

All the Wild Winds of the World Go Howling Through You

SUSAN MUSGRAVE

as you write one more poem of longing
and send it shivering into the next world
because, inside you, it no longer has a home.

What do you expect,
to sit under the cedar trees all day
and come away the wiser?

My boy on the winter beach knee-deep in foam,
laughing and stumbling towards his father's arms,
like the rest of us, perhaps, longing for home.

The coroner at the taverna

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sees everyone's future; it's his
business. He sees the one
with the beautiful neck that will
soon be broken by the other
with the sensitive hands sitting
next to her, sipping a Corona.

He sees the one who will come to him
in pieces, her body dismembered
by an estranged lover because,
as he confessed to the press,
she wouldn't give him any. The coroner
will be careful to note the body
has not been interfered with.

At night he comes to the taverna
to be alone, the sickness he has tasted
during the day consuming his thoughts
like beauty. Each time he cuts open
a young body he finds something beautiful
but malignant inside.

There are things he won't discuss
with anyone, even the boys
who bring him illicit
pleasures, boys he can be
himself with again, when the knife's rinsed.

In the taverna he does not have to think what will become of these boys once beauty has outgrown them and they have turned into uncertain men.

He does not have to see the one who lies before him on the slab, a long way from home and the pleasures they shared, the drugs, the cigarettes, his grotesque lungs now squeezing upwards into his collarbones.

In the taverna he does not have to see the track marks on the boy's skinny arm sticking out from under him on the bed, the boy always waiting for another jab while he wanted something he would never get.

He won't look at the boy's face as he bends to kiss those places he was, even in life, so afraid to touch.

Conjugal Visit

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Nothing out of the ordinary, only
a doe and her fawn nudging
the hard yellow apple
you left on the grass, a fist-sized
Golden Delicious, the kind
that makes your mouth bleed
when you bite into it.

The doe raises her head
when you step out
onto the deck to smoke your last
cigarette of the evening. Nothing
out of the ordinary, only the same
forgivable habit.

I say *nothing*
when you ask what's the matter,
later and then I start weeping.
I can't help it, I can't stop
weeping.

Death Camp, Christmas Eve, 1944

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The stars stab with their cold.
The day we are born we begin
to forget everything we know.

How then do we prepare
the body for its future?

I see no further than this: a tree
weighted with snow, topped
by a star that illuminates
the gallows where my mother
has been cut down.

When the snow falls
I think of it as my own.

That way it is lighter.

Friday Evening

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and it's Anny's for eggs, her eggs
all different sizes, a few too big
for the carton she forces them into.
Some are pale blue like the moon
on those nights I believe
grief comes to me on wings: who was it
called hope that feathered thing?

If the barn's empty you might catch Anny
leading her grey horses home from the pasture,
a few scatty chickens nattering or bickering
at her feet. Last week she sentenced two roosters
to the stockpot: rape is the one thing
she won't tolerate in the barnyard.

Her black dog sighs when I arrive
and when I leave, Anny's eggs
in the bursting carton
the perfect measure of sorrow, or so
I lead myself to believe.