

Firsts

*our First bomb
marsh sands manoeuvre
into feet of clay*

There are many Firsts. First breath. First nose burial in the milk trough. So many! First Events, First Realisations compost earth. Take the First bomb that flattens a shop The Charity sorted out to get Mum and Dad back on their feet after The Pains. Definitely a First! None of us were there. How hit and miss it all is! One moment you run a backwater sweet shop. Then you don't. A first friend, with whom you share everything, disappears. You are or are not in the right or wrong place at the right or wrong time. Potluck! How hit and miss it all is.

“Gimme the flannel. Yer ears are mucky. An’ when’s the las’ time yer neck saw soap?” “Notsir’ard.” “An’ yer can’t wear that shir’.” “& Y kNOT?” “Cause it’s dirty, that’s why not. And look at yer shoes! They aint been cleaned since ferever”. “I don’wannergo. Leavemealone” “You’re gowintergo an’ yuaregoin’ clean an’ don’t go ov on yer own an’ make sure you say ‘fankyou’ an’ ...injoyyerself!

*special day
dirty clouds
now cleaner*

We are poor. So is every family for miles around. Par for the course. Nothing to worry about. Being different, they notice. Decide the poor children of the poor need a treat. A day to remember. A First. They give the dosh. Who understands? Same as the war. It starts; we’re there. Don’t understand. Maybe too many marriages and even more children. Like thick crusty bread ladled with beef-spotted dripping it is accepted. So we tumble and bundle and shout and laugh our way into more than a 100 London Taxis, a First of an unpredictable day.

*endless cavalcade
a twist and hill turn of roads
to new formations*

At the last outpost of land, we stop. ‘Littlehampton-on-Sea-el-Magnifico’. The Drive, Fields, Cows, Funfair, Seaside, Sea. Firsts! But That Sea! Poleaxes senses. Suddenly. There. And a new wind holds into my breath. Feet numb, I fix to improbable First pebbles. But such is the haze of trance it transports me beyond the weight of a small body. *i fly*. What a First! Inside glide swoops of harsh seagulls, above the length, across the breadth of this diving dimension, I fly through close-up wave movements that stop somewhere there, where skin startles, green fills, sand absorbs.

distant seascape the First fishing boat a sway of greys

When the shore moves I stumble. Another First. Water attracts. Here, deep beyond imagining. There, inside this reflected sky, is an Unease of attraction. I may, under its covers, take refuge from over-formed apparitions. Holding tight to a sudden big hand, shoes and socks somewhere else, I small-step into sloppy waves that come and go. As balance skews and perspective contracts, this First connection fits; not as an equal partnership, but one I survive and, later, slot into the pattern. Moved to a First rock pool, for the First time I see a

solid liquid transparency. Not blinking, I gaze at a gliding fish, eyes large, translucent and able.

Every bit of this Day of Firsts startles. Here, for the First time, i am bumping against a latter-day Serpentine-Eve-Avec-Her-Ripe-Appley-Adam moment, a Love Affair so Intense, so Integrated a process, so Confused, it can be none other than mutually damaging for as long as my Evermore lasts.

Later, during the exhausting journey into the dark, a First peacock, a First dead bump. Someplace else, another important First. How hit and miss it all is!

“Hello luv. How was it?”

“Great!”

Instant sleep pours into the thin metal bed discarded by the local hospital, and mine longer than I can remember.

*crescendo yellow
a first wave of daffodils
sweeps onto the path*