

## **It was on the Sunday (i)**

It was on the Sunday  
that he took on the city.

Religious freaks usually appear in the desert  
urging folk to come into the open air  
and find God through getting back to nature.  
God, you see, doesn't live in the city.  
He prefers the smell of a garden to that of a gutter.  
He likes to see children jumping streams,  
not raking through communal rubbish bins.  
And far better in his eyes are lovers lounging in the long grass  
than snuggling up in a single bed.

The city is for sin.  
God doesn't go there.

The Lord is my Shepherd,  
not my social worker.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures,  
not shrinks' couches.  
He leads me besides still waters,  
not trickles of urine from a beggar's bladder.  
And on the mountains are peace messenger's feet beautiful,  
not in the middle of the road.

It was on the Sunday  
that he took on the city.

## **It was on the Monday**

It was on the Monday  
that religion got in the way.

An outsider would have thought  
that it was a pet shop's fire sale.  
And the outsider, in some ways,  
wouldn't have been far wrong.

Only, it wasn't household pets,  
it was pigeons that were being purchased.  
And it wasn't a fire sale;  
it was a rip-off stall in the holy temple  
bartering birds for sacrifice.  
And the price was something only the rich could afford.  
No discounts to students, pensioners,  
disabled types or UB40 card holders.

Then he,  
the holiest man on earth,  
went through the bizarre bazaar  
like a bull in a china shop.  
So the doves got liberated  
and the pigeon sellers got angry.  
And the police went crazy  
and the poor people clapped like mad,  
because he was making a sign  
that God was for everybody,  
not just those who could afford him.  
He turned the tables on Monday...  
The day that religion got in the way.

## **It was on the Tuesday**

It was on the Tuesday  
that he gave it to them in the neck.

If you had been there  
you would have thought  
that a union official was being taken to task  
by a group of back bench Tory MPs.  
Or that the chairman of a multinational corporation  
was being interrogated by left wing activists  
posing as shareholders.

They wanted to know why  
and they wanted to know how.

They were the respectable men,  
the influential men,  
the establishment.

The questions they asked  
ranged from silly schoolgirl speculations  
about whether you would be a bigamist in heaven  
if you married twice on earth,  
to what was the central rule of civilised behaviour.

They knew the answers already....  
or so they thought,  
otherwise they would never have asked the questions.

And like most of us  
they were looking for an argument  
with no intention of a change of heart.

So he flailed them with his tongue...  
those who tried to look interested  
but never wanted to be committed.

And that was on the Tuesday...  
the day when he gave it to them...  
to us...  
in the neck.

## **It was on the Wednesday**

It was on the Wednesday  
that they called him a waster.

The place smelt like the perfume department of a big store.

It was as if somebody had bumped their elbow against a bottle  
and sent it crashing to the floor,  
setting off the most expensive stink bomb on earth.

But it happened in a house,  
not a shop.

And the woman who broke the bottle  
was no casual afternoon shopper.  
She was the penniless poorest of the poor,  
giving away the only precious thing she had.

And he sat still  
while she poured the liquid all over his head....  
as unnecessary as aftershave  
on a full crop of hair and a bearded chin.

And those who smelt it,  
and those who saw it,  
and those who remembered  
that he was against extravagance,  
called him a waster.

They forgot  
that he also was the poorest of the poor.

And they who had much  
and who had given him nothing,  
objected to a pauper giving him everything.

Jealousy was in the air  
when a poor woman's generosity  
became an embarrassment to their tight-fistedness.

That was on the Wednesday  
when they called him a waster.

## It was on the Thursday

It was on the Thursday  
that he became valuable.

He hadn't anything to sell...  
not since leaving his hammer and saw three years earlier.  
Needless to say,  
he could knock together a set of trestles  
or hang a couple of shelves at the drop of a hat,  
no bother at all.

But he wasn't into making things.  
Not now.

He was into...  
well...talking, I suppose.  
And listening  
and healing  
and forgiving  
and encouraging...  
all the things for which there's no pay  
and the job centre has no advertisements.

So his work wasn't worth much.  
Nor, indeed, was he.  
For, not being well dressed  
or well connected,  
he wouldn't have attracted many ticket holders  
had he been put up for raffle.

But he had a novelty value...  
like the elephant man or the fat lady  
or the midget at the circus.  
Put him on a stage and he might be interesting to look at.  
Sell him to the circus  
with the promise of some tricks  
and there could be a silver penny or two  
or thirty in it.

It was on the Thursday  
that he became valuable.

## **It was on the Friday**

It was on the Friday  
that they ended it all.

Of course, they didn't do it one by one.  
They weren't brave enough.  
All the stones at the one time  
or no stones thrown at all.

They did it in the crowds...  
in crowds where you can feel safe  
and lose yourself  
and shout things  
you would never shout on your own,  
and do things you would never do  
if you felt the camera was watching you.

It was a crowd in the church that did it,  
and a crowd in the civil service that did it,  
and a crowd in the street that did it,  
and a crowd on the hill that did it.

And he said nothing.

He took the insults,  
the bruises,  
the spit on the face,  
the thongs on the back'  
the curses in the ears.  
He took the sight of his friends turning away,  
Running away.

And he said nothing.

He let them do their worst  
until their worst was done,  
as on Friday they ended it all...  
and would have finished themselves  
had he not cried  
'Father, forgive them...'

And began the revolution.

## **It was on the Saturday**

It was on the Saturday  
that he was not there.

Those who don't like corpses  
can't stay away from graveyards,  
unless there's some prohibition to stop them  
revisiting the dead end  
of their hopes and their dreams.

It's as if they think  
that should the voice speak again,  
it will speak there  
or a sunbeam will dance  
or a flower will shoot  
and give a sign of misinterpreted life.

But close the cemetery,  
or confine, through custom or constraint,  
the wailing ones to the house  
and it looms larger...  
the loss,  
the lostness,  
the losers.

Men shiver in an upstairs room,  
warm though the day is.  
Women weep in an uncharmed circle.  
Memory is forced on memory.  
The mind's eye tries to trace  
the profile and the face,  
the smile,  
the gentle twitching of the nose...  
and fails.  
And a panic sets in  
because it seems he can't be remembered.  
Was he ever known?

It was on the Saturday  
that he was not there.

## **It was on the Sunday (ii)**

It was on the Sunday  
that he pulled the corn.

They arrived with flowers,  
shuffling through the dawn  
as the dawn snuffed out  
the last candles of night.  
Their faces betrayed their belief  
that yesterday would always be better  
than tomorrow,  
despite what he said.  
He would not say it again,  
so why bother to believe him on that score?

And the flowers,  
they too were silent witnesses to disbelief.  
Like the grass,  
they were cut to be dried to death,  
cut off from the root,  
the bulb, the source of life.  
He was the flower they cherished,  
the flower now perished  
whose fate the lilies of the field,  
now tight in hand,  
would re-enact.

So when they passed the crouched figure  
at the edge of the road,  
they thought little of him,  
scarcely seeing his form through their tears.  
Had they looked even a little,  
they would have seen a man  
letting grain fall through his fingers,  
dropping to the earth  
to die and yet to rise again.  
It was on the Sunday  
that he pulled the corn.