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**ILONA MARTONFI**

### The girl by the sea

When you see me
swim in the Aegean sea
my name is Marisa.

Hard armpit lumps
burst and crust over
the size of brown-purple figs.

Undiagnosed lung sarcoidosis —
scar granulomas.

White sand Varkiza beach.
Here is a photo of us:
I am the girl in the blue sundress,

Yes, I get very tired.
Five-week family vacation.
My fiancé back home.

Standing in line with our bags,
Paris, Gare Montparnasse:
I don’t remember fainting,
Mama slapping my face, calling my name.

Seven-hour transatlantic flight.
Yes, I get very tired.
I cough and wheeze.
Melancholia. Anxiety disorder.

Here is a photo of us:
silver champagne glasses.
a diamond ring.

I come to the marriage with my own house and linen.
Pearl necklace, black velvet dress.
The eldest daughter.
Two sisters, one brother.
You ask, do I remember
love words —
Mother’s green plastic knitting needles.
Papa beating mama.

My name is Marisa.
I am the girl with
the wooden easel, gessoed canvas.

Tubes of oil, boar bristle brushes.

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Ilona Martonfi is the author of three poetry books, *Blue Poppy* (Coracle Press, 2009), *Black Grass* (Broken Rules Press, 2012), and *The Snow Kimono* (Inanna, 2015). Ilona has published in *Vallum, Accenti, The Fiddlhead*, and *Serai*. She is the founder/producer of The Yellow Door and Visual Arts Centre Readings, and the co-founder of Lovers and Others. She is also the recipient of the QWFI 2010 Community Award.