



A visual representation of "Rain Scene" by Collier Nogues

Rain Scene

Collier Nogues

for Opal, and for Hong Kong, the city she'll grow up in

Sheltered by the white-tiled park overhang,
I watch you run in nonstop loops. You've found
a shallow soup-bowl where a tree was planted once
but didn't take. Its surviving neighbor trees, each
in their own soup, quiver in the light rain
while you stomp, soaking the socks I'll soak again
tonight to leach from them their rust-red mud.
Of course I remember the pleasure this is.

This isn't the color my mud was. Mine
was white, limestone ground down to river clay
and rife with flint and fossils. At every flood
we found dead things risen with the water.
In case the road washed out we had the truck,
and when the creek rose past truck-axle-height,
my father drove the tractor to the highway
and hitched a ride to get more milk.

More milk here takes merely a walk
down to the Circle K, whose clerk knows you
and says hello. Hello you say to her, or if she says
jòu sàhn, you say jòu sàhn. Jòu sàhn, says the fruit stand man
who offers you an orange. You take words in
and give them back, but sometimes changed: orange
becomes ocean—because of cháang, I think—
which in our family now describes both fruit and sea.

The sea comes very near the fruit stand, surging in
on Lam Tsuen River's tide from Plover Cove,
but the watercourse is paved and engineered, no chance
of flood no matter how the rain comes down. My mother
would have liked that, would have liked the refuge
this city makes, the care its people take to greet
each other. Thank you for the ocean, you say to the man.
What she would have made of you, I wonder.

I wonder where her heaven is. Far from my father's,
surely. Or near, in that for both of them, just as for me,
you are every heaven's anchor. I am glad we've anchored here,
where I watch you watching for snails, the giant ones
who come out in the rain, bigger than the ocean you've forgotten
in your awe, are those its hands you ask and no, I say,
they are a kind of eyes, a kind which can bear water.
Some creatures, even cities, make their own shelter.

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The speaker often compares her life and living environment in Hong Kong with those in her hometown when she was a child, and therefore I featured scenes of her past and present memories in the painting.

Her daughter is squatting down at the end of the tunnel and watching the snails moving slowly. She is holding an anchor-shaped balloon as the poem reads 'You are every heaven's anchor.' Next to her is a 'Circle K' bag with cartons of milk inside. It shows how convenient it is to buy groceries nowadays.

The trail of rainwater in the tunnel turns into a winding road that leads to a barren land. It portrays an inconvenient living environment where the speaker's father needed to drive a truck to buy milk from a corner shop in the old days. The outside and inside of the tunnel are reflections of the past and the present.

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Positive value(s) and attitude(s):

Love, gratitude and appreciation