

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Kith and kin

by Olivia Sprinkel

Our kith and kin are those people that, hopefully, we love, and that love us. Only 'kith' does not, in its original meaning, refer to people. Kith referred to the land that we come from, to which we belong. To one's home outside the house.

I sit in a place, surrounded by eucalypts, which eight months later will be at the heart of one of the areas most badly affected by the Australian bushfires, although this land will be spared. The previous owner of the property was a Buddhist and she set up a stone bench on a rock clearing by the house, the land falling away in ancient folds.

I think about ways to greet the day. Most of the time I don't have this immediate connection with the earth at the beginning of the day, I start my day inside and then continue it outside. The tenor of the day is completely different. How does it change things if you start the day by asking the land around you "How are you? How was your night?" And if the rain fell, "How did the raindrops feel upon your leaves?" To ask the earth, the trees, the plants, the rocks, as you would do a friend, or a lover, and then listen to their answer.

There may be no answer, because maybe they are not in the mood for talking. Or maybe the answer is the feel of the breeze upon your skin. The freshness of the rain soaked air.

The yellow robin looking at you with curiosity and care when you open your eyes after you hear a rustle of wings. Maybe it is how your gaze is drawn to the swirling bark on the peppermint gum leaning down the hill. Or the black lyre bird that you catch out of the corner of your eye, running urgently to wherever it is running to. Or the mushroom cap that is peaked as the Himalayas, if the Himalayas were two centimetres high.

This is not the land that I come from, but it feels like my kith. And kin.