Orit GIDALI

Poems

Cranes

She is hiking with her husband in the Hula Reserve.
The children have run ahead.
She observes the cranes.
She says:
When I am a bird I will die in midflight.
He laughs in response.
She doesn’t know that he has another woman
She thinks it is his way of saying—my dear, I’d recommend
not ever dying.

When it comes she won’t die. Not at first.
The shame will drain her happiness, spasm after spasm, much like the gag reflex,
where did he bathe after the act, in which city did they meet, is he thinking of her,
she won’t ask, but precisely because of that she will never be rewarded with an answer.
Sometimes she will cry.
Run kilometers, drink only juices, complicated things.
She will be so confused that she won’t remember what she cannot.
The days will pass.
There’s no use lying,
she will remain suspicious.
Cordial towards the future.

Her husband won’t make an effort to bring her back,
perhaps because he is so panicked.
She will walk through the hallways
and watch him avoid her.
She’ll dance her mouth around the silence.

When asked how she is she will say:
I am a happy person in a sad time.
Or:
What love has to teach me
she teaches without love.
She’ll use these kinds of expressions.

One day without explaining she will get up and leave the house,
it will be urgent for her to see flocks of birds charging the wind.
She will cross half the reserve but she will find nothing.
There are no cranes, they tell her. There aren’t any, and there won’t be this year.
What do you mean, she’ll become upset,
but it was a long way to get here,
there are no cranes, lady, what do you want,
but the journey and the traffic and the fatigue and the tension
years upon years,
call the person in charge
please call someone,
there are no cranes
just empty peat land,
her voice will choke
and she’ll return to the car
instead of shouting
how could she burn the earth,
the dry and flammable earth,
but she’s not ready to hurt anyone
she doesn’t think she has the right,
in the end, as it happened, she died; she, which is to say, me; yes, slowly, but in the end, there’s no
use lying.
Child

You come out to the living room after bedtime
Bearing your simple question, like a passport.
It always begins with “What does it mean?”
and ends with “But that’s not an answer!”

I can barely answer any of them, Child:
not what orders the periodic table
nor what lies beyond space, if anything at all.
But standing before you, I suddenly feel
that I may not have that much left to learn after all,
and I might already be there.

And when you drag your feet back to bed
dwarfish in size, gigantic to my eyes
I know I can now remain silent in the years to come
just listening outside your door
while you read and fall asleep.

There is something beyond space, child,
I want you to know.
And it is for its sake I approach your bedside light
turning it off. On. Off again.
From within, the house winks at the stars.
I CALL TO TELL A FRIEND THAT MY MOTHER IS DYING

I moved apartments three times in three years—it still beats buying, in my opinion. Who knows how long this country will last. The children, the work, there’s never enough time, I just called to hear your voice.

Awful things going on in the world. How are you?
DID YOU PACK IT YOURSELF?

Of all the questions to ask:

Did you pack it yourself?

Yes, by myself.

It was hard, I said.

But it is harder to fear that it will never come.

I am not beautiful, you see,

And the heart is the size of a fist.
WE COULD HAVE LIVED SO WELL, YOU SAY, AND GAZE AT HER, STILL PRETTY

In a little while Shabbat in the Sharon, and traffic lights take off their red, and the laces unravel and yield the bare foot, and the records of the word gather into a book and rest from their anxiousness to break, and the change in the wallet emphasizes the victory of the many and the small, and the expiration dates on the milk do not threaten to be expired, and the first fruits are relaxing in sealed bags, and the ice in the freezer assumes the shape of the most self-confident mold, and the Styrofoam separates into small balls that do not need the practical, and the central air does not apologize for deceiving the heat, and the screens do not apologize for deceiving the brightness, and the poetry switches off the linoleum floor and switches on the ceiling,

and the adolescents are softer and are not putting off thank you, and what is piling up is piling up, and what is split is split, and the clouds ponder the field, and the field ponders the fish that float among the bushes in their imagination, and in the vineyards, grapes turn into raisins, others into wine, and not all the sweet ones are contaminated with maggots of worry, and he who asks for a deluge does not intend annihilation, but only a hard, streaming rain, and the community leaders return from the road, gathering a family to themselves, and generosity is being seen as a quiet virtue and not for display, and mistakes are removed from the heart of things, and the body’s exchanges are just, and the public domain is full of permissions, and the private domains are full, and the fruits have set a tenth aside and do not miss the missing part, but are lighter, sweetness is intensified, every branch that crossbreeds accedes to him with whom it was crossbred, and the bulbs open themselves to the outside, and the bees imagine the honey, and the trees get themselves a new king according to the vigor of the blooming, and the asphalt conquers the earth and liberates the best of her on the side of the road, and Tamar and Amnon have moved into a pansy, where they are making cakes out of the colors, and the dust is withdrawing before the pollination, and every drizzle is the chance of a rainbow, and the green that is in the bushes almost overpowers the leaves, and in the old people’s lawn that surrounds you the water sprinklers of winter open, and, indeed, there is suddenly a good southern wind,

only that she doesn’t answer when you ask, sparing you the nothingness, and her wrinkles multiply at once as if the little girl inside her were shrinking her into herself, and your words glide on the slope of her nose when you lean on your cane, looking at her, looking at the blossoming, looking at the asphalt (we could have lived so well, you say) remembering the earth

Translated from the Hebrew by Marcela Sulak