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*The Further Adventures  
Of The Lives Of The Saints*

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## A Holiday In The Same Place

Summer is hitting Gloucestershire like starlight spitting at a black slab of cloud.  
The fields are not really made of greenness, it is the colour of steel or a seabed.  
Maybe you will be able to dig down into Gloucestershire as if it was a page to be turned,  
a grey slab to be opened,  
if you can talk about a page being opened.  
The grass is the colour of grass in the evenings in Africa or just outside Portland,  
or the colour of grass in a book about techniques of warfare,  
or it is grey in the slight darkness like the cover of the book or a diamond stuck inside a mountain.  
Someone really ought to get on with dynamiting that mountain.  
You have even less time than you think you do, however much of a mountain you are.  
You should read something about logic and then maybe a few poems about wolves.  
The poets in Gloucestershire mainly like to name the riffling weeds in the streams.  
A page in a guidebook tears itself open and the landscape is beneath,  
and then the landscape tears itself open to show the shards of its grass and leaves,  
the leaves that chatter sharply like teeth  
on the muttering  
branches where all the movements also withdraw themselves.  
Gloucestershire is a wolf or it is a wolf to itself.  
The spiders jet up into the clouds, and they look down at the fields just as you  
can look down at the sharp silver strands that they leave behind,  
the patterns that they make out of their own innards.  
The spiders move within air that is murky and at the same time silvery.

The wolf is the colour of grass and it gnaws at its own bones,  
not because it is trapped but because it is a wolf and hungry.  
If it could it would eat itself, and then leave a generous tip.  
Inside itself it would finally tell the hollow truth about Gloucestershire.  
The disaster is here if it is anywhere, but at least here you can try to lie  
a bit less urgently than elsewhere and more creatively too, or you can write

poems  
instead, always, one after another,  
poems that eat each other and then themselves,  
and then howl the truth about poetry inside themselves,  
while the sun hangs on the horizon like a dazzling tooth;  
it is biting someone else's lip.  
On the harsh branches the birds sing about how pretty death is, or how  
appalling  
beauty is,  
how it comes out of poverty and flicks back into it,  
hardly pausing to dazzle you on the way,  
a feather writing in black ink on the black fields, and hoping that one type  
of blackness  
is more shiny than the others,  
lighter.

Gloucestershire is a spider and the grass is its web  
in the early morning dew, the scintillating rags of its greyness.  
In Gloucestershire the edge of a black barn is growing out of some pale  
nettles.  
White rust has scribbled itself in bits across the corrugations of blackness,  
and the white flowers of the nettles sing in the air like the  
brief pale bobbles on a wrist that has got itself stung.  
If happiness is not here it is nowhere, Gloucestershire is muttering,  
as its tears slide down a tight black road one by one.  
Gloucestershire is a window through which a hissing radio can be heard;  
it is casting the slow music out as if it was a rag.  
The river Rhine is flowing through Gloucestershire like a feather  
flowing down the small white waves that open into a torrent.  
The pale black roads tear through Gloucestershire like thorns.  
Gloucestershire is flowing down the Rhine as if down a ragged  
mountainside;

a grey feather lies in a field beside a wolf's tooth.  
In the joke a magical tractor turns into a field.  
But right now,  
you are ravished as much by your disenchantments as anything.

## A Very Short Essay About The Sun

I spent a very brief part of an evening  
years ago  
in the house of a married couple somewhere in south Warwickshire,  
around where the accents start to change if you are driving  
up from Gloucestershire.  
The house had once been a chapel.  
It had high ceilings and a sort of rigid metallic cleanness  
hovering.  
So I sat amongst cushions that were white and nervous.  
The strictness of light stood in piles.  
Maybe I would have drunk a very small glass of vodka,  
in order to be sociable or polite.  
I am not sure either whether it was  
on the same evening that I stopped off  
at a small funfair in a town nearby,  
and did rather well on  
one of those machines where you try to nudge piles of coins into falling.  
Years later, the husband stabbed the wife and killed her,  
or at least so I heard.  
The sun is a white spider, metallic, burning.

## Dante

Summer can turn into a labyrinth,  
a series of sweltering rooms leading off into one another,  
something that you cannot see beyond,  
rowan berries are flaring in the margins with a certain grim but lurid  
vehemence,  
their rough orange shades are both brash and abstruse,  
and in the fields greenness first flared and then found that it had burned  
itself,  
now it stares into the eyes of the afternoon as if it is dazed or drunk,  
or crazy,  
it does not quite know who it is any longer,  
puddles of brown light cluster around the base of a beech tree's sheer  
reticence,  
a city is a retina flooded with slow bright greyness,  
it keeps on calling anger assiduousness,  
while the only calm that it knows is a servile despair,  
so instead be grateful out here for a small road's graciousness,  
and for the cool persistence with which it follows  
the ideas of the hill's harsh bones,  
it is as probing and tender as a stream or a dragonfly,  
as careworn and multiform as the face of a donkey,  
it is as calmly scintillating as the style of Dante,  
who in any case is still walking along somewhere ahead of you;  
we are poured into our precious bodies like bursts  
of soft rain reworking the harsh faces of rivers,  
and we must learn so many times that we do not know what to say or where  
to go.

## A Quick Guide To What Being Immortal Means

If man was merely composed of dust and blood in the end, as we keep on being told while we travel through nervous forests or gaze at the savage screens, it would mean that our bodies were rivers tearing apart their own flesh pointlessly as they try to make themselves amount to something or go somewhere. Two of us once got into a conversation in the street with a man who claimed to have found what he said was an elixir of immortality, and who said that he would let us drink some of it with him if we wanted, he was a small blunt man with a look of something like levity scribbled on hard bland features, but when we agreed to try it, jokingly, or at least so we thought, he brought his mouth down suddenly onto the inside of his right wrist, and bit into the thin pale flesh there so fiercely that it was all that we could do to get him to stop before he started bleeding, and it was unclear whether this was how he had wanted us to react all along, or whether he was genuinely disappointed not to be bringing us into eternity with him, tooth marks were etched in bright white shades on his dull pink wrist like little waves, but then eternity should indeed not be thought of as a sort of straight line stretching off with no ending, no, it lives in the ways in which each moment strains with indelibility, as if the river inside each one was made of rocks.

## Junction

A pink shaded car rises up into the pink shades or strips of the sky. The top of the road flickers or jumps with the small wildness of an insect's wings. Gustav Mahler's hands are inside your head or at least inside your hearing. All day soldiers have been scrambling across television screens, a long way away and also wherever anyone wants to see it. The joke goes that a fairly dangerous intersection around here should be called the extreme junction. Light is folded in the late sky like a slow ear, it crumples serenely, but then it is moving too across the dirt like a small voice across the scuzziness of words. It glances at the sides of the cars as they die. It is inside your eye looking out.