

Handbrake Waltz

A car, no taller than the man inside,
breaks down on the A51, somewhere between
Tarvin and a tarmac endlessness.

The man, about as old as the plates on his car
steps out into the moss and meadow of the overgrown lay-by,
his serious shoes confused by the dampness of it all.

He waits appropriately,
patient in the new moon of early evening.
The bubblegum glow of an all-night garage
accents the middle distance, tracing the trees
and pylons to his feet.

She arrives, his partner, after some time.
Climbing into her car he observes its wellness.
Quiet and polished, faster and much younger than his own.
A leather utopia of confidence and control.
And with that, they drive on.

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Some years later on the same stretch of A-road
Just west of Tarporley, the car is unmoved.
Fallow and deactivated, statuesque;
immortalised in metal. His Brands Hatch beauty
now a stable economy in the wiry timberline.

Above, spring celebrates; underneath
it is still winter. The browning undercarriage
of half-readable serial numbers and steel composites
shaped at the chisel of rush hour,
fall out of favour with the sun.

By night, a mist sits on the mire and on
the brambles and bushes and bonnets and breaks;
all the same now. It was as if the years
spent wrapped up in the concrete sheets of driveways
and side streets were a rehearsal for not moving.

As if not moving was the new moving.
And across the road, in the garden of a house
no taller the Birch beside it,
plastic goal posts are dismantled and left;
the rubble of playtime.