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Book of Love and Loss

Tell the bees

Something has plundered the bees' nest.
At the wall's foot, lichen brick
used to meld into a tangle of moss and ivy:
a ragged tear bleeds earth over the path.
Bees tread circles on the spilled soil,
wings quivering, shifting grains from place
to place and back again.

Each day I pass, I see them working;
fragments of moss, scatters of dried grass,
pulled in to cover the wound.

The sun has faded bare earth,
shrivelled exposed roots;
ivy leans over the edge of the hole,
blending into the dusty green
of the bees' repairs.

After the phone call,

air thickened,
radio voices vibrated and slowed
to a memory of deep water.
Words, phrases, bubbled up
from the call; jangled, garbled,
making no sense.

Thoughts scurry like rats in a drain;
of flights and affording them,
of time off work,
of cancelling appointments,
of costs and overdrafts,
as if there was time.
as if there were still time.

Counting the Cunning Ways

Corpse-hounds, he calls them or lych-birds,
turns away from their churring call. He curses
a white moth in the house, slaps at its blunder
against a dusty bulb. He'll take a long way round
to avoid meeting a hearse head-on, shudder
to see a child point at the plumed horses.
He won't take the ashes out after sundown,
always comes and goes by the same door,
shouts at ravens to chase them from the roof.
He won't wear anything new to a funeral
and covers his head by an open grave.
The bird in the house, the left eye's twitch,
hawthorn indoors, a mirror cracked.
So many ways to foretell death and disaster;
but it came for him while he wasn't looking.