with oilslicks and rainwater. It was Edwardian apparently, the house – all pale stone and subtle volutes. Suzy came out to meet us on the front steps. Her expression was warm, and her hair was a mess.

Then we sat down for tea and cakes. With the big bay window and the grim weather outside, we all felt glad of the fire. I was so nervous, seeing Suzy again after all this time, I lost my appetite, but she wasn't the sort to take offence. Absent friends were toasted. Suzy grilled you excitedly about life back home in Vienna. When we'd finished, you stacked the things up onto the tray, and I carried it out.

In the kitchen, Suzy introduced us to one of the other women, Jess. She must have been half Suzy's age, twice ours – and yet already there little streaks of grey in her ponytail. She was nice, something of a gentlewoman. She talked in an animated fashion about a faith healing at a recent prayer meeting, emphasising certain points with the knife with which she chopped the onions. I thought how she must have had the lads running after her when she was our age, and wondered if she was married. Then Suzy ushered us into the garden.

Apparently it had been a good year for the jasmine, but it was October now and what hadn't been cut back hung shrivelled and brown. A narrow path ran out across the lawn, down to the river. The cherry tree was full of droplets of rain. Through a plastic window, the shelves of the tool



ES

Afterwards, we drove back to the hotel,
The lights in the dockyard just coming on
And the sun bedding down under the causeway.
The night was heavy with rain and you fell asleep
To something by Snow Patrol or Radio 4.

Chiswell Beach

You blessed the meal when we sat down to supper,
And after, with your hands around the cup.
In the room, we kissed & drank old fashioned,
Watched the first ½ an hour of **Heartbreak Ridge**;
Then you pulled off your teeshirt with the chinese
prints.

I could never admit that I liked it: but
The light from the lampstand gentling your body,
A touch of bois des îles behind each ear,
You laying yourself back on the duvet like
You were a teenager and this was the first time.

shed presented arms: the tines and blades properly oiled and stacked. I said to myself, It'd be good to find work here, over the spring. Then we came in out of the cold.

A long windowed corridor separated the kitchen from the chapel: a handsome room, oak-panelled and oak-floored, with bean bags spread around the altar. In place of a cross there was a painting of the crucifixion, almost like a photograph. His eyes were bulging, bones visibly broken, the hair on his chest matted with blood. I remembered a passage Suzy had given me on a piece of card during our first acquaintance – ‘Christ has no body on earth now but yours’ – then I looked at you. You didn’t seem to pay any of it much attention, but perhaps you just kept your eyes lowered out of respect. I find you very hard to read sometimes, and that gets to me.

Sta Teresa de
Ávila

After that, Suzy took us upstairs to another room. It was as big as the lounge and similarly furnished, but the chairs were laid out in a more formal circle. Suzy said that everyone gathered here every day, first thing in the morning and after supper. In the evenings, the women might want to say sorry for the sins of the day, or tell stories about the things that had happened to them in their lives. There was never any pressure to speak though, she said, nothing to worry about.

There was a library just across the landing: a gorgeous space with a thick red carpet and a stone fireplace. There were eight mahogany bookshelves protruding from the walls, four on the left and four on the right. Then in the centre space, beneath the window, was an enormous copy of *Pilgrim’s Progress* laid open on a lectern. The binding had been carved out of a rich red leather, and inside were the most intricate woodcuts: Apollyon was there with all his teeth and fish scales, and Discretion with suitably come-hither eyes. I called you over and asked if you’d ever read it. You said you tried once when you were fourteen, but it didn’t really work in German.

Then Suzy led us up the final set of stairs, to where the bedrooms were. Near the gable end she showed you into the

place that had been chosen for you. It was fairly bare: a small wardrobe, a desk and a bed, the walls painted matt magnolia. I placed your holdall on the duvet and began to unpack: your jeans and t-shirts, bras and underwear, your blue silk dress, your Bible. The window looked out onto the garden and over into the valley beyond: the moor and husks of industry. Everything was black or gold – except the river, which was silver – the sun being stayed an inch over the col.

