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### Three Words: Foreign

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# Three Words: Foreign

A Collection of Poems by Nina Stojković

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Fine Arts of the City College of  
the City University of New York.

Mentor: David Groff

May 1, 2013

*Who doesn't break into pieces*  
*Who remains whole and gets up whole*  
*Plays*

Vasko Popa

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I

Before I Came

Clasped hands  
In morning dew  
    Tulips endure  
What we do not speak of

    Traffic noises  
Stain my shoes  
    With disregarded architecture

    Unfastened incline  
Drives savored hotness  
    Onto my skin  
    Sensation plants  
A bite on my lip  
    For future reference

    The skies open up with  
Petals of mundanity  
    Coloring my irrelevance  
    Instantly

§

i run down the stairs to  
catch a dropped ball of yarn  
my grandfather's accepting hands  
tend my childhood scars  
i ride a bike impatient and ripe  
end of our street seems too far  
a boy on a curb gasping  
his fingers soiled with compliant muck  
i give him my marbles and a kiss  
declining to join hands  
my homework always done on time  
approval comes with no intention  
jump into the blotted river  
clears my mind for one cosmic instant  
my cousin's budding bosom  
curiously inspires touch  
inquiry about my girl parts  
discomforts those who do not answer  
a boy cries for my vagina  
i choose to eat ice cream instead  
death comes suddenly but not too early  
my grandfather's still veins delineate my existence  
i give you my hand woven scarf  
your reason exhausts my daydreams  
unwillingly, I take off my shirt  
and dive into the zenith of doubt

## Singidunum

Hugging the dirt under the fortress  
 Two rivers marry again and again  
 Witnessed by our virginity and ideals

Rain cascades over crosses and chimneys  
 Undermining sacred tenets of our ancestors  
 Deflating compliant artistic notions

Cobble stone sounds off her heels  
 She grabs my arm firmly  
 Ripeness overflows forecasting a fresher dawn

Adorned in fragrance of a marketplace  
 Cherries and melons map out our corporal passage  
 She stays silent, undetached

Blinded by the imminent pleasures  
 Our racing hearts declare the anticipated  
 Forgetting that nature amends her seasons

Bells play off beat  
 It's 9  
 No  
 It's 10  
 No  
 It's almost midnight, magic will wear off soon

Embracing the imminent past  
 August sings  
 Of a town where we left our youth

You took me out on long walks  
It was winter  
Snow persisted  
*Romantic* you said  
I couldn't have known being sixteen and all  
So I smiled

You took me out on long walks  
And I remember  
Your glove holding my bare hand  
Suspicion twisted my muscles  
But my tongue would not obey  
So I kissed you

You took me out on long walks  
Across cobble stone streets  
Over ancient bridges  
Through soiled sheets  
I trusted your taste in women  
And your interpretations of Rilke

You took me out on long walks  
As sparrows nested above my window  
My hair grew 4 centimeters  
And I started to smoke  
*Be right back* you said  
As darkness engulfed your intent

Liquid trailed down to my sandals  
The odor of your relief cleared my nostrils  
I anxiously licked the air  
*You are safe in the shadows* I concurred  
And strolled on

i recall the long lights of your car  
sucking in the sticky air of our  
preemptive temptation

hard ground  
thin blanket  
and my sister's shirt  
ruined

early spring adorned our pubescent  
anger with warm hues of  
lust and  
rejection

your clumsy strokes  
and long strands of grass  
tickled my open mouth with  
comic relief

your zipper got stuck  
my panties got torn  
and just like that  
we grew up

sanctioned years of our adolescence  
taught us how to sprinkle  
sugar over rotten fruit and eat it  
faking pleasure

§

The basketball prodigy with dreamy eyes was the first one who kissed her, French style.

She liked it, a lot, so they went all the way.

He left her for a curly blond who developed early.

The soldier on leave touched her, just the way she liked.

Spring grass smelled of his fresh shaven face.

He could not have been more than two years older.

Train whistles and images evaporate. Smells stay.

The law student took her to jazz clubs and told her about Chet Baker.

He wanted to kiss her neck but she hated his sweaty palms.

She told him she is a punk girl forever.

That tall dark guy, who allegedly lost his virginity to her, felt right for a while. Until, one breezy spring afternoon, he twists her arm, intentionally. It didn't hurt, but it clarified.

There is a reason why seasons change.

