Polina Cosgrave

CARGO

Gallery Books

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for Erika

Big Bottles, Big Rivers

I'm going to drink from big bottles
and swim in big rivers.
I'm going to honour the ruins
and talk to the graves.
I'm coming home, Mother,
will you make my bed?

I'll walk down the main street
wearing nothing but hope.
The boy who left me will stare at me in horror.
He has always had the talent
to recognize a ghost among the living.
The boy I left will turn away in disgust.
I have aged painfully, and he is still nineteen
and seeing me at the bottom of every bottle,
burying me on the bottom of every river.

I'll sit with the memory
in the old pub.
I'll write letters to an Irishman
on the napkins
lined like
his mesmerizing hands.
I'll gulp down the need for him
settled as a lump in my throat
for it only to return
the morning after
twice as strong.

I will wake up in the bed
my mother made for me
wishing he could finish my bottle
and jump into my river.

Pine Cones, Sticks and Stones

Half-awake, I have mistaken
the pale sunrise outside the window
for Russian winter.
It seems the world turned
white and crisp behind the curtain.
Just like that time
when storm Emma hit Ireland
I took the last bus to your house
and we were trapped together for days.

We built a snowman larger than the two of us
in a shimmering field that had neither beginning
nor end, the same one you played in as a boy.
Ever since the storm passed
I'd go searching for the snowman's remains —
pine cones, sticks and stones,
but the field would not reveal them for me.

How do you bring a melted snowman back to life?
Until I know that
I will get my eyes drunk
on the milk of morning light.

Eyeful

My fingers warmer now
in the pockets of your coat.
The wind has brought a shade
of cerise to your cheeks. I know it,
but dare not look.

I would put this evening
where I've always kept
the most important items.
My baby's hospital tag.
My town's commemorative coin.
My friend's last photograph.

The place I should clear out
for things of beauty to settle in.
It can't contain more than
an eyeful of you.

I steal one of your breaths
and my chest breaks open.
November sunbeams
burnt onto sternum.

Wings

That smooth loss of gravity
after the plane takes off,
moving the clouds apart
with its shiny head,
that perfect sinking feeling
always expected, yet always sudden,
time is almost brought to a halt,
light slowly touching faces
through a weeping porthole,
then a determined thrust
and a gentle release,
weightlessness achieved,
tasted by every muscle,
the whole body jolts
begging to be dropped again
with care.