

Treasure Island

I mumble the solemn oil-charm of 'Sullom Voe'.
Your face looks oddly slipshod or post-dental.
Half a mouth gone sloppy you cannot whistle. I wax

piratical: 'Touch o' the palsy?' And blimey, it's true –
Bell's Palsy, the seventh nerve paralysed, post-virus.
It sounds legendary, like Sinbad's seventh, or seven seas

crossed by fleece-mad Argonauts. They'd go bananas here:
nursery slopes of newborn lambs, the staggering
foals in May's heatwave, as though earth were unsteady.

I plunder cigarettes from Hamnavoe, veer off to mosey
on Meal Beach, consider the sibilings 'bliithe' and 'Blydoit',
my Linux Bible drowned, hallelujah, in verdigris shallows.

Fortified with builder's tea, accepting the unforeseen
facial arrangement, muscle hitch, you spurn steroids
in hope of self-healing. Heath Spotted-orchids are out;

by Kettla Ness, a nose family of seals, their heads
our ocean pop-ups. They look to shepherd us,
by hypnosis, back to these whale-humps of green hills,

boot-swallowing blanket bogs, bedrolls of mist,
Burra's object permanence. The air is a new drug:
high on appetite, we descend like Assyrians

on cream cake, fancies, our chins hung with wolfdrool.
Your sister flies in with games of geocache,
her waterproof tub of trinkets buried at Bannaminn,

coordinates posted online, finders keepers,
contents: Kinder egg, skull of mole, a spinning top.
We pitch ourselves behind the prizewinner's eyes,

imagine the unlidding, Tupperware triumphant,
those penny giveaways transfigured, blindly adored.
Your good face grows back, at ease, tomato-bright.

A.B. Jackson