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All the birds within me
in panic start to beat their wings.
All - the busy wagtails
and quarrelsome crows.
The frail body of a crane trembles
while a haughty peacock's call
betrays him.
Nothing to do now but freeze.
Many, many will perish.
Nothing to be done - we did not.
We hoped and loved. We believed -
that summer would never end.
We did not fly away.

THE CLEARING SPEAKS

I wouldn't open my mouth if I wasn't sure
you felt the same.

I'm confused. Full of shame. I don't know
what is old in me, what is new.
Naked. Exposed. Empty.
Cleaned out. Guilty of change.
Maybe relieved?

Roots no longer draw juices,
don't tear my flesh like cloth
as they dig deeper and deeper,
stretch farther and farther. Trunks no longer stand tall
like farmers in revolt.
Magnificent torsos!
They sleep in a warehouse now,
wait their turn at the saw
to be sliced like bread.
I worry, worry about the pine,
the pine that grew
close to my heart.
Don't tremble dear, don't fear,
you were not cut for kindling
- I tried to calm her and myself -
but to be the foundation of a room.
I hope so. I do hope so.

I now close my eyes against the sun,
for I no longer have the benefit of leaves
to offer me shade
like a young girl offers a green jug

by a well.
Shade, which once allowed mushrooms to grow.

O, what a passion
for mushrooms, what desire!
Even the smartest ladies
drove here from Riga,
and on finding the chanterelle places,
their joy was as great
as that of gold-diggers finding gold.

In vain
I muse about the lost days
when I was still a forest.
I find myself strangely still – I`m even startled
when I spot some cranberries! What if they`re
drops of my blood?
And the morels – scabs over wounds?

Though I start life over
I`m riddled with tree stumps
like a mouth fool
of dead teeth.
With holes, scarred as if by sulphuric acid,
disfigured by the remains of fires
where the last branches were burned.
I can only accept with wonder
all the new in me –
pines the size of dwarves,
elbow-length birch,
young willows, maples, linden, bird-cherries...
An oak like a salad...

Flowers of many colors, a robe
I throw over my nakedness.
I survey my surroundings,
the hospital ward
where I`ve been so close to death.

Is it a loss? Or is it a victory?

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You could get much farther
if while walking
you didn't also have to build the road.

You could carry much more
if in one hand
you didn't have to carry a sword.

You could fly much higher
if each morning
you didn't have to find your stolen wings.

A BEE SPEAKING
FROM INSIDE A WINDOWPANE

My feet slip
like the unshod hooves of a horse on ice.
The honey is spilled
that I drew from dandelion deep
yellow wells.
The honey is spilled
that I collected from the lashes of forget-me-nots
- as gently as through a kiss.
I see the garden with its flowering cherries,
the grass growing as quickly as horror -
the grass already being cut .
They let me see it but
why can't I get near it?
Why don't I feel the wind?
Where is my home, where the door to my hive?
Where my small place in the honeycomb?

Perhaps something in me is broken.
So much in me hurts.

I crawl like a toad on a furrow.
Again I am hit and again -
like a winged angel, I fall.
Is this glass mountain really
abandoned, derelict and dead?
And I - a nameless face from a crowd?
Without a crowd. Alone.

Where is my crowd, my swarm,
my hive? I am a spent arrow.

Queen bee, the last thing I've left -
my sting. I know it's worthless. I know
it means death - to sting. But I sting
this cold, bright blue and slippery,
this deaf and dumb flesh -
I sting!

Even my sacrifice is not accepted.

What must I do? For what do I ache?
Out, only out. Outside. Just out.

So much hurts in me.
There must be something that's broken.

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So few warm sunbeams,
So many humid nights -
this is my homeland.

So little peace, so much turmoil,
here the sun knits a nettle shirt -
this is my homeland.

So much love burns out in the breast.
There is no path. Only the longing -
this is my homeland.

A bird crying on a steep sand dune.
All of life - a bright funeral.
This is my homeland.

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Each night the castle mound burns
at the horizon where the sun sets.
Never to be extinguished
not even by monsoon rains.
Firemen can't smother it
nor we who heed and conspire.
Each evening the castle mound burns
as we slip into sound sleep.
And in the morning - is it fog that smokes
or the burnt cinders of the castle mound?
Are those trees that march along the Great River
or men with pitchforks and clubs?

