

Breakfast

Corner Table

CORNER table, strange hotel,
Late to breakfast, all alone.
Dining room's vast open space.
Human islands. I can tell
Coupled closeness: love's been sown.
Togetherness, as eyes embrace.

Waiters clearing things away.
Watch them, busy-busy band.
Company's my coffee cup —
Dredged, disgusting disarray.
Lad comes over, pot in hand.
Thank you, as he fills it up.

Lord knows why: it's pretty foul.
Treacly black, with gritty grounds.
Just one cup would be enough.
Add some milk with pensive scowl.
Pot continues on its rounds.
How can people drink this stuff?

How can *people*? How can *I*?
Drowns the taste of buttered toast,
Swamps the egg-and-bacon's trace,
Sluices grapefruit's tang — so why
Can I, quite stupid, smile and boast
Another cup's not out of place?

Slush it down. There's no escape.
Poison-pot man's here again.
Dull dismay at brimming cup.
Tongue gives teeth despairing scrape.
Foulness clings. I can't explain
Why I let him fill it up.

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But, of course, it passes time.
This will be a ghastly day,
Spent on some God-awful train.
Waiter doesn't need a prime:
Shuddering, I hear me say,
Thank you. . . Fill it up again.
