



Crusaders
Frances Poet

Across the globe, children and teenagers make their way to the 'holy land' following visions that the world will end. Seventeen-year-old Meera makes her way to Mount Hermon from Scotland. Halfway up the mountain, her friend Kayleigh dies. In this speech, Meera tries to contact her mum.

(Mount Hermon. Night. Meera is alone. She is wearing many layers of clothes but she is still shivering. It is freezing. She looks at the battery level on her phone and considers. She puts it back in her pocket then, on impulse, changes her mind, pulls it out and dials.)

Meera: Mum, it's me. I-

(It's her mum's answer machine. She is winded by the disappointment of it. She waits for the beep.)

Hi. You're working the night shift. I pictured you sitting by the phone waiting for my call but i suppose... life goes on. It's me by the way. Meera. Sorry I didn't answer your calls. Maybe you've given up? I'm on a new phone so i don't know if you've been trying me... My old one got a bit... wet. I can't speak for long because I'm low on battery and this is my only torch so... It's so dark here. And cold. I told Kayleigh. I told her it would be freezing at night but she was determined to ditch her layers. It was so hot and the climb was...

I'm on a mountain called Mount Hermon. It's probably where Jesus was transfigured into divine form. It might also have been where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. Lots of people have different theories why we might come here as opposed to, I don't know, Mecca or Machu Picchu or Kashi Vishwanath or Glastonbury Tor. I wish it had been Glastonbury. You could have driven us.

The Arabs just call it Snow mountain but Hermon has a really complicated meaning in Hebrew. An Israeli guy explained it to me. It's when something changes and part of it is lost. A bit like the food we eat, our body takes nutrients, transforms them into energy and expels the rest as... you know. Poo. So there's death but only in the context of transformation, of change. But I googled it and a bay name website said it just meant 'devoted to destruction' which is... well, a little worrying.

I'm a bit scared if I'm honest, Mum. I'd really like you to-

(She looks at her phone. It has gone black.)

Damn it!

(She shouts into the void.)

Anybody have a charger I can borrow?

(She laughs and then cries but not for long. She pulls herself together.)

Bye Mum.

'Saturday'