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The Bees

Written by Carol Ann Duffy

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The Bees

CAROL ANN DUFFY

PICADOR



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*I Gillian Clarke,
Bardd Cenedlaethol Cymru,
Mam-gu anrbydeddus ac arbennig Ella
a'm ffrind annwyl i.*

Bees

Here are my bees,
brazen, blurs on paper,
besotted; buzzwords, dancing
their flawless, airy maps.

Been deep, my poet bees,
in the parts of flowers,
in daffodil, thistle, rose, even
the golden lotus; so glide,
gilded, glad, golden, thus –

wise – and know of us:
how your scent pervades
my shadowed, busy heart,
and honey is art.

Last Post

*In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

If poetry could tell it backwards, true, begin
that moment shrapnel scythed you to the stinking mud . . .
but you get up, amazed, watch bled bad blood
run upwards from the slime into its wounds;
see lines and lines of British boys rewind
back to their trenches, kiss the photographs from home –
mothers, sweethearts, sisters, younger brothers
not entering the story now
to die and die and die.
Dulce – No – Decorum – No – Pro patria mori.
You walk away.

You walk away; drop your gun (fixed bayonet)
like all your mates do too –
Harry, Tommy, Wilfred, Edward, Bert –
and light a cigarette.
There's coffee in the square,
warm French bread,
and all those thousands dead
are shaking dried mud from their hair
and queueing up for home. Freshly alive,
a lad plays Tipperary to the crowd, released
from History; the glistening, healthy horses fit for heroes, kings.

You lean against a wall,
your several million lives still possible
and crammed with love, work, children, talent, English beer, good food.
You see the poet tuck away his pocket-book and smile.

If poetry could truly tell it backwards,
then it would.

Spell

Yes, I think a poem is a spell of kinds
that keeps things living in a written line,
whatever's lost or leaving – lock of rhyme –
and so I write and write and write your name.