

Adult Highly Commended

Rachel Burns

Fountains Abbey

Black monks once broke bread here. *This is my body. This is my blood.*
You taste it warm and metallic. Your children count one, two, three

up to a hundred, searching the ruins for their father, one pillar at a time.
Their feet stomp on tombstones. Spring sunshine streams through high windows.

Knitbone grows in the yawn of archways, a herb that once knitted broken bones together.
You imagine Abbot Marmaduke standing in the courtyard, the sun's warmth on his back.

Spring comes to you like a prayer, the rays cleansing your body of this arthritic curse
your spine an algorithm of joints, bones and spine fusing together.

Coming ready or not, your children squeal and bubble with delight
as they find and embrace their father. They hug as if time

has escaped them, like seeds of a dandelion clock carries in the breeze.
You watch your daughter lifted high onto her father's shoulders.

One hundred and sixty feet above your head, a colony of jackdaws
squabble *jack- jack, jack- jack* in Marmaduke's tower.

Soli Deo Honor et Gloria.