

HOW  
LONG  
IS NOW

*Tanzania*



JUNE 2015

## STONE FLOWERS

**T**hey say the city is grey, overhead and underfoot. They say it's a home for the broken and the damned. They say there's no life in those streets, that nature's overtaken on dual-carriage intersections.

Open your eyes.

We don't have roaming beasts or squarely planted fields, you can't smell the hawthorn from the fencedoff fences, and maybe the bloom of life on a Saturday night is too strange to accept, but don't tell us there isn't beauty here.

What you call a den of hedonism, we call a hub of life. A place to congregate, to meet your fellow (wo)man and plant ideas not seeds; here the wild flowers grow through cracks atop lead rooves.

Life finds a way.

So the sound of sirens and the smell of petrol takes some getting used to, sure. But if you have any heart you'll not dismiss the grey, for when you peel back the layers you'll find the core: humanity, at its best, struggling to strive and striving to survive.

This is our city, our home.

This is the home of

*stanzas*

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*to the streets  
and the streetlights  
for lighting our way  
home*

TIMES SQUARE

*John Collins*

the loneliness of chaos  
wandering, searching for a sense of you  
green shirt, wet lips  
your eyes, we meet

car rides into the city bring memories  
swarming at every intersection  
how desperate my stay without you  
even for the briefest time

a glass of water, minerals with ice  
you hold firm as i lay trapped beneath you  
times square at midnight  
we will do it all again, if only a block or two

how pitiful my departure if i cannot see your face  
disappear beyond a crowd once more  
you think this is misery  
it is elation and it is joy and this is why we rise

SUMMER (IN A HUNDRED THOUSAND PARTS)

*Rob Carlile*

This city offered me the air for my first breath,  
in Autumn, in the delivery room of the bons hospital  
like it has to a hundred thousand others.

I accepted it without thought.  
I was young and impulsive.  
Cork's Autumn air, half a season brewing,  
filters out the colour of the city.

Winter is forever next, worry is suspended in the air  
each breath tries to convince you  
that fear stops things catching you off guard.

The summer air is different.  
In the summer the city reveals  
its one hundred thousand parts  
all dressed for the Summer,  
modeling the liveliest quarters  
of their wardrobes  
Beautiful and revealing,  
appealing to the best and worst in us.

A season of smiles and sunglasses,  
blackout blinds for the windows to the soul,  
an attractive way to deal with too much,  
because nothing is more tempting than  
the forbidden to the rebel county.

Curiosity thrives in a university town,  
and sensitivity thrives around beauty,  
So the city has selected  
for the curious and the sensitive,  
and sunglasses and smiles in the sunlight in the city  
Are why the sensitive  
have to fall in love so often.

Over and over every day, for ninety days,  
sending up their sighs, so that  
Cork's summer air is full of life,  
every distinct hundred thousandth of it to be shared  
among one hundred thousand distinct universes  
infinite in scope,

one hundred thousand manifestations  
of a universe experiencing itself,  
stardust lighting up for each other in the sunlight.

When beauty fills the streets beautiful  
and silly ideas fill a curious and sensitive city,  
fill each breath of summer air,  
in a hundred thousand parts,

and convince you that every breath  
you've been taking,  
right back to the very first,  
was a good decision.

STREETLIGHT STARS

*Lauren Griffin*

LED stars decorate the backdrop of  
our suburban forest  
Evergreen buildings  
topped with slate leaves  
and  
R A I N B O W S  
springing from  
pools of glass  
Lingering along  
shopfront paths.  
Diamonds  
litter the  
water's  
edge  
as  
Summer  
awakens.

This high-rise vastness  
gives freedom to my thoughts.  
Beauty can be seen writhing  
every crack or 'blemish',  
it takes the right eyes to see.

This city is home,  
here is an exotic familiarity,  
just as beautiful as any other.  
The mind has to open.

I walk these streets  
to my own beat.  
No one else's.  
Creativity flourishes without the stroke of a pen,  
or the flick of a paintbrush.

I can walk with serenity,  
smiling at passers by,  
not because of social convention  
but because my heart wants to say hello.

Aesthetically pleasing may not be  
what pleases everyone.  
Walk the streets as a stranger,  
To relish the beauty of home.

















I THINK WE'D DO MUCH BETTER TO HAVE –  
*Eoin Ó Muirí*

– sex

And wake up still together in my room  
With the window half open  
                    and a breeze from the street  
and the cars like the ocean  
                    as they always are  
                            when I'm in bed.  
And we could look out the window and see  
                    the terrace with the bunting  
                    and the brown, crispy christmas tree  
                            that's been there since christmas.  
And you could help me with my poetry –  
You could point out where a line  
                    seems wrong, and scrutinize me  
                            for my awkward punctuation.  
And I could show you all my favourite songs,  
                    and that might help you  
                            with your lyrics.  
And we could do all of this from the seat of my bed  
because  
                    we'd be after having sex –  
And so the day would open  
                    up to us – like  
                            a pink lotus.

BUKOWSKI, MY FRIEND

*Eoin Ó Muirí*

close to you after you've  
left this hell  
who knows in what  
absurd and grotesque  
place you may now dwell!

Picked up by the tentacles  
of a terrible goddess  
eaten a thousand times  
but never digested. In  
the awful make up of  
her face you'd smile and say  
'Come on baby!'

Or maybe  
you're still at that  
eternal racetrack  
next to some blond  
in a mini-skirt  
all tits and ass  
trembling as your horse  
comes in.

Whatever, either way  
I am here  
On a concrete bench  
in a beautiful park  
thinking of you.  
Like you ever  
thought  
of me.

