

Roger Craik

BIG DAY

Two important men in the world
are meeting today.

And for weeks before,
people have been talking around the world
about two important men in the world
meeting today.

Early morning. Coffee and the birds.
The world rolls on.

ANOTHER DATE IN PARADISE

His trim black tablet on the table.
Her wider, blue-rimmed tablet on the table.
(COVID's the third wheel.)

“GOING, GOING”

She gets her nipple caught inside her dress
(the kind with straps or bars across the front)
and so she says:
“My fucking nipple’s caught inside my dress,”
and so her friends
(the English girls all tarted up
for “snogging lads” (and grabbing cock)—
for this much I have ascertained)
all laugh like drains.
Like drains they laugh;
oh yes, they laugh like drains.

(One rather sees what Larkin means
by England going, going, gone.)

THE HORSE’S MOUTH

“Love and marriage, love and marriage,
go together like a horse and carriage.”

Of course. Just ask the horse.

MUSHROOMS

Over coffee, when I chanced to say
that I was mulling over Sylvia Plath,
you mentioned (as I rather thought you might)
her poem “Mushrooms” and went on
to tell me how, together, as a man,
your freshman class announced that they at last, at last,
had figured out just what a poem meant;
and when you asked, cajolingly, which one,
they let you know that “Mushrooms” is about
mushrooms.

At that you smiled, so sneeringly aloof,
from uninitiates, the likes of them and me,
who in the plain old way they’ve always known
of seeing things as simply what they are,
see mushrooms softly fisting through the loam,
or leaves, or needles of some forest floor.

LONELINESS IN FRESHMAN COMP

“What goes 99 bonk?”
I wrote in a text to Tom.
(Tomorrow he’s discussing humor
in English 101.)

“Go on, ask them that,” I said.
No reply. Tom’s gone dead.
“Centipede with a wooden leg,” I said.

I kill myself.
Time for a cigarette.

Of course he’ll end up having to explain
what a centipede is.
Perhaps he’ll draw one on the board
(lacking some of its legs, perforce).

By this time
the joke’s forgotten in all likelihood—

leaving Tom marooned
in doldrums of incomprehension.
Retirement cannot come too soon.
You won’t catch him dead
embarking on those Latin roots,
remote as mangoes on the moon.