

Murmuration

I
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Because we love watching the flock's precision glide
upstroke for height, tilt of wing spun mid-flight
just for a moment
we're in the frenzied swirling rush

home for the winged

owls hoot their love through the dark
chiffchaff creeps up stalks
fennel and flow
dipper and wagtail
Arctic terns like darts
geese honking each note weighed out
a duck sits on top of the bowling club king of the world
if you love the bird, don't cage it
we'll miss the starlings when April comes

*

on any high hilltop, breathing this air,
this precious air, remember those who lost their breath

if you love the flower, don't pick it

a sudden sweep of daisies in a green field
like counting stars
losing count
starting over again

more shades of green than words
scream *Life!*

life, damp grass between bare toes
light passing through poppy petals
the slow unfolding of a rose

home for the prickly, those that slither
climb or crawl
for us all

atom by atom
cell by cell
what else matters

we cherish these conversations when the vetchling speaks
the lavish eruption of nasturtiums, weaving ropes of white stems
orange flowers

lush leaves
hearts burnt open

if you love wild things, let them be

*

follow the almost invisible path through the heather
summer's easy grin, the slow smile of autumn
gaze of winter starlight

isn't this how we learn not to fear
change
the seasons
that mark time
shape our lives

spangles of sunlight on a river
otters rippling

the sting of cold sea on tight, red skin

we feel it all, drink it in and love it

love honey, love bees
the smell of dust, hot rain
a damson tree
dripping purple fruits

love the kiss of a dandelion clock

wind-suck and time disappears

the pull of the moon
waves that crash with forgotten history
the rubbed edges of the world
a spider crab scurrying sideways

we love the roaring isles
the taste of a peach

our neighbours busy in their vegetable patch
the daylight gate

tunnel of trees
those little paths one-person-wide

between hazel and ash
warm bark

in the city that birthed us
bright tufts that grow in the cracks

*

because we love the way dawn wakes up
and switches night to day

the twist and fall
the surging sweeping joy of it all
the visceral thrill

how dusk strips away the waste of worried days
as birds yield to their roost
and leave the night to moth and bat
beyond day, beyond everything

we know we too are rock and star

but now on the tip of our tongue

even love's not enough

II

*

At the midnight of the year
utter darkness
a million compasses fail
and the starlings don't come
empty sky
no swallows, no swifts
no summer nests in the eaves
threads looped in the blue
a blackbird that isn't there
opens his throat
into silence, thin air
no golden note

you wake to a dawn
unheralded
dusk, uninvited, doesn't know
where to begin
ghost calls echo in the trees
dogs and deer stop barking
rain forgets to fall

its rhythm broken, lost
oak and elm hold their breath
you will never see another flower
the stars' last vanishing act
no words left

III

*

April high tide
hurls driftwood
 oarweed
 sea-glass
a wreckage of shells

tomorrow comes soon

 how much would you pay to hear the sound
of rain
 or birdsong

what if couldn't-care-less cared more
and we let the murmur of change
 change our ways

hear the roots of trees
 whispering
dark soil's cavernous memories
 tectonic plates shift

sit like a mountain
all weathers
in our hearts

 what if our flutterings become feathers
 the starlings lend us their wings

till we trust enough
 to fly together
 synchronised one vast voice
all different, all the same
 to mend our wounded earth

ballads of continents crossed
 comrades lost to storm or predator
 the shockwave moving through the flock

see how we flit
 twist swell

co-mingle dive
 co-exist co-inhere

belong together

*

imagine we're made of those slivers of sky
 know all the colours of light

hitch a ride on the bees' flight
go to earth with badgers
 small as Alice catch the worm
the keys of the ash
 rise like a dandelion
 the promise of a peony bud

where heather meets heaven
 home

this is the patience of the albatross
 a cormorant's hunger
craning for a flash of silver
 beneath the water

the good omen of a crescent moon
 milky stars
 set in new stories
meadow orchids
 skeins of geese

a chance to constellate honesty
 justice
escape heroic fantasies
 gravity's boots

so what if's rubbed out
 and becomes what is

 the path between

 then we can hear the hiss of rain

*

what is
 is more than the ear can hear
or eye see –

we will never have this time again
can never rewind this moment

all the maybes, all the small things
we touch
gentle, curious
and let pass

like fruit in season
the secret language of earth
underland of coal, uranium, oil

indifference banished by love

power to the parliament of rooks

it's just this us
the people
our footsteps
walking into all this wonder
every day through every weather

solidarity
the planet's rage

making a stand
for a different future

it's just this
our words
building this home we share
these bridges

nowhere else to go

here we are
turning over
this tainted page

to start again

and healing the earth
the earth heals us

our better place
not a destination

a method

common ground

*

ask

what if words could fly
and this poem rose into the blueness
a whirr of black italic wings

breath by breath

a prayer
to give life back to life
all of us
pieces of the world

what if all the time we were searching

the sky
the birds
were watching for us

what, if not cartwheeling

what, if not care
what, if not a cadence
like love
held lightly

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