

LAND'S END

Dasha Bulatova

I.

Land's end: two coasts
converging into one nothing
but sea: without sea
there would be no milk
as sweet as its sound.
Once in a while, a thistle,
or the pinkest sunset,
an elk framing its haze with his antlers.
The raven settles on Hawk Hill,
I take a picture,
then it plunges into the gulch
lined with the pain of raw rock
crested all new, all day.
I cough in the fog. I burn a hole
in the quiet sea.

II.

This morning, Alexander dressed
for church in his best sweater
and boots, said he'll
be back soon. I lay in bed,
a fever wavering off, on, off, on.
But what then?
What strange span
of presence erasing
the absence?

III.

What grace I have I did not earn.
After everything, after all,
I am still afraid. My mother is there,
picking blackberries. She places
her hand on my fever and smiles.
I am afraid to die, Alexander.
I wanted to tell you so that I could
see you there, poplars rustling,
shedding your first tear
on the grey stone.
Christ, how long will I be
homeward bound?

Those poplars, I learned,
will not grow again.
And my sons, those darlings,
must wait to be named.
This emptiness not like the plenty
in the wide desert. This loneliness
is what I am always trying to stave off.
The restless hands are spinning,
and your train, Alexander, is leaving.

IV.

All of my dreams
begin in memory:
a girl holding a sunflower,
a car hurtling through
the rural village where
my grandmother grew lilacs,
the urgency of heat
in the night with you,
the mornings where
the dreams scrape
the surface.
I am so sorry, my sweetest
things. This year, I was indeed
the tree unwinding, a loosening
of roots and bark burning,
though slowly, I become the mustang the
helicopters run through the Western deserts,
all gold and light, all hawk and miles.