

Remnants

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An extract

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He who kept watch

He who kept watch,
drunk on conspiracies,
glimpsed at the edge of the wood
buckshot hares, munitions factories
and shreds of improbability.

The suspicion was set down nowhere in books
but there was a hint of certainty
and a vision,
aspirated by assumptions,
abbreviations, aspersions.

He would be merciless
and be motivated only
by the rush of risk.

Facts were nowhere to be found - or, perhaps, they were -
buried somewhere in the creases of a sofa.

All kinds of trust would last aeons.

It was the fever that had hotted everything up.
Smouldering in stairwells and in app groups.

Police officers were declared bullet-free,
investors were forced to entrench,
the president was spat upon
and a wino sang lah-di dah-di dah-di dah.

Someone wrote the word 'war'
and many, even the most inveterate gamers, perked up.
And there proved to be many varieties of reason.
The darkest had been hoped for.
It was not intended to console.
He who kept watch would know.

By the filling station there stood
- by the filling station there still stands -
every evening
in the ever-so-hot evening sun:
a fountain with ornaments,
a few oleanders,
but mostly concrete.

Day labourers get out of an old Renault,
dust each other down
as best they can,
overalls, tow hair,
the melting asphalt of their desires,
rorschach blots between their shoulder blades.
They get new ideas
out of the boot
and cool them with water
to the purring
of turtle doves, nightjars
and a chorus of dazed drug addicts.

By the filling station
on a low wall
a bloke sits smoking.

His eyes narrowing
with every drag.

The horizon is fixed
from America to Asia.

Like swallows
citizens flock
from the pump to the corner.

Not for fuel,
but for rum, scratch cards,
porn and sweets.

No one wants to see
the war that is coming,

the glass-hard theatre of politics,
the failing diplomacy, the alliances,
the peritonitis, the hysteria
of the blind victor
shooting in the air, the murder
of the word, the interests
expressed in interstellar units,
the mercenary's purse,
the aneurysm of the threatened witness,
the journalist who leaves the glossy with diarrhoea
the panic of the computer illiterate in Google Play,
the dictator's minutes,
the platforms of photoshopped reality,
the bling-blinded teenagers in the shopping centre,
the snapchat wall,
the glint of the phosphorus bomb.

No one can tell

the ammunition from the anaesthesia,
the anaesthesia from the ammunition.

This no one sees.
No one but him.
And there's me, Sandy.
But he's yet to find out.

Musk
Balsam
Sandal
Bait

His throat, his groin.
The hair on his chest.

Musk
Balsam
Leather
Myrrh

His army beckons. His duty. His tribe. His song.
His befuddle-slept army entices me.
His weapon annexes my complaint.

Musk bomb
Balsam bullet
Sandal gas
Bait grenade

Sniper, subdued but strong, his every line taut,
harnessed power on a mountain-ridge pass,
eyebrow crown.

Suddenly the sniper looks up
and the purest
optical-electric lust
of this planet is a fact.

The beauty, the beauty,
it waylays me
like a highwayman
tipping a bag of gold dust out over my head.
And the chance only lasts as long
as the twinkle just before dusk.
My war is waging, my hound pack pacing
tracing any scent, any sub-sign of his army.

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Millions of Women

I inhale

the forgotten track
with its riming beeches,

where that remaining muse is rusting
who plants this nitrogen land
with knee-socking rooibos bushes
and now fatly-swollen pumpkins

above which more truly than ever
many jupiters have been hung
wreathed in midge dances.

Here, silken-soft flash mobs appear
with lanterns from China,
and the guinea fowl's kimono reflects
in the magic blue mirrors of morning.

In wisps of loitering misty moisture
something
is materialising, big but full of secrets.

Here, too

smithereens of fresh misunderstandings abound,
distorted forms of self-portraiting
insoluble language insufficiency
aimless messages
incomprehensions as deep as ravines

and the sadness and the hope, too, sigh through the wood,
those omnipresent clichés, it's enough to make you sick.

But millions of women stand ranged along the woodland path,
all with mittens and head scarves on.

they are waiting for God, who does not come,
and the creatures of the wood have long known that,
he does not come, never comes, so why should he
today, but the ladies cling anxiously
to the timetable, because there is talk.

Talk of progress.

