

The Last Dinosaur in Doncaster

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Strike

Home at last. Frozen
fingers open the matchbox.
One pink match. One black.

Near Extinction

I

No otters in the River Don.
No rest for Sylvia Grant-Dalton
upholding Brodsworth Hall: subsidence
scribbled on the wall –
the roof a drain, gardens besieged.
A losing battle.

Down the lane, Brian
at Brodsworth pit
with his mullet and denim jacket:
windswept, sun-kissed – convinced
they can turn the tide
in landlocked South Yorkshire.

II

Rossington. Like Beirut.
Mrs Selby, watching ghosts
of picket line past –
burned-out cars,
burned-out hearts.
Mr Selby in his chair, waiting
for the snowdrops.

An action shot of Lesley Boulton:
camera in hand, the raised baton –

a pin-up girl at Highfields Welfare.
Wives on battle stations
in the soup kitchen.
Men fed first.

III

Outside the new Frenchgate Centre –
a band of brothers riddled with badges,
rattle buckets – ‘Miners Children’s Xmas Party’
all around the world turned
outside in.

Paul, just nineteen, marching back
with the shift and his granddad
to Markham Main: end of the line,
final man down, under that headgear –
the last dinosaur in Doncaster.

Rosso' Youthy 1984

Talk's all pit-head gates:

men chasing men down Holmes Carr,
under washing lines, through Mr Shaw's marigolds.

Two Tribes reverberates through plastic orange chairs
Angie and Dirty Den hard at it in the pool room.

Maureen hands out squash and *Sherbert Dip Dabs* –
food parcel hand-outs from the Welly soup kitchen

– kin' hell, di ya clock Stig's old man knock that bobby's lid off!

The amber of a cigarette, a finger held aloft
passed around like a syringe full of shit,
drawn into a tail of drooping ash.

Each son careful not to be the one
to let it break away.

Hillards

In the doorway next to Hillards there's a man.
In the doorway next to Hillards there's a man and a dog.
A man and a dog and a cardboard box.
A man, a dog, and a cardboard box, and the people
are walking past the doorway next to Hillards.
Past the man who's been on the edge
for almost a year, a man with a collie on a rope.
A dog watching people walk past –
that weird blue eye. And the dead cigarette
wedged between the man's index and middle finger,
like a salute; reminding himself who he is,
as he stands in the doorway next to Hillards.
It isn't a Walkers' crisps box, no it's smaller,
like it once held something sweet
like bags of toffees or plums, as he dreams of notes
but would be glad if loose change
or a tin of tomato soup drops into the box
as he disappears in the doorway next to Hillards.
The flap on the box has something written on it.
Words that started out bold and black
then fade away as the ink ran out, and the nib
had to scratch, Miners, in '*Support The Miners*,'
as he took off his parka and told the collie to sit
and stood in a shop doorway with nothing left,
then nipped his smoke and dug a message
of hope into corrugated card, and stroked his dog
while they wait in a doorway for us to stop
and put coppers or tins into a cardboard box.
Next to Hillards. The supermarket that was.

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