Every evening the castle mound burns
at the horizon where the sun sets.

AT THE EDGE OF A POND

I let the fish spawn in me
And the seaweed heal me.
I let the wind inhale me
while weevils destroy a flower.
I bloom to make a landing strip for dragonflies,
hold myself high as a skyscraper
so even a bird may land.
Where will the daughters of the sun go today
so splendidly dressed?
The water glitters, glimmers, deceives,
hiding water fleas in its grasses.
There is a fortune gift-wrapped here.
Indestructible metal shines at the end of a string.
The reflection of a lucky catch - very near.
Crouching in a coltsfoot leaf,
leaning against a bulrush,
lying on a water lily,
swinging on the tip of a sweetflag,
the poem continues...

Only a bird flies over the moaning,
scaring a pair of frog lovers.

ASTRONOMY – A LESSON ABOUT STARS

It's a good lesson for me
not to scramble after stars,
not to be overwhelmed by the vastness of heaven
but
to learn more of loving
more of blood, flesh and clay.

A star is simply and only
far.

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Your face is a fortress.
Who would dare occupy it?
The pupils of your eyes like gunshot
fly out from your ramparts.

Bulrushes strike, thorns raise their axes.
Iron grass readies at the whetstone.
I crave a kind word
and simply love.

The church - a nurse - stands by,
her steeple jabbing the vein
of heaven above us.
Never shall it descend down to us.

Fortresses darken. Churches sorrow.
And look, even a spinach,
with its small, green sword,
crawls out of the earth. Hardened.

THE GOLDEN ORIOLE

Low down, dirty work -
in stinking swamps and bogs, in darkest marshes,
land laced with underground springs,
mud spatters and splashes.
(Purity - a mockery or a dream?)
From clay
parched as a tongue,
roof of the mouth dries out
like a pair of dirty wet socks,
nails broken in hard clay,
sand whining in lungs,
hew, tear up, draw water -
dig out the River Daugava.

Golden my underbelly
who else, who else, who else
still has one?

Low down, dirty work -
moles shovel, wolves burrow,
stags paw, geese tinker,
waddle and wallow. Shore up the river.
Crash! The riches of a lifetime spill,
flood off in a rust-tinged torrent. Begin again,
once again - slime slippery as a plank-way,
sludge like the dissolving dark,
(Purity- a mockery or a dream?)
hew, tear up, draw water -
dig out the River Daugava.

Golden my underbelly
who else, who else, who else
still has one?

Low down, dirty work –
O, stuttering, gushing turmoil! O, what a mess,
what trouble, what squabble! Earth and water
still inseparable. Still to be dug. Make a nest for Daugava.
Dig up. Drill. Lay down the riverbed. Gnaw out ravines.
Untie, unwind the river, curve its coves. Lift up rocks
like thoughts. Dolomite. Stalactite. Stalagmite.
Fools! Isn't it God's command? Let them burrow!
Low down, dirty work. Not mine –
digging the river Daugava.

Golden my underbelly
who else, who else, who else
still has one?

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Drr-drr! Drink! A drink of clean water! Drink, wolwes,
bears, moles, stags, geese. The deep shines
cool as silver. Freshens, purifies, slakes thirst.
Water to swim in. To heal. Bubble up. Draw.
Drench thirst. So much, much,
much water in Daugava. Like a feast
life sings in the depths.
The baptized are pulled from the water and
coldly, a thousand eyes flash – why couldn't I hold back,
why scream – I thirst.
Silence.
Only the mill-stream
grinds timeless time.
So much, much
water in Daugava.
As if loving, fields press close to the river shore.

Daugava gives earth new life.
Fresh, clear waters to drink. For them.
New thirst is born.
No harm now in their thirsting –
River Daugava is dug.

But no for me.
Though golden is my underbelly
no one has one like mine.

xxx

Still, I'm saved
by a dew-collecting flower
God, please send her dew.
Be merciful, dear God.

(Purity – a mockery or a dream?)