

New Poetry by Sofia Tiapkina: "To Forget or Not Maybe," "Grasping the Sky," and "Airless Embrace"



THE SILENT SKY / *image by Amalie Flynn*

to forget or not maybe

to forget or not maybe
to fight for memory or not
i'm here i'm she
lying on my back underneath me
blue cherries of bruises ten backs
all pierced by bullets all riddled
no one seems to cry here this defenseless death is unshared

with any and all
i look around at people all around still people these old
trees outside what a spring so wildly
blooms and dies with a scream
i rise from my knees or maybe just
think that i rise i was a teacher
what remains of the school now
walls shrubs suckle blood from the soil
i taught them to never
kill people and now
i'm face to face
with the killers of children hands and face changed the maples
turned perfectly crimson too soon
broke my
spine and soul i would tell them if i still taught never kill
anyone
i rise from my knees call out to god
god i accept everything i
understand the end of life
i accept it i am desecrated
why do you punish me
with this life
after death

Grasping the Sky

Inside us: a piece of
sky, blue and rusty,
smelling of winter and
gunpowder.

Who will see us as we crawl, chasing
the shadows of the clouds?

She reanimates the land.

The bombs, and bullets, and bodies took
its breath away and send it straight into cardiac arrest.

The scars of war are on her palms and tongue,
but she keeps going because without the land,
her heart will stop, too.

Land—земля—zemlia: a greenplace, a birthgiver, our bread.
She puts her hands around it and tries to close off
the wounds of horror and destruction and
deathdeathdeathdeath
that the inhumans opened with their hungry teeth.
Sometimes, when the blood stops rushing through her ears
or between her fingers,
she hears the echo of “brotherly nations,” “local
misunderstanding,”
“child actors.”
The land moans under the weight of
countless bones.

We carry no
prophecies under our skin.

The silent sky
floods our mouths.
Who will hear us climb up
the lifeless mushrooms?

He rebuilds the house.
A new foundation in place of his ancestors'
home built with tears. The missile took
the walls, but the kitchen table is still
standing in the middle.

House—будинок—budynok: a warm place, a safehold, our nest.
He drinks tea at the kitchen table.
One year anniversary,
he feels the explosions
reverberating through his ribs.
His daughter would have turned three.
His wife would have put a pot of

lilacs by her crib.

He drinks tea at the kitchen table of a murdered house.
It's hot and bitter, and for a minute, he forgets
a new future of new houses with
no one inside.

Everything we wanted
was in the sound
of the sky without
the stench of corpses.
Who will remember us if
the task ahead will take a generation?

They reconstruct their homeland.
Too many questions, too little time: where
do they fit between now and then;
how do they embezzle millions yet fight corruption
as never before; what are dignity and justice and fairness
if the debris of a shelled hospital hide
the broken pieces of mothers and newborns.

Homeland—Батьківщина—Bat'kivschiyna: a free place, a seeing
glass, our hope.

They won't live to see it without blood and tears
soaking its black ground. How do they repair machine-gunned
hearts?

How do they rebuild a cracked-open sky?
They reconstruct their homeland as the bombs
try to bring them to their knees. Too many
questions, too little time. But the question,
"Will we live?" is not one of them.

Millions of hands breaking the chains
shout the answer louder than
air raid sirens.

Inside us: a whisper
of summer, when sunflowers
grow from the ash.

Who will catch the birds
pecking out a path between
the sky and wheat fields?

No one. Our wings hold the glory of freedom.

airless embrace

i miss you like i miss the sky
cold so painfully blue
angels must have
dripped blueberry juice
from the clouds
i want to tether myself
to the sky-whispers
embrace them bury my
face into their warmth
but it doesn't make you here
i stalk the shore scooping
up birds beaks
black with blood
you used your skirt
to wipe off the
red from their feathers
why did you
let go
the earth drinks soot
i'm thirsty for
the sound of
your smile
under the winter sun
on the shore
i pick the nightingales
curl my toes to find
the damper sand
the soft homes of crabs below

i hold the memory
of your hair
between my fingers
i miss you
until i fly out of
the soil's arms
and the sky
catches me
in its thousand
blue hands