

SAMPLER

A Wind-Up Collider

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Peter Dent

*A Wind-Up
Collider*

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*Here I come, the invisible man, perhaps employed
by a Great Memory to live right now. And I am driving past*

*the locked-up white church – a wooden saint is standing in there
smiling, helpless, as if they had taken away his glasses*

Tomas Tranströmer, 'December Evening 1972'
(translated by Robin Fulton)

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One

A SURROGATE DREAM

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DEWDROPS AND THE OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE

By late Autumn we were piling into our margins and looking through wardrobes for heavies: this sounds chaotic. It is. A conceit: a refusal to mourn one another's passing or, as it turned out, more. I had to wonder why people insisted on blocking the flat entrance with mountain bikes and boots. I was not disposed to going out less clad than those who'd been in regular contact with their feelings and who thought being ahead of the game meant you'd get both hot water and the soap – there wasn't much to say about the text. By removing commas you could cram more in and finish up with heaps more energy than you'd get by talking the hind leg off an energy company's infatuated answer machine. It gave me time to weep for all those ghosts that failed me in my historic prime, and yank on an extra 100% nylon layer.

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THE UNLIKELY

Adult nights draw in – and deer tread so softly, I cannot, even at this point in my life, speak of leaves or close my eyes and imagine gold. I once confided in my mother, saying I would see to everything, knowing my mind was grounded in half a dozen miracles of presence. As befits, I beware mildness like the plague. Too few of my companions made it this far, no-one hinted he'd seen it coming. Leaves spiralling to the ground. Late migrants worrying at the light and cherished reserves – I'm still on someone nameless's payroll, wondering for how long: at a certain age, labyrinths and mothers come into their own. My evening schedules beg to be rearranged.

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WHAT'S ON

Stuffed birds in cases – rainbow-coloured models from some design course sporting antique poses. A guide usually to show you the ruins. The evocative unnerving dark-framed photographs of the person you were prior to a few drinks and accompanying enlightenment, when the past was sold off as scrap and you could pick up moon shot mementoes for less than a pound. If only you'd asked nicely, they might have treated you to a warmed-up old classic say Horace – just one of the jokers that could do it backwards. This, scarily, is a live museum. Everything updated and the bushy-tailed backstory yours to keep – the old have had it, O.K., kids rule.

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You've probably seen it – a blackbird, half-awake, sitting (or rather, propping himself) on the wall, one wing extended, at a comfortable angle to the sun. Lots of things there are that don't merit a mention. I look across the road to Spar – the man outside, unhitching his dog as a girl runs past. The day already running thick with event and associated (I suppose they are?) modern myths – which, of course, I believe in, as everything and even nothing wears on. The cosmos fading. After all, it's mid-October, last night was cold – Tomasz says +1° (stress on the plus – as if we may well have been lucky?). And there's a cyclist down from the hill: more speed than he knows what to do with, at least in one kind of way, he's fine.

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TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN

Mercury, for one, could do with a pair of shades, she said, tilting her head back. Could I see where this was leading? Of course I couldn't! You know, orbits are running rings around us, she went on. I decided not to respond, but spent the next eight hours off air – not adrift and not hurrying back to base. She was all about her business: I was predictably obtuse, offering neither wise words nor glimpses of sentience – too much has crashed and burned. I can't imagine a life so realised there is nothing I'd want more, but a half-moon to look up to and beam me down.

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A POWER OF GOOD

They have recommended a book of non-specific no-go areas for controlled investigation. Of all that ails thee, think not once but again and again and be nothing if not healed – the price of poverty is pain. Life is both occasional and perfect, as your sun shines, so let it. Continuous reinvention sounds more like politics than it should and the P.M. has a shedload of explaining to do. Which leads me to an embassy I shall not name that has windows looking in too many directions: one cannot, excuse me, bare all. Many fine things there are that need to be everything or else – that they help the world go round is the theory. My suspicions are a battleground. It's so crowded one can scarcely breathe. Come all ye who.

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TO THIS DAY

It was one tactile blunder after another. He was but a part-time pioneer of the night, scavenging like a bear among bins for nigh on 3 weeks unemptied of everything he held dear and in suspension. Whilst he felt himself to be far from diminished, he wasn't one to shape a controlling narrative. Dark rain fell, and, in the manner of the unconvicted, he was never inside for acts of contrition. Falling, not something to grow on trees, was the orchard's only deception. His apples being of a distinctly mild demeanour and delight. What touched him greatly was the recognition he was the only story with a character to play up to. Till the school-bell rang, he'd be the bravest savage and every hunter's kill.

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SPELL IT YOUR WAY

Places at the top table don't come up so often you get to pick and choose. I spelled it my way with an extra 'o' – it was that arresting. Space junk is so far away, it's out of mind and I look up only when I have to, which is, essentially, when I first leave the hostelry, dreaming through my handbook of creative desire. As it stands, I rival CGI for faking up my identity and flirting with the world. The world has no idea that angelic forces are playing their part. If it does, then I'm out of a job. Abandonment is naturally what you make of it and I mightn't.

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