

# **In the darkening trees**

Poems and song lyrics  
By Alistair Cochrane

11 (*after*)

While winter held off its claws for a little longer  
from the woody patch down by the lakeside path  
where she and I once liked to wander  
in the summer warmth I'll always prefer to remember -  
the sheen of still water ablaze behind two trees  
that clung to the crumbling bank by the tips of their roots -  
we spread her ashes there, scribbled her epitaph  
in powder on the damp of the fallen leaves,  
pale grey on dark brown.

I'm all the fonder  
of that place since I once took a photograph  
of those two leaning pines, their bare legs entwined,  
for the cover of a record that still puts  
a smile on some folks' faces, a tear on mine.

The snow came at last and buried her in November.

The winter night lies curled around its day  
like a black-draped mother cradling a sickly child.  
There's more light coming from the cold stuff piled  
around me and beneath me than out of the grey  
rays of the sun, those millions of miles away.

It's nine months now since I began my stay  
in this far country where I'm now exiled  
from love's comforts and troubles, not reconciled  
to the loss of either. Tramping my solitary way  
along the snow-cluttered streets, with luck I may  
exchange some words with a neighbour about the mild  
or bitter weather, not a word I manage to say  
hinting at how my soul has gone astray,  
my heart become homeless, rootless, witless, wild.