

Alina DADAIEVA

Six poems

A little boy, sliding on line of light
to line of scroll,
where black letters
twisted, like black chains,
twisted, like pulpy leaves.
The boy stooping, leans slightly bald.
The boy swallows drops, transparent.
And in the temple two wilting lilies,
white lilies
and a bit of rice.

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Disunited
Dispersed.
While whistling,
Passionless
Careless
Groundless
Left,
Apart
All points
Precisely
Stripped of all profit
Ours – like litter
Like leaflets,
Like letters.
Like you sleep,
Gold cuckoo?
Are there no dreams
In the gray Kazakh steppe,
Fergana wilds,
No Russian words?

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Two centuries in a rented apartment,
quietly moving furniture
from corner to corner
and bare walls
pasted over in fashion,
the redhaired demon,
he thirsts for different songs,
Soviet string bags,
bitter rowan berries.
He has a sick liver.
And at night
he cries for mama—
and his own and the other,
and both plaintively.
Two centuries ago
his ancestor
gave an immutable vow
to wander
crackling under the heat of the sun
and all summer
drink weak tea
from a clay bowl.
Tired and swarthy,
with a rough beard,
he asks to go home.
But another's summer persists unending.

And the City slept.
Only greasy beards of elders,
prickling at its crown,
as a throat by the down of rotting quince.
And along the roads
Shaggy Gorgons on twisted trunks
Skimmed bare heels in water,
Suddenly spilt from the sky.
The bath on Staramoskovsky
- or rather its remains –
groaned
with ghostly steam and pails.
An instant – and all will subside.
Only the scent of hennaed hair
will linger on.

Shorts full of patches; a leaf tucked behind the ear
Grandma Zuleika calls out to Zayinka
In a half-Russian trills on: Olinka!
And on the clothesline at Grandma's – A cloud
dries next to a brassiere in satin,
And it's unclear which is more - unsuited.
The cat lazes around in the stable,
and shattered a cup of mulberry jam.
Horses flick at their drooping haunches,
a cat with mulberries; horses – with apples.

And a child lives up in the clouds
and babbles strange omens
underneath the carpet
braiding charades into knots.
The boy solves something,
but he is too small; too naïve,
he dreams of winsome willows and red lilies.
He sneezes from dust,
dust mites
and wool, trundling through fog,
he tugs on an overbroad jacket
and doesn't know,
where the blue ball rolls,
and rummages all around
and cannot find it,
and whines in resentment.

Translated from the Russian by Alexandra Niemi
