

FRIEND

Do you remember
that wild stretch of land
with the lone tree guarding the point
from the sharp-tongued sea?

The fort we built out of branches
wrenched from the tree is dead wood now.
The air that was thick with the whirr of
toetoe spears succumbs at last to the grey gull's wheel.

*Oyster-studded roots
of the mangrove yield no finer feast
of silver-bellied eels, and sea-snails
cooked in a rusty can.*

Allow me to mend the broken ends
of shared days:
but I wanted to say
that the tree we climbed
that gave food and drink
to youthful dreams, is no more.
Pursed to the lips her fine-edged
leaves made whistle – now stamp
no silken tracery on the cracked
clay floor.

Friend,
in this drear
dreamless time I clasp
your hand if only for reassurance
that all our jewelled fantasies were
real and wore splendid rags.

Perhaps the tree
will strike fresh roots again:
give sooting shade to a hurt and
troubled world.

NOT BY WIND RAVAGED

Deep scarred

not by wind ravaged nor rain
nor the brawling stream:
stripped of all save the brief finery
of gorse and broom; and standing
sentinel to your bleak loneliness
the tussock grass—

O voiceless land, let me echo your desolation.

The mana of my house has fled,
the marae is but a paddock of thistle.
I come to you with a bitterness
that only your dull folds can soothe
for I know, I know
my melancholy chants shall be lost
to the wind's shriek about the rotting eaves.

Distribute my nakedness—

Unadorned I come with no priceless
offering of jade and bone curio: yet
to the wild berry shall I give
a tart piquancy; enhance for a deathless
space the fragile blush of manuka. . . .

You shall bear all and not heed.

In your huge compassion embrace
those who know no feeling other
than greed:
of this I lament my satisfaction
for it is as full as a beggar's cup:
no less shall the dust of avaricious men
succour exquisite blooms with
moist lips parting
to the morning sun.

NO ORDINARY SUN

Tree let your arms fall:
raise them not sharply in supplication
to the bright enhaloed cloud.
Let your arms lack toughness and
resilience for this is no mere axe
to blunt, nor fire to smother.

Your sap shall not rise again
to the moon's pull.
No more incline a deferential head
to the wind's talk, or stir
to the tickle of coursing rain.

Your former shagginess shall not be
wreathed with the delightful flight
of birds nor shield
nor cool the ardour of unheeding
lovers from the monstrous sun.

Tree let your naked arms fall
nor extend vain entreaties to the radiant ball.
This is no gallant monsoon's flash,
no dashing trade wind's blast.
The fading green of your magic
emanations shall not make pure again
these polluted skies . . . for this
is no ordinary sun.

O tree
in the shadowless mountains
the white plains and
the drab sea floor
your end at last is written.

MONOLOG

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