A SWALLOW'S NEST

*Simon Benson*

I once saw a swallow's nest,  
just outside my window.  
Wedged twixt wall and water pipe.  
a very contemporary balancing act.

Cushioned, lay in it three fragile futures.  
Parents so hectic to provide,  
forgetting to supervise.  
One mouth less to feed.

They say curiosity killed the cat,  
but in this case  
the cat killed the curious.  
Not even hungry.

Those who can't screech are so forgotten.  
Almost as if protesting the non-existence of its sibling,  
another too ceases to speak.  
Withered feathers remain.

The last from fledgling to fully fledged grows,  
grasping at each opportunity its unstable nest could  
provide.  
Cautious to multiply by less than one.  
Scared to provide less than little.

I once saw a swallow's nest,  
just outside my window.  
Once.

Abby Carey strode dappled morning light on O'Callaghan Strand between the leafy grass verge and wrought iron railing which skirted the trail of the Shannon. A little early yet for breakfast with Godet near the butcher said her iPhone spritely as she slowed and thought and rested her arms on the black bars against the river. Nice span of water between the two bridges on both sides and impressive too she considered, how they had invested in the quays across the way with large white features where three rollerblading girls rolled down the wide footpaths - only missing palm trees to trick a drunk to thinking he was in L.A. Working on that stretch for months of course and wonders would be done for trade in the hotels and restaurants and Clohessy's would surely be printing money for weeks with the fine weather.

Abby looked once more at the clock digits on her digital phone and cursed that she could not fire up her Kindle Fire for she'd left it at home on her locker all alone. Still, a stroll instead of a stride would burn the time a fire might and light the corners of her mind that had remained unlit for far too long to help her rest and maybe even sleep that night. Rising slowly from the railing with interlocking fingers high above her head, she arched and stretched deeply in a wide yawn before committing one foot to follow the other along the blackened concrete path.

It was quite beautiful. Abby wondered why but not aloud she had been asked to meet this morning for coffee. There was always a motive of course but the text was odd in tone when one considered all the water under the bridge and there was Sarsfield's now in front of her which was opened some two hundred years previous to great fanfare under the then auspicious title of 'Wellesley Bridge' after the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland – himself a brother to the celebrated 1st Duke of Wellington; not to mention his direct ancestry to the current monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, its overseas dominions and all lands presently allied to the commonwealth, HM Queen Elizabeth II. The gothic spanning arches, pseudo vase pillars and Munster quarried smoked stone had become synonymous with that 'Limerick Greyness' often attributed to the city in time by its detractors of the well – heeled, erroneous and moot variety.

Miz Carey to her students turned the path's corner and stepped onto the bridge, never stepping but taken aback by the panoramic depth of Bridge Street up to Lower William Street ahead and the expanse on either side of water. Clugging cars clugged by in easy streams now the rush had ebbed and the teacher slid her palms along the surface of the grainy cool stone of the parapet while passing the 1916 memorial cross across from the 1900 Limerick Boat Club at Poor Man's Kilkee. Down from the bridge deck, she walked lightly in soft decks up Bridge Street between the brown sorrow of

old Dunne's and the new gaiety of former Riddler's bar where gays once gaily riddled around tables and puzzled the fears of an outer world. Across Henry Street and up towards what she had looked towards on the bridge, Abby traversed the city's main thoroughfare and walked along the wide paths of a revamped William Street past a sandwich bar, a jewellery shop and an electrical store across from a bus stop in front of a street beggar.

Turning onto Little Catherine Street, Miss Carey glanced upon a dark skinned busker opening his violin case for morning's inaugural performance at the exterior of a religious outlet selling religious wares where an elderly vagrant had urinated before daylight moved him to consider his options in a wet house. The busker flicked his brown milky eyes upwards and caught Abby's stare in sadness. This was averted.

Past the busker and across from a life sized plastic butcher outside an identically scaled butchers was a tidy sized coffee shop with hollow metal tables and chairs on the street beneath a wide canopy. Beneath the canopy sat a sparsely dressed middle aged woman of blonde hair and rotund dimensions pinkie finger extension sipping an ice cold brown liquid of the mid – priced and decaffeinated variety. As the lady placed her glass back on the white brown ring stained coaster she noticed Abby's approach behind the plastic butcher and raised one hand in the air to harness her attention with a loud 'You hoo!' Abby reciprocated with the physical but not the oral gesture and spoke softly on arrival at the silver table top.

'Hiya Dolores, it must be nearly six months?'

Dolores Keyes smiled deeply into round cheeks and slid a pair of sunglasses up her moist forehead to nestle in the straight yellow lines of her bottle blonde hair. Abby had long decided that she would loath the woman if she were not the mother of her boyfriend and husband to be.

Dolores spoke heavily of her desire to see her son settle down and asked lightly why they had set no date. It had been due to the coldness of his feet of course and Abby began to feel harassed by the enthusiasm of the mother behind the apathy of the man.

What a man, she thought, and was he even really a man. Stringing her along by his mother's apron strings. Too much of too little is what she had become too used to.

The eternal engagement had been taxing on her soul and she wondered hotly on her desire to engage or converse with his mother. Hot coffees passed between the two women and they left as cool as they had begun.

Abby walked around the corner of Thomas Street and down towards old King Harris once more. The iPhone numerals would say ten twenty and Penny's clock said twenty too but only one was worth her trust. She felt angry at Dillon's thoughtlessness and thought he'd sooner let down his mother than move in with her sooner. Up the garden path she considered as she strolled up O'Connell Street and left to leave into the fashion quarter. Tired now, she browsed the window ledges and stopped half way

along the wide footpath. A pretty pink shop named 'Serendipity' was asking eighty four Euro above a perfect white dress.

Abby smiled. Not quite serendipity love.

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