

The clocks have gone back

and I spend my waking hours dressed by darkness
looking over my shoulder thinking *of course god*

is a man, cloaking these streets with a whisk of his
hand in the mid afternoon. A whistle of wind or a

leaf takes flight and I'm breathless, a body alert with
collective memory, moving deftly through the city. I

pass slips of other women like octopuses desperately
blending with the sea floor. We too, know the threat of

these shadows, know how it is to be prized, pursued, a fine
specimen. To be hung to dry as the fisherman stands by, proud.

Here, look at my catch.

Learning to skin a rabbit on a Monday night

Your therapist would like you to answer these questions before your next session.

Over the last 2 weeks have you been bothered by any of the following:

1. Abundant interest and or pleasure in doing things?
2. Feeling positive, joyful or elated?
3. Have you fallen asleep easily and slept peacefully?
4. Have you felt fresh or energetic?
5. Have you been bothered by a good appetite or gratifying eating habits?
6. Have you felt good about yourself, that you are a success or have made yourself or your family feel proud?
7. Have you experienced sustained concentration on things such as reading the newspaper or watching television?
8. Have you been moving or speaking with such vigour that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite, have you been a lot more mindful, slow and considerate to yourself? More than usual?
9. Have you been bothered by thoughts that you would be better off alive or healing yourself in some way?

0 NOT AT ALL 1 ON SEVERAL DAYS 2 MORE THAN HALF THE DAYS 3 ALL THE TIME

Father

The word has taken on a life of its own;
a soft hum after a quake, the song a sparrow
sings each morning, she is always alone.
Exclamation mark, uncomfortable stammer,
the final ingredient forgotten from the recipe

Our feet take us on a pilgrimage from the back door
to the compost. Potato skins impart wisdom
to the weeds. One of us cracks in two most weeks
so we keep the sewing kit out ready, but anger spits
from the seams, red hot, and melts all the needles.

On a Thursday afternoon we sing hymns to drown
the silence, our collective saliva floods the church
and I float beneath god with your picture in my
hands, smiling. I have your grin they say, you'd
be so proud they say, so I dive deep, beaming at
your flat face and hum Our father who art in heaven.

A spring sonnet

The 6am sun wakes me, reveals dust on all the surfaces, pointing where skin starts to gather. A bunch of £1 daffodils sits on the table, left to rot until their heads loll like skulls with broken necks. I am continually haunted by photographs of blossom trees. I close my eyes but a stray twig stretches them back open, the iris scrolls and scrolls wondering how cruel these buds can be, to puncture a helpless sky. Out in the local park all the women stagger around boasting their bellies. Every single thing must be fucking fertile. Even the rain and heat reproduce and excrete on my body. Only the ducklings understand my rage at the world, at this unbearable season. They start as 12, bobbing along a trash filled Thames, each day their numbers dwindle as if their birth story is on rewind. I begin walking backwards, shrinking before the lustful eyes of spring. Getting smaller and smaller and smaller until just a bean, back in the warm safety sack of someones womb.

SB 8

1 I lie in bed like a man. Spread. My red lip, white cunt, lavender candle

2 dream of lopping my hair off, picture the smooth glint of the knife in the rack, eliminating curl upon curl upon

3 a polaroid picture: muted face, chequered gown, 11:11 in sharpie on the bottom right

4 my future cat will fall asleep on my belly, the warmth of her against it will break me

5 right now you are smaller than a poppy seed

6 right now you would have been the size of a winter squash

7 above the desk two sheets of glass, holding one pressed poppy, dancing

8 my flatmate makes me a winter squash soup, it gives me a week of diarrhoea

9 a room of twelve women in polyester, a tv screen playing Jeremy Kyle, the man screams 'It's not mine'

10 the last face I see before going under is a mans, *you're in safe hands*, he says, his face blurring, eyes the colour of my funeral

11 two strangers hold hands, their open backed gowns flap in the wind, freely

12 have you ever held an orange in each hand, one intact, the other peeled... which felt heavier?