The swimmer was handsome and strong and learned in the ways of women. He marinated salmon for her and made her drink out of his spring. They talked while they fucked. She could see beyond the Milky Way. Except, his breast strokes could not reach her emotional undertows. He said goodbye. Properly.

And then, there was her husband, educated, sensible, unassuming, thoughtful. What was wrong with him? She can't remember. Pawns gradually deserted the black and white board, but she was a queen and *she* had the final move. Checkmate.

The horny, the depressed, the unavailable, the flaky, the clingy, the immature, the aggressive – all made it into her independent feature production. In the darkness of a movie theatre, she re-evaluates their roles. Happy endings are predictable, but we still pay to see them. And we never ask for our money back.

§

Flickering astrology teased their tongues  
Into combat  
Peons in someone else's board game they  
Fought their own war

silent  
impatient

A different June night they would've gone swimming  
Cooling off their steamed existence  
At this moment, the sticky perfume of absurdity  
Infiltrated their pores  
Camouflaged in  
First kiss thrill

rebirth  
restored sanity

Proximate obliteration echoing in their  
Throbbing temples  
Crumbling architecture pulsating in their  
Bone armature  
Unexpected affection shuddering

uncertainty  
and fear

Nothing else existed  
Behind her eyelids they owned the world

She replays the scene in her mind  
Casting shadows on the ceiling to portray  
The eerie episode of her so called life  
Disfiguring the intimate autonomy of her room  
Sirens howl yet another warning

She won't be dreaming tonight

In rare moments of stillness  
You barely resemble yourself  
Or I remember you incorrectly

I cut my hair and changed my name  
To dispose of your hedonism  
But insomnia lingers

My pores clogged with liquid steel  
Lines we uttered in unison  
Now sound Kafkaesque

I leave my safety pin on your dresser  
In attempt to mend  
Frayed tissue

*"...Prepare myself for a war  
Before I even open up my door  
Before I even look out  
I'm pissing all of my bullets about..."*  
Damien Rice

a soldier, in someone else's yard  
dawn on the horizon  
i weep out loud for angels to hear  
just in case

wooden horse with a broken leg  
mud on your shoes  
i put a scarf around your neck  
it is cold outside

i hear your laughter  
and i turn around  
rain beating on my window  
wakes me up

i get up and make some hot chocolate  
i bleed in my underwear  
sharp pain through my stomach  
a war is starting again

I put flowers on your bed  
Sun keeps your sheets warm  
I sit next to you and sing softly  
    I don't want to wake you

I kiss your left cheek  
It feels cold so I rub it gently  
You are still and I wonder  
    what you are thinking

I ask you, are you sad  
I ask you, are you hungry  
I ask you, are you tired  
I ask you, are you cold

I sit on the edge of your bed  
I talk to you but you don't seem to care  
Sun is holding my hand  
    and I think it's you

I fall silent  
I rest my words into eternal cradle  
I do not fear for you anymore  
    you are a big boy now  
I follow you in my dreams and I am happy  
    that you let me

Your hair may turn gray, I won't see it  
The laughter of your children, I won't hear  
I will be long gone before you return  
    and the flowers on my bed will turn to dust  
Before watered by mother's tears

Soft clouds weep  
    Thirteenth May in the row  
Earth lays abundant  
    Of fragile clamor of bones

Engraved with determination  
    I feel your name under my fingerprints  
The acid burns  
    But I refuse to comfort my marked flesh  
Branding becomes a trend

Remember that really hot summer  
    when I would wait for the sun to lower  
over my house  
and your house  
over our schoolyard  
    and I would water daisies quietly, inconclusively  
Anticipating a sound

That song is stuck in my head now  
    I hum it eat it cry it  
Too young to sing it off key  
    I listened as your lungs grasped for adulthood –  
And it is yet to come

I will soon return to the place that you own  
    Grateful that you would wait for me still

Warm my bed, my dear friend  
    my feet have gotten cold in the years of your absence

I put on a blue silk tie and my  
good shoes. I imagined you  
waiting for me by the fountain, your hair  
flirting with a summer breeze, your feet  
dipped into iridescent glass, your wishes  
reflected in strangers' coins.

*De quelle façon Champs Elysées?* they ask you and  
you reply, hesitantly. You are bored with all mundane  
routines, disgusted with patterned little lives of  
these ants roaming about pretending  
they have a purpose.

