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The Blood Spot

Original titles and publishers

De Bloedplek (De Bezige Bij)

Translation Dutch into English

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Bio

The lint on my hands blossoms
like cotton. You shine silkily. The spears
that stab the stars in the scorched chamber
of the night are coated in a light paint.

Skirting along the edge of the meadow,
holding my breath, I touch Strangle-tare
and the strings with your hands.
Lost milk loaf days,

the moon cycle harbouring pallid sorrows
that light up until hogweed has us blistered
on our knees. Cells perish where bloodlust
reigns in never explored territory. Mist

twists us like mustard gas. Black beckons,
buffs the tarmac up ahead. Factories belch
smoke from their calyxes. The first coolness
irrigates the rooftops. Though bees are hard to find

today, their stings blaze.

Short back and sides

The hairline is silver-plated. You catch a whiff of my blueprint.

I nod at the one having the trim, sit down and settle in.

Take it all in, this winter salon,

this mirror where soon a pair of scissors

will slide through the image. Slowly the blade,

the scalp, I'm ground down with foam.

You rub your stories into me. Scalp-snow.

A calmness draped around my neck. The head

that has reached maturity sinks transparently

into the washbasin between arms of mercy

and the seven sorrows I allow myself to undergo.

Underneath the gown, the torso in dusk.

All that moves in my breath, porous pelt,

underneath the trimmers punishing the scruff.

You fix the image on request. I wangle it. Brush you down,

the tufts tangle. Cast off the towel

in the shape of the other.

It plunders us, lies supine
smelling us out like a threat
and is jolted by its shadow, licks its poison
and tangled up in its blanket, moults, then nestles

in our gaze and smells of apples, rattles
sounds and screeches a hole in the night,
the depth of which we are mounted on.
And looks at us. It turns into water

that has stood for too long in a glass
we can't see through. We swallow it,
quench the nights, toast,
heads ducked under. It sees how strangely

good it tastes to drown.

'She is gone. She has come again.' The yarn rolls off the spool.

This is how you dangle by a thread. It follows you round the room,
summons you, drags you along like a rag doll.

Stays silent when it catches in your voice. You sing out loud,

after all that longing for that scream, you let it sound.

Your singing sets it dancing underneath the sheets. It
gurgles, hankers after your voice. Next it has forgotten
your song. It resides here now, deaf to all your tones.

From its early words it braids a hammock
like the sparrows in the privet hedge. They fly
up to the mangers, not waiting for hunger to come.
It sees how like shadows we continue to glide

across one another. It can't get by on us,
and scoffs us emptier than a wet nurse. It looks
and looks and claws for a reflection. And continues
to devour. The mirror feeds and pillages.

It is incurable when it finds its face there.

It robs us, numbs us, it drags us back to its nest.
Lays us down in its place. We stare at who wakes over us,
who breathes over us. What it wants to quench
is unfindable, we get drunk on the view, shoulder-judder

at the sight of the light dripping through a pine. We toss
the blanket to one side, search for what divides us
and clear a path outside; the earth smells of rusk.
It's the youngest day; this spring we watch the ground

glow transparent. Gibbering green leaps up from the compost.
The ground is dry-nursed. Everything sounds, is yet without a name.
Then it flings itself around our necks once more. It is water flowing
into the fountain's stream. You watch it slowly escaping

from the cup of your hands. It splashes and splurges, translucent
with the first notes of spring. It takes its time to look about.
And what lies ahead is never far away. It recovers from its shadow
on your shoulder. How tellingly similar its kind is. It came,

it returns. It begets us every day.