

Smuts and Shrooms

LISA KELLY

In Search of Cowbane Rust

Daughter, Son, some rusts are rare
Their hosts are rare, that's why
If I'm long gone, don't despair
I'm on the Broads with watchful eye

Their hosts are rare, that's why
I paddle down Wheatfen dyke
I'm on the Broads with watchful eye
Slipping off with otter and pike

I paddle down Wheatfen dyke
Checking for cowbane at the edge

Slipping off with otter and pike
Fingers brushing willow and sedge

Checking for cowbane at the edge
I found clumps, but none had rust
Fingers brushing willow and sedge
Hope of a parasite come to dust

I found clumps, but none had rust
If I'm long gone, don't despair
Hope of a parasite come to dust
Daughter, Son, some rusts are rare

Red Data List of Threatened British Fungi: Mainly Smuts

Smut, lie down with me in annual meadow grass that tickles
our pelts. Smut, be barley covered and reeking of beer,
a bearberry redleaf prim on each pinkish part. Smut, with your bedstraw hair,
bestow no interloper a bird's eye view. My promise, a primrose
with its fairy caretaker that no bog asphodel, no bone-breaker
will I brook, smut. As a chick weeds out a worm, I will weed out
all burrowing doubts, all jealousies, all winter green looks
on our love, smut, which would shrivel us, smut. Smut, be not false.
This oat-grass ring, I twine about your finger, smut.
Think of me when a foxtail, smut, lifts to expose a gland,
stinking of March violets, to deceive you, smut.
They'd have you frogbit, smut, back in the pond where you
were spawned, mounted and belly grasped. Glaucus sedge creeps
in damp ditches, smut. Weep for such green hell bore away
with earth's daughter, smut. Loose your hair. See how sedge flowers in spikelets,
smut, and love always pricks. Lie down with me in meadow grass that tickles
our pelts. Revel in mudwort, smut. I could call you close to Limosella, smut,
cloaked in tiny white stars, a northern bilberry redleaf prim on each pinkish part.
Passion marks us, smut, with a purple small-reed stripe, smut.
My rare spring sedge, smut, tender as fresh shoots.
My reed canary-grass, smut, sensitive to noxious airs. Saxifrage smut,
I cannot help but repeat saxifrage smut, the brassy instrument of you played.
Sing of prickly yuletide, sea holly smut. They are small spored
with their white beaks, sedge smut, poking and prodding and stinking, smut.
They are not sweet – they confuse carnal with vernal, smut.
Damn the white beak-sedge, smut, worn by quacks as if we were plague, smut,
with their aromatic herbs, smut. What rare pathogens we are, smut.
What gall smut, to detest our dark teliospores. Yellow toadflax
on them all, the cowards that croak. Yellow toadflax on them all, smut.