

nathan thompson

**the
arboretum
towards
the
beginning**

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thompson**

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For Laura

the arboretum towards the beginning

the arboretum towards the beginning

I love that song you always sing in the arboretum

“you chased me down to the apple blossom
where the heart-shaped child offered consolation
in the form of money for cigarettes
but the machine had run out
and the juke-box had no tunes left for me
so I put on my hat and climbed ‘a tree (perhaps shrub)’
with a sign on it in a foreign language”

I suppose it was almost entertaining the sky
warming into evening
like biting an orange on a cold limb

but the child if I read it right (and who I point out now is not my own)
was getting sad about the arboretum its lack of leaves in winter

and wanting everything just so as if his turning into a sleeping lion
while the tree wasn’t getting any taller or even looking proved anything
or put distance between
the me in the song and the heart-shape and the potential cola cans
(god I love the potential cola cans every song should have them)
I have to wonder what it is he wants maybe

 it’s not like it’s always this way in the park so sorry sometimes
the tramps sit for hours without anything happening and I’m
 wondering again
this time about the near miss of the me/tree rhyme in lines 5 and 6
 which is in itself
derivative I think though I can’t remember the why and where

in verse two of the song which isn't so memorable
grandma and granddad are turning their face (collective) to the camera
displaying their own not very yellow teeth and saying how things have
changed
which is what you'd expect but their mind
will have none of it and looks the other way with an ice-cream to where
a roundabout is masquerading as a children's plaything and frogs
are not becoming extinct courtesy of a new super-virus
thankfully carried by jukeboxes

(the papers say hearts and children
are immune it's something to do with genetics and the sprawling
connections between disparate things oh is that child dead? heart-
attack-shaped and caused by complications to the parentheses

I'll need to try harder on this one I mean what are the odds
somebody asked me that this morning I didn't know quite
what to say which seemed to be the right answer
but left me defenceless in this arboretum
where it's widely believed a child's death is unavoidable

a pile of apples slumps from a market trestle

the air today is so malleable

an amanuensis for water

you could almost write Keats on it with your finger

a walk with the narrator

he said the roses wouldn't come out
in the city this year there's too much
already to be done pull up a chair
we'll talk about it

you are home and the grass is growing
between the tulips and at least
this isn't a place god comes to be bothered
except on Sundays

 even the cathedral windows
have been blown out and it is filthy with light
the fighting tarnished gargoyles are losing their teeth
and I feel like a child being told everything about love
the strange shared frankness disgust wonder
but lacking narrative until narrative is imposed

over there a girl is saying thank you to a daisy
for its simple effort not realising
its sovereign guilty secrets e.g. its flower
is a busking hat for bees and if her mother knew
she wouldn't let her talk to it

the sky is taking on a Gregorian aspect
of shared experience
 while the last crows gather their stuff

the air is cooling as they've demanded all day

solstice

collateral processed

it is a line drawing

corona surrounding a candle

witch this stick hazel

stunted forest echoes

fingers broken lichen covers the boulders

what's to check swallows

waiting granite seams

hair left behind whose footsteps

Pentecost

her loom the belittlement of silver

the old tin cans buffering communication

across a tennis court

wintering without nets coal is hibernating

like a jewelled toad

of our lady ornate as the janitor

a grounds-man measures trees by their weddings

 it seems none
have sprouted a crucifixion or were rolled by picts

some however caught in a garter and spick and span

themselves over skylines

maybe Friday or Saturday

who shining summer

owed more on the river

a child would be

catches tiny fish

benefitting from the sun

a camouflage this is all the distance

something is missing from a magician
has left his wand behind there'll be no doves

I am dipping my toe in the water
it is cool and sickly

this is not encouraging

the banks rubbed clean and grassy
somebody should be on them
openly flaunting

