

Poems by Allison Grayhurst

Blood Spent

I rest these limpid hands
on your face
where my shame falls.

For I was colour once, then I
turned chaotic like an insect
in a duststorm, swirling in
frail deathness, swirling in the
choking, greying air, sick against
you, cursed against you my morbid howl.
I was sad, but more than that, I was
falling from a great height, like
a grape to cold pavement. I was sunless,
and the maggots swarmed my mind, nibbling
my nerves with their hundred tiny mouths.
I was indulging, unable to control the violent
famine scissoring my breast. I spewed
my foaming tears on you. I came
destroying of every song.

The Hope of Lovers

With thin love
and a heart that pangs
unnourished, lovers
meet to undo their
bitterness and know again
undiscerning grace.

Meeting in passion's excessive
persuasion, all heavy wounds rise
to dissolve as though never there at all,
then reappear as embedded and destructive
as they really are.

They reappear beyond
any calm abstraction, as lovers lean on
the blindness of each other
to find their individual sight.

As lovers lean to advance with the strength
of two made whole, and lean to reach
the truth of love (forever re-told).

Heritage

In a room of celibate smiles,
in a fever of shame and reprimand
they hold the symmetry of hardness and
idolatry, they adore their
dying god like a babe, adore
his bleeding wounds and delicate face.
They curse the children for their freedom,
forgetting the tenderness he spoke,
forgetting the force of renewal
that penetrated his every sharing speech
and unnerving demand.
They axe away the threat of all non-conformity,
maul the flesh of each guiltless dreamer.
They hold back what he said each must give, blessing
only snivelling sentiment and hands offering gold.
They are in beds leaning next to spells,
cuddled close to candlelight and the demeaning lure
of confession. In a room of fur coats where hearts
never dare to melt, they judge with turned backs
what they cannot kill or control.

Dream

Again it came like hari-kari,
twisting my innards on its holy blade.
It came at 4 am, into my lungs and brain,
like a new death-rattle sounding
an old, familiar fate.

It came under the blankets like a scorpion
between my husband and I, touched me
with its tail then raised its head to my eyes.

It unchained my killer-hand, bent my tree
until it broke. It found me in the violence,
in the night of unconscious beginnings and
jealousy too brutal to be controlled.

It plucked my morals one by one, like plucking
a cat of its whiskers. It turned
me into a nameless creature, into a betrayed
and raging deformity of myself. It came
like scissors to a flower, like an axe
to a pig's straining neck. It came
from where, I do not know, but came again
as though portraying something within
that I must unclothe and undeniably own.

Nightmare

I harbour this hemisphere
of thundering fears. I close my eyes
and whirl in the anger of
my imagination, bellowing curses
to eyes I love and faces that
have never failed me. My pain
is loud like chaos is,
and near the threshold of cold madness
my mind is thrust, helplessly
betrayed and collapsing. I dream
with grief, without control,
doomed by suspicion, by anxious motion,
hatching a dread beyond the healing
of forgiveness.
Out of a blank curve I awake
like one whose mouth is
ice, mute, in rising
shock.