

Darkfall

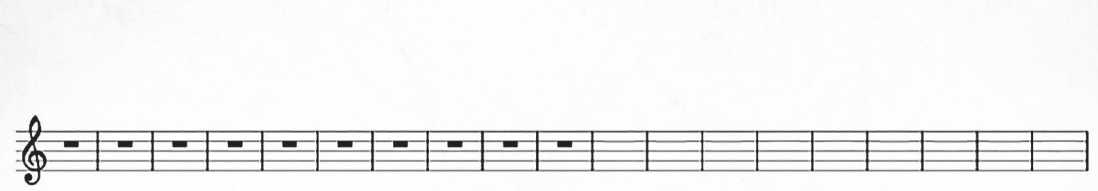
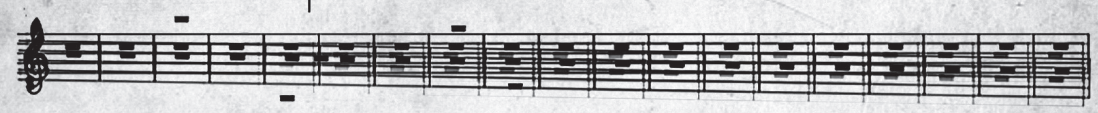
Indigo Perry



love
let live
all who are different or strange
cherish your freaks and bastards

o wicked god of love
exquisite joker cruel as traps
release these iron jaws from
memory and from the spirit

From 'the nature of passion', Michael Dransfield



Umbra

And Dream of Sheep

The birds. They gather in the peppercorn tree, the only tree left un-cleared in the paddock. The way they twitter is familiar. It's a birds-going-to-sleep song, she knows. But it goose-pimples her skinny brown arms. She's leaning with her brother against the wire fence, trying not to snag her hair in the barbs. The last thing she sees is the sheep flocking as one to the ground under the tree, and lying down and settling their heads to one side, ready to sleep. Then the birds hush. The sheep melt away and she's not sure if she's holding her breath or if she can no longer breathe.

A prize had been offered by the headmaster for the best drawing of what was coming. She knows about darkness that falls in through the middle of days, a looming curvature flooding away the bright lines, the squares and rules. Wetting the dry. Inking and blocking out birds, seeping into the cocoon-thickness of sheep until you can put your hands through them and not even discern the feel of air. She knows the taste of when it enters her through her mouth. The black of outer space tips in over her face and turns her inside-out to a cosmic aloneness where nothing but this can touch her.

At the far right of the paper, she had drawn in a narrow pane with a flat blue sky at the top and a thin crust of brown-dirt earth at the

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bottom. She put herself standing on the dirt, bare feet almost floating above the clods and prickles. She was smiling. Hair a scribble. Hands extended in stars. Nine-tenths of the paper, edged with a curling-up to a rising wave, she had shaded in black, silkily leaden. The yellow sun yoked between, half garish and spindled, half eaten alive. A Grade Six boy with a more scientifically correct picture had won the prize. But she thought hers to be truer.