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They all came to the poetry reading: an angel, a politician,
two ancient Latvians and joy,
the rustling leaves of autumn with the eyes from a brook
and a strange kind of light;
the first snow came,
a new song came, expecting to be sung.
A girl rose – a white flame, a girl rose – a new day,
a girl rose, sister to anger and red apples,
I am her, she said laughing,
I am, she whispered, crying,
I am the color of summer evenings as they rise over bridges,
I will rain on your windowsills as small children sleep
behind them,
with a sweet scent of lilies wafting like the rum of
Havana nights,
I caress women's breasts dangling as they bake bread,
I burn on men's hands as their bonfire gutters out,
I am, for the world inside me sings of a new day through you,
it sings of the white power of life to keep silent
and peacefully be,
with a simple breath, a touch of the tongue,
I will relate through your lips how fear is lost.

I am, you are, we are, how weightless the language, how alive,
like tide, like the morning light over those peacefully sleeping,
we will live like the sea nourished by love and expanse,
we will live this one life we have,
and that means, forever.

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I'd be in my fat clothes,
on the day of bad hair,
and you would walk up to me
saying: I want you.
That is my dream,
as I stand there so very beautiful
on this golden autumn day
by the school,
holding my daughter's hand.

Rebirth of the City

On that day, the entire city went down on its knees:

On Maskavas, Jersikas, Ebreju, Līksnas, Kijevas, Jēkabpils, Lāč –

plēša Streets,

Viršaišu, Lauvas, Lielā and Mazā kalna Streets, and heads were

bent in Rumbula Forest.

On that day, the entire city went down on its knees,

both those who had been guards and those who could not

pronounce “g” or draw a yellow star,

and their children and grandchildren, and great grandchildren,

a field of people with heads bent

in order to become the foundation for a new city that would

never forget,

that would walk in their footsteps,

that would ask the heaven to forgive

this prolonged silence, not looking in the eye, this rushing past

in a city in which every day shades of people with colored stars

on their foreheads do not walk on the sidewalks.

And I asked, grandma, honey, how could you sleep, you and

grandpa, on those nights in November and in Decem-

ber, scared of the war, naked trees knocking on windows,

embracing each other to keep warm?

How could we sleep on all these nights since?

We are a small nation. Indeed. Our shaky voice is our flame
and we sing.

I have a friend who has only half a brain after a drunk driver
left him to die. But he lived. And this friend has problems
speaking – he sings. And that’s how it is with us. We sing.
Who ran US over?

On that day, the city went down on its knees and a plea, quiv-
ering like an autumn leaf, floated up to the heaven:
forgive us who looked aside, who shot, who arranged you in
rows, who told children to look elsewhere, who let you walk
in the gutter, who thanked God for having been born light-
skinned and blond, forgive us who did not bring you bread,
who did not sew on yellow stars ourselves, who did not
enlist in the partisans to hatch out a conspiracy, forgive
us who were not žanis, elvīra, anna, who was not among
those 270 others. We are an even smaller nation than we
thought up to now.

On that day, when the city went down on its knees and not
even words, trembling whispers went up to the heaven; on
that day, deep down inside the city, its heart slowly resumed
beating.

And after 700 years, birds came back to the city.

Look in your i-phone. Today is that day.

Road

I am not a boy in Gaza who awakens from a shrill whistle as he
lies on a mattress in the school gym.

I am not.

I am not an explorer of outer space from Germany, so beautiful,
a true Aryan; in these parts, only transvestites are as
beautiful.

I am not.

I am not a grandfather – half-turned toward the cockpit,
I squint, I believe what's happening is a sequence from
a movie watched by my grandsons.

I am not.

I am not a Jewish/Palestinian teenager, rope cutting into my
wrists, I try with my lips – the burlap tastes sweet.

I am not.

I am not an Indian woman in love with a man from a higher
caste, stealing away from my lover's bed, spotting a man –
he would like to be called that – in a neighboring window,
understanding how much I don't want to die, the globe of
the red sun in the metallic Ganges, the very last memory,
the last memory, what is my last memory, I want to call out to
all who are sad so that I would not have to die,
so that I would be breath – breathed in, breathed out –

in grandfather, man, ganges,
so that I would be in time, so that I would be in a bracelet
around the wrist of a child born after the coming war,
so that I would be in a moment when a grandpa buys sausage
at a supermarket, what's new, a round metal watch falls
out of his pocket – a moon, he of course has the aroma of
autumn, a man, who is me, bends down to pick up the watch
with a sun drenched hand,
a girl touches his shoulder, that's also me, we are by the sea,
lights blink in the distance,
they are a threat to no one as yet,
half-blind kittens, we swim in a vast bowl of motherly love,
someone struggles with words to say, you know, perhaps, if it's
so, then perhaps there could be a way, perhaps, if it all were
to be interrupted, outshrieked, stopped if only for a min-
ute and done differently, I don't mean that it should be
started anew,
no, simply, "touched her breast," and that too am I, perhaps
there could be a way,
although there seems to be nothing of the kind,
there is only a ship, a departing ship, through the rust-colored
leaves, there are only vast and smooth expanses of water,
the sun emerges, I stand on the shore and don't under-
stand how I might have managed it all, in such a short while,

in such a strange form, for I only wanted what's best,
a young woman is standing behind me, her belly bloated, and
I feel sorry for her, of course.

