



NIGHT INK

A tram rides through the
treetops.

A woman is waving from
the bridge
at a child on the back
of a bike
who stretches her arms
out wide
like oars as she slides
out of sight.
Circles in the water
are searching
for a shore. The woman
waves.

They are chestnuts
says Adrian
who puts down his beer
in a puddle to hold up
a grey card
hanging from a ribbon
round his neck.
His photo is on it.
LOOK it's me.
Hair flowing in watery light.

Pseudo-acacias Bill thinks
or no
those are in the
Wilhelminastraat.
He's sitting on a block
with his feet
side by side in the water.
The same
trees are growing there
on both sides
of the street. Here there's
all kinds together.
YOU should talk to Warren.
DO YOU KNOW him?

They aren't chestnuts
says Adrian.

A woman is shuffling
under the bridge
with her arms at an angle
to plough herself forward.
She gazes
ahead as if she's on a
journey far
beyond the park. We follow
the orbit
that she draws round
the earth.
See how she runs in a calm
that rests in itself.

Dutch elms Tommy suggests.
Rhombus they call me
because I used the
Latin word for
parallelogram at school.
I was sent out of the class
by my teacher
who didn't know the word.

Without the trees
I wouldn't be here.
Nor would you.
Everything's linked to
everything like this grass
with the roots
of these bathing trees
Patterns in numerical series
and water music.

Adrian says goodbye
with a hand kiss

I really must go.

Fiona gets off her bike
to take a look
from nearby
at a floating tree.
Hands with white knuckles
round the handlebars.
Is that an olive?
I've never seen an
olive tree.
Where are the olives?

Bill is wearing a
pink sun hat
with a flower pattern.
I found this he grins.
I love the four-letter word
that begins with F.
FUCK!
Yes, that too.
FREE!

We nod.
The beer cans nod back.

Adrian returns to shake
hands.

In Kenya says Johnny
the tree is
the place where
the family comes together.
I don't know where
my family is.
It's nature I miss
most of all.
I sleep on the street
but the trees
are still standing.
Look there's water
you can wash and drink
from the source.
A heron stands
stock-still
amid the tin cans in the
stream.

I never see roller-skaters
approaching
they appear out of nowhere
and roll right through you.
Do they know
each other or are they
all alone?

Adrian is sitting on the
far side.

He's showing his card to
someone else.

Gloria sings a song in a
deep voice
and brushes her dog in time
with the music.
She cleans the brush
and keeps the soft hairs
in a bag
branches and park weed
entangled
with her and the animal
that tugs.

We dive from the bridge.
Immerse ourselves in trees
with our names
written in night ink
in this park
that they say will sink.

Maria Barnas

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