

THE QUARRY

Night Cry

Freshta Nawabi

I.

we were lying in bed,
me and my sister,
when we heard the cry of a Baby Bird
splinter the space between us

(in the other room, mum and baba were screaming)

it was storming, that night.

Rain bounced off the roof
like translucent marbles,
shimmering then gone.

(i think i heard my mother cry)

Baby Bird wailed and wailed
but we didn't move from our beds.

(they only fight when they think we can't hear)

If we laid still enough
we could pretend it was just a dream.

II.

when the rain stopped
and the sky broke apart like an oyster
revealing its pearl
we rushed past the front door,
past the white fence
to stand before the bottlebrush tree.
Pushing aside the weeping foliage
my sister and i stared.

Awestruck, we trembled with hushed delight.

It was a baby Common Myna,
cold, wet and shivering.
Feathers soft and beak wide open –
totally alone.

III.

Where was its mother?
we thought it was kind of weird how
Baby Bird seemed to have emerged
from the night itself
once, a grey storm cloud
now, a ball of feathers and sound
clicking, crying and screeching.

Baby Bird was really saying,
'I'm here, I'm real, I really am'
His language was the storm.

me and my sister screamed for baba

until he emerged from the hole in the wall,
smiling his glassy smile.
(‘I’m here, I’m real, I really am’)
i imagined Baby Bird
tapping his beak against that smile.
(‘I’m here, I’m real, I really am’)

Not stopping until we heard it crack.

IV.

Lunchtime.

i held Baby Bird in my hands,
closer than a secret.
Mum was hanging up the washing, as always,
and you could see her face blink open and shut
open and shut
between my school uniform and baba’s pants.
(‘What will Baby Bird eat?’)
she fingered the beads of rain
strung up on the clothesline and
i watched her mouth form
the shape of a rainbow
as she turned away.
(‘It’s his mother’s job to worry.’)
(‘But he’s hungry, mummy!’)
‘So are you.’ So I was.

V.

Life is precious.
i discovered this one lunchtime

on a cloudy afternoon,
looking for a bird no longer existed.
just feathers and blood.

Tears streaking down my cheeks,
i lay flat on the front lawn and watched
the sun sink behind the neighbours' house.
Its creamy white walls turned pink
and golden like Billabong ice cream.

Something happened then,
the sort of miracle
that only happens in twilight.
A shadow struck the purple sky
and left me momentarily blind.
It had only been a second,
but i knew it was Baby Bird.

Limbs splayed across the spiny grass,
my mouth fell open in awe once again
as the air thickened with the sound
of fluttering wings.

i smiled up at the telephone wires,
up at the dandelion seed heads,
floating like bits of cloud or feathers.

i smiled, and opened my mouth to the rain.