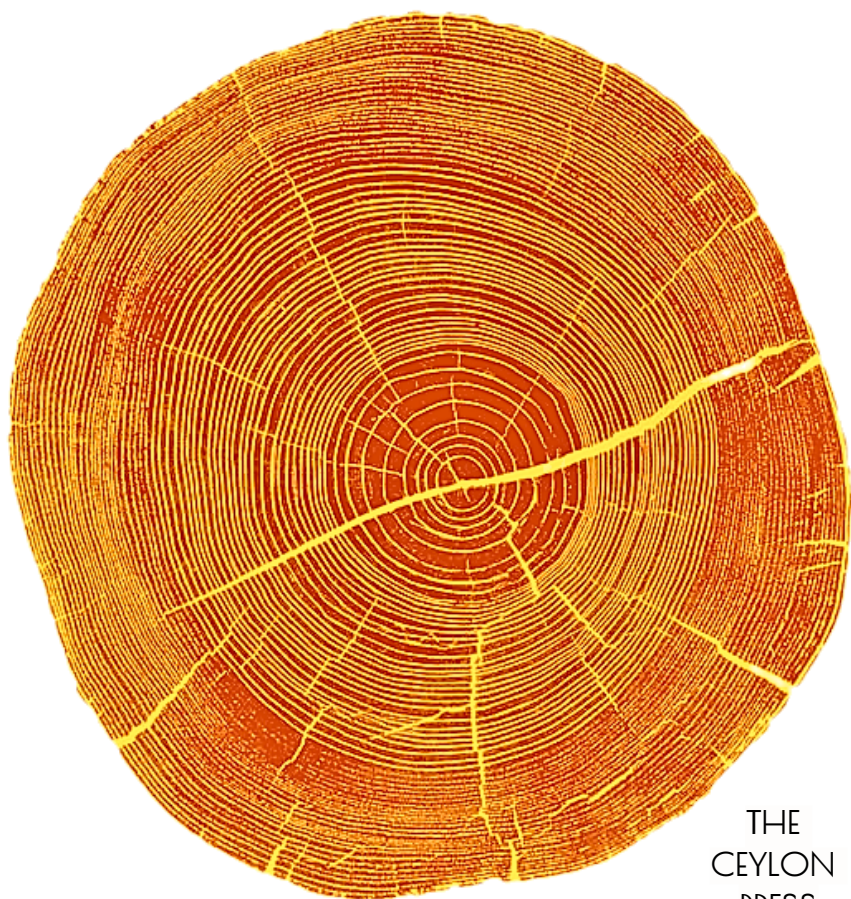


THE SUMMER FORTRESS

DAVID SWARBRICK



THE
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PRESS

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7.30 am in bed on 5th January 2026,

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TO R.A.
AND REMEMBERING VERITY FORSYTH

I hear you still
clear, sure -
talking to me
now
as you would talk to me
then;

a corner of the garden room;

a long table laid for tea,
books piled up,
shadows of poets and painters
stirring;

listening,
as you hear me say
what I do not say;

as you tell me
what I need to hear
but would not:

I hear you still
I hear you now,
I hear you.

SKONA, JULY 1997

DATE

This cycle of poems was written in the Weald of Kent between
March and September 1979; the last one 18 years later in July
1997, in Skona

1

for this
there is always
time –

your fragmentary will
concocts hours
where the day
has none,

etches a far horizon
forever
in the sun.

2

take only touch

and that electric guess,

hand to hand,
till hearts
rest within flesh;

till your touch
upon my face
moves inside.

3

you would stretch
out,

draw me apart,
for though
you do not know it
your
time
is mine.

would you want more?

would you change
the tide
that carries us,

evenly,

sand within a stream,
toward the sea?

4

loving

you:

the picture

safe

in the cabinet -

mine,
the

dare to remove;

the white palms
stick with sweat
now

summer comes.

5

knives cut -
and death's

unknowing,

cells grow -
and bones will break,

and still,

the

starting point -

your face,
ghosts all the

change;

leaves -

silence,

a space for

shadows;

a space to turn

within;

and lie at bay.

6

your cry
hollows the hour,
touches stars
that won't explode:

but

I

can hurl javelins
up at space

and break their hold.

7

you may not believe it but,
after the battle,
rain washed the blood
onto the village streets,
into the Weald.

