

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach: Three Poems

Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach · Wednesday, September 23rd, 2020

For the lost songs

where the shiksa cuts butter
with a meat knife and the rebbe
tells you to cover it in ash
set it on fire among the coals
and stick it in the straw earth
to make it Kosher again

where Odessa is a pearl by the black sea
and Kostya brings her scows full
of cephas and at 7:40 she opens
and closes to Jews and you hear

the orphan boy beg in Yiddish
for you to purchase papirosi
and the poor girl sells

bublichki because her father
reaches for the vodka and mother
for the dishrag and sister for the man
who pays for her reach and then

the lover blindly repeats
tumbala tumbala tumbalalaika and let's
be happy all the while
wondering if he will
ever be
loved

*

For Light in Soviet Winter

The first time I got coins, my father
made me keep it secret, made me
choose a chocolate gift and
take my time with choosing

how to keep it secret
from the store clerk and my mother,
who took her time with choosing
which candles wouldn't glow

bright enough for the store clerk
to know the origin of light
came from our candles' glow
behind dishtowel curtains

the first time I got coins. My father
believed in something then:
choosing a chocolate gift to teach me
the secret origin of light.

*

Things the river forgets:

that it is water, moving and unmoved

its refusal to ask about the blood

that my grandfather walked into its mouth and nearly drowned
when the current rose to his knees

that he swallowed sand and heard it crack his lungs

that at the surface core and corpse and corporal can't be
ground to coriander

that we too are made of seeds

its own image flowing powder out of our hands

his body is not as heavy as it was once

bones hollow as a seagull's

the little left will wash up on these banks in swaths

jellyfish that tried to live in freshwater but winter's current
carried them to salt and spit them back out

that he was quiet quiet underwater when a child
pulled him out

an ungraspable fish

that he wasn't in a river at all

that the sea is just a mouth

-full of rivers

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VOTE!

(Featured photo by Ekaterina Izmes)

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