

Roar

It's hot, when I wake up in the doorway, so I roll to where it's cool.

Lying here, you can see the shimmer.

It rises up from the roads, the pavements.

It's all I've seen since

It's all I see all day, every morning, noon and night,

the heat haze and the shimmer.

Across the pavement, on the roads,

the cars and the buses and the bikes pass through it, the wheels and exhausts

clicking and rumbling and mixing with the rattle of trains on the bridge,

above the road.

I lie here, in the doorway where it's cool,

next to the wall of shuffling shoes and flip-flops walking past.

I've been reading about them, all week:

the lions.

Everything I see,

everything I read,

everywhere, the lions.

They're roaring, the words keep saying,

soaring, the people keep saying,

doing it for us, people keep singing,

but it's hard to feel like they are.

As expected they come in the afternoon, the army of white,

marching on Southwark and Borough and across London Bridge,

an army of people laughing and chanting and singing with plastic pints.

They wake me up, and I put a hand to the sun, squint across the street,

see the army and the line,

hear their songs, and grab a footprint covered Metro and flick through the

scrunched and crackling pages.

The boys are dead, it says in a small box in the corner,

all of them dead and alone in the cave by the sea but
The lions are roaring, it says across the top, soaring and doing it for us,
and all the while the line gets longer,
an army of white and gleaming sweat soaked faces all burning in the sun.

It's nice in my doorway.
There's shade.

In the line some push and shove and stare through the traffic and nod
and point at my bag but they look away when you look back.
On the pavement by my doorway suit-clad men and women make for the stations,
looking down at their feet with red and puffed out cheeks, heading home, and
one woman drops a Standard and another drops some change and
gives an awkward little nod and a smile that seems strained
but this paper is cleaner,
no footprints,
and I read and it's all about the lions.

They open the gates at six and the line gets moving,
shuffling a few feet towards the fanzone each time and still the songs go on,
echoing off the tall glass buildings as they make for the tents,
for the bars and the benches and the tall wide screens by the tracks,
and the songs carry on as the crowd moves forwards.

Then, everything slows.

The pavements are silent, noon makes way for dusk and an orange glow
slices down the sides of the tall glass buildings and sets the street ablaze.
It's just me, the doorway,
the shimmer and the haze.

The long line of white has made it through the gates and distant voices boom from
the far away speakers.

The shadow of shade stretches outwards,

away from the doorway and leaks across the pavement,
spreads out onto the road and within minutes,

there's a roar

an amber wall of spray soaring skywards and a tingling wave of sound.
Voices, screaming,
singing.

Then there's a pause,
an hour or so of silence and nerves and then the roar returns,
louder this time,
longer this time.

Car horns blare and passing people on the pavements scream and punch the air and
someone says They've done it,
someone says They're roaring,
someone says They're soaring and that they've done it all for us,

but it's hard to feel like they are.

There isn't long left when a distant siren sounds.
There's a faint blue tinge at the end of the street,
towards the station, so I stand
and with the third and final roar ringing in my ears I grab the bag and move,
away from my doorway towards the Tate,
towards the river and the water and the trees and the bridge,
away from the flashing blue lights and the adults that smile, say they want to help.
All of them getting closer to the doorway

So I move away from the roar to somewhere out of sight,
the voices, the songs and the roar still ringing in my ears as I sink away,
into the black, away from the screaming, happy, chanting army of white.