

Elegies – A Triad

Mandy McKee

Δ i.

believing to be following your path

I let the bus spit me out in Zadar

jet-lagged and hopeful that you would somehow be the first face to greet me there.

how embarrassing to wear so much longing with

nowhere to put it

for so many years.

walking with your apparition *your image my bookmark*

I would never have guessed then, *my head filled with all the watery sounds of myth*

that it would take so long

for something to die

you stay exactly where you are.

early morning alone with the sea organ, prefiguring it all,

and years later, when we meet, the fragile architecture of my thought

begins to crumble invisibly

sound on mute

as if our poetry can't exist without both of us to compose it

maybe I didn't explain it right or

maybe I wasn't what you had in mind after all, even from the very beginning

but, for me
the shadow of you is in everything
I'm just finally able to recognize that I can't always
get what I want
and try anyway.

Δ iii.

in the black kitchen in Bled I saw my future with you evaporate
like music
up into the black ceiling where the herbs hung and
the apocalypse didn't matter
though I couldn't say it then *you wouldn't believe me*
didn't want to admit anything without you was possible *after all this beautiful ache*, but
I saw myself slip through your centuries of wisdom and felt
clumsy
you told me that the snow only falls in Pokljuka when the temperature is
exactly zero degrees Celsius *I believe you, I say*
and that when it decides to fall it will just keep falling, so
the world stops and waits to be entombed and
there is nothing to do but

*stop, wait, watch, make jokes, make tea, make love, burn wood, sleep, wake, play briscola,
play music, talk, walk...*

to the spring to
collect water
the most pure, you say

I always believe everything

We filled the stockpot with snow, melted it by woodfire. out of somewhere you conjure an
everlasting embroidered cloth *I hold it to your collarbone for a moment*

and we let warm wet threads trace through shapes of you and me.

you told me the most intimate thing that two people can do is

wash each other *I always believe everything you say*

drinking Štefka's čaj, a wildflower mountain harvest fifty years older than our parents
timeless, in a jar, reawakened in our bodies, we make food for each other.

what you call Rapunzel, I call mâtche

puzzling over origins of names of things that don't matter, and anyway you were always
so much wiser than I...tripping over my thoughts around you *so foolish, so clumsy*

I saw it then, but

couldn't look away, maybe because

the crystallized sunlight the morning after the snow buried us was so ethereal

shimmering ephemeral luminous numinous

or the memory of the warm cloth we washed each other with was the most intimate thing
I've known *sublime*

or

maybe the memory of your tongue wrapped around mine in the night,
while the snow fell for hours, was
enough to keep everything alive
for a little while longer *bliss*
my back on the wood stove
your hands cradling my doubt
waiting for the world to cave in on itself
under the weight of the snow, under the weight of our poetry
I always believe everything you say
I made paper cranes, listening to your stories, waiting for the world to end
and it did.

Δ v.

Dear a.

I got your postcard.

I remember Maribor. Walking anywhere with you...across the canal, through the empty market square, over nine hundred years of cobblestone, past the neon lit mlekomat. Following you into the immaculate time capsule apartment of Gregor's dead aunt like it belonged to us. Folded linens from the sixties, program notes from the city opera, crystal from Serbia in the liquor cabinet, scotch with a label I couldn't read.

vestiges of someone else's past.

I remember leaning over the balcony with you, watching snow fall and melt on the map of your face, the dirty street so still, the flawless cigarette that you rolled on the perfect tiny kitchen table...quiet city, a few hours left...

I think about the smell of your neck, the džezva you brought everywhere for
the Turkish coffee that lived in your left hand, hammered copper
you, so careful to never let
the water reach a boiling point
I think about your favourite movie... I felt so stupid... didn't understand it at all but I
wanted you to love me
I feel the warm deep spell of your voice, softening the insides of my memory. There is no
voice like yours and
never will be. I know I'm not the first lover to tell you so
I feel my face buried in your neck, my hand on your chest while you spill your
voice into my ear...
I'm sorry I couldn't write to you again
everything is impossible and you
are the most impossible
of everything
yours always,
d
ps. I took the band-aid tin from the bathroom and a fork from the cutlery drawer. in case
you wanted them back.