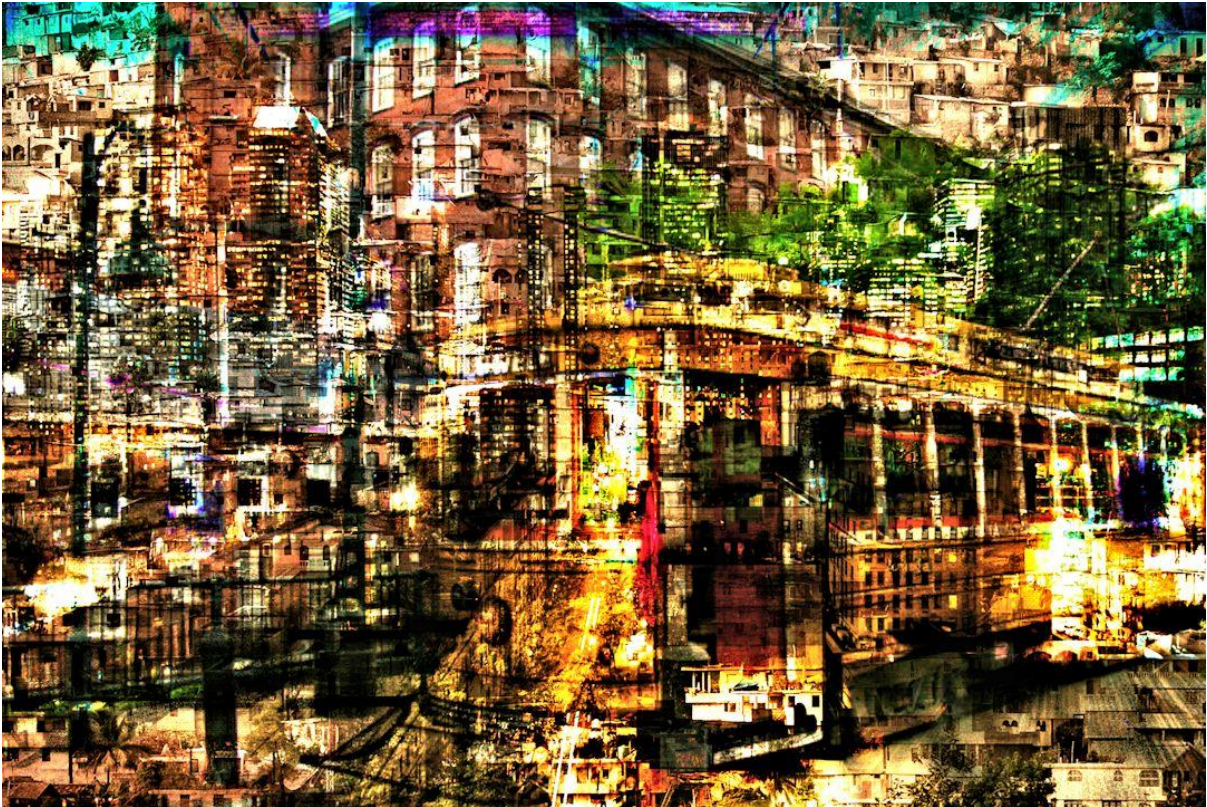


# The streets have the last laugh

*by anthony j langford*



## **Statement:**

The city observes our lives, loves and follies. It follows our dreams and mistakes, our successes and our distress, no matter which side of the street we live on. It saturates all with irony, kicks back with a drink and a wry chuckle as we go around again and again.

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### **The deep dark centre**

The city has no soul. It's a sex starved beast dripping saliva, thirsty for violence and lonely for stars, lost in amber lights. People run as tough rivulets thrusting all tenderness aside, which is to be found in subtle pockets and a defence free exchange, yet no one is willing to take the risk. All charged, multiple authors, one thread, shields raised and the city remains as it always has, armoured, fortified with sensitivity discarded and exactly what they feared.

### **Dog Gone Days**

Sometimes, you're the bitch. You have to take the hits. Others you lay the boot in, glad it's not your turn. Most days you swing with the willows with an acceptable batting average while there are those never up long enough to take stock of where they are. Most float by like scum in a swollen gutter not aware of the next block let alone suburb, only the next cigarette, the next drink, how they went on the tote and how much is left in the pocket. A disparate pack of mongrels sniffing for the next morsel, not united and ready to turn on one another with teeth hungry for flesh if it means an edge. Not cute enough for the kids but at least the fleas are happy.

