

When Tom died

What it was like when Tom died:

I was standing in my kitchen,
in about the middle of a public housing commission estate, or suburb,
but in 'the bush', not an urban location,
or at least sitting up,
because I'd been resting there, seated, on a high bar-stool type chair
pushed back from the kitchen bench,
just sort of slumping there.
And he managed to get through to me right then.

I think it was afternoon,
but possibly morning,
or in any case daylight (a long time ago),
and somehow he came to me, well, not in form but
as a speaking voice, the psychic aspect of himself, and visual too,
and it was that he knew
it was too late, in that moment,
and he sort of reached out to me then (we'd been quite close for some years by then),
and he was sorry,
and so he came and said so, he said as much,
I think it was 'oh oh', you know,
and he said it simply, genuine,
and he was ... genuinely sorry,
regretting what he did.

He said it right then, when he realized, in dying,
that it wasn't what he wanted,
it was not really what he'd meant to do after all,
it wasn't what to do, or to achieve,
and he wanted me to know
and knew then, I'd be upset.
But it was late (in the procedure),
and then quickly it was too late.

It was too late.

He'd hung himself, with laces from his shoes,
and they'd cut right through his neck,
bled him to death as he choked.
There was just no going back from there.

His crimes and misdemeanors were:

He stole petrol from a servo, for a borrowed car,
without which he wouldn't have got very far.
He participated in a police-patrolled protest against the big MacDonalds,
being erected right over a heritage building, that was demolished for it.
He had smoked a bit of weed, you know, couch-surfed often,

had probably laughed a lot (no way of telling if it might have been too much; could he have been too frivolous, too funny, too care-less?).
He never became acclimatized to cold weather.
As an accomplice, he'd stolen a cut off remnant
of a mushroom-grey flat wool carpet, quite neat, and a good color,
although it never found a proper use.
And he'd tried to burn the historic pub down – a molotov through the letter-hole
in the front door – when he thought the devil was residing there;
thought to give him a real hiding I suppose,
and it's that got him locked up.

But in his defence:

In life, he was a truly funny man, perhaps
the funniest I knew personally,
and with the ability to turn his sense of humor
introspectively, onto himself.
He loved his daughter, and his wife, and was good as brothers go.
He was conversational, sweet-natured, respectful
and not violent to anyone,
if perhaps a bit lazy by temperament.
As their uncle, he dandled all my kids, on knee or hip or shoulder,
or arm or back or shoe, without the least concern from me
(unlike that other lot who are united 'round 'a giant flea').

It is sad.

But
down the track a bit ...

I'm telling you this, in hindsight, because you might remember him,
or may be contemplating suicide yourself,
thinking *your* life just can't work out.
Well, you should know, after other troubles in my family crew,
I cried hard, I cried it out
for a decent six years of biggish grief,
pretty often, after he died, I missed him so, you'd have to say
it probably hurt me more than him (but he didn't mean it; I forgive him).

And I think it's possible those who would never really
hurt someone intentionally
might be more prone to shock, or more susceptible to feeling helpless
in the face of 'weird stuff', and paranoid (if fear counts),
(I remember him afraid), and untethered from the earth perhaps,
and in effect, may over-think their own role in all of it, or in all of life,
as if stuff's more meaningful than it is -- forgetting others' guilt and complicity
in crimes that really are insane, impactful,
that truly bring folks down – like you and me – make them depressed,
and make no ultimate sense --
when in the throes of going crazy, from drugs
or other causes.

Husbandit leaving

So
I sit
now silhouetted in black
rocking
a twig on a verandah
like leaves in a winsome wind whispering
across a fantastical beautiful sunrise
these morning moments stolen out of a why a why
a long and wakeful night. Pinks sighing
into crumpled orange grey today
sparkling brilliant lights awakening the sea
clouds. And the birds fly east
south east across the autumn of my heart
as the sun sinks into a new day
this wintry spring dusk of our love
a dusty passage
of folded photographs parading through
the back of my mind. I am old
and older than time oh yes and wise
you seem simple so like a child to me today as I
wish you a way to know your self and me
my own self and its feeling ways
you wish yourself away. I say my hooray bid you
fare well may
god keep you always
in his care
my heart
with
you goodbye.

