

## On Lacking the Killer Instinct

One hare, absorbed, sitting still  
Right in the grassy middle of the track,  
I met when I fled up into the hills, that time  
My father was dying in a hospital –  
I see her suddenly again, borne back  
By the morning paper's prize photograph:  
Two greyhounds tumbling over, absurdly gross,  
While the hare shoots off to the left, her bright eye  
Full not only of speed and fear  
But surely in the moment a glad power,



Like my father's, running from a lorry-load of soldiers  
In nineteen twenty-one, nineteen years old, never  
Such gladness, he said, cornering in the narrow road  
Between high hedges, in summer dusk.

The hare

Like him should never have been coursed,  
But, clever, she gets off; another day  
She'll fool the stupid dogs, double back  
On her own scent, downhill, and choose her time  
To spring away out of the frame, all while  
The pack is labouring up.

The lorry was growling

And he was clever, he saw a house

And risked an open kitchen door. The soldiers

Found six people in a country kitchen, one

Drying his face, dazed-looking, the towel

Half covering his face. The lorry left,

The people let him sleep there, he came out

Into a blissful dawn. Should he have chanced that door?

If the sheltering house had been burned down, what good

Could all his bright running have done

For those that harboured him?



And I should not

Have run away, but I went back to the city

Next morning, washed in brown bog water, and

I thought about the hare, in her hour of ease.

