

I Trawl the Megahertz

Prefab Sprout

I'm telling myself the story of my life
Stranger than song or fiction
We start with the joyful mysteries
Before the appearance of ether
Trying to capture the elusive
The farm where the crippled horses heal
The woods where autumn is reversed
And the longing for bliss in the arms
Of some beloved from the past
I said 'Your daddy loves you.'
I said 'Your daddy loves you very much...'
He just doesn't want to live with us anymore.'

The plane comes down behind enemy lines
And you don't speak the language
A girl takes pity on you
She is Mother Theresa walking among the poor
And her eyes have attained night vision
In an orchard, drenched in blue light
She changes your bandages and soothes you
All day her voice is balm
Then she lowers you into the sunset
Hers is the wing span of the quotidian angel
So her feet are sore from the walk
To the well of human kindness
But she gives you a name, and you grow into it
Whether a tramp of the low road or a prince
Riding through Wagnerian opera
You learn some, if not all, of the language
And these are the footsteps you follow
The tracks of impossible love

Twelve days in Paris, and I'm awaiting for life to start
In the lobby of the Hotel Charlemagne
They're hanging photographs
Of rap artists and minor royalty
All cigarettes have been air-brushed from these pictures,
Making everyone a liar
And saving no-one from their folly
As proud as Lucifer, I do nothing to hide
My kerosene dress and flint eyes
Which one steady look, are able to restore
To these images their carcinogenic threat
So what if this is largely bravado?
I have only twelve days in Paris, and I'm waiting for life to start
I'm setting out my stall behind a sheet of dark hair
And you, the hostage of crazed hormones
Will be driven to say:
'I am the next poet laureate,
And she is the cherry madonna,
And all of the summer is hers.'

At first I don't notice you
Or the colour of your hair
Or your readiness to laugh
I am tying a shoelace
Or finding the pavement fascinating

When the comet thrills the sky
Ever the dull alchemist
I have before me all the necessary elements,
It is their combination that eludes me
Forgive me, I am sleepwalking
I am jangling along to some song of the moment
Suffering it's sweetness
Luxuriating in it's feeble approximation of starlight
Meanwhile there is a real world
Trains are late, doctors are breaking bad news
But I am living in a lullaby

You might be huddled in a doorway on the make
Or just getting by, but I don't see it
You are my one shot at glory
Soon I will read in your expression
Warmth, encouragement, assent
From an acorn of interest
I will cultivate whole forests of affection
I will analyse your gestures
Like centuries of scholars
Pouring over Jesus' words
Anything that doesn't fit my narrow interpretation
I will carelessly discard
For I am careless, I'm shameless, and
'Mayday, Mayday, watch the needle leave the dial'
I am reckless, I am telling myself the story of my life

Soon, I will make you a co-conspirator
If I am dizzy I will call it rapture
If I am low I will attribute it to your absence
Noting your tidal effect upon my moods
Oblivious to the opinions of neighbours
I will bark at the moon like a dog
In short, I'm asking to be scalded
It is the onset of fever

Yesterday they took a census
Boasting, I said 'I live two doors down from joy.'
Today, bewildered and sarcastic, I phone them and ask
'Isn't it obvious? This slum is empty.'

Repeat after me: happiness is only a habit
I am listening to the face in the mirror
But I don't think I believe what she's telling me
Her words are modern, but her eyes have been weeping
In gardens and grottoes since the Middle Ages
This is the aftermath of fever
I cool the palms of my hands upon the bars
Of an imaginary iron gate
Only by an extreme act of will can I avoid
Becoming a character in a country song
'Lord, you gave me nothing, then you took it all away.'
These are the sorrowful mysteries
And I have to pay attention
In a chamber of my heart sits an accountant
He is frowning and waving red paper at me
I go to the window for air
I catch the scent of apples, I hunger for a taste
But I can't see the orchard for the rain

There are two ways of looking at this
The first is to accept that you are gone

And to light a candle at the shrine of amnesia
I could even cheat
In the subterranean world of anaesthetics
Sad white canoes are forever sailing downstream
In the early hours of the morning
'Tell the stars I'm coming, make them leave a space for me
Whether bones, or dust, or ashes...
Once among them I'll be free.'
It may make a glamorous song,
But it's a dark train of thought with too many carriages

There is, of course,
Another way of looking at this
'Your daddy loves you,' I said
'Your daddy loves you very much,
He doesn't want to live with us anymore.'
I am telling myself the story of my life

By day and night,
Fancy electronic dishes are trained on the heavens
They are listening for smudged echoes of the moment of creation
They are listening for the ghost of a chance
They may help us make sense of who we are and where we came from
And, as a compassionate side effect
Teach us that nothing is ever lost

So, I rake the sky
I listen hard
I trawl the megahertz
But the net isn't fine enough, and I miss you
A swan sailing between two continents
A ghost immune to radar

Still, my eyes are fixed upon the place I last saw you
Your signal urgent but breaking
Before you became cotton in a blizzard,
A plane coming down behind enemy lines