

Kunapipi

Volume 17 | Issue 2

Article 8

1995

Poems

Dorothea Smartt

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Recommended Citation

Smartt, Dorothea, Poems, *Kunapipi*, 17(2), 1995.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol17/iss2/8>

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Poems

Abstract

forget, medusa? medusa black!

Dorothea Smartt

forget

convenient forgetfulness is my guard
against slights and hurts
your vacant this-isn't-happening eyes
I don't remember a lot of things
quite deliberately shoving it away inside me
imploing later when I least expect it
I don't remember why should I
walk with it hold it know it
for all its unpleasantness feel it
choke me smoke me dope me
I don't remember is
my favourite reply when put on the spot
about how I got broken that time
I don't remember the sound
the impact of your words shattering me
as you chatted on dismissing a quiet plea
saying again don't be boring shuddering
as another piece hit the playground tarmac
spreading into a pool of once-me
trampled again and again
by my big sisters silences and refusals
to look me in the eye at least
to share a silent moment of sympathy
I don't remember my wanting you
to do the enid blyton best friend thing
and rescue me from the little girls that bullied me
or you bringing the taunting to our front-room
laughing at my swan neck and my cowardy-custard ways
only the mirage of my hopeful fantasy
of ever-lasting super-glue love
like the infant fingers of that boy in my class
doing everything together
grown like one like twin plantains
that could never be parted with whole skin
that would not re-member itself
always being in half
I don't remember being unwanted

the day I ran out the school gate
away from the isolation of everybody else's eyes
witnessing another humiliation
out the school gate to get away from – who
I don't remember
Mr Grant with his big six-foot army self
charging after me escorting me
an easy captive in biting April sleet
white as his big hand
leading up to the hair in his nose
a crowd of schoolkids telling me
I was really in trouble now
and the only eyes I wanted to see me were yours
away over at the other end of the playground
you wouldn't see me there
walking home I could never tell
feeling too shame in your don't care eyes
convenient forgetfulness stinging
from your mouth to the soothing front-door
our Yelverton Road home
where you were all the world I thought I needed

medusa? medusa black!

Medusa was a Blackwoman!
afrikan dread
cut she eye at a'sistamirror
turn she same self t'stone
she looks really kill?
ask She nuh Medusa would know
she terrible eyes leave me stone coal
Medusa is a Blackwoman lost
looking for love
kept behind icy eyes
fixed inside the barricade
for anybody who come too close
runnin' from she own
'case the worse thing happen
an' she see she self like them see she
the blood haunted

If you black, get back
 If you brown stick around...
 Is that okay? being black your way
 whitewashed an' dyed back black
 am I easier to hold in an acceptable role
 ...and if you white comelong y'alright
 make it go away the nappiheaded nastiness
 too tuff too unruly too ugly too black
 get back
 scrub it bleach it operate on it powder it
 straighten it fry it dye it perm it
 turn it back on itself
 make it go away make it go away
 scrub it step smiling into baths of acid
 and bleach it red raw
 peel skin of life sustaining melanin
 operate on it
 blackskin lying useless discard it powder it
 head? fuck it wild haired women
 straighten it fry it desperately burn scalps
 banish the snake-woman
 the wild-woman
 the all-seeing-eye woman
 dye it
 remembrances of Africa fast-fadin'
 in the blond highlights
 turn us back on ourselves
 slowly making daily applications
 with our own hand
 my hair as it comes
 is just not good enough
 the blood haunted
 if you black get back
 if you brown stick around
 and if you white comelong y'alright
 say
 make it go away make it go away
 daa nappiheaded nastiness!
 is too tuff too unruly too ugly too black
 too tuff too unruly too ugly too Black
 get back
 Medusa!
 Black get back