How I wish to have captured your expression  
at that moment  
in oil on canvas.

I pick up the pace through traffic and crowds, hurried to  
embrace your eager adolescence and take advantage of  
my reputation to lure you into bed  
with me. I imagined you  
waiting for me by that fountain.

You told me you like to come to our dates early, find a  
suitable spot to observe tourists and  
guess which direction I would  
come from. Anticipation made you horny.

How I wish to have drunk all your ripeness  
at once  
from a tall glass.

Sun was setting fast on our infatuated  
afternoon. I lost you before I even had you. Your  
pale pink dress, dancing in the breeze as you  
ran towards me, remained permanent  
ink stain on washed out pages of my recollections.

And yet  
I have never been to Paris.

§

It crept in softly, one evening in December.  
It filled every atom of the room.  
I felt it on my skin, in my hair.  
It tethered in my breath.  
Intentional, leaving no reason to question.  
Introductions were made.  
Acknowledgment guaranteed.

My grandfather –  
Lying in an oak casket  
    Stiffly embracing my mind.

§

Woke up. Walked down the stairs and into the kitchen. Fed the cat. Shivered from a fresh morning breath through a cracked window. Put on a kettle. Thought. It's Monday, it's spring, it's sunny, it's life. The water is boiling. Made some jasmine tea. Burnt my tongue. Thought. It's sad, yet lucid, it's unpredictable, it's life. Cat rubbing against my feet. Observed small dots in the distance – a chimney, a car on the road, a tree. We are but specks in alien eyes. Drank another sip. Thought. It's irrelevant, it's relevant, it's like anything else, it's life. Put down my tea, put on my clothes, stepped outside. Inhaled.

snowdrop flower  
single  
determined  
announces  
new life

## II

### We Persist In Tides

## Ablation

They investigate new subsistence  
 Deep in your murky veins  
 Intruding  
 Gauging  
 Examining  
 The tangible abrasions of your mature body

They glide over your cryotic flesh  
 Pretending they care  
 Pretending they know you  
 Moulins apart, they foolishly believe  
 It is only them you love

They penetrate your crevasses – uninvited  
 Scraping  
 Scratching  
 Striving  
 To claim the prevail of permanence

But you know better than to resist  
 Their arrogant attempts are absorbed  
 By your caerulean skin  
 Allowing for illusion to continue  
 For a jagged moment longer

Your dissolving reverie tells of  
 Other galaxies you want to visit  
 Drop by drop  
 Stream by stream  
 Lake by lake  
 Determined – you *will* leave

Maybe not tomorrow  
 Maybe not next year  
 Not even next century

But one day you will be  
Untouched

And they will know  
Once they reach your solid heart –  
It would have melted a long while since

What day is today?

It is Friday.

Mother knits a pair of winter socks for their baby. Dinner is steaming on the stove, laundry freshly folded. Father walks back from the factory. Snow falling heavily on his mended shoes. He pushes his hand deeper into his pocket, touching the envelope. It felt good, it felt thick. It will make things easier, at least for awhile. *She* will be proud of him, and he liked to make her proud. He speeds up, not feeling the cold anymore.

What day is today?

It is Saturday.

Girl stares at her reflection in the big custom made mirror in her living room. *This black dress or that deep purple skirt?* Formal or liberal – first impressions are important, and she knows it. She heard from her friend that *he* likes smart but uninhibited women. She could not know if he is going to be the one who sticks, but she wanted to make an effort. It's not fun anymore spending nights all alone, especially when there are so many young people in this city. There had to be at least one who could be good for her. She was eager. *I am smart and confident*, she whispers as she pulls out maroon mini dress from her closet.

What day is today?

It is Monday.

She forgot her speech, but she'll have enough time on the train to draft it again. She remembers the key points and she was always good in improvising. She will nail this deal. They expect her to, but even more so she expects it of herself. After so many years in the company, she deserves that promotion. It would be a good cause for celebration next time she goes back home. She will show *them* all that she loves what she does and she is great at it. The purpose of woman's life is not necessarily only in bearing children. Although she would like a couple of kids one day. Not yet. She was only thirty five.

What day is today?

It is Sunday.

The old man walks by the river, not too close to the fence. Cane in his left hand does not have a rubber cover and it makes clicking noise on the icy

pavement. It is a bit chilly, but fresh air does him well. It opens up his lungs. He breathes better. He forgets about all else when he is walking outside, the river calms him down. Doves are his friends. Few rain drops fall on his glasses. He looks up. It doesn't seem that bad. No need to hurry. Marie is not waiting for *his* return anymore.

