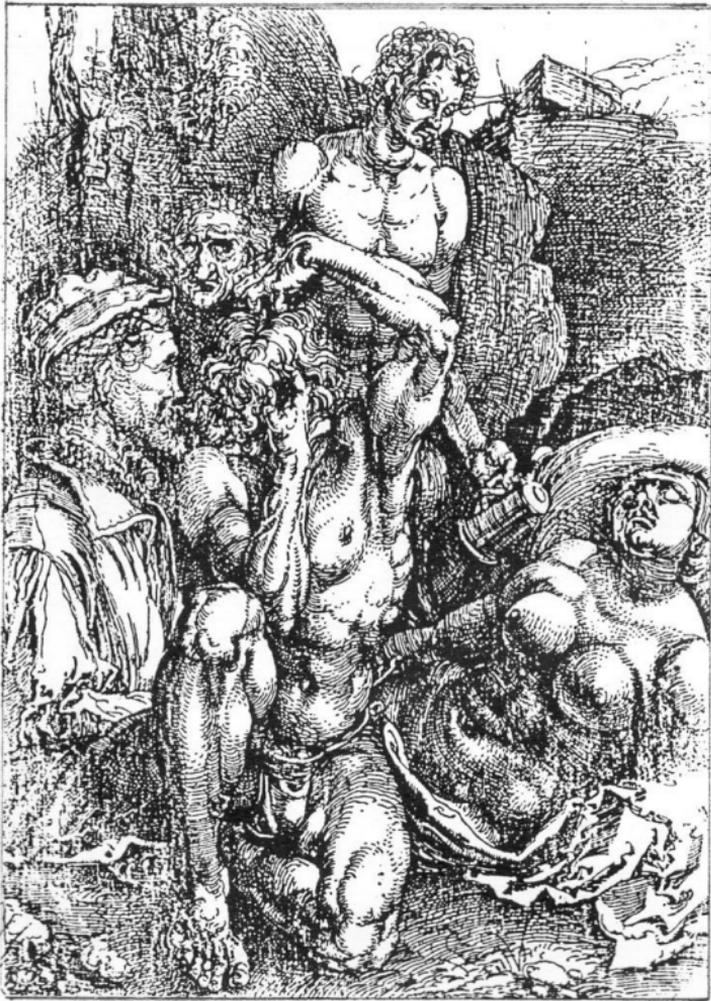


From The Day Room



Kit Wright

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1.

Many are non-plussed
By the unexpected behaviour of their clothes
And have mislaid forever .
The art of wearing the face.

Gums wedged tight or mouths
Locked open in a scream that travels inward
Homelessly :

Here we all are on your holy mountain.

It's a little bit nippy up here on the mountain
For some are shivering, never
Stop shivering, also

Unseasonably warm. That man
Is caked with lava, head to hip.

2.

Come in, come in,
Don't shut the door.
Take care your feet
Don't touch the floor.

Come one, come on.
Avoid the wall.
Whatever you do
Don't breathe at all.

Stand back, stand back.
What is it? Ask
But whisper through
Your cotton mask.

Back out. Make sure
The door is closed.
Now wash your hands
And burn your clothes.

3.

Joan's mouth is a crematorium.
Six years after her husband died

It bums and bleeds and weeps, she cannot beat
His flaring ashes down with her tongue.

All in the mind and pain
(What was said? What left unsaid?)
A child of the mind
That eats the mother.

The widow is burned alive.

4.

Where cigarettes are the entire economy
Domestic policy is locker love. .
Pink stones to arm the military,
White coats for the judiciary,
One hall in hell for all of the above.

5.

The male nurses, without exception,
Corpulent, good-natured,
Moustachioed forty-year-olds.
Five of them. How can this be?

They must have a club where they stand and swap
Rounds and jokes and mistakes and moustaches,
Taking each other's paunches
like a pulse.

6.

Our road's a green carbolic corridor
Off which on certain days the sun
Ripens in small groves. In one

I found her crying because she had lost her lipstick
And; so she said, her bones.

The sun poured ,down.

We found the lipstick, couldn't find the bones.

7.

Unspeakable blue
Observed
Through unbreakable glass.

How long have those humanoid beech-limbs,
Their green-dust glaze a parody of spring,
Aped inmates? Patients here
Slept on hay and this afternoon
We queue like sheepish children
For the tablet trolley,
Candy counter that won't divert
The all-day double-honking donkey bray
Of Josie,
Without mind. Or is it
Meaning, is it
What we call gladness in the natural world
As the faint cry of those gulls
Dancing over the kitchen pickings :

A wheeling above
The leavings, mirth
In what she might have been?

8.

Reg was a Ship's Officer.
Blue Funnel, Ellermans.

Alert on the bridge and likewise
Scholarly in the chartroom.

He wheeled great cargoes
Through the Southern seas.

Struck off the port, he slumps
Blindly on the windowsill.

His head plunged into his arms
That are guiding nothing.

9.

Pat threw herself away
From babies, from
A seventh floor. Foetus-coiled
She sleeps all day .
On two sun-coloured plastic chairs,
Snug by the mother-warmth
Of the radiator.

10.

One sits fluttering, fluttering.
Poor, pale moth stuck through with a pin.

One seeks me out to whisper
Extraordinary confidences
Concerning the holy ghost
And a computer. One

Rages up and down the day-room
Shouting, "It's shite." Everyone's right. .

11.

The evening canteen
Is where like minds meet .
Eruptions of senile fisticuffs,
Dancing and even
Love I've seen:

One childishly sprawled
On another's knee,
Sucked kisses with cigarettes
Endangering the endearments.

Behind a partition,
The healthful sane are playing badminton.
The shuttlecock soars to heaven like a searchlight,
Drifts to the earth like snow.

Our side
Has a stout Edwardian billiard table,
Permanently sheeted,
Reserved for the diversions of the dead.

12.

Many streets in the hospital,
"The largest of any kind
In Europe" when it was built and many
Minds within the mind.

"The shifting population
Of a grid-iron city."
Pathetic co-operations and courtesies,
Hunger and pity.

This is your holy mountain,
Your shallow grave.
When nothing's left this is what's left
To save.

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KIT WRIGHT was born in 1944. His published work includes *Treble Poets 1* and *The Bear Looked Over The Mountain*, which won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award, The Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize and was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. *Bump Starting The Hearse* is due from Hutchinsons in 1983. He has also written books of poetry for children. He lives in Liverpool.

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