

Brandt

each morning the cock crows
smothered by the shed, his duvet
Still he will rise, tend the flock

he wears only his underwear
and sits with his back to my window
drinking his cup of oolong
watching the rooster mount the hens
he has his favourite

she is a black bantam
her feathers turn the richest russet of beech
beneath the black, though she is balding now
his wife has a thyroid issue

he himself has concerns, at his age
the beer does him no favours
he yellows like the rooster and his belly
swells like a barrel

he hasn't delved below it for some time
not since the night-leaking
fearful he would turn on the tap
and just pour everything out

he bought the geese to remind him
to be strong against watery fluctuations
the ducks too, and he cages the doves
why should they fly?

Margret

she busies herself with the veggies
her hair falls out over the pumpkins
its only there she notices
how grey her roots are

over the fat tilt of their full weight
she struggles to lop off their heads
gets tangled in their gnarly bodies
as if it were thick hair
the kind she has forgotten

except when Brandt looks at her
in that apple pie way, that ripe way
and she flicks her thin wisps
as if they were clouds scudding
the colour of her favourite hen

she lays double yolks

she remembers his young egg-white
fevered to harden and expelled into her
crowing like a dawn lay
he is her favourite hen then

but her roots give her a steel halo
over her sun-pinked scalp
her heart beats faster, in anxiety
her hands shake
so instead of the pumpkins
she plucks their voluminous flowers

for her bedside table

You and the Raccoon

it runs on hand-feet
a dexterous tangle
feels each ridge on the tarmac
foody fiddling fingers offended
by the poxed man-ground
quests for the polish of a carapace
the fidget of an ant

instead you were found
rooted out, under the shifting moon
the blindfold eye
uncertain, blinked

you

the abrupt shape of man
his tiny daughter

a pause of sound

unexpected, inconceivable

and morning
so close to its blinding beginning
only birds eggs stir and crack
(rolled in black palms, slimy sucking)
only gobs of slug and snail
skate the dew

washing the old dry day away

you were there, among them
sand dunes in the corners of your eyes (a desert)
dreams still crowning under your hat
blooming as if the moon was newly risen

I should not have slept
under such heavy covers
the feathered shawl of my bed
hid my eggshell body
an all-sung-out bird
resisting the dawn

you could have woke me
roused an empty crust
that could still walk, still see - enough anyway
and taken me with you out into the murmurous night
to meet the bandits on the road, hidden in the trees
I'm only half-glad you didn't



Nature is the blood of **Susannah Violette**'s work. Animals both within us and outside of us fascinate her and her poems become liminal spaces, where the edges of these worlds blur. She was recommended in the Westival International Poetry Prize, shortlisted for the Frogmore poetry prize and has appeared in various publications.



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