

Tatiana Krievim / from *BOUND*

Rundown

The night train clinks over ghosts who've lost
their silvery vigour.

A woman out of focus sways in the corridor.

She drinks a glass of high beam
through the window.

Jostled julep.

Trains crossing in the night.

Rapunzel's hair crushed her neck.

In a list of three:

envy-green dress
chin-length hair
sneer.

More?

Sleeping berths
compartmental
sea beams from the window.

Smoking
jade cigarette holder
train stack.

In the compartment:

Sitting up with his chin
dropping.

A click.

She enters via sliding
glass door.

Fallen asleep with a book in your lap,
have you?

Read upside down:
How to Be –

(His limp hand blocking the rest of the title.)

Adopt a papal manner
radiate celibacy
wear nightgowns with ruffs.

Pinochle.

He wakes.

Barely beguiling
in slouchy hat
she swings her belly-dancer belly.

So-and-so? Is that you?

TODAY I WILL COMMIT IRREVERSIBLE ACTS

*Ah! here it is, my love-resistant cloak!
I'll wrap it around me
and leave the house now.*

The ticket in her palm.

Jet earring snags wool:
fibres on a stud.

Body: heart vase.
Loose verb crinkles vision.

The chesterfield throbs beyond its lines. Expands.

BUILDING PRACTICAL FIRES

He doesn't know they're not coming.
Stop him from uncorking any more wine bottles.
Any diversion –
He likes to debate the tragedy of clowns.

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And then, later, we'll take him away, somewhere, by train.

YOUR PAINTERLY WORDSMYTHE

called today and left messages
bitten daintily into crosscut sandwiches.

He said you'd miss him if you were any later than seven
and you are
and you did.

He's on his way to the smouldering city
of verbs and passes
set to make the green light his bride.

The sumptuous exhaust backwashes this way.

You could follow him, but only in reverse.

He wants to be a skywriter now,
did he tell you?

TSEW

A traveller's scent, baking in the thrust of the train re-entering midday again
and again
and again.

She thought about the correspondences
so stark on the platform
misremembered now in loose scraps –

the imagined death of her dog
her own real grief
Delaney's crassitude
her unduly warm hands

– caught in the bowl of a hat
drawn out like first names.

She unwound the scent from her nostrils:

a scent as rank and unmistakable as *greenhouse, wine cellar, or book.*

()()

I kept all your letters.
I might need to start a fire someday.

HYPER-CEREBRAL ELECTROSIS

Your flushed cheeks.
That un-releasable heat
pressed against the window
where the sun is concentrating
like a chess player
about to burst.

You are unreasonably alive today.

Another city passes,
boldly absent in the windows.

Your insubstantial bodies
parted with like day clothes,
stacked like metaphysical pancakes. Leaning.

Trace them all the way back to the station and beyond.

Eventually ghosts will revert to a lifelike diffidence.

Only you possess yourself.

W/HERE; or, C/OVERT

A man whose mother birthed him during a solar eclipse enters the dining car.

He
straddles a chair and looks around him with specialized interest. He's looking
for
someone.

He shades his eyes, muttering
As soon as you don't remember
you forget
over and over.

BOTTLENECK

My mother told me all my life
fashionable personages
– her proclivity for high-flown diction, you see –
know how to layer.

The Comtesse, who clothes her girls in furs,
refuses to talk to me unless
I stand to her left.

Her eldest, Veronique, on the contrary, must be addressed
from her right.

Mélanie and Geneviève are still children,
their best sides yet to be determined.

Veronique introduced me solemnly to Bête, her Mordashka,
a breed of Russian bulldog she claims
has been extinct since the Revolution.

I must brush her teeth twice daily.

We exercise ourselves along the corridors.

What impossible things shall we do here?

Veronique banging her cane from wall to wall,
rousing the other passengers,
by turns hitting my knees.

My only option to carry on between
Veronique and her mother,
Bête and the other whelps trailing
in tolerated disarray.

MAINTENANCE

The woman beneath the massive stole takes to her lips your ear
inquires of you
in stagy whisper

What decade is this, drunkard?

grips your elbow
ore in the mine of her hand.

BEATRICE'S GRIEF, CLOSED-CAPTIONED FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED
(Alone in the Tiny Bathroom)

>> Beatrice: [SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[SNIFFLES]
[EXHALES DEEPLY]
[INHALES SHARPLY]
[DOOR OPENS, CLOSES]

AS IF THE TRAIN WERE A WHISPERING GALLERY!

No, no, Reginald, you are no raconteur,
not by any stretch.

Arrange me cinematographically
as I recollect our recent travels.

The tar had melted in the summer heat;
hence, we abandoned our caravan and waded
the rest of the way
until we reached the iron gates
where the mad groundskeeper kissed us
and gripped the Viscount by the lapels.

We couldn't get enough of the heat –
we built a fire on the escarpment.

Reggie here combed my Egyptian hair –
purple and black in the matchless blistering.

Our skin slicked and slackened
as we passed our tongues over
spummy hot drinks.

The fire kept for three nights,
the escarpment creeping ever backward,
crumbling beneath us . . .

UMLAUT EYES

The patinaed mansion behind the dandelions we just passed. Did you take it
in? There
resided – I dare not say *lived* – a man who concealed his alcoholism in the most
peculiar
way. He filled his various ornamental vases – gifts from his late aunt, my old
friend the
peeress – and grandiose watering cans with Polish vodka in lieu of water. He
had, to the
eyes of his undiscerning company, become an avid florist in recent years,
though one

conversation with anybody vaguely in the gardening know would have outed
him as an
absolute dilettante.

How have I come to know all this, you ask?

He confided in me – confessed to me – after I happened upon him chugging
from a
particularly unsightly amaranthine monstrosity (his spare fist clutching a hand-
ful of
dripping stargazer lilies, likely purchased from the local garden centre) on a
night he was
alone and had expected no one.

