

THIS WAY

Lise Downe

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THE VIEW FROM HERE

If not under acres of canvas and hide
then bruised and dizzy.

If not suffering what some
distortion might suggest
cracking and dividing

then the world grows older.

One attends to all of this
and one recovers
all those failures that render us into eclipse
into the meaning of meantime
high noon under hollow trees
what with
and clothed with
one short word of explanation.

All our lost mobility
obscures the silent horseshoe
the crucible, the vapour
gathering
and the hounds that pursue it
along the cliff's entanglements

out and into.

Blankets of blue-stem grasses
hover seemingly
like the horseshoe under cover of darkness.
All part of the matter
of hours that furnish
us under what roof
and which stars.

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

This isn't to say the field was ever lacking
or even apt to fade, or
that it spiralled moth-like from vine-laced hills
shivering, from what quarter it had wished

to whisper. And how we stood still.
We had temporarily confused the real
and pretended, inspecting the underside of every leaf.
Intimations of blue amid the tracery.

This lent a certain lustre to the expanse of coiled watch
springs, sent these tiny grains scattering our middle initials
eternal and amethyst the hours that lift
and radiate now like wings.

SOLITARY IN WINTER

Everything appears to shine when viewed
along the horizontal fork of a slender branch.
Inclement weather wouldn't hold a candle to those
first gleamings of gold and red.

Repeated flicking and flickering is inconsequential
in the grander scheme of things. See how
it blends easily into the long grass
and dense shrubbery.

Camouflage for a hollow.
I'll tell you one thing for free: they've kept
their secrets well, but the tremulous laughs belie
confusion with new-found changes to the shafts

and dizzying heights. No one can help
but marvel at the widespread worship, or
the habit to lunch with whispers, or
the experts who conveniently let

part of the narrative drop. It's called
"showing their sympathies." But I digress.
It's simply a matter of hours before the bare twigs
let us in on part of the historical sequence.

Promises of a subdued palette.

Coins will be tossed, and hope
– well – hope will continue to spring
as long as the trees provide some measure

to their swaying, and
and and, as long as
whatever gets scattered in the failing
light, in the forests, increases the odds

in a totally unexpected way.
Within that lost genius of chronology
there is plenty of room for interpretation
especially now when we await the advent
of the new thesaurus and its companion
what's its name.

I'm feeling tired now. Have felt tired for days.

Beginning to pale into insignificance.

A CURIOUS BATCH

The perforated spoon's first inkling
of fine icing sugar dust
keeps casting a powdered veil over the cook's
unshakable obsession for the proof of tongue and finger.
The slightest sign has failed to materialize
and yet today it boasts four stars.

I wonder if he is saying another prayer
there, collecting himself
in seclusion
sitting where scar tissue most likely forms.
You'd think a conspicuous landmark like that
would help anyone navigate any flat stretch.

Either that or be driven into a frenzy
by a bag of root vegetables
forever clamouring for the cook's attention.
He's distracted by the huge magnolia blossom
opening toward the cosmos.

Remember, he's been up all night
staring at the shelves
so his reflexes are strangely unaccountable
even to the ravenous
assembled at the tenuous intersection
of momentary and duration.

Theirs is a dream of peril and endurance
for which they make no apologies.

I, on the other hand, am awash
in the suddenness of turquoise.
Shaken, but alive.

TELLTALE SIGNS

Church bells in the middle of the night, superimposed
and attending the wee hours of morning.
One red and one green.
Long descriptions accompanied by longer silences.
If, or when, from whom, or from what they are retreating.

When things in simulacrum are equal and scary.

When almost every other faith lasts longer
than the knotting hidden in us.
When a detour is the longest point between two distances
and everything else is peripheral.
If it happens suddenly.
When it is uncannily accurate and then you inherit it.

If it glows.

Because it has a memory and seems to enjoy talking.
When it isn't a depiction, but an embodiment, and
strikes a low chord – twice.
When it strikes.

When there is only one risk at a time
it inevitably blocks the view.
One wonders if
you had to be there, straddling the river

while everything on the opposite bank hangs upside down.

If, when looking back, one is turned to stone.

If, in other words, you pick it up.

If it looks harmless but leaves you
ready to hate what is to come.

When the patterns reveal something
moments before entering the sanctuary.

When it is inexorable and inedible.

If it becomes enshrined.

If, above all, it isn't waiting
here at the furthest reaches.

If "Only," she says softly, facing
the flat land, "if
otherness is filtering through."

LOST LOTS

Marginalia, discarded, are cluttering the town square.
The scent of salt fitful, commingled, with the uncomprehending
air.

We mean to embrace every arbitrary
composition and expressive shade of green.
Believing is not seeing the rosy bloom, spare
in its scribbling but sure to note the changing depths
and barely perceptible
slowness.

An arm's reach away the face of the moon is absorbed into the river.
One remarkable bird flits and flushes among the differing
textures, its fluency and goodwill almost
more than we can bear.

It persuades the crossing over the crowd and passing parade.
How fragile the shift of emphasis. How fragile
the turn of events fall briefly, thankfully, onto the first page.
It's a short hop to the story we thought we knew, and
it's a sweltering day.

In these unsettled times, the face of the water looks like it's going to cry.

COLOPHON

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