What day is today?

It is Thursday.

They met at 6pm sharp, hugging like they haven't seen each other for days. It was just this morning he kissed her goodbye before leaving for work. Hand in hand they talk softly, despite the violent sounds of the city around them. In her blue rain coat she looked as any other girl, young and pretty, happy to be in this great city, happy to be in love. The film they are going to see is a romantic comedy. *A chick flick*, he said, *they just don't want to tell us we are suckers for paying to see something we already know the ending to*. She smiled. Placing his one hand on *her* budding tummy, he uses other one to open the door to the theatre. As she passed him, he leaned in and whispered, *And how I love to be a sucker for you*.

§

Hurricanes and avalanches

Day into day

Brand my skin

With reluctant butterflies

Desert storms fill in my ventricles

With misplaced desires

And unawaited longing

I want to outgrow my shoes again

And gain a third set of teeth

Longer

Whiter

Sharper

As hunting becomes consistency

Resting on the wings of

Headless sphinx

I do not dare

Utter the answer

To one question

I dare not ask

The howling

Of hungry wolves

Keeps me sane at night

Moon tides stealing

My human footprint

Looking for revolutions

And doubts that need redefining

I dip my fingers into

Murky milkshakes of

Interplanetary blunder

Gods laugh at my mistrials

As sunspots erupt

Into pool of dread

Treading water  
With my penis in her mouth  
I betray all visions  
And deny all intellectual existence  
Savaging last reserves of cambium  
For another shot at immortality  
If only for an atomic instance

Birth inscription on your left arm  
 Dreamt of distances beyond your  
 secret chords

One two three –  
 Seven auburn stars  
 of your fragile constellation  
 invited me into conspiratory stellar disobedience  
 Leonard Cohen's *hallelujah*  
 had no answers for us

Your left hand caresses  
 Defiantly my "no means no"  
 to the bottom of my third beer  
 Your marked fingers press the strings  
 Distinctively  
 Exact string at the precise time Except  
 not on my throbbing muscles

Your tongue outlines my earlobes  
 Undermining  
 all preconceived girlish fantasies  
 of reversed insomnia  
 and glass slippers unbroken  
 And this glass object I'm trying on for size  
 is half empty  
 or is it half full?  
 Which one are you?

Ominous thirst tickles  
 my cerebral verses  
 luring flagellant tendencies  
 out in the open  
 Your velvet whispers spit out  
 drowned roses even if my name is not  
*Elisa Day*

I don't care if she's nice  
                  or smart                  or wild in bed  
Fuck her                  reluctantly  
                  and fuck you                  inadvisably  
Does that make us a threesome?

Store your reasons for forthcoming snows  
                  when my warm cunt  
                                  won't put you to sleep  
Etch my name down your spine  
                  Forget                  how I got here  
And buy me another round of elation

Our movie ending                  authenticates  
                                  the disillusionment of *we*  
                  I bite into my wrist hard                  Exhaling  
                  that bittersweet taste                  through my nostrils  
You know the one, right after you cum?

I am mystified by your loyalty to nihilism  
And amused by your refutation of sentiment  
                  I want to pretend that you are real  
                  That you are Tom Waits humming  
                  A Christmas card from Minneapolis  
Long after the last call

I don't need you to seduce                  my foreign words  
                  I know where they come from  
                                  And you will not drink them tonight

They never touch            except  
 Accidentally            and  
 When they fuck  
 Missionary style

They never vocalize            “fuck”  
 The verb dismays them of            cleanliness  
 But they do  
 The action            as an offering

I imagine            a  
 Plank on top of            a  
 Plank

Missionary friction

My knees smart  
 In my temples

They never say            I  
 Love you  
 To each other            except  
 When they read news

Nobody requires them to

I declare love to my cactus            alone  
 On  
 My windowpane  
 He answers in prickle tongue            I suck  
 The blood dotted intercourse

My laundry awaits to be  
 Washed  
 my black t-shirt skin            fades down the drain  
 in hot rivers smelling of  
    “spring air”

I eat molding bread

Eardropping on their existence  
I learn how to cry myself  
To sleep

Spherical satellite unexpectedly  
Demands a replacement of my  
Failed womanhood