Suzy said to me, ‘You’d best be going now. I wish I could let you stay the night, but really I’m breaking the rules just having you here now.’ And you looked at me like we were the last two people left in the world, like the cripple at the Beautiful Gate. We hugged tenderly, awkwardly.

‘Don’t worry,’ I said. ‘I’ll be back in a couple of weeks.’

Moreover, there were two blond women drinking Campari at a small table in the far corner of the taproom. I raised my eyebrows; you consented; they seemed happy enough to be chatted to, and so the four of us sat down together round the same board. They both looked about thirty years old, with that slackness in the flesh – here barely perceptible – that a woman can’t help but acquire after her second or third child; and they were dressed shabbily, although it was clear they were wearing their best clothes. The conversation went well; it was awkward, but all parties were eager to get on, and we were both happy to bring the two of them drink after drink.

Later, they were sat on the sofa of our living room; you were laid back in the armchair opposite, and there was I stood in the middle. Then the larger of the two – that is, the taller – quickly stripped naked and, leaning back on the cushions, put two fingers inside herself. I pulled her up by her right hand and hugged her close to me. She seemed tiny now; my forearm easily spanned the width of her shoulders, and she was bony – not emaciated, but quite thin. Meanwhile the



I woke up between you & your sister. FC

(When you were kids you'd sleep in the same bunk,
So you say; now she's apt to feel jealous.)

All three had fallen asleep in our clothes.

You knelt beside me and gave me my glasses.

Someone stirred and checked through his phone.

It was night-time: a rich lampblack dark. In the hallway
Streetlights fondled through the fronds of a birch.

David himself would've run out of verses

In praise of that kiss, the deep scar at your waist.
In the dark, the heel of my hand found your breastbone,
 Guessing its line by touch & the mind's eye.

Were it not for you I would've missed the snowstorm

 Blanching the path down to the weir from the railbridge,
The emptiness beyond the arbour,
 NEVILLE'S CROSS and PITY ME.



Μανασσῆς

God, who in former times heard the petitions of mere creatures, take pity on me, and have mercy on the work of your hands. My crimes are so hateful that I have lost the right even to look up and enjoy the sky: the warmth of the sun, and the gentler splendour of the heavens. They weigh me down like a yoke of solid iron, and cling to me like a spiteful shadow. My punishment is more than I can bear; forgive me, Lord. Help me to bend the knee of my heart, and tune my heart strings to your music.
Amen.

other woman had stripped herself too. I felt the weight of my joy in the back of my throat. I wanted both of them. Then the taller one knelt down and pulled down my shorts, and all could see that I was already well hard.

I picked her up and laid her back on the sofa. I knelt between her legs and, with your permission, entered her – quite forcefully, although she showed no sign of discomfort or distress. Now how can I describe the innermost texture of any woman? All I can say is, it was sweet.



CHAPTER 2

Hibernal

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Christmas Eve

Morning

DM

I'm not used to sleeping with someone else.

I lie $\frac{2}{3}$ asleep holding you stirring –

A hand round your heart, the prickle of your *mons*.

All this morning I've been thinking about

That tender morsel of lukewarmth,

While the moon & the stars wear themselves out.

The snow is quietly silting up the glasswork

When you open your eyes and paw my palm.

The flesh of your neck is like opened fruit,

And your arms around my waist hurt.

Here is your tongue, and here is your navel;

These are your hands & this is your side.

HR

I remember the first real girlfriend I had,

Blue eyes & a scholar's stammer.

She was an atheist; she was the only girl

I ever knew who slept more deeply than me.

I used to hold her, of a wintertime, and

Trace the sign of the cross on her brow.

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The tide turns in the river, day becomes dusk,
And you, as shy as a fox (or
My own heart), steal in
In your mother's red silk nightdress,
Fringed with fur & a hem of white satin –
A quaint match for your 15 years.

