

The Perfect Advice

Dublin, 1992

Lost on a nameless street in Dublin,
on the way to the Guinness Brewery tour
in a neighbourhood of kids throwing rocks at all the available glass.
An old man we ask for help
leans towards the car and admits,
“You’re lost but it’s not hopeless,
just close to it.
It’s always that way in Dublin.”
He grips two bony hands on the half rolled down window,
and like a preacher in a pulpit
he peers into the dim light inside the car,
thick glasses, reddish face,
tilts his head at my wife:
“You’re married then?
Well good. I was too
but she died.
I’m alone now
but I was a very lucky man.”

Half of Ireland’s traffic is tied up behind us now:
propane truck, brewery workers, garbage lorries.
Anger is everywhere;
drivers’ horns barking for blocks,
even the kids have stopped their
spray of stones on the vestibule glass.
He studies my own hands gripping the wheel of the MG,
pities me for driving a hired English car
but nods again at my wife,
“Hold onto her boy
don’t never go to bed angry at each other
and you’ll do alright,”
then taps the door and backs away,
notices the commotion he’s caused,
tells the rest of Ireland to go to hell
and walks off home
to sip a single cup of tea in a rented room
that smells like 1932.