



The Verve
"Bittersweet
Symphony"

Urban Hymns

09/1997

Hut

Bittersweet Symphony (for my unborn son)

Scout H. Bolton

How is it then, Crow, when the lanugo spritzes right off your red back will you come bounding in to us? This week we called you Bubble or Little Fish or Beautiful Goddamn Tiny Thing or a word we haven't learned yet. Black and white films are my favourite now, you swimming in them, your lips competing for First Face Place, that I recognised from my own face, and your father's geometry somewhere beneath that cherubim fat; here, in our mould.

Thrilled to notice you either love or hate to be spoken to, or about, to wonder where you'll nest on the *Beau Brummell's Irish Linen Obsession* to *Kurt Cobain's Dyeing His Hair Again With Kool-Aid* or *Whatever* bell-curve. Corners of all the rooms would creak if we could hear them expand for you; at the very least this house is breathing but not in a scary way, you understand. The woman who used to live here might have had a cat and it visits or perhaps doesn't and I'm here, in my mould.

Of course, halfway through and here, Daddy's mind takes quick vacations, celebrations through our towns and what might be twinned, running about the small, connecting runnels and prancing avenues like he's being chased by a cloth monster of silks, laces and some kind of glimmering threat beneath all that, like the whisper of a sword or not really, better safe than sorry, but I like to friend enemies and this mad swaddling athlete is no exception; we have it round for kitchen supper, writing group, study—see now, the clever bastard, *these* days it's because it teaches us things that we'll later teach you (that sword could even reveal itself to be, oh, I don't know, a suit of fantastic armour), like how to be a million different people from one day to the next. Halfway through and here, Mummy wants to know if her blood can reveal an immunity to raw meat and its toxins.

When the cake tasted of blood pudding, the vinegar like hot, sour raisins, the pasta like—don't, actually, I'll be literally sick—it was like I was getting to know your sense of humour. Brooding jester Crow, and the bright, silver sound of your hair which is either dark or very dark brushing quite charmingly against my abdomen, it feels as if I'm housing a guest I'd give the house to and ask to rent it back from, build a chair for, bury my outrage for, plant ficus in the garden for, and renovate for playmates; I let it cleanse my mind, I feel free now.

By ruin, this incessant, palatial joy, we're unaccustomed but learning alongside you, who doesn't know different. The day before my father died, I learned the truth of you implanted, not a day before time. For 22 hours of my life, I played quite the harmonious middle in this grand, generational pass-down and he learned you too, held on to learn about the news of you.

That six or so hours it really took—not his sixty years but six hours, I'd say it took, from start to end—grief began to prematurely scatter in nooks I only discovered that day, that endmost laugh of his as he breathed out and never back in again shone like the Long Nineteenth Century and all its gilded flock, leathers and feathers, O revolution, O war—and ache pinged from one daughter, one partner, one brother, sister, companion, and multiplied before settling real in each of us for a long, long time, now, Crow, and one day

you were there to breathe back in his name through my navel and O my embryonic bae, I had told Dad the day before he'd be somewhere nestled in the name of you and I meant it. Maybe that's that smile, then, Crow Anthony? Maybe the first smile you give us will be wholly yours, Daddy's teeth, Mummy's clumsy smile and Grandpa's last gasp before hiding out where he is now and gifting his boundlessness to you and we'll learn it all over again as new this time—the only road I've ever been down—

I can't change my mould. You can. You have.