



FEED THE FIRES,
TEND THE STOCK

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TRINITY TO ST.MARY'S

The air is different, there's heat in it, a rogue Spanish smell.

Trinity shopping centre, a contaminated greenhouse. The escalators are encased in plywood, it's meant to be industrial I suppose, a club or an art installation. There are fluorescent tube lights, pink but sanitised.

I'm thinking about the places we went. Phono, Warehouse, Orbit, others I've forgotten the names of, they were dark places, caverns of dry ice, mirrors and black walls.

My hair's a mess, the heat's flattening it.

Trinity is a circus of chain shops and restaurants, H and M, Primark, shit like that. It's a webbed canopy, an atria wrapping you in it. A new skittishness pulses in the desperate sloganeering, the swarms of Sale signs. The mall is suspended between the fanfare of its opening and the piecemeal closure of its retail units, a shrill defensiveness in the architecture, guards stationed at every level.

I emerge on Briggate. There's a sense of relief in that. I remember watching dozens, no scores, in black adidas come through here and take the Apple Store. I remember jubilation in the breaching of it.

I edge around Victoria Quarter feeling self conscious, judgement I can feel spooling from Reiss and Harvey Nichols.

Somewhere between Kirkgate and Vicar Lane a knot of streets.
The light is more Granada than West Yorkshire. There's a café,
chairs outside. The heat is undoing codes, reordering the city.

The shopping district is the medieval city boundary, you feel it
don't you.

Business Improvement Districts. Men crouching beneath walls at
the cholera grounds.

Burley Bar Stone, the corner of the Headrow and Albion Street.
Leylands to the east where the Chinese Supermarkets were. And
Woodhouse Bar, lost.

Kirkgate market. I remember one Christmas knock off Baileys and
white chrysanthemums. I was living in Woodhouse then. We came
here sometimes, before the bus to Morley or Brighouse to see my
Dad.

The Victorian desire for order is crystallised in the domed glazed
roof. Each stall is clearly demarcated, no contamination. Then the
70s market hall, shimmering spills of fabric, kitchen appliances,
fake handbags.

A café with orange pendant lights; popcorn I can smell, and
frankincense. The man behind the counter speaks Harehills with
mouldings of Amharic. There are booths, you watch the market
through reinforced perspex.

White blokes exuding preproprietary signs, a front room ease how
they talk to the staff. I settle into a corner, a temporary sanctuary. I
feel exposed today, maybe I've been drinking too much. The man is
nice how he speaks to me, there's coffee in a small cup, black with a
spoon of white sugar like a dilated pupil, an amphetamine rush.

Irish sisters with white faces and black garb. I must be in their
corner I realise, between rubber plants and defunct heating
appliances; they cast glances, make a show of discomfort in their
diametric booth.

I don't stay long, twenty minutes that's all, but something changes,
through striated leaves and ketchup bottles i'm seeing other futures.

Stalls selling second hand books, birthday cards five for a quid.
There are suit jackets, camphor scented, like they've just come out
of storage. It's a maze in here, a computer game, you go across and
down, lose your bearings, feel daft when you see the same faces.

Then the sprawl of stalls outside and it starts to unravel, a glitch in the CGI rendering of Victoria Gate, which is there, a hologram beyond.

Heaps of mobiles and chargers, lads trading, handing stuff over.

A woman, my age I think with bleached hair and black eyeliner, someone from the time before.

A stink of weed then, green envelope sealing me.

House clearance, crockery, bric a brac, junk.

Denby coffee cups from the 70s, we had that set, the decades are scored in it, biography in the glazes. I want to re-possess the time, undo the mistakes rising in it. I lift one, examine the roundel pattern, the mid browns and turquoise. It connects to futures that could have been written, ones left behind.

Then i'm jostled a bit, shoved, and I set it back in the roil of chipped mugs and faulty kettles. I'm trying to stop buying stuff, trying to lose the shoals of memory that swim through it all. I'd like to live in a hotel I think sometimes, with clean white walls.

70s platform sandals in a heap of trainers and scuffed boots. They're like Yves Saint Laurent ones, spindly and scorching. Sometimes I wear stuff like that. They make me think of him, the eroticism of those times.

I walk through a wall and it's Victoria gate and the bus station. The last time I was here it was freezing, I had rum in my coffee, there were old people in thin anoraks and black ice, now it's sweltering, the city is liquifying.

I cross Eastgate where I went on that dole course, 1994 it must have been. I realise the building has been demolished, subsumed into the new department store. That's where I met Hinder and the ADF lot. I remember them saying it was a chance to network, like activists they meant not LinkedIn. The connections were resurfacing, a swarm from those overlit conference rooms.

