

An ode to war and winter

## **FIREWORKS BACK HOME**

In the musky apartment in Brooklyn  
I heard the stories from back home.

The mosaics of the Kyiv metro station,  
How the light of the coming train made the tiles  
Colors, images of the murals dance.

Freshly baked bread by the blocks—  
Sold at the bazaar. Kids picking them up  
For the family lunch.

The story of the fireworks my Babushka  
Heard the night of her high-school prom.  
A blissfully ignorant moment—  
Fireworks mistaken for the first calls  
Of a war to begin.

Decades go by,  
The story hasn't changed.  
The mosaics still dance in the stations—  
Children hide beneath them. This time,  
No one is mistaking the sounds  
For fireworks.

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## **ENTERPRISE OF MADNESS**

Empty eyes behind stained fabric–  
Orange in hue from foundation not well matched  
Browbone twitch to raise an eye–  
That's how we smile now.

In the east, the wind is so vicious  
My hat nearly flies off and I hold onto my flimsy scard  
Smelling the stale coffee– uncirculated breaths in a vortex  
Of my orange, stained mask.

There's a glimmer of hope as I see the  
Sun tease its presence at roughly 9:18.  
One wet seck, one toe snub, one burnt tongue away  
From madness–  
But at least the sun rose today.

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## **PHONECALLS**

I made my bank account pin  
the last four digits of your old  
phone number. So everytime  
I need cash for croissant  
or an ice cream cone—  
I have a reason to dial you again.

Cash or no cash, the screen resets to new.  
Just a little less dead than you.

## THE ARRIVAL

So, August is over.

Two thirds of the year vanished—

My birth month and its reminder settling in the instant

All the wrapping paper hits the trash. It taps me

On my neck and spine, reporting things I've done and yet

To do. The melancholic disapproval of my own follows suit.

My skin rises from those taps like the annoying, knocking,

Neighbor in desperate need of sugar.

And then the first wind draws—

The night sets sooner. Reflection passes when the

Temperature drops and I revel at the leather on my knees

And wool on my arms. Autumn awaits—

The hazels soon replace the greens.

Because what would autumn be,

If not an austere, yet soothing reminder that

Infinity isn't real.

## PATIO FURNITURE

And when he rejoiced that hers was different, better, than mine  
A bitter taste flooded the roof of my mouth  
And a fidgety film surrounded my teeth.

I wondered if it was because  
Her family sat across each other every  
Sunday noon, feet untickled.  
The lawn was mown—  
The artisan chairs balanced easily  
On level ground.

I wondered what it was that seperated.  
Maybe the gold plating—  
Chipped on purpose,  
On the picture frames.  
Their friends studied art—  
The fine kind. Inheriting  
A studio was a must. Expensive  
Flour rising in an oven that can  
Only be requested, not ordered.

But how the tension builds  
As the souffle is mere seconds from deflating  
And 2004 was the last time someone hugged and meant it.  
Yearning for a nametag to be printed  
On a passport. Celebrating when the nametag  
Gets printed on the passport.

And while I nod and think about mine  
And the life she always wanted  
I want to blame her  
But I cannot when I remember every  
Lukewarm, ketchup drenched angel  
Hair pasta slither swallowed tiredly. Every irresponsible  
Plastic cub she throws away.  
Who was supposed to tell her they were wasteful  
While her limbs twinged on shift hour 10.

And maybe the simple sushi suits her palate better  
Because it's plain and salty like the fish from home.