“Ryzhy in Yekaterinburg” Poetry Collection

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Powstanie

Windows cowered in their frames,
screams huddled in the alleyways,
and gunshots clinked glasses with the dying.
Generations of rubber boots stomped Warsaw’s spine
    out of shape.

August hoisted up the revolution like its gaudy sun
so that the young might have the fortune to die
in the summertime.
Medics dabbed the light from their brows
  into rags heavy with massacre.

Impaled by the sharp clatter of gutted magazines,
the light-headed city collapsed with its bullets.
From pinpricks and parted mouth,
its blood ran out to join the militia
  blockading the street with wounds.

Ryzhy in Yekaterinburg

In Russia,
the mountainside heaves forever.
From burnt-out sockets it blinks winter along,
as though a tear to garnish the scripts of its
ground-floor poets.

In Russia,
the hound takes scraps from gangrened palms
and plucks leftover meat from the soil's bones—
but it leaves the blue evening in the tenements,
for to live on sorrow is the poet's job.

In Russia,
the wind is a tenor caroling with sore lungs.
The swingset's ache slips into the cracks of its voice,
and in stillness when their duet is smothered
the poet culls their harmony into his soul.

In Russia,
a son dies with the youth of his father.
From grief, neither has managed to live beautifully.
The night, having strangled its only heart,
repents at the poet's graveside.

In Russia,
it is all too much to be a poet,
to wring hollow avenues into verse.
The mountain blinks more winter along,
eyes level with the stars.

Hotel Angleterre

Goodbye, my friend.
My inkpot has been turned over in the sky
and leaves none but the blood which
composes this farewell in my arm.
I write to you, katso, with all that remains of me—
the scraps fit only for a dog's mouth.

Goodbye, my friend.
St Isaac's is aflame, and Leningrad,
scored by the Neva and cross-hatched by stones,
in tatters dabs at its fiery wound.
My eyes, stale from tears, shepherd in the wandering smoke,
then constrict like water into ice.
In this night
I have only the hotel room to plead with.

Goodbye, my friend.
With these eyes, I shall not see my works collected
by the time my soul hemorrhages in the rafters.
I shall see only the poetry which congeals in the stars,
furnishing the wombs that once evicted it.
In their matted web,
something newer than life will thumb my hollow death like a coin,
and you, my friend, will sleep well—
in our seven-room flat
white as Ryazan spring.