Poetry

Eeva-Liisa Manner

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Translated by Selja Paddon

When shore and reflection are perfectly one
the marriage of heaven and water calm and whole

when mirror-image is deep and clear
and beasts wander, and clouds and dark woods
hum in the deep without a wind,

only a bird’s wing needs to touch the surface to break the spell:
light and water’s enchanted confession to the world
thin as silk, but forming a bond.

And the world fresh and beautiful as if after rain
or creation,
or a change of mind, or a long illness
is the one, pregnant, limb by limb alone.

Finn Jacobsen

Translated by
Cynthia Norris Graee

Divorce 3

It is not easy

the absence of

strong smells.

Stale smoke

in the curtains.

The bed is too wide now.

Your girlfriends leave at potato-cooking time.

Freedom comes

with the next train

an unknown traveler

who is not fond of children.

The dog is agitated

sniffs at the wrong trouser legs

will soon be in heat.

You read books

watch television

understand nothing

or was it rust, what if it were blood,
blood filling in the tracks of fleeing hooves
as if the earth itself were wounded?
I saw an arrow fired and a throat coloured
a horse pranced and trembled with wet flanks,
another hit by an arrow, legs paralyzed, a prince in his iron shell fell from the saddle
and ran, if you can call it running, probably he too would have given a kingdom for a horse
and he did.

The yearning for
something unpleasant

He stood with his back to me
and I didn’t recognize him

until he turned slowly

the light cutting him in half.
He shook ashes off his suit while becoming ash himself
until he vanished, the image of smoke, the way shadows of those on a bridge in Hiroshima melted into light.

How I loathed decorative art
when I saw the handsome arrows drawn.
They were rusty, of course — from the fifteenth century —
are suddenly arrange
very happy make
in the morning decisions
and disconsolate are everywhere
by evening never phone
on Sundays.

It is a phase
your girlfriends say In the evening
something you have to they come
go through. slinking in
Weightless as an with a bottle
astronaut of cheap sherry.
you hover around You let
in empty rooms them in by the horde
and wait and try to
differentiate them from each other.
for freedom You straighten up after the last one
to do empty ashtrays
what you smooth the hollow
no longer in the pillow
desire. go to bed

Divorce 4
They are thick are alone
or thin no longer make an effort
vertical and begin over again
or horizontal in the morning
They ooze in the hope
tenderness that one of them
and good advice one day will become
for hastily put-on clearly defined
openness and unlike the others
With a pleased and will telephone
one Sunday.