*In Praise of
Older Women,*
Julika

Fire is not quenched by the dark, but
Love, sometimes, is blunted by fear:
You have untied the cord from your waist,
Unstrung your softnesses into the dûvet,
But, for all my teenage desire, I
Could not make myself hard for you.

Auden

You pressed your face against me when we kissed,
After, I remember, and my head swam –
'Young girls should show their nightgowns
To men worthy of the name' –
The branches blackened & bare in the courtyard
Because they could not be otherwise.



Mass

God, I am your possession, the son of your workman, the son of your washer-woman, and you hold my head in your hands. All your wishes for me are just, and your wishes are always carried out. I ask you, by every name with which you have named yourself, or which you have taught to any of your creatures, or which you have revealed in your book, or which you have kept within yourself in your knowledge of the unseen: make your book into the knocking of my heart and the brightness of my eyes, and a departure for my sorrow and a release from all distress. Amen.

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CHAPTER 3

Vernal

I REMEMBER, when I was seventeen, kissing a girl in a hotel restaurant in Sorrento. It was in the early hours of the morning; apart from us and another teenage couple, the place was deserted. I remember that she was wearing her pyjamas and an elegant gold pendant and a heavy, sweet perfume. She was Italian but she was a tourist like me, a Venetian; the south is really another country. The only illumination came from the lights in the street outside. Even when one puts to one side the lack of choosiness of drunk seventeen year old males, she was superlatively beautiful. She pressed her face against me and kissed me, and I put my left hand on the bare skin of her hip. She continued to kiss me, and I moved that hand further under her pyjamas. I remember the nipple of her right breast grazed the ring finger of my left hand, the first time I had touched that part of a woman since I took my mother's milk.

An otherwise obscure philosopher wrote that one cannot step into the same river twice – because it's not the same river and it's not the same man – but I am strongly inclined towards the opposite point of view. All the molecules in my body – lips, eyes and hands – have been replaced several times since that evening in Italy, and yet these hands, in the only sense which has any practical significance, are the same hands that touched that much-missed Italian. The river is not the same thing as the water flowing through it.

Heraclitus v
Wittgenstein



Kavadias «Evα
Μαχαιρί»

I got this knife off an arab trader
In odds & ends in a stall in ALGIERS.
I remember his hoarse voice and hollow stare,
The grime staining his lips & fingers.

See that mark there. That's hand-worked sheffield steel.
Those are real rubies set into the hilt.
But every man who ever held its weight
Ended up killing someone that he loved.

A father who walked in on his young wife
With his own son gutted him in the street.
A greek sailor sawed through his boatswain's windpipe
Over a bad hand & a packet of smokes.

I keep this knife tucked into my work-belt,
Where the sunlight catches those wine-dark stones.
And I, that care for no one in this world,
Am terrified I'll only turn it on myself.

Suppose I cut myself one afternoon while removing rust with a knife. The wound runs almost the entire length of the index finger of my left hand. If it's deep enough, it will leave an impressive scar, which, though it may fade, will be with me for the rest of my life. As with every other part of my body, all the molecules in the scar will be replaced over time. But the scar itself will remain, and if, years later, I were to point to it and say that this is where I cut myself, I would be telling the truth.

I have this recurring dream about my grandmother. I am standing in the living room of her old house, and she lets herself in through the front door. Where has she been? Had she not died? ‘Yes,’ she says. ‘But I was only dead for a few months. That doesn’t count.’ (In fact, she has been dead many years, but this never occurs to me in my dream.) In life, she was not any kind of scholar, nor would she ever have become one even if she had been born into great privilege. But in my dream she utters sentences of the most dazzling sagacity, the logic of which inevitably falls apart in the morning. And the same unselfconscious kindness is there, the same quietly nurturing presence as I remember. If I try to ask her about what it feels like to be dead, she dissolves into another dream.

