

Tism

"Neighbours - Everybody Loves Good Neighbours"

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I
Cancer? Cancer?! I dream of cancer -
Cancer can eat my bones:
O, lucky I would consider myself
To be racked by cancerous moans.
A fate more evil, a life more lost
The Devil for me foresaw:
Imagine the day I woke to find
The Milats had moved next door!

II
Was I a man of the bourgeoisie?
Ha! Of course I was more than that!
I was a latte drinking, clever thinking
Documentary making pratt.
I ran my own film company,
I was an artist, I was sure.
Then I heard my neighbour say:
"I'm Alex Milat. I'm in next door."

III
My films explored the evil side
Of Mankind's unknowable self;
My kids all went to private schools,
My wife, she bloomed with health;
The critics applauded my visual style
And my dissection to the core
Of the Freudian, Jungian evil id.
Then the Milats moved next door.

IV
Ivan, of course, was doing time
But his brothers are all free men.
"There's me, there's Walter," said Alex Milat,
"And Richard - in all, there's ten.
Me and the wife moved in last week,
And when Richard's coming we're unsure.
You like films? Well, I'll bring over someÃ,â€¦ shots.
Wink. Wink. We only live next door."

V

A shadow, a pall, hung over my days
The first weeks after I found out.
The bruchutto was off, the antipasto stale
At the cafes where we'd all hang out.
"It's good for your art," said my cameraman,
"They're just the sort your films explore."
"Fuck my films," I told Toby, "you pretentious git -
My fucking films don't knock on my door."

VI

My wife was a painter, sculptor too -
Her studio was set up at home.
"I can't stay here," she'd scream at me,
"It's impossible to work alone."
Her exhibition was coming up soon -
A review in the Age for sure.
"Just stay calm," I'd scream - so loudly, too,
I bet you they could've heard next door.

VII

A couple of months after they came
I got a call from my children's school:
"Your daughter's been caught smoking pot,
And your son's started playing the fool.
The counsellor's asked them both to say
If their home is quite safe and secure."
By his tone I knew straight away
He lay the blame right at my door.

VIII

My next film was a critical flop
For the first time in my career.
"He seems to have lost his ability
To show evil up close and near."
I read that review, and gave a laugh -
Critics always think they know more.
Fucking critics should try living up close
To the people who live next door.

IX

Toby left me the very next month
To shoot a Gillian Armstrong flick.
"You know," he told me when he left,
"I always thought you a soft cock prick."
Funding dried up; grants turned down;
My wife couldn't take any more:
"I'm leaving," she said, "I'm getting out.
I can't live here with them next door."

X

But the way she said it, how she left,

I knew the Milats were her excuse:
She married a successful film artist,
Not a failure. The final proof
Came when I heard three months later
She'd moved in with some director bore
Whose film was at Cannes. She was gone -
But I couldn't blame the people next door.

XI

My children went to some alternative school
Where all the hippy children go;
After that, we sort of lost contact -
I last heard from them two years ago.
I got a job in advertising
Shooting commercials - on video, what's more.
No super 8, only mainstream crap
Designed for the people who live next door.

XII

And yesterday came my greatest shock -
Oh, Truth comes bound in Pain:
I went to next door's intercom
And asked for Alex Milat by name.
"Who?" said a voice, incredulous.
"Why, they're not living here no more.
They moved out nearly two years ago.
Hey, aren't you the weirdo who lives next door?"

XIII

No matter how easy or sweet life is,
Be sure - your life will change;
There is a shadow hangs over us
That leaves none of us the same.
There is another person waiting to come
Buried in your deepest core:
You'll be found out. Who you really are
Lives behind your very own door.

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