

*Perfectly Careless,
Final Separation.*

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Introduction

This collection of poems is very much a companion piece - neither prequel nor sequel - to the play Flowering Desolation that I wrote using a similar approach in 2018.

Each poem has been carved out of a single novel which has been read, sliced up, and reorganised into the linear poem that is presented here. These fragments of sentences have been removed of their original context and used as the raw material with which to craft new meaning. The content of each poem has arisen naturally, always being led by the source text itself, and was naturally obscured to me until the full poem had come into being.

The process was simple: I read books and took from them interesting arrangements of words, never altering them but allowing myself to take only fragments of sentences and to edit punctuation as I saw fit. These groups of words were then ordered so as to create something that appeared both coherent and distinct from its original source. Some of the poems here conform loosely to the original feel of their respective source-novels, and some contrast sharply from them. They exist here both as individual works, and as the collection in which they are presented. The writing style naturally changes poem to poem, and the vernacular of each writer is apparent in the text.

No word besides this short introduction has been written by myself, rather they are hijackings: unofficial collaborations for which I did not seek approval nor ask forgiveness.

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In Calculated Disorder



Toni Morrison - The Bluest Eye

Dreams of affluence and vengeance
into the anonymous misery of their
Terror and obscure longing.

Her eyes are full of sorrow:
“Please, make me disappear.”

We acquiesce.

The others are braced in darkness,
Slid into the silence,
Surrounded by black.

How strange was their outrage,
And much less melancholy.
How repulsive this disinterested violence
Thrived in insecurity.

The distinction was subtle but final,
Flagged in calculated disorder,
Blunted by a permanent awareness of loss.

Every possibility of excess was curtailed with it.

Of Hopeless Agony



Jane Austen - Persuasion

In a convenient silence:
The natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.

The solitariness and the melancholy of
Love has an earlier death.

Consciousness sought to conceal
The exquisite relief
Of former intimacy.

With fond regret
Now so deserted,
And sentimental reflection
Too late to retract.

A melancholy air
Of hopeless agony
Was a remainder of former sentiment -
Changed naturally into pity and contempt,
Without beauty and without dignity.

A dreadful extension
Of past kindness and present suffering,
Brought too painfully:
A sort of desolate tranquility.

The misery of a parting - a final parting -
Deprecated the connexion in every light.
Poetical despondence
Was reduced to form a
Perfectly careless
Final separation.

In private rapture,
With unalterable coldness,
Something between delight and misery.
The elegant stupidity of
All the sacrifices that ennoble us most.

Pity and horror,
Weakness and timidity.
The ecstasy of such a reprieve
Could never be remembered with indifference,
And without violence.

Almost Despair



Fyodor Dostoevsky - The Brothers Karamazov

The jealous will never understand
The shameful depths to which they have voluntarily sunk.

With a melancholy and exhausted air,
In despair, he hid his face in his hands.

In silence, alone with his conscience,
he asks himself something supercilious and scornful,
An expression of peculiar solemnity.

At that moment he had no desire to live.
Such heavy burdens are not for all men.
All things come to an end; all things are made equal.

In bitter despondency, almost despair,
His first horror had been succeeded by pity.
He was fearfully exhausted,
For suffering is life.

He was exerting himself to the utmost not to believe in the
Delusion
And not to sink into complete insanity.
Despair and penitence are two very different things.

He exclaimed suddenly, with tears:
“In thousands of agonies - I exist.”

Sleep, Remain



Alice Walker - The Colour Purple

I look into her eyes.
First she smile a little.
I lay there thinking
But sleep remain a stranger.
I don't know nothing.
I don't say nothing.

I pray for strength.
She say nothing but death can keep me from it,
And don't nothing seem to be troubling her mind:
But I know better.
I knew what she thought.
Eyes clear and innocent.
She say slow:
Every day I think about you.

This life soon be over I say.

Only the sky above us do we hold in common.
Two old fools left over from love,
Into quiet hysteria.

Distant Lightening, Still



Vladimir Nabokov - Pale Fire

Oblivion thrives:
Awake and breathless,
Tugged at by playful death.

Mangled, and unnecessarily alive.

The riddle of her behaviour was
A general impression of indecency
In an ecstasy of frivolous haste.

Implicit in self-destruction.

With timeless intensity
Death's fearful shadow
Now sinking into raucous undertones
Of rapture and reverence.

