

Always the Second Time Around

Cars again
The trails of fingers
The spit of radios
Voices
The texts and emails
Telling her what to wear
And that she was wrong to leave
Wrong to peel her life
From his desires
From the prison
Of the thing that wrote her
That controls every little thing
Even now, even here
The concrete citadel
The drunken, shattered men
The perfect lines of corridors
Life configured, let through doorways
Into uncertain games
Without obvious rules
Another night
Spilling into billboards
Impossible light, flagstone cracks
Filled with rain
Gold from streetlights
Electric signs
And blind shop windows
Shattered
The dead eyes dropped
And nothing remains but guilt
Where once I danced
Now dead, white skin
TV footage
Pictures, a myth to be punctured,
Single lights in tower blocks
Pillars of fire
In the gutters of Farringdon Road
Shattered by taxis, night buses
Minicab touts,
The pools of vomit
Hands clutched at cold stone
And crying

Smokers in hotel foyers
4am dreams
Fantasies shot for another weekend
The disappointment
The stench of old, torn seating
Sweat and stale clothes
The ghost of the Fleet river
Tracing me, erasing me
Even as I walk

The woman, half dressed
With drowning pool eyes
Leaves the car
Clutching her purse
Staggering up the steps
Drops in front of me
The driver laughing
And watching
All part of his price
She waits for the landscape to move
But it is inside her
Waiting to be moved
And the horror
The corrupting grey horror
Detonates behind the cracked cement
And holds her out
The weeds lining every step
The stained walls
Spittle on greased lips
Blood
A deafening explosion of nothing
Behind everything
The world convulsed into shape
And rocked into motion
The cars, the letters, the screaming arguments
Outside the Print Works every Friday night
The occluded lines
Mystics and writers have drawn between buildings
Patterns of meaning
Murdered women birthing a future
That never was, never is

To feel something that remains

The asphalt
And the paving stones
The taste of rain
The hum of streetlights
And the ravages of music
Unsteady coltish legs
She's telling him No
And the windows burst; one, two
Jewels ripped across oil-stained feet
As he rages
The car alarm
And the longing
And the pictures hanging above him
Bodies written in constellations
But he never guesses
Love never returns once it's given
Left a husk
Cold, jacket open, eyes turned down
I'm no longer there, a shadow
The limousines wait outside Venus
And the boys play
And believe themselves
To be
What they tell themselves they are
And the girls play up to it
Smiles plastered over photographs
Tight lines of skin
Drawn over cities conjured from mirage
The dresses, the handbags
Days shopping for shoes
And later the beaches, hotels,
Sprawling villas
Hack fantasies
Forcing each dream to be born
Into the world
To be real
Forcing each word
Into desperate pantomime
Needing something to mean something
More
And the ecstasy
Bliss
Love

Once looked for
Fades and crumbles everything else
Hanging heaven off words
Just out of reach
Spewing lightning back into the sky
The shock of skyscrapers in drizzle
Only just beyond me
But smeared with haloes
And unreachable, impossible
I find myself
Caught on the other side
Of the water,
My face staring back
From a puddle on Ludgate Hill
Luminous black sky
And perfect, deathless,
Brighter, that single-atom skin away from truth
I nevertheless have to reach down
And break it
In search of more

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