

The Dingo Poem

"So the plan is the dingoes wipe out goats then we come back and humanely shoot those dingoes because they'll have tracking collars so we can find where they go. If for whatever reason we can't ... shoot those dingoes, those little 1080 poison time-bombs will go off." A.B.C. story: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-23/dingoes-set-to-become-pelorus-island-environmental-saviour/7652424>

When the chopper flew overhead, Dingo was snapping flies
and as she looked up midges were making her eyelids close,
bats were blanking out satellites and Dingo and all the other dingoes
stalked the goats, tracked and stalked and ate the goats
who ate grass and bleated and multiplied across the island
then Dingo was trapped and smelt sweat and went for a helicopter ride,
and when she saw the willy-wagtails enticing children into the bush
she demanded to be released, but the pilot couldn't hear her
above the engine roar and the sniper who was sitting beside her
checked the batteries in her collar, *he* was the man with diarrhoea,
the man who listened to music to distract himself from his disease,
who was delirious and stumbled on a log and didn't see Dingo sniffing his spew,
he saw her red dot was where *he* was on the screen, *they were linked*, the red dots
were a blood trail jumping across the riverbed, across the fallen tree
and across the heavy range, Dingo trotted to the gorge mouth
to watch bubbles rise from flooded sand surrounded by crow-prints,
and she walked faster and paused less, her body under intensifying heat
she passed a decaying bovine shot from a thousand feet,
over the wound the dried blood is deep and leaf litter accretes,
and Dingo ran her body along the cool chasm walls bent like branches
or batholith or ghost gum trunk tracking the curves that bent back
on themselves, Dingo knocked loose a fossilised invertebrate
before lapping up a drink and chasing a rock rat into a spinifex bush,
that's where footprints near the white signs brought unseasonal grass
that Dingo didn't eat, no, she ran along her boundary marking
her territory and found a fence near a burnt pine and stunted acacia,

she climbed to the lookout and saw the crater where a strange reflection stood out,
and Dingo sensed she helped build a track by walking where the humans walk,
and sniffing the young girls' red cotton thread, she rarely stopped because stopping
leads to memory and memory leads to song and song leads to tracks and tracks
chart the stars and stars bring highways and highways lead to automobiles
that take away her babies, and she cries to her friends across the highway —
her wounds were red where her womb separated —
and then Dingo walked into the camper's laughter, into firelight,
Dingo's bright green eyes disappeared and returned to skirt peripheral light
and she stayed close to where the bins overflowed and later her dry nose
pestered the atmosphere as we slept in our swags her ribs swelled with BBQ smell
and our cheese and cracker snacks vibrated in her stomach.

In your sleep Dingo tugs at your sleeping bag, she likes to rip holes in your shopping bag,
and when you begin to report her sighting to a caravan of caravans
you decide to keep Dingo's memory inside, Dingos are shy, yes,
they are the ghost of an old friend for when you spot them they scarp
with the sound of paws on pebbles clack-clack-clacking
you think you're closer to Dingo than the mosquito,
but the Dingo's cat-like independence defies all friendship
and soon you'll discover the kind of fear Dingo evokes
is the same as words filled with poison and poison filled collars
set to explode with a mouse button click, and maybe the light emitting diode
goes flat because Dingo is the burnt cycads that stand sentinel-like near the gnamma hole,
or the land that's left when the world ends, she'll return with a broken heart
and with a sore knee she'll nibble at the pain licking the blood
inside the cave where the dolomite and quartzite collide
where echidnas and zebra finches breed, and after a rainless decade the chalet closed
and Dingo watched the remains of the building rot and the sunlight
on the breakaways hit the tombstone shapes and her song echoed in the canyon
and she jumped up on the piano and sang and sang and people traveled
for miles and miles to hear her sing until the bitch on heat with a new song entered
and she was beaten back and she snapped at flies with her jaw

and she felt the sunrise warmer and felt full and content for once.

Dingo with her soft white hair trotted along her boundary
and I believe Dingo stepped on schist that gave way smashing and dividing downhill
Dingo was roaming, seeing, feeling, she was falling toward the stars
behind the stars, the world turned against Dingo the day the tombstone figures
screamed and yelled and she ingested the colourless salt and her citric acid cycle collapsed
but she kept running sweating, convulsing, confused and agitated
and burning with 1080 poison, Dingo felt the sniper's rifle, the camel cull,
the roo cull, the fox cull, the rabbit cull, the cane toad cull and the starling cull,
and Dingo's ears pricked as she felt the crosshairs and she stared
the sniper down and saw the crow's feet around his one closed eye
and his trigger finger faltered but he shot anyway, yes, *he*, shot, anyway,
then he followed her blood trail on the screen and he was sick but he found her,
he found her lying in the red centre of an ancient spinifex and when the killer
bent to pick her carcass up her sharp teeth struck his throat and she shook his neck and head
and he beat her with his fists and you could hear them together, thirsty,
wounded, and whining, all night long, wwhoooooooooooooo.