

*Essential Beauty*

In frames as large as rooms that face all ways  
 And block the ends of streets with giant loaves,  
 Screen graves with custard, cover slums with praise  
 Of motor-oil and cuts of salmon, shine  
 Perpetually these sharply-pictured groves  
 Of how life should be. High above the gutter  
 A silver knife sinks into golden butter,  
 A glass of milk stands in a meadow, and  
 Well-balanced families, in fine  
 Midsummer weather, owe their smiles, their cars,  
 Even their youth, to that small cube each hand  
 Stretches towards. These, and the deep armchairs  
 Aligned to cups at bedtime, radiant bars  
 (Gas or electric), quarter-profile cats  
 By slippers on warm mats,  
 Reflect none of the rained-on streets and squares

They dominate outdoors. Rather, they rise  
 Serenely to proclaim pure crust, pure foam,  
 Pure coldness to our live imperfect eyes  
 That stare beyond this world, where nothing's made  
 As new or washed quite clean, seeking the home  
 All such inhabit. There, dark raftered pubs  
 Are filled with white-clothed ones from tennis-clubs,  
 And the boy puking his heart out in the Gents  
 Just missed them, as the pensioner paid  
 A halfpenny more for Granny Graveclothes' Tea  
 To taste old age, and dying smokers sense  
 Walking towards them through some dappled park  
 As if on water that unfocused she  
 No match lit up, nor drag ever brought near,  
 Who now stands newly clear,  
 Smiling, and recognising, and going dark.

Philip Larkin, 1962

**Oven beef loaf**

**OXO**  
gives a meal man-appeal!

When you drink a Bed time Beverage - drink the Best!

**Ovaltine**  
and note the Difference!

alamy stock photo

Happy Families say 'Good Morning' to Good Health

**OVALTINE**  
It costs a little - it gives so much.

*Lady Lazarus*

I have done it again.  
One year in every ten  
I manage it——

A sort of walking miracle, my skin  
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,  
My right foot

A paperweight,  
My face a featureless, fine  
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin  
O my enemy.  
Do I terrify?——

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?  
The sour breath  
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh  
The grave cave ate will be  
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.  
I am only thirty.  
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.  
What a trash  
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.  
The peanut-crunching crowd  
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——  
The big strip tease.  
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands  
My knees.  
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.  
The first time it happened I was ten.  
It was an accident.

The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.  
I rocked shut

As a seashell.  
They had to call and call  
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying  
Is an art, like everything else.  
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.  
I do it so it feels real.  
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.  
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.  
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day  
To the same place, the same face, the same brute  
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'  
That knocks me out.  
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge  
For the hearing of my heart——  
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge  
For a word or a touch  
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.  
So, so, Herr Doktor.  
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,  
I am your valuable,  
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.  
I turn and burn.  
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash——  
You poke and stir.  
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——

A cake of soap,  
A wedding ring,  
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.

Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air.



Jimmy Oh dear, oh dear! My wife's friends! Pass Lady Bracknell the cucumber sandwiches, will you?

*He returns to his meal, but his curiosity about Alison's preparation at the mirror won't be denied any longer. He turns round casually, and speaks to her.*

Going out?

Alison That's right.

Jimmy On a Sunday evening in this town? Where on earth are you going?

Alison *(rising)* I'm going out with Helena.

Jimmy That's not a direction – that's an affliction.

*She crosses to the table, and sits down C. He leans forwards, and addresses her again.*

I didn't ask you what was the matter with you. I asked you where you were going.

Helena *(steadily)* She's going to church.

*He has been prepared for some plot, but he is as genuinely surprised by this as Cliff was a few minutes earlier.*

Jimmy You're doing what?

Silence.

Have you gone out of your mind or something? *(to Helena)* You're determined to win her, aren't you? So it's come to this now!

[...]

Jimmy Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity. *(His good humour of a moment ago deserts him, as he begins to remember.)* For twelve months, I watched my father dying – when I was ten years old. He'd come back from the war in Spain, you see. And certain God-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live. Everyone knew it – even I knew it. *(He moves R.)* But, you see, I was the only one who cared. *(He turns to the window.)*

[...]

I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. *(He moves around the chair.)* You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry – angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. *(He sits.)* I knew more about – love . . . betrayal . . . and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.

*They all sit silently. Presently, Helena rises.*

Helena Time we went.

Alison *nods.*

I'll just get my things together. *(crosses to door)* I'll see you downstairs. *(She exits.)*

*A slight pause.*

Jimmy *(not looking at her, almost whispering)* Doesn't it matter to you – what people do to me? What are you trying to do to me? I've given you just everything. Doesn't it mean anything to you?

*Her back stiffens. His axe-swinging bravado has vanished, and his voice crumples in disabled rage.*

You Judas! You phlegm! She's taking you with her, and you're so bloody feeble, you'll let her do it!

*Alison suddenly takes hold of her cup, and hurls it on the floor. He's drawn blood at last. She looks down at the pieces on the floor, and then at him. Then she crosses R, takes out a dress on a hanger, and slips it on. As she is zipping up the side, she feels giddy, and she has to lean against the wardrobe for support. She closes her eyes.*

Alison *(softly)* All I want is a little peace.

Jimmy Peace! God! She wants peace!

We examined the *Racing Form*. I hadn't played the horses in years and was bemused with all the new names. There was one horse called Big Pop that sent me into a temporary trance thinking of my father, who used to play the horses with me. I was just about to mention it to Old Bull when he said, 'Well I think I'll try this Ebony Corsair here.'

