**Picture A Vaccum**

Picture a vacuum.

An endless and unmoving blackness

Peace.

Or the absence, at least,

of terror.

Now,

see in amongst all this space,

That speck of light in the furthest corner.

Gold as a pharaohs coffin.

Follow that light with your tired eyes.

It’s been a long day, I know, but look –

Watch as it flickers

then roars into fullness.

Fills the whole frame.

Blazing a fire you can’t bear the majesty of.

Here is our Sun!

And look – see how the planets are dangled around it

and held in that intricate dance?

There is our Earth.

Our

*earth.*

It’s blueness soothes the sharp burn in your eyes,

it’s contours remind you of

love.

That soft roundness.

The comfort of ocean and landmass.

Picture the world.

Older that she ever thought that she’d get.

She looks at herself as she spins.

Arms loaded with the trophies

of her most successful child.

The pylons and mines

The power plants shimmer in her still, cool breath.

Is that a smile

that plays across her lips?

Or is it a tremor of dread?

The sadness of mothers

As they watch the fate of their children

unfold.

In now.

In.

Fast.

Kaleidoscopic visions.

The colours like drugs in your belly,

churning.

Your skin pulled loose as a pup’s,

shaken

then tightened

now everything’s flashing.

The waves are magnified as they roll up

towards you

And you’re tiny as sand,

just a speck.

As you approach the surface

all of that

peace

that you felt is replaced with this furious

neverknown

passion.

You’re *feeling*.

The people. The life.

Their faces are bright in your body.

You’re *Feeling*.

You want to be close to them.

Closer.

These are your species,

Your kindred.

Where have you landed?

Uncurl yourself.

Stand up and look at your limbs.

All intact.

Clothed in the fashion.

This is a city.

Lets call her

London.

And these

are the only

times

you have known.

*It’s this what it’s come to?*

You think

*What am I to make*

*of all this?*

**Lionmouth Door Knocker**

At any given moment in the middle of a city

There’s a million epiphanies occurring

In the blurring of the world beyond the curtain

And the world within the person

There’s a quivering.

The litter in the alleyway is singing.

People meet by chance fall in love, drift apart again.

Underage drinkers walk the park and watch the dark descend.

The workers watch the clocks, fiddle with their parker pens

While the grandmothers haggle with the market men

Here, where the kids play and laugh until they fall apart

It’s kiss chase and dancing

Till it’s mistakes and darkened rooms.

Too fast too soon

too slow too long

We move around all day

but we cant

move

on

*Is anybody else awake?*

*Will it ever be day again?*

Overflowing plant pots.

Fence-posts.

Decorated door numbers.

Motorbike beneath a tarp.

Beaten up punto.

Goalposts painted on that green garage door.

There’s a rainbow on that wheelie bin.

There’s stickers in that window.

Smart flats. Rough flats.

Cant get enough cat flats,

you know, seventeen cat flaps.

Rich flats, broke flats.

New flats.

Old flats.

Luxury bespoke flats.

And this has got to be a joke flats.

Pensioners, toddlers.

Immigrants and Englishmen.

Family with six kids.

Single businesswoman.

Everybody’s here trying to make or scrape a living.

The fox freezes on the alley wall and stands still, sniffing.

Bare branches sway in the front garden.

The lionmouth door knocker flaps in the breeze.

Streetlights glint on the Beware of the Dog sign.

The beer cans and crisp packets dance with the dead leaves.

It’s 4:18 AM

At this very moment, on this very street

Seven different people in seven different flats

are wide awake.

Can’t sleep.

Of all these people in all these houses,

Only these seven are awake.

They shiver in the middle of the night

Counting their sheepish mistakes.

*Is anybody else awake?*

*Will it ever be day again?*

*Is anybody else*

*Awake?*

*Will it ever be day*

*Again?*

We start on the corner,

with our backs against the wall

next to the old phone box

where the tramp leaves his bedding.

The road runs ahead of you

Houses and flats either side

Walk down it,

go past the yard with the caravans

there behind the hedges.

**Ketamine For Breakfast**

In the house opposite:

Black gate-post

with the concrete frog squatting on top of it.

Through the hallway,

ancient wallpaper,

nicotine gold.

Up the stairs, rickety,

loaded with history.

Here in the top flat – flowers on the windowsill,

little breeze

fluttering the petals

as they stare out at the city streets.

Jemma is awake.

What woke her?

Open eyes.

Streetlight’s float slowly through broken blinds.

She watches as the light plays across the tattered carpet,

And she holds herself tight in the rooms half darkness.

*It’s cold.*

She wedges her hands underneath her armpits,

It’s 4:18.

