

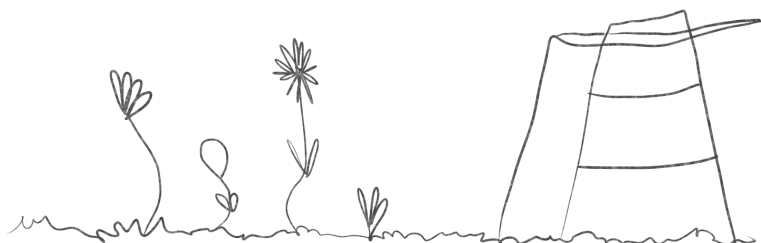
*Fibreglass Ladder*

To be a child on a bad day  
is better than my best  
To wake in the night from a dream,  
cruel and corrupted,  
and to cry and fuss and wail.  
To see sharks circling my bed,  
their fins carving the carpeted ocean,  
until a light switch 'flick'  
washes them away.

To not sweat through the summer,  
but to swim.  
To feel your stomach poke fabric to the horizon,  
and drool watermelon juice on wet swimwear.  
To cling to fibreglass ladders  
in the midst of a whirlpool,  
and sink without drowning.

I would itch now  
like I'd itched then,  
in a fibreglass pool made of prickles and algae.  
My body is not new.  
I shave at old fur  
that ate at the static of trampolines.  
My nest has straightened  
to a warm iron blade.  
My chest is not flat  
and my body bleeds.

What curves have brought me here,  
where the summer is so hot,  
and I'm not afraid of the dark?  
It is at light when I feel most like I was,  
in a fibreglass pool,  
itching,  
itching.



*Little Bear*

I'd always imagined steel to be cold in my hand,  
but it is not.  
My fingertips ooze a wet paste  
that once covered, front to back,  
red spiral notebooks  
filled with drawings of stickmen  
holding weapons like mine.  
Sweat bathes the metal  
in a warm top coat of polish.

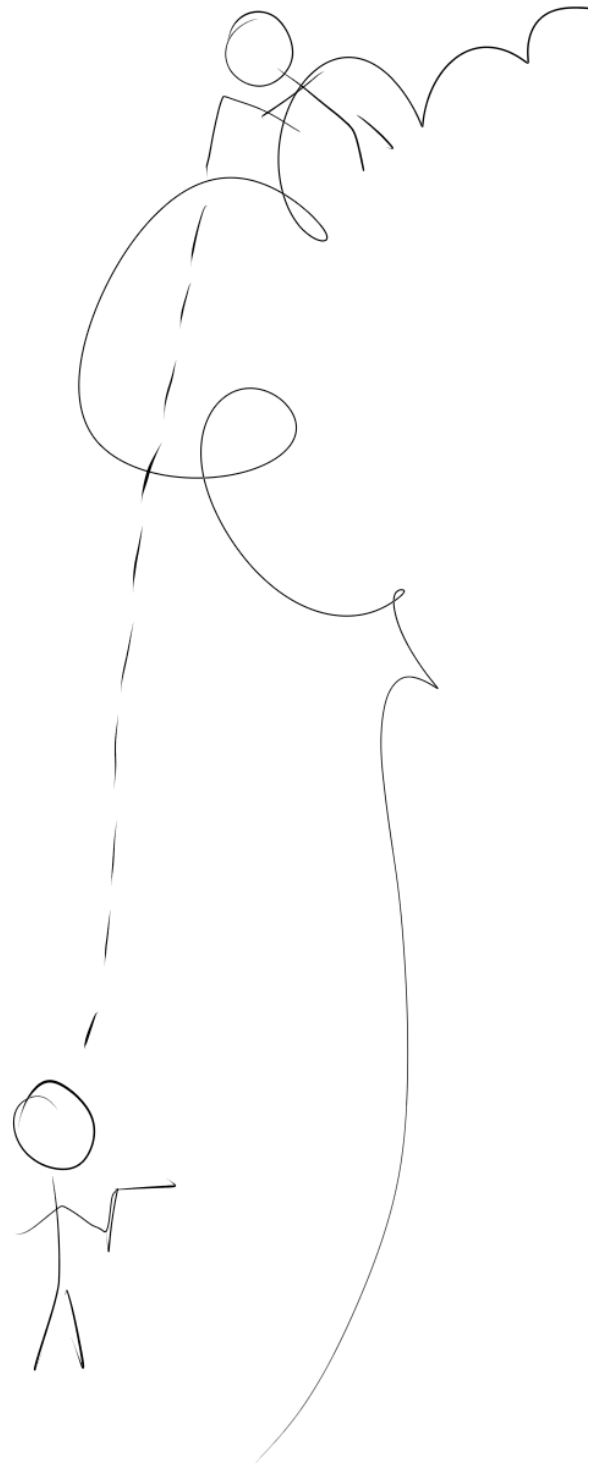


While the days are warm  
I'm cold at night,  
under the same stars that burn back home.  
They were warm there,  
at the top of a bunk bed  
or the left hand side of a queen.  
I've never slept so alone,  
with a million men around me.  
Yet I sleep.



Sometimes I dream I'm a child,  
I draw guns with crayons  
in the shape of the letter 'L'  
as my teacher reads *The Indian in the Cupboard*.  
There's a feeling in my hands  
that lingers,  
when I wake.  
At mess I draw a stickman in my notes,  
and he's sitting on a log.

My cuticles are grimy,  
underneath every bitten nail  
is a world not smaller than my own  
and I wonder if they are at war there too.  
I will clean my hands in spite of life,  
with cold water and bar soap  
that smells of bird feathers and milk powder,  
because I know as long as there is dirt,  
there is a hand to hold it.



*To the Birds*

A star on a  
beach isn't the sun  
back home. She cleans  
your liver and warms your  
fries, folding off a lake and into the  
polarised lenses of eyes dark enough  
already. She warms where she can; the open  
chest and the creasing skin at the back  
of his neck.  
I feel naked  
beneath her,  
in the same way as a newborn  
baby. I am Lazarus, reborn to the son.  
She fills the pelicans on the shore, their ever-  
stretching bills holding sunlight to save for  
when their small heads scrape through the  
surface of the dark water. Picking up life  
and holding it for just a while. Wriggling  
fish, like my bumpy skin, finally accepting  
the warmth of the starless pond,  
and swimming down. Why do you  
want my  
chips, Percival,  
when you  
can catch the sun?