Distant lightening
Still trying to assuage the swelling torment
By sinking back
Into oblivion's shallow diaphanous filth.

The thick venom of envy
Into an inviting abyss
Of accepted regret.

Incipient Dawn



Chinua Achebe - No Longer at Ease

In semi-darkness and in silence,
Except when the silence suddenly became too heavy to bear.
It very soon vanished altogether
To the incipient dawn.

The sudden impact
Trembled violently as
Flashes of lightening showed through
The miseries of winter.

It had become an endless waste of restless
Darkness and ignorance,
Neither deep nor sincere.

A decayed one
Waiting sadly and silently
To escape the burden.
A thing of shame
Completely transformed,
Descending softly with the wind.
Almost in silence.

In What Darkness



Charlotte Brontë - Jane Eyre

The quite solitary churchyard:
A ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly
In the raw twilight.

In what darkness
The black frost reigned.
In the unknown world of the departed.

A profound stillness pervaded.

Though dusk was now fast deepening into total obscurity,
I approached the verge of despair.

Sense would resist delirium:
Judgement would warn passion.

The solitude of a lonesome wild
Annihilated in a moment.
I was presently undeceived,
All was obscurity.
No longer a void.

I grew calm, and fell asleep.

From Fear or Weakness



Alan Moore - Watchmen

Born from oblivion
Love crawls on all fours
Or in modified visions of a half-imagined past.

A life of conflict:
Careless with anger,
Free from fear or weakness or lust.

All those old doubts and worries
Without all their darkness and ambiguity,
Sparing me further horrors.

It meant that I had reached my destination
With disconcerting stillness.

Life had no worse news to offer me.

For better or for worse,
Never surrender.

Into the shadow now without complaint.

My Sudden Frailty



Sylvia Plath - The Bell Jar

I felt in terrible danger.

In the middle of the dark
Elaborate decadence that
Should numb and cover
My sudden frailty.

The familiar labyrinth of
Of my own bones.

I saw a flicker of strangeness.
The faintest glow;
The black shadow of something that wasn't there
Melting into the shadows
Beyond the darkness.

The sky turned black
Into the overhang of silence.

Quiet as death.

Darker than Death



Kafū Nagai - Behind the Prison

Waiting an eternity for the
Escape forever from this fateful shadow.
Darker than death,
More radiant than ever.

A taste of the sadness to come after parting
Fills me with an inexpressible sorrow
In quiet solitude.

All one is left with is the unbearable agony of conscience.

Thunderstorm Howling



Mark Z. Danielewski - House of Leaves

Regions of sorrow
On the fringe of night,
Somehow violent.

Pitching towards a profound darkness,
Long past midnight.

There is nothing but regret here,
An almost indiscreet sense of familiarity.
Devoted beyond death.

Thunderstorm howling
Upon the melodrama of shadows.

Carrion dawn for vultures.

Meaningless Carnage



Margaret Atwood - The Blind Assassin

Immolation is what she wants.

It was the fury
Of departed grace
Which promises to be
A strange inertia
In the outer darkness.

Deeper into the shadows now:
The whisper of
A miasma of old spite
Solemn, and radiant.

Beneath the surfaces of things
Meaningless carnage
Will shortly follow.

Falling silent finally
Her throat fills with smoke

I tortured myself with visions of her.

Hovering



Leo Tolstoy - Father Sergius

With trembling jaws, pale as death
He was seized by the same rapture
And the lusts of the flesh.

Fits of fury to which he was subject and during which
He lost control of himself.

But intense and complex striving went on within him
And she seemed the personification of innocence and love -
The very thing he had found so repulsive.

That temptation arose with terrible strength.
And in this obedience he found a special tranquility.
But subsequently, that feeling
Became more and more deadened.

He had heard how the silk rustled
When she took off her dress
And felt that danger and destruction were there,
Hovering above and around him.

She grew irritable
And she could not continue, but became silent.

The memory of that conversation now disquieted him,
Oppressed him,
It also pleased him.
He was touched with pity for himself,
With aversion and a sense of guilt.

She interested him in that she presented a distraction.

From the Unanswering Sleep



George Eliot - Adam Bede

The quiet depth of conviction with which she spoke
Seemed like a great terror was upon her.

There was a touch of melancholy kindness in her face.
With a sad beseeching tenderness that
Might become unpleasantly severe.

