

Graham Rowlands

SLOW RUSH

The bulbs began twelve months ago.
The talling teal-green leaves
pushed through weeks ago.
Now the syringes of
stems full of
water & earth
go up for air, go air
opening up & out
the petal
they'll die for
bonsai oranges & lemons
haiku oranges & lemons
orange & lemon.

One stem bends at the bulb, keels over
for snails already making
their way. The bud
is not quite out
not quite out of it.
I snip & stand the stem
in a stem-vase of water
outside in the sun.
Don't want to waste it.
When the sun no longer shines
on it, I stand the vase
where the sun shines.
I keep the sun shining.
When the sun no longer shines
I stand the vase inside.
Outside at night
the snails will do anything
to get at, to get
bud & petal.

I turn the light on a quick fix of
teal-green, orange & lemon.

Some do heroin; I do jonquils.

PARTNERS

In the beginning there was Mr & Mrs John Smith.
Later on there were Mr John & Mrs Joan Smith.
Then, of course, there were John & Joan Smith
who were to become John Smith & Joan Smith.
My wife, your wife & all our wives somehow
became less possessive than the wife, The wife
despite one last desperate defence of The Wife
via The Dutchess, The Princess & H M The Queen.
But my, your & our possessives weren't enough.
This is how Smith & Smith became friends.
So John Smith used to arrive—& friend
& Joan Smith used to arrive—& friend.
Yes, they knew they were more than friends
but at least they had a friend in common
even if the friend was a different friend.
Would there be room on future invitations for
& close friend & good friend & old friend
without being presumptuous, ageist or a perve? So
partners took partners & partners took partners. So
much easier for partners to take partners' partners.
Just taking up a partner & just taking that partner
so that partner could take home some other partner
became as popular as a wild new dance craze.
It was the end of People Without Partners;
the beginning of Partners Without Partners.