

THREE POEMS



Nicholas Murray

HISTORY

Elle avait eu, comme une autre, son histoire d'amour.

—FLAUBERT

The tall girl from Kildare,
I imagine you among horses and wide fields,
Having taken the fence you faltered at,
Marrying your man with the stubbled chin
And the slow, gentle smile.
On our bar stools, just the two of us,
Like an emblem of innocence and experience,
We rehearsed your story: dismantled dreams
When his car left the country road
And your heart, untenanted, searching,
Came to ask itself if happiness was the four walls
Of a good man's house who would not survive you.

On a lift into town, he stopped at a barley field,
Waded out like a fisherman in shallow seas,
To stare at the blank horizon as if a message
Were posted for his attention,
And came back to the Land Rover, saying nothing.

Our game of tennis at dusk, the lost ball we foraged for
In the long grass where our hands brushed lightly
And you turned away, saying nothing.

Do you rule now a flagged kitchen
In a big house among fields,
Or do you trim the plant of a single life
With expert fingers, sheathed in a green glove?

OSTEOPATH

Look at this stately dance
As she takes my arm and twists it round
First this way, then that,
From this and then that angle;
Spinning me round with the clodhopping grace
Of folk dance on the museum forecourt.
Every bit of me turned and twisted
To loosen the inflamed cordage of pain.
Afterwards, we inspect the red anatomical man,
Sitting side by side, like two children
On a companionable swing.

COLD

White grains of snow rolled by an east wind;
Windscreens still frosted at noon;
A blackbird scuffling in dry leaves
For the seed or nut it cannot find.
And a twitched curtain where she looks out,
Wondering how far compassion goes
In the populous universe of garden birds.