



# Dog's gift

I've waited by this door for several hours,  
my face is changing to grey, the coldness  
of the hard surfaces is seeping into my small  
symmetrical paws. I'm not seeing the dark stairs,  
I'm not going back to sit in the fire.

I have made circles of the garden, at high speed,  
a noose around my neck. I have done the barking thing.  
They think they know my thoughts but there are plans.

They try to make me look at pictures of hills  
and listen to the drumming of her heels,  
her ankles transparent, her tattooed blanket.  
I am next. I will be seen. They'll listen to my heart,  
ignore my genuine dog's smile, and hold my trembling  
black wool head to keep me from leaving.

The moon is throwing giant in-me shadows  
in the blueness of the room. If I want to  
bring it to an end if I want to go back  
to the stream and put my nose under water.  
If I want the thigh-high grass  
and swarms of gliders overhead, if I don't want to  
think about shoes or the thoughts I had  
the night before, I'll become acquainted  
with this box of matches. I'll be a user of tools  
and put the flame to the beds of roses.  
I'll give them a burning bush, this dog's gift.

I'll slip out to the graveyard and eat the grass of the mad  
before they fill the cracks in my head with reason and meat.

*Suzanne Batty*

*This poem was commissioned by the poet David Hart on behalf of the Arts Council. It is part of a collection of fifty poems by different UK poets - each on the subject of waiting. The poems are for display in waiting rooms.*

Poems for...waiting

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