

Royal

- Your glass planet, your river crossing,
your wide appeal, your unbuilt tube stations.
We'll see if this works, dusting and Hoovering,
dabbing, sponging and buffing the nation's
surfaces. Once it's all nice, our army of orphans
will split up and move away from the water,
into the treeline. No one will see us shiver. ↴

△ Those who know only the inner life will quiver,
the pushchair will roll across the embankment
while everyone looks pointlessly upriver,
not knowing the burning boat, fuel almost spent,
is well past the outflow from the cement
works, into grey-green open water. Pink
knitted bonnet, pack of wipes, no time to think. →

△ Flaking walls, signs cable-tied to a chain-link
fence, groups of toe-rags, urchins, shoplifters
in loose-fitting track-suits, card-holding Crime Inc.
hardcore cocking pistols by the exit while their sisters
and nieces - this scene is backwards - twisters
in fleeces, gather round the old joanna. Fabulists
in fire-proof suits, reluctant to finger an arsonist. ↴

Δ She's pissed, he's pissed, it's all missed opportunities here, son, and the lightness that comes from knowing the wished-for will not now come. You'll swerve, mess it all up in the great tradition of shiftless nobodies like your old man, slipping grimly into the deep end, blinking randomly. →

Δ In Leeds, as in Sao Paolo, it's as if the dimly outlined graveyard soap opera of sod's law is the only certainty, a nailed-on destiny afforded to all God's children - all God's slow-witted children - all God's non-Gods, near-Gods, failed Gods, demi-Gods, mock Gods and sock Gods. We live, we work. ↴

↳ Mercs, Priuses, Civics, two Fiestas. I'll walk through to the car park, suspend judgement, expect less. I'm waiting here, gridlocked, quivering at the oche, giving it 110 per cent, [insert your own epic level of commitment] while my opponent pirouettes, double-jointed, and twice the money! I'm doubly derided. →

△ Aneurisms, lamp posts, frozen ponds, sharpened sticks. You'll have your own favourite. Mine is the bag of cement, positioned in the rafters by a trusted operator, paid in cash for an ingenious false flag hit that can easily be pinned on the old lag in the porter's hut. His secret tunnel, his stash of seditious texts, his papers reduced to ash. →

△ Circling back, we recover our equilibrium, cars pull up, everyone breathes, laughs nervously. It's reassuring, okay, it's a thumping bass in the sterile zone behind the town's KFC. At the turn, something strange happens and we find ourselves looking up, mobiles raised. We're paying attention now, not frightened. ↗

△ Sandwiches - read the sign - are provided only for our top floor guests, so please don't stuff the food under your lopsided hat, you cheeky git. We see you, cream cheese and tuna fish on your grease-dark sleeves. Wait, with us, though, here in the lounge, while the helicopters pass. Wait while they howl. →

△ I won't acknowledge other art here, only flash back to dry-as-dust, hollowed-out allegory. Driver, injured in grisly slate quarry crash, seeks new position, mid-career, pre-reappearance. Our jaded vape jockey is incapable of exceeding the speed limit even in freefall, seconds turn into minutes. ↘↘

△ It's more direct, if not more poetic. Grey-brown, light brown collision course. The decision to revoke access is always cathartic. To shut down, seal off and expel, then limp along a ribbon of moon-lit road carrying only that grim weapon. Imaginary dogs might chase you up the stairs, though, and your house might splinter into stars. ↶

△ Slap-happy but not punch drunk. She'll growl and we'll all look around the bar for the source of the rattle. At the respectable end, the whole group is silent, apparently waiting for the force to build and for the BLAM release, for the morse code rat-tat-tat of the inevitable. Dot dot dot dot dot dash, carpet tiles, gin shots, gun shots. ↘

△ Slate and brown surging and milling knots of crows and some other birds form a wedge. We're stalled, waiting, watching, on what's becoming a crumbling, tapering knife-edge ridge, looking down onto clouds, hedging our bets - laying off mist against cold stone or a condensing veil of bad luck, of bad loans. ↓

△ Over the rainbow, over at rainbow's end, lines converge in the manner understood by generations of joiners, tacticians, jurists. Spines aligned with the earth's magnetic field, dry grain piled to the roof. Lichen, moss, and why does London always let the innocents down, down at the sewer's iron rim, half-drowned? ↶

△ Transcend this then. Plant your stupid feet in the wet soil here, press your hands into the ditch's edge. Your famous wit has no purchase here, your cursed land's need is for something else. A very grand almost cosmic realignment? A rift that sets the ditch diggers against the plutocrats? →

△ In the land of big cats, it's the sharp hats that negotiate. One minute you're top dog and the next you're amongst the huge rats in the cellar where, in the dark, men cough, dead hard drives rust, darkness finishes off dignity. Anyway, you'll adjust slowly, grieve, rave, renounce all, before it's time to leave. ↴

△ Breathe fuckface, turn over, breathe
while you can, before you slip under
again and the current tugs you by the sleeve
into the dredged channel where younger
men than you have looked up to wonder,
curse implacable fate and whisper bubbling
truths in the ear of history's final nothing. →

△ In New Kent Road (or Old Kent Road) doing
only the absolute minimum, under the arc
lights at the back, rain lit like TV static, crossing
the loading bay sideways. Eye-catching, shark-
skin flicker, strobing ultraviolet against dark
er than dark, tragic matte-black cruisers
lined up outside, boxed in by the refusers. ↴

△ Ask the dogs, the cats, the wave of losers,
the Kronstadt sailors, kids at the car wash.
Ask anyone in here. The cultured boozers
barricading the bar, all the reliably posh
dealers in loss, human vanity - whiplash.
What can a driverless lifestyle provide?
What do they know down at the quayside? ○

The rhyme royal is an old form, probably
brought to English poetry by Chaucer. Royal is
a chain of 19 seven-line rhyme royals.

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