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Poem - Summer Has Lied

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Abstract

Summer Has Lied

Mike Jenkins

SUMMER HAS LIED

Summer has lied this year –
swallows seem caught
in their own hurricanes,
the wood's green is heavier
than the sky, the buds are shy
to the skinning breeze.

Still, I feel holiday here
in the gap between one decision and another.
The paddle-steamers chugging back and fore
full of children who buccaneer
about the deck, and take Steep Holme
back with them, to build a cottage upon
in their heads before sleeping.

A case full of punched tickets
and the kiss of a neighbour
worn on my lapel. Weston stretched and gleaming
like a necklace from a distance.

Towards the pier, willing my eyes
to be binoculars – they are there
more vivid now: his walking-stick raised
in a ritual greeting, she in a pink dress
and straw hat like a Methodist outing.

We will meet and kiss. ‘A wet one’
she’ll say and giggle, little girl
kissing for the first time at a party –
and he, perhaps, will sniff the beer
but save the sermon till I’m out of hearing.

She will shuffle along like a female Chaplin
and he’ll watch his feet in case
he trips over a smile, enquiring
about the happiness of family members.
Everyone’s misery I can finger,
I feel older than them and sourer.

Summer has lied to me –
I must open an ear for birdsong –
dead flies litter my head for sweeping.
It seems that every year
I’ll make that journey to Weston,
with the wake of swallow’s tail
behind the steamer, to furnish
their upstairs flat, to sit spoilt
as they worry around the kitchen.