

## D. C. Reid / IT COMES WHEN IT COMES

Mist blows at Mynydd Heulog.  
Stinging pinheads,  
swarm around the window.

Inside,  
winter bones keep us warm.  
Elizabethan timbers  
wrenched from roof sockets,  
100s of years old, burned  
for a Saturday's warmth.

They boil in the grate.  
Wind presses this solid  
stone cottage,  
bulges  
the window  
ever so slightly  
in  
at me.

I start to say I hate the wind, but catch my dissatisfied reflection in the small window. I bring one of Sarah's paintings to the light and search for her. She's in them somewhere, layered among her brushstrokes, like a drift of autumn leaves. Her canvasses are heavy, left in damp corners like discarded moods. "They'll rot you know."

Sarah shrugs and wrinkles her lip, holds her hands apart. One hand holds a knife, the other an already buttered Bara Brith loaf.

"Do you ever get up in the night?" I ask.

“Whatever for?” Sarah says. This is the same question her sister had asked before I married her; Nichola’s used to it now. The kettle boils and Sarah makes a tray at the small kitchen counter that forms one end of the livingroom. The rest of the room looks crowded with a love seat, an afterthought table and a ratty chair by the fire.

Sarah's strokes are sweeping bands of pink, shaping bodies sleek as summer legs. There are far off rumpled bedrooms oozing purple light, people imitating statues in gallery windows. Naked, her people recline, sip at straws and wait. Something is going to happen any second now. Sunlight grows through windows and walls. Plants wave tendrils on lopsided tables. Not content with waiting, they throb from their 2D worlds like octopus.

"Do they flow from you or through you?"

"Sorry? Oh, I play with the colours until they're done, I expect."

"That's how you do them, not where they come from."

Sarah concentrates on the teapot. Her fingertip just touches its lid. We haven't seen each other in years.

"Let's have tea and a bikkie first. I love the chocolate ones."

"Would you cut off a hand?" I persist. "Leave a husband if it came to that?"

Sarah curls away in her loveseat,  
arms around her knees.

A thin pencil  
of light  
draws her cheek.

Is she too young  
to be serious?

Am I too desperate?  
Is it really like drinking or breathing?  
Is it really a need?

If she threw her  
knife in the air  
it would hang there  
slicing  
the thickening air.

"What is this anyway?" I bring over a hazy pastel I know perfectly well is dim trees and shrubs in pink and yellow, hills of brown flame. I have no armour in half-light, in futzy wind.

"Why does it have to *be* anything?" Sarah tries to take the paper drawing. First one hand and then both pull at it. It shifts back and forth between us until I see Nichola in her eyes. I let go with a

wide emerald valleys,  
abandoned quarries,  
roads, pubs, a fever of people and poems,  
the pulsing sea.  
I can't believe there's anybody  
but us

"Well, what do you want?" I try. Fog climbs the window between my fingers.

“Don’t we all.” Coal purrs in the small stone fireplace capped with a crooked timber. The grey hardness is softened by her prints, sunshine flowers, fishing boats lying on their sides, round roly sheep leaping fences. On one stone shelf are a jar of shiny coins, a bottle of wine and two long stemmed glasses.

"Nichola will miss me," I say pulling back.

We skirt her white-washed walls on slate stepping stones mortared, it seems, where they fell. She has brought them down the mountain in buckets, left them with her muddy trowel and mortar board. The back smells of damp and creosote, fish fertilizer. There's a rotten boat, ribs pinched by the sea.

Sarah laughs at careless ways, at me for noticing. "They're beautiful, really."

18

"Silly Billy. On a good day you see everything." Sarah holds her arms wide, sure she will see when the storm goes away. It comes when it comes; hedges crisscrossing hills, fields of new-cut hay, trees greening over water that speaks as it falls, trilliums by a ditch of standing water. People wait naked by rusty barbed-wire fences, frozen explosions of lichen on the blackened posts. They lean together, imperfect and human, all bony outcrops, warts, hairs, drooping breasts, slack bellies. Hands gesturing, they will speak any second now. Can she feel them breathe and beat? Doesn't she want to?

I hate the wind, I think. God, I hate it.

Sarah looks at me now, sideways and up as at someone who has said something not quite right. Her eyes turn past me to the back of her mind, trying to remember

something she almost heard me say.  
She lets go of me to concentrate,  
though her arm remains out, stretched  
toward me, the fingers reaching out  
to touch me. She will do so  
in a moment, in a sisterly,  
neighbourly way.

And she will say,  
"How can you hate the wind?"

Her chest begins to fill,  
a heart beats,

my heart

a little uneven  
a little disappointed  
a little relieved  
a little high strung.

It jumps around a frying pan,  
fibrillates like crazy.  
Feels every sizzle.