

The Charity Of Night

Bruce Cockburn

Big city, Europa, July of 64.

It's 5AM. Weather blowing bitter off the Baltic.

Car slows beside him as he walks, hubcaps slow revolution, jaundiced looking pockmarked face round and windburn, short greasy black beard.

Couple of language stabs, settle on English.

It's cold.

I give you ride?

Don't you want to kiss me?

This goes on halfway across the cobbled bridge. Driver pulls ahead gets out by the construction fence, ambles toward a rubbing bulge in his pants. In his jacket is the revolver. The hand is already in the pocket for warmth and fingers slide easily around wood grips. As slow as that predator's footsteps the gun comes out, arm straightens, scythe blade bisecting yellow forehead. Wind. Blue metal street light. Faint twilight shining in the corners of stones.

Wave on wave of life

Like the great wide oceans roll

Haunting hands of memory

Pluck silver strands of soul

The damage and the dying done, the clarity of light

gentle bows and glasses raised to the charity of night

Slow revolution, 1985, crosswise in a hammock in the hot volcanic hills.

Its 3AM, the night after the air raid.

From the ridge she watched A37s like ugly gulls make a dozen swooping passes over some luckless town maybe ten clicks beyond the border. In the distance the Pacific glimmered silver. Now lascivious laughter floats on the darkness from the police post next door. Male voices and a woman's. Little clouds of desire painted around the edges with rum. In the muddy street a pig suddenly screams.

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Pacific glimmers silver. Moon full over shadow mansion.

West coast. Can't say when.

There is incense and the heat-driven scent of flowers. A tongue slides over soft skin, love pounds in veins, brains buzzing balls of lust. Fingers twine in wet hair, limbs twist and roll. On the dresser wax drips in slow motion down the long side of a black candle. Ecstatic halo of flame and pheromone.

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