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**THE
FIFTY MINUTE
MERMAID**



Gallery Books

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Mo Mháistir Dorcha

Táimse in aimsir ag an mBás,
eadrainn tá coinníollacha tarraicthe.
Réitíomair le chéile ar feadh tréimhse is spás
aimsire, achar roinnt bliana is lae mar a cheapas-sa.

Bhuaileas leis ag margadh na saoire.
D'iarr sé orm an rabhas *hire-áilte*.
'Is maith mar a tharla; máistir ag lorg cailín
is cailín ag lorg máistir.'

Ní rabhas ach in aois a naoi déag
nuair a chuas leis ar dtúis faoi chonradh.
Do shíneas mo lámh leis an bpár
is bhí sé láithreach ina mhargadh.

Do chuir sé a chrúcaí im' lár
cé nar thug sé brútáil ná drochíde orm.
Ba chosúla le greas suirí nó grá
an caidreamh a bhí eadrainn.

Is tugaim a tháinte dubha chun abhann,
buaibh úd na n-adharca fada.
Luíonn siad síos i móinéir.
Bím á n-aoireacht ar chnoic san imigéin
atá glas agus féarach.

Seolaim ar imeall an uisce iad
is gaibheann siad scíth agus suaimhneas.
Treoraím lem' shlat is lem' bhachall iad
trí ghleannta an uaignis.

My Dark Master

I've gone and hired myself out. I've hired myself out to
Death.

We drew up a contract and set the seal
on it by spitting in our palms. I would go with him to
Lateeve
for a year and a day — at least, that was the deal

as I remember it. When I met him at the hiring-fair
he inquired if I'd yet
been taken: 'What a stroke of luck,' he declared,
'when a master who's set on a maid finds a maid who's set

on a master.' I was only nineteen years old
at the time the bargain was struck.
I made my mark on a bit of paper and was indentured
on the spot. What a stroke of luck,

I declare, what a stroke of luck that I fell
into his clutches. Not, I should emphasize again,
that he meddled with or molested me for, to tell
you the truth, our relationship was always much more akin

to walking out, or going steady. I lead his blue-black cows
with their fabulously long horns
to water. They lie down in pastures of clover and fescue
and lucerne. I follow them over hills faraway and green.

I lead them down beside Lough Duff
where they find rest and where they are restored.
I drive them with my rod and my staff
through the valleys of loneliness. Then I might herd

Is siúlaim leo suas ar an ard
mar a mbíonn sciollam na móna le blaiseadh acu
is tagann míobhán orm i mbarr an mháma
nuair a chím faid mo radhairc uaim ag leathadh

a thailte is méid a ríochta,
an domhan mór ba dhóigh leat faoina ghlaic aige
is cloisim sa mhodardhoircheacht bhróin
na hanamnacha ag éamh is ag sioscadh ann.

Is tá sé féin saibhir thar meon.
Tá trucailí óir agus seoda aige.
Ní bheadh i gcarn airgid Déamair
ach cac capaill suas leo.

Ó táimse in aimsir ag an mbás,
is baolach ná beidh mé saor riamh uaidh.
Ní heol dom mo thuarastal ná mo phá
nó an bhfaighidh mé pá plaic' nó cead aighnis uaidh.

them to a mountain-pass, to a summit
where they browse on bog-asphodel and where I, when I
look down, get somewhat
dizzy. His realm extends as far as the eye

can see and beyond, so much so
a body might be forgiven for thinking the whole
world's under his sway. Particularly after the sough-sighs
of suffering souls

from the darkness. He himself has riches that are untold,
coming down as he is with jewels and gems.
Even John Damer of Shronel, even his piles of gold
would be horse-shit compared to them.

I've hired myself out to death. And I'm afraid that I'll not
ever be let go. What I'll have at the end of the day
I've absolutely no idea, either in terms of three hots and a cot
or if I'll be allowed to say my say.

Dubh

Ar thitim Shrebrenica, 11ú Iúil 1995

Is lá dubh é seo.
Tá an spéir dubh.
Tá an fharraige dubh.

