

History of Sadness

The window frames a pink dusk, dot-matrix
through the fly screen. 'Miraculous' is a bit much

but it's been nearly a season without sky.
Smoke-choked for so long, I'm a child noticing

God for the first time. Bat silhouettes
pass overhead in wobbly trajectories.

I call Steven from his scrubbing to watch
the swirling lilac and silver curlicues of cloud;

a magic trick, or prophecy. Our eyes are still
wet. He's intent on tricking the bats, clapping

to send them off course. The heady stench
of Jasmine is aggressively feminine. Petals

stream. I'm not clucky so much as I am tired
of grief. Each month the history of sadness

congregates inside me; virulent. Ants swarm
toilet paper and tissue boxes; I reach for a Kleenex

and smear myself with peppery energy.
Jesus. The dishwasher clicks and shushes.

I could pray, but I'm not sure what to ask for.
They're seeking fig trees and sex. In a café I asked

a Magic 8-Ball if everything would be okay
and it replied: *YES.* There's an old cockatoo

that's been coming around, skeleton-grey
and mangey; the other birds squawk it away.

Maybe it was a cruel person in another life;
this is how I justify my actions when I spray

mosquitoes and wasps. But don't bad people
start as children who've been traumatised?

I wanted to end the cycle. Grief is an addict,
pleading. You'll do anything. I wasn't arguing

with Steven; I saw his side and agreed with it.
There's an inner misalignment, like a car tire

that veers away from the highway. Hot nights
dreaming of still-alive cats and ballet exams.

Sweat: the body crying. Struggling up staircases
on torpid days. Unconquerable laundry hampers.

Then change. Cool air. Relief. Rain.
While sorting underpants, I get a response

of sorts. *Pay attention to whatever isn't pain.*
The room expands with subdued brightness.