

Steve Cartwright

The Chip Shop

It's winter
It's always winter in the chip shop
Where the fat spits and gurgles and the steam flies
And the white and slippery slimey fish
Slip from the creamy dip
Into the boiling cauldron
And the peeler strips the taters raw
And the chipper chops them into chips
And drops them in the plastic bucket on the floor
Each perfect white and glinting naked
Ready for the firey furnace
And sausages and saveloys and pukka pies
Lie beckoning behind the steamed up counter glass.
Hands, both old and young reach out and feel
The rays of surging heat come tingling up the shivering arms.
The queue all clad in winter coats and gloves and scarves
Stands steaming in the glowing chippy.
Each locked into that robot gait of waiting
And savouring the thought of gobbling up the golden mountain
And yes, it's always winter in the chip shop and I am always young
Each time I go, memories of all those former trips

Spring to my mind
And each is tinged with Shilton Fair or Barwell wake
The fallen leaves like soggy cornflakes on the heavy sod
Sloshing as I walk down the back gitty
Carnally anticipating the thickly buttered bread and the dolloped sauce
The swill of tea
The golden cod arching on the lattice work of chips
The scratchings and the slosh of mushy peas
Just Mum and Dad and me
Huddled by the glowing fire, shovelling the family belly
Rain steaming down the windows
Socks steaming on the hearth
Shadows dark among the orange flicker in the fireplace
My heart so full and overflowing
With the wild magnanimity of the winter night
As laughter like the heart of God hurls me down the gitty
And the seeping heat of the wrapped chips beneath my coat
Oozes their warmth into my belly