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Hotel, 13/4/2006

Waking on the morning after,
My child beside me
Restless, tousled
Breathing open-mouthed,
The movie from the night before
Repeating endlessly.
Seconds after surfacing
The hot tears come again,
The racking sobs
That nothing can withhold.
The space left by your leaving
Fills the room,
Sucks the air from my lungs,
Pins me to the bed:
I've never felt this alone.

I want to wake her up
But it's only just turned dawn
And how could I add to her pain
Just to ease some of my own?
The purest product of imperfect love,
I see your face in hers so clearly,
And so it starts again.
Images of you, her
Through the years.
I can see every detail, place and time
A thousand little moments
And in all I am nowhere.

Later when she awakens

You call to say hello
And for the first time
In ten long years
Not one word comes.
My throat is closed
My mind is numb.
Not racing: frozen,
Standing still.

Space and Distance

The night is just outside my window,
breathing soft and whispering memories
of other nights in other towns
with different sounds around us.
Lost in the breathless shimmer
of flesh against flesh,
the darkness held no fear:
Not like here.
Not like now.

We fell in love on nights like this,
shaking and moaning
and sharing our hearts,
until silence fell between us,
holding us together,
tearing us apart
crying in one another's arms.

Now five years later on I flinch
at your voice on the phone,
pressed hard against my neck
to feel you close
and hold the rising flood
in check.

Falling

Every time I touch your skin
or hold you close,
catch your eye;
or hear your name
from someone else's mouth,
see you with some other guy,
the space between
love and pain
sorrow and joy
longing and loss
seems to shrink
contract to a point
that disappears
behind your eyes.

I peer into the blackness,
but no matter how I try,
I can't see which
is lying in wait;
which I should embrace

and which try to escape.
And then you speak to me,
a few words,
maybe only one,
and however deep,
however far I have to fall,
I can't hold myself
from letting go.

Words

Inside the words swirl and beat
And break against my bones
Cry and beg and bleat
"Please, please make it stop,
Set me free, take it back,
Stop this hell.
Give me just one last chance"

But, possessed by seven devils,
The words that break the air
Snarl and circle
Slash and gouge
Rip and rend
Never stopping till
The wound is bled.

And I look on
From a small, silent place
Praying for the flow to stop
The frenzy to expire.
I want to cry, "It's not me, not me."
These words are not my own"
Fishhooks pulling at my bleeding tongue.

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Neil Stewart McLaren graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English Literature and Political Science from University of Strathclyde. He then trained and worked as a teacher and left the UK in 1993, to live and work in Slovakia, where he remained for five years, married and started a family. Since 1998 he has been living and working in Asia. He is a musician, playing guitar, bass, keyboards and vocals, and has performed professionally in the UK, Slovakia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia.