

SPARK

By

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First published 2015

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Cover by Dom Walter

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THIS IS THE SUMMER was originally read by the author on BBC TV
Newsnight, May 2009.

BEAUTY and CV OR NOT CV originally appeared on the album, The
Original Human Mind, September 2014.

For My Girls

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SPARK

I really do, I really do believe that

We all have a spark - it's why we are here
In some of us it's obvious, in others less clear
For some it burns bright, for others it's dim
All of us possess our own special thing

Some find it comes easy, some find it hard
Scratching at words that they then discard
Some refuse to accept it, others implore
Some approach it lazily and some ignore
Some are blessed by it, others are scarred

Some waste it, some make the most
Savouring long the seconds grossed
Some do it down, others celebrate
Some forge alone and some collaborate
Some carry it modestly, others like to boast

I really do, I really do believe that

We all have a spark - it's why we are here
In some of us it's obvious, in others less clear
For some it's a plan, for others a whim
All of us possess our own special thing

CARNIVAL

I doubt she would recognise me, no
If we passed in the street, our summer finery burnt to cinders
There would be no long looks, or fragile interest to show
For the small intimacies that bind like glue
Yet here we are again, so close we're almost toe to toe

She returns to me with pizzazz
Not dowdy or downtrodden by years, but carnival ablaze
Even after all this time, her red dress still has heads turning
To her twirling and swirling all ways
Her necklace shimmering, bright colours shining far as

I remember the brother, who was yellow
The father who did pack runs and was on nodding terms
In a very different time, before any of us knew
We were closer still. I think about this and how it affirms
My heightened senses, Latin rhythms coursing through

He calls over from a face-painting stand
Where kids are getting glossed as butterflies and clowns
I knew she would be with him. He takes her hand -
Those small intimacies again - and they disappear into the crowd
As night falls, long shadows submerge the straggling band
And no one can hear what I'm thinking out loud

GETAWAY

Much later
I walk across the movie set
And think again about
Something that was nothing
And my strong reply

I can still hear the sirens wail
The getaway speeding by
But no longer give chase
Only let out the grief of a love
We knew nothing about

Much later still
I watch the rushes and rewind
You back-step from the car
And it plays again
In a sleepier, softer hue

The scenery shrinks
And all summer is lost
Like light in a collapsing star
It spirals to the point of departure
Your absence crushing it

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US

This is the worst
Of a love unrequited
It burns holes in my soul
As ocean-distance grows
With every heartbeat of the sun
And time separates us further still
From the days we should have had
But never will

PERFUME

Wanda, where are you now?
I am trying not to be tied by form
I want to say exactly what I mean
I want to rescue from the shadows
The things that should have been
A would've been, a could've been

Just now I caught it on the breeze
The sweet odour of your perfume
The long locked-away secret of
Your scent released once again
And yet I know this to be untrue
I know this to be untrue because
Reality would never allow it
Would never give such memory
Release from the here and now
The cold hegemony of today
And I would have it no other way

And I would have it no other way
Unless upon meeting you anew
The rawness of parting be excised
And replaced by the love we knew
But it is not so, it is just a lie
A vaporous falsehood sent
To tease my shocked senses
Wanda, where are you now?
Something caught my eye
It was the year my wife was born
I never knew then – how could I?

It was a Friday evening decades ago
Do you remember our visit, do you?
I think about it all the time
The vagaries of the coastline
And the shimmering of light
Upon a half-imagined headland
I remember our incessant chatter
And the sudden stonewalling
I remember collapsing onto a bed
Crushed by expectation's weight
Was there nothing I could do?

She was a blonde go-go dancer
The half-time entertainment
I can hear the whoop and wail
Feel the effort of her containment
It wouldn't happen now
A different world without connection
Yet here I am again somehow
Was it the tail end of summer?
I recall missing a festival chance

Old posters curling in the breeze
Were you cold as we danced?

