

Snakes & Ladders

David Keenan

At the Church of St. Barbara
Beyond the good village
She came, she came with the Fifth Empire
Smelling of oranges
I placed my "Beginner's Guide to Bravery"
On the lip of the mountain
And planted a flag, a white flag
At the belly of the moment

Come here!
I met the King of Ethiopia
Atop a double-decker bus this morning
Bright and early
Speaking with his hands
He severed heads
Wearing the uniformed frown of Na Buachaillí Dána
A speech impediment he inherited
From a childhood trauma

Then through the open window wide
A little moth came floating through
This inebriated angel brought forth news of you
I made a wish into a 10th-century well
I made a wish into a 10th-century well
That the hunger will be nourished
Have its fill and be fed
We could step out, liberated
From the subterfuge of lead

Silly words come spilling from the spout
Dawk and dawk and take the sting of the nettle out
She spits tobacco wisps from her upper-class lower lip
While me, happy as Lazarus back from the dead
Lying on the bed, plucking the grey hairs
From his curly head

Playing Snakes and Ladders on your body
Snakes and Ladders on your body
It's becoming a hobby
God, she's listening in the lobby
As we play Snakes and Ladders on your blessed body

Placing my hand atop your breastplate
The murmur of your heart
Sends a shock through your silken skin
The sizzling surf comes rolling in
Ah, the reason for me being here
Has been buried in your garden
But I am on the mitch from the tyranny of the self
For One Night Only

And in your Medieval arms
I think of nothing except Chavez
And our Immaculate Conception
And the ritualistic nature of it all

As we play Snakes and Ladders on your body

Snakes and Ladders on your body
It's becoming a hobby
God, she's listening in the lobby
The fool for giving up the folly
And the simple act of saying sorry
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Then in a feckless, reckless act
I succumbed and wept into your chest
The moon, her face plastered in makeup
Watches a tear trickle down your nipple
The past is but a faulty memory
And there are worst things than dying a death, kid

Listen! The Gregorian chanting
Listen! You hear the ringing of the bells

If you see the King of Ethiopia
Tell him I was asking for him
I hear he's lost his faith in public transport
But he's found himself a new direction
He's down below, dressed head to toe
In ceremonial clothes, on the Garvaghy Road
Holding a sign which reads, "You can't fight the flow"
The man is hitchhiking towards heaven

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Make a wish for me
At the 10th-century well
At the 10th-century well
At the 10th-century well