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poems
by
doctors

If Homelessness Were Genetic

Sean Spence

If homelessness were genetic,
Institutes would be constructed
With tall white walls,
And 'driven' people (with thick glasses)
Would congregate
In libraries

And mumble.

If homelessness were genetic
Bright young things
Would draft manifestos
'To crack the problem',

Girls with braces on their teeth
Would stoop to kiss
Boys with dandruff
At Unit discos

While dancing (slowly)
To 'Careless Whisper'.

Meanwhile, upstairs, in the offices
Secretaries in long white coats
And horn-rimmed spectacles,
Carrying clipboards,
Would cross their legs
And take dictation:

'Miss Brown, a memo please,
To the eminent Professor Levchenko,
"Many thanks indeed
For all those sachets you sent to me,
Of homeless toddlers' teeth." '

If homelessness were genetic
Rats from broken homes
Would sleep in cardboard shoeboxes
Evading violent fathers,
Who broke their bones,
While small white mice
With cocaine habits
Would huddle in fear,
Sleeping in doorways,
Receiving calibrated kicks from gangs of passers-by
(A 'geneenvironment interaction').

If homelessness were genetic
Then the limping man, with swollen feet,
A fever,
And the voices crying out within his brain
Would not traipse
Between surgery and casualty
Being turned away
For being roofless

Because, of course,
Homelessness would be genetic

And, therefore,
'Interesting'.