
One Exquisite Silence

A Collection of Poems

by

DW Myatt



One Exquisite Silence

These are the moments of an exquisite silence
As we lie together on your sofa, holding, pressing
Our bodies together
As I, gently, stroke your face and hair
And you kiss each finger of my hand.

There is a fire of logs to warm us,
As night descends:

There are no words to confuse,
No time, as we flow, together,
As clouds on a warm Summer's day
Beneath a dome of blue.

There is a peace, here, which fills us
As if we are the world and all the beautiful, peaceful, things
Of the world.

Nearby, your two ginger cats sleep
Secure in the warmth of their world
As we are secured while we lie,
Wordless, feeling those subtle energies
Born from no barriers:
You are me as I am you,
In such exquisite moments.

But you belong to another
And it is against my will, my dreams, desires
That I leave
To walk the lonely miles under moonlight
To where a dreary lamp lights my empty room.

This Dewy Autumnal Grass

This dewy grass reflects a warming Sun:
Small spheres to prism rays
With each slow move -
There, a clear-sea-blue
As when from beach to end-of-reef I - we together - swam
Where an ocean's island calmed
And each day a so-brief bliss
Lasts.

But it was cold, last night
With no woman to warm by love given
Received
And there was only the Owl, only the Owl, calling into blackness
Outside
And a tiredness to take me restless to those early hours
When the ageing body knows its age
And rises slowly, too slowly, to begin again
Another day
Of work.

Yet, in moments,
A certain calmness calms:
Grown, growing - uninvited, unexpected - as the warmth of this morning
Measures out six seasons since her death

While the toiling species toils
Trapped
In Time through ego;
No gentle wisdom, no empathy, there
Only a painful birthing of colourless dull abstractions.

So I sigh, one prism so briefly placed on Earth
Among some dewy grass.

One Answer

Sitting quietly in high Summer
While the river flows
Is peaceful, for an hour;
But any longer, and we who wish
Cannot wait to abstain:
We must be gone or find a goal
To satisfy such haste.

There was a man, dying from his age
As his flesh and organs failed:
He did not seem to mind this
 I've had a good innings
Except, sometimes, the pain.
He would lay, slowing breathing
And sometimes smiling in his bed
While we who waited on the living
And the dying
Cared
As our time, tiredness and allocations
Allowed.

Every two hours, on the Ward, still living bodies
Would be turned
To remove just one more soiled sheet
While the heat of Summer through half-open
Windows
Mingled with the smells
And the oozing from freshly sutured
Flesh:

But each dark moment was almost always
(If you watched)
Relieved
By the sadness or the smile
In another person's eyes.

And there was a learning
In such simple glimpses,
Shared.

Dirty Work

Weary and sleep inclined
I watched the pools of rain
Upon a roof below a corridor
White, quiet and quite empty.

A calmness of concentration came
As I aimed and made the kill, again.
There, a bleeding body
While, somewhere, trees buds were bursting
With the Spring.

I had killed, knitting in space-time
A synchronicity since it was only
One family's loss
But civilization's gain.

The choice was never hard
Since Thought can never act
And in Action without Thought
Lies a perfect bliss.

But the Dragon stayed
While only I moved on:
They - the politicians - could still cry
For they forget our memories,
The things that we did in their name.

Yet our eyes betray our loss
For we few who survived are forever

And always
Alone.

One Bench Along The Way

He was called Steve:
Or so he said when we met one very cold
Bleak October morning
In that grey-stoned Cumbrian town,
He, Northbound, while I was traveling
South.

I passed the bench where he sat on his bag
And we knew each other immediately:
The beard, the many layers of clothes,
The slightly dirty hands,
The boots, the sun-touched wearied face.

So I sat to idle away a few
Of those hours which - often more than rain -
Were an enemy
Of ours.
He offered smokes, a drink of Brandy
And I - some bread.

Warm again - for a while -
We spoke as friends unmet in some time:
He of a place nearby where a fire could be lit,
Of a shop selling cheap food,
Of recent travels
And how last Winter near Morecombe Bay
He had collapsed, from cold.
And I, I spoke of one week's work waiting somewhere, South,
Of how Summer days walking roads had tired me,
And how bin-bags are useful wrapped around the legs
At night.

It was good, cheering, to spend those hours talking
While people passed,
Some staring:
Our world the bench where we sat, the shelter of the night before
When frost broke our sleep into short and shorter spells
And left us huddled, tired,
With only a walk - or Rum or Brandy -
To warm us.

