

The Belfast Greenway

The blackbird scrutinises us brightly from the sycamore. He sings in three-note trills with a final rising squee, “This-is-my . . . This-is-my--mor-ning-TREE!”

A carpenter bee bumble-stumbles in the honeysuckle, seeking the perfect nectar for the morning after the night before. Still resplendent in his shiny black party gear, which is now splattered in pollen, he hums and shakes the flowers to release more, and the golden life-dust tumbles and trembles on the quiet breeze.

Three more sober bumble bees are working the dandelion patch to my left, sifting each flower with a satisfying, higher-pitched “Buzz-ZIP! Buzz-ZIP!” before moving on. Their legs jig in a perfect harmony of fuzz and angles.

Beyond the dandelions, the dog dives through the draggletailed ferns, which part with a starched rustle. As he swishes through, he disturbs both a low spinner and a high-flyer. The sheet-web spider reels nimbly to the edge of her shaken tuning-fork web and turns, all eyes aglow, to face this intruder, while the disturbed chaffinch startles upwards, shrilling his “Pink! Pink!” of irritation as he soars. Delighted by this unexpected impact, the dog re-emerges triumphant, panting and scraping the stones in pleasure.

Suddenly, two squirrels skitter across the path in front of us, their tails in parentheses as they scramble up the smooth poplars ahead. One, noticing the dog, turns his tail into an exclamation point of shock as he leaps upward. We listen as they scabble nimbly into the cool green canopy overhead.

Beauty is here.

249 words excluding title.