

ROGER ROBINSON

**Four Paradise Poems from *A Portable Paradise***

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**The Job of Paradise**

It is the job of Paradise  
to comfort those who've been left behind,

to think that all those loved and lost  
would live on there like tiny gods.

It is the job of mumbled prayers  
to help you calm your hurts and fears.

It is the job of the long black hearse  
to show we head to death from birth.

It is the job of a clean neat grave  
to remind us how to live our days.

If only I could live my days till death suffice  
and make Earth feel like Paradise.

**And If I Speak of Paradise**

Then I am speaking about my grandfather  
And if I speak of my grandfather  
I am speaking about horse racing  
And if I speak of horse racing  
I am speaking about my father  
And if I speak of my father  
I am speaking about shirt jacs  
And if I speak of shirt jacs  
I am speaking about intellectuals

And if I speak of intellectuals  
I'm speaking about revolutionaries  
And if I speak of revolutionaries  
I'm speaking about independence  
And if I speak of independence  
I'm speaking about Paradise  
And if I speak of Paradise...

## Paradise

Is Paradise an island of perfection?  
The reward for a life of good deeds,  
a payment to the virtuous?  
The antidote to hell's fire and brimstone  
and endless suffering?  
Will there be white sands and crystalline waters,  
all pina coladas, swimsuits, shades and sun beds,  
our bones finally relaxing in their sun-soaked skins?  
Will we see storms far out at sea  
that mysteriously never trouble our shores?  
And after years in this perfect land,  
will we not secretly long for a night  
when we wake to skies of bruised clouds,  
lightning, a deluge of rain  
and a murder of crows  
scything the fat-faced acned moon.

## A Portable Paradise

And if I speak of Paradise,  
then I'm speaking of my grandmother  
who told me to carry it always  
on my person, concealed, so  
no one else would know but me.

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That way they can't steal it, she'd say.  
And if life puts you under pressure,  
trace its ridges in your pocket,  
smell its piney scent on your handkerchief,  
hum its anthem under your breath.  
And if your stresses are sustained and daily,  
get yourself to an empty room – be it hotel,  
hostel or hovel – find a lamp  
and empty your paradise onto a desk:  
your white sands, green hills and fresh fish.  
Shine the lamp on it like the fresh hope  
of morning, and keep staring at it till you sleep.

—選自 *A Portable Paradise* (Peepal Tree, 2020).