And Jemma’s thinking

Before I was an adult, I was a

little wreck,

peddling whatever I could get

my grubby mitts on.

Ketamine for breakfast,

Bad girls for drinking with.

I gave them puppy dog eyes

for the acid on their fingertips.

Heads in the bass bin.

Lips without faces,

getting feisty,

Half baked in the bakery

eating pastries.

Desperate for a body

who could save me.

But I never really wanted

what they gave me.

Always wanted something else.

Sweating in the dole queue.

Spitting like a villain in a pantomime,

old shoes,

bad teeth.

Drinking in the rain

with my ghosts,

Sitting in the back of the class,

comatose.

Villains on my back in the dark

hold me close,

But you never held.

I did some things I swore I’d never tell.

that night you tried to kill me,

run me down with your car in the snow.

I didn’t realise

how far you would go.

Every day I’ve lived

lives in the day

I wake up in.

My dreams are all screaming and fucked

but I’m fine now.

Something remains,

it’s still pulling me.

Yeah, my future is bright

but my past’s trying to ruin me.

*Tried to change it*

*but I know,*

*If you’re good to me,*

*I will let you go.*

*Tried to fight it*

*but I’m sure*

*If you’re bad to me*

*I will like you more.*

I saw some things

when I was young

That made me

who I would become

I feel them with me

every day

Coz if you try

and run away

They run beside you

pace for pace

Trip you up

and drag your face

Through the mud

of every wasted chance

and every

bitter taste.

My heart is sprayed up

with the names

Of all my friends

who lost their way

It doesn’t change,

it all remains,

It takes your strength

and gives you shame

All I want

is someone great,

To make me

everything I aint

But the only

ones for me

Are the ones

that shouldn’t be.

Even though

I’m doing good,

I’m working hard,

the work is strong

It might be fun,

just for a while,

To go back

where my hurt is from

And rinse myself

to emptiness

And push

my body close

To anybody

that can recognise

The presence

of my ghosts.

*Tried to change it but I know*

*If you’re good to me I will let you go.*

*Tried to fight it but I’m sure*

*If you’re bad to me I will like you more.*

**Europe Is Lost**

In the basement flat by the garages

where the people dump their mattresses

Esther’s in her kitchen, making sandwiches.

The slats on her blinds are all wonky and skewed

You can see her from the street

before she moves out of view

To kick her boots off tired feet.

She wipes her forehead with her wrist

She’s just back from a double shift

Esther’s a carer,

doing nights

Behind her

on the kitchen wall

Is a black and white picture

of swallows in flight.

Her eyes are sore

her muscles ache

She cracks a beer

and swigs it

she holds it

to her thirsty lips

And necks it

till it’s finished.

It’s 4:18am again.

Her brain is full

from all she’s done that day

She knows

that she wont sleep a wink

Before the sun

is on it’s way.

She’s worried bout the world tonight.

She’s worried all the time.

She don’t know how

she’s supposed

To put it

from her mind…

Europe is lost

America lost

London is lost,

still we are clamouring victory.

All that is meaningless rules,

And we have learned nothing from history.

People are dead in their lifetimes,

Dazed in the shine of the streets.

But look how the traffic’s still moving.

The system’s too slick to stop working.

Business is good.

And there’s bands every night in the pubs,

And there’s two for one drinks in the clubs.

We scrubbed up well

We washed off the work and the stress

Now all we want’s some excess

Better yet; A night to remember

that we’ll soon forget.

All of the blood that was shed for these cities to grow,

All of the bodies that fell.

The roots that were dug from the earth

So these games could be played

I see it tonight

in the stains

on my

hands.

The buildings are screaming

I cant ask for help though,

nobody knows me,

Hostile. Worried. Lonely.

We move in our packs

and these are rights we were born to

Working and working

so we can be all that want

Then dancing the drudgery off

But even the drugs have got boring.

Well,

sex is still good

when you get it.

To sleep, to dream, to keep the dream in reach

To each a dream.

Don’t weep, don’t scream.

Just keep it in,

Keep sleeping in

What am I gonna do to wake up?

I feel the cost of it pushing my body

Like I push my hands into pockets

And softly I walk and I see it

this is all we deserve

The wrongs of our past have resurfaced

Despite all we did to

vanquish the traces

my very language is tainted

with all that we stole to replace it with this,

I am quiet

Feeling the onset of riot.

But riots are tiny though

Systems are huge,

Traffic keeps moving,

proving there’s nothing to do.

Coz it’s big business baby

and its smile is hideous.

Top-down violence

structural viciousness.

Your kids are doped up

on medical sedatives.

But don’t worry bout that, man.

