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from

FIRE STATIONS

Published by Anvil Press, London, 2003

Night Work

after Roberto Juarroz

As I sleep, my two hands come awake
and work their craft, create or unpick
some halfway human body, stitch by stitch,
play Frankenstein all night behind my back.

I hear them, from my sleep: I hear them groom
this bastard demi-ghost, this bloodless *golem*,
doctoring its life, its other death.
I wake, with two hands folded on my chest.

The Christmas Pet

A blood-sport refugee
kicking its heels in sanctuary.
It was an impulse buy,

spurred on by the children
and the straw season.
Care required, minimum:

recommended food, anything,
make the den inviting,
give the gold nose-ring

a good polish.
It did not flourish:
I offered barley and mash

without success. It grew
lean and repetitive, slow,
lean and repetitive. Now,

having churned up the lawn,
it patrols
the small circle of indoors

scoring things with precise horns.

Maryhill Road

19A Milngavie 1 min

19A Correction 2 min

ELECTRONIC BUS-STOP DISPLAY

I will wait the extra minute
and go to Correction
where sweet peas grow upright
on the lawns of Eden

where light-adjusted children
play safe in the dark
all sugar no medicine
their games unelectric

where groups of identical pig
make perfect bacon
where men remove garbage
and work the oven

I will wait the extra minute
and go to Correction
to catch the unwavering scent
of brimstone

The Sleeping Gypsy

Painting by Henri Rousseau (1844–1910)

My best dream came
and found me as I slept
It came
on four legs with a heavy head
Its ribcage rose and
fell it came so
soft it broke my heart and held me
small within its eye
It stood outside my sleep I could not see it
It had no words to say but knew my scent
It had no words to say and would not wake me
I woke when the moon had gone
and my dream
whose mercy is my sorrow

The Silken Road

I take the shoots of river willow,
supple, fashioned circle-wise
and fastened so. There is a code
of charms upon the Silken Road.

They say there is a queen, her crown
a nesting-place for each cocoon:
on hatching, teams of busy worms
spin out, spin out the Silken Road.

*To reach the journey's origin
brings riches . . .* By this legend struck
so many homes stand empty. Miles
are posted on the Silken Road

by bones, some spread, some figuring
their common frames. That's animal,
that's other. All my brothers left
provisioned for the Silken Road,

and as I walk I scan the ground
for charcoal, tent-pegs, human tracks.
The light arches at my back
as night falls on the Silken Road.

My dream is short: a river lined
with willow, on its banks a queen
worm-eaten. There's myself grown old,
at home upon the Silken Road.

Blackbird

Summer.
A blackbird with no
tail-feathers.
Shame.

It takes bacon scraps,
potato skins, allsorts.
Favourite
is grapes.

It runs
a perfect lap of the lawn's
oval.
Give that bird a medal.

Next thing you know
you're wearing a blackbird's head,
scanning the soil.
A new god arrives

with grapes for eyes.