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I Scatter Bread Crumbs to the Sparrows

From my palms spills the joy of sparrows.
I call them to the crumbs, *Come quickly! and Who will be first?*
Their frozen bills warm,
their small feet etch messages into the earth,
but the snow falls, wipes the letters away.
The birds are patient –
they draw the lines once again,
teaching me a new alphabet.
One bird corrects a mistake with a claw
and the book of poems is full.

As the sparrows peck at the crumbs
from inside the house drift news-sounds –
I overhear – *Ahmadinejad . . . Timashenko . . .*
The US minister of defense . . .

What is the impact of a nuclear weapon?

The sparrows continue pecking at the bread

Yuliya seems to be just as interesting as Yanukovich,

In Gates's ideas, there is no fear of hunger.

The smell of bread is far better than the perfume of a woman.

Silence, everyone, please –

the sparrows are pecking at the bread.

The bread is pecked by the sparrows –

the snowman's half-lidded coal eyes water a little,

its broomstraw hands tremble,

and the icy frame begins to melt.

Pecked by the birds, the carrot nose crumbles;

the birds assail, topple the dread dummy.

New Boots

The world begins from new boots.

That's what Aysel knows.

Everyday she polishes them, top to bottom.

She walks them everywhere.

Her father bought them for her –

and although they pinch,

she will squeeze her feet into them all year long.

In winter they will touch the snow and rain –

they will become a little bit older.

In the summer she will walk them around the house,

though her mother will scold her many times.

One day the size of her feet will change;

still, a little time must pass before she understands this.

Rabiqe Nazim qizi was born in 1979 in Baku. She has worked for several newspapers as a reporter and translator. She has published two books of poetry (Up to You and Episodes of Love) and was awarded the Nasimi Prize for Literature and the “Umid Ishighi” (Hope's Light) Prize in International Literature from the Rasul Rza Foundation.

Read a bilingual version of Rabiqe's poem “To a Phoenix,” hear her recite the original, and read the folktale that inspired it.

More by Rabiqe Nazim qizi
More Poetry

Two Poems (with video), by Hagit Grossman

“Invisible War,” by Gábor Schein

Five Poems, by Carolyn Forché

“To a Phoenix”: A Poem from Azerbaijan

Start the discussion…

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Two Poems

by Aysel (Nino) Novruz

I have broken a cup

There is an ache in every corner of this kitchen.
Every word from this young man rains irritation,
rains anger.
Three cups sit on the table to be broken;
the dearest of them is looking at me.
Every holiday, the loving girl earns a flower, a bracelet, or a kiss.
Last holiday I got a cup from my furious love.
It was blue, I loved blue.
But what is the meaning of the yellowed glue stains that spot it?
When I tore myself from my furious love,
was it the fate of this cup,
trembling, trembling in my hands,
to fall to the ground,
to crack
and shatter?
Watching my eyes, they
insulted and beat me.
I did not cry.
But for the spotted one that fell by chance,
for the companion of my joyous holiday,
at the breaking of this cup,
my eyes filled.
In our house, where every corner aches, there is a kitchen.
In this kitchen
my sea-colored, yellow-speckled cups often break.

Contacts
In the list of numbers dialed recently
your name descends – slowly, slowly.
This is how loves are forgotten.
You are removed
from the list of close friends on Facebook.
I no longer see what you write there.
More time passes, we are no longer close.
You change your passwords,
and I lose my faith in you.
Evenings, we have tea in the center of the city
with people we haven’t seen in years.
I put on my dresses forbidden by you –
I don’t forgive you.
To triumph against this love,
you have painted yourself with sorrow,
as have I.
A message arrives on my phone.
I know it can’t be you.
Here, let me open it –
just perhaps, it might be you.

A pianist and educator, Aysel (Nino) Novruz was born in 1985.
Interested in literature from childhood, she published her first article at
the age of ten in Günash (Sunlight) magazine. Her literary works are
regularly published in different periodicals.
Two Poems (with video), by Hagit Grossman

“Invisible War,” by Gábor Schein

Five Poems, by Carolyn Forché
Two Poems

by Jale Ismayil

We Shall Manage

for Rabiqe, who doesn’t like to read sad poems

our teardrops will dry
we shall forget even the easiest of rebellions –
rebellion against God

we shall forget jealousy –
both you
and I
will leave our pride at home

first of all
we shall walk toward grief
it will be confused by our smile
it will see that it has no home
in our souls – this eternal guest
will forever leave us
then
we shall borrow thread
from the Sun
and embroider our red, red dresses
with golden tracery
we shall acquire wings
and fly
we shall manage
to be happy:
to stick out our tongues to the rain
to throw a wink to the sun
to wrinkle our noses at the wind –
such things will occur only to us
and what we could never imagine –
you are the prettiest women in all the world – they will say
ah, we will love, we will believe
deliberately we will not ask
deliberately we will not ask
have you seen all the women of the world?
no doubt one could find
those who are freer,
happier
– only those who are happy
can create happiness –
but, oh! still we shall love, my friend
and still we shall be loved –
madly

Such a Destiny

My forehead must have been inscribed with sails –
I beat against the winds.
My body must have been carved from wood –
the storms shudder before me.
In the eyes of bulls, my friend,
a crimson scarf spins a thread of fear.
A single dissent, my friend, a single dissent –
just the sight can bring great leaders to their knees.
There once was a wide silent sea,
its surface even, unrippled –
I must have been its shore.
Imagine a person, my friend,
a person who would open her arms
as wide as the world,
and run straight toward her love –
he would quickly buy a mouse hole in which to hide

– one woman, my friend,
imagine just one woman.

