

Poetry Collection

Russell Jones

Open Window, Toilet Room Suicide

Is it ill instinct that grasps this one gull?
An open port is too much to resist.
He staggers across the sill in full
view, colony screeching. Is it a twist
of nature that takes his sharp foot inside?
He ponders the sink as he walks the tiles.
He takes to the toilet to check the tide:
still as clockwork. Is it vastness, the miles
of flight that make the saltwater so sweet?
The routine is tested, ancient and wise.
He leaps to the cistern, surveys the seat,
yanks the chain with his beak. He drowns the cries
outside, screeching, swirling on a throne
of wild cataracts until he is gone.

My Secrets as a God

Whoever says omnipotence is good
is as bad as his word. Truth is I've seen
too much. I've watched deserts flood,
cities tumble, women burn, I've stood
with the kind, the godly, the downright mean.

When civilisations charged into battle
I was necessary, I was there, I was the gleam
and the darkness on their mantle,
a dead man's word, hallucinatory babble,
his flash of white, his nightmare, his dark dream.

I've secrets I'm bound to keep and yet
there's nothing of you that I've not gleaned,
heard, felt. I know you, your loss, regrets,
the sting of your love, how you begged to forget
that smell, that silent sun, so changed routine.

If there's something I could pray for
I'd choose confession: that velvet screen
between us. I'd whisper the door
down, call it a miracle. And more
than anything I would ask for your forgiveness.

Crossing Over

Remember how we crossed the bay
in that little wreck we found,
five-past-midnight, after drinking
on the shingle? We rowed
to the lighthouse you said was haunted.

I forget how long it took,
what we said or didn't say.
The fear of opening a graveyard
had shrunk or evaded me

but I kept the bruises from when you fingered
my arm like a crucifix
when we headed upstairs.
Everything was silhouette
as we watched the hillsides sleep on the horizon.

Remind me: did we try to relight
the dead and search the ocean?
Did we name the shades of darkness
because of our intoxication?

We drew particles of the night into our lungs
and spirits made it through.
You switched on your torch and rotated
so that somewhere,
between worlds, we'd shine our beacons.