Wanda, where are you now?
I remember but cannot inform
I fear the things that are unseen
Less they rise up like a dark whale
In the turgid depths of night
And swallow whole my dreams

I should have written more, left
An indelible mark, something that
Would not fail or alter with time
Wanda, where are you now?
The years are rushing back,
The scent of your perfume
Has kick-started my need,
My agonised wanting
It is heavenly, heavenly, heavenly
I breathe in the rich aroma,
Tasting your beauty once more

I should have recorded your words
Captured for posterity, every excitable
Alliteration and downbeat simile
Where did my writings go?
I could not have guessed
The lonely, uncharted place
To which they delivered me
My dreams were so different from
The reality that became, I should
Have kept them closer to my heart
Or jettisoned them altogether

ANIMAL INSTINCT

Stretch to remember
None of my worth is worth this
Survival is a dragging down
A denial of what I've missed

Or need
But cannot contemplate
The risk of leaping in the dark
A course to fear, not celebrate

CHILDHOOD

Avalon and on and on
This is where it always ends
Beyond the haunts of men
A quick detour on a Friday afternoon
And back to childhood again
No distractions, just me and them

One kid screams
It's a soft play area now
But I remember when it was just
Grit and bits of bark
When half-dazed, half-concussed
We dreamed a slug at dusk
A creature of our own invention
To go sliding down the water-board
But that was then and this is now

Today, at 6pm, the eyes shot down
An imaginary plane – the scattered remains are
The children of our pit
Blobs of jelly, covered in mud and sand
Dizzy, thirsty, made to measure – whatever
Our heads are like roulette wheels, spinning
Our feet the concrete blocks of a world turned upside
Presently we catch the moon
It has nowhere left to hide

My daughter, who cannot know
Bangs her cardboard drum, makes pies and tea
From woodchips and their dust
She notes the A-frame
And I am reminded of adventures past
And imagine things yet to come
The 'A' of Avalon
Yet she is only 3
And we have never been to Glastonbury
And on and on and on
Again

MY LOVE HAS GONE

My love has gone, farewell my love
She will not walk this way again
But with her sleep my dreams at night
To wait in silence until then
Or such a time as she explains
She said not why
What care she if the transience lives
Or the transience dies?

*I was hurt by the gully
I was hurt by the stream
I was hurting incognito
Through all that has been*

One day even this pain will fade
The hurting like hell, of having then not
With sorrow made nothing but jot
Winter will no longer tolerate a Lover's spell
Nor summer trouble to break the years
The sun will still set, but nothing will stem
The flow of my long-wasted tears

OWNERSHIP

I used to own a true love
Forever, as she bequeathed
I used to count our blessings
Yet still I was deceived

I used to own the streets
Here, near where I was born
I used to walk a concrete line
And kick the cans at dawn

I used to own a melody
Heard, as birds began to sing
I used to flute in golden voice
A tune forever lingering

I used to own the stars
There, of my bedroom light
I used to gaze at them in awe
Each wild and windy night

I used to own such things
But, it was never so for me
I used to kid myself believing
The lie of my prosperity

IS ANDREW THERE?

The phone rings: Is Andrew there?
A lonely soul, forged through ology
Dials the wrong number of life
When I am least expecting company

Restricted by distance I cannot see
The face to face dead giveaways
The gestures her voice will not reveal
The truth behind each turn of phrase

Her words are just a blur of language
The only sticks and stones she has to use
There is no expression good or bad
Only silence with which to abuse

From coldness and through pursed lips
Indifference comes with heartless lies
And worst of all I never get to see
The whites of my assailant's eyes

In this way I am cuffed by circumstance
And sad to be here down the line alone
Judged only by my muted resistance
Her silence on the telephone

EAGLE

I am an Eagle
Lost to love's wound
Nothing of me should remain
Or ever could

I am despised
Mostly for myself
Wayward, floating high above
Devouring scenery

I am ever watchful
Hungry and cold like snow
I am beautiful until touched
Solid until tested

WORK, REST AND PLAY

I see them working on the road
A swathe of bodies, coned-off from traffic
I think about all summer on their dig
The loneliness of it all

I wonder if they have wives, girlfriends
How far away from home they are
If English is their first language
And whether, after all their work
They've something more to show
Than just a hole in the ground

I hope so

A CURSE

And is every word used still bad enough?
So ludicrous? Or is it simply jealousy
Keeping us where we are, my trying hard
You one step higher than me?

