

BROKEN LAND

(Neil Murray)

I drove from Broome to Fremantle in the winter of 2021. Gales and squalls lashed the port city while I hold up in a room. I'd been on the road for over 3 months and I was a long way from where I was born- Tjapwurrung country, western Victoria- a region that had suffered- like so many places- from brutal colonisation. Yet, even so, it is my home.

Once there was a people held paradise in their hand
Then invaders came and killed them off and now it's a broken land
The country it was plundered and greed drove it's course
Anything sacred and precious - destroyed without a thought
Gleaming towers of glass and steel rose along the coast
Profits from the mines inland were what they valued most

The elders are all gone and our kids just run amok
Try to restore some discipline before we lose the lot
Courage, diligence and fortitude they say it'll get you through
No point being too angry or your spirit might leave you
You can't fix it all when the damage has long been done
Do your best with what remains, pick up and carry on

Down in a broken land, down in a broken land
paying the price of the colonised anyway we can
I was born in broken land, born in a broken land
I don't mean to criticise I just want you to understand

Now the nation looks for glory upon the sporting field
As if the winning count can make up for how we feel
I'm baffled by the loss of knowledge that once was
Haunted by the absence of the people who belonged
Is there any place of nurture? Is there any woman who can
hold me tight on these dark sad nights down in a broken land?

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3000 miles away I'm staying in somebody's shed
The wind moans outside my door and a cat keeps jumping on my bed
I thought I could escape but it's still here in my mind
Even in the city I can hear the mopoke cry
I know my grave is waiting, back there in the cold country
I pray that only good memories stay with me

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