

Ballad of Forgotten Places

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Translated by Mary Crow

My most beautiful hiding places,
places that best fit my soul's deepest colors,
are made of all that others forgot.

They are solitary sites hollowed out in the grass's caress,
in a shadow of wings, in a passing song;
regions whose limits swirl with the ghostly carriages
that transport the mist in the dawn,
and in whose skies names are sketched, ancient words of love,
vows burning like constellations of drunken fireflies.

Sometimes earthly villages pass, hoarse trains make camp,
a couple piles marvelous oranges at the edge of the sea,
a single relic is spread through all space.

My places would look like broken mirages,
clippings of photographs torn from an album to orient nostalgia,
but they have roots deeper than this sinking ground,
these fleeing doors, these vanishing walls.

They are enchanted islands where only I can be the magician.

And who else, if not I, is climbing the stairs towards those attics in the clouds
where the light, aflame, used to hum in the siesta's honey,
who else will open again the big chest where the remains of an unhappy story lie,
sacrificed a thousand times only to fantasy, only to foam,
and try on the rags again
like those costumes of invincible heroes,
circle of fire that inflamed time's scorpion?

Who cleans the windowpane with her breath and stirs the fire of the afternoon
in those rooms where the table was an altar of idolatry,
each chair, a landscape folded up after every trip,
and the bed, a stormy short cut to the other shore of dreams,
rooms deep as nets hung from the sky,
like endless embraces I slid down till I brushed the feathers of death,
until I overturned the laws of knowledge and the fall of man?

Who goes into the parks with the golden breath of each Christmas
and washes the foliage with a little gray rag that was the handkerchief for waving
goodbye,
and reweaves the garlands with a thread of tears,
repeating a fantastic ritual among smashed wine glasses and guests lost in thought,
while she savors the twelve green grapes of redemption—
one for each month, one for each year, one for each century of empty indulgence—
a taste acid but not as sharp as the bread of forgetfulness?

Because who but I changes the water for all the memories?

Who inserts the present like a slash into the dreams of the past?

Who switches my ancient lamps for new ones?

My most beautiful hiding places are solitary sites where no one goes,
and where there are shadows that only come to life when I am the magician.