## **City views**

From my backyard where I am sitting, I can see the trees in my neighbours' backyards and beyond them, trees around the train line and more pinnacles of green beyond it, in suburban streets. If I face a certain way, all of the trees merge. I could be gazing into the bush or a forest in another country. It's a fallacy of course. The sounds won't let me forget. But as the sun lowers, pouring orange into the leaves, I am there and not here. And for a moment or two, the city is far behind me.

## **Orthodox**

I thought I was in the moment but there's a voice from the past that I've never heard, all encompassing, a youthful style, now out of fashion. Yet the tunes are familiar and I like that, as do most and children especially, who relish routines and replays as it's some sort of genetic imprint, conspire to learning that makes us favour what we already know. It serves us well when needed yet lingers as we get older and if you have a good reasoning for this phenomenon, flick me an email rather than a call or face to face, as that's what I'm used to.

## **Look what he did. Look.**

He broke her heart, trampled her soul and shredded all that meant anything. She lay in a pit of misery and was happy to stay there. She disliked the chorus and expected the tune to end yet serenaded to death throes so all could hear. Nothing so pure as pain or so noble as suffering. The more eyes, the better. Depth of attention, like that, can become addictive.

## **Cooked Not Swallowed**

He was outspoken. A 'good' suspect. The right photo fit. An opinion too loud, timer gone off, in your face, annoyance. So he says, not that he needed pre-empting, 'Take it all, and leave me none. Your mind is made up so speak to me no more.' The truth only rises when bullshit evaporates. Lies bake in the day after false promises in the night following the heat, which explains why, when all is stripped back, so little remains. After all, truth is simple, yet too succinct for most.



### **Even the Gods have a crap table**

At times the gods get agitated. When they get together, they're downright mischievous. *Let's play.* The man with the pool swept leaves along his fence as his neighbour mowed his own lawns, both infrequent, today, simultaneous. The man bent to scoop leaves into a bag as the mower struck a pebble which pitched through a crack in the fence and into the man's eye, piercing his brain. Pandemonium. Ambulance, hospital, surgery. The man survived and now sits looking at his pool that he will never swim in as the leaves collect and the drool falls.

### **Real riches**

I've come up empty with balls full, agendas stagnant and chasing full moon's and disappointment should come with reward and how we'd all be rich as a compensation which is not enough for me but it will do fine for others. I'd settle for an empty sack, not of my doing.

## **Strapping on the Millstone**

He wanted nothing but what he couldn't have, especially when it came to women. Mimi and Sarah and Yvette, a dreamer on a fool's island, barren and isolated. Unrequited love is no paradise, nor unquenched lust, a journey desperate but never pointless as hope always lingers no matter how minute, far removed from tranquillity. Affliction recoils, calamitous contemplation damages the self, until a soft smile initiates the next round.

## **One Battle, Many Hostages**

Battling tyrants is scientifically proven to have a higher success rate to battling teenagers. Ninety seven percent of housewives agree. Given inches and stolen miles. Marathons have been run on less. Often said, rarely pinpointed, hell on earth, lies alongside.

## **Slaughter Spotlight**

I raise the pill to my mouth and wish you farewell, not that I'm leaving but that you're going someplace else where I'm happy *not* to be. Self-sacrifice ain't what it used to be and dead heroes are too long dead without witnessing their adulations so a temporary eradication is as good as anything with or without cognizance as long as there's another slingshot hours from now and I'm not D.O.A. as everyone wants to see the bad guy caught unless it's the one you thought was true, being you (me) so I'll pretend I never spoke and you regress to the shoebox and let the next episode feature another criminal of the week.

## **The lowering sun**

The sun came down and sought us through the cracks in the balcony boards. Having a balcony is a good thing. Having the sun lower is always pleasurable. Having an ale in your hand is bliss. Having a friend to savour it with is even better. In silence we contemplated life with an eye to tomorrow but most of all we embraced the moment, wrapped ourselves in orange and raised amber bubbles to the hope of a little magic as it seemed, as it often does with a drink and the colour, that maybe, it can all be possible.



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