

SAMPLER

*A Long Weekend on the Sofa*

ALSO BY KENNY KNIGHT

The Honicknowle Book of the Dead

SAMPLER

Kenny Knight

*A Long  
Weekend  
on the Sofa*

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*For Tim Allen, Norman Jope and Steve Spence*

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## 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

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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.

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# 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.

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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.

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