Where is happiness found  
If not  
in passing trains  
in inconsistent faces  
in occasional arrhythmia

When there are no destinations left  
I supper my last thought

Medicine man  
Is what they called you  
Amid pine branches and eagle flocks  
I saw your face  
Feverish  
Constant  
Until you cured my scorching brain  
With white man's logic

Her rag dolls habituated  
In a crimson suitcase  
Adorned with airport pixie dust

Landing strips hummed  
Lullabies  
As she combed their hair

Every now and then a stranger  
In transit  
Would be so kind to take them  
Under his wing and  
Feed them delicious lies

Oh how they elated in attention  
Forgetting that Solitude always  
Reclaims her subjects

Once the feast was consumed  
Nausea besieged  
And primal instincts induced  
Fear of flying

Her insecurities were her  
Most faithful companions  
And who was she to disrupt such loyalty?

§

I walked into a store to buy a ring. Subtle, understated, a ring of promise for the one who deserves it. I observed and considered and concluded. No ring was good enough for you. So I left.

Awhile later, I repeated the attempt. I went back to the store, but all rings looked too much alike. None could express my appreciation of your faithful conduct, your cooking expertise, your lucid interpretation of poetry. I felt they were undeserving of you. No decision was made.

After many years, a proposal emerged again. I wanted to buy you a ring that concluded your expectations.

Rain got into my broken-in shoes.

Chill crawled in through the holes in my pockets.

The store was closed. It was a Sunday.

I remembered how your hair smelled.

Underneath my eastern folklore  
 Your hand finds the answers  
 Of loose buttons  
 And black pantyhose  
 Our flesh proficiently translates

Between your language and my native tongue  
 We spit promises we cannot keep  
 I love you  
 I leave you  
*Rose petal lokum* tastes the same  
 Before and after intercourse

ETD (estimated time of departure)  
 Forces our vows  
 Into a cold green hands  
 Of an immigration agent

I get a new life  
 You get a new wife  
 The administration smirks upon *true love*  
 And so do my in-laws

As my hair grows, you work more and more  
 My *musaka* is too salty  
 And it makes us soundless  
 When we supper  
 TV flickers with delight  
 Reality shows win again

Borders are trespassed but  
 Grass was always greener on the other side  
 And now, our boat is damaged  
 With no other way of going back  
 But to swim

Languid water awakens

Oceans apart  
We dive  
We swim  
We struggle with torrents

We slowly  
Give in

Our blues streaks into the green  
Of my independence  
Disillusioned hues are grinded into opaque  
Little stars of *what ifs*

Once  
She wore his tall hat  
And inherited his panic attacks

They would saunter around the apartment  
Uninhibited  
Until they could not remember anymore

There was little time for nourishment  
He cooked seasoned infidelity  
Competently  
She poured resentment in Champagne flutes  
Repeatedly

Birch utensils left splinters  
Inside their sighs  
But they were too drunk  
To care

Rummaging through the debris  
Of each other's touch  
They learned treachery

When establishment exposed them one day  
Beneath a blanket of burgundy  
Their tongues were smiling

No one was surprised

Silk

Her left arm drawn behind  
                   her back                  compliantly  
                                   to the point of flinching  
 Your desperate remedies arching

*I've missed you, baby*  
*I'm almost there*

                                  Her eggshell house with  
 umber fence  
                                   and a couple of puppies  
 Your monochromatic frame filler

*Not now, baby*  
*I'm almost there*

Your fingers drip down  
                   her back                  tenaciously  
                   Her ablation filling in  
 your evaporating life lines

The clasp validates

Birthdays                  Holidays                  Anniversaries  
 Presents and late night texts abound in  
                                   sweet and sour  
                                   single serving

*Hang on, baby*  
*I'm almost there*

Crooked crimson lettering of your commitment  
 Scores  
                   back of her neck  
                   her shoulder blade

her toned upper arm

Single titanium stripe smudges  
her cheek  
her restrained mouth  
Reminding of the luminance  
outside of these paper walls

Her gratification  
comes the morning after  
restrictedly                      dependently  
Tracing the ultramarine palette of  
your absence

She lingers  
bound  
silenced  
pulsating from within  
as  
you take her  
inhibitions  
for granted

*I love you, baby*  
*Right there*  
*Right there*

She holds  
her breath  
your grip tightens  
and everything dissolves  
rapidly                      violently  
as  
you pant  
false syntax                      in release