Mountain;
empty light;
into the
trees,
black.
the sky.

night falls
on the Bloody
a bird pulls
against
bats fold
outline of
black on
above us
a harvest moon
burns a circle in

8

smoke awhile
walk between the silver trees
of the Cinders track.

let us stay,
night holds us;
we lie
beside a water tank,
listening;
water
dripping
drop by drop
waiting
where the
is cool and
air
grassy
where nothing moves
the moment on,
where nothing moves.

9

your heart is high,
sweeping
high:
tempers,
slackens, on again,
states of
difference -
not by
joining
I, in love,
would
move.

10

in
your awkward beauty
I rest
I
play;
the landscape breathes
with you;
in skies
the peacocks fly.

11

do not hold back;
you should not fear
you
the brightest light;
you shine
and shine
as life.

12

come,
we will evade this,
armour ourselves
as night checks day;
and a smooth sly
slides through the
orchards.
the
last bird
songs
drain the day
into a shoal of
trees.
we
can evade all this.

13

we will become fond of these days;

go over them tirelessly
as armchair generals
over maps.

we lay down
the living death
like bottles
in a cellar;

effortlessly.

14

the abacus moves
but I will not;

its beads have a sort of rhythm,
a pretended order.

do not
listen.

silence
has a safer sound;

even calls
the directions
of a
hidden road,

easily missed.

15

i 'd rather not
think;
or imagine,
know,
or even
suspect,

grieve,
celebrate,
wonder.

I want to

live easy.

why

troubled?

should I be

16

yours

is the gift that brings
together,

that calls me in
that keeps me here;

your
arms
open;
your
imprint
haunts

your
body,
is a
barrier of words.

17

the train passes places
where nothing has changed,
where life has gone
on
just the same
all the time
I have been
so caught up.
it will go
on the same
when this
ends;

18

daily
the state deepens
and I concede
to this round
and to that
the bets I
place
the game I
play,
the cards that
fall
far short
of what I
make.

19

you smile:

I saw you

walking in fields,

a

dancer,

naked,

slender as

a scorpion.

the knife you wield
opens the knot
the quickest way,

dares all

do

you know

what

we do?

20

lost time
is life's regret:

death guilds its share,

the days
rob and bleed,
and time
smashes easily as

glass.

the calendar

breaks a little

more each day.

21

I
 love in distance,
 you
 do not know
 and,
 all the time
 I know
 that behind me
 he kisses you;
 his
 blooded lips
 smear and
 conquer.
 each return
 you see
 gets closer.

22

you turn
your eyes,
catch up my
glance;

hold it

like
a mirror,
distorting
by
all
it
cannot see.

23

he had made
a plaything of fear;
the mirror caught it in
the sun. with

autumn will rush
before the Kentish hops
to dredge his glass -
the image, and
unreflected,
noiselessly dies out.

24

death kisses you;
the offering
of suns gluts in your
heart;

an unaccounting change
removes your hand.
wake; you
the rage for life but
sleeps on.

25

we shall devour
each other
or forget;

torture

the simplest of glances,
the easiest look
or touch,

take

each ordinary phrase
and twist it;

till we can never tell

what it was
of all we said.

26

scorpion,

let me lie
in your claws.

let

us see

whose poison

poisons first.

27

the wake of summer
empties you;

 shadows the seas
 with a corrected light.

the storm of Galilee
saw its path on water

but the touch of faith
has strangled you:

 now the

leaves knit together

 with a

bellyfull of love.

28

summer
 stumbles to a car;

 say goodbye -

 give it your hand,
 before it drives away,

 before you say
 good-bye

 - not at the station -
 alone;

I want to stand alone
with my bags
and people
I do not know.

29

cycling in the Weald,
freewheeling down the hill;
buying cherries at orchards
brimming still:
even as the term ends
I know it;
even as we pack,
this last weekend
me burns
firebrand like a
all life long.

30

sun leaves over sky;
the blue,
denied,
commands outside
this amber home.
sitting here,
I have this image of summer,
the fortress filled
with all that nearly was,
with all that once had been,
that has no end,
that has not ended.

uninterrupted,

a single thread
links that summer
to this;

connects the blue Weald
to this house
high in the birch forests
above the bay of swans
where you swim in the sun.

nothing comes between,
nothing claims
the space

that separates

a parting from a meeting,
an ending
from a beginning.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Swarbrick is a publisher, planter, hotelier, hermit, broadcaster and writer. He was born in Colombo and lives in Sri Lanka and the UK by way of India, Singapore, the Middle East, Wales, Scotland and Sweden.