

» KEVIN HART



**A Gardener at Midnight:  
Black Garden**  
by Kristin Headlam.  
1994, oil on linen,  
122 x 122cm.  
Tasmanian Museum  
& Art Gallery

COURTESY THE ARTIST &  
CHARLES NODRUM GALLERY.



KEVIN HART FAHA has published several collections of poetry, including **Flame Tree: Selected Poems** (Bloodaxe Books, 2002), **Young Rain** (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), and **Morning Knowledge** (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). He is currently writing a new book entitled **Barefoot**. He teaches at the University of Virginia.

# Testament

Since every word I write bespeaks my end,  
And since my body's busy making plans  
It won't reveal to me in steady light,

I pen my testament while light abounds.

*Item:* those little bones inside my ear,  
The ones as fine as hair, I leave them all

To scholar friends, with this: know everything  
Worth hearing may be written there. *Item:*  
One heart, much used, but good in print for years,

I leave to those who kindly read my verse,  
Along with tastes of verbs upon the tongue  
And nouns that populate a Counter-Earth

Where you might live another life. *Item:*  
Deep muddy windings of the Brisbane River:  
I leave them to my students, for their dreams,

And for the sparkle dreams will bring their work.  
*Item:* Regret that rises, falls, all night  
While throbbing through the valves of memory;

I owe it to my wife, and wish her well,  
For bearing with a black-edged mind for years  
That cut her all too sharply more than once.

*Item:* I leave my girls a rage to know,  
Which means a little forest's worth of books:  
Read greedily and calmly both at once,

And in your pleasure I shall live again.

*Item:* And for my enemies, though few  
And vaguely out of focus anyway,

I wish some things they'll have no matter what:  
Mosquitoes, meetings, marriages gone sour,  
The noose of wine, dead hopes, old age, limp dicks.

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Midnight: Red Garden  
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# Father

My father's only still a child in death.  
So can he speak that quiet language now?  
And can he walk the ways they slowly teach?  
  
And does he smell thin summer here below?  
So questions flicker through a hot dry day  
When summer leans too hard upon the land,  
  
When days seem cornered by a violent sun,  
When days weigh more than two or three a time,  
When rain is no more than the faintest myth  
  
And all you do is sit inside and read  
And live in words made soft and stretched by sun,  
And squeeze the day for any minutes left.  
  
I think my father makes his way in death,  
Avoiding trouble, somehow getting by,  
I think he's learned enough to say, well, "Love,"  
  
And say it with a steady even voice,  
And hover in it, like a bird of prey,  
And look down here, where summer scolds us all,  
  
Creatures of mud, as he well knows by now,  
All cut with cracks, as he once was back then  
When he would walk the earth in heavy sun.  
  
But days go bad; wild light falls hard and long;  
And questions rot before an answer comes.  
This summer's worse than any I have known:  
  
The sun grows vaster with each sallow day,  
My father ages fiercely in his death.  
Not enough rain to blur the cracks in mud.