

Flying Free



Alison Chisholm

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Flying Free : Alison Chisholm

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COME ON IN THE CLOUDS ARE LOVELY.

Why do they seem to stand so long, not
moving - mouthing
words that make no sense?

I cannot see for the glass
embedded in my face
and no one tries to help me.

My wife, for instance, whining
"So much blood"
Like a demented amateur Lady Macbeth.

Touch me, hold me until they come.
They can do
remarkable things in their assembly line.

She only stands there while the others
talk in slurring senseless rhythms
with no words and no comfort.

I am forgotten - should try to get some sleep -
but I cannot stay here
with my guts fouling the pavement. I

move rapidly away wading
through marshmallow kaleidoscopes
bird song and trees growing through my footsteps

and seeing
and seeing

STRANGER IN THE PARK

Every day he watches
as I feed crumbs to the sparrows.
and I see him
wanting to approach me. I
can laugh at this man:
he dare not even speak.
I can toss my head
and lead
him on across the grass
to thick shrubbery.

then.

teasing,
run away and
watch him search for me.

Come on,
follow me if you dare.
YOU ARE NOTHING.
I will play your games
and laugh
as you blunder after me
still afraid to speak.
COME AFTER ME

At last he is coming
faster and gaining ground

and I cannot laugh for I see
he is strong
and today
he is not going to speak.

WHAT PRICE SUCCESS?

At school he sailed through every subject, scored straight A's, and learned to stand on his own feet.

He never even had to cram or cheat.

Persistent study brought its own reward.

He graduated, then he studied law,
because his father and the Don agreed
that it was likeliest he would succeed
in practice as a young solicitor.

He married at the age of thirty-one
a County type, ex-Rodean. She supplied
two regulation children. They reside
in mortgaged bliss this side of Surbiton.

His whole life breathes success, agree his peers.

He's the most crashing bore they've known in years.

ARIEL

I would fly free.

Wings of my spirit fluttered liberty
when he who masters all the elements
undid the curse on me.

I would fly free.

My island's limits are the sea
which, limitless, constricts imagining
more than my prison tree.

I would fly free.

I can outwraith the wraith that bonded me.
and yet I weep, mortal chains
binding, forbidding me to flee.

I would fly free.

FIRE CHILD

The lion of the sun roars through my veins,
shoots flame from my fingertips,
heats a moment's irritation to ablaze.
I fall prey to ancient pride,
surge hope to mount my sureness.
claw vicious at imagined enemies.
Sometimes I strain to feel, but never fear
hot conflagrations singeing everyone
who tries to warm his hands before my heat.

More strange, I sit to contemplate the knowing
mother's quirk or midwife's could have sent
me scurrying sideways through the sea.

WORM TURNING

I know I'm just a sentimental fool,
but she deserves a treat. For fifteen years
she's done her best to make a home. Careers
were not for her, I told her. Never cruel,
I've shown her (firmly) how she ought to be,
and let her entertain my guests herself.
I never mention she'd been "on the shelf"
some time before she came to marry me.
So here we are - myself, the little wife -
all set to stretch our minds upon a tour
of Southern Italy. She'll find a score
of memories to warm her little life.
I hope she will appreciate the way
I've planned some culture for her every day.

I know I was a fool to marry him,
but fifteen years of punishment's enough.
For fifteen years I've had to watch him stuff
himself and boring friends with steaks and gin.
He even thought he had a perfect right
to mould my conduct, never let me go
to work. "A woman's place is in the home".
What happiness I've had has been in spite
of all his patronising arrogance.
Now he assumes I'm simply here to hang
upon his arm. But here the heady tang

of freedom will excite my feet to dance.
I'll dump the sod in Naples, then I'll flee
to Paradise in exile on Capri.

COMING TRUE

Foreboding overwhelms me in the sweep
of rain that suffocates my senses. Light
of ordinary day points at my fright,
and shock drags waking to a nightmare sleep.
This is the place I know from dreaming deep
the fears your life will crumble in my sight.
Here you are destined to begin the night
that swamps imagining to make me weep.

I cannot keep you back. I have to see
reality and dream fuse as you hurl
yourself up at the bracken covered slope.
You yield yourself to earth, rejecting me.
One kiss chokes life from you with grit and soil -
you give the ground my final shred of hope.

STUDENTS' CRICKET MATCH.

They played hard in the overbearing heat,
protected from the sun by beer
and handkerchiefs with knotted corners.

They were

sportsmen by default, running
graceless, reaching short.

Their girls were tawdry followers,
with packs of sandwiches and lukewarm cans
outdoing every other one
in dress and innuendo. Noise
of willow and the furtive coupling
fragmented high into the chestnut trees
fell back

in scattering of leaves, cold confetti.

They

in desperation

mindless of the constant tides

hit wider than the game's encompassing
to thrust away from them the longer range
of shadows. Aloud

they laughed obscenities into the face
of time to come

and played

hard in the overbearing heat.

LOCKED IN A TRAIN.

Locked in a train -
train going nowhere, fixed beside
oblivion. It is
warm here, there are lights,
the comfort makes a womb of it.
Outside
splatters of rain
mottle the greasy dark
refracting
hazy haloes around a streetlight
into diffusion. Twigs
pierce the blackness of grass and sky.
Inside
cigarettes breathe air into staleness
coursing through too many.
The glass
is crusted with rust, ageing our wait.
Heat buffets our legs. The cold
of being among alien others
suffocates.
Locked in a train, and up and down the line
on station platforms husbands,
children, lovers all go home,
shaking their heads.
We are a million miles from Adelstrop -
and just this side of hell.

WALTZ.

If only he'd ask me to
spin to his music, I'd
float in his arms till the
heavens should fall.

Now he's approaching, and
yes he is asking me,
- one two three, one two three,
turn at his call.

Moving so lightly he
leads me across the floor,
intricate twirls where I
answer his lead;

- dip on the down beat and
lift for the following -
closer together, the
dance gathers speed.

There is no question now,
just a progression, two
moving as one while the
music still plays.

Steps of the dance form more
complex imaginings
- one two three, one two three -
measuring days.

Weeks change to years as we

spin to the playing, the
heavens are falling too
fast for our feet.

- dip on the downbeat and
lift for the following -
never again will our
frail footsteps meet.

One invitation lasts
more than a lifetime, an
intimate sidestep to
fuse our design.

But never forget that one
dance is mere transience,
--one two three, one two three -
cheated by time.

BATFLIGHT

Crumple of black paper
unfurls along the floor to be a bat.
Mouse ears, mouse wary
twitch their want of sound. He
crawls from the feet
aimed to kick away his strangeness,
bound to the earth by fear to fly.
Fingers fumble him into his element,
bat toes groping for familiar
grain of wood. Fright forces
wings into tissue stretch
to warn his way to flight. He drags
his certain beauty: poses
poised before the flying,
sails through darkness
he possesses. Bat black.

MERSEYSIDE POETRY MINIBOOKS SERIES

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WINDOWS

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