

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.

