

## Cotswold Scenes

I'm woken by the sounds of lovelorn allosaurs,  
that screech and roar their mating calls  
in some primeval swamp.

But then, as in the fevered dreams of a Creationist,  
I hear the shouts of dinosaur mahouts,  
cheery through the small-hours mists.

The joy of dustmen's lorries in the early morn.

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Along the valley's ridge,  
beyond the tower of the village church,  
moist-gauzed by morning mist,  
the woods are like a badly fitting wig  
that's fooling no-one.

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Here and there, between  
discarded cardboard coffee-cups  
and empty plastic water-bottles,  
luminously blue, grow pale oxlips;  
they raise their heads like  
primroses that strain to stand  
above the dog ends carpeting the bank.

Sweet violets, too, and cowslips  
can be glimpsed, though often  
turning out to be the vernal  
vividness of soft-drink cans, of  
chocolate wrappers, empty packets  
of potato crisps, and cast-off skins  
of Marks and Spencer sandwiches.

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They shear the fleece on rolling fields,  
and send it off for grinding into filbert-coloured flour,  
then to be baked in golden loaves.

The grainless, chaffless stalks are baled and left  
upon the four-day shadow leas, until they can be used  
for bee skeps, bedding, dollies, hats, and more.

And while the roly-poly bales sit out all day in  
late-September sun, a single ragged, wind-blown  
crow alights, and perches for a while, and mutters darkly,  
looking for a murder.

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Sunlight thickens on the tower  
outside my study window,  
limestone soaking up the heat  
like toast absorbing butter.

On the green, that's shadowed  
by the church, the grass is white  
with morning frost, and dogs and walkers  
leave their mazy trails of darkened prints.

A sudden squall of hail, and then again  
the sun, and watery but clear  
a double rainbow links the hills to either side.  
Jackdaws rise together, scatter,  
sliding down the icy air and up again,  
from shadow into warmer heights.

I shiver slightly, reaching for a log  
to place upon the waning fire,  
and think about another cup of coffee.

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The scent of frost on privet  
is reflected in the bird-bath ice —  
a chattering of dunnocks' beaks  
like distant gunfire.