

The Young-Laplace Equation

Extract from a story by Craig Aitchison

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I pick up a book from the shelf. It isn't in English, not even in the same alphabet. I look around. There's a book on the desk, a copy of the book our English class is reading. *Sunset Song*. Ms Stevenson asked us to buy our own copy, even putting the Amazon page up on the Smartboard. I didn't bother. I watched the film instead.

Zay bought it though. Of course she did.

The book's pages are thick with annotations. Some Scots words have an English translation, then another in Arabic. I wonder if she can picture the moors and parks of Blawearie. The way it's described is how I imagine Zay's home to be – hot and parched.

I start to read, quietly at first, then louder. It doesn't matter if Maalik or her parents hear the strange words. As long as Zay hears me.

My voice sounds weird in the little room. My accent is broader than usual, the words – *dandering, loch* – forcing my mouth into different shapes. My mouth and throat feel dry like I've been walking with the character amid the crackling dryness. *Up here the hills were brave with the beauty and the heat of it.*

I stop to see if Zay's eyes open or she stirs. Nothing. I keep reading. The sad, slow story makes sense here in a way it doesn't in the classroom. I'm sure the sound will register; Zay will know I'm here.

. . . read the full story in POTB Issue 17