

## Poetry

### SEAN MCDERMOTT

#### Concert

I see you there music  
A clear pool up above  
Shining under a bright light  
Overflowing with colliding colours  
of all shapes and sizes  
Curved and sophisticated  
Raw and sweaty and sexy  
I squint my eyes and watch drops of heaven  
falling into my lap  
through the cracks in the universe.  
Making their long passage  
from me to the microphone.

I hear you over there music  
Calling me to change direction,  
and miss the last train  
Stay a little longer in the  
swing and sway of your embrace  
Forget the present and deep dive  
into an ocean of notes,  
arranged to turn my head and remind me  
of scenes from an earlier life  
Up the keys and back down,  
encouraging me to be louder  
quicken the pace, silencing me

I feel you at all times music  
You have brought me to a calm setting,  
when I needed to be alive  
Swirling around, humming in my dreams,  
play-acting with melody  
There you are in the paintings,

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on the factory walls,  
the hum of machinery,  
the clang of regret, the last note of  
happiness fading in the twilight sky  
We dance when I sing, cheek to cheek,  
arm in arm, old friends  
trusting one another again and again  
I could kiss you, you're that close

## One More Dance

You were a birthday cake  
Each time you arrived in the room  
I felt the warm wave, that there was  
something different about that day.  
You were a shiny bike  
On Christmas morning  
Every thought of you glittered.  
Wrapped in white glistening ribbons  
My heart soared my face beamed  
The very notion that  
Someone like you, liked me,  
knighted me and I knelt down.

You were a gold watch  
the lingering scent of men's cologne  
all around and about me  
Secured to my wrist, a leather band  
Comfortable and comforting  
It told me the exact time that  
we should leave this soiree  
and I glanced at you over there  
speaking generously with another.  
Yet you excused yourself, on a wink  
And we departed through the  
door, arm in private loving arm.  
Like a waltz. Motion in sync.

But then you became the crystal vase  
that dropped in slow motion  
to the hard wood floor

You were the framed Polaroid  
of our first date that faded.  
You were the ruined meal  
Burned to a crisp, inedible.  
You were the cake in the backseat,  
the bike in the trunk  
The dulled cracked unwound watch  
In the junk of the glove compartment,  
of the old car that was reduced to a square box  
at the wreckers.

You were the greatest and worst  
chapters of the book that  
I did not eventually write.  
You were the hard lesson learned.  
The wake-up call of a wanderer.  
My executioner, my dearest,  
my nightmare my dream.  
There are days when it all seems  
as if it was a song  
that was trimmed for radio,  
the nuance removed.  
So I move my feet, mouth the words,  
smile a bit, and imagine that I ask her to dance,  
for the last time. Once more.

### The Wall

So off we went  
Two innocents praying for love  
Storybook junkies, stars in our eyes  
I readied the chariot, she the mascara  
In a nineteen eighties bloodlust blush  
Looking for what set us apart  
Where was the fascinating,  
Where was the night headed.

It was called The Uptown  
On Yonge Street, downtown  
A thrilling oversized theatre  
With an extra wide screen

Built for big movies with big ideas  
 Back in a time when it was still  
 a step away from a live show  
 Bob Geldof was in a full close-up  
 Taking a razor blade to his eyebrows  
 The animation was grotesque  
 But she had slipped her hand in mine  
 And set the future on fire

We strolled in with separate lives  
 and left together, on a popcorn high.  
 You see, I had suggested the movie  
 Bold and brash as if I knew something  
 And I did not know anything  
 So I said outside under the Marquis  
 "well that was kind of odd"  
 Her face was happy, beaming back  
 She nodded, "yeah but it was great!"  
 So that, is what falling in love is like.

### Up and Over.

There's Dad in the photo  
 On my wall, in the frame  
 Happy and relaxed, contented  
 On a chaise lounge from better days  
 Lazing under the crabapple tree  
 In the Canadian back garden  
 Of the house he worked to pay for  
 So that we could be safe and warm.  
 Dinner is next on his to-do list  
 Listen to the family all around him now  
 Music, laughing, dishes clinking  
 Glasses filling, oven door opening.

That was the Dad that I stood beside  
 In Dublin along with my elder brother  
 He took us to a Gaelic football match  
 In Croke Park, when I was Six.  
 I could just hold on to the pocket  
 My little fingers in his wool jacket,

where the coins are, and a hanky.p  
My brother was much taller than me  
And Dad was twice his size.  
We walked the smaller side streets  
With thousands of others  
Toward the columns of the stadium.

Suddenly I'm being lifted up  
in his strong arms, over the turnstile  
And then my brother the same  
Up and over, children are free.  
I had been in Mom's arms, I'm sure  
Not too long ago, but never Dad's  
I can smell the lingering aftershave  
His hair-cream, to keep it in place.  
He asks us if we want a pear. Yes!  
And the coins come out  
Into the hand of a bent-over man  
With dirty fingers, tobacco stained.

We're walking fast, through the tunnel,  
we can hear the crowd inside, the roar  
the deep green of the field of play  
The players in their colourful jerseys  
And long studs in their shiny boots  
The ball is in the air, I'm standing  
And again the strong arms  
Lifting me to see the goal far away  
Men cursing with filthy words  
And shoving, frightening, terrific.

He's gone from us a few years ago  
And I still look into his happy eyes  
In the photograph immortal  
And wonder how many afternoons  
he had recalled in the accumulation  
of his own memories of a full life.  
To pinpoint how much he leaned into our days  
and shaped and formed us.  
The crowd roars, Dublin won it  
And I feel his hand on my shoulder  
Letting me know he's there, even now,

Larger and stronger than life itself.

The camera clicked, all was silent  
the arrow stopped in mid-air  
I gaze at the treasure, that expression  
His smile, reassuring me once again.

## We

And they worked in their homes  
And they sauntered their streets  
And they stood apart chatting to strangers  
who live two doors down  
And they let their children  
stay up later, and eat chocolate  
And they looked in the mirror  
and witnessed the distortion  
of a lost sense of self-care.  
And they did not know that all along the raccoons  
and the squirrels, the deer and the falcons,  
the salmon and the perch, were in their usual patterns  
and typical goings and comings.

They didn't know that the emptiness was draining the anxiety from  
the tired earth  
and there was a flourish here and there on paths less trampled.  
Good things were happening  
just beyond the worry and the waiting.  
We have been through a time together  
They forgot pessimism and found the desperate and lovely hope that  
comes to the fed up and weary.  
And they learned to stay in and cook meals and play games.  
And they listened some more than they'd ever before and put up  
with each other to soften the blow...  
Of the hundreds of days that had turned into months  
Nowhere to go and nowhere to go.

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