Pictures On A Screen

Kae Tempest

On the second floor of the new block in the flat with the yellow door
Next to the boarded up independent record store
Bradley is awake
He's watching notches on his clock face
Just lying there, thinking, limbs like fallen buildings
Feelin' like every day he's ever lived is out to kill him
Bradley's got a good job
He works in PR
He moved south a few months back
Top whack flat, all mod cons, wall size windows
He's a Manchester boy, done good in the big smoke
Young professional, single, Tinder, and flings
Life seems simpler than it's ever been
He's doing well, he's living the dream, and he's paying the mortgage off
He doesn't know why he's not sleeping at nights
He could get up, try and walk it off
But he's got to get to work in a matter of hours
Is he awake or asleep?
He can't tell, he can't dream, he can't feel, he can't scream
Man, it's 04:18
And life's just a thing that he does
He rolls over, cold pillow, warm body
At the end of his tether, as usual, he breathes softly
He burrows down deep, and he closes his eyes
And he thinks, "Is this really what it means to be alive?"

The days go past like pictures on a screen
Sometimes I feel like my life is someone else's dream
Most days I'm dazed, walkin' 'round, I'm workin', talkin', perkin' up
But always feel I can't be certain that I've woken up at all
Is this life, will this pass?
This feeling like I'm lookin' at the world from behind glass
Even when I'm laughin' hard, or fallin' on my arse
Or half plastered before it's even dark
Or when some hard bastard barges past
When I'm passin' my targets at work
I can't shake the feelin' that life hasn't started
It's worse in the evening at parties
I'm standing apart, my heart's hard, I can't hardly be heard
Still, I'm harpin' on, barkin' out words, is this me?
Is this what I'm doin'?
I know I exist, but I don't feel a thing
I'm eclipsed, I'm elsewhere
And the worst part is, I don't think that I care

What am I gonna do to wake up?
I know it's happenin', but who's it happenin' to?
Has this happened to you?
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Has it happened to you?

I try new things, I shoot films on my phone
And I play them back when I'm alone, did that happen?

I walk around, tryna understand every sound
Tryna make my feet connect with every inch of ground
The sky flattens my cap, battens me down
Everything's in its category, packaged in self flattering girls
Battle reality, it's battle royale
Everyone is chattering, nothing is real, collect my salary
Cookin' a meal, rice and vegetables, I exercise regularly
How that I feel, visceral melody, is this all that's ahead of me?
I always thought that life would mean more to me eventually
I hate to think I'll make it to 70, potentially 75
And realise I've never been alive
Spend the rest of my days regretting, wishing I could be forgetting

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