If we live again, will it be as a physical creature of some kind, or will it be as an intangible spirit? I am inclined to believe that any afterlife worthy of the name would have to take a corporeal and physical form, although without necessarily conforming to the physics of this present reality; indeed I have difficulty believing that an intangible existence is even possible in the first place. But, if my body is so

indispensible to my living again, how could anyone guarantee that this new body was in fact my body, and not some kind of living wetsuit that my consciousness had stretched over itself? Does this problem actually point towards the impossibility of an afterlife?

When I try to imagine an eternity worth inhabiting, my mind turns inexorably towards the resurrection appearances described in the gospels. I can think of three reasons for this. (1) My upbringing was such that I instinctively think about death and the hereafter within the thought-world of Christianity. (2) The gospels seem to answer some of the philosophical objections to an afterlife – continuity, identity, boredom, etc – in a robust fashion. (3) The accounts of Jesus' resurrection have a compelling strangeness, not unlike an etching of an impossible object, which draw in the mind's eye long after being heard.

Assume for a moment that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Did he, on Sunday morning, inhabit the same body that the soldiers had nailed to the cross on Friday lunchtime, or was he a ghost of some sort? The gospels stress the physicality of the risen Christ. In Matthew, the women cling to his feet. In John, he famously invites one of his disciples – who probably earned his nickname Thomas, a Greek speaker's mangling of the Aramaic word for twin, due to a striking physical resemblance to Jesus – to put his fingers in the five wounds of the crucifixion. Luke tackles this question quite explicitly; here Jesus declares to his apostles, *Touch me and see. A spirit does not have skin and bones as you see that I have.* But this body, however tangible, is not like any normal body. The risen Jesus walks through walls, appearing and disappearing at will, and barely stays in one locality for more than the length of a conversation. In the famous story of the road to Emmaus, he talks with two



BRIDGETOWN, a night in a gale with a girl,
The doctor I met on board, talking over
Old lost lovers and **The Last Picture Show**
With cold beef & chocolates & a rough scotch.
Darkness. I lay in her bunk
And travelled in dreams back to a garden in ROME
Where as a younger man I'd man spent one summer.
You & *Alex* were behind the bar. It was freezing,
And the snow fell through the rich blackness into our
drinks.

Ah there you were, *Isla*, with those curious clear blue eyes
And tangled soft brown hair like a river of living bronze.
The time between us is nothing at all,
Nor death and the river of forgetfulness.



۱۰۰۷

A cup of wine was offered me, and I drank it in the sweetness of my delight in you. My feet have found their furrow, my mouth its bridle. The lover has found his beloved, and Jack has his Jill. A cup of wine was offered me, because your vines were heavy with the riches therein; because whoever dips his lip into this cup tastes life itself, and whoever drinks his fill becomes immortal; and if the whole world perished, I would not. I will live by the wine of this cup forever. Alleluia.

of his followers for what must have been several hours, but they do not recognise him – except when, at the end of their journey, he breaks bread in a distinctive way, at which point he vanishes in plain sight. The risen Christ seems both to have re-entered his mortal body and, simultaneously, to have transmuted that same body into a new kind of matter.

How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? You foolish man. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies, and what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel.

I Cor 15.35-37

One other thing: the gospels emphasise the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, Luke especially. But this only rediscovers the paradox at the heart of the resurrection from another point of view. History has to do with finding similarities and differences in order to understand what happened, but, if the descriptions of the resurrection are literally true, there is nothing with which to make a comparison.

Walsh

I have no idea whether we live again. It hardly seems likely from either the scientific or philosophical point of view. But all things are possible with God, and, when I try to imagine an eternity worth inhabiting, what I see are the resurrection appearances described in the gospels.

Berryman

Matthew 19.26



CHAPTER 4

Aestival

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Blind Girl on a
Train

She's only nine tenths beautiful,
And yet we men are standing reverently around,
Watching her listening
To her tapes, and sometimes smile, belle of Coach F.

Her hair is tangled & black, like black-bryony,
Ringletting down to her seat, beneath which
A violin case
Edged with red velvet is tucked between her calves.

