

**WHEN LAUGHTER CRIES
LOUDEST REVISITED**



Wendy Webb

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This collection is dedicated to Norfolk Poets & Writers

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CRYSTAL SHARDS

In grief's soliloquy of tarnished themes,
a thousand hopes are cradled in one night
and smashed in nature's sordid morning light.
The piercing cry reverberates and teems
in caverns hollowed out by tortured dreams.
The winter sun glints wanly, past its prime,
muting the buds of Spring in blighted mime.
Joy's cradle splintered from its broken bough,
shooting crystal shards of tomorrow's vows.
Lapped by silent tides - the Soloist deems
the faintest lullaby might soar. Hush the realms
of crystal chandeliers, sparkling insight.
We haunt the whispered vestiges of night,
until the sunrise of our cradled dreams.

INNOCENCE

**Simply caressing
the secret growing in her womb;
with the certainty of promise
and innocence of youth.**

**It was simplicity itself
to swaddle the child,
wrapped in arms as peaceful
as a mother's, newly-born.
No harsh laments shattered the
cradle song -**

**evoking terror in the echoed cries
of streets spliced by Herod's sword.
A hundred Rachels crying aloud
at the systematic slaughter of
the Innocents.**

**In foreign dirges you cuddled your charge,
clapping at the tumbling steps
and stumbled words;
securely growing a boy into a man -
unsullied by Ramah's haunting melodies,
in the stillness of silenced lullabies.**

**Then the babies nursed in Abraham's bosom,
safe from the cries of new-born despair,
wept for the senseless desecration of innocence -
their mothers'.**

LIGHTER THAN AIR

The fickleness of lighter air
flares coldly now in denser night,
as deeper shades of darkness bite
chill hollows in bright lunar stare.

In tremored shades fresh oceans dull
to deeper, denser, darker brine,
and buoyant fairy dancers twine,
disguise cool depths, where moonshine's full.

Sheer dragonflies dance elven dust
in hovered flights above a pool,
unseen beneath, scale jaws skim cool
and mute a denser dragon's lust.

SUMMER BLEEDS RUBIES

Sweet summertime was blushing in the field
Her crimson frock undressing all she held.
Pale daisies rouged in endless chains she wound
With poppy rubies daubed upon each mound.
Now blending scarlet breath on cheeks, she yields.

Her chin is dripping butter while she holds
The knife to bread cool-starched in sheet-white folds,
With ocean eyes the foliage storms and pounds
Sweet summertime.

Her robust colours wilt as Autumn wields
His shadow-scythe into her emerald shields,
Indignant circling birds wail parting sounds
As bleeding, she is blazoned on the ground.
Her frock is crushed and dank with russet moulds;
Sweet summertime.

OCTUPLET MOTHER DELIVERS

**Treading the famous boards of publicity,
your opening scene sent shock waves
of consummate notoriety,
shuttering the silent grief of the infertile.
Infamy drowned in multi-screen complexity.**

**In ubiquitous stage-management,
SHE hid the many faces of pain;
graven images, of mother and child,
crushed octagonal grief
in the debating chambers of multiplicity.
You were the facsimiles of creation,
drugged into existential inexpedience.**

**Prematurely siding with the press,
you brought forward your opening night;
white seraphic gowns caught your exit
through the trap-door.**

**Your Madonna was castigated by a world
preferring the silent injection of stillness;
they wished to leave you twin civility,
before your final curtain call.**

PATERNITY

Eagerly you shouldered your male duty,
in creation's joyful lightness of being.
Procreation's desire to sire a son
or daughter, mixed with giddiness and fun,
as you lightly won the prize of seeing
fulfilled a growing, ripening beauty.

Lightly you picked fruit fallen from the tree,
summer's early windfall bruised on the ground.
With devastating lightness of being,
you raised impotent the frail fruit, seeing
beauty's desecration, close-wrapped and bound
around a being that would never be.

Struggling refusal, a chapel of rest,
bearing your child alone in the cortege.
The weight of the whole world on your shoulders.
Utterly weightless, baby-weight holders.
Cradled for the grave in duty's portage
and mooring in the harbour's little nest.

