



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  
*jóu sàhn*, you say *jóu sàhn*. *Jóu 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.

The poem was first published on the Writing Plus website as part of the Urban Love Poetry Contest for the 2020 Hong Kong International Literary Festival Schools Programme: <https://www.writingplus.hk/urban-love-poem-2020>, reprinted with the permission of the poet.

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The poet watches her daughter lovingly as she plays in the rain. The setting of the poem is a park, but the pair is drawn in an imaginary art gallery, which represents the mother's memories. The large painting in the middle depicts a scene in which the mother escaped floods with her father and his truck in the old days. The painting is blue and dull to emphasise the depressing mood of the scene. The surroundings are bright and colourful. The orange background contrasts with the blue in the painting. The other paintings showing their life in Hong Kong, such as the one with an orange, are refreshing and heartening. The colours exhibit the comfort and joy the mother feels in Hong Kong. The rain, the umbrella, and the warm sunlight shining through remind viewers that the poet is still in the park. Though she reminisces about the past, the present will always shine brighter. Despite being surrounded by the painting, she focuses on her daughter, her anchor. She will always feel at home with her in Hong Kong.



**Positive value(s) and attitude(s):**

Devotion and contentment

**Positive message(s):**

Family is important. They can bring you contentment anytime and anywhere. The memories created with family will leave a lasting impression and are carefully hung in the 'art gallery' of your heart.