

At the end of the lane ...

At the end of the lane there was – nothing ...
But that must surely be wrong, there
cannot just be nothing ...

And therein lies his pain, his heart knowing
that indeed there shouldn't just be nothing, that
there should be a bungalow, a carefully tended
garden, the driftwood bench they used to share
over a mug of tea watching the early morning light
glint on the sails of distant turbines; the compost bins
in the corner behind the tarred shed; the gravelled
borders of salt tolerant shrubs and grasses – he
remembers beach rose and sea holly, fleabane,
miscanthus and phormium –
all now gone ...

In their place, behind a rusty scaffolding barrier,
a ragged edge; broken paving, torn tarmac, dangling
pipework - a fifty-foot drop to a cluttered beach
already partially swept clean by a cold grey sea,
breaking and receding, breaking and receding,
washing away soil, grinding rubble into shingle
that a later storm will push and pile against
the remains of ancient wooden groynes ...

And his head knows that, though denied for
now its next four yards, that same relentless,
indifferent sea will continue to probe for
weaknesses in our defences, and having
found them will, over time, wipe away
others' lives just as it had wiped away his.