SUBTLETIES OF A NEW DAWN

Half-light
imperceptible,
creeping through the curtains
to the edges of my mind;
dancing beyond my consciousness.

Half-light,
insinuating
the vestiges of day.
Shadow-wrapping my mind
in the dirges of the night.

Half-light,
inconsequential
in grieving's night.
Sleeping, the bludgeoned mind
touches brief memorials.

Half-light,
incandescent,
brimming life's margins.
Sparking hope into a mind
brushing a brighter stratosphere.

COLD COMFORT

**Your words bereft, in ebbing pools
of helplessness, submerge, struggle,
evaporate upon the shore.**

**Your shuttered face refuses more
than sand-bagged comforts, dropped too late.
Your words bereft in ebbing pools.**

**Charmed sentiments rise to their crest
in quick succession from your store,
evaporating on the shore.**

**Speech draws the bridge before your door,
in shuttered phrasing, comfortless,
as words bereft in ebbing pools.**

**Yet when your naked soul has left
its comfort, dropped in sodden heaps,
evaporating on the shore,**

**I grieve upon the low tide's shore.
My sand steps thirst a rising tide -
until your words evaporate,
in ebbing pools upon the shore.**

THE FLAG LIES IN THE SAND

**It could be your sand-castle, buried deep,
Each crumbling sand star shooting past your keep,
Sand's slush dredged from your moat at highest tide
And turret tumbling sands drift your flag's pride.
In sand steps, waterlogged, your ocean creeps.**

**Dissolve the shifting sandcastles of sleep,
A fickle moon tide glides beneath your heap
And sodden, drifts your salt flag from your side.
It could be you.**

**Small footsteps dance their sand-weave as they sweep
New flotsam flags above the sands they leap.
Your castles weep in Avalon and slide
Beneath the waves, abandoned in the tide.
The stars of sand are sown for salt to reap -
It could be you.**

SOUND BARRIER

**Conspiracy of silence labels “brave”.
Incognitos disguised as safety ploys,
to satiate maternal baby craves,
and recognise a special little boy.**

**Trouble-torn; winding his parents like a toy.
Grave inquests held at how they failed, or gave
incubus to life’s darker side of joy.**

**White sounds distort each language barrier wave,
as airborne craft’s resistance dulls his ploy,
to safely land each phrase his parents crave.
They recognise a special little boy.**

YOUR MAM'S EYES ARE RAINING, SON

He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain,
He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain.
He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain,
He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain.
He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain,
He's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Rain.

She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam,
She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam.
She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam,
She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam.
She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam,
She's the Rain Man's, Rain Man's Mam.

It's a red train, red train, red, red train,
It's a red train's, red train's train.
It's a green train, green train, green, green train,
It's a green train's, green train's train.
It's a blue train, blue train, blue, blue train,
It's a blue train's, blue train's train.

It's a red train (Mum)
 It's a red train (Son).
It's a green train (Mum)
 It's a green train (Son).
It's a blue train (Mum)
 It's a blue train (Son).

 It's a red train (Son)...
 It's a red train (Son)...
It's a red train (Mum).
 It's a red train (Son).
IT'S A RED TRAIN, SON.
 IT'S A RED TRAIN, SON... (Son).

ROCK-A-BYE-BABY

Snowdrops popped before first snowfall,
tulips grew fat in March.

Winds frolicked with Easter lambs.

April showers lashed at cherry blossom time,
snowed white and bloodied before May's fall.

Greensleeve oaks were belted through June,
snivelled until St Swithin's.

Emerald trees rustled peaceful, like an estuary at
slack tide,

as August burned with life.

Sprinklers were banned until October
then fog bled Autumn bare.

Buds rose new and blossomed Christmas Eve,
shedding golden blushing tears.

A cradle wintered beneath a broken bough.

There was a baby bloom on Christmas morning,
blooming immortal.

The rose was misnamed 'Peace'.

WINTER BLOOMS

A rose weeps, profuse
as a winter flower stall,
blighted every year.