Worry bout

Terrorists.

The water levels rising!

The water levels rising!

The animals -

The polarbears

The elephants are dying.

STOP CRYING START BUYING!!

But what about the oil spill?

Shh.

No one likes a party pooping spoil sport.

massacres massacres massacres/new shoes

ghettoised children murdered in daylight by those employed to protect them.

live porn streamed to your pre teens bedrooms.

Glass ceiling, no headroom.

Half a generation live beneath the breadline/oh but it’s Happy Hour on

the high street!

Friday night at last, lads,

my treat!

All went fine till that kid got glassed in the last bar, place went nuts, you can ask our Lou, it was madness, road ran red, pure claret. And about these immigrants? I cant stand them. Now, mostly, I mind my own business. But they’re only coming here to get rich.

It’s a sickness.

England!

England!

Patriotism!

And you wonder why kids want to die for religion?

It goes:

Work all your life for a pittance,

maybe you’ll make it to manager

pray for a raise

cross the beige days off on your beach babe calendar.

The Anarchists are desperate for something to smash

Scandalous pictures of glamorous rappers in fashionable magazines

who’s dating who?

politico cash in an envelope

caught sniffing lines

off a prostitutes prosthetic tits,

and its back to the house of lords with slapped wrists.

they abduct kids

and fuck the heads of dead pigs

but him in the hoodie with a couple of spliffs –

jail him,

he’s the criminal.

It’s the

BoredOfItAll Generation

the product of product placement

and manipulation,

shoot em up, brutal

duty of care,

come on! new shoes!

beautiful hair.

bullshit

saccharine

ballads

and selfies

and selfies

and selfies

here’s me outside the palace of ME!

construct a self and psyhcosis

meanwhile the people are dead in their droves

but nobody noticed

well actually

some of them noticed,

you could tell by the emoji they posted.

Sleep like a gloved hand covers our eyes

The lights are so nice and bright

and lets dream

But some of us are stuck

like stones

in a

slipstream

What am I gonna do wake up?

We are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost we are lost

wearelostwearelostwearelots

We

Are

Lost

we are lost

we are lost

And still nothing

will stop

Nothing pauses

We have ambitions

and friendships

and our courtships

to think of

Divorces to drink off the thought of

The Money

The Money

The Oil.

The planet is shaking and spoiled

Your life is a plaything, a garment to soil

The Toil

The Toil.

I cant see an ending at all.

Only

The End.

How is this something to cherish?

When the tribesmen are dead in their deserts

To make room for alien structures,

Develop

Develop

Kill What You Find if it Threatens You.

No trace of love

in the hunt

for the

bigger buck.

Here

in the land

where nobody

gives a fuck.

What am I gonna do

to wake up?

**We Die**

Across the street, above the green

In the flat with the colourful curtains

Alesha’s wrapped in her blankets

Head leant back on the wall

She’s gripping her knees.

Looking for purpose.

Shaking and nervous.

She keeps a brave face on all day long

But now, the brave face is gone.

Something in the changing seasons

Prickled in her skin all day

Sucked her back through time

And left her feeling far away.

He was in her dream.

She hasn’t dreamed of him for months.

She’s so tired when she sleeps,

she doesn’t really dream at all.

But there he was:

holding his belly

Blood on his shirt.

She heard him scream her name.

And then she saw him fall.

Alesha wipes her face

and whispers to herself

*was just a dream*

She sniffs and nods and dries her eyes

She checks the time.

Its 4:18.

 It’s a strange thing.

 Your face seems to fade with the changing seasons.

Then, for some reason, it comes back

More present than ever.

Well not your face really.

More a sense of you.

Even though I know it’s happened

It’s no more comprehensible

Than if it was an abstract thing

Someone else’s friend.

Are you asking me for something?

Is there something I should do?

It’s hard on your mother

She lost your little brother too.

But your sisters doing good.

She’s smart.

Smart like you.

She’ll finish her degree next year.

Try and find a job I s’pose.

She’s got her head screwed on right.

You don’t have to worry.

But is there something else?

I mean, if there is, I’m sorry.

I cant really think

 What you might want from me.

 I heard your voice so loud it woke me up.

 I don’t believe in ghosts.

 Works fine. Life’s good.

Ty’s nearly four now.

 Smart enough to walk round

and hear what I don’t say.

 The night it happened

Is vivid in my brain.

It wont fade.

Life is long, still.

Some things don’t change.

 Be nice to fall in love again.

But that aint gonna happen soon.

Trying to get some money saved,

Fix up the living room.

I nearly got in trouble

I got angry with my manager.

There’s this young girl who works with us

He tried to put his hands on her.