Inspired by one image: it's the bright light

...I'm inspired by one image: It's the bright light of afternoon across an ocean,
off the sea cliffs, 't leaves the land a dark mass damply smoking shadowed

in my sunstruck eyes. That silver water, white light, and a black earth,
brings impending night, but new birth as we change. And the more we change,

the things we value stay the same. And so, enlivened by this image, by a longing
sense of distance in the gleam and slash of whitish metal, a reflection of the sky,

– where we p'rhaps were born in deepest hist'ry, and into which we sail (and now,
throughout which, like the birds, we fly) – I've yet a sad feeling for a homeland, dark,

tho' illumined like a silver soul: this rare view of silent 'home' beneath us. It should
not quiet our feeling inner-seeing eyes, but have us hearing heartily, as the world

that holds us *tries* to bring us homing pigeons back to Nature, she our mother, yet
it alters, without wanting. Lest we leave the things we value, in our changing,

far behind, we *must* stand upon the cliff-tops far away from seats and screens, cry
our echoes 'cross the ocean through continuum space-time, til we feel at one with

pure essence, a shared and incoherent dream, of a sacred earthly life, nigh abandoned.
...Near twenty lesser sights've yielded to this, like the *clutch* of round rocks, dappled,

seaworn, weed-strewn, buff, and an inverse world of trees inside a stilling pool
that mirrors, falling into the blue frame, and a tawny golden sunset o'er expansive

placid water, where fish-lines set to wait until the slow return of dawn. So we *must*
recall and *love* our living mother Nature, '*neath* our feet, before she's gone, and ne'er
the same.

Falling through a coffee table

I once had a big round
coffee table,
my favorite.
The supporting structure was formed of pale cane, strong,
heat-bent into concentric circles,
tied up with cane strips,
and topped with a dense pane
of clear tempered circular glass
with a lovingly sanded beveled edge,
that sat safely,
secure,
in an engineered groove.

Being petite in height
and build, I found
I could safely stand on the glass top
of the coffee table
without fear, although it occasionally unnerved
some other people.
I could place all my weight upon it, unconcerned and ‘free’,
in order to fetch a thing down
– a book from a shelf, or a plug-in for an air-con –
from a greater
height.

This table nested close to my window couch,
where I was living a second life, at that time,
an alcove it was, in the passage of time,
reading determinedly for a masters thesis.
And gradually
upon the table
I heaped piles and piles
of books
of topical interest.

One day, unthinking, I had to reach for a thing, of course,
at a height,
but had forgotten
that books on a glass top themselves
weigh a lot.
My own relative lightness
was thus nullified
by the density
of the many thick cardboard covers, the glossy print
on the inked pages, and
the heavy weight of
knowledge itself.

My standing confidence
on the glass surface
of the coffee table,
usually undefiled
by the wiles of external circumstance,
should have been,
pre-emptively, undermined
by this ...
But no.
I transferred my weight, and reached ...
And very rapidly, in shock,
the glass, sudden and fragile, broke through
and I fell into the middle,
my bare feet striking the floor in an unrealistic
instant of magnified pain.

I was disoriented, naturally stunned
in realizing, thinking the glass would cut me badly,
that it could damage or kill
due to extreme blood loss,
and it took long moments to
comprehend what actually happened,
and examine myself for serious injuries,
for large gashes, blood everywhere
the fright of redness,
the spurting of arterial hemorrhage,
the collapse of empty veins,
the ambulance journey to a hospital,
fluids in a bag,
bed-rest,
swathed in bandages.

Looking down then to the jarred pain
in my foot, ankle, leg,
it was a moment of miraculous life
once again, rearing its reminding head,
urging me: take care,
and I stood, philosophically amused,
in a sea of broken safety glass
blessed in the middle of that magical
cane table ring
with only one
tiny scratch
upon me.

I've never seen a tree as lovely

I think that I will never see
A tree as lovely as a rose.
But then again it occurs to me –
With due respect unto the way things goes –

Those flowering bushes called the roses
Have those protruding bits, quite sharp
That might in fact 'get up your noses',
And 'though I don't really wish to carp

About it still I know you'll see,
The tree has quite a deeper shade
That in this heat, shouldn't be unmade.
And so it, latterly, occurs to me:

I think that I will never see
A rose as lovely as a tree.