

## **Three Tanka for Exmoor**

By Lizzie Ballagher

*Runner-up of the 2025 Coleridge Poetry Prize*

### **lovers' bane**

gorse fires burn all year  
yet when spikes draw blood they say  
gold blooms fade and drop  
shed acid bonnet flowers  
then kissing's out of season

### **whortleberry**

summer's pallid blooms  
call up honey bees to feed  
in scarce winter light  
red deer browse leaves of leather  
roll bilberries on their tongues

### **spring**

sky's chalky shell splits  
jagged daylight crunches in:  
feathered blue begins  
spills, quills across, beak parting  
to sing warm birdsong

