

Nothing Important

Richard Dawson

I am born by Caesarian section at 9:30 AM
in Princess Mary's Maternity Hospital
on the 24th May, sixty years ago today,
dangled by the ankle, smacked across the bum,
swaddled in a blanket howling like a wheel.

My big brother Iain on his tip-toes hisses 'I don't like him'.
He's Maradona, I'm Peter Beardsley, chasing a ball through the mud
followed by the kitchen window, bellowing through the fern:
'Boys! Dinner's ready!'

Dad is tuning in the telly beyond a heaving mountain of spaghetti hoops.

I am nothing
You are nothing
Nothing important
Death within a dream

Petrified on the back of a pedallo in the Balearic Sea off Alcudia
I can see the ghost of my uncle Derek waving to us from the beach,
gently drifting out of reach,
the telephone receiver swinging by its cord,
a glass of broken beer expanding on the lino.

My mam slips into the coffin
a polaroid of his sweetheart
Clutching Good-Luck Bear I peer gingerly over the side,
press my nose up to the tide,
and there behold a barracuda chewing on a chrysanthemum
and a family of clownfish hovering in the corpse's hair.

In the scullery of the cub-hut my clarinet falls
into a sack of flour - a flurry of pins
squashed into the leather handle
a crescent moon of stricken fig-wasps.

Drizzling my fingers with The Magic Sponge
Dad says 'we'll probably have to chop them off'.
He collapses like a canvas tent on the floodlit astroturf
rent with a fibula guide-rod poking a hole through his shin
There are teardrops in his moustache
charging a flute of champagne
down the aisle and out for a throw-in

A St.John ambulance careers between the sugary pillars of the wedding cake
A crystal spoon
A pewter tankard

these words inscribed upon the base:

HAPPY RETIREMENT BEST GRANDDAD IN THE WORLD

A toby jug filled to the brim with curtain hooks

A sheepskin rug discoloured with tobacco smoke

 within it's braids concealed a rank

 of plastic soldiers set to burst underfoot

Berwick in oils: a skiff on the swollen tweed

 cradling a false pearl

 a ceramic seraph

 with an ashtray for a brain

 - and I don't care about these things

Why do they remain so clear while the faces of my loved ones disappear?

 A Rington's plate

 a forking hairline seam of superglue through the Black Gate

 a digital photoframe

 frozen on an blurry orange thumb

 I remember all these things

 Old karate trophies

 I am tethered by these things

 Thimbles and pesatas

 I remember all these things

 A roll of Woolworth's price stickers

 I can see all these things but

 where have all my people gone?

 In the end it wasn't meant to be.

He was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen.

 He survived for seven days

 before he slipped away

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