

LORIS GOOCH

Come to Dinner

“I hope you can come to dinner.”

His smile was enigmatic as he faded
away and dissolved into the atmosphere,
swallowed by the smog of the city.

Perhaps I imagined meeting him again.
I remember our first time, so full of hope
and promise, my heart expanded with joy
and dreams of a rosy apple garden
at the back door. I shoved a spade into the soil.

Jonathon apples went in first, my favourite,
so special, so particular, so juicy. I planted
other fruits of the earth along with broccoli and
bok choy, borage, basil and buttercups, while
bees and hives flourished and I waited,
watched and tended but he never returned.
Still I waited.

And here he was again, before me. My love.
I searched for his name in my memories of men
lost in the mists of time, swallowed
by wars not of their own making although

someone creates the rumbling war machines.
When will they learn not to be drunk with the power of it,
to flick a finger and send our youth tramping off
to destroy what they don't know

where destruction is the measure of success
as we leave so many wounded
in the mists of time—alive or dead,
they no longer know where
they belong—with the living or dead,
in the ruins of civilisations where thin-stemmed
dandelions sprout yellow crowns
and still I hope
you can come to dinner tonight.

When will we learn both the end and
the means exist on the path of peace
and goodwill towards all, surely not just idle words
uttered in a church on
a Sunday morning but
words of strength and meaning and wonder,
even as we notch up the wars of the twenty-first century,
Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine—all are throwing stones
as we ponder what can be built
on the bitter fruits of war.

(cont)

When will we practise peace and goodwill and
thou shalt not covet even as
dreams resurge and people rebuild, while
grinding dandelion roots for coffee and
savouring the aroma of a freshly brewed pot.

When will we learn
to use our energy to heal the earth and
march forward together
for the common good
before any shrine, in the open air, in the fields,
under the stars, the moon and the sunshine.

Let not goodwill be lost in the mists of time
where blossoms fade and ripen
and still I hope
you can come to dinner tonight.