

When will the rain come back from the water?

It was the year vanilla became more
Expensive than silver

Dogsbodies were scattered outside
On every corner, busying themselves...

I was leaving the car of a stranger when
The driver asked me plainly
When will the rain come back from the war?

I opened my mouth and in
one simultaneous voice occurred:

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It was September 2016 and he decided to ring
A belle-de-nuit, which I found hilarious
Until she arrived slicked in black and
He disapproved *You are an itchy*
Little trigger aren't you? he snarled into her hair.
The taffeta was ridiculous
And made me rumble for an enormous
Amount of icing sugar.
This was a desire which was never
Completed. The sound of the evening
With its indiscernible location
Stuck in my mind with its constant, pink yawning.
He told me to shut up and make myself a milkshake.
He promised it would help me fall asleep.

It starts like a dream-in-waiting
And that dream is a docked
Oil tanker on a banks of a desert
That dream is a supine skyscraper of rust
Waiting for a signal
To jettison.
I stand on the banks. The waves
Are rough, like gravel shovelling itself
Into my palm. A firework goes off:
Its ashy tendrils meeting their watery reflection
In the Horizon, the meeting place of
My self and my Sake
I look back into the desert and see I have arrived.

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Cruelty was fed at my teat
Like a ball of static. Its borders
Were always in negotiation
But
I always knew when it expanded.
It grew each time there was my own
Return-to-form, which came as a striking
Return to carnality. Boréd, Boréd
Returning to the so-called civility of
This dirty, deflated, red balloon.

At the Palace of Backwards
Where I am unable to tell whether Crisis
Is a participant or observer.
Regardless I am told I must enter the Palace
Where my love enacts The Good Fight
Wrestling the ars antiqua from the mouths
of the princess, and the prince, and the dog.
The rain outside falls in long streams, like serpents
following their screeches into the dirt *When will the rain...?*

Why are you covered in algae

INTERROGATION IN THE PALACE OF BACKWARDS:

When you should be covered

What is the colour of the man you left here?

In honey? He asks me this as

—Moth

I remove my clothes. But I came

What is the name of his mother, of his father?

To this place as one of Redon's swamp flowers,

—The upward scream of a cicada, the sky

I knew I was going to stay a swamp flower.

Why do you come here? What do you seek?

I just needed his pale knuckles

—The air inside had told me it was itchy.

To light the candle in my lantern

It had been untouched for years.

Of a head. I ask him to do this,

It told me just my breath would satisfy its itch.

Greenly, wetly, and with difficulty.

That all I had to do was step inside.

I ask him very, very nicely.

Sound comes dressed in drag;
The record says it is folk violin but I know it is
Actually a coyote with a jagged tooth
That coils with pain each time
A bite of meat is taken
Again and again and again
In the forest next to the highway in America
Where a patrol officer is patrolling
With a handgun in his pocket
Waiting for the perfect time to shoot.

Some days I awake to find the palace
Has become a re-education camp.
I am far away banks where I waited
For the oil tanker to slip into the horizon.
I wonder if I am losing my sight
And my hearing, as touch seems
To be the only rule in this Palace,
Where my wound is always
More eloquent than my mouth.

When I arrived, his room was filled
 with petty atmospherics. Lodestone
 and amber. Ten perverse spangles.
 Albino peacock feathers
 from Akhmatova. He poured
 the wine, which has been waiting, perhaps
 for many hours. It uncoiled slowly in the unfit glass.
 He was cradled in his bacchanalia; I just came along as
 He staggered to quench the cusp of his desire.

The stelectric welkin sobs
 With lightening.
 Thunder sobs and rain hides
 Tucked in the cloud, reluctant to fall.
 It arrives in colours instead of streams:
 Purple beaded necklaces racing
 To the ground, punctuated by
 The forks of white that never reach the air.

When I clang against the ground
In my metal shoes I am in no one's home
I am outside for the first time in three weeks
My mouth my own mouth Sounds my own sounds At last

I am a piece of change in this purse of the rain
That swallows the world and brushes
My skin like Russian white mink coats

[**Sarah Fletcher** is a British-American poet currently living in Madrid. Her first pamphlet *Kissing Angles* was published in 2015 by Dead Ink Books, and her most recent pamphlet, *Typhoid August*, was published in 2018 as part of the New Poets Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The White Review*, *Poetry London*, *The Rialto* and other magazines. She was a Foyle Young Poet of the Year and a two-time winner of the Christopher Tower Prize for Poetry.]

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