

Middleton, R. (2020) 'Sunday', 'Grove Street Gardens', and 'La Ferme dans les Arbres' in *As Above So Below: Issue 6 Liminal Spaces* (pp. 9, 23, and 64).

## **Sunday**

We sat in the snug by the window. The coffee machine frayed the air as we watched people in the street. Our empty cups stood on the table between us. 'Time to go?' said Larry, and we stepped outside. The rain had stopped, and all the pavements glistened. We passed the vegetable stall and the discount stores, then turned into St Georges Street, where we saw a rainbow. Its colours glowed above chimney pots and TV aerials, and made the white walls look grubby. I turned to glance at Larry, wrapped in his brown coat and scarf. People tramped past in hats and raincoats. In that crisp moment it seemed clear; such garments concealed a light within.

## Grove Street Gardens

Parakeets swirl through a firmament of green  
in the old graveyard behind St Cyprians.  
A young woman hides behind a dappled trunk  
and watches children dart among the bushes.

The traffic noise is soft, like distant waves.  
Sometimes a siren breaks in, then subsides.  
Nothing disturbs the stillness of the trees.

On every bench lies a grey and ragged man.  
Every so often one of them gets up slowly  
and walks to the iron gates without a sound.  
Soon another arrives to take his place.

One lies with his right arm hanging down,  
his beard grizzled and his skin like marble,  
dreaming like one of Arthur's knights.

## La Ferme dans les Arbres

We sped past frozen forests.

Branches blurred to fields and houses  
then timber yards and corrugated barns.

The engine grumbled  
as we drove higher. The Czechs and I grew silent. Slopes of rock  
emerged from mist; the road swung back and forth.

We followed André,  
his 2CV a dash of powder blue against the grey.

We parked, and carried our bags to the farm.

Yorck was feeding sheep,  
so André took us round to the kitchen, and wished us all the best.  
We waited, dizzy from the road.

With no electric light,  
we gazed outside at pines that seeped into the snowlit dusk,  
and all around, the bulk of mountains, their silent presences.