And those cheeks, as tender as meltwater
And as clear, that small voice purling
More rosily than mulled wine,
That six hand waist no soul has yet handled.

hand = 4 in

Shak But the light fails, lovers meet and journeys end.
She alights, to be met by her first sweetheart,
Whose head she kisses
As if the world, and not her, had gone blind:

And nothing matters more than a girl,
Of a velvety, late august early evening,
With her fingers
In the lapels of her lover's jacket.

sapien. Suspendisse eget lacinia justo, id volutpat purus. Suspendisse iaculis ornare odio sed gravida. Fusce lacinia turpis sed elit lobortis, at vulputate tortor dictum. Etiam placerat mi viverra finibus malesuada. Suspendisse euismod et libero vel mollis. Fusce euismod nibh odio, sit amet suscipit arcu convallis ac. Integer luctus velit ut elit condimentum, eget iaculis nisi placerat. Proin lacus augue, consectetur ut urna nec, cursus congue arcu. Ut id lacinia lacus. Nulla a malesuada sem. Nam ac pellentesque nisl, vitae placerat ipsum.

Integer fringilla rutrum nisi, quis consectetur purus tincidunt non. Maecenas sed placerat mauris. Etiam ullamcorper quam nec erat mattis, id accumsan ipsum fringilla. Maecenas tincidunt vulputate elit, eget dignissim orci porttitor ut. Cras risus dolor, consectetur nec consectetur sit amet, pellentesque sed lectus. Donec aliquam aliquam justo non porta. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae;

Phasellus ornare ante nec est faucibus hendrerit a porttitor nulla. Nullam eget felis sit amet massa congue tincidunt eget vel lectus. Duis consequat elit a sagittis egestas. Phasellus ut interdum tortor. Suspendisse elit mi, hendrerit nec dictum non, commodo in turpis. Vestibulum tristique porta est eget fermentum. Pellentesque libero risus, dictum sed lorem ut, sollicitudin tincidunt metus. Quisque eget justo commodo, lacinia nisl nec, ornare turpis.

Phasellus dapibus nibh a mauris ullamcorper, non blandit purus maximus. Nunc dignissim felis nec est accumsan volutpat. Donec viverra efficitur tortor, a lobortis felis ultricies non. Curabitur quis fermentum urna. Vivamus finibus condimentum magna. Curabitur at leo sit amet nibh sodales molestie. Etiam sed felis eget augue gravida pretium. Etiam libero nisl, porta ut porttitor eget, luctus ac mauris.

Proin sagittis, nisi quis convallis pulvinar, mi nisi suscipit enim, id dictum ligula purus sed dui. Pellentesque sed libero ut ipsum dictum ultricies eget ut diam. Morbi eget

turpis ut arcu fermentum condimentum. Praesent feugiat elit consectetur, porta nisl et, lobortis orci. Morbi interdum libero a sapien consectetur, vitae molestie magna vulputate. Etiam quis tincidunt dui. Nulla faucibus commodo posuere. Pellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada fames ac turpis egestas. Quisque augue nulla, volutpat quis pharetra tempus, luctus fermentum purus. Sed et sem ut purus iaculis eleifend et a lectus. In sapien ante, finibus id nibh semper, tempus tincidunt mi. Quisque dapibus eget neque at bibendum. Vestibulum quis erat libero. Sed euismod tortor non nisl tincidunt mattis.

Quisque aliquet orci nisi, eget consectetur nibh ornare ut. Phasellus congue ullamcorper sapien eu elementum. Vestibulum sed maximus eros. Maecenas tincidunt pellentesque lorem eget sollicitudin. Integer et tincidunt odio. Curabitur libero sem, accumsan ac fermentum vel, tincidunt in nisl. Suspendisse in sapien quis magna tempor euismod vitae in lacus. Quisque eget magna vulputate, molestie libero at, commodo urna. Etiam feugiat velit lacinia ipsum tempor cursus. Etiam et purus eu magna volutpat hendrerit eget massa.

