

Mark Niedzwiedz

The Field Near Wiston House

I always park quietly
Mindful not to disturb the green sleep
Awaken the South Downs that for centuries
Has greeted our hurry and scurry
With a mocking yawn, as if to say
Slow your cart or motor, you have no right of way

But I am not here for the peaceful panoramic
To sit idle, or marvel at God's garden
The window is wound down to glimpse a ghost
Conjured from a dogeared photograph
A few gramophone tunes and stillness
The music from her youth, not her illness

I do not know why the field near Wiston House
Brings back to life this almond-eyed, fair skinned kid
Yet the moment I play Amapola, or Perfidia
The tall grass sways, the dark woods mellow
And this corn haired girl appears, every inch a Forties star
She is pretty as a picture, she is my dear mama

Free from pain, the frail old lady banished
She tosses her head, nimble to the dance
No nursing home or graveyard, to worry, tend
Just soda pop to hand and adolescent boys to tease
Sometimes I call her, reach out, but she is far too busy having fun
To see who sits behind the wheel, her teary, ageing son

But before the clarinet runs out of spit and polish
And ghosts take tea in some other place, or realm
I turn the key, wind up the window, be on my way
For I must join the living, for a little while longer yet
So, mama, sing to the butterflies, dance with the meadow mouse
Till we meet again tomorrow in the field near Wiston House

Red Chimney

I wonder who lives in the house
With the bright red chimney, someone must
For on cold winter mornings
Smoke bellows from the stack
And the smell of freshly baked bread
Stops me in the thaw and snap
So, I linger for a moment
And stare at this dreamy abode
Lit by the soft edges of snow clouds
And the sun a pale embroidered gold
'All is well with the world' then I say to myself
All is well in the house with the red chimney

I wonder who lives in the house
With roses around the door, someone must
For come late bloom
Peckish birds gather, flock
To taste the plum tree garden
And jam from the pantry pot
So, I wait at the kissing gate
To see who drinks the cooled barley
Who hangs the crisp, cotton sheets
Then comes a girl, to peg the sky, a threadbare carpet beat
'All is well with the world' then I say to myself
All is well in the house with roses around the door

I wonder who lives in the house
With the bright red chimney, someone must
For you were built to silence the soulless city
Smash the concrete slab, my daydream cottage
With honeysuckle borders
And thick soup made from pottage
So, if you glimpse me at the fence
Tap my shoulder, then with muddy boots we'll tread
The creaky stairs, the homely rooms
And rest our weary bones on a soft feather bed
'All is well with the world' then we'll say to ourselves
All is well in the house with the red chimney'

The Demon Bean

Coffee

Unctuous

First sip, last drip, scrumptious

No drink can comfort, the parched dry mouth

Recover from mornings, the sentient self

Quite like the demon bean

Devilishly moreish, whoreish even as I sip her wares

With cinnamon toast for company

Not love, nor utopia compares

Arabica, I shout, the cavernous yawn expectant

Smells the roast, hears the china cup

And like magic the corpse is resurrectant

Then with a thank you God and a splash of cream

I do baptize the demon bean

Coffee

The Daddy

All day protection for the crabby

The pour, the nestling in one's hand, the craft

Rituals to calm the soul, homogenise the heart

So, bump and grind that bean

Do not stint on the velvety smooth Italian

Or recoil from the thimble of treacle

If Turkish, or Greek is your Valium

No, indulge my brothers and sisters

Till all that's left is a froth moustache

To lighten the mood, tickle your whiskers

Then life you can face renewed, redeemed

And you owe it all to the demon bean