It’s such a waste.

So many idiots alive and kicking.

 Why’d it have to be the only sane man in town?

 I’m probably only saying that

coz you’re not around.

 I’m keeping my chin up.

 I don’t let it get me down.

I heard your voice so loud it woke me up

I don’t believe in ghosts.

You’re with me all the time

 I think I know you better

 Than I did when we were hanging out together.

 What’s it like where you’ve gone?

 Well I can feel it, it’s ok

 I know you cant say

 But you’ve been with me all day.

 I have to tell you

 When it happened, I couldn’t cry for ages.

 But when it hit me,

I fucking screamed like a lion in a cage.

 And look, I fasted.

 I didn’t eat a thing for like a week

 I just walked across the heath in the rain

 Spitting bars to the grass

Listening to the cars skidding past.

I thought life would get more real or something

More fast.

But it didn’t.

When I look at your son though, life’s hidden

Meanings come to the front of my vision.

And it’s weird.

The way I see it right now, it’s so strong.

 I’d never be the person I’d become if you had never gone.

Everything’s connected. Right?

Everything’s connected.

And even if I cant read it right, everything’s a message.

We die.

So that others can be born.

We age.

So that others can be young.

The point of life is live

Love if you can then pass it on.

We die so that others can be born

We age so that others can be young

The point of life is live,

Love if you can

Then pass it on.

**Whoops**

Now, who’s this staggering home?

Jabbering.

Looking like some streetsmart arrogant gnome?

Feet sticking to the kerb like javelins thrown,

Gesturing wildly,

having full blown

conversations with himself,

saying, *haven’t you grown?* to his face in the windows,

grimacing,

grappling with half a cigarette

not managing.

This is Pete.

Pete grew up on this street.

He moved away

but he’s back living at his Dad’s so he can save.

He rigs stages at live events

But every time he gets paid

he gets wasted

and wakes up with less than he made,

and he hates it,

but that’s life, right?

Fast-paced, shit-faced, low-maintenance.

And all of his mates

are kind of on the same page

it’s basic wages,

takes ages

to get through the month

then payday comes

and it’s drinks all round

outrageous behaviour,

living right now

no sense of later

pills by the pocketful,

nights last days.

And even if he never splashed out

He still couldn’t make the rent on his own place.

Face it.

It’s 4:18,

Pete’s fourteen doors from home,

His thoughts are like a pack of starving dogs,

Fighting

over

the

Last

 Bone.

 No no no no no no no. Yeah, so anyway,

what was I saying?

Fuck it mate. Hold on. I’m coming up,

wait/

Good night,

weren’t it?

Must have been

Burnt too

much on the

 good stuff,

lucky me.

I looked up,

saw my future

unravel in the lights,

Funny innit?

I’ll have that sinking feeling any minute.

But you cant win a race

less you’re running in it?

Right?

cant get a taste less you’ve taken a bite.

Man

I’m

climbing

up

the

walls,

Things are getting difficult,

it’s all

take take take

I start early,

work late.

Putting in the hours

for these drugs tokens.

Love’s a joke

till your bloods pulsing

Love is real

when you start choking

I’m double dropping

in the vast ocean

State of me, mate.

Blatantly the way I was made.

Man, I been getting on it

since back in the day.

Good place for a bad time

if you ask me,

Trust me, nothing gets past me.

Bad place for a good time,

know what I mean?

I never met no one like you,

It feels like a dream.

Woops.

Back here again.

How many times have I sworn it’s the end?

Woops.

I know *this* feeling.

Shovelling the rubbish till I’m staring at the ceiling.

Woops.

Dancing to a shit tune.

Hands in the air when it hits you.

Woops.

I’m lying in my bed

And my brain is eating my head.

I got these demons that I cant shake,

My past is a vast place

cant get away.

 Life got grim back then,

Like it does,

You know how it feels

to lose people you love?

I like talking to you like this!

you wanna come back?

Couple drinks,

something like that?

I got a gram on my nightstand,

I got an eighth of squidgy black.

I got this feeling that we’re gonna be

friends.

I got this song

I wanna play it to you.

I got this dream

I’m gonna make it happen.

I got this thing,

I wanna say it to you.

I been writing poems,

it’s a thing that I do,

would you mind if I

shared one with

you?

No. course not.

Right.

Sorry.

This time of night,

I always end up spouting

the same old shite.

Reminds me of this time I was trying to find my mind in the back of

this rave. This kid was spilling blood all over the place. And I was looking out for someone to save or be saved by and I found this paper plate. I started writing,

Man, it felt fucking great.

I knew then,

me and the pen,

We were one and the same.

