

Simon Perchik

*

Again the sky rubbing against my legs
the way a dog closes its eyes
--I wade toward a place

that has your hairline, your nose
lips the same--tonight's no different
although these stars once side by side

behind their invisible starting line
--a few already clustered in the lead
some last and between I walk

from Gemini to Sirius to Orion
--all 14 miles by myself
and in my hands an empty glass

that magnifies the sky --I still look
for clues, for the ankles, the yes or no
as if the night has already forgotten

what is dead, what isn't, what
is hiding in the step by step
across an old footprint that might be there

might still be wandering and its bark
try once more for distance
the way a timekeeper's pistol is grasped

held up, but the stars
slip from under, drowning before my eyes
--the sun still alone, coming back

with yesterday, today, tomorrow
with the closed windows and the streets
left out too long.

*

The same Krupp? this coffee mill
arm and neck
on orders and German engineering
and now each morning
the way marrow darkens
fresh ground from smoke and seawater

--who can drink from such a place
can touch this switch as if the trains
would stop, back up without expecting clouds
that have my nose, my eyes, my lips
sit down at the table, ask what's new.

The clerk in back the counter
is next, wants me to know
these playful mills are made
only black or white
photographer unknown
exhibit at Nuremberg trial
--talks from behind some valve
he's opening, sticks a little --a few
seconds
is all it takes --I can't make out the words

--even at home, hour after hour
I listen to its motor --no water, no beans
just the blades over and over
like a plane trying to get it right.

*

They're eggs nobody wants :snow
all day falling from their nest
and these waves broken in half

--it's so long since I sang
--I forgot how a word, one
then another, another and I am flying
taking hold a mountain, somehow the top
then stars --even the drowned

will rise to the surface
looking for air and the cold
--all winter this sea kept warm
--some bomber ditched, its engines left on
--four small furnaces and still forging
wings
from bottom sand, shaped the way each wave
still lifts the Earth, then tries again

--each year the sea made warmer
by those same fires every mother
nurses with soft words :this snow
growing strong, already senses
the flight back as lullabies --my mouth

can't close, a monster eating snow, my lips
swollen from water and cold and loneliness
--someone inside my belly
has forgotten the word I need to say
or sing or both my arms into the sea
feeding and feeding and feeding.

*

Not until these stars began to cluster
did the first heart stir --even now
the sky rising and falling
brushing against just my finger.
I almost start a fire, almost not.

To point has always been dangerous
--even the firing squad needs protection
and I cover your eyes
--already one star stopped moving
no longer passes through your heart
falling from one place another
backwards into how far everything is,

the glove is useless, not yet wet
or cold or the morning whose light
was once a seed deep inside the Earth
--one finger still remembers the North Star
the exact distance and from your eyes
their vague breeze still climbing
taking the stone away from your stone
till nothing is left but the darkness
that used to be the sky on fire

--more than ever now
I walk at night as if I could
with just a simple touch
and from your heart a great morning
--all these stars --in a pack
and from my hand the sun
lifting you into mountains, wolves, flesh.

It takes time. Winters.
And the glove I left for you
somehow is blowing away.
They take so much time.

*

To keep you from rotting
I drink tea almost frozen
--after each drip
gnaw the cubes :makeshift snow
half trance, half swallowed
and nothing is wasted, every shard
even the one different from the others
that will let me live forever

--snowfall over snowfall
the way a cockpit canopy
climbing till its glass frosts over
scatters into the blue mist
that will flood and the Earth
already begins to open :each Spring

from a grave the size
where just your lips
--nothing is stone only once, the tremors
two by two, rise half stone
half water for the sun
washed clean, turning again to you
as in weddings and flowers.

*

At every birth the extra child
disowned on the spot, sent off
still calling for more mouth
for both a father and a twin

--with the first breath
one is human, the other with strength
to lift clouds, whose grave
should always be moist.

Twice a day since who knows
I bathe from a well, then the walks
alone, try to remember
the last time it rained

--I need water from the sky
carry this axe on my shoulder
my step by sharpening step
half thunderclap, half

the bitterness only that banished twin
could pull apart and overhead
another sky begins to clot, tastes

like wax and my one fist
squeezed dry --I never heard my twin
or where such anger, closer, closer
from nowhere tighten even on my name.