He told me he was at the bottom of his sinking, that he saw eyes in the swell of
every
vase . . .

EXCURSION

I never had nor acquired
the GALL to love
– preferring? –
to walk amongst crowds
palms un-clammy
distributing vegetarian sandwiches
to the homeless or otherwise
outcast denizens of the old town.

Following my brush with death,
the long convalescence in my own bed
. . . & the lucrative punitives . . .
I took to taking mystery tours.

Here I am on my way to.

I've settled at the table of the androgyne with yellowing black eyes,
pondering, wondering through my sandwich
– that face with tissue-y lips biting across from me –
what a punch might feel like.

Nailing the creature to the wall,
rehabilitating our crushed eyelashes.

COMPARTMENTS

This is the part of Rick's brain for cake design.
This is the part of Rick's brain for celebratory dances.
This is the part of Rick's brain for frenzied sketches of genitalia.
This is the part of Rick's brain for Stone Wheat Thins.
This is the part of Rick's brain for appropriate level of concern.
This is the part of Rick's brain for Ay, ay, ay.
This is the part of Rick's brain for measuring wildly, without cups.
This is the part of Rick's brain for hullabaloo.
This is the part of Rick's brain for vacuum bag replacement.
This is the part of Rick's brain for abstruse allusions to Paleolithic evolution.
This is the part of Rick's brain for what Stalin's clones really looked like.
This is the part of Rick's brain for wild guesses.
This is the part of Rick's brain for spoon-on-nose balance.
This is the part of Rick's brain for accoutrements of enterprising young man.
This is the part of Rick's brain for severed limbs.
This is the part of Rick's brain for television aerials.
This is the part of Rick's brain for skinning a lamb.
This is the part of Rick's brain for accidental wit.
This is the part of Rick's brain for ending the poem.

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This hour, the dark still
brimming the room.

LOUNGE CAR (Madeline and Gregory)

My husband went to bed an hour ago.
Yes, he is, he's a very sound sleeper.
Oh, he likes to get at least ten hours.
No, no, you're right, I'd much rather be a banker, say, than an insomniac.
Oh, me? No, I sleep fine, myself. Just not for as many as ten hours!
Hmm?
Oh, I don't know. It varies. Seven, maybe? Seven and a half?
Yes, any fewer than six and I'm haggard.
That's very funny.
Yes, you are, you have a wonderful sense of humour.
No! You do? Only three or four?
Four at most! How do you cope?
No, no, I would look positively *simian*.
Oh, no, no, no, you've misunderstood me. *You* look just fine. Really you do.

DESTINATION DESTINATION

The morning's hollow-eyed track their dreams
in to breakfast.

You'd swear someone just whispered

The Isthmus of Panama

then burped blithely.

You pick stellar matter
out of your mouth and eyes
with thumb and forefinger.

Remember why you've come this far,
make ritual of oatmeal.

SHE THREATENS VIOLENCE (There Are No Inappropriate Responses)

Some kind of purist
studies the back of a man's neck
recognizable as anybody else's face.

He would like to have a closer look.

He will have his assistant take photographs
and document on index cards
the ambient peculiarities
of the train
and the man
and the neck.

Music plays
– obedient child –
in four precise movements.

Some of us want to arrive.

COLD FRONTS

Spread-out Sal reads a magazine
while her myopic brother George, cramped against an armrest,
regards her with malice:

How to Taste Good for Your Cannibal Lover.

Not unlikely.

The Deleterious Effects of Poking.

All love on spec.

Wind slappings.
When the teeth rattle.

. . . The train cuts through the rain.

and we are all reading
The History of Molasses.

The tunnels all in our heads.

The trip shot and it isn't
morning enough for me.

Hubbub in the hall.
An old-time murder.

Freud's face in a long trenchant grin
on the mirrored back of a door.

LEARNING A LANGUAGE

Veronique and her volatile Frencherie had tired us all.

Mélanie lay back reading & rereading the wrapper of her Italian lozenge –

INGREDIENTI: ADDENSANTE:
GOMMA ARABICA - ZUCCHERO -
SCIROPPO DI GLUCOSIO - SUCCO DI
LIQUIRIZIA - COLORANTE: E 150 b -
AROMI NATURALL

– until she felt contented, the pellet sucked & tucked in front of her molars.

The train blanched into different light & the windows gaped like cameras too
close to our
skins & we were shameless. The asexual sun pulled itself apart & pulled at our
clothes
with soft hooks & we each thought the others slept.

FACTOTUM

Keep your blooming mouth shut &
old ladies will hold your hand, patting.
Cheques will arrive biannually
(birthday, Christmas)
or whenever God has been especially,
clitorally Good.

Fat widows will dispatch you
to Germany to sort their papers:
tickets paid, sons of friends
to meet you at the station.

Mrs. Schofield has had diarrhea for a year,
ever since Kenny died.

You may even make the odd cheeky remark,
for they are naughty in their way –
guffawing, pleased.

When this business is over
& she extends her generosity,
you're sure to end up
wherever Agatha Christie disappeared to.

AT A TILT

Languid in the action of the train
eyes cumulate afterimage.

Each one of us going
somewhere else together.

We remind ourselves of the narrowness of trains

and the garrotte we dreamt of
when we were so far from the next station.

DES GARES (Stations)

Years together.

Years apart.

Synchronous at Calais.

Each passes the other by.

Nothing in her memory
to account for his stray beard

nothing in his
for her tall red hat.

\\/

If I told you I admired zealots?

/\\

In another life
after you and I are reborn
as twins

we will sift through vintage garbage

to find a small room
on a dull train
barrelling through god-knows-where

and sit together again until the future
is irretrievable.