

two poems by

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Medicine

Her medicine might contain the word *cough*
but a thorough investigation
of the etymology of the stuff
is sure to encounter *pseudo*
and a growing resistance from chemists
when they come to know
the frequency of her visits, and the fact
that she is free from coughing
and to claim authenticity
over dependency, she rattles off a list
of ingredients she believes are benign
although it seems she falters
and coughs when her mouth encounters
then tries to negotiate the word *ephedrine*.

The Ceiling Of An Umbrella Shop

Gathering mushrooms, our plan was to eat some
preserve the rest in jars
and to spoon these, months later

from a tilting gleam of honey.
We began with those like blue parasols
that shade the rim of a cocktail glass.

Soaked in vodka then thrown back as shooters
we named them *The ceiling of an umbrella shop*.
Soon darkness fell like a flying fox cull

without the reports. Siamese fighting fish
were trailing torn silks
through the port holes of a bubbling wreck

and a pair of Pygmy falcons
had begun negotiations
on a short-term tenancy agreement

with sociable weaver birds
their communal nests arranged on a loom
under the ceiling beams.

The night was irregular as arrhythmia
with meteor showers unspooling like razor wire.
In the skinned wreckage

of an embrace in a clearing
lit by the lamp-shades of bracket fungus
we knew little of what had befallen us

and even less of what lay ahead.
With the air tasting like the metal in anxiety
we climbed to where rain was drifting

over the shapes of trees
in the Gods of a landscape unfamiliar and barren.
And there, as if to offer comfort

we found grief to be nothing
but sleight of hand, and madness no more
than a stretch of septic weather.

The caps and gills of one species
had turned to the sleeves and stipes
of another, stuttering into life to parachute

spores like Irukandji onto the tongue
to form the words *hat-thrower*, *devil's snuff box*
releasing the psychotropic perils of imagination.

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