

Anthology of Poems

The Intruder

Huddled within our nest of shadows
We pray for comfortable silence,
Any sign of our visitor's departure.
His deep slashes of light across the darkened sky
5 Becomes a mockery that frightens, like quick jabs at our tender flesh.

Our hearts race, thump, thump, thumping at each wish for its conclusion,
But our reward, a crack, a tortured roar that shook
Our foundation, stifling what little courage still dwelled within.
Sheets of zinc clatter as if engaged in battle, boards squeak, limbs shiver
10 A chill settles, tightening its grip around our tense shoulders.

Like marbles raining down on delicate tiles
So does his bitter tears, heavy with the strength of his wrath,
First trample then seep through the cracks within the crown's ridges.
Its nails surrendering to the force of our intruder's icy breath
15 Then lifts to expose his scowl of discontent.

His screeching howls thundered above us,
Warning of his intent to destroy,
What was left of the humble life
Spent within these walls,
20 Now, a distant memory.

The Divide

The morning's rays had just opened its eyes to receive its patrons,
When I first saw him lying there – still,
Crunched up like a piece of waste paper,
Thrown out to weather the elements of a hard existence
5 With nothing but the steady rise and fall of dirty material
To show proof of life, but who could afford to care?

Footsteps trudge past in haste to meet their quota in labour
To receive the meagre trappings sanctioned by law.
Just the minimum stretched to meet the maximum demands of
10 Basic health, food, clothing, shelter and dare to dream – a good education,
To fuel the next generation.
Nothing left with which to share with the unfortunate lying there.

He wore too much, as the morning's heat would soon prove,
But he wore all he had, the volume of material, its own shelter.
15 A nomad at right, always ready to migrate
At the scowls, growls and distant shouts of,
“Get away from here!”
“You can't stay here, move away!”
A filthy reminder to labour even harder.

20 The steps on which he slept now glowed from yesterday's cleaning,
By a bank assigned employee who will never taste the riches which lay within.
All marble tiles down to where the steps ended and greeted the side walk,
The building's doors were solid glass, tinted to block the view of passers-by,
Framed by thick, solid stainless steel plates and a stylish curved handle.
25 Such opulence was an insult to the struggles of the locals,
Whose efforts continue to fill its coffers with which to play their game of monopoly.
But who could afford to care?

So on we trudge labouring at length
To feed our desires to be more than what we are.
30 To escape the fate of economic decay to which many have fallen victim,
Like the mouldy specimen lying there,
Buried and trapped under rags discarded by the poor,
On steps that he could never climb
As another day closes its lids to bid us goodnight.

A Mother's Tears

Her wails could not be ignored,
Even from several blocks away,
Guttural, like the squeals of an animal being slaughtered.
A crowd rushes to look,
5 Quick on the scent of despair,
A slew of gadgets at the ready
To capture juicy evidence to be aired to feed the public's debate.
Their only contribution.

Under the flashes of light and the zoom of lenses,
10 She held him close, there on the side of the potholed street,
A bloody cargo she once affectionately called son,
Rocking back and forth as he sleeps,
Future memories never to be formed –
His graduation, his wedding, his first child,
15 All lay waste in a trivial pursuit of quick riches;
A common image in the ghetto.

The red striped crew, armed with the right
To maintain order, has wreaked havoc with two bullets,
Straight through the heart of a gang, its don
20 With youthful exuberance, had his last stand off.
Ignorance ignores the truth that you can't beat the law.

A mother's cry is his final eulogy,
Grief for the boy he was, for the hope he could have become,
For his death has been mourned long before
25 With gun in hand, he was warned with a mother's tears,
But ignorance disregards the truth that you can't beat the law.
To a novice, her howls prick the heart,

But does little to mute a community's relief,
Whose core had already been poked, pummelled and plundered,
30 Now hardened with vengeance from their own loss,
His doing, a father's only lesson.
Like an abuser's grip around its victim's throat, he smothered and maimed
Many hopes, dreams, the future, prosperity.
So, on a mother's knees, he was cautioned.
35 But ignorance overlooked, but alas now acknowledges
That you can't beat the law.

The Long Wait

We sit impatiently, perched on blue seats,
Cushioned to wear the time,
Sink at every tick, tick of the clock
To greet its hardened base
5 And the rising displeasure
Of patrons already late,
For mandatory and clandestine dates,
Such is the business of the long wait.

Number fifty-four, number fifty-four?
10 The teller's voice soars,
Mocks the ears of the unlucky,
And misses the exits of those entitled to go first,
Blessed to have picked the lowest number,
But leave before its draw.

15 Aiden Knott? Aiden Knott?
The name echoes, floating, poisoning the air
Of which we must breathe;
Stale from the resentment forming like bile within our throats
Which threatens to erupt
20 Into curses at a teller, who refuses to tell us
The news we so desperately want to hear –
A precursor to our freedom.

But another tick of the clock drones,
Silencing our hopes of being called next,
25 Of being freed from our bondage,
Enslaved by the limited funds our purse possess,
But lay in abundance in the safe, guarded by the teller's key,

The puppet master, whose string forces our hand,
Whose call we must adhere.

So we sit impatiently, perched on blue seats,

30 Dampening our bitterness, serving out our sentence,
Until our name or number is called, now our fate,
But, such is the business of the long wait.

Melodic Drift

The pluck of each string was a dagger to the heart,
Piercing deep to unearth feelings long buried,
In memories of a love that burned like coal in flames,
The guitar chords echoing its theme song.

5 Like notes on a winding stave, its soothing melody floats me back,
Through the sweet lyrics of our first sight,
Slow in its beginning, to unveil the newness of its arrangement,
Then the steady strum warns of its harmonic progression.
Its chorus speaks of our leisure walks on the beach holding hands,

10 Fancy dinners at candle light, darkened theatres and soft kisses of goodnight.
Until its bridge, over which crescendos the ominous tones
Of our frequent, spirited quarrels, butchered our symphony.
Its climax reached, then fades to a heart numbing resolution
As now to hear only the silence again as it drones.

Dear Neighbour

Dear Neighbour,

I never took the time to know,

To truly see through tired eyes,

The frequency of your muted cries.

5 Burdened with work and responsibilities,

Our gazes would pass over wired fences,

Your greetings, fleeting and sparse

Engineered as society's code of civility.

Dear neighbour,

10 Your good mornings falsified evidence to the contrary,

For behind smiles, your happiness brooded.

In solitude, your spirit lay confined,

Closed to the calls of visitors and invitations,

Your social calendar too full with emptiness –

15 A conspiracy never investigated,

As time was too expensive and too thin to spare.

Dear neighbour,

Who knew of the dullness of your companion?

The monotony that had become your life?

20 The thick shadow that mimicked your footsteps,

And locked you in its cold embrace day and night?

Who knew of the loneliness that stalked you?

The silent acquaintance, too jealous to share

Your light with the world?

25 Dear neighbour,

I should have listened with unclogged ears,
Through walls so close to mine,
For your final groan roamed the street to wake the living,
Which brought new borders of yellow tapes and speculative eyes.

30 The coroner reports the culprit as your hand,
A shock to those who knew you *so* well,
As the guilt of your passing we all should own,
For only in death, dear neighbour, should you have walked alone.