TINKER, TAILOR

He tinkered with the car
and tailored it to meet his needs.
He soldiered through the night,
a solo cell, sailing a fickle tide.
A man not rich, not poor,
beggared if he would belie his beliefs.

The car ignited at dawn
on the tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor;
the rich, the poor.
This beggar was the thief.

BANG BANG

Bang bang, you're dead.
The gun rings in my head.
It's fun to dump
the duplo bricks,
bike to the tip,
sit down, chew gum and kick a ball,
play grown up games, and fire,
Bang bang!
Don't frown, we're mates.
You're down.
I have to go, it's time for tea,
but can we play tomorrow, please?
Why are you playing "dead", Jack?
Bang bang, Jack's dead.

A SAINT DIES IN SHADOWS

(A Tribute to Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

In shadow streets of dying
glimpse the mother's spark of life,
tragic as a mother taunting a camera's taint
in shadowed streets of dying.
This mother is hailed a saint,
shadowing her mentor in her wake.
In shadow streets of dying,
glimpse the Mother's spark of life.

THE WREATH TREMBLED

White heartbreak flowers
tremored cold on the cortege;
bled a nation's grief.
A white paper flag, poignant
with a haunting name - "MUMMY".

HAIKU

In one rattled sigh
a ripe forever "Now!" leaves
Paradise breathless.

ALL MANNER OF THINGS SHALL BE WELL

The doorway ajar,
I lightly enter the world
where all shall be well.

A familiar voice,
in yesterday's calm echoes,
that all shall be well.

Dream-walking with hope
over tomorrow's threshold,
where all shall be well.

Lulling consciousness
that all might be as it was,
and all shall be well.

Drifting through maybe's
of window velvet; drawn back
filters of the dawn.

Harsh recognition,
seeping the edges of joy,
and all shall be, shall -

but it was a dream.
Comfort crept to the corner
and vanished - ALL WELL?

LIFE'S CORD

In the Everglades, our fatuous rink
of humanity is drowned in the stink
of a bog. The flight of the DC-9
swallowed without trace, a wallowing swine
in time's marshes, at society's brink.

The frail scattering of resources slink
the edges of an everlasting sink,
to find the relics of a tragic shrine;
in the economy of the Everglades.

Expansive humanity cannot think
so tenuous a thread could, in a blink,
snap into immortality. This line
tangled between your fragile life and mine,
irrevocably sheared in life's weak link -
forever severed in the Everglades.

COMPOUNDING THE MESS

Man's pulp abandoned on the ground,
in cardboard city's homeless mess.
A mulch of bone-damp idylls drowned
man's pulp, abandoned on the ground.
Your festered shells were never found
compounded to a new card dress.
Man's pulp, abandoned, on the ground
in Cardboard City's homeless mess.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions spring from the tinted glass,
still brash and ruddy with Santa's bold tinge.
From champagne courtships with ghosts of the past,
resolutions spring.

Bright fairy reindeer, leave, (their antlers singed)
and blast the dense new year with Auld Lang trash,
too drunk to remember the old year's sting.

Plastic cards tingle their own Market Crash,
they binge fast-heeled on the sales checkouts' ring.
Snow-storms of brassy, slashed prices amass.
Resolution's Spring.

TINSEL AND SUNTAN

The travel brochure on the mat
had splattered bleak on Christmas Eve;
the present's future sadly sat,
a tinsel wrap for New Year's leave.
The bin bag blackened sell-by dreams
of theme-torn Summer Holidays.
A tip packed garbage, less it seemed,
than word trash glossy landfill claims.

EYES OF THE BEHOLDER

Bent down by the weight of the years,
shuffling by with arthritic joints.
Deep crevices carved by the tears,
massed in a disorganised web.
Knobbed hands reach, clutching with cares,
grasping door jamb to climb the step.
The shapeless bright sack that she wears,
billows before closing the door.
Lowered slowly into the chair,
she rests on the faded old suite,
and contemplates whether she dare
risk mounting the steep wooden stairs.