You switch your perennity                      for  
her sublimation –  
Still  
she aches for more

§

Under my left breast  
I cut out a map of longings

My shoes are two sizes too small  
Which helps me think

When I walk underneath a passing train  
I make a wish  
And it almost  
Comes true

Tick tock tock tick  
Hour by hour  
Time is a woman  
Time feels

I feel time  
My woman  
Puckers her lips  
Seducing my ideals  
Away

Lust dripping  
Clock ticking  
Time standing  
Still

I swear I will  
But I don't  
And I won't  
Tides echo  
Away

And I feel  
That woman  
Fairy of the North  
Six months sleeping  
Six months keeping  
Our lust alive

Hour by hour  
Time is a woman  
Time feels  
Tick tock tock tick

Her pillars keeping  
My mind calm  
Rains touch

My mornings  
Soft

Lust dripping  
Clock ticking  
Life standing  
Still

And I swear I will  
But I don't  
And I won't  
Woman ticking  
Away

Her pulse probing  
My chest hard  
Warns of offspring  
Unsprung

And I hear  
That woman  
Fairy of the North  
Six months breathing  
Six months reading  
Another verse  
Away

We count  
Songs and kittens  
We count  
Birds and snowflakes  
We count  
Clouds and poets

Time is a woman  
Time feels  
Tick tock tock tick  
Hour by hour

I feel time  
My woman  
Combs her hair  
Trading her beauty  
Away

And I see  
That woman  
Fairy of the North  
Six months nursing  
Six months cursing  
Our love alive

Lust dripping  
Clock ticking  
Dreams standing  
Still

I swear I will  
But I don't  
And I won't  
Sighs melting  
Away

We count  
Meals and sunsets  
We count  
Smiles and nightmares  
We count  
Leaves and reindeers

And I need  
That woman  
Fairy of the North  
Six months seeding  
Six months weeding  
Our touch alive

Time feels  
Tick tock tock tick

Hour by hour  
Time is a woman

I feel time  
My woman  
Closes her eyes  
Counting my fragments  
Away

She stays  
My woman  
She feels  
My woman  
She keeps  
My time alive

§

She boxed all of my stuff in the corner, against the mirror.  
Camus was crying out, but I could not facilitate.  
I leave my arteries behind, but I take my books with me, every time.  
She knew this about me.  
She changed the door lock, the alarm code, her last name.  
*I want my life back*, she said.  
*Who doesn't*, I thought and fucked her best friend.  
It seems redundant to excuse myself from myself.  
After all, Bukowski is a good door stopper.

Once  
I left my pen on a pillow  
Feathered with morning sickness

Then  
Eagles drew blood from the  
Weakest among them

Now  
My immigrant fingers sculpt  
An audacity of recognition

My tattooed body aches to be confirmed

§

Divorce me.  
Riots endure the masculinity of our mornings.  
Storms share residue.

Allow me.  
Coffee and cigarettes support my anorexia.  
Our ancestors betrayed.

Divorce me.  
Leather ribbons can restrain the mad only for so long.  
Silence bites at every admission.

Conceive me.  
Rabies conclude the undertaking.  
Blood cleanses the childless womb.

Divorce me.  
Before time.  
Before rain.  
Before I dive into my eye and  
spoon it out permanently.

§

You ask me what I wore to your funeral.

The very first time, it came as a surprise. So  
I wore black.

I woke up early in the morning, before birds, and  
brushed my teeth. I did not wash my hair but  
rather combed it vigorously, pulling it back tightly into  
a perfect bun. The velvet pin you gave me for  
my birthday kept my hair in place.

I put red lipstick on and stood naked  
in front of a mirror. I pictured myself in  
assorted mourning outfits. Some appropriate, some  
uncomfortable. Hours passed. Naked still.

I reviewed a scene from a movie where  
this woman was at a funeral of her man. She was all in  
black, dress, hat, veil. When the coffin was in  
the ground and people started to turn around and  
leave, she leaned over the edge of the fresh opening and  
lifted her veil revealing the reddest shade of lipstick  
I have ever seen. I was four. And I remember thinking *Oh  
how wonderfully sad this woman is. I want to be like her one day.*  
The lipstick was a nice touch. A bow for  
her sorrow.

Black underwear.

Black bra.

Black freshly pressed button down shirt.

Black stockings.

