

Romance Apocalypse

In love I fall upwards like Rome
like an empire suckled into being
from an unwanted pregnancy.
Men think of the fall of Rome
but the she-wolf says the startup
was worse – so many wars
between different kinds of bitches:
those who were embarrassed by myth
and those who would get in the swamp
if the oracle willed it. I want her
to think I'm the best kind of bitch,
whatever that is, a good citizen
enamoured of emperor whoever.
As in the arena so in the sheets –
my want of her want eclipses me.
In love I am always getting married
though I don't always know
to whom – here are my sleeves
like white eggs ripped at the seams,
here are the angels poured out of a jar.
Here is the abscessed rainbow
and the martyrdom of two black clouds.
In love I am Madonna of the electrolytes,
my baby chomping clover as light
reveals the dust of my bed becoming
a fortress becoming a hilltop. The angels
say perspective is the desire line of god
and that's why they're always hovering
(they read it with their toes).
Cranach believed Eve was innocent
because he believed in the virtue
of her proportions. If she had sin
it could only be a blemish, beloved
imperfection in the tip of a littlest finger.
Saint Lucy dips her quill in the mess
of her martyred eyes like ink.
She colours in the holes in her head
to make them look more like holes,
and then she just gets on with it.
On my seventh honeymoon I wake

with blue moth eggs sprouted around
my mouth. For a moment it's bliss:
a new symptom for a new syndrome,
the first day of the rest of my life.
In the church of San Pantalon
the angels tell me they are angles
designed to cut through air and flesh
to reveal the five cavities of hell.
I tell them I don't know if love
should feel like this, like what,
like little blue dots on my upper lip,
like resentment that I'm not the
favoured groupie of my generation's
foremost materialists? The angels
look concerned. They ask how long I have
been feeling this way. I say I'm not sure ...
at least since I woke up to the boats'
engines snarling at each other like beasts.
Like beasts, say the angels, or like bitches?
I notice they are nudging the air with their toes.
I follow their pointing to a chapel
cordoned off for restoration. A laminated
sign gives a diagnostic picture: rising damp,
manifesting in salt deposits, detachment,
material disintegration. The conservation
aims to clean the floor, repair the fragments
and gaps and to integrate marble losses.
I can't parse it. I move past the donation box
in a cloud of hot air and the angels wink
back like numismatic bitches. In love
let it always be known that I love
with my tail between my legs
and a spider on my breast.
Peony, she-wolf, low-cut dress;
a whole inventory of family devices.
In the end of days I gate my keep.
So perish all who cross my walls.

Written by Daisy Lafarge