

Life of Highs

I hear the last of the Sunday

drunks howl

As if to say,

Don't tear this weekend away.

I hear them clearing up the Bar

bored

Collecting glasses, spurning hassles

And us there dizzy from our display,

Stung by the bright red flushes of

why we dance -

Not a very modern romance

But one to cherish - hold these

hugs you held

For that's all there is to be got

In this life of highs,

And ever, forever was.

I hear the last of the Sunday

drunks howl

As if to say,

Please don't tear this weekend away.

Sacred, not Eternal

The first time I've been out
And it's not work, pub or football,
All year and the spring suits you
With your hope and your heart
And I said that civilization began
Here in Chorlton park: that 60s block
The work of ancient futurists
But never, I think, was there anyone like you
And never will there be anyone stupid
Enough to let you go again.
We lay on the grass and watched
The old lady scoot around the park
In her buggy doing 30, dog panting behind
And you lay down with all the excuses
Under the sky: chemical, emotional comedown
And I didn't even put my arm round you.
You didn't see them but blades of grass
Were waving at you while flicking Vs at me.
They had heard you reply that the essence of life
Was to make other people happy.
Ignoring this wiped out the ancients
And will be the undoing of me.

Cheapest Man in Town

By mood I join the
Sad-eyed men you
Force yourself to notice,
Who get queue-jumped
In Wetherspoons
Because they have
No table number
After they've ordered;
Have to go and find one.
I left myself to
Drink alone with the wrong copy
Of the M.E.N (jobs not property)
In the City Arms,
Tried again in the Vines
But the woman in front
Had 20 drinks writ on her napkin.
And then you call,
And it's far too late:
You have prep for Lisbon,
The 5th cheapest city in Europe,
Leaving behind, in McDonald's,
The cheapest man in town.

Doctor Hanif stuck his finger up my ass

Doctor Hanif stuck his finger up my ass

And then we both sat there smiling.

Imagine if it had been worse:

A finger up my ass and then

We'd both sat there frowning,

Me thinking: 'he's just stuck a finger up my ass

And now he's going to tell me this bad news.'

He thinking: 'I just stuck a finger up his ass

And now I've got to tell him this bad news.'

In any case, diet won't change the nodes

(An irritating indie band at the arse-end of the charts)

So there's no lifestyle shift, though

This is surely the first sign of one to come.

Doctor Hanif stuck his finger up my ass

But when it came to eating my packed lunch

(cheese every day, not good for them; like booze and coffee I've read beforefinger)

It felt like *my* hands were dirty – how must he feel?

Burgess called them the writer's curse so

Why do they get worse now I'm number-crunching all day?

Burgess had gin delivered to his house every day.

His nodes must have been massive. Did his wife

Never get a fright caressing his ass those days?

Or was he sat writing all the time? Deliberately?

Cursed and blessed and probably

Semi-pissed, eating cheese while semi-sober on coffee.

Such are the myths we create around men.

All I know today is that Doctor Hanif stuck his finger up my ass

And I smiled and thanked him and went back to work.

Day of the Dead

Bored as a blunt knife

But prickles in her stomach

As the boys pen her name

On the stone

Beneath her cold bum.

She knows the known and

The unknown is rare

And too expensive

In Milan, in November.

The warmth of the Metro

And the underground smell

Of rubber and oil

Penetrate her Inter scarf -

Console her as she

Passes over a vent,

On the way to the tram,

On the way to the tombs.

Her sister is older and

Somewhere behind sunglasses.

The flowers are too many

And smell too much.

Her grandfather's photograph

Has faded since last year,

But on the next stone

She falls in love

With an old soldier.

I Dream I'm Asleep

I dream I'm asleep in the fuel tank

Of the jeep my grandfather is about to jump from

Before it explodes.

She dreams she's asleep in the hot desert sun.

But of course she isn't. She cannot sleep.

I am tiny, by the way - probably too small to even

Attempt to unscrew the rust-glued cap.

And besides, I'm asleep.

Every whiff of gasoline from the ration-starved stomach

Of that old WWII banger must set off a

Sickly stew of body and brain overmetabolism

Within my thumb-sized, fetal frame,

Way beyond nausea.

But it's nausea I feel on waking in that drenched bed.

And I determine to go back to sleep before she does.

Of course outside it's not hot.

It's a cool and cold June, indifferent to its own rain.

Quick, Save

Such kind blue eyes.

Nice words on the checkout.

She throws him the bag

With a frowning yawn,

Knowing such small contempt

Will be forgotten by tomorrow.

His black tinged with grey,

His children in pyjamas -

Grubby with sleep and play.

Little loving daughter

Loads his cider bottles

As he pays with a wink.

Dots and Waves

The desert has waves
Like the sea.
The dotted shrub of her hair
And her private patch
Are imitated upon the
Very public hills around the city.
And you lose your sense of scale,
Of time and of space,
Your eyes de-focus and mist.
A hill for every person living here,
A dune for every thought,
Until you reach
The oblivion of the ocean
Where dolphins make the perfect circle -
Half below the waves,
Half leaping to inhale the air of earth.
And we too must leap to feel alive
Then hold our breath and wait
For life's next wet and salty kiss.

October Sun

You gripped me
And on the bus on the way back
The autumn leaves
Were dirty champagne colours for me.
Your sleepy face
This morning felt me out
And that small nose nub of yours
Sought me out for company.
No food in the flat -
Cold chips uneaten from last night,
Wasted as we had been.
Pan to see us,
My hands on you on the sofa,
Your cushion lips biting me softly.

Smudge

The only way to walk this big smudged city
Is in a daze:
On drugs or - as I was last night -
Double-crossed by love
And barely dodging traffic.
I noticed buildings I never had before:
Other mens' dreams.

I hope it rains on you today.
I hope that on your way to the station the rain
Seeps through your too-small hood
And into your blonde thatch of hair,
Smudging it.

Bedsitting Room

All those rooms
Where do they live now?
Who remembers them but us?
Who would dare move one plastic ornament
Or nightclub souvenir
Without permission from the couple-in-residence?
As you fried those hangover-busters
I would smoke and read from the paper,
Or make you laugh with nonsense.
Where is our stupidity now kept?
Too ridiculous for most bed-sits,
Our simpleness too simple for a cupboard.
When I left your eyes were shiny
Like the washing up we could have done.
I tried not to let the sag
In my hard jaw show -
All the fat you gave me
With your love was denied and taut:

Your lesson from which nothing was learnt.
Experience is the great empty church,
Memories the bed, the sitting, the room of colour.

Once Shared and Shy (for the Lads)

Goodbye all that
The ups and downs
The incredible, inimitable, professional
Fun
The private jokes
We carved in despair, joy, mediocrity
The music we sang so free-er,
That unchained melodies in
Waterfalls
Leaky radiators
Shone heat on us
Guiltless in the smoke
Unwanting but a cold one
The beautiful sound of ragged voices
Moving on a pitch, the joke, the put down
Melts on us all relaxed
Too near to write about
But instantly unforgettable
Just as the lines were throw-away
Stay with me you all
This love is not traditional

Anti-sentimental

Always will be with me nonetheless

Good luck to us all

We look lovely tonight for

One more time.

Sunshine in Manchester

Sunshine in Manchester

And it's an event.

People whistle and

Make eye contact,

Looking for mates

Or their mates.

Sunshine in Manchester

And the all-day drunks in the park

Celebrate their decision,

Whilst in the office

Us two you spurned

Spot a new blonde

And in the glare,

Make her you.