

Claudiu Komartin

cobalt

for Alexandra

the sun is cobalt when it rises from the body and shines
over coral
and my suntanned mind where
exotic birds come to lie is cobalt
the defiance to compromise and helplessness
was always cobalt
the night terror I wanted
to beat like an ornery animal
is cobalt
the hand I write with on an ever-distant screen
is cobalt
and my elongated and contracted muscles sweating
for joy and terror when faced with love
are cobalt
and the faint and refined shiver which poetry
still stirs inside me
is cobalt
mother's late forgiveness is cobalt
the leaf fallen on glistening water
where a friend thought he would find peace
is cobalt
the need for you was and still is
cobalt
the aged innocence of poets which informed
the comforting lyrics I cannot
get out of my head
is cobalt
there are worlds with tiny skies and
there are happy worlds
where memory is hope
and the wounds are healed from the start
there are worlds where no one sells anyone
and their premonition
is cobalt
so when I speak to you again about love
don't believe a single word

my cobalt eyes will
show you
everything
on that day.

Translated by Stephen Watts

Five Days

Today I woke up knowing everything,
though I'd prefer anything to that:
to take, at last, a deep breath,
to be able to unwind a good thought inside the walls of my skull.
I wish my clothes didn't smell of mildew and sweat,
that rumble growing louder in my head,
not just firecrackers and sparklers, as on Christmas,
as if someone was hysterically beating
the walls of a huge, empty vessel
with his fists.

For five days, I know:
I'm the envelope of anthrax you receive some Thursday at the office.
I'm your envious whine.
I'm the razorblade under your tongue.
I'm all the things you like, all that's cancerous and obscure.
Will you remember me, supermarket man?
I'm nobody. I think I'm the devil incarnate.
I'm the dry cough you cannot shake.
I'm the meanness and hatred of the year 2020.

For five days it's fever and loneliness.
For five days only pigs and night before my eyes,
the red of insomnia
and hot tea, my body coiled under sheets
run through with thick, devastating phlegm.
For five days my thin arms
reach out purposely towards nobody

because I am nobody
and the world is my kingdom.

Getting Ready for the Centennial of the October Revolution

Out of scissors and ladles people will be born again.
Getting ready. Seething like lard.
Hunks of fresh meat already hang in the attics, the sign
that someone in the orchestra played the wrong note
at the end of the solemn aria.
What more proof do you need? – there are bloody feathers, eyelids
drenched in polonium.
And at the Fish Market a scrawny fella who's not yet guilty
of any wrongdoings
pretends he's a sturgeon with the mouth sewn shut.
Under Putin's boot he tried to hide his hands
and the minuscule needle on which it was written Правда.

Alone he did all this, alone he has to bear with it all until the end.

Translated by Diana Manole

Love Poem

starting from a line by Ilhan Berk

These unfinished poems are your ankles
and the gentle withdrawal of your elbow
as you lie next to me in pillows and yawn
is another line no one can take from me

I don't feel like pulling myself together
22 cigarettes and not a single thought followed through
a bee hits the window
then again
honey on the lip of the stoup dripping

down on the wrinkled bedsheets
our amazing
hands and feet
reinventing the world
lips hair genitals touching fingers entwined
ivy on terraces

it's late
in all the room only the outline
of your body in the folds of bedsheets—
something of your breath—
the smell of your neck—
the shape of your breast—
of your groin
and I watch from over the bed
how you smile like a big, nasty kid
without memory
without even a pinch

Translated by Andrew Davidson-Novosivschei

A Riddle for Monsters

To what end?... is not all but madness?
— Eminescu

So are the times. The choir of angels is silent.
Better not to speak
of moral decay. Over there
a little stray light
in a small provincial town or
in a patch of wood the white snouts
of bulldozers threaten. Left-overs
from yesterday's dinner. Insects cloned a sun.

Somewhere there's a room, with a hole in the middle
and a surly, little fellow sweating, writing and mumbling
in a language on which leans
something rust has not (yet) eaten up.
The skeleton of a giraffe. Or maybe the final
thought after
a telepathic beam from the Jiguli constellation
scrambled our brains completely.

I've seen those foreign objects. Some thought they would
save the world with them. They didn't save anything.
Subtle machinery. Batteries, coils and watches
and animals wearing them around their necks
laughing at the god who sits
in an empty movie theatre
watching a spaghetti western
since the last Aquarius hung himself.

Translated by Andrew Davidson-Novosivschei

blessed are—

you turn your head for a moment and then you don't find the world
where you knew it: the real city like an unravelled dream, the
legendary perfection of friable gestures, night clears its way through
the fog with a machete, the lighter lights on the third try,
and you do it as if something would depend on it, ember on your lips
and volcanoes in iceland, it's all the same if you sleep or if it's a monkey's dream
the companies at the international airports won't comfort you: blessed are
those who saw african butterflies rushing after midnight at the ripe fruits

in caracas maybe someone is waiting for us – peace
in instambul freedom is blowing its brains out right now – peace
in the underground tunnels dug by the blind – peace
in the maze of the suburban streets we laugh at the jokes of a neurotic architect – peace
inside me someone slowly pulls the curtains, the blinds are down, my mind – peace
in the world there's nothing i can understand, look at this clumsy anarchist and laugh
in the bowl, the head, dredged in cornmeal, timidly
shivering under the machines that darken the sky.

Unfailing

I want to believe you when you say
someone will come
with a perfect smile
and unfailing gestures
an insect with the heart of a wet nurse
to push me on towards tomorrow
as you lead a horse crippled by sadness

at night to the slaughter

Translated by Andrew Davidson-Novosivschei

Just a Jingle for the Poorly Adjusted

stars and clenched teeth
and things you cannot save
without smashing them against a wall

I felt you in me and I hated you

never free never freed
of you don't cry what's the point
of crying there's so much light

I was there and tried to feel

(just a jingle for the poorly adjusted)

holding everything forever inside you
and tying everything down inside

last promise
last touch
last time you shut my mouth with
something only yours

and in this deep water
I would have liked to plunge my face

this blade washed clean in secret

Translated by Andrew Davidson-Novosivschei