

2 poems from Dark days at the Oxygen Café

Dark days at the Oxygen Café

The whole night creaks
like a broken bentwood
chair in here, a night
on its very last legs,
like the battered waiter with
his varicose veins and garlic.

Is it too much to ask
for a menu without bloodstains,
a plate without the congealed
evidence of the past?

I'm a music lover but, god,
this seventies throbbing must be
the Migraine's Greatest Hits.

What happened to
the goddam pianist?
Did he get burnt
and char-grilled too?
Couldn't we have some
civilized tinkling in here
instead of this throb,
this hiss of pipes,
this creak and strain
of overburdened bones.

Why isn't there linen
any more? I like linen.
A man shouldn't have

to live in a world of Kleenex.
We ought to invade
that goddam country
where the linen comes from.

And it's cold in here.
Why is it so cold when
it used to be warm?

And whatever happened
to gingham – red gingham?
It'd be on the table,
the waitress's heart apron,
like a warm cheerful laugh.
God, I loved that stuff.

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Laika

Come to my room at midnight
and bring your dancing shoes

and we will keep the cosmos company
for several lovely hours.

There is melody in the gramophone
and music in the spheres

and French doors to my balcony
which is small, but full of stars.

White as the froth of the Milky Way
flowers fall to the street below

as what remains of Laika
falls like incandescent snow.

We will drink and dance to Laika
and whisper Laika's name

while alyssum tumbles from the window box
like bubbles in champagne.

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