

I Packed My Bag

and in it I put the things specified on their list:
dressing-gown and slippers, toothbrush and paste.
I squashed in a decent pillow and my favourite books
and snuck in a box of chocolates.

I added the opening bars of Bach's cello suite in G,
and the Vee Valley when the rhododendrons bloom.
I put in salt spray crashing off Hook Head,
and silence from the top of Sliabh na mBan.

There would be hours of waiting
and sometimes they would take my dignity,
so I put in endurance, and a smile for a stranger,
and an acre of meadow in soft rain.

Lastly, I packed water bottled at St Brigid's Well,
and an old piece of paper
on which I'd copied down: 'Our single purpose
is to magnify that Light we share between us.'

Grace Wells

DNA

My father was sprightly, quiet
never complained of ill health
rosy face, lively gait and
seventeen years older
than my mother who was a talker,
had ten children, lived in dread
of pain, it travelled around
her body like a submarine,
a metal nose that could
erupt absolutely deadly any place
from knee to jaw or big toe.
Every morning, I wake and through
my half-closed eyes,
resting on top of the duvet
I survey the early grey light
that might in certain lights be gold.
What's it going to be,
sprightly or dying?
Which one of them
which side of one of them
and how long will each bit last
today?

Martina Evans

A man comforts a woman

– words I come upon
under a post-tsunami photo
in the newspaper

and read
as a found
poem of the ages

once again updated,
given to me
as a mantra

A man comforts a woman

an assurance
that somehow,
just like suffering,

human comforting persists
despite or perhaps
because of

all that's lost
or broken
beyond mending

A man comforts a woman

for all that's smothered
ruined, ravished, wrecked
and devastated

somewhere
sometime
anywhere

for all that's deepest
worst
most terrible

A man comforts a woman.

Michael Coady

Tumbled silver through the hedges'



A Moment In Time

a menu of Poems

In celebration of All Ireland Poetry Day
October 2011

In celebration of All Ireland Poetry Day 2011, we compiled this short anthology of poetry for distribution through a range of hospitals and day centres in Ireland by asking eight poets to send us poems on the theme of 'A Moment in Time'. Their poems approach this topic in various ways: some focus on the awareness of a single moment, others on a moment of realisation or choice. We hope that you will enjoy reading and thinking about the imagery and music of these poems, and that the worlds they create will give you your own moments out of time. Please do let us know if you have a favourite poem and your thoughts on the anthology by emailing WHAT@hse.ie.

This is a joint initiative between Arts for Health Partnership Programme, West Cork, Beaumont Hospital Arts Committee, Arts in Health at Cork University Hospital, Galway University Hospitals Arts Trust, Arts Initiative in Mental Health, Sligo, Leitrim, South Donegal, West Cavan, Naas General Hospital Arts Committee, Peamount Health and Social Care, St Luke's Hospital Arts, Kilkenny, the Waterford Healing Arts Trust and the Twilight Programme, St Patrick's University Hospital, Dublin. It has been co-ordinated by the Waterford Healing Arts Trust and kindly supported by Poetry Ireland.

Mark Roper
Editor

From time to time

red dog shows up in the forest.
I don't know his name.

'Dog,' I call out to his presence.
My voice makes a bell in the woods

which are vague with gnats and thick light.
He steps from behind the dense trees

and stands there, attentive, tongue lolling.
Great cauliflower-domed seed-heads of hogweed

tower the overgrown path.
He waits in the web of the stillness,

red in the green tunnel's end—
Then, gone.

Dogness of dog into woodness of woods.
My feet make small sounds in the silence.

Kerry Hardie

Roscommon Rain

When the rain stopped the rain began
And clattered beads of runny light against the panes
Decreased and crept inside the ghosts of sheep
And seeped inside the warmth of prostrate cows.
Then pelted bogs to syrupy peat
Made gravelly lanes glitter again
Beneath the melting greys of cloud and cloud
Pierced the puddles with a thousand stings
Tumbled silver through the hedges
And off the skinned shin-bones of trees;
Swept, soft again, like a haze of locusts
Across the ridge, then shifted shape in sudden wind
Drifting, finer than chimney smoke,
Like a passing pang of some great loss
Away from where more rain was coming in
From somewhere else beyond the world's rim
Erasing gradually the misconception
That the world had ever not been rain
And rain would cease before the end of time.

James Harpur



Not Yet

Five-thirty, mid-March, and already
day has begun. Frost lies in strips
across the park, across our lawn.
Soon the sun will have licked it up,
skimmed the air of cold. I want
to kiss the fistfuls of buds
the half-dead pear tree is offering,
the winter-thin honeysuckle clinging
to the once-climbing frame. Above
the iron spidering of Alexandra Palace
three-quarters of the moon is jutting
from a slit in the blue of a sky
clear as a bell. The tube train
that's just left the station is weaving
its glinting body between roofs
and laceries of willow. I don't want it
to vanish underground – not yet.

If only I could trap this moment
in cupped hands before it's flown,
stave off the knock on the door, the chill
rushing up my nightdressed body,
if only I could stave off the paper
thudding on the mat, the unfolding
of the man cradling his wounded brother,
the uncontainable grief – if only
I could pretend time is a clock
whose arrow hands I could pull off,
and stay here dreaming myself
into the copse in the park, selfless
among the wood anemones
about to open their white wings.

Myra Schneider

The Washing of Feet

It's the simplest form of healing:
late at night,
the washing of feet.

When the light called sky
is an absence,
when the traffic's asleep;

when song
is a physical thing
needing physical shape

but you're just so worn out
facing darkness again
and those brave

tulips and roses
in Merrion Square
have long since turned in

to the dark, cottony
breath that simmers
inside of them.

When the world
is a cave, is a dungeon,
when the angels retreat,

return to this tiny
pacific ocean,
to the washing of feet.

Pat Boran

Baltic Amber

Someone said I would uncover pieces of amber
from long-dead trees on this Baltic shoreline.
Day by day, I leave the cottage, walk the sands
to a headland village.

Nobody understands
what I mean when I mention amber, their minds
engrossed by hazel branches hung
with painted eggs, catkins; or hyacinths in bowls.
The time for hyacinths is long gone, I tell them.

I am in need of something that has survived
more than winter, hardening to translucent gold,
enclosing – perhaps – one small seed,
to honour the month and the Easter I was conceived.

I have grown five decades, like aeons,
and my tears have surely become like amber,
enriched and smooth, taking tawny colours
for blood.

Next week I will be casual
about the search, will uncover nuggets
beneath tree fragments,
inhaling salt and resin as I turn freely
from eggs, catkins, those April fevers.

Mary O'Donnell

'my voice makes a bell in the woods'

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