

Andrew Frisardi

Aeolian

The wind had words for me that day,
though what it said I couldn't say
or argue with when it arose
across a land where nothing grows
and billowed in my open mouth.
I hadn't known there was a drought
or ever thought of breath as deference,
when all at once wind made the difference,
filling the space of where I was
as if I'd sighed without a cause.
Whatever mind wind might forebode
deciphered its remorseless code
prior to wind and mind's conjunction,
which I forgot without compunction.

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The Apricot Tree

This year, I think, we will have apricots.
The tree down at the bottom of the garden,
which seemed a splintered twist of bark that rots
within, is blossoming February's pardon.
Last year the fruit it gave us was negated:
shaded light that cooled the afternoon
like grief no one was ready yet to prune
the useless branches from. And so we waited.
Serena, oracle of cats, is staring
past it, seated on the ragged slope,
as if she might divine how things are faring
where we can't see. Her stillness ripens hope
that what's still possible will soon appear,
like apricots I think we'll have this year.

Rain At Night

The city lies back in its winding-sheet
while little digits drum a steady beat

on roofs and terraces, and rolling rain
crescendoes in the hushed collective brain.

Pensioner, wage-enslaved, impoverished, posh,
the sleeping people feel it wash wash wash

in runnels, through dark tunnels under grids
and manholes, down detritus till it rids

the buildup. Hands like these may be minute,
but such masseuses' touches work the root,

as buried wishes loosen from debris
and multitudes of deltas meet the sea.

Pilgrim

He started out a favored son of Florence,
most bellicose among Love's devotees.
An arrow early barbed his boyish ease.
The mythic monsters of his own abhorrence
and love swallowed him, spat him out. Adherents
of papal power and the Fleur-de-lis
seized all except a sieve of memories
he'd use to strain existence from appearance.

Exile was his stability: the salt
of others' bread, his beggar's role, the cares
he cauterized and bandaged phrase by phrase.
In lieu of pilgrimage he spent his days
ascending and descending others' stairs,
as if in restless search of grace in fault.

Song Of A Bottle Man

Rome, 1943

When he was young he had his pride,
and thought his pride would never end,
but now his dearest friends have died
and he has no country to defend,
he hobbles out a daily beat
while gathering bottles from the street.

Sometimes he puts a good drunk on,
and folds at playing cards too late
to win the day. His money's gone
when he reels home to wife and fate,
and in the windows' darkened maws
glimpses what his father was.

He'll slip a bit on rotten fruit
on cobbles, shouting something base
at shadows. He can be a brute
to Giulia too. She slaps his face,
but then makes room for him in bed
when he crawls in, the rest unsaid.

He dreams night is an empty bottle
with other bottles in a stall,
the lot of them as dumb as cattle
asleep beneath a silent pall,
all left there when he left off work,
their empty bodies full of dark.