There is no Sun, here, now,
No dreams, and - the Brandy gone -
We parted, quite happy then within our wandering, homeless, world:
He, to fetch more warming spirits,
I to begin one more journey, South.

Religion is Beer

Religion and beer both provide an answer
And there is neither Destiny nor Signs as I sit
In this town's Park
Greatly worse, for drink:

Dread, debts, problems, pain - all gone
And we, he, she, they, homeless and drunk as me,
Chatter incoherently in our stupor.

Years ago religion sheltered me, a tramp,
But Doubt came bringing to an end
Those threads of Life.
So now I sit, quite happy, while beer and Benefit last
And it does not matter I have no aim, nowhere
To go:
For I am at peace, at last.

No longer the care the bore me,
No longer the pride
Since that cloudy Winter settled itself upon
My life:
No more the bright Sun
Of youth.

Yet - sometimes - a dream of warm Summer
May wake me

Shadow Game

In her every room: shadows
Cast in those moments I have never shared;
Whose the laughter, whose the hand
That gestures to leave impressions
Upon her favourite velvet dress?

Chilling - this cold of evening
Which, as my memories, makes me not wish
To stay
But cycle away, fearing what I might do.
In the dark, I sit
While a river, swollen, passes
Not gently
By.
It is my soul, this river -
Swirling, of tempest and full:
Perhaps more exertion will lay
My love to rest.

I had gone, unannounced, unexpected,
To see them kiss as they stood
Near her window.

Each false Spring is a lesson
Which Nature slowly learns
As harsh Winter in returned
When stark frost, chilling,
Creeps to crack some bursting buds:
Poems cannot change this
Just as Summer is not Summer
Without Spring -

I am Winter,

Until woken by Spring

Africa Recalled

Where, among these books that breed like flies
Are bred from a carcass in the bush,
Are the meanings which once girded our lives
And led us like supplicants
To the slaughter?
There was a special meaning, there
While bullets parted our desire
From our death
And the torrid sun lay breathing
Between the hills of mist.

It is forgotten, like the natives soon
Forgot why we the forgotten fought
Amid the mud with the flies of heat sucking
Our blood of life.
Memory, like money, fades:
Each beauty becomes dulled
Without the fulfilment
That our projected image promises
But never brings:
And our women will forever weep.

Once, words spoke but now
They speak no more
Since what was treasured is profaned
Through the profanity of use
Just as in action without thought
The wordless meaning fulfilled
And we who remained were glad
When each morning brought the news
From our body to our brains:
We are alive, still, thanks
To our gods...

How could we, as civilians, re-adjust?
Was there a meaning in clouds,
In waiting because such waiting reminds?
But there is truth in desiring desire
Which we ourselves may not

Yet always should strive to fulfil
Through the actions which endanger life
Since we have only to release our hidden self
To become that being-beyond
Which all great striving
Brings.

But
Every warrior desire breeds
Another death
While every quiet and dreary peace fulfils
From its beginnings
The sulking coward who lies in wait
Within.

So Simple

It is so simple
He heard the wanderer say
While he lay sleeping in sun
Propped up against the fence
On hill-top field:

There was the image, the sound,
Of that valley stream which years ago
Had often drawn him down from where Corner Lodge
Lay, a whole century settled, beside the bend
Not quite half way
Along the steep heather-strewn hill
And where he, his wife, their cats, enjoined some years
Of restful life
Before his selfish self dishonourably sequestered
Such happiness
Away.

Yet it was warm, this February sun,
And so he dreamed such peaceful parts of his past
Until his wanderer spoke
Again:

It is so simple to live as we can live
Settled and focused on only what we see,
On only where we can walk on one day's
Walking.

But clouds came, covering, awakening
Because warmth went
And he - aching from his half century of life - rose
To descend down
To where no one
Waited.

Yet there would be dreams, his dreams,
As he sat at night, cold, before the fire:
His dreams, never quite believed,
Of warm times when a woman would once again wait
To welcome him
Home.
And they would smile, as he - she, they - had smiled
Bound in warm wordless love.

So he sighed - well over half sad -
Because he knew now
As the calling buzzard, the grass, the trees,
The very earth around him knew
The living silent knowledge
That grew as grass grows green
In sun

First published 2010 CE
Second Edition 2011 CE

cc DW Myatt 2010 CE



This work is covered by the Creative Commons
(Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0) License
and can be freely copied and distributed, under the terms of that license.

Image Credit: High Acre, Shropshire (A Painting by Richard Moulton)
