

My Lilies

Olha Kobylianska

Prose poems.

Give me a desert!

A distant desert, a wide desert with a blazing sun, without any noise or life—one where I can cry.

There I will come upon no one's gaze. Neither mother's all-knowing gaze...nor father's, always ready to fight for his child's happiness, nor the pitiless, everyday gaze of a curious crowd—there I will meet no one.

There I will bury my face in the hard-baked soil, refreshing it with my tears for as long as they last, subduing me and my deep sorrow. The sun will drink my tears forever—a sun that thirsts for pain...

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Trust?

Trust is a little child, with naive, innocent eyes, a child who, having gathered thoughts and feelings in its lap, runs to whoever calls.

The child holds nothing back. Laughing and crying openly—it doesn't know any better—is its natural state, its whole beauty and worth! The child waits.

Large trusting eyes, never suspecting grief, look straight into the face of whoever calls. The child waits eagerly, awaiting it knows not what. Perhaps fortune of some kind, or something else—something as lovely, magnificent, and heavenly as its own soul, filled to overflowing with genuine pearls.

But no.

The mighty hand of disappointment rises over the child's unclouded head and falls upon it like a heavy stone. It falls on the head of the child who knows nothing of the world other than directness and truth and trust in its own sunny disposition.

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Love is threefold.

The kind that thrives on tenderness, the kind that thrives on kisses, and then the mortally serious kind, which nurtures itself and others. Itself it nurtures with tears and grief, with sadness and loneliness—and, once death

has come, with memory's golden, shadowy recollections of its blessed and everlasting power.

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Solitude is poor?

Who can prove that?

Just listen to the torrent of tears it brings forth and how they spread! Look at the countless marble-white hands that bridge its space in convulsions of pain; look at the torn veils of hope rocking back and forth, back and forth; look at the swarms of thought crowding into it with brute force, thrashing about mercilessly and ever faster ... to get where?

Dear God, to get where?

Listen!

Shut the door, huddle together, hold your breath—and listen!

A deer runs through the forest.

Through a green, airy, and lush forest, in search of something.

The deer runs, trampling and crushing flowers underfoot. The leaves of trees rustle and murmur. Within the forest, an old tree's imposing branches sway nearly imperceptibly.

The deer has just stopped short.

Has it arrived? It doesn't know.

It thinks it has. It darts ahead, side to side. Leaping and racing, it bounds ahead—and stops once more.

Its eyes open wide.

It stands motionless, trembling.

What was that? A shot has just rung out through the forest.

Faint sounds of something breaking, something crashing—and all coming toward it, coming toward it. Suddenly, the deer's wide-open eyes see something they have never seen before, and its ears hear something they had never heard before. The hushed forest fills with something the deer never knew before—and blood drains from its body.

That was why it had to race through the green forest.

Listen!

Translated by Olha Rudakevych

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