The air is charged with silver particles
dancing in circles
to the voice of a young manager,
and in the distance the trucks are stringing up
a necklace of red Christmas lights,
they go so beautifully with the scarves
that the ladies
have knotted around their last hope:
this year's percentages
have all been set down in tables,
because there is talk.

Talk of progress.

And they are quite right:

the panes have been shammied with alcohol,
it's freezing, and, for the next four hundred years
the little plastic windows
will not be contaminated.

But the grumbling of investors
is the backing track
to the spreadsheet.

The investors are working monomaniacally
on a new project
with figures after the decimal points.
They grab, grope, grub, gather.

They grub at their crotches,
they grub around beneath the rampant brambles
where the frost has not been able to reach.

I, too, grope at my crotch,
I grope beneath the rampant brambles
where the frost has not reached,
and notice that he is still sitting there,

he, my flight reflex,
he, whom I idolised,
he, who is engaged.

God does not know who he is.
God understands nothing of tatter tongue.

Only I
know in part the formula for his sweat
and the back and forth of his flanks.

Just for a whiff
I, too, am ranged by the woodland path
wearing red mittens and red cheeks
and I wait.

But then
the framed figures tear
themselves suddenly free from the spreadsheet
and thrust up into the heavens
like voracious choristers at the Hallelujah.

The winter solstice strews itself
over the frozen music.

The traffic congestion cannot be assessed,
but the lands can, and
numbed poets, crippled violinists
and badly-undernourished children
step out from the groaning bushes.

Their mouths
full of staves and purple-blotching
blackberries on their snow-lace dresses.

Everything of worth has been counted and listed:
specific and measurable, acceptable,
realistic, time-bound.

Every spreadsheet is a Gloria
in a hereafter
holding the emaciated and the mentally mutilated.

But we have to shout
into the megaphone
of the muzzled,

that is our task.

See the eyes in the beeches.

The hart of the kingdom of heaven, it sticks its head
through the wine hatch of the madhouse
and snuffles at
man's value and mission.

Who casts his last loaf
out of the window onto the hard fields,
who still lives for redemption?

The bread waits to be eaten.
It doesn't matter who steals it.

The programme supervisors wag their forefingers.

The good intentions sneak through the wings
but there are colleagues who say
that they have rotten teeth.

And the question is to whom that 'they'
refers.

No one knows,
Me, too, I haven't a clue.

But look,

the frost on the field
with its blue shoes on,
the triangle on the plane tree,
hear the aggregate roller mill
by the children's hospital, see the little springs,
the steam column from the cooling towers and all the long-tailed tits in it!

And smell the bright blue, brighter than the freshest sky,
clouds of lemonade with cream and vanilla,
pan flute and reed bunting,
the barn owl in the middle of the day
when exploring other motorway exits,
the plodders and the lovers of the wood,
the back road route with its asphalt floes!

Oh, the road block

prods and prompts a voice inside of me,
to lay myself down in nameless hoary verges,
in the always-gone-and-always-thereing realm of immobility,
that divine realm of which the sniper speaks,
to yield my parts to the land of which

now at my wits' end I think that this is his army,
a clump of wilted lilies and abandoned bunting nests
in the oozing of winter fertility, in the cold,
with a brittle-gauzy polyphonic ladies' choir
three octaves higher than the blackberry bush voice,
so slip-dizzily powder-snow cloudy
that even the inhabitants of the libraries
 come out of doors.

The prophecies
sing through the atmosphere, crackling
 like exhilarated batteries.

Oh, here there is no longer any gravity, here
birded sediments, earthen beaks, feather arches
in an ark that simultaneously flexes and relaxes,

because this is the woodland ride in the woodland ride,
the woodland ride in the woodland ride in the woodland ride.

No, no,

that is not my choice,

Google is forcing me to go into the woods,
Google Maps!

And while I am busy
not accepting the route,
Google Maps suggests
I take yet another route
well, it's a jumble of suggestions
and forking zelfisch white wives
and the sniper's elixir.

