

## 4. After the kiss

*by Jane Flett*

### 1.

I could still feel you like horseradish  
in the hairs in the back  
of my nose. "Wait," I said,  
but you'd doffed your harness  
abseiled down my sinus  
& lodged yourself in my throat.

I hocked up phlegm, which  
erupted from my lips as sunflowers  
and covered the pavement in gold.  
When I tried to scamper, I sank  
to my ankles in pollen,  
sneezed a thin silver windchime,  
and felt the helter skelter.  
Gutterwards,  
stomach-set,  
you fell.

### 2.

Beyond the sunflowers, I saw a tower.  
A narwhal's snout, cresting & corkscrewed  
from the ground, the turrets staffed  
by magpies. A charm  
of magpies, an unkindness  
of ravens, a murder  
of crows. I collected birds

and placed them in chambers,  
I locked the chamber doors, but still

the magpies escaped.

Distracted by sapphires  
& taunted by glintlets—  
worry not! The ostrich egg  
is safe on the stairs.

### 3.

You reached my belly. By now,  
your legs had stopped kicking, your  
harness unravelled—you'd forgotten  
gold ribbons & fairs.

My acids lapped with toxic cat tongues  
and stripped your flesh to bone. My sunflowers  
drooped. The decades  
passed and all the while  
your dwelling skeleton shifted.  
Bone to rock to coal to diamond.

You became gut treasure  
& trinketful. I decided  
to keep you, but too quick  
the magpies snatched your  
kernel. The magpies flew.

### 4.

My stomach hurts so I stick  
a tongue in an empty toothhole,  
suck an antacid, hock up  
something new. I taste  
wasabi. Horseradish makeout.  
I kiss everything.

Besotted by  
murders & charms.