Tá na gairdíní dubh.
Tá na crainn dubh.
Tá na cnoic dubh.
Tá na busanna dubh.
Tá na carranna a thugann na páistí ar scoil ar maidin dubh.

Tá na siopaí dubh.
Tá a bhfuinneoga dubh.
Tá na sráideanna dubh (is ní le daoine é).
Tá na nuachtáin a dhíolann an cailín dubh go bhfuil an
folt láidir dubh uirthi
dubh, dubh, dubh.

Tá an damh dubh.
Tá an gadhar dubh.
Tá capall úd Uíbh Ráthaigh dubh.
Tá gach corréan a scinneann amach as an ealta dubh.
An chaora dhubh a sheasann amach de ghnáth i lár an tréada,
ní heisceacht í níos mó mar tá na caoirigh ar fad dubh.

Tá na prátaí dubh.
Tá na turnapaí dubh.
Tá gach bileog cabáiste a chuirfeá síos i dtóin corcáin dubh.

Tá an sáspan dubh.
Tá an ciotal dubh.
Tá gach tóin corcáin as seo go Poll Tí Liabáin dubh.

Black

On the fall of Srebrenica, 11 July 1995

A black day, this.
The sky is black.
The sea is black.

The gardens are black.
The trees are black.
The hills are black.
The buses are black.
The cars bringing the kids to school are black.

The shops are black.
Their windows are black.
The streets are black (and I don't mean with people).
The newspapers sold by the dark girl with the great head of
dark hair
are black, black, black.

The ox is black.
The hound is black.
The very horse from Iveragh is black.
The bird suddenly out of sync with the flock is black.
The black sheep that stood out from the ordinary run of sheep
no longer stands out, for all the sheep are black.

The spuds are black.
The turnips are black.
Every last leaf of cabbage in the pot is black.

The saucepan is black.
The kettle is black.
The bottom of every pot from here to the crack of doom is
black.

Tá na Caitlicigh dubh.
Tá na Protastúnaigh dubh.
Tá na Seirbigh is na Crótaigh dubh.
Tá gach uile chine a shiúlann ar dhromchla na cruinne
an mhaidin dhubh seo samhraidh, dubh.

Tá na polaiticeoirí ar sciobaidh
is iad ag baint na gcos is na n-eireaball dá chéile
ag iarraidh a chur ina luí orainn
nach fada go mbeidh gach dubh ina gheal.
Is an té a leomhadh a mhisneach dó
nó a chreidfeadh an méid a deireann siad
níor mhiste dó b'fhéidir an cheist a chur
ab ann ab amhlaidh a chiallaíonn sé seo anois
nach mbeidh ins gach dubhthréimhse ach seal?

Ach ní dhéanfadsa.
Mar táimse dubh.
Tá mo chroí dubh
is m'intinn dubh.
Tá m'amharc ar feadh raon mo radhairc dubh.
Tá an dubh istigh is amuigh agam chughainn.

Mar gach píosa guail nó sméar nó airne,
gach deamhan nó diabhal nó daradaol,
gach cleite fiaigh mhara nó íochtar bhonn bróige,
gach uaimh nó cabha nó poll tóna
gach duibheagán doimhin a shlogann ár ndóchas,
táim dubh dubh dubh.

Mar tá Srebrenica, cathair an airgid,
'Argentaria' na Laidne,
bán.

The Catholics are black.
The Protestants are black.
The Serbs and the Croats are black.
Every tribe on the face of the earth this blackest of black
mornings black.

The politicians are scuffling about
biting the legs and the tails off each other
trying to persuade us
to look on the bright side.
Anyone who might be inclined
to take them at their word
would do well, maybe, to ask
why they think it goes without saying
that every black cloud has a silver lining.

I myself won't be the one.
For I'm black.
My heart is black and my mind is black.
Everything that falls into my field of vision is black.
I'm full of black rage.
There's a black mark against all our names.

Like each and every lump of coal, every blackberry and sloe
and demon and devil and Devil's Coachman,
every grave and cave and arsehole,
every bottomless pit in which we lose all hope,
I'm black as black can be.

Now that Srebrenica, that silver city —
'Argentaria', as the Romans called it —
is blank.