

Three Miniatures

Iryna Vilde

A Legend About A Dream

“If you only knew what a wonderful dream I had last night,” said the older woman to her friend.

“So tell me.”

“Just think, I dreamed that I had regained power over a man.”

“Is that all?” The younger woman was clearly disappointed. “Don’t you have any power over your husband or your sons?”

“You’re not listening carefully.” The older woman said, growing impatient. “I’m talking about power over a man’s heart and you’re asking about my husband and kids.”

“I see! So, it’s our fate to regret that pleasant dreams come to us so seldom. And then, what’s a dream, anyway? A web of illusions, that’s all.”

“Stop grumbling,” snapped the older woman. “Or that web, too, will fly away from me.” Then she added with melancholy: “Oh you young people! Give them a candy and they want the whole box.”

And That’s the Problem

“Mom, isn’t it true that when a couple breaks up, they return the gifts they gave each other?”

“Yes, more or less.”

“And, what about feelings? Do people give them back too? Or do they burn them with old papers in the fireplace? Or maybe they give them to the janitor as a keepsake? Or listen, maybe they leave them in the old apartment, somewhere in the corner with the chipped bottles? Honestly, Mom, what do people do with their feelings when they separate? They can’t just throw them in the trash with the jars and tins, can they?”

“No. Feelings are not thrown out with the trash. People dig a grave for them in their hearts and bury them there. Some do it ceremoniously, others do it any old way, just to hide them.

“And then they walk around with a grave in their hearts?”

“Yes, and usually with more than one.”

“Will there be a grave in my heart too?”

“Very likely, my dear.”

“Mom, that’s scary. How can I avoid having a grave in my heart?”

“If I only knew! Except if you never fall in love with anyone.”

“What do you mean, Mom? Never?! Nobody?! Never love anybody?
That’s impossible!”

“And that’s the problem, my child!”

You

You said to me: “When spring arrives, I will take you in my arms and I’ll tell you something that I’ve never told any other woman before.”

And I believed you—I believed that your vocabulary of love could still contain some words that you have never yet uttered to any woman.

(You who laugh at my naïveté—show me a single woman who would not believe that her chosen one has reserved in his vocabulary at least a couple of words intended for her alone. If you do, I’ll stop believing in love, just as I have stopped believing in fidelity.)

You’re thirty and have a profile like those carved in marble, so the thought of several words that you’ve never yet spoken to any woman yet....

And so, since that day in December, I’ve been dreaming of the spring.... But how will I recognize it here in the city?

Maybe in the village, swallows are already weaving their nests and children are running barefoot on sunny hills. Here the only sign of spring is the first appearance of ladies’ spring hats in the store windows.

Tell me—what is supposed to happen when the display is full of ladies’ spring hats?

The sidewalks are already as dry as the sunny village hills in the spring. The dry streets make footsteps echo.

In the evening I lie in bed, curtains purposely left wide open, and listen to the sounds of footsteps on the sidewalk. I think to myself that I would recognize your footsteps even if you were marching with a whole company of soldiers.

I hear footsteps of various kinds from my window: tired and light, careless and cautious, long and playfully short. But your footsteps are nowhere to be heard.

I know very well that wherever you are, the distance from you to me will always be the same as from me to you. And I would have found you a long time ago, were it not for the fear that a woman’s heart knows from birth.

I fear that one day I’ll meet you on that sidewalk, one as dry and warm as the earthen mound around a village home in spring, and you’ll be in the

company of a woman who will look like spring itself, wearing the first spring bonnet of the season.

That is my fear.

You're thirty and have a profile like those carved in marble. That's why I'm afraid of that unknown woman in the spring hat. That inevitable one. That one in the future.

Who will she be and what will she look like, the one that will make you forget me? Will she be smart? Pretty? Young? With a heart or without? And how will you renounce our love for the sake of her heart's peace? How will you kill the jealousy her heart holds for the days we spent together?

Will you tell her that our lips have never kissed? Will you convince her that you have never loved anyone as you love her? Or, perhaps, you will promise, come spring, to tell her something you've never said to "any other" woman?

Translated by Khrystyna Bednarchyk

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