

Apple of my Eye

by Jon Nash

*Inspired by the Victorian 'Naughty boy' cell below Devonport Guildhall*

It feels heavy in his hand as he turns it over and over. Around and around.

Counting each rotation.

One, two, three, four.

It's almost enough (almost)

But hours in (is it? Has it been?)

The darkness won't be ignored.

He sniffs. (Don't cry, don't cry)

And instantly regrets it.

Is that what happens here, he thinks?

Water. Soil.

When you've been in here for hours.

(or longer. Could it be? Longer?)

He reaches out his other hand and touches the wooden door.

(there is a way out)

To remind himself it is still there more than anything.

It's the darkness that gets difficult.

(how long can they keep me here?)

He traces his fingers along until he reaches stone, turning to his left, round, behind

A perfect square until he's back. Fully rotated facing the door.

Brick dust on his fingers.

(dirty, dirty)

But it feels good to test the limits of his cell. Cage. (no) cupboard.

(what if they forget?)

My pantry, he thinks as he lifts the apple to his mouth.

(bad, bad, thief, thief)

Green, though he cannot see it now.

Fresh, though only his teeth and tongue can confirm it.

(bad, bad apple, apple of my eye)

Will his mother be looking for him? Sad green apple eyes.

(don't. don't think)

His father's eyes two red apples of fury.

(apples bruise so easily)

But it had been too tempting. The apple. Golden in the setting sunlight.

(taste, taste)

No snake around but the twist of hunger in his stomach.

Forbidden but he'd wanted to eat it, pips, stalk, core and all.

(you there boy)

But someone omniscient saw before he could get away.

(damn damn damn)

Grabbed him. Brought him underground as the sun continued to fall.

(down and down)

The thief in the cupboard, in the dark, no space to sit, to lie to do anything but stand to attention,

(Like an apple tree)

swallows his prize, his stolen goods.

And wonders how he is supposed to grow without any light.