



CITY OF NAKED FEELINGS

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CITY OF NAKED FEELINGS

*Have you ever happened to see
a city resembling this one?
- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities**

In a city of naked feelings, *Amargish*,
they dream and think in poems
that always begin and end in silence.

Splendid Amargish reflects onto
the vapor, risen from the bay,
shifting images of terraces,

streets flanked by limestone houses
rested on fluted columns, blue arches,
an airy sheath hovering in slow motion.

In the city, full of tart wine,

residents, in light, loose clothes
that barely touch their skin,

avoid speaking - either lies, or truth.
A speck of pretense can hurt
like a grain of sand in sandals.

The city, ephemeral like a scent,
wisps skyward into thin clouds
that spill their wordfall into memory,

trajectories of rays, thin verticals
traversed through the blue air
the city of naked feelings - *Splendid Amargish*.

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WHAT IS DUSHA?

Your Soul *flutters*
when you can't take your eyes
from a slim girl with long hair.

When your body finds a Soul mate,
your Soul *sings* and *flies*.

When you are frightened,
your She *slips*
down into your heels.

What is *Dushā*?
when you are healthy,
but feel something hurts inside.

Depressed, you need a numbing drink -
not you - your Soul *demand*s it.

When your body gives up
and dies, She is the last to leave.

Afterwards,
a Jewish Soul doesn't wander

like a Slavic Soul in cloudy heavens.

She *moves* into a family's newborn
when a baby-boy is named after you,

for his life cycle with all her pains
in all generations hence - until

She moves into a *righteous* body
and her journey is ended.
She can *rest*.

Note: *Dusha* means soul in Russian

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HEISENBERG'S PRINCIPLE OF UNCERTAINTY

Through the kitchen window
he sees wild gooseberries
with nipple-hard rounds.
If he doesn't look, would
they glisten in the sun the same way?

His body takes up some space
in the car, ready for a morning drive,
and his wife's body - in a doorframe.
They both carry a habitual goodbye grin.
Would it be different on other faces?

How long does a day or a year
linger in his hands?

A child's day stretches like rubber;
young, he is wrapped
in the eternity of love-making;
adult - he doesn't notice mornings
or evenings - gets up, has coffee,
goes to work and back,
aged - his body hurts from
turns, looking back
into his faraway youth.

The mirror in the hallway reflects
spiral stairs behind him,
leading to the bedroom of non-intimacy,
his wife in a house robe,
crossing the corridor to the kitchen,
a family's dog photo on the wall.

Would life of this house be the same
for a different husband of hers?

How to describe all that uncertainty
while standing on one foot, as rabbis say?

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WHAT I MISS

What is left in my life?

I watch surrogate of feelings
on the screen -
his yearning gaze washes over her,
her body awaits his hands and lips.

I don't miss a man's craving eyes -
I miss wanting them.

Sexual longing has gradually leaked
drop by drop from my body, yet firm and smooth.

I don't miss a man's hungry hands -
I miss wanting them.

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A LIFE AGO

Pendulum of a clock floats mid-swing.
-Alan Lightman Einstein's Dreams

Memories are secured
in the house of my mind

Somewhere in the Moscow suburb,
in the museum of a Russian poet

a guide recites verses to visitors.
My daughter of five stills

within magic words, while outside
summer mixes the sun with children's laughter.

In the Russian winter
I would sit in the audience

and with no end listen
to the Mozart sonata,

flowing from under fingers
of my nine-year-old daughter.

Moscow theater in the freezing
winter of 1978 is bundled

in heavy coats and on stage Desdemona
shivers in her chiffon

and a white cloud of breath
muffles her timeless lips.

I would rewind the tape of memory
and run it again and again,

*There is a place where time stands still
and raindrops hang motionless in the air.*

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SIGNING A BOOK

To my former boss in Russia with affection
A man comes and goes, but love
stays in the air like perfume
from a passing woman.

To my ex-husband
Affix your frame of reference on a doorpost
like a mezuzah with the blessing for time
aging you within the same immovable space.

To my Rabbi
The Torah's dysfunctional family is mine.
I took my place at the table that waited
for me through all my long ignorance.

To my friend in Jerusalem
No wonder that I love that Land so much -
I know, I was a shepherd on the hills of Carmel,
and centuries later I am tearful hearing Hatikva.

To my former lover
May the taste of my skin remain on your
tongue even after you forget my name.

To my daughter
Later, much later, be easy on your tears
of remembering, of forgetting.

A note to the author
You can't come back to the same place,
because time has only a forward vector.
Your brain gets more folds and the image
of that place gets lost in memory
of a familiar kitchen's aroma
or field of sunflowers,
or your daughter's laughter on swings

hung between birches.
But there is no one there to confirm -
oh, yes, you're right, it was like that back then.

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THE ART OF ORIGAMI

as a humble craft of folding paper
was born on the edge of the Far East.

The artist boiled cotton and banana leaves
then pressed the pulp into a textured pane,

and crumpled, folded, crushed the sheets
into wanton lines, crevices, shades of a shadow,

into seashells, abstract like real, opened to gulp
a fish with a myriad of overlapping scales,

into rising wings, cones, domes
of silver thoughts slithered through the space.

The art of origami, suspended and fragile,
lives not for a touch, but for a glance -

its folding grace slides from the artist's fingers
into other countries, other eyes,
into centuries beyond.

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At seven I lived in a tiny hamlet
clung to an old cemetery.
Small mounds of graves

within a transparent net
of birch shadows securing
wild strawberries.

A berry's round smudged
my fingers and lips and filled
the whole mouth with lush softness.

* * *

I hunt for those tingling memories.
Nothing close - neither on a fruit stand
nor on a pick-your-self farm.

How to paint memories of taste or aroma?

An artist's brush can catch
glossy colors of berries
in a bowl on a kitchen table.

But he can't convey the smell
of melting snow, after-rain air,
or dizziness from a mass of lilacs

where I remember sinking my face.
Maybe a poem's can bring a wisp
of memory - the sweet-tart berries.

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I was a cat, silky furred
with a long limber back.

I like a possessing hand
moving along my spine -

(thrill shoots through my legs).
I stretch on a rug, purring

from a lingering touch
of fingers fondling my ears.

I like words enwrapping me -
My little kitten - even though

I am not - I am a big
pleasure-seeking creature

...in all my lives.

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