

Sunk

by Penny Goring

when I worked in the pet shop I sunk my arse in the fish tanks

sunk my tits in the freezer at the supermarket

sunk my brain in the stacks at the library

sunk my looks in the lights at the club

sunk my liver in the glass at the bar

on a day trip to the London Aquarium, I felt the ennui of the squid, puked at the drift of the jellyfish, saw through the eye of the shark, stroked the sadness of the stingray, longed for the lapping of water

I sunk my hope in your shallows

Dithering on the seafront, eyed-up by a leery moon, waves came crashing over my head carrying all the junk I'd sunk, throwing it down at my feet. My legs dissolved beneath me and I saw what I'd often suspected — a long tail of rubbish was pouring from my hips with shocking ease.

My feet had always been clumsy, cringing inside my clodhoppers, my legs had always been tardy, flagging beneath my skirts. This sinuous tail flipped proudly when it met the cold slap of the ocean, and I swam gracefully, in search of the famous escape.

The weight of my heart dragged me in dangerous directions.

It delivered me to this unknown rock, where trees meet on hill-tops to tangle dark branches under fog shot with dankness and blight, and I am always welcome because I am the only one — and the funny birds who tell no jokes, and the giant bile-squirting flowers, and the delirious prancing monkeys, and I have nothing in particular to say, and I say it again and again

I burn

I send smoke signals

I am the message in the night

I didn't dream I could ever be happier — until I found the bottomless pit.

My heart was dying from inherent weaknesses. I trimmed the unwanted anchorage roots — they were thick and fleshy, it was really a job for two people — then I kissed it goodbye. No window box or greenhouse, kitchen garden or orchard, no digging deeply in autumn

I sunk my heart in the sinkhole.

I studied my reflection, it didn't look any different, cooled my tail in the rock pools, built battlements with the pebbles. You said you could never put a time on us — we could end tomorrow, we could go on for years.

Tentative tendrils crept from the hole. I chopped them back. A crooked tree grew. I hacked it down. It grew stronger and even more twisted. I called it beautiful, called it ugly, nurtured it with my moody weather. It never blossomed but it sprouted fruit with the flavour of offal.

You arrived on the eye of a vicious storm — my storm, not yours — riding two snarling dogs, trailing clanking empties, black tar oozing from your pores, spikes shining from your shoulders, screaming lies about forgiveness.

Speak to me in foreign, I don't want to understand. If words were piss you would drown.

You sunk your fist in my face

You jacked off on my flowers

You jacked up in my forest

You sunk your teeth in my fruit

You ate my heart and it choked you

No pomp required

I sunk your body in the sea

toilet seats, wrist-watches, buckets, mobile 'phones, lockets, charms, bangles, bottles, corks, forks, bunches of car keys, table legs, doll's legs, deflated balls, flip-flops, used condoms, bicycle wheels

I burn

I send smoke signals

I am the warning in the night

