

New Poetry from Alise Versella: “Parallels,” “Red-Breasted Sparrows,” “I Wonder If History’s Men Knew They Would Be Great,” “A Fierce Sense of Resolve”



TRENCHES OF MY LUNGS / *image by Amalie Flynn*

PARALLELS

The birds with conviction
Tap out their lyrics in the snow
And their chatter descends upon the mountains
Look how the flowers still struggle to grow
Like lungs filling with air
The soft despair
 of endings
 of so much life lived
It must be written
And then it must be sung
Like the chorus of a sun after a lightning storm
The bees like oboe players thrum
The morning sky an afterbirth of blood
This is how we love
It's also how hate seeds in the veins
But mostly
Morning's birthing is how the stars are made
Occasionally
The stars burn out
Like flames in church hall candles
Their ashes floating on the wind

But for centuries death is how time begins
Infinite explosions and black holes
All the songs the Earth sings that we don't know
The words to
Like psalms in a foreign language
But they have always been my favorites
Like autumn's blood-red season
Her heavy soil and decay
I love how a little death choreographs
The sycamores in a grand ballet

RED-BREASTED SPARROW

There's one red-breasted sparrow and he speaks
To me of grief, how snow diseased emerald
Spring, the morning worm dying in his beak
All alone he'll sleep between twigs nestled

As I am nestled warmly into bed
Goldenrod spears through plants on windowsills
That know not of sickness in heart or head
Mourn not, for there's glory in winter rose

The map of my veins runs wild with blood
I breathe to fill my lungs unconsciously
Outside the beehive with sweet honey hums
Hexagonal cities, combs built between

These milk bones of mine like geometry
Have faith in the calculations a body sings

I WONDER IF HISTORY'S MEN KNEW THEY WOULD BE GREAT

In case you were wondering
 If at all you do wonder
I mean stare off into the space collecting dust particles in
the sun
Wonder
I hope you wander forward

Do not get stuck in the loop of reliving

All the conversations you wish you held

Isn't it funny how we always think of the
right remark after the arrow has left the quiver?

Sailed on like great fleets on uncharted seas

Circling around unknown America thinking it was the West
Indies

We all just want to discover something

Like a cure for the aching

I hope your daydreams lead you to rejoicing

In the architecture of your body

A city skyline rising

How it glimmers like those dust particles in the sun
I hope you wonder about the things you could become

Not what you have done

I hope you never ruminate on anything you think you missed

That it isn't here anymore only means there is room on the
gallery walls for new art

Do you understand what I am telling you?

Your mouth is a paint brush; I want the acrylic to speak to me
a new language

Teach me a new word for matrimony

That colors and my empty sighs could wed

And the canvas and I

Would bleed a glorious red

The beautiful ruin of the withering day
How you empty it out for its worth because no gold can stay

In case you were wondering

I dream about the galaxy, turn my mind to stargazing

Believe in little green men terrorizing craters like two-year-
old boys ransack the waiting room

We are all waiting for something to begin

Daydream about what that is

I know it to be breathing under water; I am waiting for my
gills to appear

I want to swim, Pinocchio in the mouth of the whale

Don't you see?

Movement is the way the lake ripples, breathing

The sky is a wave cresting

And you could be as great

As history's greatest men

If only you believed the way they did.

A FIERCE SENSE OF RESOLVE

Resolutions require revolution

And I have been at battle with the nation of my body since
puberty

I have gone to war with my heart as it broke

And broke

And broke

Reinforced the battalions to hold the pieces up

And the bullets ricocheted off the trenches of my lungs

And I swore the fires pillaging the village of my stomach
would wipe out the living

I am living like a militia razing the fields of foreign
countries

I am burning the boundaries

Rewriting the policies

I am done policing this body

I am done living like I am a war-torn country

A refugee seeking refuge from my own self-pity

I am finished doubting the ability to achieve my dreams

Just because they haven't happened yet

Civilization was not built easily

There was death in battle and conquerors invading

Trespassers trying to take away
All that I made
Of myself

How dare I
Monarch and sovereign body
Forget that I am royalty
A king
A rajah in the Bhagavad
How dare I lose faith in the ruby red of my blood
Propelling the turbines of this heart

I have resolved to tap this vein
And inundate the land
The great flood once again
Ready your ark and corral your lambs

The fox is on the hunt
I am cunning enough
To see through the lies I tell myself

A kitsune never deceives herself
Never traps herself in the hunter's snare
She will own the year
And the forest
And the air
Breathe the freedom she pulled from his rib.