

THE QUARRY

Mykayla Castle

salt of the earth

i.

i look, and i cannot see the mountains.
i drive by an unfamiliar patch of world,
the bridge of a song i know by heart
and cannot find the hawkesbury under it.
the sky is a shrivelling orange rind,
white smoke like mould—

wherefrom comes my help?

Here, it is coming in a distant squall of rain.
it opens old testament pages,
gilt edged edition, a southern gale
to drown out the question.
this pillar of fire now cloud,
the salt of our muddy earth slides out
the flooding, doubtful mouth of an

unseen river—

has my foot slipped?

we see it coming, in a distant swarm
we hope it passes over us,
dip hands in alcohol before doorframes like blood.
mark your door, lock it, go nowhere,
see no one, and have faith
in the staff that divides the sea.

have we done this before?

ii.

i fear death on doorknobs,
grow cold if i cough. am i
jumping at shadows, or
what lives in them?
the final enemy delivers me
or just a pizza.

i can't breathe. this whole year
panic spreading like germs
i can't breathe, but i hear—
over my own stuttery lungs,
Floyd's voice— 'I can't breathe'.

leave your city, o jericho!
they have their trumpets;
colour film, black and white.
we call for walls to fall,
cry with empty hands,
and cannot breathe as we wait

for news to flood in.
for the toll.

iii.

i found the river i was looking for.
i heard singing on a balcony and
followed it along. i traced my finger
down the heartbeat of frontlines
and handmade masks. i made
shapes from undisturbed clouds
and dough one afternoon.
in the quiet, the ocean came back
into the canals in shoals, and i listened
as the glass house we built gave us
a window into a second chance.
i followed the fingerprints,
the scales fell from my eyes—
the river was where i had left it.