

BY SALLY FLOOD

PAPER

TALK

MACHINIST
WANTED
7 DAY
WEEK
APPLY MR
SAEDOE



ALI
NO. 10

TESCO



Cover by
Patricia Flood

SALLY FLOOD has been with the Basement Writers for over three years. She has a family, one of whom is married and has a son called Darren, so that makes her a grandmother. She has been a machinist for most of her working life.

PAPER TALK

Newspapers fill me with horror
With stories of violence and woe
Saboteurs and spies in disguises
Soon there'll be nowhere to go
The parks are surrounded
By muggers
Meths drinkers sleep on the streets
While squatters occupy the houses
The public have lost their retreats
Politicians are mixing with gangsters
Taxes are riding high
Concorde is facing disaster
Growing too big for the sky
Warnings of rapists and terrorists
Are putting fear into me
While racists and guerilla warfare
Repeat themselves on T.V.
So if you ring on my doorbell
Don't expect a reply
I've barricaded with bolts and a rifle
And the first one in, will die.

CONTENT

My home, I build around me
My castle and my throne
Warm within my family
I'm never on my own.

SLEEPLESS NIGHT

A baby crying in the distance
Cats mi-owing in the street
Another sound joins the chorus
The tripping now of running feet.

Hear the sound of bottles flying
Friday night, the lads stay late
Singing fades into the darkness
Homewards to their waiting mate.

My eyes are closing nearly there
A soothing of my fevered brow
Then a clanging in the street
How the Hell can I sleep now!

I awoke this morning,
To a ring on the bell.
Lying there yawning,
I said, "Go to Hell".
"Wake up", the bird sung,
"Listen to me".
Still the bell rung,
Who can it be?
As I lay there dreaming,
Nothing else stirred,
Just the bell ringing
And the song of the bird.
So I lay there debating
What I shall do
Between the creating
Of a hullabaloo.
So I took my time,
Climbed slow from my bed,
Slipped on the mat,
And fell on my head.
The bell still was ringing,
And so was my head.
The bird was still singing,
I wished it was dead.
Climbed slow to my feet,
No hasty retreat.
Walked to the door,
Across the cold floor,
"Hi," said the milk man,
"Top of the morn".

I wanted to write something nice
About Brick Lane
Something unforgettable
Something to stir memories
The reason perhaps why
The immigrant makes for it
Like a homing pigeon.

So I stared at the gutters
Overfilling with litter
And the old brick houses
From better days
Trying to capture
Some of their former glory.

But all I could think of
Was the dead cat
Lying in the road.

TIME TO THINK

My mind is as grey
As the surrounding streets
And the drizzle repeats itself
In my brain
Too quiet, the factory stands
With empty machines
And crates
Waiting to be moved
Into another overcrowded factory.

Ghosts whisper in my ears
Of other years
Of laughter and voices
Competing against
The deafening roar
Of machinery.

But now, the deathly silence
Sits upon me
And in that silence
Generations of the exploited
Are coming alive
And whispering
Their dreams
And their fears.

GENTLEMAN OF THE ROAD

See the beggar in the street -
Whose coat's been worn for many years.
The stench of life clings to its cloth
The smell of meths, the stain of tears.

Dirt-grimed feet encased in ancient boots
With worn-off heels and soles a-flapping.
One look and his story is near told
For a gifts only as good as its wrapping.

Something moves - sweaty hands scratch -
He's crawling with vermin and disease.
He reaches in to your dustbin with hope
Eating ev ery edible scrap that he sees.

Yet he doesn't envy you nor me -
As he spends his night sleeping in the cold.
He goes through life oblivious to society
For this my friends, is a gentleman of the road.

by P.M.Flood.

(My daughter, Patricia)

LONDON BY NIGHT

I stare thru the window
At the cold deserted streets
And wonder at the fear
That keeps me a prisoner
Were the dangers imagined
Or did they really exist?

These strange creatures
Who looked like men
With their glazed eyes
And reddened faces
Who inhabit the streets
By night.

You could hear them
Yell abuse
And the crunch of glass
And if you dare
Creep into the darkness
The blood splashed pavement.

Here and there
A body slumped in a doorway
Still yelling
Even in sleep
Parts of the anatomy
Exposed.

Glistening strangely white
In the moonlight
Grotesque in their positions
And the puddles
They produce, beneath them
Fearful of waking them

Lest, like mad dogs
They vent their frustrations
Upon one more fortunate than they
So I stare, into this jungle
And wonder, at my fears.

IN-BETWEEN

Why can't I be an In-Between?
Instead of stretching to extreme.
A cool undulating stream
Winding onward in a dream.
Thru the mountains of my life
Toward the highest peak I strive
The merest glimmer of a beam
Disrupts my dream, then, down I dive.

Into a pit of moody blues
Completely lost within a muse
The resurrection of martyrdom am I.
So intense, I wish to die.
The reservoirs of my mind
Blot the sun, and leave me blind
Why can't I lead a life serene?
Why can't I be an in-between?

STRANGER WITHIN

Inside myself
I am a stranger
I lie on my bed
While knowledge
Flows thru my head.
I read books
And understand the words
That leap at me
But inside, I am a stranger.