Donec at tellus velit. Proin efficitur purus non tellus porta vestibulum. Fusce purus erat, accumsan sed aliquet id, interdum et arcu. Phasellus velit libero, molestie a volutpat sit amet, mollis sit amet massa. Donec nisl mi, molestie non iaculis vitae, rutrum eget odio. Vestibulum ac pellentesque arcu, ut suscipit arcu. Phasellus et turpis pulvinar est placerat maximus sit amet eu nunc. Ut varius euismod lacinia. Fusce turpis nisi, porta ultrices condimentum eu, interdum in orci. Mauris mattis dignissim porta. Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Duis eu suscipit odio, et vehicula leo. Nunc sollicitudin tristique facilisis. Pellentesque aliquam consequat mauris, in mattis nunc. Pellentesque et odio purus.

Phasellus vel quam nisl. Nulla metus mauris, volutpat et imperdiet ac, rutrum vitae enim. Donec ligula leo, posuere



I remember smoking hash by the railtracks
Dribbling down from PONTE CASALINO
With that giggly albino of a dutch girl
Who never could stay pregnant.



Propertius IV.7 A ghost is something – death does not close all –
 And a spirit seeps out, untied from its body –
 Prof Lee For I have seen *Silvia* peering over my bedhead
 Though we'd buried her ashes by the side of the road
 Leopardi Only that day – as if she'd been fished out of the fire
 And the waters of LETHE had not yet worn away her
 lips.

'How can you?' she said. 'How can you sleep?
 Aren't you forgetting those nights we shared together:
 The zip of my sundress, worn down from overuse,
 And the scent of rose oil mingled with cigarette smoke?
 We often made love under the railbridge,
 Our bodies warming the bare earth.
 Alas for all those pleasures of sweet life
 Which time & heartache blindly washed away.

'But I'll say no more about that. Water under the bridge.
 You paid me your respects in what you wrote.
 If you still want to make amends: bury your notebooks next
 to my grave,
 Plant myrtle over us both, and carve this in stone
 (Where ANIO's purling fattens thirsty orchards
 And ivory, thanks to *Hercules*, never yellows):
 Here lies gold and *Silvia*, bringing
 Glory, Father ANIO, to your banks.

'And pay attention to the entreaties of the departed.
 If word gets back from the dead, it must be worth
 knowing.
 Daylight keeps us in chains; night sets us free,
 And *Cerberus* only watches the backs of his six eyelids.
 Others may hold you for now;
 You'll be ashes yourself soon enough.
 You'll be with me, and the good earth
 Will mill each of our bones into the other's.'

Thus she spoke, and laid herself beside me,
 But when the morning came her warmth was gone.

dapibus justo non, venenatis sollicitudin purus. Quisque in faucibus elit. Vestibulum hendrerit purus et ligula porta, dapibus mollis augue dapibus. Proin eu nisi a diam ultricies congue ut molestie augue. Phasellus quis nibh sit amet est auctor bibendum ac quis orci. Vestibulum tincidunt leo a massa varius, posuere scelerisque felis tristique. Nunc tempus, dui at tristique porttitor, sapien orci faucibus felis, quis finibus dui risus venenatis diam. Etiam mollis blandit risus ac vehicula. Morbi purus purus, semper at dictum sed, tempor eget mauris. Phasellus auctor, lorem ut euismod pulvinar, libero leo placerat risus, at egestas quam justo a urna. Vestibulum rhoncus nisi sit amet ipsum cursus tempor. Curabitur rutrum fringilla lobortis.

Aenean vehicula dapibus magna, quis ultrices erat ultricies vel. Vivamus fringilla nunc lectus, a pharetra odio ullamcorper vel. Aenean ac viverra ligula. Etiam et justo feugiat, feugiat eros et, mattis nisi. Mauris at rhoncus mi. Cras eu nisi nunc. Quisque id mollis arcu. Curabitur eleifend mi vitae tortor egestas porttitor. Aenean nec scelerisque quam. Sed vestibulum, sem et condimentum auctor, nisl leo porta risus, ac efficitur ex libero nec purus. Ut augue.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK