

Imaginary words for real pictures.

i

Black call heart, burning out as sodium gas burns back
Fingers on the keypad, key part of the truth
The way it changes meaning like the rolling traffic river
The bends hair stench, combustion engines whispering
His words: 'it's the month you make the call'
Her face etched out in numbers across the clouds
Body dancing in the smoke, exhaust fume goddess
Tongue lolling to touch her Temple
Sales, seasonal discounts, 10 per cent off
The building cracked with light, baubles grinning
Invitations to play at bingo, to play at being real
Wreathed in dollar bills, armoured in appliances
A villa in Spain, the power to reach through invisible walls
And touch hair, bring her to him.

Blocked arteries (the fucking traffic jams again)
Pains detonate from the inside, fisting out
Fresh constellations in his eyes
Peppering the sky. Cleaners high above
In towerblocks, lights faded against his new stars
Mopping-up spilled cold coffee, flakes of Danish
Post-it notes, crumpled and carelessly thrown
At the bin, the ever growing bin
Like a bottomless well, shit spilling out
And flooding the pavement with crisp packets, Coke cans,
Flapping newspaper birds
The shopping centre a speechless stone
Touched by her tongue, and therefore holy
Surrounded by the roaring liquid maelstrom
Cars...
Cash machines...
Personal loans at incredible rates
Green lotus letters of innermost desire
Rushing through him, black sky coagulating,
Ink running thickly to earth
Her cold hand caressing his heart
And sucking away his warmth.
Illusion, buildings and clouds hung like a tapestry
Torn by headlights and gaping blank beyond...

ii

Branded. The mark of Cain. Animal ownership
(the red meat sacrifice so beloved of god)
The triptych illuminated
As cars gun engines, sweeping on
And staring.
Come together (everybody in khaki)
The pearl glare of television, ghosts upon windows
The innocent transfixed, guilty, trailing blood

'not me, guv...'
The cheap trainers, the Indian wall-hangings
Made in China khaki trousers
All the people that disappear completely
Shot through the back of the head, brains on TV
15 seconds of fame quickly over
After an 18 hour labour shift
Rubber truncheons, straw mattresses,
Spiders legs pistons chatter, magnified in roaring halls
Working for cents, cotton like cheese wire
Seen slicing across bodies, separating heads from the useful bits
Choking on sweat, dreaming Westward,
Fantasies of high cholesterol comfort
And being the one with the elsewhere workers
Juniper berries and fresh lime
And good baseline percentages
Inkwell eyes, yolk sac dreams burst
And flee out uselessly across his crumbling face
Inviting tomorrow.

iii

We've all got to go at some time, she thinks,
Shopping bags crunching to the ground
A bottle of Guinness breaking, black blood spilling out
And lapping at the loaf of economy white
Tins of beans, cat food, Brian's favourite steak
(even though Brian's been dead all these years)
Her legs giving way like folded sausages
Eyes filled with the big fuck you of Canary Wharf
One raised finger (with the skeletons of two more,
Which she does not much like either, is glad she is going,
Big brother staring down Barking Road
It's just not right.)
Ears ringing with the thousand screeched arguments
Billeted anonymously across the red brick kiss of home
Ungrateful bastard kids, a widow's pension, and the cat
Her dreams dribbling away along the A102
A busted heart
Watching Brian, pissed, go down fighting
Put a brick through the smooth black glass
Of the Anglo Nigerian restaurant, red faced and screaming,
Going down like the sack of shit that he was
Kicked in the guts and the face, with no way back
But that was love, you didn't pick what shoes
They'd all been so jealous down the Turkish baths
Of her man,
All of the businessmen's wives, the indulged daughters
Brian was a charmer, had chatted them up
She could hear the gossip pearling like steam
Pride like a new skin, a new shape to her body
Brian dreamed of Amazons hidden in the mist
On Ladies' Day, even though he must have known the truth
All cellulite and heavy folds of flab

And to be honest they always wanted a peeping Tom
Veiled but heated looks at the men's changing room door
Haunted by tales of after-dark lovemaking
In Lyle Park,
A crafty fuck in the alleys of Silvertown, caught on camera
The red eye watching
Memories of youth slithering away with the steam
Sweating, lumpy legs pushed together
Waiting for this haze in front of her eyes
To thicken.

iv

'WHERE IS MY BREAD?

One of my shopping bags is missing'
Marie Antoinette on the telly, toasting us with champagne
(or crack cocaine, anything we can't afford)
Abolishing youth, poverty, towerblocks
The order fired down the wire, screaming analogue datastream
Spat out and picked up the other end
by the unseen workers
Hidden away in a warehouse the size of Telford
Serving up goods bled from the fingers
Of Filipino seamstresses
In the hours after midnight, supermarket sweep without the audience
Just credit card numbers without faces, saving time
For the good things in life: TV, the movies, drunk in a bar again
Watching the junk and the river
Being told to just say No, tabloid pictures of rotten noses
White men dreaming of white powders
White power
The money
Spent
On entertaining
Fat men in suits
Blood pressure rump steak coronary dosage
Long legs and miniskirts upping the heart rate
One more beat on the road to heaven
And yes is the only word we want to hear
Chattering machines ruling the world
On our behalf
Driving the price of coffee into the ground
And ruining whole districts of Western Africa
DO NOT LOITER - PRIVATE PROPERTY
The ranks of hotels, private bars
Festering kitchens behind white stucco porticos
Oil money, media wealth, credit cards flashed like machine guns
Telephone booth girls curled round the bed posts
Holland Park slaves cleaning the shit from the toilet bowls
The riff of sports cars gunning wasted engines
Parading the King's Road catwalk for pret-a-porter girls
(bought off the shelf by doting parents
And sold down the finishing school production line
To oblivion)

STILL THE ORIGINAL AND BEST JAZZ LUNCH VENUE

New Orleans sweat exchanged for a five-star hotel
All rebellions crashed into Sunday supplements
Talking point titbits, noodling afternoon amusement
As prayers are muttered to the Darwin's head
Or the greenback Cyclops pyramid
Or the filthy black gold of the deserts
Burning on in Kuwait, the photograph of the dead man fleeing
The petrol revolution
(and today, another four people die on the roads)
Let them eat cake

v

The rain falls in slow motion chocolate shadows
Reflections dance across paving stones
Shrouding the skin of the earth
The mummified dead walking on CCTV
Umbrella disguises, hoods and scarves
(Graves open, mutilated wretches out for revenge
Shuffling through puddles, eyeless craters
Thirsty for cheap adverts, lottery girls, tabloid pictures)
Water hales the videotaped images
Beatifies the masses, God watching,
Knowing only what he sees, a troupe of saints
Faces stretched and pious, eyes wisdom dark
The pixelated hint of a soul
Hidden in a smile
Bible messages scratched on the walls
WE'RE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!
Beneath a pink camera, all friendly smiles, an upraised thumb
Reassurance that his every move is followed
By higher beings
All phrases ringing through his head
Speak when he spoke into the mouthpiece
Speak when you are spoken to
Walk on the left, hands out of pockets, bags off shoulders
The dizzying scent of yesterday's child
Everything so easy, laid out, pre-planned
All you had to do was follow...

Eyes blurring, seeing beyond the tapestry of shapes
Rain running fingers down his skin
His hood not up, surely something unusual
The cameras just watching, scoring him down
Cradling the mobile phone to his ear
Umbilical link across his radiation womb sky
Bathed by light emissions, microwaves
Secret FM messages
Satellite signals (scrambled)
Fed on dog shit, empty cans,
Discarded needles behind Newington Butts
Landfill material ankle deep
(the rain hissing off naked bulbs

And slithering away as steam
His heart, buried, burning bright)
All it takes is that the touch of the key
And he can send the same message live down online out again
Receive the same reply
Digitised female voice calmly chiming:
'this connection has been blocked
By the recipient'
He can almost see her looking, her smile
Knowing who it is that calls
And responding, their secret code
Flickers of communication without words
He knows what she means
Because she knows he is the one
(and it isn't it 'Billie Jean' where a black Michael Jackson
Stalks across the paving slabs
Which light up beneath his feet
A moment the cameras failed to catch
Following his trail but not his magic
Across the market at Elephant and Castle
Avoiding the cracks, as lovers should
An apocryphal tale, scratched beneath these eyes of God
By his children.)

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