

Please, tell me of the smell of the moon

by Jane Flett

What does it smell like, she asks, when the moon is full?

Do you know first hiss of batter hitting groundnut oil in a shallow pan, I ask, on a morning after a long, dream-ridden sleep? The night when you walked through the deserted fairground, where an old man with mustard eyes held aloft tschotskes and trinkets oozing cotton wool from their seams? The smell of the moon is like the echo of your steps walking through the sawdust, bouncing off the rusted joints of the big wheel, slithering past the machine oil nuts and polished bolts.

I do not know what you mean, she says.

Alright, I say, how about the waterfalls, have you stood behind them? I say, There is a form of divination in the ancient Lowlands called taghairm. The mystic swaddles himself in the warm, smoking hide of a freshly slain ox, he squats behind the waterfall, and he waits for the futurity to arrive. The breeze of the water past his face as he closes his eyes and steams with the fresh blood of the ox—this is almost like the smell of the moon when it's full; it is close.

What? she says.

Like the sharp of the incisor of a Puma, in the English moors, in balmiest May. You are taking a shortcut home from drinking ale by the canalside, you are giddy with the prospect of night, and your heels dig into the soft mud. You stumble, and something dashes past you, I say (my breath quickens), you stumble and it turns and its teeth glint in the night—that, that is the smell of the fullest moon.

Listen, she says, these are not smells. You are not telling me the answer to what I am asking, she says.

She is angry.

I move my arm on the bed and rub my claws into the back of her hair, and I purr quietly. I try to purr with the same frequency of a cat, the same frequency as ultrasound; I try to purr with the frequency to heal all traumas.

Her body quivers. She turns her face so I do not see the tears bead. Every time she turns her face.

Listen, I say, I don't need to tell you of the smell of the moon—come on.

I pull her to the door and out into a night too early to be spring. I point to a sky that is ridden with clouds. I point behind the clouds to constellations, to Virgo leaping upon a dolphin, to bows and to secret arrows in ancient galaxies obscured by mist.

Look, I say; sniff, I say; it is here, I say. It is already upon us.

