

Just One Day

by Patrick Derwent

The floors are a dull institutional green
and the antiseptic cheerless corridors
are full of uniforms
machines click and buzz soullessly charting
the progress of the sick and dying
But watch and wait...

Whispers echo around the piles
of tubular steel chairs
stacked against the peeling walls in the dusty village hall
framing the drunkenly leaning notice boards
sad with dog-eared fading notices
But watch and wait...

Frost tinges the desert rocks
as dawn rears up amongst the distant mountains
heralding another day of shots, explosions
the screams of wounded men and women
the never ending toil of conflict
But watch and wait...

Cold seeps up from the flagged floors
mists the breath of the muffled worshippers
a watery light filters through
the dusty windows
illuminates the figures on the ancient tombs
But watch and wait...

And love comes tumbling down the skies
hurtles singing amongst the shivering trees
swirls around the ward where a patient nurse wipes
the forehead of an elderly patient and gently tucks him in
rolls laughing as a volunteer heaps food onto the plate
of a dirty unshaven homeless man and, smiling, shares a joke
whistles joyful through the gaps between the sandbags of the sangar
as a soldier puts his water bottle to the lips of a wounded Taliban fighter

fires the triumphant, joyful carolling around the soaring pillars
heralding the moment when strangers look into each others' eyes,
greet one another 'Peace be with you' and, smiling, really mean it.

And, for a moment, the whole world lies quiet in peace and harmony.