

The Brand New Dark

MARK WALDRON was born in New York and grew up in London. He writes adverts for a living and lives in east London with his wife and son. *The Brand New Dark* is his first collection.

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MARK WALDRON



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For Julie

Contents

Underneath the Gone Sky	1
For Them There's Nothing	2
Dog	3
<i>At the Official Function, Captain Green</i>	4
The Very Slow Train	5
Emap in Australian Review	6
Carrier	7
Carrier II	8
Carrier III (Peace)	9
Carrier IV (In port)	10
As a Boy	11
The King is in His Counting House	12
Welcome to Disneyworld	13
The Sheets and Pillowcases	14
Early this Morning	15
The Well-Dressed Street	16
My Friend Marcie is on the Insensate Beach	17
Without Me, You're Nothing	18
There is So Much Green Idling in the Trees	19
Poor Derek	20
The Run	21
I was Writing Recently on the Subject of Mice	22
Look, From Where I'm Sitting at the Bar	23
The Sausage Factory	24
Be Careful	25
23	26
The Bears are Skiing Through the Trees	27

This is for You	28
Question 2	29
The Luxury Husbands are Working	30
<i>George Said</i> , Thinking is What the Dead Do	31
This is Me Speaking	32
From the Shore	33
The Sophisticated Odour of Love	34
Microscopic Autumn	35
The Barman Turned	36
Baghdad Lockdown as Troops Hunt for Britons	37
Gunter is a Medium-Sized Bird	38
The One You See is Only a Replica	39
In the Space Between the Curtain	40
Entropy	41
Yes, Everything You Need is Here	42
We Think We See Richness, Said Dougal	43
He's Face Down in the Lake	52
Listen	53
In the Park	54
It's in Black and White	55
Juice	56
I Called the Plumber to Say, the Lavatory Does Flush	57
In the Garden, Birds in Feather Masks	58
The Dining Table	59
Their Lobes, Like Earrings, Hang	60
Would You Excuse Me Madam	61
I Suppose You Could	62
Look, My Love	63

His Hand is in My Head	64
There's a Small, Blurry Dog Jumping Up and Down and Barking	65
It's Hard Work, Pulling the Ghost Out of a Man	66
The Brand New Dark is Getting In	67
Be Quiet	68

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Underneath the Gone Sky

they stood, stretched with relief and fear,
the spilt night over everything.

The wall she was against was on the world's edge,
her back against her shirt, her shirt against her coat,

her coat against the brick, its knuckle grit holding her on.
And beneath unspeaking clothes, he found her

hopelessly bare, peaceful, shocked,
as though her clothes had been her skin

her skin, flesh. I promise
they were absolutely ruined by its magic.

For Them There's Nothing

They can never ride from Karlova Ves to Spitalska,
watching other trams and pale stones of faces

sunk under the glass; they can't have an itchy insect bite,
an awful cold, or let their sleepy, humid gaze

rest upon their feet beneath the water in the bath.
The things we make, the TV shows that leave

these muted traces of their colours on our clothes,
the foreign films that float below

the stripped out letters of their subtitles,
the songs we listen to and sing, none of these are for them.

They don't go out to eat, not even in the sullen,
almost empty cafés, where the world's bright juice

runs in hell-bent rivers between and through the tables
and shines on the floor and goes out onto

the green-grey street where it will rain later
and the false ceiling of cloud is lit from above;

they can't go out into the garden and turn to look up
at the curtained windows of the bedroom;

they never smell the plain wood of the boxes
we install them in and never even see the only true dark.

Dog

I had thought of you as I lay fighting
off this sleep. Now I find you as you squat
my dream as a dog. A dark bitch biting
on my dream's air. Its fur, like your hair cropped,
its teeth as white as yours, its mouth as wet.
And soon, when I awake to the new day,
you will be gone, but I will not forget
the sweet scent of you which I know will stray
between this sleeping and their wakeful place.
And now you come and look in my dog eye
and know that you don't want a man's embrace
and know that you don't want this love to die.
So sleep my bitch, within this sleep of ours
and dream within our dream through our dog hours.

At the Official Function, Captain Green,

hard as nails, wonderful hard,

utters: Mrs Spat, let me speak these brown and blue,

these wet and liberated stones, let me drip them from my lips,
to clatter sweetly in your ear, to rumble through your memory

and then to topple to your tongue, these amaranthine candies,
which then will taste of your unfrequented and mouth-watering mouth.

I can see you with them on your pillow later, counting them,
or moving them, this way and then this, thrilled

at their arrangements, smiling at a story, at their still sticky colours,
at the baby clicks they'll make even here,

out on their own, beyond their original home,
my butter mouth that pushed them into the world.

The Very Slow Train,

on the downhill stretch,
moves with the speed with which I grew
and with which I will, in my old age, shrink back
towards the warm and waiting ground—
myself a piston on its single push and pull,
among the billions more,
who grind this almost round world round.
And on the flat we slow to an adhered stamp's progress
across its envelope, or so it seems.
Whole yawning generations
come and go between two sleepers here.
And gazing out the window,
I watch a snail dart and flit beside the track.
The snail, which, before we reach our destination,
will have evolved, its descendents inhabiting shells
with living rooms papered in flock.
They'll rest their single feet on poufs.
They'll watch our train pull in
through windows mucus thin.
They'll see ourselves emerge as orbs of shining mind.
Please God, wait for me.

Emap in Australian Review

Emap is to review its Australian
consumer magazine business
and French exhibitions division.
The review was announced as part
of the company's commitment to
burning brown bees, pulled to the
(Oh, Gesundheit!) immolating honey.