At the foot of the bed sits an old hag with a gun, an elephant's
on the terrace, in a lotus of Buddha, I am squeezed between
Deleuze and Body, I like it,
a baby begins to cry in the neighboring flat,
I see them awaken,
his arm thrown across her round belly, and she says:
I am not, truly, I am not.

Fog

See, that is fog, sweetheart, that's really fog,
see, what you have in your hands is a damp wrinkled map,
see, here's the turn, which taken would have led you to the
checkpoint,
see, here's the boy you won't be able to look in the eye,
see, here's autumn, leaves crackling underfoot,
see, here are your friends who have no idea what to do with

the pictures you gave them,
showing a man on his knees by a twelve-year-old girl with her
pants down.

See, here's fog, kiddies, real fog, indeed,
see, here are people who will never be able to look you in
the eye,
see, here is the earth and, see, you can already say as much
safely.

You stand, you grow, you learn to control your panic attacks,
you become a bridge, a tree, you learn to look people in the eye,
you make friends with people without arms and legs, for they
seem to understand you,
you write this poem, sweetheart, for the thousandth time,
hoping that one day it will vanish.

See, this is fog, kiddies, it is really fog,
streams of snot and sperm, the solstice of tears.

And I come out quietly by the church in the forest,
two dozen years have passed and I am still wearing the same
sports pants with the cut elastic band.

And people look at me and some say – well, and some say –
really, couldn't she write it more tactfully, a little more
decently, for, if you ask me, I say, fuck it that children should

know that the world is no bed of roses, fuck it I say, why
the fuck do you have to stay so tragic, we liked you better
before, when you drank a lot, got wasted, gained weight and
fucked with anyone who gave you a kindly look. So come
and lie underneath us.

That really is fog, kiddies, for once, it's really fog.

And I have nothing except this terribly worn and biting, and
sinewy tongue and fingers that write these words on the
screen like in a wide lake.

I am coming out of the forest. And I ask you, kiddies, you who
in your family dachas, living-rooms, in the backs of cars,
in your conjugal beds, you, kiddies of all sexes who were in
some saunas, drunk and drugged, you, kiddies who survived,
I tell you it really is

scary for sure, but still – please come finally out.

Or wait a little, be gentle with yourselves.

And I will begin to try to breathe here quietly.

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Women hate one another,
they have so little space
in this world of men's hands
in this world where live just some –
the strong and the good.
They have to fight by a place by the ring,
tooth and nail,
clumps of hair and nipples,
they have to give up their dissertations
as placemats for sprats and bread.
They have to lie down and be steps
toward the highest shelf of the cupboard,
housing candy with liqueur filling.

Women hate one another.
But sometimes, in a Russian or Finnish sauna,
where they are all naked,
they simply spit.
They spit with a hiss
and sprawl out along with their
enemies of all races and bodyweights,
and just sit there a moment in silence.

Having spat and calmed down.

And the same thing takes place on the other side of the wall.

Bus No. 3

That's just how we live,

buried in our scarves and hangovers,

protect us

from evil,

I build a fence around myself, made of gold and of fear,

from bread with sausage, from shame.

That's just how we live –

don't come near

and don't ask.

That's just how we live,

we sit on our beautiful asses –

let that man get up, that's his job.

No, I will not, I am tired, does the bitch know,

what it's like to work through the night and then

not get it, not get it, don't give a shit,

why make one, if there's no money for a car

and now she has to press with others in this stinky boat,
sailing blindly
in the dark.

That's just how we live,
we don't give up our seats, don't smile, don't say hello,
for fear that we'll be cheated, cursed, unable to make it,
that the last piece of bread will be snatched from us,
sure, fifty kilos to spare, but that's from all the hardship,
so I'd rather keep sitting and not seeing a thing,
Lord Almighty, it's full of cripples,
but I don't see them,
I'm looking at trees,
I recite my mantra and thinking of higher matters,
have to make it, have to make it,
just have to get lucky,
get that son-in-law with money and a BMW.

That's just how we live,
not seeing anything,
the baby is laughing,
I don't hear, don't hear a sound,
the sun's breaking through a crack,
get a rag, stuff that hole,
we'll lose the warm air, then what?!
Fucking government, it doesn't give me bread,

any reason to smile and any dignity;
it doesn't give me pride in being human,
it doesn't give me strength to get up,
to give up my seat
to the girl who'll give birth tomorrow.

She is smiling.

There is still hope.