

Watching the Perseids

By Isabel Rogers

The parrot, Einstein of birds, who can count
and reason calmly in our tongue
while outliving us, disdains the ostrich.
For all its sprint records,
the ostrich will be remembered
for hiding from the truth.
You can't outrun stupid.

We the people hold some truths
to be self-evident: our magnificent brain
in a body that can't flee, can't smell fear,
can't hear death, can't see straight.
Even so, our retinas, with rods and cones
as intricate as any telescope array,
evolved to see a predator
slide out of oblique shadow
and give us time to bolt.

We survey our closed dominion
until we look up in August
to find comet dust flaring in the night.

This vastness, this vertiginous awareness
mocking gravity on our speck of now,
wakes us with a recalibrating jolt.

But soon our familiar star will claw toward us
in seven-league boots from the east,
drawing its Valium thread across our planet
as if to cloak a birdcage
to muffle questions that blink through dark matter
and would pour over us
until we drowned, dreaming of amnesia.



Isabel Rogers won the 2014 Cardiff Poetry Competition, lives in Britain, and is the Hampshire Poet Laureate 2016. Her debut collection, *Don't Ask*, was published by Eyewear Publishing in 2017.

