

## Symphony of Colours

*Submitted for the Australian Writers' Centre Furious Fiction competition, March 2018.*

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Music, she said. To her the colours were music.

She would sit on the porch each morning and watch the flowers open for the day; bright red roses, orange gerberas and lilies, and violets of purple so deep they reminded her of the night sky even in the day.

Dew sparkled on grass and in leaves like tiny diamonds, each one containing a rainbow.

She would walk through the forest near home, feeling the leaves crunch beneath her boots. In spring, they were deep green. Birds provided splashes of colour against the foliage; bright blue speckles of a kookaburra's wings, the streak of sulphur on a cockatoo's crest. Sometimes, when she was especially lucky, she would see wild budgerigars in their own greens and blues and yellows.

In autumn, the greens were replaced with reds and browns and yellows as the leaves fell to the ground. The birds were gone for the impending winter, though she did not miss their songs. The colours sang to her in their own way.

When she visited family, she would walk the beach near their home, whatever the weather. The yellow sand felt both rough and soft under bare feet. On warm days the water was an inviting blue and green, and some days she would swim in the shallows. She was fearful of the deeper water, the blue-grey that gave way to blue-blacks, and was uncomfortable when her feet could no longer reach the bottom.

On cold days, the water was grey and white, and steel-grey clouds would threaten rain. She took it all in, each colour its own note in a vibrant symphony.

When she was home, when the mood took her, she sat in her studio and shared the symphony. She would splash and dab and flick across her canvas. Some days acrylics, some days oils, some days the muted pastels of water colours.

Her art, she felt, was a poor substitute for the real thing, yet others would tell her the colours sang to them too. They would invite her to present at conferences or showcase her work in galleries. She always said no. Her paintings were songs written for herself, she would say, and that was half true. Mostly she chose not to show because she was embarrassed and shy. She was always her own harshest critic.

On days when she couldn't get outside, she would sit in her chair by the window and watch the rain beat down against the glass. She would read books of prose; vibrant scenes painted by words instead of pigments and imagine the colours in her mind. She would flick through her canvasses and notebooks, and remember the symphony.

In her silent world, the colours were music.