

Counting On My Fingers

A Federation of Writers Scotland Patchwork Poem for National Poetry Day 2024

Na àireamh na rionnagan: Do not count the stars,
unique and rare, ordered by number,
there are not enough fingers or toes.
Yon asteroid wheechin by the airth,
a comet burning bright, searing its way:
whatever planet or star sign governs their balances
they say, 'Just give me a minute'
or six, until they burn,
a thousand bright yearnings.

I count the wars and conflicts in my lifetime;
time has stopped here in the darkness,
going from zero to an unknown quantity.
A pack of cards scattered in the wind,
sheep in the sky, clouds that fly by;
the clouds will always show up.
No slip-ups in this numbers game,
time for a more equal future.

How many times did I come here,
to scratch, pick at scabs, chew the hangnail,
fog thick in the head,
dropping digits like breath?
What matters is pencilled in margins,
40 lengths of the baths,
the minutes between the contractions.

I'll focus on the basics,
the garden so full of colour and song,
the way everything eventually adds up.
And in that slow moment,
I'll follow my own clock,
although I'll be no more than half a stone of ashes.
I've mountains yet to climb, poems to pen;
I'll have to start counting over again.

*This poem was created by taking a single
line from contributions by the following
writers:*

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*Poem collated by Andy Jackson
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