Home is still possible there...

Kateryna Kalytko

Home is still possible there, where they hang laundry out to dry,
and the bed sheets smell of wind and plum blossoms.
It is the season of the first intimacy
to be consummated, never to be repeated.
Every leaf emerges as a green blade
and the cries of life take over the night and find a rhythm.
Fragile tinfoil of the season when apricots first form
along with wars and infants, in the same spoonful of air,
in the stifling bedrooms or in the cold, from which the wandering
beg to enter, like a bloom of jellyfish, or migratory blossoms.
The April frost hunts white-eyed, sharp-clawed,
but the babies have the same fuzzy skin for protection.
What makes them different is how they break
when the time comes for them to fall, or if they get totally crushed.
Behind the wall a drunken one-armed neighbor
stumbles around his house,
confusing all the epochs, his shoulder
bumps into metal crutches from WWI,
a Soviet helmet made of cardboard,
and the portrait of a man with a glance like a machine gun firing
and hangers for shirts, all of them with a single sleeve.
So they will fall and break into pieces and fates
branches parted, fruit exposed to the winds.
The neck feels squeezed, in the narrow isthmus of the throat
time just stands still and mustard gas creeps through the ditches.
All of this is but a forgotten game we play in the family backyard,
hiding amongst the laundry that hangs outside

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the world becomes more fragile at each moment,
and when you suddenly embrace
through the cloth – you don't know who it is,
and whether you've lost or found.
And the swelling parted body of war intrudes into a blossoming heart
because we didn't let it enter our home on a cold night to warm itself.

Translated from the Ukrainian by Olena Jennings and Oksana Lutsyshyna.

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