Black skirt.

Black shoes.

Black tie.

Yes, I wore your black tie. Laugh if you will, but  
people noticed. They assumed *Oh*

*how most wonderfully heartbroken you look in black. The tie is really a nice touch.*

I believed them. I did not cry.

The second time I went to your funeral, fear did not possess. I wore emerald green.

I woke up at noon and hurried out without brushing my teeth. Few randomly chosen pieces of clothing, one white, did not show signs of my month long insomnia, lack of nourishment, and intentional social isolation. My hair was washed.

The retail lady asked me if I want to try it on and I said *No... thank you*. I knew it fit. I knew it will enunciate my breasts, my thighs, cover my skinny arms and leave enough breath under the length to disclose the emerald sandals you got me on our island honeymoon.

Emerald underwear.  
Emerald bra.  
Emerald dress.  
Emerald sandals.

Sun was comforting. I thought about strawberries. People noticed, again. They confirmed *Oh how most wonderfully heartbroken you look in that emerald dress. The sandals are really a nice touch.*

I believed them. I did not cry.

The third time I went to your funeral, familiarity had broken my grief.

I woke up around nine, ante meridiem, perfect time for waking up. I took a shower. I washed my hair. I brushed my teeth. I dried my hair. I put on body lotion that smelled like lavender. You always commented on it.

The white suit looked as no one ever wore it. Maybe no one had. I was the first. A calming stream of tenderness dressed me up.

White underwear.

White bra.

White freshly pressed button down shirt.

White pants.

White jacket.

White heels.

I walked slowly, gazing around, distracted by the Mexican funeral nearby where they sang and danced celebrating the dead. People noticed me. They looked in my direction with questions I did not want to address. Undress. Redress. I pronounced *Oh how most wonderfully heartbroken you look in that scowling query. Your unuttered remarks are really a nice touch.*

They did not believe me. But I did not cry.

The last time I went to your funeral it was June.

I wore nothing.

I woke up, day leaving me slowly. I did not brush my teeth. I did not wash my hair. Birds sang. Waves of wonder slammed into my skeletal shores. I ate my last bowl of soup. Fulfillment. Completeness. Purpose. I did not ask why.

I stood in front of a mirror. The whiteness of my skin was unbearable. I closed my eyes and pretended it was black, absorbing all other frequencies of light. Absorbing everything.

You came towards me out of the left edge of the mirror. Softly. Unchanged. You smiled. I smiled back.

Noticing my bareness, you avowed *Oh*  
*how most wonderfully heartbroken you look in*  
*your natural attire. Your hair is really a nice touch.*

I believed you. And I cried.  
For the very first time.

### III

## You Made Me Eat It

He sees  
    this glass on the table  
        in front of him  
Water  
Folds in daybreak indifferently

He sees a question  
Blooming  
    in this glass on the table  
        in front of him

Thirst  
Urges him to negotiate history

He sees a proposal  
Mounting  
    inside this glass on the table  
        in front of him  
Asserting the margins  
    of consciousness that is  
Now

Crisp sound of dismantled starlight  
Introduces  
    what he already knows

I lick my mornings wide open and  
fetch raspberries from the garden.  
Adriatic winds round my edges.  
I roll my jade marbles into your  
opal palms. Peaks blush.  
Misconstrued affection elevates my saline feet in  
consent. Lizards dance in my hair. I let them.  
Voyeur sun encompasses our breath.  
Calm. Before the storm.  
Figs blot my exhale. I let it smear.  
Afterthought stings our serenity beneath the  
Shattering sapphire.

## The Feast

Lusty Chicken Marsala  
 Herbed Seasonal Chicken  
 Perfidy Chicken Chowder  
 Acrimony Chicken Mango Chutney  
 Mediterranean Chicken l'Egoiste  
 Grilled Chicken with Spicy Vacillation Sauce

The right amount of salt  
 Easy on the cumin  
 Now and again tender  
 By no means overdone

You ruse me with feasts of gastronomic exception  
 You dress my appetite in bones and skin  
 Of alternative lives

I coincide silently  
 But what *can* I say with a mouth full of wings

I settle  
 And I eat  
 I twinge  
 But eat some more  
 Like a headless bird  
 Sensing the prologue to a great recipe  
 Frantically bumping into her Executor  
 As if to thank him

You feed me hen  
 And all I really want is  
 Cock

§

Optical illusions dripping from your tongue  
Exist only in fourth dimension  
I am number five

