

Winter Solstice,
Hobart 2015.

Dear Me,

I'm waving to you nervously, hoping you arrived safely. I'm dreaming of standing on that rocky knoll looking 200m out on the north sea at what might have been a sacred gathering place long before Christianity appeared on the island. I'm preparing lists, perhaps laughably so, of thrift stores to visit in between archaeological sites. I'm panicking because I'm yet to book accommodation for the first two nights when I'll be bleary with jet lag and hyperactive with excitement.

Perhaps by the time you reply to this letter, we will (talking to myself across continents and time is befuddling my grammar) have presented our? my? your? first academic paper in a decade, the daunting Glaswegian writers will have been met and there will be time to just sit.

By the time you remember to check the website and realise you planned on replying, ancient carved stones will have been once again touched by my antipodean hands, steps will have been taken over the moors and mountains that people I share DNA with have left their bones tucked deep within. It's lonely here in this great southern land with none of my own ancestors about, wrapped in suburban earthen beds, propped in cheery canisters in apartment-like crematorium walls. There's a singing and something vaguely pagan and vigorously anti-atheist about my physical reaction to that land you are sitting on, reading this. It's not just the stuff of popular myth and legend, that land is my old blood home. Where great grandmothers and great grandfathers herded sheep, raided the neighbouring clan's cattle, died terrible deaths of disease and war. Munched on warm bread and thick honey, drank tea brewed from blackberry leaves, ate mushrooms harvested from autumnal pastures. Aunties and uncles who leapt over Beltane fires, cousins who groaned in childbirth, others who gave their lives to a new religion that colonised in brimstone and sermons.

I am a migrant. This warm country welcomed me, provided safe haven as I grew to adulthood, as I learned to study my own dream time, and fell in love, with a man whose ancestors have walked this land, at least for a few generations and then, with him, brought forth children, and they, lucky them, they do have ancestors lying in this land. We can trace our fingers across tombstones on that side.

I will never be of this land, except into the future now I've had those children. But that land, over there, where you are reading this, that is land that knows me, the dirt is dirt that fed my forebears, that heard them sing, that swallowed their cries, witnessed them in their highs and in their lows and in the absurd mundanity of everyday survival.

Two weeks will not have been enough to suck that home deep into my marrow but it will suffice and I will be missing my love and those offspring and that mountain of ours.

Love, me.



About the writer:

Kristen Erskine is an archaeologist who specialises in Celtic sacred sites and is also a wordsmith, writing speculative fiction, magical realism and poetry. Her work has appeared in Australian Natural Parenting and The Beltane Papers among others. Currently she is the Girl Friday at Transportation.