

## **thief of fire**

he is called back to earth in dreams  
time folded, reached across millennia  
lifeblood rhythm  
in telephone cables, fast data links  
the voice of every yesterday reborn  
sold, distorted and driven to lies  
a host selected  
his hands raised to feel the mask of flesh  
the silken brush of hair against skin  
a warmth of meat clogging bones  
nails, the blood fresh in his nose  
eyes penetrated by light like sulphur  
devil's eyes, the roar of engines  
dim concrete canyons wreathed in smoke  
himself before himself  
the ghost of an alien body in glass  
half lost in special offers on worthless goods  
the figure of a woman, eyes screaming back  
from his own face  
the heat of her heart coursing through veins  
he thinks of as his  
her mouth extended in speech  
but only his own words coming out  
lost in her voice

in an age of miracles, a constant stream of prophets  
worshipping paper gods  
heaven guaranteed for a small fee  
voodoo photography for heathens  
the Virgin Mary appearing in thunderstorms  
digital promises from non-existent names  
with no return address  
feverish prayers  
clockwork rhythms killing time  
he longs for the sound of heels, the flash of eyes  
a shock of recognition  
each moment clutched like sand in a desert  
and lost  
billboard and newspaper centrefold spreads  
skin like ripe fruit, glossed behind the page  
and unreachable  
mouths pursed, smeared with grease  
on the verge of smiling  
eyes trapped in one moment

glassily unbreakable  
the suggestion in static animal curves  
asking him what he would give  
how he could pawn himself  
for the paper to burst upwards into flesh  
sucking at the warmth from his body  
taking his heart  
not even his own to give

an offering of love, splayed on the paving slab  
a cup of blood spattered about it  
dried from its veins in a christening pool  
the innards hanging halfway out  
tiny sack of heart gone still  
but untested, the way of sacrifice  
dark eyes staring up at starry Heavens  
a mangle of feathers  
like a Sultan's bed for the skinny body  
wings outstretched, remembering flight  
life left like a calling card  
a secret word scrawled across the slab  
the unformed blobs of its ghost  
hanging in the air before him  
city screaming through a sulphur haze  
the distant rage of motorways  
low rumbling 3am trains  
moving nuclear waste  
in unmarked containers  
between unmarked depots  
wind booming from blocked up chimneys  
mocking reports  
of wars that never stop  
the hot burn of another skin, a cage  
room filled with the crush of breathing  
replaying the unseen moment of sacrifice  
over the howl of cats fighting for territory  
the whispering voices put away by sunlight  
crawling back in, and promising...

hidden in work clothes, eyes like glass  
like all the rest  
watching a shape, a half familiar body  
back against the tiles of the wall and head down  
eyes hidden under the rim of a hat  
lips rimed with pink fat and muttering  
words tried like a possible future

sound become solid, straight as the rails  
singing below him  
each word unheard  
one hand smothered in a white silk bag  
held across her breasts  
one finger left out and twitching  
endless trigger wire shocks  
shivering hand possessed by djinni  
his mouth aping her own, searching for a song to sing  
to banish the devil  
praying silently into silence

done what she had been told  
all her fantasies melting  
dissolving into the dumb pain  
of waking and knowing nothing has changed  
promises of her younger days  
cracked in the glass as she looked  
as she felt the eyes of others  
watching the ruins of her dreams  
in her body

staring at himself within her flesh  
over the barrier of years  
and knowing fear

led by the dream, tracing the curves of a word  
across the spilt city entrails  
cut on the slab and steaming  
waiting  
watching the devil's eyes of cars  
the stars of aircraft  
the scars of hearts, sati cries of silent martyrs  
black-eyed in bedrooms and never loved  
watching the Moon turn to blood  
and fade like a ghost, untouched by fire  
all the careless boyfriends,  
the breathless dreams she's had  
the garlands laid in empty corridors  
for people she's never seen  
all hopes crumbled to dust  
the abandoned newspaper fantasies  
whipped by wind across a side road  
stolen cars and bankrupt dreams  
their words unread in blind windscreens  
burnt seats, smashed headlamps

the tangle of a last journey  
marked across grass and uprooted benches  
crazy snakes of tyre tracks singing  
the flare of a match  
a lost star  
stench of petrol, acid anticipation  
the flame dropped, a comet-fall across inches  
and gulping in liquid  
running like bright rivers into the air  
lit the night sky as they gather to watch  
sharing a spliff and a can of lager  
waiting for the fire to hit the petrol tank  
the acrid flame blossoming into warmth  
briefly touching the coldest hearts

seeing the word he waited for  
written in the film of eyes  
circled silently round and watching...

her words pour out of him  
in her own voice  
flesh unbinding, sinew from sinew  
and tongue from tongue  
still possessed of her heat  
as he tumbles in mist from her mouth  
her heartbeat echoing  
the empty space of his body  
regretting his loss  
the warm meat embrace  
the taste of blood and piss  
the passage of life again  
rising with outspread wings above the fire  
as it slowly dies  
bright hands sinking back  
into the womb of rust and ash they have made  
he returns to the stuff of dreams...

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