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The Bees

Written by Carol Ann Duffy

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The Bees

CAROL ANN DUFFY

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I Gillian Clarke,

Bardd Cenedlaethol Cymru,

Mam-gu anrhydeddus 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.