THE QUARRY

Christine Ireland

Six poems

This set of six poems observes various types of relationship: intimate, collegial, family, cultural, and relationship to self.

1. Burn Thickness

The man we knew was hooded and smoothed,

walked as a panther through hospital wards,

secret, sleek & springing off the balls of his feet.

Now his eyes pace, pale-irised and clever

- the only part of him unburnt

in a face ever bald-surprised and marbled.

And instead of hands, blurred knobs of flesh,

pinker than my rhododendrons.

His meal arrives, a shell-fish pasta tangle

I cringe & look away - what will he do?

But he talks of vineyards vats and politicians

and we listen on as time slides loose,

the problem of the knife & fork unnoticed

as he grows jungle-lithe and olive-skinned again.

2. Farmer Wants a Wife

That shamble bear cheeky grinned

Kings schooled shearer man

of the thousand acres (more).

What a hunk, hunkered down

alone & out of town

with work as all.

Welcome to my parlour (really) my old homestead

what a party – all that landed gentry stuff

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'cept he was red eyed, drinking rum.

Farmer wants a wife!

He joked. A woman warm, with wit,

with sparkling eyes and independent means!

Three years on, my spirit cold in dying light

it's hold your tongue you cow you're all the same

& I'm dizzy-dulled and shackled, numb and not-me.

And now I know farmer wants a wife

breathing barely, buried in the ground in a box beneath his feet

for always.

3. Usual Small Things

I had an Uncle John,

the only uncle I have known.

He was old when I was young

& I thought of him as strange

because he was so plain and mild and kind.

Invariably behind the scenes

he'd hum around the house

as he pottered determinedly,

I never knew at what really

except he'd water plants by hand;

with hose he'd stand at garden shrubs

for what seemed like an age.

He had a patience and a peace

quite alien to me.

Most nights he'd sit alone

with his transistor radio

listening to Beethoven or Brahms.

Aunty would talk and smoke and watch TV

she rarely ventured out

while Uncle John would fetch or do

what needed to be done.

Theirs seemed to be a happy home

voices never raised

it was simple and so restful

and I felt no undertows.

How I wished I could be theirs for good

not just at holidays.

Years later I was in Wales

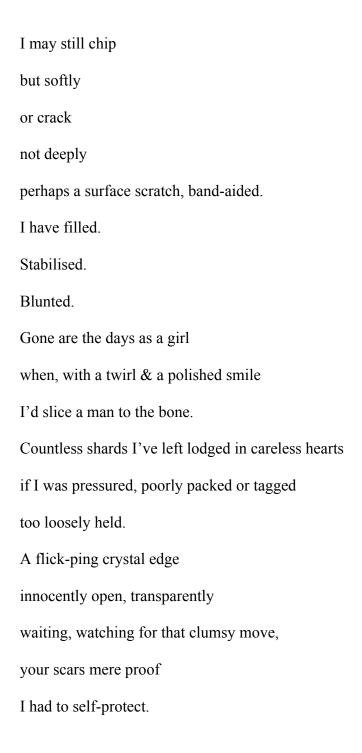
when I learned that Uncle John had passed away.

He'd been on his daily bushland walk:

his heart had burst at the last

just doing one of his usual small things.

4. Crystal



5. My Cosy Sunday

A flutter fuss, a sparrow's cry & I look up - page gone - through panes of lead framed glass a tussle in my tulip tree, now whip wet black & bare.

This September snow lets spring buds know it's not quite safe – but soon.

That's when I see a sudden sun strolling bright past my front yard a woman, black-skinned, dressed in flames which leap and flare with every roll of graceful hip & long-legged glide her queenly head dressed high, all hail, her beauty warms our frigid town.

I want to tell her welcome & I'm sorry it's so cold, that so many here are fearful but it's really very safe, the only danger, strangely, a people's disconnect from soul.

6. Reflect-less

She was clear eyed shining twenty:twenty her own level believed and bevelled perfectly bedroomed. So when exactly did she fall from the cutting edge fell hook line and stupidly cut and bled. Her view opaqued and slowed She blurred with grey spot and blotch belied, blank-eyed, unseen while evolving some third eye to an inner vision (another poem). Now just for appearances she hangs above fire between bookshelves in 3D glass blocks angled fly-eyed

mosaic-ed madly.