



Into the Fire: Poems from Australia

Sean Kennedy

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These poems give deep insights into their Australian backdrop and into the poet's life.

Into the Fire is an entertaining collection of poems recalling the personal adventures—and misadventures—of Australian Sean Kennedy, marked by exploration, humor, setbacks, and cricket.

The poems in *Into the Fire* capture incidents ranging from hiking expeditions to accidentally swallowing flies. While the poems themselves are directed through the personal perspective of Kennedy, they also work to create a larger picture of Australia and the natural beauties and dangers of the country and the people living there.

Kennedy's vision of the Australian wilderness is as entrancing, deadly, intriguing, and mundane, all at once. Poems are grouped in a handful of ways, with the poet's varied stories and experiences helping to draw out deeper insights.

The poem "Harts Range" details a geological trip searching for gems: "We found garnets in the limestone, they were of brown and red / And eroded from the host rock, they lay in the creek bed." The landscapes are beautiful, but the trip also includes a vehicle breakdown in the wilderness, so that the poem comes to highlight Australia's extremes.

"Tasmanian Bush Fires" and "Hartz Mountains in Winter" tell of escapades in Australia's wilderness as well, while "Glasses" and "The Fly" are more humorous poems. They concern the purchase of a less than ideal car and a pretty horrific insect ordeal: "But then twenty minutes later / I felt a tickle in my nose, / The fly crawled out all a tremble / On my top lip did it pose."

The poem "Snowy Mountains Memoirs" features a scene with workers working on the steep side of a mountain. In a dramatic twist, a worker falls down the hill—but ends up most worried about finding his dropped tobacco and pipe. This consistently light approach gives poems a tall-tales vibe.

Kennedy makes steady use of simple rhyme schemes and poetic structures, keeping to either an *abab* or *aabb* style: "For a break at lunchtime / beneath the sky so blue, / I ate my lunch upon the wharf / What happened is quite true." There are some forced rhymes implemented to fit the meter. Poems are still effective at conveying their themes but usually take on a lighthearted tone, more learned than death-defying, even with harsh outback encounters.

Into the Fire is a collection centered on the poet's personal and varied experience of Australia, giving deep insights into the country as well as the poet's own life.

CJ TRIPLETT (April 28, 2017)

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