

BZZ GARAGE

A RARE BEE

By Carol Ann Duffy

I heard tell of a tale of a rare bee,
kept in a hive in a forest's soul
by a hermit – hairshirt, heart long hurt –
and that this bee made honey so pure,
when pressed to the pout of a poet
it made her profound; or if smeared
on the smile of a singer it sweetened his sound;
or when eased on the eyes of an artist,
Pablo Picasso lived and breathed;
so I saddled my steed.

No birds sang in the branches over my head,
though I saw the wreaths of empty nests
on the ground as I rode – girl, poet, knight –
deeper into the trees, where the white hart
was less than a ghost or a thought, was light
as the written word; legend. But what wasn't going, gone,
I mused, from the land, or the sky, or the sea?
I dismounted my bony horse to walk;
out of the silence, I fancied I heard
the bronze buzz of a bee.

So I came to kneel at the hermit's hive –
a little church, a tiny mosque – in a mute glade
where the loner mouthed and prayed, blind
as the sun, and saw with my own eyes
one bee dance alone on the air.
I uttered my prayer: *Give me your honey,
bless my tongue with rhyme, poetry, song.*
It flew at my mouth and stung.
Then the terrible tune of the hermit's grief.
Then a gesturing, dying bee
on the bier of a leaf.

LISTEN

By Julia Mackenzie

Listen

Amid the concrete swell
There is a quieter place

By day the hedge is woven
With feathered hum

Antlered ancients follow
Their imprinted path

Latticed wings flit
Like molten darts

By night vulpine shadows
Fill the night with wilder cries

Listen

BASIL

By Nicholas Culpeper

It groweth in gardens. It must be sown late, and flowers in the heart of summer. This is the herb which all the authors are together by the ears about, and rail at one another, like lawyers. Galen and Dioscorides hold it not fitting to be taken inwardly, and Chrysippus rails at it with downright Billingsgate rhetoric: Pliny and the Arabian Physicians defend it. And away to Dr Reason went I, who told me it was an herb of Mars, and under the Scorpion, and therefore called basilicon, and it is no marvel if it carry a kind of virulent quality with it. Being applied to the place bitten by venomous beasts, or stung by a wasp or hornet, it speedily draws the poison to it. Something is the matter; this herb and rue will never grow together; and we know rue is as great an enemy to poison as any that grows. It expelleth both birth and after-birth; and as it helps the deficiency of Venus in one kind, so it spoils all her actions in another. I dare write no more of it.

TIVOLI PARK

THE WOODSPURGE

By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
shaken out dead from tree and hill;
I had walked on at the wind's will, –
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was, –
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief, there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me, —
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

APPLES

By Laurie Lee

Behold the apples' rounded worlds:
juice-green of July rain,
the black polestar of flowers, the rind
mapped with its crimson stain.

The russet, crab and cottage red
burn to the sun's hot brass,
then drop like sweat from every branch
and bubble in the grass.

They lie as wanton as they fall,
and where they fall and break,
the stallion clamps his crunching jaws,
the starling stabs his beak.

In each plump gourd the cidery bite
of boys' teeth tears the skin;
the waltzing wasp consumes his share,
the bent worm enters in.

I, with as easy hunger, take
entire my season's dole;
welcome the ripe, the sweet, the sour,
the hollow and the whole.

COMPOTE OF BONCHRÉTIEN PEARS

By Jane Grigson

Peel and slice the pears. Drop them into a pan half-full of boiling water, acidulated with the juice of a lemon. Give them 2 minutes once the water has returned to the boil. Drain them and add enough sugar to cover; stew gently until tender either on top of the stove or in a slow oven – in either case, keep the lid on the pan, or cover with foil. When cooked, squeeze orange juice over pears and leave them to cool.

WOOD VALE

IN PERPETUAL SPRING

By Amy Gerstler

Gardens are also good places
to sulk. You pass beds of
spiky voodoo lilies
and trip over the roots
of a sweet gum tree,
in search of medieval
plants whose leaves,
when they drop off
turn into birds
if they fall on land,
and colored carp if they
plop into water.

Suddenly the archetypal
human desire for peace
with every other species
wells up in you. *The lion
and the lamb cuddling up.*
The snake and the snail, kissing.
Even the prick of the thistle,
queen of the weeds, revives
your secret belief
in perpetual spring,
your faith that for every hurt
there is a leaf to cure it.

CHILD ON TOP OF A GREENHOUSE

By Theodore Roethke

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches,
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty,
The half-grown chrysanthemums staring up like accusers,
Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,
A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!

THE BAY TREE

By Nicholas Culpeper

It is a tree of the sun, and under the celestial sign Leo, and resisteth witchcraft very potently, as also all the evils old Saturn can do the body of man, and they are not a few; for it is the speech of one ... that neither witch nor devil, thunder nor lightning, will hurt a man where a bay tree is. The oil made of the berries is very comfortable in all cold griefs of the joints, nerves, arteries, stomach, belly or womb.

TRITTON ROAD

THE ENKINDLED SPRING

By DH Lawrence

This spring as it comes bursts up in bonfires green,
Wild puffing of emerald trees, and flame-filled bushes,
Thorn-blossom lifting in wreaths of smoke between
Where the wood fumes up and the watery, flickering rushes.

I am amazed at this spring, this conflagration
Of green fires lit on the soil of the earth, this blaze
Of growing, and sparks that puff in wild gyration,
Faces of people streaming across my gaze.

And I, what fountain of fire am I among
This leaping combustion of spring? My spirit is tossed
About like a shadow buffeted in the throng
Of flames, a shadow that's gone astray, and is lost.

NEW TERRITORIES

By Jean Mackenzie

A bronze shadow slides through whispered grass,
I glance and catch a glimpse, a hair's breadth.
A shredded trace slips beneath me,
Under my feet, a cough, a whine, a blur.
I know some things this way stir

Two worlds above and beneath
Through slatted steps the den is slow revealed,
Deep earthen forms with milk-blue eyes,
They do not see me; I form an outer edge of things.
I draw and cut; they wait,
Her absence felt through a murmuration of radio waves.

Mother, deep red with poise,
With magpie hunger scours the hood.
She runs the risk of road-struck end
To bring prey in silver foil or plastic bag.
They greet and suckle amongst my briar and nettle.

Bold and brasslike they roll, scrape, nip and pounce.
I watch so near, via huge divide.
Soon they will melt into rusted echoes
And slip through the cracks of urban ways
By night and day — new territories.

CALAMINT

By Nicholas Culpeper

It is an herb of Mercury, and a strong one too, therefore excellent good in all afflictions of the brain. Burnt or strewed in a chamber, it driveth away venomous serpents; it takes away black and blue marks in the face, and maketh black scars become well coloured if the green herb be boiled in wine and laid to the place, or the place washed therewith. It helpeth them that have a tertian ague by taking away the cold fits.

LIBRARY OF THINGS

THREE BEE POEMS

By Emily Dickinson

The pedigree of honey
Does not concern the Bee—
A Clover, any time, to him,
Is Aristocracy—

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

In the name of the bee
And of the butterfly
And of the breeze
Amen

TREES

By Philip Larkin

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In full-grown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

CHESTNUT AND APPLE SOUP

By Jane Grigson

Cook the chestnuts with the stock and celery for about 20 minutes; meanwhile simmer the apple slices in butter with a good sprinkling of pepper. Liquidise chestnuts, celery, and apple with the stock and the buttery apple juices. Add the cream. If the soup is too thick for your taste, dilute it with water. It should not be too heavy in texture, but light, with a faint sharpness from the apples.