This is the threshold, the boundary, that's why things dissolve, why they try to shore it up. I recognise the government buildings as fortifications, Quarry House as bastille.

Victoria Gate can't tap into the currents, the ecologies at the edge of the city, brothels, gaming houses, the unlicensed and unbound.

John Lewis homewares, glacial arrangements of candles and ornaments, a white security guard circling. I'm in a controlled zone, there's a surplus of stuff but its ordered. I lift things to listen but they can't transmit.

There's never anyone here, it's always chilled to inertia, but I know the agitation will resurface, the intoxication and devilment.

That dole office that wouldn't let me sign, Circle House it's called with greek key pattern climbing the walls. That day marked the end of a six year episode, the crossing of a threshold.

Boarded up warehouses Phase 2, Victoria Gate.

A traffic island with monkey puzzle trees.

Quarry Hill. The flats were demolished in 1976. I remember the orange street lights, the black arches and windows. It rose like a barrier, on and on like Hadrian's Wall. Three i must have been as the motorway slid beneath the city, as I caught the last image of it. My mum was driving, we must have been coming from Brighouse when it made its indelible mark.

A thicket of buddleia, collapsed plywood boards. A sign saying Assessment Centre. Anxiety unfurls from ramps and car doors, you feel it before language, the need to offer comfort, to place a hand on a shoulder. Inside are LED lights, a stark reception, someone who won't look at you.

Footbridge over the A64, site of crossing and conveyance, a new temporality coalescing. Where is he, the mediator, the guardian of the threshold? Perhaps he's the cab driver dropping them off, or the bloke in his wheelchair, maybe it's him saying take good care.

Silver birch, yarrow, wild rose.

The bridge spans the ravine of the A64. I look for the mosaic patterns, the orange lights. This was the first Leeds, tattooed like borstal dots, ink under the skin.

The other side is Burmantofts, is St Mary's. Cholera grounds and brickfields, I see their names rubbed smooth on the ground.

Elland Flags, sandstone, shale. I'm memorising the sequence. Leather hard, bone dry, glaze fired.

Brickworks and quarries, the Glassmakers Arms. I must be close now, Saville Green Wreck, I wonder if that's him with his clay pipe, feeding the fires, tending the stock.

MERRION CENTRE

They've occluded the brutalism, painted the pillars white.

Morrisons have a café now, it wraps around the entrance to the Phono. I don't know when it closed, decades ago probably. The door was a portal, you went from brightly lit shopping arcade to mirrored columns, dry ice and violet gels. Now tables and chairs cling like barnacles or limpets.

ST. JOHNS ARCADE

I want a mcdonalds milkshake but I don't stop for one. I think of Idris in the van, the way we careered into that Drive Thru grabbing stuff when Keisha worked there. That game didn't last long but now, in the melting heat, the sugary cold is tempting. I think about Jamil, what the heat did to us.

I'm getting the 70s again, escalators in orange tubes, motionless seconds of tangerine light. It seemed alien and mesmerising then like the International pool, or the tower blocks in Seacroft.

1978/1988/1996/2022

Traces of older currents. Like those fly posters I found on the towpath, messages from a decade ago.

Maps drawn, papers passed around. And that song on the broken stereo, trapped on repeat. Because this isn't the first time. And as the song starts again the fragments are knitting together.

The table was noisy, clutter and racket and spilled beer.

I knew exactly where I'd seen him before. God. I'd started to think I'd imagined all that, West Yorkshire, the years before London.

And the dots on my hand, the fleeing of that place. I placed both hands over my face, a split second gesture, to let him see, and a smile altered him, opened up another lineage, another set of features. He lit up a cigarette, to let me see his hands, the same borstal dots, blue ink on coral skin.

I recognise him, not in an abstract way, although it felt that way sometimes. I mean I'd seen him before. I sieved through the years, the sound of them brushing as they settled. It comes the way you remember a dream, little pieces at first then slow panning sequences. His hair, longer then, and a leather jacket. He was older than us, twenty two maybe. I remember them hanging around town with outgrown mohawks and copies of Class War. I couldn't comprehend the duality then, the sacrifice.

I'd left signs too, cast them like messages in a bottle. He gave me a flyer, a folded piece of paper with a spiral on it. There was a mobile number, you had to ring on the night for the venue. He told me it was this Saturday, he was in a new band now, a collective. There was a little shock as his fingertips brushed me, the last decade sucked into a vortex. He'd remembered everything, it was part of his dream grammar too.