

A sunset over a beach with a large rock formation in the distance. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the sky and reflecting on the wet sand. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with some clouds. A large, dark rock formation is visible on the right side of the horizon.

‘Heartbreaking.’
‘I have fallen in love with your writing.’
‘A treat to read. Gorgeous.’

SAMPLER

Ben Williams

**Fragments
and
Reflections**

BEN WILLIAMS

Ben Williams is a former political adviser who has always harboured a secret passion for writing. This is a sampler for *Fragments and Reflections* his first collection of poetry. It is drawn from his writings published on Wattpad, where he writes as *Requi3mX*.

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BEN WILLIAMS

Fragments and Reflections

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A Storm in Prospect

It is dead air, choked with dust and sweat and
the metal tones of spent exhaust.

Each second drags a cloying weight in the
wrong and sudden stillness of the day,
wherein thrush and sparrow quieten, and
cats are safely absent.

We labour on each breath, and feel an ancient ache,
and blood rings loudly in the ear as the jet roar fades to mute.

And when the sky is dressed by hidden hands,
a drape of pink-washed greys that
trick the eye and fool the hour,

we urge that glorious dread spark to rend and burn,
to thrill and terrify upon Creation's banging drum,
and place the kiss of spill and soak
on a cracked earth's crumbled wealth.

Hangover after a Late Spring Evening Drinking with Friends

Today, with heavy limbs and slamming head,
it is too much: too brash, too loud, too bright.
What seemed boundless and obtainable in
excited gabble, under canopies
with wine, the night refreshed by bursts of rain,
has fled with morning's groan to higher ground.
Gone, the breathless swagger stalking our words,
banishing obstacle and barrier.
Gone, those gauche and brash pretensions, first born,
remember, when we hid far from the world:
years lived cloistered away from awkward truths,
homes made, briefly, in ivory towers
surrounded by moss-battered quadrangles.
Now, in this yammering of city hours,
it seems unreal, a place that should not be,
where full breasts and naked legs are lit by
candlelight and fat lips drip Pinotage,
tempting the evening to finish in
rented rooms, making wild love to strangers.

A Night by the Ocean

So much love fled here,
beneath these sentry cliffs,
where centuries are washed away
in tongues of foaming surf.

I remember young kisses,
stolen in the crook of night's arm,
the safety of an innocent 'Forever'
still moist on hungry lips.

I remember soft embraces,
loose tangles of tentative caresses,
your gasp and whispered cry
against a growl of waves.

Now, watching here, alone,
the rusting stripe of sunset's wreck
is all that separates the
purple wash of sea and cloud.

And, stars bright in the Atlantic dusk,
I remember tear-bled lovers longing
for one last, desperate evening,
dancing on the shores of 'Always'.

A Morning Fog

The world draped
In spectral finery,
Or rubbed out?

Sparrows silenced;
A still spider in its
Dew-jewelled cobweb;
Watery headlights like
Glowing eyes,
Cast down on
Wet tarmac trails.

A chance to
Slip away unseen,
To hide in the
Damp folds of
Robes that cover
Concrete scars and
Iron blemishes:
The marks we make
Upon the world.

The Previous Occupant

Who lay here before me, clutched by
This starched linen, thinking of an absent
Lover and the loneliness of unfamiliar places?
Who stood on this rough carpet, gazing
Through rain-washed windows at the Clyde,
Wanting to taste the bright lights of a sleepless city?
Who appropriated this space, even briefly,
To soothe their mind and secure their secrets?
Whose was this illusory haven, built from the
Discreet assurances of professional strangers and
Anonymity claimed despite the gawk and chatter?
Who danced to old tunes under the ceiling-sunk spotlights,
Draining the mini-bar as suddenly all things seemed possible?
Who came here before me, bringing escorts or a boy,
Or a childhood sweetheart chanced upon?
Who before me did their best to call this home?

November Sunset over the Fen

Rococo skies of orange fire over
Cloudscapes of shifting mountains
And angry, purple dragons;
A silver jet trail gleams, a lance

Piercing the very heart of Heaven,
Bearing dreams on vapour as the
World turns and horizons flare
In tiny defiance of the night.

The cold clay of sodden fields
Lies below, framed by flooded
Ditches and the creeping
Shadows of ragged hedgerows.

Single trees, their spindly limbs
Raised in silent praise of solitude,
Are havens for rooks beneath the
Lone gulls and starlings' murmur.

Glassy pools of rainwater stare
From the darkness, unblinking eyes
Studying the dying light, whilst
Wary foxes drink before the kill.

Christmas Morning

The angled light of the low sun
Sprawls wearily on clod and furrow
As robins hide in straggled hedges.
Across a sodden meadow, behind
Barbed twists of rose and bramble,
Whitewashed chapel walls contain
The ancient anthems raised in praise,
While candles burn with jocund flicker
And the old year's fecund lies prepare
The way for tomorrow's truths.

Momentary Indecision

Sunlight glittering
On a pavement frost;

A cat slinking
From the hedge;

The rich aroma
Of morning coffee;

Birdsong joyful
In the apple trees;

Cheerful chatter
On radio waves;

Furtive lovers
Going separate ways;

A moment's pause:
To go or stay

Where demons hide
And angels play?

Friday

It began under sun, the air crisp and
Clean like a lemon washed in water
Bled through chalk and epochs.
It ended under rough, oak beams,
Silent witnesses to three centuries of
Bread, ale and plots; you lit by candles:
Beautiful, like raspberries and cinnamon.

Impromptu

A drained mug and tired
eyes betray your smile

and somehow walking
alone is to bear

too much, to struggle too
far under the

weight of extraordinary
love.

Come home with dusty
tears to bread and lilies.

Irresponsibility

Your tears broke my carelessness,
the slight salt wash in
an unconnecting glance.

You, usually defiant with
laughter now silent,
steeped in thought and worry.

Me, unintentionally cruel in
feasts of denial,
my casual disregard of next.

Hat Tea

So many hats,
weaving, bobbing,

some stitched,
some glued,

some sewn,
some moulded,

each a cosy for
a pot of thoughts

stewing in the
morning brew,

then pressed hard
on pavement strainers,

and we, like vessels
for our tea,

are mugs.

The Boy Who Fell from the Sky

They loved him,
these friends of mine,
they loved him,
the boy who made them smile,
who lived and laughed
on summer days,
who bought beer and wine and
knew the Blorenges and
the Sugar Loaf and Skirrid Fawr,
who made them safe
with twinkling eyes.

They loved him,
these friends of mine,
they loved him,
the boy who fell from the sky,
who became a man
on winter nights,
who ate rice and raisins and
knew the bullets and
the sticky heat of Kandahar,
who gave his all:
the brightest and the best.

Written for Pippa, in memory of Lance Corporal Oliver Thomas, a friend to so many colleagues, who died alongside four fellow soldiers in the Lynx Helicopter crash in Afghanistan on 26th April, 2014.