Jale Ismayil was born in 1978 and received her graduate degree from the Baku State University School of Journalism. She has worked for several newspapers and is an editor at an advertising agency. She has published two books, one of short stories, Heykalin içindaki (2010; Stories inside a monument) and another of poetry, Birnafasa (2015; In one breath).

More Poetry

Two Poems (with video), by Hagit Grossman
“Invisible War,” by Gábor Schein
Five Poems, by Carolyn Forché

Pre-order your copy of Mestizos Come Home! on Amazon
A Man’s Confession

This is not simply loneliness. Your absence is a terrible and bitter thing.
Every night when I return, throw open the front door, leave behind all other amusements, enter my damned wreck of a home, I am filled with this bitterness.

You would never shut the door in my face. Your door would always be open.
Just the breath from your open door would ignite me.
This is not just loneliness. Your absence is a terrible and bitter thing. Every night I throw down my weary arms upon your pillow, as traitors to the homeland are tossed into cold graves. In my bed of ice I howl like a dog until morning. My neighbor told me, last night a dog kept us from our sleep.

Come back. Chain me to my nest with your hair. I am not afraid for them all to know – how this longing has made me a dog. Sooner or later, everyone will figure it out.

At the one they know is ownerless, everyone throws a stone.

The Desk
You are my closest friend, my dearest lover. Seated facing you, I cannot remain silent. You free my heart, always. You have no tongue, no mouth – you respond to me with silence. You have no need of paper, nor pens, for you have nothing to say, nor analyze. At times, my dear possession, it is to you I write. At times, when I can’t find the words to empty my heart, I want to climb upon you, and hang myself. My lovely, dumb writing table.

Born in Baku in 1976, Elnaz Eyvaz is a secondary school literature teacher and works for the Azerbaijan State Television and Radio Company. She has published two books of poetry (It Is Good That I Can Write and A Man’s Confession) and was a nominee for the 2011 Nasimi Prize for Literature.
Two Poems (with video), by Hagit Grossman

“Invisible War,” by Gábor Schein

Five Poems, by Carolyn Forché

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To the Children of War

Mornings, they run from the dark along the length of the seashore. Like an iron sword beaten by a blacksmith, the sun reddens as their feet strike the ground. Someone’s voice floods your ears – They reproach you again: the other children’s eyes fill with tears and your chest heaves. But you are happy: It’s another day, and the sunlight has pulled you, running, from your hiding place. Every day at this time, barbed wire pressed to the chest,
a song plays, and somebody sings. I cry out:
*bring a kaman, an anthem for you,*
and, if anyone can be roused to help,
*I will bring bread baked in the biggest of tendir ovens.*

Sometimes your wire-torn knees ache;
you want to beg, fall to your knees before someone –
and you know who they are.

You confess as if you are the guilty one
Closing your eyes to the spirit of childhood:
*I caught myself on the barbed wire*
*Playing, jumping up and down.*

They are just children –
afraid, perhaps, at the sight of themselves, how they appear
unable to give up even the ugliest toys
from their bullet-strewn breasts:
*Come, let’s go play,*
*I bring you dolls wearing dresses redder*
*than the blood frozen to your collar.*
*I will bring the largest tendir bread*
*If only I can find someone to help –*
Are you hungry?

Thirsty?

Don’t cry.
Soon night will fall,
don’t be frightened, don’t –
my own mother is with you,
nighttimes, she will sing you a lullaby.
Hush, she will soothe you.

Let me rest a little too,
then I will go to the shore, and running with all my strength,
my feet striking the ground, I will bring the sun to the sea.

**You Were Right**

You know, you were so right.
Everything should have been frozen in time –
the moment rain washed away the words
*wait for me,* written on the asphalt
by the neighbor girl in love with a soldier;
the moment the window glass,
fogged with the breath of the neighbor’s daughter,
inscribed with a finger *’til death will I wait,*
broke in a sudden blast of wind –
time should have stopped,
the homeland frozen,
and all humanity . . .

You know, you were so right.
Everything should have been frozen in time –
the moment a five-year-old little girl
scrawled on the white fence with a piece of coal:
*House for Sale;*
the moment a full pitcher of cut glass cracked
in the hands of a young mother, about to splash water
on her beloved –
time should have stopped,
the homeland frozen,
and all humanity . . .

You know, you were so right.
Everything should have been frozen in time –
one endless sleepy winter night,

the moment a smile appeared on the face of a baby emerging
from the womb of an older woman,
when the despairing old man, dozing at her side,
started at her faint whisper – *my son,*
time should have stopped,
the homeland frozen,
and all humanity . . .

You know, you were so right
when you said people are traitors.
When you said: People *turn their faces from love –*
*your beloved is a murderer.*
You were so right.
Love should have stopped then, too.

From the day you spoke this truth,
everyone in this city is as righteous as you.
They pass each other on the streets,
tattooed with the words *wait for me,* washed by the rain –
all those people whisper the same thing
*Everything should have been frozen in time, in time.*

*Translations from the Azerbaijani*
*By Alison Mandaville & Shahla Naghiyeva*

**Feyziyye** was born in 1982. She works as a newspaper journalist in
Baku. She has published one book of poetry, *Message.* Her poetry
takes up themes of war and displacement.

**Alison Mandaville** is a poet and assistant professor of literature and
English education at California State University.
Shahla Naghiyeva is a professor of literature and translation studies at the Azerbaijan University of Languages.

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