

## Seven Seven Seventy-Seven

Early morning in early July -  
a bliss of waxing sun and waning cool,  
a silver stillness with diamonds flashing about my feet,

a philandering green lawn  
with its arms around buxom rose maidens  
and pert, cotton-print, flower-bed damsels;

a reviewing of trusty troops  
on the well-hoed parade ground —  
ranks of sturdy onion pikemen,  
jaunty carrot standard-bearers,  
beetroot Beefeaters and spinach Green Howards,  
broad-bean rifles and Wolf Cub cabbages;

a triumphant walkabout down a narrowed lane  
squeezed tight by jubilee-celebrating grass public  
waving, bowing, and curtsying  
along the billowing verge,  
drunk with excitement, swaying  
about gawky, unbending hog-weeds  
with their ridiculous cottage-cheese hats  
hoisted aloft in grudging matinal cheers,  
vinegar-faced dock dowagers,  
festooned with rusty beads,  
acid old-maid nettles  
bristling with prudery and spite,  
and geriatric cow-parsley, all seedy and sere.

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I kick my Shetland-pony moped  
into grudging motion  
and trot it lazily along the balmy lane,  
past meadows drowsing behind hawthorn curtains.  
I dodge the sudden bramble snakes  
that lurch out and arch to strike as I pass  
and fall behind with a frustrated hiss.

I plunge into perfume ponds  
oozed out of new-mown hayfields.  
I hold my nose in garlick puddles  
of alien, burnt-out-petrol fumes.  
Stonehenge stooks of new-piled hay bales,  
ghostlike in outline, loom like brooding druids  
muttering incantations in the brightening sun.

My crash helmet breaks through the cool  
soft air and swishes it past my ears  
like the wash of a water-skier's disc.  
I could dream on and on  
like a sun-bather on a golden Caribbean strand,  
as if this magic holiday morning  
had turned already into eternity in Paradise,

But the "Gateway of Service" posts  
fall in suddenly beside me,  
galley-masters, ruthlessly waiting  
to haul me back to the oar  
for a weary, burning day.

— A. J. Woodfield  
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