

Henriks Eliass Zēgners

Poetry

Translated by Kathrine Sowerby, Kirsten  
Norrie, Jayde Will, William Letford, Llŷr  
Gwyn Lewis

**magnolia dawn**

the streets are almost empty  
the radio cracks my ears  
the night is disappearing  
and morning's not quite here.

I'm burning all my bridges  
under the cover of night  
the sun is not yet with us, but  
your window's still alight

eyes that glimmer quietly  
your eyes are dark parades  
with you it's so much safer  
with you the danger's far

at last my eyes are closing.  
your skirts in darkness dance  
through windows of the morning  
magnolia dawns

(translated by Llŷr Gwyn Lewis)

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Aye, well, there must be something that holds us together.

When the haar rolls off the ocean in December. And light turns up late, legless, drunk on sea salt and mist, we should be swirling the afternoon against morning and drinking the evening together. Instead, we're simply sitting on the sofa. I'm on the laptop staring at cars. You're on the i-pad shopping for clothes.

Something binds us together though. Often it's forgotten.  
Then suddenly its there. Rising from where the magic is hidden.

(translated by William Letford)

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smile: camera  
we'll preserve this picture  
will frame it, hang it  
on the wall

between a well-kept Soviet section  
confection dished upon a table  
and the dog, grounded

always, between it all,  
you will softly talk things most important  
sex, suicide, depression.

(translated by Kirsten Norrie)

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Your depression is natural. People will have the chance and choice to blame you. And they will. But they aren't important at all. I can explain the harsh cold you feel at night, the warmth of the midday sun. And what can't be explained, you will remember forever like a downpour in a new city. The inability to sleep, arms wrapped around you at night, that park, the song you listen to when you are alone, darkness, leaves falling, reeds moving, the softest moss under your feet. You are going to swim naked, the waves will welcome you, and see over there? The backdrop of dunes. You will age and your face will sadden like an oilcloth because your skin will absorb every little thing – every conversation, every struggle. You will do ordinary things expecting the extraordinary. Sand, your swimsuit on the ground, your irregular breathing, the heat. A seagull flies towards the wind turbine and, you know, we all grow old alone.

(translated by Kathrine Sowerby)

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write to me, talk to me,  
my hands are stiff,  
paint me a painting,  
so I'm not afraid anymore  
it's so easy to speak loudly

they dive into the Mediterranean  
you can hear laughter and joy  
bring me home a handful  
of snow at least

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(translated by Jayde Will)

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I wanted to move a boulder, I wanted  
to ease out a pine that had sunk  
into a sand dune, it didn't work out

later we sat in our quiet little house, I put on  
some music, I wanted to show you how I  
felt now, still, five years later

I wanted to find the words, but I couldn't  
move the boulder, ease out the pine  
sunk into the ground

all I could do was stare at the sea and throw pinecones  
watch as time went between the water and the light  
once again drawing that single line of the sea

(translated by Jayde Will)

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the flowers on the wall cast a colorless shadow  
and water flows down the window, down the outside world  
you – a senseless word, an empty lottery

gray – it's everything mixed together  
silver is gray, a discarded ticket  
water flows where it's easier to  
our hands flow into one another's

(translated by Jayde Will)

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Wherever that key is hidden – I'm trying to find out – it's not there  
I looked in the woods, the cavity of a tree, at the foot of the hill,  
I looked in the city, under those who've fallen asleep on soft couches.

I dug around behind the bed, I checked the pockets of all my coats  
I flipped through all my books, I rummaged through all my drawers.  
I opened up the little curtains of clouds, I looked under the doormat made of mist.

I looked in the fridge, where a horse had once found his lost glasses.  
No luck, I continued, until finally I stopped at the seashore, I see –  
a ship that never was is sailing with the key – stuck on the top of the mast.

(translated by Jayde Will)