They flare like little Fockers writing
HELP-LA-DI-DA and OH, SO SORRY
in the mad and some might say,
'fornicating' sky, their tiny souls
baling out and coming down smiling.
Look closely at their faces.
They look exactly like me.

Carrier

She goes through water. She is made of bread,
beans, telephone conversations, milk, tea, music and shampoo.
Planes are on her decks. Like egrets on a hippopotamus;
like idiots, or children. Her flanks?
Well surely they are old and quite forgotten thoughts.

Her metal is thick. In the middle of each slab
it's as dark as it, one day, will be.
The weight would press you as thin as skin,
as thin as nothing. The anchor chains are of a monstrous toy.
The links hold each other

and where they touch is some awful pain.
Now look away and listen.
I think she is telling you something.
To be down here, in the silly, dark waves of the world's dull stomach;
the sticky surface, the clicking foam, the dirty smell of it.

Fact: the carrier's salted sides might be meat,
or my unhappiness, or my father, or something that for the moment,
slips my mind. They are going down underwater, going up above it.
Be sorry for it, please, because it's ours. I'm sure it is.
Yes, I am quite sure it is!

Carrier II

Come closer.
Come closer still, this time.
Right up against her hull.
Put your pink cheek on it,
close your tired eyes, little thing.

And be still, though you
may move your toes;
move your blind and infant moles
in the damp and dark at the shoe's end,
where upper's stitched to sole.

Yes, your rubbery and nourished tummy
will mime the carrier's pitch and roll.
Aye, her pitch and roll, Sir!
Ah, the cracking waves, Sir! The creaking waves,
on this forever undecided sea.

So rest your cheek upon her and know her to be true.
Unbending as she is. Driven as a cow,
by the stumbling men within,
whose aims are jolly and unknowing and unknown by her,
pushing on, above the plummeting deep of sea.

Carrier III (Peace)

He said to me,
we're not afraid of the warm nosed missile,
the charming bringer of itself, carrying itself as its gift,
a bottle which is a guest,
a moth grub rocket that makes quick holes
in the fabric of a boat, Sir.
Out here, displacing sea,
the unknowable foam, the sea a darkening
that draws and redraws itself correcting.
The waves toss and turn, bless them,
but we are on deck, among hard, stiff birds,
with our headphones playing us nothing,
holding our lollipops, we're barely sick with joy.

Carrier IV (In port)

Honestly sir, he said,
from in my painter's hanging cradle I have stared,
have barely rolled my wet, my quite aquatic eyes
(their looking coming out as fingers of anemones),
on small and varied parts of her enormous sides.
The metal seems, from here, as soft as painted canvas
(you can smell the oil still), the grey a mix of every colour
and every colour being, once upon a time, a thought.
I mean and wish to see so well
that I am able Sir, to find the colour's discrete parts;
to use my eyes as tongues to taste the single things
within the old (but still not rotten) stew.
And I ignore, and will, the foolish water underneath.
The light on it as little talk of friendly people in a bar.
The infant waves suck pointlessly.

As a Boy,

he saw God once, or his deed at least.
The sun coming down in a blessing—
the clouds part, the sun comes out,
the invisible angels sing an inaudible hymn,
that kind of thing.
And at other times he spoke to trees,
and them to him, or so he told me.
And in the meeting, last Tuesday,
in Conference Room 2,
he caught the pretty girl's eye,
composed a look meant to say,
How boring this is. And she smiled at him.
And his smile was slung from his ears,
making his face hot behind it.
And later in the toilets, he reprised his bored look,
and the smile and the eyes,
checking their effect in the mirror.
Age is coming down on him like a stone.

The King is in His Counting House

not counting out his money, but making some swanky
kind of love to his secretary,

her knickers clumped happily in his back pocket,
her behind positioned, not uncomfortably,

on the edge of the splendid, inlaid desk,
and collecting its superbly inconspicuous impression,

a barely discernible and effacingly transient
endorsement of its quality.

We may appraise later her bottom's embossment,
when she's had sufficient, and gets down from the table,

but for now, their shared and sumptuous sensations
are as turgid and as oiled as all the very eyes

that go about their business beyond the castle keep's
thick and stoned walls.

Yes, I'm afraid I've spent too long inside again,
when all I meant to show you was the Queen

eating sticky honey in the garden,
listening to the rummaging brook

and smiling at the small,
white joke of the sun's telling;

and the black bird watching the snub nose wriggle
in the middle of the maid's face.

Welcome to Disneyworld

It's hot in my suit
and I can't scratch
my itch
with my fat, white fingers.

And when I breathe in here
I can smell the smell
of last night's beer
and of Minnie.

She's standing over there.
Sometimes I think she looks at me
with her unblinking eyes
and her fixed smile.

The Sheets and Pillowcases

in this place, have a design printed on them
and he imagines the patterns might get up his nose while he sleeps,

that he'll feel them, rough on his cheek, or that they'll free themselves
from the fabric and slip beneath his eyelids,

to work their way around behind his eyes—open
behind their blinds of lids—and that they'll slice the optic nerve

to leave the marbles spinning, independent and random,
fleetinglly pointing inwards, towards their severed cable, but unseeing,

as he is when he turns out the light and finds the sheets as smooth
on his skin as if they had been white.

Early this Morning,

and the flushed, embarrassed darkness
in its totally explicit nightie

is discovered hunkered in the bushes yet again
by the cheeky gleam of dawn.

And inside the condo, Marcie reads on the white
and paper page of 'Happy' Hooper's bedside copy

of *Positive Thought for the Day* that everything
in the whole world was made in the twinkling stars,

even Hooper's long and sleeping hands and this,
her pale and indigo waiting.

And Marcie's hopeless loving of me,
which I have made, is fading as she stands alone

in the teeming light of a rising, busy sun.