

Things Which Are

A nocturne on St Lucy's Day, after John Donne

Give thanks to any god that's listening
for this; the shortest day, the longest night of *yes*,
the sixteen hours of dark we torched with kisses;
with all our fire-ship fucking, fingering.

Now, a glass half-full of moon;
two Christmas candles, tongues of heat; and you,
near-stranger, here. The clean throat of you,
the muscled body pulsing at my hand:
the unsprung power of a sleeping man.

An hour ago I watched that nameless bar
of flesh becoming full and sweet.
The glory and the helplessness of it;
the glove of poppy-tender skin. This year
has opened up its hinge
to us; we tilt it back for meat, pilfering
its juice and spasm. Oh, this giddy thing,
its flip-flop tumble. Alchemy has fuck-all
to do with it; we're making ordinary miracles

in spite of winter; in a blaze of sweat and bone,
of slick and tangled bodies. What we are is this:
a man with faults in him, of course
but also love, as true and ragged as a stone;
a woman, ready – *yes* – for
all the subtle give of tongue and muscle, or
for intimacy with its firework scatter
of consequence and chaos. Bring it on.
Put up a finger for the year to swivel on;
we don't accept defeat. We're here to start again;

we brace like acrobats across the day
who now support, now push; who catch and lunge,
who tighten round each other with a salty plunge
and fall; or, like the sparks that lift away
to start the fire again
across the gap. Your hair, messed by my hands;
those toothsome cheeks; my sex, so sore and stained;
it all adds up. We are twice everything.
We'll blitz the darkest night with our small lightnings.

No sun required. We are illuminated
by our gasp and giggle; every laugh's
a beacon. We have energy enough
to sting like Scorpio and wake the dead.
Don't think of kettles, might-bes;
don't you dare get up. Fill up that glass,
declare to any god that's listening our *yes!*
Just leave the lace and satin on the floor.
Come back to bed, love; help me praise the things that are.

Jo Bell
www.jobell.org.uk