The controllers of spatial containment,
the committee members of the hard u-turn,
the punctuation police
and their henchmen
with their equity hair and all the moths
that come flying out of it,

 they dozed off rather autumnally, into winter
 for an eighteenth-century pee break,

and in the walled garden with the coral-red ferns
we all hear the frenzied violinists and cellists
stamping out time with their laced boots

in between the owl pellets,

because it was this winter
that the tawny owls came to us,
crescendo and vivace,

they are playing hide and seek at the costumier's workshop,
and on the farrier's roof,
and in the street where the paper and jute shop is,

dusky, misty, lanternlike,

and the nuthatches sing hallelujah Christmas carols,

and the woodcocks conceal themselves
between the wheels of the junkyard,

and now it is up to us, colleagues, to seek
the source of all sadness.

Disguised as tourists

and armed with field research method,
interview technique and recording equipment,
the colleagues visit
heaven
and talk to priests.

The priests have grown gnarled
and been replaced by imams,
by young, viviparous imams,

but it doesn't matter
because we are all
only opening

and some pray
between the spreadsheets
and are bothered
by others not washing their hands,
and sound out everyone about the spa day

- bikini or no bikini -

unknowing of the sacred river
that is unknowing of bikinis

and couldn't give a toss about them,

sacred rivers don't give a toss.

The earth evaporates my breath
into the morning.

People talk about me.

Well, okay, judgements,
scrap metal,
space debris.

As if breathing were stealing.
As if sniffing were theft.

How the planet sings
through his writing
through me.

I love
and make my way through the winter.

His writing speaks
from the melting throats
of the clearest muses:

*Man lives not for himself;
he lives
to share himself with another.*

We,
the colleagues
who seat ourselves beneath the beeches
our laptops open

and try to have a meeting
and try to forget

what tore us apart,
drink wine from Liège.

The wine is named Sadness,
it is the colour

of young onion skirts
and tastes like fire.

A text lights up
in phosphorescent plasma.



*I've been out shooting
with my friends
in the fields*

We came bearing fire
and shall leave bearing fire.

7

In the fuel of the dark

Snuffle at

the remnants
of the one.

That one doesn't give a fuck.

Delighted and kneeling in the ever
repeating he tugs at you,
and wants to do something
with game and gamer still
in the bed of the month without end.

I've stopped eating.

*I'm training myself
to stop eating*

*Prepared
I will go through chaos.*

It's the breeding season

and a swallow lies dead in the night.

It's harvest time
and no one sits under the fig tree.

The cats are thin from hunger
just as my soul is thin from hunger
for a single afternoon with him.

Only he,

sniper, who, with his serene canon
fires the beauty of a faraway mountain river
at me
from the other side of the month,

only he,
lantern light of my evenings,
dream enigma floating beneath my ceiling,

is reason to keep going
though I am swimming blind
in the fuel of the dark.

I have started
praying.

Give me.
Give me
your September bed.

Lend me.
Lend me
your unwashed singlets, your shirts,
your work trousers, your weekend trousers,
your swimming trunks and your handkerchiefs, your underpants, your pillows
and their slips, all
of your bed.

Engulf me

in your further and further away
in your further and further away
your further and further dying
vaguely-last molecules,

under the cloud
of what remains of your body.

Let me be
in the tracks
of who you want to be

Engulf me
in what is fleeting.

In what dissolves.
In the remnants.

And just as I
was thinking that last night,

he tapped
on my window

woke me
the night wind

in the beaded curtain.

He,
his saturated silhouette
of evaporating molecules,
stood man high in the room.

In the middle of the night
he was standing in my dormitorium,

as headily scented as a limerent blossom,
smouldering like the moonsick horse radish

and the arrowhead weed
rooted through his trousers.

There he was who knew no fences.
There, my hunting trophy stood proud.

I had greased my thighs
and he was well endowed
with his ghaznavi 3.

But I thought
that he muttered something.

It was hard to hear him.

Many homes
had been made into colonies,
their smell of greasy gravy and blankets driven out
by the ozone odour of circuit boards, processors
and from many an eagerly pounced-on game space
the virtual machine guns rattled,
from the tower came the sound of a badly out-of-tune mass.

It was in this din that
he whispered:

I am not a terrorist
I'm not a terrorist

What remained, that was

the oil, wild apple and marjoram
slowly smoothed by the sniper
with his warm, soft hands

into my-four-poster bed bottom.

What remained, that was

the hazing of net curtains
a gust of saffron,
perhaps propane,
and lingering still
of language a lilt
