

John Miles

BEST DARJEELING SUITE

I

This morning I woke up
and found I still breathed
and the sky had cleared
after rain overnight and
doves were bobbing on the lawn
and I said hang the rules
I fried bacon and two eggs
in the pan in real fat
and in the kitchen
smell mixed with smell of
fresh-brewed black best Darjeeling
and I spread real dripping
on my toast salting
and peppering it.
Hang the rules I said
I'm not yet for
the quarrying of worms tonight
I will sit up late very
late writing and writing with
Mozart playing and a half
kilo bag of Riverland sulphured
sun-dried apricots. When dawn

comes I shall be waiting,
out on the lawn with best Darjeeling.

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II

Theaceae — japonica,
moon, waterfalls, forest —
and *Camellia sinensis*.
Of the *taxon*, Assam, for me,
fermented — but, perhaps,
sometimes, just a little, *oolong*.
Picked wilted rolled dried.
Sipping, sitting back each time,
thousand times — new.
Morning, noon, night,
I am one with Yorkshire housewife,
Zen priest ritual.

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III

Picked by slave girl
probably age ten. Making
twenty she will be old.
Brought down from hill country
the trucks, sometimes
pack train, probing,
river mist, morning mist.
Sifted classed and chested.
Loaded in a dockland
Out of Kipling. Smell
of jutes, hemp, beggars,
turmeric, fenugreek.
Arriving across the sea,
packaged, *oh so*,
for the shelves of my town's
Harrod's. Bought by the gramme
picked by the tonne, the
same price, month's wage
to her, indulgence for me.
I shall write words always.
For you sister.
Nail up the war cry,
fire and blood, till kingdom come,
for me, you.