

conversations with God

Bohdana Matiyash

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lately we've been left to divide the fish at midnight o Lord
during the day there is not time not patience enough to wait for you
until you are supposed to come during the day the thought does not even
surface sometimes that you may be nearby during the day the fish
root in the earth with their heads during the day the fish root firmly
in the earth with their heads waiting for you for me waiting for when
I shall hear that you are speaking to me my God

and also my Lord during the day bread never gets baked
I cannot even say what hinders it maybe constant hot weather
maybe I am just afraid it will get stale too soon
after all maybe I just forget that you asked me
to prepare us at least a modest supper
to add to the fish and bread some wine and olives
listen Lord why do you never want to remind me during the day
that the evening is close that the night isn't far behind that you my God
would also like to rest though forgive me Lord
I am speaking nonsense again you needn't remind me of my own invitation

you will probably get angry at me but I confess that I accidentally unlearned
how to press grapes my God or maybe not maybe I just missed the time
of their harvest do you remember my Lord those transparent amber clusters
remember how we walked in the vineyards and you kept saying a little
longer and they will be ready to be picked recently I saw that the vines
had withered I totally forgot to water them I stopped attending to them
and besides I listened so indifferently to your request for olives
that now I have nothing to serve you

when at midnight I finally recalled that you were to come when I heard
your steps on the threshold but tell me how long you stood there waiting for
me without even calling when I hugged you Lord hiding my face
wet with tears on your chest when I asked at least today

let there be no miracle why do you always have to do miracles for me
 why can't I manage to wait for your coming like normal people
 why every day do you give me so much why o my Lord

you just hugged me just wiped my tears my God and you said
 don't take it so hard it is only a pity that we have to divide the fish
 at midnight when even the bread tastes different and we cannot have
 a real banquet you shouldn't eat so late at night and then you go quiet
 you sit resting your head on your palms and watch me eat the last crumbs
 wearily put my head on my hands and fall asleep exhausted

you know my Lord the worst is that I never have time to thank you
 even for the supper just after I fall asleep you probably still do the dishes
 because in the morning in the kitchen there are no dirty plates I don't know
 what else you do while I sleep or when you leave the house I don't know
 why you never come for a visit while I am having breakfast or is it that
 in the morning when I am not yet fully awake I just don't notice
 your presence

Lord maybe it's better not to multiply this bread so persistently maybe if
 you feel compelled to do a miracle every time just give me different eyes
 to see you different memory a different voice to speak to you because you
 hear how it trembles and fails gets caught in the tree branches stretches
 and ruptures o God

maybe my Lord just come more often maybe don't wait until I open the
 door maybe come in without knocking maybe just drop in it does not matter
 my God whether empty-handed or with rivers full of fish or with rivers
 of milk or maybe just never leave me my Lord

7 (10)

just a little more you see and I will be able to speak to you differently
 than before though to tell the truth it is a very strange feeling as if
 you are learning to walk anew as if they are giving you crutches but do not
 stretch out their arms to at least help you up as if you meaning I am being
 checked out of the hospital though you know I was never admitted to
 a hospital and for that reason I don't know anything about such a feeling
 I only know very unexpectedly and unusually that responding to you
 covers a greater distance than to God at least he hears right away
 what I ask him and what I tell him it is so strange to tell you about him
 and him about you you know my room these days reminds me of a fish

bowl though it seems to me for some reason that the walls are bent inward this is probably due to the lighting and my fatigue though I don't know either its nature or its origin sometimes while falling asleep in this fatigue I think I have already told you both too much I should have given you a ship as a gift you would stow all my tales all these stories of mine in the hold and finally one day you would sail out to sea and jettison them as fish food and later maybe you would sail to a completely different shore with rivers of milk and honey tell me why would you have to return from there just imagine yesterday while writing these lines I simply fell asleep I just lowered my head into God's palms I just got tired of pestering you and him with my stories at least for yesterday there was more than enough of them you know this morning for some reason I was imagining that my heart resembles some fruit something like an almond or a pod with a million different colored seeds and different smells and right when one seed rolls out and loudly hits the ground and the ground begins to shake you have never seen this you are always rather far but if you want have a talk with God ask him how many cities are destroyed during these local earthquakes for he has seen them all from first to last yesterday these seeds were rolling and rolling out one after another and falling into the ground so quietly as if into cotton for the first time they fell quietly for the first time I just fell asleep on the word return

