

Twelve River RIPPLES

Favourite Poem



Icefield

by David Harsent

A place of ice over ice, of white over white
and beauty in absences. There was time when the only sound
was the wind calling its ghosts, when the skyline was set

clean as a scar on glass, when your heartbeat slowed
with the cold, when your dreams brought in a white bird
on a white sky and music that could only be heard

from time to time on the other side of night.
Now the horizon's a smudge; now there's a terrible weight
in the air and a stain cut hard and deep in the permafrost.

Breakage and slippage; the rumble of some vast
machine cranking its pistons, of everything on the slide
and the water rising fast, and the music lost.

I love the economy of language and imagery which assists the inculcation of a 'blank' white landscape. In just twelve lines we are taken from beautiful simplicity to a polluted -'weight in the air' - and dirtying - 'stain' - environment where global warming is causing ice caps to melt and ultimately this spoiling could doom earth - 'the music lost'.

It isn't an uplifting poem but one of beauty which speaks to me about taking more care of our planet and preserving 'the music' - the soul's medicine.

(From David Harsent's 2014 Faber collection *Fire Songs*.)

Sue Foster