A Long Weekend on the Sofa
Also by Kenny Knight

The Honicknowle Book of the Dead
A Long Weekend on the Sofa

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SAMPLER
For Tim Allen, Norman Jope and Steve Spence
SAMPLER
Chatsworth Gardens

It’s been another quiet day on the street and night has fallen for itself again. The sun has torn itself into billions of pieces and has gone back indoors and is shining through the windows at a speed quicker than anything driven by Henry Ford.

I’m sitting on the front doorstep looking out over my mum’s privet hedge at the houses on the other side of the street the street where we live with cats and dogs and goldfish.

When I open the letterbox I am blinded by brightness. I can see my sister wandering from room to room as if they were on the beach slowly getting suntanned. I can hear the wireless and the second hand clock ticking in the background. I can hear my mother talking to herself and talking to the cat and talking to the ghost sleeping in the shadows of the wall.

If I looked around the corner I would see my father
sitting in his deckchair
on Treasure Island
a monosyllabic parrot
sunbathing on his shoulder.

Like a jackdaw flying home
across the St. Budeaux Triangle
I wish I had somewhere to go.
A walk down to Shakey Bridge
to see the trains and wobble
like a big dish of jelly.
A night out with Queen Log
and Grand-daughter Grizzly
a picnic on Honicknowle Green
or a neighbour’s lawn
or just someone to call around
to see if I’m coming
out to play outer spaceships
in the dark.

I was eating my tea
when my friends
wandered off
gone into the fog
that fell so thick and suddenly.

Are they walking
in circles around
the Honicknowle Theme Park?
Are they sitting on the wall
behind Harpers Garage
or leaning
on each other’s shoulders
outside the fish and chip shop?
leaving me here
gazing at streetlights
watching moths
head-butt council property.

I walk partway around
the outside of the house
and open the back door
to quietly follow my shadow
into the promise of sunrise
as another quiet day on the street
turns on its heel and toddles off
leaving me here like a poem
all by itself in a big notebook.
Treeline

The family tree
is one tree

in the forest.
The family tree

is wild and long
and in need

of a haircut.
On the branches

of the family tree
my great grandfather

and his crew
of pirates

and jackdaws
were shipwrecked

in the desert island
resort of Las Vegas.

The one-armed bandits
and roulette wheels

made them homesick
for the seaside.

My great grandfather
was six foot seven.
Not very tall for a tree out in all weathers.

For a bit of peace and quiet he’d sit

on the family tree stump or climb into the crow’s nest
to read the autobiographies of the dead.

My great grandfather had a pirate ship

a fleet and a flock of jackdaw flags in every port.

My great grandmother planted sons and daughters in the birthday parties of the future.

The family tree is root and driftwood.

On my father’s side a monkey puzzle on my mother’s a silver birch.
A Christmas Card on the Wind

The jackdaw
wants to hotwire
the Elizabeth the Third
and go around the world
just to get away
from the Royal Wedding.

From the washing line
the jackdaw takes a flag
and a party dress
and irons out the creases.

On one side of the flag
there are two robins
sitting on the shoulders
of Robin Hood.

One day this flag
will fly over the rooftops
of sheds, shops and houses.
A flag in a world without thrones.
A flag for my hometown.

On one side of the flag
there are two robins
leaning on a garden fork
happily married or happily not.

Two robins flapping on a string.
A Christmas card on the wind.
A Short History of Children

My father was born in Nineteen Twelve
the same year as Roy Fuller,
Woody Guthrie and Lightnin’ Hopkins.
It was the year the Titanic went down.

In the village of Hatherleigh
my mother’s eyes popped open
it was Nineteen Fifteen
and the news was dark
the First World War
hadn’t yet stuck a bayonet
into a birthday cake
it was barely nine months old
and crawling all over Europe.

Over in America Muddy Waters,
Brownie McGhee and Billie Holiday
were starting out on the road
to amplification.
Back home my mother
picked up her teddy bear
and moved to the outskirts
of town and into
the Nineteen Twenties
the era of slapstick.

In Nineteen Thirty Three
Chatto and Windus published
the collected works of Wilfred Owen.
My father read about life in the trenches
while my mother went to the cinema
and marvelled at the waste of custard.
By thirty nine
the golden age of quiet
had long gone and soundtracks
filled the rooms of Hollywood House.

By Nineteen Forty Two
there were bombsites
all over the city.

Married in forty six
Monica arrived in forty seven
It was a year rich with future
post-war celebrities
Pam Ayres, Iggy Pop,
Mitch Mitchell and Warren Zevon.
George Orwell was weeks away
from starting Nineteen Eighty Four.
That year in baby boom town
it was Ry Cooder’s first Christmas.

Brand new like Nils Lofgren,
Jaco Pastorius and Jonathan Richman
I followed four years later
narrowly missing Halloween.

In Nineteen Fifty Six
Angie Wickenden was born
in Hatfield to a daughter of Tipperary.
It was a leap year the year
Walter de la Mare, A. A. Milne
and Jackson Pollock died.

Twelve months after
Winnie the Pooh went into mourning
I was in Class One at West Park Infants
trying to get to grips
with the English Language.
It was Nineteen Fifty Seven
the year Somerset House
signed Sid Vicious
and Susan started playing drums
in the family band
two years before
Christina was born
in Hanover on Christmas Day.