

Flying Free



# Alison Chisholm

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Flying Free : Alison Chisholm

Merseyside Poetry Minibooks Serles No 28  
First published 1985 by Windows,

·22 Roseheath Drive, Liverpool L26 9UH, Merseyside.

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Acknowledgments.

Some of these poems have previously appeared in  
*Doors, Poetry Survey, Tops, Success and Orbis.*

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ISBN 0 907950 29 9

Windows receives financial assistance from Merseyside Arts

## 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.

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ISBN 0 907950 29 9