Giving up this inquiry in despair she
Shrouded a secret indulgence of unbecoming wishes
And was already in retreat

In such pleasant delirium of hers -
Which belongs to the first hours of a sudden sorrow -
She was obliged to turn away from him and go on.
Into violent distress.

In some way quite unlike
That mystery of human sorrow which had
Her heart swelling with discontent.

Fallen, from pure decay;
From the unanswering sleep of death;
From a temporary sorrow into a lifelong misery.

That sense of helpless dependence
Took on a solemn splendour under the dark,
With an air of quiet obedience
For obscure and monotonous suffering.

But now tribulation has opened her heart.
That is the longing which has been growing
And for a long moment time has vanished
Without having produced the threatened consequences.

She lost sight of him and turned back slowly
In heart-stricken silence.

Barely Concealed Distress



Yasunari Kawabata - Dandelions

A hint of madness
Came out of her terror.
Faded imperceptibly into
Barely concealed distress.

Something more than just the broken destiny of
Her own individual loneliness
And all the sorrow.

So tranquil, so peaceful.

Without Decay



Flann O'Brien - At Swim-Two-Birds

Dulled somewhat by indulgence in
The sharp agonies of
The nearness of disgrace,
Or the sorrow of death.
Against the hum of desire,
Dependent on the conflict,
Wild ecstasy
Without decay
Would lead to chaos.

Evident, Only



Väinö Linna - Unknown Soldiers

Even in this hopeless state of affairs
The darkness seemed saturated with danger.

Exhaustion began to recede into the shadows of their
Burgeoning anxiety,
But then its ominous silence grew downright terrifying.

Trying to block out their misery, which gradually came to be
Drowned out by the knowledge that they would soon find
Themselves - yet again - experiencing that greatest of human
Anxieties: fear for their lives.

A force mightier than all of these whipped them onwards
To be forgotten there forever.

Lucky for them, they were ignorant of the general situation.

In the middle of the mayhem
He was smiling - that curious, private smile of his, evident
Only in and around his eyes,
Laughing proudly in the face of death.

But even so, a tough resilience within him fought death
Long and tenaciously.

God doesn't want them
And the devil knows he'll get them in the end.

Post Crisis Stillness



Steven Hall - The Raw Shark Texts

The post crisis stillness:
A deserted place between resignation and regret.

Totally adrift,
Responding to the stillness
Of undisturbed waters.

Caught in that second of realisation,
Heavy and oppressive and powerful.

Everything is changing.

I had to get out.

Brittle Envy



*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - That Thing
Around Your Neck*

Finally there was silence
Lined with both disgust and disappointment
And tortured loyalties.

The abundance of unreasonable hope,
Brittle envy -
A disquieting finality.

She watched him with a kind of desperate sadness
In the still darkness,
Suspended between disbelief and hope.

A strange deserted feeling:
The remnants of accidents,
Guts, or insecurity.

The air hung heavy with
A gentle sorrow.

Madness in her eyes,
Those secrets she shared with herself
Had started to disappear.

She was relieved:
A lifetime of silence collapsing.

For a long time with great sadness
The glowing malevolence
Hung heavy in the air.

There was something about it that was exceedingly fragile.

The Absence of all Hope



Marcel Proust - Jean Santeuil

Joy and wretchedness
In the silence of the night
Cast a sharp, black shadow
And concealed her fury.

Having become saturated with his weariness
He watched with a sense of desperation
Once the tempest had subsided.
An immaterial presence seemed to be hovering
With a pretence of intimacy.

A sad warning of love's fragility
Awakens only by slow degrees,
Only in solitude,
While all outside is cold and hostile
And seems to rage without a cause.

A glance of deep affection
Had drawn from the darkness of
That nagging sense of life's mediocrity,
Produced by the absence of all hope.
The sharp return of disinterested memory
For the profound silence.
Secure at such times in its solitude
Like the stirrings of a sweet and gentle dream.

A sweet madness
Which conceals a complete vacancy of mind,
Pronouncing a sentence of absolute condemnation
With an enervating softness.

Infinite pleasure,
Gleaming in the darkness,
To be suddenly precipitated into the measureless black
Depths of nothingness.

The cruelty of absence
Taken refuge in the silence and oblivion,
Until such time as darkness should assume its sway over its
dark and tender melancholy.



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