

2020 DMPA Results

Senior Secondary

WINNER

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mist

I walk through tangled shadows of fairytale bush.
raindrop diamonds cling to bare twisting branches
shatter on rocky ground as I pass.
a phantom of a wallaby
greyed by droplets of rain on dense fur
stands sentinel
concealed amongst bushes bleeding colour.
pillows of moss
brilliantly green
punctuate grey sky bush rock.
I lean to pat them
feel them give under my touch
spring back into perfect round poufs.

I climb
the track steep and narrow.
I grab branches the width of my wrist to haul myself up boulders,
watercolour bark smoothly damp.
as I ascend spidery tendrils of mist creep across the mountain,
cling to its ridges.

I remember as I climb
the way I traced your body in lamplight
fingers lightly tickling
caressed the contours of your body as mist on the mountain.
the way gold pooled in the hollow of your collarbones
necklace delicate and bright against brown skin.
the way your fingers
adorned also in gold, rings of intricately swirling patterns,
grazed mine.
traced my lighter skin up arm to chest

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the way my skin was so attentive under your touch
the way you drew from it
simultaneously
shivers and heat.

all of a sudden I reach the top
burst through the last line of trees to exposed rock
a platform suspended between heaven and earth
am thrust out of my reverie with a slap of frozen air.
step onto the edge of the world.

I am cocooned in white
mist dampening sound and touch.

I breathe out clouds indistinguishable from deafening fog.

I am entombed in cloud silent and heavy.
soon I barely remember what it is to see.
I drown

forget to mourn the stolen view
as I struggle to draw thick air into burning lungs
when as swift as crumbs swept off dining table the curtain of fog is whipped away.
I gasp, grasp at the view
like a lifebuoy.
spread before me is the world.
rivers of fog flow down valleys and mountains drip with green.
far off the water glints greyly. I strain
to discern barrier between sky and sea
when I find it I cling to it with stinging eyes
afraid it will melt when I blink.

I tremble at the size of the world
the thought you could be in any corner of it and I'd have no right to know.
as I hold that border where grey meets grey
feeble
I remember when you left.
when I buried my face in your pillow
cold by now
inhaled

hungrily searching for a hint of your scent
anything you might carelessly have left behind.

desperate, crumbling
fading memories all you left in your wake
I tried to recreate your shape
the lines of you curved beside me.

the concentration of the one who fancies himself guardian broken
the barrier dissolves
the tide of fog rushes back in
fills every space around me.
I square my shoulders
stare it down
take up space
when it threatens to overcome,
erase,
me. I am swamped once again in white.

Judge Comment:

A highly evocative and lyrical poem, beautifully resolved, where each word has been carefully chosen to reflect both mood and landscape. The clever interplay between the account of the narrator's trip up and down the mountain and the status of his relationship is breathtakingly effective.

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