

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Raaisa Islam

Winner

Presbyterian Ladies' College
BURWOOD VIC

It Will All End in Stars

The charms jingle,
Ching-ching-ching,
As the arm of its bracelet takes life.

The pain of loss flares in her eyes,
The graphite stick, slicing the page into hairline
cracks.

Right- left, the chalk moves.
Scratch-scratch-scratch, immune to gravity's pull.
A new world, for the escapist.

The drawing, calm, subtle,
Opposite to the collage of pain, connecting its
pieces inside her.

Arm tires, back weakens,
Yet fingers still tingle, mind still sharp, throwing
life's fragility at every inch of canvas.
Salty drops slide down her cheeks.
Plop.
Land on her smudged fingers, staining pale skin in
grey water.
She doesn't notice, too busy is she dragging up
shapes out of lines.
Silver links blending together, a yearning on paper,
she of all, cannot feel;
To know the future.

Life is quite impolite.
It takes you without warning, and then leaves
without a goodbye.

Why is it that everyone wants to know the future,
when we all already know where the final
destination will be?

Laing knew.

Laing knew, just as her strokes no longer defied
gravity, the stick heavier between her fingers.

Laing knew, just as she realised breathing, now
took effort.

Laing knew, and accepted, just as she saw for the
first time, her fingers stained in her grey tears.

She rests in peace now, a victim to life's rudeness.
Yet her last drawing still hangs, as if she was still
here, the same hands, her hands, perched through
the flaps of a fortune teller.
An item she did not need.
Ain't that ironic?

Andromeda replaces the numeric symbols.
Just as Laing believed;
'it will all end in stars'.

Judges' Comment:

Powerful, sharp, ironic and laconic. Raaisa Islam's poem is an elegy to the artist Cassandra Laing. Laing was particularly known for her drawing skills and her last exhibition in 2007 was entitled "It Will All End in Stars." The poem is extraordinarily mature. Its rhythms are spare and subtle, and the apparently simple choice of words vibrates with sound, movement and life. This makes its juxtaposition with death all the more devastating. The poem faces that final reality with a mixture of irony and defiance and then, with a final twist, leaves the reader with an even bigger picture to contemplate. Never sentimental, never overworked, a strong element of the poem's success comes from the writer's personal response to the artist and her work.