

BIG LOVE

What comes out of big love?
The sizzle of nocturnal insects in your ear,
stalking dreams,
souvenirs on the very bottom of the drawer,

Hasty deeds, brisk maneuvers,
years or money gone —
the latter means you were fortunate.
It is much worse when reality cracks,
and you are left sticking to that
thin crack's trail,
day by day, year after year,
each time uncertain whether you are
in the right dimension.
Do you believe that girl, what she was saying
by the withered fountains,
her eyes full of words?
Weren't you saving her when she
fell out of the boat,
so you are now experienced in her rescue?
A ship with bright sails; a row boat
with no one on the oars.
Handfuls of wind that smell
like salt and pine trees.

THE GIFT OF SUMMER

Summer is oppressive, dazzling, windy.
Summer, which it was hard to believe in.
Lined with greenery, diamonds,
a summer I wanted to be mine.
Knowledge is someone's moth-bitten scarf.
Summer is a late shuttle to the airport.
Summer transports you somewhere without thought.
Summer, we guarded against ourselves.
Summer, we couldn't confess, –
too late, too large a price.
Write it in the sand, rub it into wounds,
apply stitches or filters, post it on Instagram,
rebuild it with colored blocks
into something different, a new kind of grace.
For picnics beneath the rain, quiet evenings,
awkward silences lingering,
hanging in the air despite the wind.
Summer, hold it in your palms for me.
Walk endlessly towards it and break free
from the ropes, stretched between the highrises,
between worlds, so different, it's pure heartbreak.
Shield this summer with your body from the pain,
from the reckless words, dust, and burn.
Summer, which we once again did not earn.

TOUCHED BY A COMET'S TAIL

Autumn is an old beggarwoman in dirty bright clothes.
Give me some gold, she says, I will call up everything.
She brought the seam on my throat, a tree in a hospital window,
then turned insensibly into winter, ruled by hunger for oxygen.
Sometimes a body has no other way of telling you 'stop'.
A pen spills an ink spot in the middle of the story.
The spot becomes a black hole, a comet with a deadly tail.
Here is how youth ends, with the first general anesthesia.
Our joint decade has laid paths across our faces.
They are easier to read than our diaries.
Perhaps we could've loved more fiercely, given away more,
but our resources are limited, we have to save them.
See how the sun's scalpels are piercing the skin of clouds.
The light is flowing on bridges, tunnels and highways.
The light is soaking into the body's cold marble,
making us choke on inevitable gladness.
The white wolf, the snow, has stretched from the curb to the woods.
Your hand is hurrying to take out sunglasses,
while the other is holding the wheel, while I'm pressing myself
deeper into the seat. While the road twists and turns like a snake.
It is hard to read the signs at such high speed:
blue and green signals, black birds frozen on glass.
A black tailless comet appears out of nowhere,
disappearing into the unknown.
And the bud of spring rain bursts.

THE GOLDEN FORT

The sun kisses stigmas on the palms of trees,
a path hides its dragon scales under cobblestones.
A fire explodes, a lion comes out of the thicket
But this is just wind, wearing a wig of leaves.

All precious gifts, those really are priceless,
acorns and chestnuts, hiding in your jacket pockets.
Children are dragging dry logs like boats
splashing laughter and rustling out of the yellow sea.

Annual October performance, tickets sold out.
Get expired leftovers of summer for a dime!
Walnuts are beating like drums and a squirrel approaches
sniffing your hand, a shy little red-haired beast.

People, the lost flock. Watch the lord, the fall park,
carefully herding us into his golden fort
while a thin voile of wonder hangs in the air,
while someone is still in need of high art.

– Translated from Ukrainian by Olena Jennings and the author