

Words from Abroad

Voda Neperliva

I'm awake now.

My sleep,
that weight like great sandbags sitting on my heart,
is now sinking away.

My eyes are closed,
but I try to see forms in the faintly colorless dark.
It is impossible,
echoes of light left imprinted behind eyelids are slippery and not real,
but the chase to catch them is fun no matter.

Let's get up, go to a cafe and talk about death.

I've had dreams with huge cauldrons of hot liquefied iron spilling
and exploding down every tiny alley I walk,
the scalding syrup dissolving any fleck of flesh of friends beside me,
naked children hidden in cupboards wailing their cries,
a single skeleton of a greyhound hanging from a leafless tree.

I've learned horror and fear that I never could in wake.
I've cried in despair, the tears manifest as sweat now on my sheets.
My bones have frozen terror-stricken, feeling like icicles under my skin.
I've known what's it's like when cold blackness descends and
the heart is swallowed up because loneliness is all the mind remembers.
You can tell me that my dream never happened but never say that it wasn't real.

Let's go now.
I'll get a glass of still water with no ice.
Voda Neperliva, you must tell the Czech waiter.
I want it in this moment cause it is flavorless and motionless and
reminds me of my dream.
Then let's talk of how we're going to die,
the last words off our lips,
the last thought sprung in our head,
what the existence of non-existence will be.

Then what? What to do after the deepest contemplation of your annihilation?

I don't know.
Let's sit and stare out the window without any words between.
At the piece of trash being blown by the wind down the street,
at the mother holding her child's hand along the crosswalk,
at the blank blue of the sky.

Let's just watch and listen and perhaps it will all make more sense in a minute.

Movie Night

1.

I was going to go to the bars tonight.
Patrick texted me, attempting to rouse and rally
“come, we’ll get good and drunk and slap some ass” I read on my slimed iPhone.

But I stayed.
I think there’s still beer left in my liver
from all the nights of bars last week.

No more, it’s like sour yellow water to me now.
I’d rather lounge on plush pillows,
cozed in my home watching a movie.

What shall it be, hmm?
I don’t want to be in the world of fantasy.
I want something real, something now,
for pretend ends after the show
and I want a flick that frames life around the edges.

That’s it then, a documentary it shall be.
Ahh, here’s one here online, one on the war in Syria.

2.

It starts,
grey buildings of cement holed and crumbling,
shots of missiles bursting into smoke,
sobbing an injured man who I could not tell what covered him more,
dust or blood.

Hoarse yelling from a rebel commander,
the angry popping of machine guns,
sputter from the broken engine of a make-shift ambulance.

Inside a hospital lay lifeless a man with eyes but no pupils.
His skull concave, smashed in like play-dough but
the doctor steps over him like a piece of fallen furniture.

The doctor has another task now,
to sew back the 7 year-old’s belly.
Her pink stomach and intestines flop out from her scissored-skin,
exposing all that soggy matter that keeps her alive.

In other rooms,
a blue newborn is uselessly resuscitated,
a footless man crawls on the pavement leaving a trail like a bloody slug,
a lost 4 year-old boy looks to the camera like its mother as carcasses are piled.

The only people I see cry are the children in pain.
For those older, pain does not surprise them enough.
It must be because to them horror is more common than rain.

By the end of the film the hospital is gone,
bombed by Assad,
left only as rubbled rocks filled with flimsy corpses.
.... why

.... why

.... why

I ask,
 the director asks,
 the new widow asks wailing beside the heap.

“a doctor dead is worth a thousand dead rebels” someone whimpers.

3.

Now,
I cannot eat without thinking how children dodge bullets for bread.
I could never look to the inside of a bar again when a whole country is barren of mirth.
If I think a thought besides them, they will be betrayed,
and I cannot forget them even if God has.

But what will mere remembrance do?
It won't sew back limbs.
It won't defeat the regime's crooked soldiers.
It won't cure disheveled despair worn like soot by every Syrian.

What can I do but
sit and watch this gruesome
senseless inhumanity unfold on a simple screen
in a pile of pillows
in an unharmed house
in the richest nation found on the globe?

I could become a soldier,
adding to the death toll by my gun before my own body.
My money would only be paper to a crime funded by pitiless nations.
Perhaps all that is left in this evil complex world is my voice.

To plead helpless as I am,
to live and give life through word and sound,
and hope, though wounded with doubt, to form a chorus of humans just the same.