10 (32)

so unable so unable was I either to speak or to see tell me God what have you done with my eyes so unable was I to tell you anything except what you heard without my saying it except my God tell me what you want from me you heard my Lord you always know full well what I am asking you

so much I told you with my thoughts great waterfalls would flow if all my words to you turned to streams of water

my God you are silent though you know that I don't know how to hear you when you don't speak when you are so firmly not saying a word

you wait so long for some things my Lord until the maple sprouts turn into powerful trees until the waters of the rivers flow back to their springs until a mountain comes to another mountain and the abysses close as if they never existed my God maybe then you will speak maybe then but will you be speaking to me will I last long enough will I still hear your voice my God

what have you done with my eyes that they cry with such anguish what have you added to this water that it is all sweet like honey and when it falls to the ground it nourishes the grass and flowers planted by your own hand

what do you want my God when you let lips smile heart feel joy eyes cry what o what do you want such tears have never flowed they have never flowed out like water from a spring I have never thus become a tree on which there are leaves my God and dew and fruit what else do you want I have already been for you everything you wanted the earth and adam's rib

I have already been only a voice only a thought merely an intention and yet my God I will become a sound just a breath o God also just memory a leaf of ripple-grass to ease your pain as you look to all four corners of the world to ease your waiting for those whom you love

I beg you make them my brothers make everyone whom you embrace before the sunrise and whom you guide all day until the very sunset and over whom you watch while it is night while even the brightest streetlamp lacks light call them my sisters

just do not grip my heart in my chest like the core of a tree trunk and do not let me vanish like wild poppies that wither after being picked too soon look how the skin of our palms and leaves is the same look how this purple color suits them and then I shall show you my scalded body and arms

my God you for whom my heart so yearns talk to me with unfurled flowers of lilies with transparent water of lakes with the wrinkled hands of beggars and the eyes of bums teary from the wind I so pine for you I so yearn to be with you I so much yearn for you my Lord

17 (59)

and now leave me and now allow me to go and now tell me that not everyone here is tired and burdened and I won't believe you and who will tell us all that he will relieve our burden soothe all our pain calm our hearts that he will reduce this fever this high fever from which our lips crack from which we want to save ourselves with honey and vinegar wrap me my God into some cool wet sheets and let this moisture be unequivocally life-giving because if not you then who will give us this relief but first leave me alone just leave me with my dead body one on one I want to have a good look at it I want to see how you my Lord will breathe life into it and how it will choke from too much air and you keep walking around to look at

your dead trees dead women next to dead gates at blind owls flying in the
blaze of day in the suburbs at small bear cubs in the zoos 'cause where else
will you find bear cubs here go look at the animals that hide by squeezing
between dirty boards and under stinking sand among garbage and stones
covering their heads with their bleeding paws where the animals cry
licking their burning wounds go where I never go because there my heart
becomes very fragile very tender there it breaks out of love and pain
there it starts to resemble a delicate piece of chinese porcelain friends
brothers and all the rest just leave me for a while I will also close my eyes
I will also cover my head with wounded paws I will also listen how from
under my heart blood pours the rust-brown blood of an old shaggy bear

21 (64)

every pain if you wished it my Lord could turn to joy
when the world falls asleep and when I cannot distinguish your features
I think how joy feels to the touch what color it is and how it smells
I think how the human smile is born and how it dissolves just tell me
why it dissolves my God why can't it disperse across the sky like a
seven-colored rainbow or spill forth in the chirping of birds it would be
so nice my God so endlessly happy so transparent you know sometimes
I think that you created this world with amazing joy and then I get so
sad that among your mountains and rivers birds and animals fish and bugs
trees and grass there is so much pain that day and night and morning
and evening are filled with it and it shows up even in the sweetest embrace
I think of those who are grieving and those who are rejoicing and those
who are dying and those who are being born those who are giving
and those who are accepting you know their slightest move each thought
each breath from first to last and also you know how overwhelmingly
and sharply I now feel every joy and how I live every loss how I
suffocate among false things and how few real ones I have how I am
afraid to do harm and afraid to hug because to hug is sometimes the same
as to harm teach me my God to turn all these pains to joys if you teach me
I will almost not want anything I will almost not ask for anything
I will almost not need anything if only you will wish this my Lord

27 (83)

the love that comes tells me to keep giving
wraps a wool scarf around my neck
pours candy and nuts into my cape
as in childhood

watches over me like mountaineers over their fire
wounds me like a branch of wild rose
gliding its hand it says your skin is so thin
your heart so tired

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