

Mountain Writing Competition 2021

Poetry 1st prize

In Praise of Hope

By Sunyi Dean

Hailing from Yorkshire, Sunyi Dean is an autistic writer of fiction and poetry, whose debut novel (The Book Eaters) will release in September.

On the mist-drunk slopes of Ben Hope
we gauge the north-side ridge
daunting scramble down
an accomplishment, if pursued.
We consider turning back, but
"This chance might never come again"
—stark thought, a warning
that one day there will be
no more mountain hikes
one day, no more mountains
everything we do, we will one day do
for the last time.

What will it be like
the last ever time we trespass
wild-hearted into the clouds
the last ever morning we sip dark
coffee in bed, stretching tired legs
last call, last drinks before the bar shuts
for the rest of our lives? But the end
of everything is always tomorrow
and today we are immortal
old as stone, enduring as earth

heathen gods in muddy leather boots.

On the raw-clock slopes of Ben Hope
sunlight spears the mist as we
turn gratefully towards home.

I can't live as if life were a candle
in need of burning, as if
we exist only to be exhausted.

Though each quick breath
eases us by inches to the grave

I choose Hope
not the mountain, but the lie
that we'll have other chances, other days
endless summits to ascend.