

# The Night of the Day

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**David Morley**

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Any Romani or Parlari is given in English translation at the base. The alphabet used in the language here is phonetic.



## Perjury

I clutch a cold court's witness box.  
I reach my right hand across a book.  
I move my mouth to say what I must say.  
What is my name. My date of birth.  
Where I was on the night of the day.

I was at home. My brother was with me.  
We went to our beds. I read until eleven.  
My mum came home about midnight.  
She seemed to be happy at that minute.  
My marks are good. I am trying to behave.

## Three

I am trying to behave but my father  
has a fist crammed with kitchen knives  
like a brilliant new hand, and the rest  
of us in the house are suddenly not alive.  
One of us is guilty of the crime of two biscuits.  
One of us has taken biscuits without permission  
so all are condemned and have earned his lesson  
which is to cower in the bedroom's corner  
without cover while he slices our arteries open  
in the air between us. His house is his abattoir.  
His home is lit with hooks and steel hands.  
We are not alive as he bars the bedroom door.

The morning is ordinary because I am three.  
My brother unwinds a lace from his shoe.  
He works its little rope across the hearth  
until it makes a dripping strip of light and flame  
that he slips slowly on the back of my hand.  
I am trying to behave as though this never happened,  
keeping my scorched hand below the tablecloth  
while my father, sick with guilt, serves us soup.  
My brother knows I can soak up his secrets.  
My left fingers misbehave and my father  
forces the hand. Sered sores. A veal of veins.  
My brother at this time is being flung into a wall  
and all I am thinking is that I do not like oxtail.

I do not like the blood thirst of what I can hear  
through the floor of my bedroom as my father  
flies off his handle again, but this is a real handle  
that he's handling as a weapon, and the sitting room  
is being smashed and smashed and smashed to death.  
Better the mirrors, I think, than my mother.  
But he's upstairs by now, kicking his way up  
and dread is draining through that black wall  
but the wall doesn't shelter, not when there's a door  
to be hurled off its hinges like it was never there,  
him yanking me by my cock to his yelling height  
before dropping me down a well in that dark room.  
His face swells to fill the door as he finds his range.

## **The Rafter**

After he died my father found his body among the ash.  
He moved it to the loft where he shivered on the rafter  
just over my pillow, daring me to sleep, rise, then waft  
up to him through that kicked crack in the ceiling.

## A Gamekeeper's Ghost

What do these wood  
ants want of me?  
They shear my shirts  
of unwinding skin.

Nature's gentlemen  
at their sprack tasks;  
mine-ropes of ants  
hauling me hollow.

A shot split  
the wood. Slunk  
to a cedar's cover  
alert as a hart.

Poacher held hard;  
red-handed isn't  
the word. Wrung  
every hare from him.

Court of oak and ash.  
Ripe for a hiding he was.  
My word and hand  
and hound against his.

Jumped on in the lane  
home, after the pub's  
late lock-in. Mates  
of his, I know it.

A fallen snowman,  
I dozed under sleet.  
Raw wind wringing  
wrists and fists.

Self-snared in white  
woods, I slept in  
hope I had spared  
the hares of heaven.