

A wanderer in the garden – a prose poem inspired by barrack community gardens

By Naomi Webb

It is dawn when I find the garden in spring.....

An oasis in the grime and the sky is filled with pink streaks hidden away from the suburban lanes behind a steel gate and narrow opening. I do not know why I have come here,

But here I am.

I move through the air, just above the ground. The gate is unlocked through the bending of metal and the fiddling with a needle.

Underfoot the concrete, the ground is hard and unfeeling as though a frozen and invisible barrier erected. I feel poison is hidden deep within the soil and the concrete where dark poison of tarr steepes in.

The nymph is in the bathtub. A bathtub of flowers and soil

Her hair is flowing like a flower and river all at once. Bright red like the sky and strained with tangled weed. As the tulips bunch around her as she preens

The tulips burn brightly in the sun like bronze enclosed in flowers hiding secrets.

Around the garden are the remnants of old ghosts, I see the mirage faintly of a young man in a red hoodie, as though only the odd scent of him lingers and handprints in stone from children, I'd heard from my friend, that they had been made to commemorate their time here.

When feeling the ground, the back, I see pawprints and know that the black dog may have been here. Or a fox has found some kind of sanctuary, as the grass is wilder and the shadows are longer.

Bits of sticks and leaves litter the garden in piles and at the end there is a patch of vegetables where I feel the forming of carrots beneath my feet. In the corners of the garden wild blackberries grow and the trees blossom white and fall like the snow

Daffodils spring up, all over like stars, on the ground, splattering every surface.

In the willow den, bent and fiddled with by eager hands, I see the large bulbous nest, near the top, abandoned as the wasps scared the children, although a queen might lie dormant

In the cabin, I feel the rushing of feet in frantic energy, living spools of light in their wake and tangy smell of feet and sweat. Glitter is left on the floor and the mugs are left on various tables in the cold morn. I wonder if they are still warm from the hands that hold them. The crookedness of the word reminds me of my home. A spider crawls upwards on the wood.

I see the brightness and blueness of the bluebells as though the ringing in the breeze is faint, a slight sign than even the mystery can be found here. Some say that they are a sign of the never world, something even my kind were unable to see

When feeling the ground, the back, I see pawprints and know that the black dog may have been here, or a fox has found some kind of sanctuary at the back where the grass is wilder and the shadows are longer. Nettles, a wilder plant grows more frequently

I can hear the faint sounds of the birdsong chorus of the small birds busy pecking at trees and gobbling worms. The high harmony of the simple black bird brings good luck and a sign that the mysteries are still here hidden in the black tar below the concrete.

At the back I think that a snake could hide there between the cracks and under the compost bin, all slippery like..

Robins flit in and out of trees, their red breast still pricked and to those who know are a sign that maybe one day the oak king might even breach the harsh concrete labyrinth of the city.

At the back I see and hear the presence of the badgers, a cub peaks out from behind his mother and the other tumbles and snorts around looking for roots and apples.