I would like to know
Before the madness consumes
Before all plots are lost
Perhaps I've never had it at all
And in all the years of blaming
It was me who was the fool

But do you have to point it out for all to see?
Reveal my frailty?
Alright, go ahead, shout and curse
I know that it makes you feel better than me
But would not doing it make you feel worse?

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

The cyclist hates the motorist
The motorist hates the cyclist

The motorist hates the pedestrian
The pedestrian hates the motorist

The pedestrian hates the cyclist
The cyclist hates the pedestrian

The cyclist hates the cyclist
The motorist hates the motorist
The pedestrian, the pedestrian

BEAUTY

This is open to interpretation
In the eye of the beholder and all that crap
I just want you to hold me the way she used to
It should be seen to be believed
The escapades of beauty are all I really need

Now that winter is banished and aggrieved
And hope bursts from the seed, chasing through
Like some long forgotten creed
The flower shows how to shine again and breed
Take it from these fields round here
Pluck it from my window view
The bottom line is nothing new
Treat it as my gift to you

This flower that you'll debase
Rage, rage, rage
Dig it over; tear apart with a fork or spade
Break its neck
Shear off its fucking head
Bleed its petals across a page
Throw shopping trolleys into the canal
Come on, take the plunge and make it yell

Bask in its more precious moments
Scar its face with disease and cruelty
Make her love anyone in the world but me
Fine wine, fine food - substitute with sewage
Chuck crisp packets on her grave

I live in a town
It was all I used to need
Like something cosmically agreed
It should have been seen to be believed

PHOBIA

I'm not sure if it's agoraphobia or claustrophobia
All I know is that I'm scared of the stairs
Scared of supermarkets with big wide aisles
Scared of apartments with wall to wall tiles

I'm not sure if it's the micro or the macro
That I most worry about
So please don't let me in
And please don't let me out

CV OR NOT CV

Work is how they define themselves
They are what they do
CV or not CV
Whether trading up or cutting back
It was never once the game for me

In the thirty years between attempts
I made the most of what they threw
My way
From stacking shelves to erecting tents
I worked hard for an honest day's pay

I fed on the scraps from their table
Waited for them to give a clue
In the bar
I tried to walk the walk, talk the talk
And listened to their blah, blah, blah

When I was asked to show solidarity
I took my place on the picket line
Gave it my all
While others were cashing in on the OT
And making me look like a fool

Now I put pen to yellowing paper
And think this thing through
The only way I know
With over half a lifetime's work gone
And fuck all to show

I walk up to the lectern trembling
There is no pretence, nothing new
Just all eyes on me
The hall closes in as I shuffle papers
And let them have it as I see

I am filled with dreading
Scared shitless by things untrue
Unnatural to me
I conform to rules that are corrupt
And be what they want me to be

Yet there is something else inside,
Other things that I must do
Dreams to let fly
It is for these ideals, not yet eroded
That I get up and try

HAYMAKING

You look like a strong country girl
Carrying child and hay with ease
I imagine that if required you could fall to your knees

JUMP

Regardless of the pain
Get right back up again
And still give a smile for the camera to please

YOU WERE HERE

You were here
There is no doubt
Your name is everywhere
So much to shout about

I wonder if you climbed this hill
Travelled on the steam-spitting train
Took in the view, clear and still
Went round the circuit once again

I wonder if you stopped for a pint
Went into the second-hand bookshop
Bought a postcard showing the point
Marvelled at this lovely spot

I wonder if you stood in Sandpit field
Gazed out to sea on a Carnival Saturday
Walked the path to Durlston Head
Used Purbeck stone to mark your way

