

The Crack

By Hamish Brown

The stone cracked, audibly, visibly
As I stared at its ice-worn pelt
Of wildcat gabbro. Glaciers,
Through countless ages, had stroked it smooth
And clean as God's own son
We sinners entered that corrie
With reverent tread, soles squeaky
On the tear-wet world
We borrow for a life.
As we sat by the lochan,
Munching honey pieces, downing
The crystal water from the gabbro goblet,
There was this crack. Not loud -
No startling gunfire, no August the Twelfth;
More a starter's pistol, so muscles tensed
Rather than froze in reflex reaction.
But I saw the crack appear. The smooth
Slab at my feet was instantly marked,
As if I'd poured boiling water on a precious plate
And seen it split across. Rocks of Ages
Are not supposed to break like that. Prickly fear
Tickled my sweat then. If a million-year-old
Slab could die during a picnic
What other cracks might run, not over rock
But through the frail flesh lounging there?
I looked at my friends, fearfully, but they
Had not seen what I had seen.
After a mere flicker, a frown,
They'd gone on chewing. All was the same:
The comforting Cuillin, the certain sun,
The loon cackling against the ripples,
The climbers' call from a route above,
Mumbled comments, a belch
But my eyes had seen, my eyeballs had turned
The incident upside-down and sped it to my brain
Where tingling nerves relayed it into my heart.
There is a crack there now. In my heart. And I fear.