

the story so far

Part1

The promise of rain breaks across the face of a cool, light morning. he rises, ablutes, pulls his knickers on in a twist and answers the door like this.

From the shore rises the sonorous clatter of rope against mast, morning dogs barking, and the same smells that permeate his memories of childhood.

He writes an email, thumbs a manuscript, opens the mail and throws it in the bin.

He lights the day's first cigar.

Catherine is speechless as she looks to the floor where her purse has fallen.

Where her coins are scattering to the four corners.

She knows that she's invisible as she gets to her knees to collect the fleeing.

Until her hand meet the stranger's in pursuit of one of low denomination.

He hands her in silence the small cluster of change in his palm.

And she thanks him inaudibly, rises, and runs away.

Beneath the girl's sobbing the murmur of world music can be heard - some jungle drums he thinks.

He thinks of savages eating themselves in the forest.

The rhythm of her convulsing breast has become the deep salt ocean she floats upon, her tongue hangs bloated in its waterless sea of sand, her thoughts go through iterations, refining her self-disgust into long-sharp needles that scrape down to bone.

Outside the humidity portends a storm coming.

Outside the car drivers go wild, mounting curbs and flinging swearwords from rolled-down windows, the sweat pouring in sheets off them.

The noise won't let up at all but for three or so or the early hours when a modest semblance of calm descends.

And Julio, who stands at his balcony overlooking the city,

Who has lived here fourteen years,

Is overtaken by the feeling he still sometimes finds, that he can't comprehend for a second this morass he's lost in.

He breaths out. Deeply.

The lights quiver.

His hands descend to his full belly, undo the bottom button.

Catherine feels ancient but knows there's another age to live as he catches up to her, hugs her hard, As a long lost friend would.

I got these too.

And that could've been what they were, not strangers.

At all.

He returns the lot to her.

And she says,

Hasn't it been a while hasn't it?

From now to then arches a single thin span that trembles in the slightest of winds.

That the rain slicks off, ice exercises its cracks, sun heats to expansion, always needs repairing.

The chasm beneath is deep, and there is far to fall

And at the bottom John lets slip a secret

Then binds him to it - let not this graft come unstitched.

He paces back and forth beside mockery of a creek-bed. Could have been dry 10,000 years,

He says.

And what of it?

It's been a long, long time since I've had a partner in crime,

He says,

A very long time.

And up above the wind, it whips at the slender span, knocks insects from flight, it keeps the spirits bound tight to the land.

Not a soul has stirred here since the last caravan floundered, left a high tide-mark some few miles west. God, in charge of only scrawny beast and element, whips stone and rock, remnants of a well-forgotten ocean, into bizarre formations - perfect spheres, pedestals and stacks, arches, eyes of needles.

Soon though here will stretch electromagnetic fingers, communications that'll out-survive man, and the mundane and the miserable will mix with all this glory.

A tall-eared beast scratches backwards into the ground, accustomed to getting out of the wind. And in its pupil hunger rears, lack of water, carrion-lovers screech, the dying embers of cigar chimed along by the ocean-shore song.

the tall-eared beast hold in its eye everything - the day breaking late in the cliffs shadow, the boy who still wears to bed his ex's underwear, the crying of two strangers reunited at last.

He hits send and instantly regrets it.

There's duct tape in the drawer

There is a heavy salt in the air that corrodes everything it finds.

There is the mail in the bin

There is a hook in the beam.

And a chair can be pulled beneath...

Part 2

And a chair can be pulled underneath, kicked away.

He hates nostalgic glances by the way.

Julio, prince of men, stands naked,

squinting

until the city becomes smeared halos.

He wishes for a grate to burn a little fire in.

But that's the least of his wishes.

He longs for the ocean, but really, honestly, return is the last thing on his mind.

And a whiskey

A gin

The imagined fire starts roaring.

The shapes of the nightscape, illuminations before him,
sparkle like in the movies.

A sip of rum and lemon

He picks up the telephone to call,

while with his other hand pours

another stiff drink.

Hello, he says, Good morning, It's morning there, right?

Are you OK? He says, Really?

A Pause.

OK then, well, when you want to. OK?

With the TV muted, with the city behind him, nostalgia for the onshore breeze, the rotten graffitied planks of a bench overlooking infinite flats, one solitary dog-walker out there, at the horizon. One man, digging for bait.

That man, with a bad back, who would be dead now, or near it perhaps, could meet up, one final

time, with a stranger he may not ever have met, a girl, perhaps, you know, who'd be surprised to meet him, who'd run, but be caught up, perhaps, who'll imagine their distance in terms of a land.

A land to be home to signals, entrancing to some, where a secret shared lost its power.

John took him down to his boulder - where it had all happened before - and he spun a yarn, true and delectable, and they embraced. And this all stopped the pacing although he can't tell in four or five years, months or days, how they'll stand, how strong the pact, how well tethered their bridge.

And a look up shows the wind's effects, but also moorings that hold fast.

And how can he know what to think?

What to expect?

But he takes the risk, leaps for the top, and on the way back down knows he wasn't a fool to have tried.

They, she and him, walk hand-in-hand again for the first time

Under the kind of sky you only get in CG -

A medley of hues and glows -

they cross the road and fail to get mown down

they talk in rhyming silence

they find their way without compass and map

to a place-less destination

And she is thinking - what's here guiding?

How do I know

What the hell I'm doing - because this sure isn't what the stars portended.

After a while he leads

To a teashop he says

Is just begging to have its cakes sampled.

You'll treat me, won't you,

With some of that change I retrieved?

It's not the kind of place she'd normally waste the time of day on.

It's full of Italians, for a start, though it's not yet the tourist season, not that there's anything wrong with them, nor anyone in particular

and it's then that she sees

the lines around his eyes...

she is running faster than she possibly can
with her whole chest burning like time-lapse acid rain
and real rain
her constant companion
is life, is health, is freedom
is every lover she wishes she'd forgotten
yet affirms her skin,
her lips that don't speak
her heart that
she doesn't believe can believe again
and shops burn past,
and other places
and old haunts where she was underage and drank imported German beer and prayed
and gradually
inured herself to never knowing intimacy
before all that changed and intimacy became that beautiful blade
and you can
have too much
of a thing
and in the end
that's all it was
a thing.

But the ground, asphalt hard, still strikes a blow
To her sole
with every footfall
and with each remembering the tangled knotted ligaments and tendons
ball up harder
But every lunge forward
brings closer the days of winter
she knows the rain
Will become snow
That melts before touching her skin
And what she know lessens by the moment,

What she feels increases
As memories add their weight
And past acquaintances shout their greeting.

...the lines around his eyes and
The ache of his heart that
Give the lie to every uttered
Carefree word

Come on then
Says Catherine, let's have a something.

And they go in...

Well, she runs for hope of that snow
Is what she runs for,
She runs
For the memories of her own voice saying
Without her bidding
"My Julio, sweet
Julio,
My Sweet."

And he?

Stands still

Awaiting what? Who?

Or shifts, restlessly, about the apartment

Whose edges now

the embers are dull

the TV blank

are being softened by a limpid dawn

Sleep won't come

Won't come yet

For a while...