I try to believe the seasons in your eyes  
But rains come down hard  
Charting my ovals and fissures into a treasure map  
Lazy pirates don't seek the treasure

You say  
"I look at your birth constellation and it melts my snows  
That is why I hunt, to distract my chasers"

I understand you and don't judge  
I sharpen your spear with my lullabies  
Mend your cape with invisible threads  
I paint your face red with my virgin blood

Shamans sing of a King's daughter  
Who disobeyed her father and slept with a mortal

Lovers burn squirrel skin at night  
To swathe their smell for trailing wolves  
They eat morning bark dipped in moss  
They bath in each other's urine  
To trick the witches

Every time they vomit, they grow closer  
*Catch a butterfly at the end of a day*  
*Hold its wings lightly*  
*Blow softly into his antennas*  
*And make a wish*  
*Pin it down on the east side of the willow tree*  
*Make an offering to Hunting Gods*

They do not desire to break the curse  
But to die in sleep, together  
It is believed only then  
The four seasons will come together  
And approve their incestal dream

She whispered softly her grandmother's secret recipe  
 For a perfect breakfast  
 He listened patiently

*1 oyster egg  
 1 wing of a monarch butterfly  
 5 gently plucked dandelions  
 2 juniper seeds  
 a spoonful of overcooked tears  
 4 scales of a beaded lizard  
 1 read of Prevert's poem  
 a pinch of mint*

*Combine ingredients with medium zeal  
 Into a non-conspicuous fusion  
 Maintain stirring through at least three precipitations  
 Turn the heat down and  
 Let it simmer in sighs*

*Best served with a glass of fresh goat milk  
 With no more than five milligrams of  
 Salted vows of a left lover*

She pricked his palm with needle number four  
 He hissed and released three carefully guarded tears  
 She held the vessel ready  
 No other words she spoke  
 As night lost its youth

In the morning  
 She touched the opposite side of the bed  
 It sang out of tune  
 She knew she cooked too far

Discernment occurs  
 Crystallized like meth in a shack down south  
 Straps around them tighten  
 Forcing them to shoot up more of this liaison  
 That lies beneath their tentacles

Deliberating the impending outcome  
 He savors the taste in his orifice  
 Finds a spot  
 Settles in  
 Patiently  
 Waits  
 For his prey

She approaches haphazardly  
 Confirming the mechanical virtue of curiosity  
 Like moth into a light  
 Closer and closer she comes  
 Comes  
 Comes  
 Cumming still

Mouth wide open  
 Spikes flash with saliva  
 Palpitation subdued as to not create a ripple effect  
 And then –  
 It snaps  
 His lustful jaw  
 Seals shut

Iridescent trail  
 To emancipating surface –  
 Swallowed

As she becomes his  
 Submerged in a pool of  
 Doubtful corals

And self-deprecating oxygen suds  
The hunter munches on lean muscles  
And taut skin  
Delicate bone frame is fractured  
Ruthlessly

Both  
The hunter and his prey  
Fall victim to statistical margin of error  
Impious script alleviates –  
Alas, too late

Their secular thirst  
Humorously delineates the mirage of

Love Divine

It splits my rib cage  
I look at my phone and then the hour  
I think of my family

Acidic torrent attacks my left side  
While I read Mayakovsky  
And wonder if irony is permanent

I eat when I'm bored  
The frequent provocation  
Becomes my silent companion

Familiar twinge confines me  
To hold hands with Him  
In absence of firm convictions

Health Insurance does not cover the inconsistent  
And I am all  
But a believer

§

You brand me so I'd come to you  
    I dress myself in ribbons and needles  
    Hum my own lullabies  
And let you have my namesake

You cloth me so I don't shame you  
    I bare myself to all under the Sahara skies  
    Covered in poetry and lavender tea  
And let you have my truth

You feed me with language so I'd tell you how I feel  
    My dreams stay my own  
    Leading me through labyrinth of your definitions  
And I escort myself out

You paste expressions on my face so I'd believe  
    I laugh, I cry, I wonder and fear  
    Swallowing ideas away from those who do not think  
And let you have your entertainment

You fly above me revising the earth for gain  
    I choose to remain diminutive and frail  
    With centuries under my pelt  
Your wings will eventually tire out

I let you have a bite of my heart but only I will know  
    It is the lesser half