

Willow

by [Lucius Falkland](#) (July 2024)



Evening in the Cotswolds, Sir Alfred East RA (1913)

Willow

I think of that sandstone Cotswold inn
Where we re-enacted scenes from *The Wicker Man*,
Where we betrayed our Anglican spouses,
And I see its thatched roof, the trusses all around,
The café next door, the cottages near the green,
Alight like that final scene,
Where the spindled head fell:
A frosty evening

Pretending to be the First of May,
As bright "as the midday sun at midnight."

Naked, you sang me Willow's eldritch verse
As I lay on our bed.
The very thought of you,
So "young and fair," was Bramley apples,
And ginger bread and childhood holidays
On country coasts where the sky was clear
As the fairy tales they read as I warmed
Beneath the duvet in the home they'd rented.

But now the thatch is on fire,
It flickers in the whites of your eyes
As I recall your Willowy thrusting.
I must never forget,
As Great Tew turns to cinders,
Who offers those Oxfordshire apples
That taste just that bit too sweet.

Clan Tobacco

My eyes sting as I make my way
Through clouds of Clan tobacco
Exhaled from Church Warden pipes
All chortling round the saloon bar.
Tweed caps, the odd moustache still,
Harris jackets, ties in Windsor knots,
Beneath Army-style-washed faces:
That's where they learnt to drive their cars.

As I'm led inside the children's room
And given a glass of Tizer

I don't mind that burning in the eyes
I won't "give *them* what for,"
Though they say at school it's bad for you.
Their Billiard pipes, their Trilby hats
Reassure me. They run this place
And they fought and won a war.

Tad tipsy in *The Royal Oak*,
Named after English Monarchs,
One talks of Maharashtra,
One racing, under fire,
To shelter; some Salerno church
Where they gulped the Holy Water;
Or sister lost to measles,
As they suck upon their briar.

Then home to housewives; terraces
Put up when they were toddlers
In a town named for a Saxon Jarl,
Or a church beyond the bales of hay,
But they passed from power as he did,
To ash, like burnt tobacco.
The Royal Oak's smoke-free these days
And the streets are now Bombay.

Devolution

I'm sitting here bereft of motivation,
Of passion and of vigour and resolve.
He's fired the gun. There can be no cessation.
Unstoppably, you've started to devolve.

"Girl Power," and all that rigmarole Post-Modern
Is setting light to brassieres far away

And you've become a chamber-maid down-trodden
By a Duke who, almost certainly, is gay.

And now the engine hasn't been invented.
The only form of transport has a tail.
You've beauty spots and wigs like you're demented
And corsets made of little bits of whale.

Stuart times, the Tudors, Medieval.
Your clothing has become a dreadful mess.
This devolution must be an upheaval
As constantly you're having to undress.

And now, my dear, you've turned into a primate.
At least, with that much hair, so it would seem.
I'm sensing quite a violent sexual climate
As I hear you moan and wail and scratch and scream.

Sex has now become your only interest.
You've purchased all the make-up in the land.
You've done it all! (Apart, I think, from incest).
But there's one thing that I don't quite understand.

It wasn't God that caused this ghastly process.
Darwin? Albert Einstein? Not the case.
But a Physics undergraduate from Bowness
With an eye-brow that goes right across his face.

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