But I cant take the strain of the days

I’m pretty sure I’m halfway

to insane

You’ve got such a nice face

And your eyes are like

rain

I’d try and kiss you

if I could just remember your

name.

Woops.

Back here then s’pose,

Don’t watch the state of my nose.

Woops.

My jaws gone west.

I’ve started getting pains in my chest

*Is that normal?*

Woops.

There goes my promise.

All it took was two drinks

till I got on it.

Woops.

I swear this person isn’t me.

We did have fun though,

didn’t we?

Didn’t we?

**Brews**

Above Pete’s head

as he fumbles with his key

The clouds get dark,

start brawling

wargames

ancient faces,

pushing each other around,

the sky’s changing.

A foaming storm is coming.

A howling mist,

A growling downpour.

But Pete don’t see it.

Pete’s too busy

trying to make

his key fit.

Cant.

Quite.

Get.

It.

Right.

In their rooms, Alesha,

and Esther

and Jemma

are too concerned with their own thoughts

to think about the weather.

But we see -

the clouds like furious ink

Thick liquid sinks and

whips the wind

pitch shifted

rumble, screams from a swollen grin

There’s a big storm rolling in.

**Don’t Fall In**

 We came from the four corners

We are the raw waters that course

The four horsemen will drink from the water that pours

We carry the river,

the reservoir

the residue

Rrising waves,

the sea spray,

the inevitable churn and crush

Many voices in our vapours,

we surge and gush

we were steam

in a distant heat

We moved rapid over landscapes

gathering speed

Desertland. City. Forest and beach.

Heading for the people asleep.

Ready to bleed

Unleash the torrents.

Come clean.

We carry many lessons.

Let the water teach.

But you better learn to swim

or you’ll get caught beneath.

Hard rain falling,

on all the half-hearted

half-formed

fast walking.

Half fury, half boredom.

Hard talking.

Half dead from exhaustion.

Hard pushed,

but the puddles keep forming.

Don’t fall in.

Some saw us in their tea-leaves

Some felt us in their knees

Most left it to the weathermen

to tell them there was nothing to see.

You can play dumb and ignore for so long

But we’ve been in the mountains getting strong

We’ve seen you,

filling up the sky with your fumes

Sitting in your rooms

like you’re all that ever lived

Heads down to the lives

of the others in your towns

running from the rains

like you’ve never been kissed

Look - leave

your possessions and funds

tell your friends that you’ve gone

to make peace with the things you have done.

Come dance in the deluge

Spill like the flood.

The weather-vein swings,

things will never change sing

All the money men who close their eyes

and pretend;

that this rumble

must be low planes.

So strange

Hard rain falling

on all the half hearted, half formed, fast walking

half fury, half boredom,

hard talking.

Half dead from exhaustion,

hard pushed but the

puddles keep forming.

Don’t fall in.

And they will run to the highest hill.

Consult the old books.

Ask the dead mystics for wisdom they don’t trust.

The people

will flock to the garages,

stock pile canisters

of gasoline

Tinned fish

and bandages.

count the seconds between the thunder and the lightening

Scared of every other body running round frightened.

*We cant carry on like this,* you will mutter

Staring with disgust

at the people

weeping in the gutter.

*We made no trouble*

*we played by the rules.*

*I worked double shifts*

*to get my kids through school.*

But you were so focused on your own little part,

you went ploughing on blind in the dark.

No heart.

We are not the dread storm that will end things

We’re just your playful

gale force friend

in the end times

Come to remind you

that you’re not an island

Life is much broader

than borders

but who can afford

To think over the walls of this fortress.

Of course it’s important

to provide roof and floorborads

for you and yours

and be secure in your fortunes.

but you’re more

than the three or four

you’d go to war for.

You’re part of a people that need your support

and who’s world is it?

If it belongs to the corporates,

The People are left on the doorstep.

Door-shut.

Nauseas and are tortured

by all that they lost.

Hard rain falling on all the half hearted, half formed, fast walking

half fury, half boredom, hard talking. Half dead from exhaustion, hard pushed but the puddles keep forming.

Don’t fall in.

**Pictures On A Screen**

On the second floor

of the new block

In the flat with the yellow door,

Next to the boarded up independent record store

Bradley is awake.

He’s watching notches on his clock face

Just lying there thinking.

Limbs like fallen buildings.

Feeling like every day he’s ever lived

is out to kill him.

Bradley’s got a good job; he works in PR

He moved south a few months back.

Top-whack flat

all-mod-cons.

Wall size windows.

Manchester boy

done good in the big smoke.

Young professional, single, tinder and flings

Life seems simpler

than it’s ever been

he’s doing well, he’s

Living The Dream

And he’s paying the mortgage off.

He doesn’t know why

he’s not sleeping at nights.

He could get up,

try and walk it off.

But he’s got to get to work in a matter of hours,

Is he awake or asleep?

He can’t tell,

he can’t dream,

he can’t feel,

he can’t scream,

Man,

it’s 4:18

Life’s just a thing that he does.

He rolls over, cold pillow, warm body,

At the end of his tether as usual,

he breathes softly,

He burrows down deep,

closes his eyes,

and he thinks, is *this* really what it means to be alive?

The days go past like pictures on a screen.

Sometimes I feel like my life

is someone else’s dream.

Most days I’m dazed

walking round

I’m working

talking

perking up.

But always feel I cant be certain

that I’ve woken up

at all.

Is this life?

Will this pass?

This feeling

like I’m looking at the world

from behind glass?

Even when I’m laughing hard

or falling on my arse

Or half plastered

before it’s even dark

Or when some hard bastard

barges past

When I’m passing my targets at work

I can’t shake the feeling

that life hasn’t started

it’s worse

in the evenings at parties

I’m standing apart

My heart’s hard

I can’t hardly be heard,

but I’m harping on, barking out words.

Is this me?

Is this what I’m doing?

I know I exist

but I don’t feel a thing

I’m eclipsed,

I’m elsewhere.

The worst part is

I don’t think

that I care.

What am I gonna do to

wake up?

I know it’s happening,

but who’s it happening to?

Has it happened to you?

I know it’s happening.

But who

is it happening to?

Has this happened to you?

I try new things.

I shoot films on my phone.

And play them back

when I’m alone

- Did that happen?

I walk around,

trying to understand every sound.

Trying to make my feet connect

with every inch of ground.

The sky flattens my cap,

battens me down.

Everything in it’s category.

Package and sell.

Flattering girls,

Battle reality,

It’s Battle Royale

Everyone’s chattering,

Nothing is Real.

Collect my salary.

Cooking a meal,

Rice and vegetables,

I exercise regularly

How do I feel?

Whistle a melody.

Is this

all

that’s ahead of me?

I always thought

that life

would mean more to me

eventually.

I hate to think I’ll make it to seventy,

potentially

seventy five,

And realise I’ve never been alive,

And spend the rest of my days

regretting,

Wishing I could be

forgetting.

I know it’s happening

But who’s it happening to?

Has this happened to you?

I know it’s happening

But who’s it happening to?

Has *this* happened to *you*?

**Perfect Coffee**

Just two doors down

In the first floor flat

in the old ramshackle house

with the novelty doorbell

The lights are still on.

Zoe plays her music low,

She’s got a bottle on the go,

everything’s in boxes

It’s been a

long

night

packing.

Clothes in black bin bags.

blue tack greases the paintwork.

*What the fuck is all this stuff?*

There’s the road sign stolen from Quickshag Street.

Shirts and skirts

posters, cds,

comedy coasters,

broken TV.

 Birthday card that her sister made

in the distant past

when she turned thirteen.

Hair stuff, books,

love letters she cant bin,

and outside the night

and inside the last hurrah.

Limited edition Airmax One Tens

Che Gevara Bust

Complete with his ornamental glass cigar.

For years

the landlord never fixed the shower,

the mould kept growing up the kitchen walls.

he’ll do it up nice, now

sure,

repaint it,

he’s tripled the rent,

he’s gonna get it and all.

Only got a few hours left

to get the room all packed and clean.

Zoe goes to the window

looks to the street

lights up a smoke

it’s 4:18.

 The squats we used to party in

are flats we cant afford

The dumps we did our dancing in

have all been restored

Pints are up two quid

the staff are beautiful and bored

You think it’s coming round here?

It’s falling on it’s sword.

It don’t feel like home no more

I dont speak the lingo.

Since when was this a winery?

it used to be the bingo.

I’ve walked these streets for all my life

 they know me like no other.

But the streets have changed

I no longer feel them

shudder

Alright alright, I get the gist.

whose city is this?

It doesn’t want me no more,

I’ve had a glimpse

into the future,

it stinks.

London’s a walled fort,

it’s all for the rich,

if you fall short

you fall.

You know where the door is.

Board up the broken,

do it up

sell it back

make it bespoke

it’s all out in the open,

it’s fine, man

hike the price right up

and smile with your friends

in the posh new nightclubs.

My streets have been dug up

Repaved.

New Routes for Commuters.

the landscape has changed

I’m looking for the old tags

the graffs that once meant

safe territory

but it seems

every hieroglyph get whitewashed

eventually.