You were here
There is no doubt
Your name is everywhere
So much to shout about

HOW I FEEL

I feel with limbs, sinew and nerve
A still, small voice nagging, in heartbeats
Changing day by day, with a memory forgetting
The feet are made of clay

I feel with thought, experience and verve
With needs, irrelevant, desires unable to compete
Knowing this goes one way, the body crippling
The hair full of grey

I feel with gusto, adrenaline and curve
With a sparkle, undiminished, in a full-on heat
Unprepared to give sway, despite senses slipping
The body in decay

REMINISCING

To reminisce is wonderful
But it is often a trick of memory
You kid yourself that things were
So much better way back then

Reading Festival '89 - it's not quite true
You fondly remember sharing a cold beer
On a hot summer's afternoon, but
She never saved a drop for you

THE FUTURE

The future is a shining destination
Already, in part, an act of memory
It is the promise of children dreaming
A wonderland of great uncertainty

Tomorrow, like the here and now
Holds all our best laid plans in one
Yet we shape it without realising how
Or caring for what we have done

HIDING PLACE

I found their hiding place
Sterile to my detection
All lilac and laminate floored
It was always going to be like this
My tireless work without reward

The light settles on her face
The smile without recognition
To think we knew each other once
How strange our lives unfold
The mistress of all surveyed
A stranger at the door
Fate warm to one, the other cold

THIS IS MY DEPRESSION

This is my depression
With which little can compare
Save blood along the coastline
Radiation in the air

LET HIM GO

The big wheel turns full-circle
His stomach etched between sky and land
A terror reigns beneath the games
It is much too much to bear, so let him go
He does not know the pain there caused
And really does not care

A torture stains his face
A ghost train stance, a dodgem blow
There's candyfloss dye in his hair
So let him go, for my own sake
He does not belong
And will not be happy there

HOOKED

I would do anything to get away
From the sound that resonates
The sea-shocked roar of sky
The pain of net and parting
But I can not
For I am hooked between
Two different worlds
In one I live, in one I die

WATCHING YOU SLEEP

Watching you sleep
I contemplate your dreams
Imagine your imaginings
Where are you – am I there too?
Or here, distant to your mind
An inch too far, too few?

I want nothing more
Watching you sleep
Than to be part of your being
Half of your whole

Under your eyelids
I burrow deep
Sharing the secret
You're so desperate to keep

YOU CULTIVATE MY VERY EARTH

You cultivate my very earth
Long fingers turn the soil
The seeds you plant grow deep within
A testimony to your care and toil

You rake the channels of my heart
Tenderly caressing their worldly nakedness
You tug at my roots, drive demons out
Make sorrow less and less

THE HAPPY ACCIDENT

The happy accident of meeting you
And all the good things that it led to
It was never in my control, but I wouldn't
Change a thing –
You get what you deserve, I guess
Sometimes it works out, sometimes not –
Perhaps the planets need to align
I don't know. It just happened
I didn't think of it or anything like that
Just let it wash all over me like a dream
I'm glad I did

HOW SHE IS

She cares for me, though sometimes she is fighting against the tide
God knows I try her patience and my way is as wrong as hers is right
But in moments, when the world can go hang itself in the quiet of night
She is all to me that I would be to her, and much more beside
She gives me the light to shine, the darkness to hide

REMEMBERING HER NAME

Back in the day nothing crushed you
Your world stretched out like a beautiful butterfly
A landscape of wings unfettered, filled with gold
Where things happened as they always should

But the sky darkened to an inevitable hue
Your words lost to the flutter of humanity
And yet you made the best of it you could
Without wanting things to happen they did

Blinkered and unable to see it through
Your dreams ceased to make you free
All that you believed in divided and misunderstood
With her name as epitaph for all that was good

THIS IS THE SUMMER

This is the summer of our discontent
Made virtuous fury by the sins of Minster
In the pubs and workplaces old angers have new vent
As we find those whom we elected to represent
At best careless, at worst bent

This is a Britain where Banker's O/Ds are open-ended
And child poverty viewed an acceptable price to pay
Where massive payouts are stoutly defended
And we're told that the gloom is here to stay

