

from The Book of Esther

VI

Last night we leafed through his facsimiles
of Japanese prints and woodcuts. Pine trees.
Plum blossom. White orchids cinched to the stalk;
frail, trembling in the emptiness. This is how I want
to write: brittle wisps against a wordless background.

Not to work in spite of silence, but to give it shape,
like a lit window pulsing in the distance on a dark
night. I want to look at the blank sheet of paper and
see in it the root, the tough kernel of truth.
Not its unbearable absence trained on me like a gun.

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II

The blue lines of my notebook run like stitches through the day: peeking out, pulling the world together, only to dip below the surface again. Typing up a letter, I see one pierce the air on the tip of a needle as the sun unravels its light in the last of the autumn leaves, shadows dancing in the dusty window. Then come the headaches, days of waking breathless, drenched in sweat. Knots, tangles, cuts. When I try to pull the thread the fabric only frays.

Last night, Loekie could hardly focus on her Russian. Scratching, her knuckles flushed with rashes, she smiled and stammered. No buttermilk, no rye bread, no carrots. Her round, darting eyes; her sharpened face. I want to hold her, to hold onto her, to shut her up in a story that never ends.

O Loekie, I long
to watch you tip-toe like a child on my pale blue lines,
to tie you up in them.