

## EXTRACT: SOPHIE BUXTON

She would feel like she had something very important to say but was kept back from saying it owing to the very fact of its enormity.

*And she ends up saying nothing at all?*

Either that or finding herself saying what to her sounded glib, facile; speaking to the surface of things, making faces in a mirror. And yet this thing was important to her. The language and all its complexity. She would wake up in the morning with it already in her thoughts, primed, there on her lips. She was concerned by its simplicity, frightened that this condemned her to sounding like an idiot; a hick, mundane.

*After all, the face in the mirror has its place.*

She would have said there is new beauty to be found in that which is vanishing. Images from that day kept insinuating themselves into her thoughts. Walking over the rocks had felt like clambering over a dinosaur's back. She was unable to get down to the sand as the tide was up. It washed over the rocks, swamping her feet. The phalanx of cars had made her feel anonymous. No one she knew would drive here. She imagined her feet in the sand, digging her heels in as the water sloshed up, no doubt it would suck her heels down in its retreat. She looked up to the line that felt higher than she was, even standing on the rocks, over where sea met horizon. And the day had turned itself inside out like an enormous duvet extricating itself from its cover, leaving a vast blank, empty chasm with complicated crosshatched and folded sides. She felt as though she were gazing back into her own future, or as though the past was rushing towards her in a welter of palpable images, especially a dog or horse or combination thereof which had always sat in the fireplace, the one they never used. It never seemed especially sorry for itself but its appearance was a little abject, not as sickly though as the tubular doll with

the blue, sweat stained dress and green hair that her father always called 'Diphtheria Doll'. The dog still stuck in her mind. Its fur was bare in patches, revealing the skinniness of its frame. She had always felt that if she stroked it gently enough it would instantly repair itself but the moment she stopped that delicate stroking – imagine caressing an eyelid – the dog or horse would return to its original parlous state. Her fate felt hopelessly intertwined with it as she sat there, all that time, in a wolf onesie.

The jewels glittered and twisted prettily near the edge of a surface just below her eyes and the clarity of the dream hung enticingly. The jewels' complex and faceted surfaces, the light reflecting and hanging deep within them, the impossible and really tangible closeness of objects in no world other than their own...all this gave her a sudden surge of spirit, a sense of optimism, as though it promised she didn't know what. A world perhaps? A world where everything was made of beautiful objects, objects to be forever looked upon.

So, she had holed up in the bungalow and then went for a swim in the sea. She dreamed of feeding bees. Enormous. Through a pipette.