



Royal Literary Fund



## Vaccine

My mother kept me from fairy tales,  
not wanting those women in boxes  
with all their waiting to stall me,  
but when I grew up and found myself  
boxed-in, I couldn't see the walls  
for years, not having rehearsed horror

in miniature, how a storyteller  
or scientist might. Today, in the lab  
I learn how to make a horror small,  
that we boil it and pin it inside  
our own blood, to teach ourselves  
the lesson: naivety kills

but memory inoculates, measured out  
at the right dose. For lupus, try  
absorbing a microgram of its snarl  
so you might bite back. For Cinderella  
disease, take only its slippers,  
appear to swoon but prepare to kick.

The science of self-protection asks  
we rewrite the story of what appals:  
be glad the hairs on the back of your neck  
stir when a wolf comes near you.  
For grief, devour a sugar skull  
and dance on the Day of the Dead.

### Christy Ducker

Royal Literary Fund Writer

Christy Ducker is an RLF Fellow at Newcastle University; her next book of poems will be published in 2022.

Metro has worked with the Royal Literary Fund to display poems by writers working in the north of England reflecting on the pandemic as part of our Arts on Transport programme.