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POEM

Between Distances and Homecoming

Peter Boyle

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for my beloved Deborah Rose

It is rare for someone to walk the mountains of Bhutan and see albatross dancing. It is rare to see the shimmer of light and, temporarily losing the fragile grid of humanness, become an ant. You live now on the walls of the house and in the small altar in the bedroom. (Writing this I find I've mixed the words 'altar' and 'alter', as if every shrine was there to perform a transition but also, always, to ferry you back into our once so familiar spaces.) The beautiful mounted photo of the dingo set in gold stands guard over the room where I write. Beyond the windows, night's clear crisp contours go on expanding. Soon we will touch the dark solstice. I am entering my first winter without you.

Note: The details in this poem are factual not fanciful. Deborah's research took her to a conference in Bhutan and to Hawaii to study monk seals and albatross. During her last months, while in hospital, Deborah briefly lost her navigation faculty as a tumour pressed on part of her brain. She remarked later that she was becoming an ant, able only to travel the way ants do with no grid to lay down over the world. The specially prepared photograph of a dingo's face in our lounge room is a gift from Janet Laurence.

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