This is a country feeling ill at ease
A land of the blind where the one-eyed man is king
Where solutions are found whilst shooting the breeze
Where we catch it, bin it, and kill as we sneeze

DEAR SIR

I just wanted some advice
Nothing heavy

Only
A few words
Of encouragement

A pointer
In the right direction

To be told that
I am wasting my time
Nothing will come from it

Or
To carry on regardless

I didn't expect silence
After the question posed

Is nothing
Proof that
It is pointless
Just asking

OUTLOOK

I can see what you are doing
And you can see what I do too
Through a mirror of inventiveness
The hours are laid bare

There are no secrets
The machine will not yield
The date, the time, the place
All actions are recorded

Perhaps for posterity
A moment's checking
Before the delete is tapped
And the day erased

THE OBVIOUS

Sometimes we let it slip by, the obvious
Goes ignored, like a nagging symptom
Ashamed, or embarrassed, we often dismiss
The better part of ourselves

We hide it from the world, diverting attention
We find different routes, other clues to follow
Then, years later, succumb, throwing off inhibition
In a single act paly of release

We let it wash all over us, finding sadness
In setting it free, mourning the time spent
The endless possibilities, the pain caused by
Our refusal to acknowledge, the obvious

HOW THE WORLD WILL END

It won't be with a roar, or flashing lights
More likely the end of birdsong, shorter days and darker nights
Not noticeable at first, there will be oblivion to the clues
Bees vanishing, a dead bird here and there: nothing on the news

It won't be with a single act, a word said out of place
Just a gradual solidifying of the inevitable; a cold look upon her face
Not with a bang but with a whimper, there will be no messenger sent
Just us, too far gone to care, or to know what it meant

I NOTICE THINGS

Sat here, I notice things
Like odd socks, a flash of leg
Varicose veins, the shiny shoes
Of the men in suits
Busybodies busying

Cyclists frantically pedalling
Mother's frowns, babes crying
The not-so-urgent call
The jangle of absent change
How empty pockets appear full

The dust to throat on the baking
Sun, wind, rain and snow
Staggering stags, their bling
Gaggles of hens, a missing ring
I notice things, but go unnoticed

PERHAPS

Perhaps by chance we met for reason
And it was something we could not know
Unless it was just complete coincidence
With nothing but circumstance to show

Perhaps we searched too hard for cause
Where no justification could be found
And our perception of the scenes unfurling
Just wishful thinking turned around

Perhaps the reason was not as thought
And other subtle processes were at play
And there was something else to see
Beyond each other there that day

SHINE

Stay strong and remain forever proud
Ignore the bawdy and barracking crowd
They would devour your own true worth
Malignant acolytes, scorchers of earth
Waste no energy on them or foolish tears
On days siphoned from your glory years

But shine bright in your brave new world
Take comfort from the pure love we held
Forget the blemished words I didn't mean
Like Angels' kisses, few and far between

Acknowledgements

There are several people I would like to thank: Denise Mayo who has listened to my reading many of these poems aloud and encouraged me and believed in the whole thing. Mum and Dad and all family members for their support. Dom Walter for friendship and artistic inspiration – great cover Dom! Likewise Wendy soon-to be Walter who has been genuinely excited by the prospect of my doing this. Thanks also to Roger Farr who gave me some brilliant ideas and Lina Mezhecka who took some great photos. I am truly grateful. I must also thank Jason Applin for the great job he did putting two of the poems to music and taking things to another level. Ta also to Neil, Angela and the clan for turning up at the first reading of Spark. Much appreciated. Thanks to Gulliver and Athene for keeping me in the loop. Thanks to all those friends who have liked and said nice things about my work. Big thanks to Louise Shillingford who likes and gets what I am trying to do. Thanks also to Mark Ashworth for encouragement and friendship over many years. Most importantly, love to Clare, thanks for everything.

Nigel Pounds

Reading, September 2015

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In some of us it's obvious, in others less clear*