

# Duncan McPhee

Duncan McPhee was full of holes.  
Holes in his attention.

The world arose and  
uncoiled its serpentine mystery  
phantasms multihued and flitting  
commanded his wandering, startled perusal

The seconds ticked rent and jagged  
each crystalline shard shattered from  
the round and liquid womb welling  
life, sadness, schedules; and plans become  
missed appointments or fumbling rendezvous  
in hopeless dark quarters

At day's end Duncan McPhee is alone again in his  
faceted confusion amidst reality unraveled

Everything is come unwound and he cannot  
connect the fractured moments and  
rues the day just lost,  
the jigsawed flawed longings now  
past and tumbled snapshots lost in time

The day has worn out its welcome  
Duncan McPhee sleeps and dreams  
vague and unformed obstacles frustrate his yearning  
the dream-aether is aswarm with leering hovering demons  
and then some indefinable ally beckons yet  
remains forever perched beyond his reach

Finally the sunrise glints like a migraine  
life dawns again like a bad dream  
the sky is shocking in its blueness  
he climbs up from a weary pool of sweat  
to face the anguished cloudless dawn

Duncan McPhee is full of regret  
in the tender new morning  
the chirping hopeful chickadees grate and gall

This great and looming paradox  
of a purposeful world incessantly springing forth  
unbidden  
even unwelcome

while the birthing clamor of unfolding  
the great churning machine of a billion recurring lives

lust and grief and death in its endless cycle—  
plays itself out upon the screen of our awareness  
even when we would draw the blinds  
on that dancing phantasmagorical  
shimmering screen that is our attention

I am too full of doubt  
says Duncan McPhee  
to face this brutal day  
he thinks of his mother  
and her annoyance  
at all things when he was a child

and the child in Duncan McPhee knows  
things are not right  
there is something gnawing inside him  
something has gone terribly wrong  
he is full of writhing guts and gnawing blood

Duncan McPhee is twisting  
wriggling helplessly  
a squirming pinned beetle  
entangled beyond all hope  
in things inconsequential  
but fatal

The subway ride downtown is full of yawning  
then the workday drags like an obdurate crucifix  
the office is a tomb full of club-footed zombies  
gathered about the water cooler like  
snickering loitering geese that shit and mingle  
until finally the subway ride  
back to his lonely home  
leaves Duncan McPhee again

lost in his empty reverie

outside of time

All the awkward years and  
all the embarrassed moments  
wink by like garish strobes within  
the catacombs that hum and clatter  
as he pitches to and fro  
against the creaking handhold  
in the clanking subway

in the disjointed meander  
that is Duncan McPhee's  
lack of attention

The creeping evening casts its purple pallor  
panic wells like vomit in his unreasoning gullet as  
Duncan McPhee frees the deadbolt  
to his desolate lonely apartment  
skulks into his empty lair  
longing to forget

There will never be the time to forget  
we are not granted that  
in this lifetime

Duncan McPhee is locked away forever  
now  
alone with his regret

He stares out the barred grated window  
down into a concrete courtyard  
vacant and dingy in the dying light

the twisted branches of  
a gnarled and stunted maple  
scrape against the eaves  
fingernails on blackboard

Duncan McPhee longs for an endless sleep without dreams

He sits alone in the gathering gloaming  
hears the grating voice of his nagging third grade teacher  
the derisive laughter  
of the playground's cruel children

And in this dawning darkening moment the man  
Duncan McPhee  
realizes that  
now  
he has nothing left but his life

all things peripheral have been stripped  
and his life is become  
simply another squatting visitor  
that has overstayed its welcome

But still the coursing blood demands its veins  
the purposeful breath heaves  
the lungs yearn

he cannot close his accounts

and in the courtyard the rats gather  
in the dying light  
their pointed pink snuffling snouts wriggle obscenely  
like teeming snakes  
their whiskers are fingers seeking carrion  
as they clamber up rusting gutters

and Duncan McPhee imagines them  
swarming into this room  
running up his sleeves  
and down his collar

he staggers up from his chair  
reels across the room  
hears the voices of the neighbors  
cackling and belittling

they are talking about him  
they are plotting his demise  
he pounds upon the door  
screams to be left alone

he beats his fists upon the groaning door  
against the taunting voices  
Duncan McPhee rails in anger  
against their prying and meddling  
he only wants to be left alone but

still they obsess and meddle  
he slams shut the deadbolt again  
and again  
berates them again  
to just go away

and of a sudden

a crystalline stillness falls  
a moment's peace descends  
perfect and still

wonder plucked from cacophony  
miracle from dung

and Duncan McPhee  
breathless  
tiptoes to the window  
careful not to break the spell

something so perfect and so fragile  
has arrived there in the courtyard—  
he knows this somehow

then spies the neighbor's cat  
moving like molten fluid then  
rolling and writhing upon its back  
kneading the soft gray fur of its back  
against the cobbles

and something so warm and so tender fills Duncan McPhee  
and he smiles  
feels the tenderness welling within  
his eyes pool

Duncan McPhee remembers a girl who once kissed him  
behind the school  
so long ago

and a high distant whine from afar  
jars his reverie—

he turns to face the room and  
blood is running down the walls  
in alarm he examines his hands  
blood is running from the tips of his fingers and  
pooling upon the floor

the whine becomes WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP  
there are voices and stamping running feet  
storming up the stairs  
he braces himself against the door

now they are pounding  
calling him to come out  
they say they are police  
OPEN UP SIR  
THIS IS THE POLICE  
but Duncan McPhee knows better

and now they are breaking down the door  
someone is screaming  
it is him that is screaming  
Duncan McPhee is screaming  
cannot stop screaming  
and he attacks them

Duncan McPhee is knocked to the floor  
into the darkness...

...and now the starched white linen ties and binds  
he is restrained by straps and buckles  
these Lilliputians would bind him here  
forever

but Duncan McPhee bides his time...

they will pay  
his wrath shall know no bounds  
they will suffer  
and they will pay  
for all the rest of time

there will be no mercy

he moans and struggles  
as spiders cavort across his scrotum  
as centipedes violate his rectum

Duncan McPhee screams

and doors slam shut in cold echoing hallways  
as the seconds tick  
rent and jagged

and Duncan McPhee is alone in his  
faceted confusion amidst reality unraveled.