

Steve Cartwright

Alan

Alan looked bemused
When I first caught him unawares
He sat upon the bed
And on his legs
He wore elasticated stockings
Drawn up towards his groin.
His pants were orange
And his tee shirt a yellow ochre.
His beard was tufted
Needed cutting
And his face was tired
His legs were full of water, fat and swollen
So were his feet.
I knew that he was pleased to see me
And he was easy in my company
His lovely ordinary way was straightway there
And almost at once
The warmth I'd always felt for him
Came flooding through.
He struggled for a while to seek a word he wanted
to describe how difficult it was for him to focus his attention.

So many times before I'd watched him struggle in this way
In meetings
Full of those who spoke so well
Dear Alan launched into his thread of thought
And stumbled all the way to reach the end
As others looking in
Watched helpless on.
It didn't matter then Nor did it now
He too had seen me struggle with my nerves
and recognized that part of me in him.
And as I watched him talk
I thought about the times I'd stood beside him in the street

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And as I watched him talk
I thought about the times
I'd stood beside him in the street On demos
Or on buses bound for do's
And heard him shout a slogan
Or on some occasions launch into a song.
These memories came hot and flushing As I sat
Across from him
And saw the bandages upon his legs The drip
The plastic tap they use to push the hypodermic in.
The bruises on his arm
From where they took the blood Oh Alan
Though 'tis true
That I have loved you dear
You may not know.
Your life took you way out of mine
And mine away from you Yet I do swear
There's so much that I like about you
Alan: Your ordinariness Your car Your house
The street on which you live Your books
The things you do and say Your eyes Your hair
Your lovely lovely warmth Oh Alan
Do get better soon And come and see me
Have a drink Relax with me
And maybe get to know and feel the warmth
That spending time with you
Has wrought in me. On demos
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