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THE INFECTIOUS ZONE

Translated by Goran Brkić

EARTHQUAKE

I dream: in a gynaecologist's waiting room,
the nurse recites the available examination dates.
I contemplate the days in my calendar,
weighing which ones would suit me.
And at that moment, a rumbling: as if, from a hill,
a great metal dragon rushed down to devour us.
The room shakes, all glass and loudness,
you catch my hand,
although I'm not aware you caught my hand.

Later on, we gather plant pots in the room,
the black soil scattering over the carpet,
no power, no news,
the thighs weaken,
one man in the street,
silence.

A little later: it roars again,
I grab the little dog,
I run under the doorframe.

A little later: the room is a drum,

half-naked in the open doorway,
you shout my name.

Later, the day twitched a lot later.

We walked through the biting morning, with backpacks on our backs,
a lot of people in the street,
a lot of masks on the faces.

Pyjamas, a cat on a leash,
a young man in a wheelchair,
my dog barking.

Later, the night twitched a lot later.

I'm learning to sleep – as if I'm learning to walk.

EARTHQUAKE

a swinging motion as a wide, shallow plate
on a Sunday morning on the 22nd of March.
rolled toward one another, tiny animals in a common den,
our temperatures doubled,
we become pillowy shelters on the wooden surface of the bed.
flowers flew from the shelves, and the painting with black cacti fell
but nothing landed on us.
it is white and soft, the equanimity unreal
I enter the shower stall half a minute before
another impact.
while you call my name, a thought falls on the adequacy of time
as light as fine snow.

through the window, the stains scattered across the street are discerned,
the first cold morning of spring,
your little white dog rings throughout the neighbourhood
instead of easter.

A HAIRCUT

The thing I bought last
when one could still buy things: a hair trimmer.

I unpack it today, it's such a day.
Want to cut my hair? I do.
Do you know how to use it? I don't.

After you read the instructions
(I don't even bother; I give up after the first half anyway)
I sit on a barstool and bring a towel.

It needs the longest extension, you say
and start moving the trimmer gently down the back of my head.
Is it cutting? It's not.
You attach a smaller one.
Is it cutting? It's not.
You attach an even smaller one, almost the smallest.
Is it cutting? It is.

A little bit down, a little bit around the ear,
your voice is calm, your hand trembles,

I know it isn't going to end up well,
but I keep sitting, sitting still.

A little off the top, too? Sure.
A little more around the ear, around.

I know it isn't going to end up well,
but I keep sitting, sitting still.

Your breath is fresh and you smell like white.

Later, in the bathroom,
I keep myself from crying.
And we keep fixing it a little bit,
there, you say, now it's better.

I've got a hole under my left ear.
I've got a flower
the only one I'll pick
this spring.

A HAIRCUT

round smoothness and warm insides of the hair trimmer,
for the first time in my life, it purrs in my hands.
and so many times it has sledged down my slopes,
today it travels yours, uncertainly led.
dark hair becomes lighter while the first tufts fall,
the swathes summon the summer, light and red.

now the summer means hope, a sanctuary for the sick,
for the alms-house the world is becoming.
pope francis walks alone through the rain-washed square,
over wet stone surfaces.

your surfaces are stepped under my unskilled hands,
and I am not any better with scissors – you say a millimetre or two,
I cut off a whole centimetre;

I've always known – a craft is a serious matter.

a record day for the number of infected in croatia,
a record day for the number of deceased rings over italy,
the evening surprises us with statistics.

will I ever cut your hair again, I ask her
she gives me a brittle smile, leaving some hope for the future

A WALK

Pantovčak, Pavlinovićeva, Britanac,
Kukuljevićeva, Zelengaj, Tuškanac.

We give the rare passers-by a wide berth,
sometimes with shame,
sometimes with unease.

Dogs are not bothered by our rules,
they greet and smell one another,
not paying attention to the owners.

The canopies on the slopes are half-naked,
as if they cannot decide
between winter and spring.

The trees apart on the foothills,

their hands and the sky interweave.

I measure a pinch of the blue
then break apart a slice,
bring back a souvenir.

On the descent back,
Goljak,
a psychiatric hospital for children and youth.
Yellow, with white bars on the windows.
The colours are fresh and glistening,
like picturebooks glisten,
or a game.

Along the road, the beached bricks
as desiccated words:
plague, leprosy, earthquake, Spinalonga.

I skip them in my throat
and gaze at your face:
on your cheeks, a forest sprouted
and a patch of windflowers.

A WALK

we tumbled down the hill
like on a bobsleigh run,
I bring you into the leaves.
green, green
and lacy

masked, uncovered, whoever comes across

we'll hide from them all.

a green hotel emerges, vitreously reflecting the woods.

a season of giving nears, we gift ourselves a photo session,

the grass, and the tiny flowers

to everyone who embraces the images of this synthesis lost in wandering.

now we return

your silk scarf

all yours

the distant moon

the zenith of the day

the less warm hours

the vertebrae hoping for

a touch

knees not so cold

black clover

homeland on the windows

and the ripped air

accepting us into its bosom.

a day that withholds nothing from us