I argue with my realities
My origin is alien
So I hurt the ones I love
My tongue is barbed
It spits obscenities
Into the dark
And the stranger
Inside of me
Shrinks in obscurity.

NOT THE SAME

Like the pressed flowers
We used to keep
Yesterday's love is dead.

While memories
Lose their freshness
To retain the stench of death.

Tomorrow beckons
With renewed faith
But youth can never be regained.

THE BORE

Sitting in the pub
Till the last call
Totters to his feet
Just to fall
Singing songs, that have no tune
Pulling faces at the moon
To himself, he thinks
I'm quite a lad
But, in the street,
Somehow he seems,
Rather sad.

THOUGHTS LIVE ON

Filth is piled upon the stairs
The factory floor is bare
The office cat has disappeared
And no-one seems to care
Ghostly whispers have been heard
Machines still buzz at night
Echoes from another age
Nothing is in sight.

Cobwebs from the rafters high
Dust cling to the panes
Boards missing from the floor
Puddles from the drains
Beetles and mice settled down
Not to be disturbed
Meths drinkers settled in
Their numbers can't be curbed.

Now and then the sound of cars
Passing thru the street
Very seldom, now at night
To hear the sound of feet
Still, the ring of laughter
Is heard upon the wind
Long forgotten names
Drawn out and thinned.

The cold midnight air
Strikes with icy force
Now and then, the feel of speed
Tho' power has no source
Half forgotten memories
Living in a no-mans land
Their owners, long since dead.

PARCHED EARTH

The relentless sun beats down
Bathing the world in a white hot glow
Sapping life's vitality, while
Draining moisture from below
Withered flowers hang low their heads
Leaves fall from dying trees
Thirsty birds no longer sing
As cracks appear between the weeds

Arid, as the desert sands
The barren waste upon the ground
Summer days are over spread
While life is dying all around
Parched lips pray for rain
The red hot sun is beating down
Fading nature's colours
To a worn out shade of brown.

How long the days
That have no night
How cruel the sun
That robs the sight
Oh! to feel the dampness of the earth
Tears of compassion flow from Heaven's door
Let the rain pour from the skies
And let the Universe smile once more.

ANOTHER DAY

Watching the rain
As the pavements
And gutters disappear
Umbrellas turn
Inside out
And fight against the wind

Grey cascades of water
Pour from the slies
And the heavens
Black with thunder
While forks of lightning
Like tongues of serpents
Hiss and sway

Man shrinks
While giant shadows grow
Above the earth
A tap is turned
Rumbles of laughter
Shake the universe
Man shrinks yet further

Like tiny flies
He floats
Upon the tide
And the one above
Reflects
On the wonders
Of mankind.

WE WERE

Days and nights flow
Into a stream
Of years
And I am
Lost within
A generation of tears
Dead hands
Grab the wheel
And steers
And my mind
Is filled
With countless fears
The optimism
Of my youth
Is buried now
Beneath the truth.

A PART OF HEAVEN

Like the time you held my hand
And in the darkness
A voice yelled insults
While dustbin lids clattered
Somewhere a door slammed
Snow drifted around our ankles
And closed the door
On the world.

LONDON COLOURS

Just once,
I would like to say
What a perfectly
Beautiful day
While everything
Around
Is humming
A musical sound
The people are
Happy and smiling
Flowers are growing
Knee high
Everything coming
Up roses
There isn't a cloud
In the sky.

But the scene
From the window
Discourages me
For if it is TRUE
And it just has to be
It's raining and grey
And ugly today
And nothing
Will change it
Whatever I say.

MOVING DAY

Curtains have been pulled from windows
Crockery from the drawers
Bedding no longer on the beds
But folded on the floors
Carpets rolled in corners
Lino looking gray
Everywhere an emptiness
Today is moving day.

Kids are going mad
Doing what they will
Dogs are barking in the street
Neighbours peering still
Echoes from the walls rebound
Like ghosts of passing years
So much still to be done
And I'm not far from tears.

RETURN

The house stands empty
And listens for the fall of feet
The windows look for
Familiar faces on the street
Stairs creak and whisper
Litter stains the floors
The wind blows softly
Thru the open doors
Laughter echoes
With a hollow ring
Stirring memories
Of voices raised to sing
Cats patrol the empty garden
Where we used to stroll
While plants wither and trees decay
And time has taken toll
The creeper that we planted
Still hangs upon the wall
While tiles and bricks and mortar
Have crumbled where they fall
And in the midnight hour
As the church clock chime
Hand in hand together
We'll wander back thru time.

TIME FOR VISITORS

Was one of those days
After one of them nights
The hoover is bust
And the place looks a sight.

The washing machine
Is having a ball
Gyrating and twisting
Against the far wall.

The water is splashing
The suds are knee high
It's moaning and groaning
As if it will die.

The dirty dishes
Are piled in the sink
And the garbage can
Is beginning to stink.

The baby is yelling
And smelling like hell
If that's not enough
There goes the door bell.

by Sally Flood

They loved it,
Applauded,
Rose to their feet,
They yelled,
Delighted.
"Give a repeat".
But I had run,
Got lost in the crowd,
Much too embarrassed
To hang around.
For the veil
Had been lifted you see
I felt naked
For they had seen me!

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