

A Poem In Two Parts by Scott Allen
Advent Week 1, 2023

I.

life will mark you

the world works like this:
it was wound and now it unwinds
there are no heroes
only humans

existence tainted with waste
consumption, destruction
collapse, combustion
exhaust (and exhaustion)

‘the environment’ as if it is not the whole world
as if we are separate from the ground
upon which we stand
we live in a city constructed completely
even the trees selected, placed maples
the concrete from what sand, mined from where
bricks from what factory,
how these clothes were constructed, shipped
what landscape ravaged
species displaced, erased

how we hate the traffic
and how we are the traffic
we hate environmental degradation
and we are environmental degradation
we are greenhouse gasses
(even this paper, even these words)
we are extinction
eight billion hearts, everyday

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pumping vast amounts of blood
many are making crooked money
and most of us are watching
so called free markets

history floats, flattens
singularity vs. Armageddon
global warming vs nuclear annihilation
too many mirrors, too many screens
find yourself doing the things you hate
the things you detest, despise
that sicken, that poison the heart
trappings of convenience, distraction
vaping, VR porn, fentanyl
when first the addiction appears,
you think 'no no no'
it has no appeal, but underneath
that shadow self begins to make a plan

drifting
is all we do consume
we must sometimes wonder, are we worth it

preschoolers battling over a shared drawing
each has signed his name
they've torn it apart

boredom as torture
to be alone with one's thoughts

the end of the world lasts a long time

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II.

the lightbulb and the egg

is peace the fulfillment of desire?
or the death of desire?
the absurd extremes of beauty and depravity

the frenzy of humanity seems to be reaching its zenith
new contributions, new combinations
waiting for the population to peak, recede
if we stopped now
no more plunder
we could start to study the devastation

odd to reach middle age
odd to discover
the philosophers know nothing
grossly adequate, I grow old
the gray creeps up, takes over
the gray will feed the green
how to stay open
to imagine life as an ocean horizon

how some shapes come apart, collide
combine and reform into newly colored shapes
how fire moves, laps, leaps
like a slow projection of fire

where is the quiet swimming hole
the deep grumble of the little falls

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every single second sings, sighs
signs, every insect vibrates
every creek blinks its way through every second
every flower sprouts in spurts, not steadily
but flickering, flightingly like wine, like fire
every line is the first in a just cracked fire-journal
our crowded lives full of smoke and symbol
holy flowing
slowly, slowly
poetry's easy, just blurt
dance weird, it's the only way

do geese see God?
never odd, or even
even in chaos, even in shadows
even clothed, disrobed, exposed
ancient tombs, temporal lobes
green shoots through the centers of the garlic cloves

I know a cove, its steep shelf and hidden golden fish
I've chased them
I know your deep sea heart
the shelf of it
I've seen your smile
what a crazy love

your city holds such steep streets
unfathomable dream streets, purple and pink lit
with miniature lights, green and baby twinkling blue
what soft flow, your little houses
a city without mansions, without envy

I am showing you the secret

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I am giving it away
this is the quiet healing
writing from finding
from having found
you have knocked
the door has opened

life is mysterious
and that mystery is not to be feared
sew it up, seal it
summon love, summon healing
to hear the ticking of your own clock
and the ticking of the trees and quiet underbrush
the secret, unconcerned doings of the birds
briefly, loudly
sweetness of the snake across the path, jet black

such profound and glorious loss
the deep horror of being human
the palpable grace
the whole holy project
the whole damn mess
all of it, all of it, all of it
glowing embers in the night
words too dangerous to say except in song