

Sweet life

Morwenna Griffiths



Presented by

My poetic side 

Dedication

For Peter

About the author

Morwenna Griffiths lives in Scotland. She used to be a teacher in schools and universities but is now happily retired.

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Roaring winds: white surf assaults
Rocks of black in pewter seas.
Swirling, crashing water heaves
While all around the seagulls waltz.

Music of the Shore, St Andrews, Scotland

Like moving staves of music, long waves
Break white. Their tunes are made of water,
A foaming, moving scherzo. In counterpoint,
The solid, steady staves of coal-black stone.
A frail descant from our voices high above.

Easy Happiness

They're strolling along in this fine Spring weather
With chatter and smiles as they take in the view.
It's a commonplace happiness being together
Something so simple, so easy to do.

Because after all, no bombs are roaring down;
Because there is some small chance that climate change may slow;
And some extinctions be averted.
Because we still have this possibility of easy happiness.

Counting my assets

Rising early, I see each leaf, each green blade,
Masked by the white of morning mist, rising like steam
Over the late summer vista, the goldenrod, the purple aster
And consider their benefits, this treasure, this glorious resource, this reliable asset.

Grief for a probable future

We'd cool air, tall trees, the canopy scattering sun
On emerald moss; a woodland walk, that day's delight
As an undertow of future grief flows on.

An enchanting place ? but it may soon be gone,
Scorched or drowned, as politicians fight:
No cool air, tall trees, nor canopy scattering sun.

A happy day we'd had; and there are more to come,
But always aware of our earth's climate plight.
So an undertow of future grief flows on.

The complex web of woodland's finely spun
By beetles, lichens, leaves and birds in flight.
Thus, cool air, tall trees, a canopy scattering sun.

We'd fallen trunks of trees to rest upon,
While swirling clouds of insects caught the light,
And an undertow of future grief flowed on.

Has a juggernaut of mindless power now won?
With its self-regarding plans and blinkered sight?
As an undertow of future grief flows on
Through cool air, tall trees, the canopies scattering sun.

A day out

The world turns

The world burns

But ?

we had a lovely day.

The air thickens

The air sickens

But ?

didn't we have a lovely day?

The world burns

The air sickens

But ?

who do I mean by 'we' today?

This tangled life

I sing the wildness of weeds and their flowers,
I sing, and my face breaks into smiles,
I sing the dandelions, the toadflax and the buddleia.
I revel in their colourful, scented exuberance;
As they rise up from the paved places,
As they erupt out of brick walls,
As they lean down from the roofs above me.
I sing of the courage, of the resilience of weeds.

I sing the power of the insects that plague us,
I sing, my face screwed up in protest,
I sing the midges, the wasps and the tsetse flies.
I marvel at their otherness from me;
How their bodies lift up on transparent wings,
How they undergo metamorphoses,
How they collectively survive the onslaught of poisons.
I sing of the courage, of the resilience of insects.

I sing our inclusion
In the retreats and advances,
In the intricate dances
Of life's evolution.

Our weather goddess

In from a day out,
Sleepy with sunshine
Supper on trays
A glass of red
Smooth, bitter, good.

We raise our glasses, clink.
'To the goddess!'
'To the goddess!'

She looks after us
So we praise her ? and,
She looks after us,
We believe. We don't believe.
Of course we don't!

Yes, we do.
Who else to thank for our good luck
With weather?

We raise our glasses, clink
'To the goddess!'

The blowing out of birthday candles

It was his seventieth birthday
So there must be cake
And candles
And a blowing out of candles.

All these were assembled.
It was then I realised
Too late
That at a time of covid
There should be no blowing of breath on the cake.

My eyes lit on the courgettes.
There was a moment when I hesitated.
Then I stuck the candles
Into the courgettes
And lit them.

Impossibly useless: improbable delight

You tell me language is ?
Impossibly useless
When you say you are sorry that I am hurt.

You remark how language is ?
An improbable delight
When we play with the rhythms and rhymes of my poems.

You say that language is ?
Impossibly useless
When we walk in the quiet and peace of the woodlands.

You observe that language is ?
An improbable delight
When the words that you spin make me shout with laughter.

Like the words,
'I love you', I whisper,
Hugging you close.

The Old Gardener

He looks carefully,
Tenderly,
At small new shoots.
He observes their frail stalks
As they blithely emerge from the dark earth.

The rough ground of his face
And unruly fronds of his eyebrows
Betray the days and years and decades
Gleaning and gathering what he knows.

He considers how best to help
These fragile newcomers
As they take their place in our dangerous world.

Elsewhere

In this room
Windowless, white-walled,
My restless mind wanders, roams
Unwilled
To wind-chased clouds in restless skies
To lichened stones
To where a few bare-branched trees rise
Above the spring of heathered moors;
But I am here, held by windowless, white-washed walls.

Yellowcraigs: a sunny day in Scotland

Wide sands, wind-blown dunes.

Sea water ripples softly

Under cloud-flecked blue.

Sunshiny picnic

Two ice-cream cones ? 99s.

Sleepy afternoon.

Arriving at Waverley station, Edinburgh

Homecoming. We've left the dark miles of fields and trees.
Home. The train stops under the high roof.
We've come home to high cliffs of tenements and volcanic rock.

The dark has gone; the city, ever-lit, is here:
Yellow street lights, bright shop windows,
Night sky above these narrow streets.

Silent towering basalt.
Tall sandstone buildings hide those inside.
While all around the crowd's murmurs
Rise above the steady hum of the city night.

The wooden stool in our living room

Long ago a tree grew strong, tall and straight.
Its hard wood was nourished by the land,
African land, Sukumaland, Tanzania.

Tanzania, my childhood home.

The tree was felled.
A slice of the trunk was cut, carefully,
Ready for a skilled and practised Msukuma
To carve, from the single piece of wood,
A low round seat, suitable for a chief
To be seated, just a handsbreadth higher than his people.

The wooden stool was presented to my Dad.
It was low seat where he used to rest,
Relax, be comfortable, at ease,
In our new home in Europe,
Sevenoaks, Kent, England.

England, my teenage home.

Now the wooden stool is in my living room
Here in Edinburgh, Scotland.
I love the gold and black age-rings
On its polished surface.
They are like the wrinkles on my aging face,
Which is smiling, as I remember my Dad.

Botswana: Molepole

Plants become weeds when they obstruct our plans (Richard Mabey).

Our path takes us
Through grey thorn scrub;
A shock of yellow butterflies,
Red ant-hills, shoulder-high.

Bathed in African light
We inhale the scents and
Recover the senses of childhood
In a landscape of the heart.

This wide country has space;
The thorn bushes are free to thrive
For now.

Dreaming

Dark skies. Cities slept.

Minds danced, abandoning prose

Dreams, stars, moon, in phase.