

# THE QUARRY

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MelalUKEa Boy

## Music Class

‘Where’s your guitar, Dylan? Hop to it, boy.’  
He straightened and skipped a half step until  
sniggers slithered around his legs.  
*Why do teachers say things they don’t mean?*  
Two rows from the front, Dylan held the neck  
of the borrowed guitar toward Mr D as if it were his own.  
*I must concentrate today.*

Fingers found F chord  
and the calming strum  
settled his stomach.  
At the coda, Dylan’s mind  
shifted to the window  
the sea glinted  
for him.  
*Soon.*

Melalukeya Medicine

8am Saturday. Scrambled eggs done.  
Time for the sea rhythms, water and sun.  
Dylan clips his helmet and rides through the breeze  
down to the saltiness, down to the sea.

He reaches behind to check it's still there,  
pats the side of his uke and smiles to the air.  
Notes meet his heart as his feet touch the sand  
peace in his guts, just as he planned.

Pausing to pray, he nods to the edge  
looks for the right spot and plonks on a ledge.  
A second of still in which  
he's stealing            God  
for himself.

Seaside Prayer

*Hey, God,  
It's so good here with You.  
Why can't I stay?*

He slaps the front of the uke with the flat of his hand,  
echoing the thwap of sea to rockface.  
And plucks at a string, head tilted to compare  
tone to roar.

*I want to hear You, the rumble of Your voice.  
Speak just to me, Father.  
You're always here,  
not like my other Dad.*

### The Interstate Move

Dylan stared at the road  
lulled by his head vibrating  
on the side window.

Guitar ringtone jolted  
his Mum. Always.  
She buried phone under the faded  
folder of 'DV Stuff'.

*New life in Melalukea. New friends, she said.  
But I only have one good friend.  
He's Aspergers, too.  
Books hid us  
in the demountable library.  
Felix. He's my lucky charm  
and we are getting further away  
from him every minute.*

'Play me a tune, honey. C'mon  
it'll be OK.'

Dylan scooped the ukulele from his lap.  
Familiar, like cuddling the cat.  
He leaned to see placement  
of second and fourth fingers  
on reliable strings.

His fingers kept marching  
as he remembered  
being stuck  
in the dented Hilux  
Dad called the truck.

He never did ask  
why she didn't come and get him.  
It was his turn with Dad.  
The solicitor said he had to go.  
Dylan used to stare out the window  
and finger his booster seat sash  
creating tunes  
'til the 'Club House Bar'  
neon yawned with him.

*Will Daddy find us?*

### Blessing of the Pets

Dylan snuggles his ukulele  
softly kicking the back of the next pew  
as his mother shares the first reading.

A whippet slips  
her owner's grasp,  
licks his hand.  
Tucking the uke inside his blue jacket  
Dylan pats the tiny head.

The minister calls for beloved friends  
places a hand on fur and feather in turn.  
Her lips whisper halos.

Dylan presents the wooden instrument  
Rev Bryony turns and looks out over the lake  
as if she were called.

She nods and collects the anointing oil  
forming the sign of the cross  
on the boy's freckled forehead  
then chipped orange paint.

'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
I anoint you, Dylan, and your instrument  
May you play your life for God  
for He wants to hear you play'

Secret Beach

Bike tossed to sand  
like a beach towel  
as he seeks the sea.

*I know I can play it*

Water approaches his ankles  
like a loving cat  
and draws out minor chords.

Dylan's breathing slows  
*Your will be done on earth  
as it is in Heaven*

Clouds whisper  
and their white foam  
on the sea coaxes him to play on

Dylan takes another step  
and the blue parts  
like a glassy aisle to Heaven  
before embracing him.

If his mother were here  
she would have heard the  
change in tone  
the resonance of his sea-strum  
that echoed even in the shells  
as if the sun were dawning  
on this beach alone.

'Stay a while with me, Dylan.'  
He hears His voice plaited  
around the strings  
and smiles, taking another step  
into the hug of the ocean.

*Play the sea.*

His mother would have  
                  screamed  
She would have been the only thing to stop  
Dylan from soothing  
himself up to his neck  
ginger tufts of hair like anemone arms  
waving farewell.