And so I’m moving on. I’ve got it all to play for.

I’ll be the invader

in some other neighbourhood.

I’ll be sipping Perfect Coffee

thinking, *this is pretty good*,

While the locals grit their teeth and hum,

Another Fucking One Has Come.

All I see is

Luxury tenements

woebegone residents

Redolent resin-heads

puffing on pleasure

Everyone reckoning

something is beckoning.

Never a minute here.

Only forever.

Towering towerblocks

scaffolding rattling

The Tube is a battering ram

full of passengers

Smashing its way into town,

we are scavengers

Scrapping around in the sludge

for our sustenance

Paradise partylife.

Rubbing our shoulders

into the mould.

We do

what we’re told.

We’re Sisyphus pushing his boulder

The kids are alright.

But the kids’ll get older.

**Grubby**

Up the stairs; chip-fat grey and London green with damp,

On the fifth floor, where the wind grips your jaw

And holds you in its clamp

There’s a red door, bordered by mottled glass

And inside

A lighted lamp.

Pious lives here.

Pious is tired but cant sleep, she twitches, wired.

She lies beside a sleeping body, a girl she barely knows.

She met her in the pub.

And it went the way it goes.

The girls name is Rose,

But Pious is lovesick for her Thorn.

She left her in the summer,

And since then, Pious cant get warm.

She’s carried her, stuck in her side, since the day that she was born

She dreamed of her and knew her shape

Long before she saw her form.

It’s 4:18, and Pious

has been staring at the blinds for hours

She tells herself it’s all her fault.

She doesn’t love.

She just devours.

Can’t sleep.

So much to do.

I’m trying to get closer to you

And you’re

so far away.

I’m trying to get hold of what’s true.

And what’s true

isn’t true

when it’s day.

Tell me, how can I sleep?

got so much to do.

I’m trying to get closer to you.

And you’re so

far away.

All that I say and I do

Are things

that you do

and you say.

How come I’m becoming the one

that I’m running from,

hunted by?

Slurring my words in the pub

Feeing nervous

and over excited

Arms round the waist

of a girl who might make it alright

for a night

yeah she tears me to pieces.

I lie beside her,

awake

while she sleeps

And I feel much closer

to you

than I felt

When you were still here.

Spill beer ‘till you reappear.

I’m thinking of

you.

And the things

you do to me.

I’m thinking of

you.

And the things

You

do

to

me

 Pain in my liver.

Ok.

Shame. So much shame

can’t bear my frame

 Can’t bear your name.

 OK.

 Can’t bear this game.

 Let’s play.

 New rules.

 Old rituals.

Guilt trip.

Heartstrings snap

Want to, cant go back.

 Too Much.

 Not

Enough.

I cant get your claws out my guts.

I’m thinking of you. And the things you do to me.

I’m thinking of you. And the things

You

*do*

to

me

This is my head

GETOUTOFIT

You didn’t want it

How come you’re still hanging around in it?

This is my body LETGOOFIT

You didn’t want it.

How come you’re still fucking controlling it?

This is my night get lost in it.

This is my bridge stop crossing it.

This is my face,

stop smiling.

This is my space.

You been gone

so long

How come I still find you

hiding.

Fighting me.

I’m fighting

my darkest parts.

I’m frightened.

Nightmares.

Tighten

my hands

round my own throat

You’re the snake charmer

and I’m the old rope.

No hope.

Just go now

please,

just leave.

You’re still in the air that I breathe.

I’m stranded.

Arms outstretched for a body

Any body

here’s a body

But I wake up

and I cant stand ‘em.

I feel so grubby.

Don’t want cant stop just love me

Breath like a cigarette stubbed in the gutter

Come close,

no wait

don’t touch me.

Ugly.

Push and pull phonecall beep beep looking through names for the one that feels most dangerous.

I cant believe you’re in love again.

I cant open my heart to anybody but

strangers.

I’m thinking of you.

And the things you do to me.

**Breaks**

So, here is our moment.

Frozen.

We’ve seen our seven,

unmoving in lonely homes.

It’s been 4.18

and dawn’s still

hours off yet

my god and they are cold and listless

not quite sure that they exist

here in this moment

slow and viscous

lips haunted by the ghosts of kisses.

There is the endless saturation of the days

and here they are

there is nothing moving but their breath.

But watch now,

as the breaking storm outside

brings this moment into action.

The sky cracks into a wild-mouthed grin

and unleashes all the water that it carries,

vapour grown heavy

from every distant puddle,

every lapping wave tip,

every churning river

contributing to this

rain.

Pete on his doorstep looks up, mouth agape.