Then I finally said it. 'Big Pop reminds me of my father.' He mused for just a second, his clear blue eyes fixed on mine hypnotically so that I couldn't tell what he was thinking or where he was. Then he went over and bet on Ebony Corsair. Big Pop won and paid fifty to one.

'Damn!' said Bull. 'I should have known better, I've had experience with this before. Oh, when will we ever learn?'

'What do you mean?'

'Big Pop is what I mean. You had a vision, boy, a *vision*. Only damn fools pay no attention to visions. How do you know your father, who was an old horseplayer, just didn't momentarily communicate to you that Big Pop was going to win the race? The name brought the feeling up in you, he took advantage of the name to communicate. That's what I was thinking about when you mentioned it. My cousin in Missouri once bet on a horse that had a name that reminded him of his mother, and it won and paid a big price. The same thing happened this afternoon.' He shook his head. 'Ah, let's go. This is the last time I'll ever play the horses with you around; all these visions drive me to distraction.' In the car as we drove back to his old house he said, 'Mankind will someday realize that we are actually in contact with the dead and with the other world, whatever it is; right now we could predict, if we only exerted enough mental will, what is going to happen within the next hundred years and be able to take steps to avoid all kinds of catastrophes. When a man dies he undergoes a mutation in his brain that we know nothing about now but which will be very clear someday if scientists get on the ball. The bastards right now are only interested in seeing if they can blow up the world.'

At last she lowered her eyes and might have fallen to slouching her beer for foreign matter. 'It seemed almost too much to hope for.' After another silence, she went on in a brisker tone: 'But can't we sit somewhere more . . . out of the public eye?'

Dixon said he thought this was a good idea, and they moved across the room, which was starting to fill up, to a vacant corner. Before sitting down, he excused himself and went out to the lavatory.

Out there, he thought how nice it would be if he could give up his dual role of conciliator and go right away from here. Five minutes would be ample for a vituperative phone-call to Welch and a short statement of the facts of the case to Margaret. Then he'd go and pack a few clothes and get on the ten-forty for London. As he stood in the badly-lit jakes, he was visited again, and unbearably, by the visual image that had haunted him ever since he took on this job. He seemed to be looking from a darkened room across a deserted back street to where, against a dimly-glowing evening sky, a line of chimney-pots stood out as if carved from tin. A small double cloud moved slowly from right to left. The image wasn't purely visual, because he had a feeling that some soft unidentifiable noise was in his ears, and he felt with a dreamer's baseless conviction that somebody was going to come into the room where he seemed to be, somebody he knew in the image but not in reality. He was certain it was an image of London, and just as certain that it wasn't of any part of London he'd ever visited. He hadn't spent more than a dozen evenings there in his life. Then why, he pondered, was his ordinary desire to leave the provinces for London sharpened and particularised by this half-glimpsed scene?

Lucky Jim p.26

On the Road p 138-9



LULU. Have you got a wife?  
GOLDBERG. I had a wife. What a wife. Listen to this. Friday, of an afternoon, I'd take myself for a little constitutional, down over the park. Eh, do me a favour, just sit on the table a minute, will you? (LULU sits on the table. *He stretches and continues.*) A little constitutional. I'd say hullo to the little boys, the little girls—I never made distinctions—and then back I'd go, back to my bungalow with the flat roof. "Simey," my wife used to shout, "quick, before it gets cold!" And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of roll-mop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate, LULU. I thought your name was Nat.  
GOLDBERG. She called me Simey.  
LULU. I bet you were a good husband.  
GOLDBERG. You should have seen her funeral.  
LULU. Why?  
GOLDBERG (*draws in his breath and wags head*). What a funeral. MEG (*to MCCANN*). My father was going to take me to Ireland once. But then he went away by himself.  
LULU (*to GOLDBERG*). Do you think you knew me when I was a little girl?

LULU

GOLDBERG. Give us a song, McCann.  
LULU. A love song!  
MCCANN (*reciting*). The night that poor Paddy was stretched, the boys they all paid him a visit.  
GOLDBERG. A love song!  
MCCANN (*in a full voice, sings*)

Oh, the Garden of Eden has vanished, they say,  
But I know the lie of it still.  
Just turn to the left at the foot of Ben Clay  
And stop when halfway to Coote Hill.  
It's there you will find it, I know sure enough,  
And it's whispering over to me:  
Come back, Paddy Reilly, to Bally-James-Duff,  
Come home, Paddy Reilly, to me!

LULU (*to GOLDBERG*). You're the dead image of the first man I ever loved.  
GOLDBERG. It goes without saying.

The Birthday Party Act II

57-60

I drove through South Carolina and beyond Macon, Georgia, as Dean, Marylou, and Ed slept. All alone in the night I had my own thoughts and held the car to the white line in the holy road. What was I doing? Where was I going? I'd soon find out. I got dog-tired beyond Macon and woke up Dean to resume. We got out of the car for air and suddenly both of us were stoned with joy to realize that in the darkness all around us was fragrant green grass and the smell of fresh manure and warm waters. 'We're in the South! We've left the winter! Faint daybreak illuminated green shoots by the side of the road. I took a deep breath; a locomotive howled across the darkness, Mobile-bound. So were we. I took off my shirt and exulted. Ten miles down the road Dean drove into a filling station with the motor off, noticed that the attendant was fast asleep at the desk, jumped out, quietly filled the gas tank, saw to it the bell didn't ring, and rolled off like an Arab with a five-dollar tankful of gas for our pilgrimage.

On the Road p 125