Bedridden, the old man's face smears
as she treads through the door with care.
Well-practised, she wipes away fears
and sits on a chair by his bed.
Stroking his hand, she seems to hear
unspoken, his thoughts of the hour.
With toothless grin she calls him, Dear,
wandering through his memories.
Like comfy old slippers she wears,
he peers past her visage and smiles.
Snug fits this glove, worn tags to tears,
grief's beauty grown in a lifetime.

SILENCED

**Condemn your hymns to silence, boy
I rule you out of tune;
sweet innocence may chain your throat
to crow's "Caw's" in our hall.**

**Sing yesterdays no more, my boy
assembled, none in shorts;
your old man's cough is tuneless here -
refurbished, scrubbed for school.**

**Your village gone, a satellite,
slate/chalk an office, fine.
So tastefully, a silenced bell
shuts down your voice, as youth.**

NEST DROP

Drop down the fragile egg shell from its nest,
in muted shades a naked carcass lies.
Obscene, the pavement bears no bridge of sighs,
or modest, in disguise, its Autumn best.

Toss out a frail baby, when it's born,
grasp, cold, a shooting star before it flares.
Then catapult dull fancies into stares,
or stub, unknown, the spot its life was torn.

Dead-line, with Press, youth headlines for a day,
daub, young, with garish browns the body, neat.
Decease, grown long, the wonder of small feet,
"shot" needle high, where mind-sense could not stay.

A mid-life crisis thwarted dreams, long-planned.
Retirement early, pensioned to a pall.
His nest egg cracked and splattered in the fall -
they combed his life (and hairline) strand by strand.

Wrap, late, the withered body with cool care;
enclose with common courtesies, grown cold.
Disguise old pavement winters in firm hold
and stub your view, so you don't have to stare.

VICTIM

**They carried you to church,
a victim not unwilling -
yet no verve supported me.**

**You were presumed abandoned
and ceased in decease -
yet cessation seized me.**

**They called you Loser
and perhaps you were -
except the loser's me.**

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

Your heart
an open range,
a kettle, brewing tea.
An estuary, your face. Now leaves
its plot.

Your face
aged overnight,
and, senseless, wiped your heart.
Quelled phantom, infant, storms
too late.

Stollen
your soul. Shared as
gluhwein's warm, sweet welcome.
Familiar faces whisper, stunned.
Schlaf gut.

Scribble
humour, in your
sad and love-lost eyelids.
Shave boyhood misdemeanours, close.
Spaced out.

Sightless
your baby face.
Hushed. Innocent of time.
Suckled warm, but stilled your heart. Beat,
no more.

The old,
familiar face,
slips through crowds, coffee shops.
Stokes our passion, verve, when people
remain.

WHEN LAUGHTER CRIES THE LOUDEST

**You closed your eyes,
wiped back the tears
and drew your mirage curtain down.
You rouged your cheeks,
pressed down your nose
and poised a flower in your hat.
You trod your tightrope in flat feet
and feather-wiped your fallowed brow.
Dropped down, your silken hanky swooned,
a breeze of sighs around the ring.
Mask-white, your grimace mixed with rouge;
a carbon-copy as you clowned.**

**But did they know that when they laughed,
you played the routine one more time?
Or did they know that, when they cried,
they laughed before the tears dried?**

**Yet only one clown understood
that laughter is the loudest cry -
and laughed until he cried.**

THE LAST TEAR

Until the sun ceases shining,
blazing with earthen farewells;
until it never rises,
bleached ashen in lunar dawns;
until it gives golden kisses
to the blushing newborn day,
and frolics in the sunbeams
of an endless perfect morn.
The haze of dawn still rises -
glistening with tears.

Until the dearest faces
remain uncensored in photographs;
until mortal celebrations
cease their whispered epitaphs;
until dreams rise in fulfilment,
unheard in the dearth of care
and censured names are ringing
their heart's music in our ears.
The haze of dawn embraces -
glistening with tears.

One day the weeping ocean
will dry and grieve no more,
as the shore meets its horizon
in a burnished brighter dawn.
Unquenched floods will evaporate,
where tears no longer bleed,
as we step into tomorrow
and heaven's brand new earth.
Glistening in the bright dawn -
the last stray tear is shed.