

Twelve River RIPPLES

Members' Poems



Love

Marjan,
I suppose
your surname spelled
a Frisian, countryside stock
of stolid farmhands and yet
I hankered after your sturdy shape
all sporty as we were then, you
not pretty
as I was told
not quite the type and good enough
at the back of the class
and
in my own timid way
I could not tell you anything.
You did encourage me though
I know
on the ice ring
other times.
Remember that basketball game
just the two of us
inches apart
and my lips not daring to stretch
aching to cross the heat between us.
I passed you once
later
me, trapped on a bus on my first job to work
you on the pavement
I ran back
reached out my hand
but you had gone.

Jacques Groen

Members' Poems cont.

Mike's Misstep

We learnt about friendship
talking as we walked to the infants' school,
like the others I had envied in their noisy groups.
Stepping over bad luck in the pavement joints
or holding our coat collar after missteps
until a four-legged animal was seen,
or your rule – an ambulance,
which overrode mischance.
Despite our high stepping
malevolence still struck.
You never made it to the middle school,
we parted somewhere between the Co-op
and the road's edge that afternoon
– no ambulance, just a builder's truck,
then afterwards I walked alone.

You have been my yard-stick
to measure the relish of existence
and value its experience:
rude games with older girls,
the crass certainty of youth,
anger, frustration, intimacy,
marriage, middle merging to old age.
The 'otherness' of foreign travel:
the crowded bazaar in Mashhad,
the rising sun at Chott el Jerid,
Costa Rica – and Montezuma's Oropendola,
Capybara and Anaconda in Venezuela's marshes.

Africa, Bermuda, China,
I touched my collar and brought you there,
whenever life presented wonder
you could never know
after that Wednesday misstep
seventy-three years ago.

Ivor Murrell

Members' Poems cont.

Covent Garden

The aged gentleman's wizened hands
Rested on top of a Burred Walnut cane
He closed his eyes and listened
As Puccini played for him again
The Aria washed through his memory
Though chosen to please the crowd
None shall sleep through its splendour
Nor when he first heard it out loud

The corner of a street in Naples
Or where a corner had once been
Where bombs had buried the beauty
His mind could still picture the scene
Their Daimler Dingo had spluttered
Then came to an annoying stop
Tired, dirty, bedraggled
Back from a Reconnaissance Op
A welcoming bar was waiting
Some comfort and camaraderie
But here in this broken part of town
Was not a good place to be
The ragged locals were starving
Italy's dignity was almost lost
When politicians go to war
It's the people that count the cost
Then suddenly a moment of magic
A man with one arm stood and sang
With a voice that belied his frame
Across rubble strewn streets his words rang
A silence settled for a moment or two
He wondered what the libretto said
Then the Dingo coughed and re-engaged
Left the tune ingrained in his head

'Are you OK Dad? Are you crying?'
'Not really. Just a tear from the past.
Who are these buskers that sing here?
Are they part of the Opera House cast?'
'They are probably what they would call 'resting'
Earning a bit to keep the wolf from the door
That's the song sang at the World Cup
Time for a new group to take the floor.'
'I was recalling where I first heard it.
My driver never made it home
We were together for a month or two.
A sniper got him somewhere near Rome
Do you think these people understand?
Know what the aria is all about.
A not very nice lady set a task.
To her surprise love then broke out.'
'You look tired Dad, we've had a full day.
For ninety-five you've had quite a spree.'
'I'm fine, can you ask those singers,
To sing 'Nessun Dorma' again for me?'

Hugh Lake

For a Ripple of Laughter

Little bug,
why so smug,
how do you survive?
I've gone organic
but I just panic
when I see you're alive!

Sue Foster