Drops his key in shock and laughs a howling ancient laugh.

The lightening charges through them,

rips the sky and startles every roof in stark relief

and they see their city

new.

Esther hears herself shout a strange bark into the silence of her kitchen.

Jemma sits bolt upright in bed, wide eyed and she stares at the rain

as it smashed itself against her window

Zoe puts her boxes down

Bradley reaches for his dressing gown.

See it from above.

Seven doors to seven flats open at the same time

and light the raining pavement.

Seven broken hearts

Seven empty faces

Heading out of doors,

Here’s our seven perfect strangers.

And they see each other.

Strangely dressed, one shoe and one slipper, socks falling off, smiling,

gathering slowly, tentatively in the middle of the road.

shielding their eyes at first,

but then

tipping their necks back, unhunching their shoulders,

Opening their bodies up to

the storm

And their hair is flattened against their heads

or puffed up madly outwards

And their hands

slip off their chins and cheeks

as they clutch their faces,

open mouthed

*Amazing!* They shout

*You seen it?!* They shout

As they walk like children into the eye of a game

and band close, close

Shocked and laughing,

Soaked to the skin

**Tunnel Vision**

Indigenous apocalypse

decimated forests.

The winter of our discontent’s

upon us.

Desolate apostles

slurping strongbow at the crossroads

We are nothing but an eating mouth

Oesophagus colossal

Will not stop until we’ve beaten down

The planet into pellets

Before the interstellar mission to inflict more terror.

It’s killing me it’s killing me

It’s filling me

I’m vomiting

it’s still in me.

Everything is fine really, silly me.

Poor kids shot dead

Poor kids locked up

Poor kids saying

*this is the future you left us?*

Stocked up, lunchmeat

Processed punch from an unclean fat cat

Tasty tasty poison.

Carcinogenic

diabetic

asthmatic

 epileptic

Post traumatic bi polar and disaffected

Atomised

Thinking we’re engaged

when we’re pacified

Staring at the screen so

we don’t have to see the planet die.

What we gonna do to wake up?

We sleep so deep

It don’t matter how they shake us.

If we cant face it, we cant escape it

 But tonight, the storms come.

She’s screaming, she’s screaming.

 The drones

Turned her beautiful boy into a pile of bones

No body to bury

Nobody is home

Running from war

The boats full

The boats sinking

a mile off shore.

No beds in the hospitals

Our minds are against us

Imagine your daughter was gunned down, defenceless

On her way to school, there’d be uproar

But she’s collateral damage.

It doesn’t matter.

If our kids are fine

That’s enough for us

You cant love into a vacuum

There’s got to be a limit.

Welcome to the biggest crime that’s ever been committed

You think you and I are different kinds?

You’re caught up in specifics.

You and I apart are easier to limit

The illusions so complete

its impossible to bring it into focus

Cinematic stock footage:

People are locusts

Uniformed men keep unleashing explosives.

What we gonna do to

wake up?

We sleep so deep

it don’t matter how they shake us.

If we cant face it

we cant escape it.

But tonight the storms come.

Tunnel vision

tunnel vision

Work drinks. Heartbreak.

Cant face the past, the past’s a dark place.

Cant sleep.

Cant wake.

Sitting in our boxes

Notching up our victories

as other people’s losses.

Another day another chance to turn your face away from pain

Lets get a take away

Meet me in the pub a little later, say the same things as ever

Life’s a waiting game

When we gonna see that life is happening?

And that every single body

bleeding on its knees is an abomination?

And every natural being is making communication.

We’re just sparks,

tiny parts

of a bigger constellation.

Miniscule molecules

that make up one body

The tragedy and pain

of a person that you’ve never met

Is present your nightmares,

In your pull towards

Despair

The sickness of the culture

and the sickness in our hearts

Is a sickness that’s inflicted

by the distance

that we share.

It was our bombs that started this war.

It rages at distance,

So we dismiss all its victims as strangers

But they’re parents and children

made dogs by the danger,

Existence is Futile so we don’t engage.

It was our boats that sailed

Killed stole and made frail

it was our boots that stamped

it was our courts that jailed

and it was our fucking banks that got bailed.

It was us who turned bleakly away,

looked back down at our nails and our wedding plans

in the face of a full force gale

we said *its not up to us to make this place a better land.*

*It’s not up to us to make this place*

 *a better land*

Justice

Justice

Recompense

Humility

Trust is

trust is something we will never see

Till Love is unconditional

The myth of the individual

Has left us disconnected lost

and pitiful.

I’m out in the rain

it’s a cold night in London

Screaming at my loved ones

to wake up and love more.

Pleading with my loved ones to

wake up

And love more.