

Name Day

In time of tornadoes
one does not hesitate.
One enters a cellar,
tries to hide in quiet.

In time of high water,
one tiptoes and cringes,
holds imaginary
meetings with all one's things.

One raised in time
of spacecraft explosions,
of reactor meltdown,
she too has few choices.

She digs out the topknot
of the Sunday brioche
and sets it on a white plate.
She is the knife who learns

by cutting. She will take
a lover, another, a house
that thinks only of itself
as she walks quietly inside.

The Nautical Terms

And at the turning of the banner year
he stood whole, to all appearances,
like a melon neatly cleaved
and propped upright. There, in the hulk
of his grey winter coat
like an animal on the chair,
above the ocean's yellow foam
knotted thick as yeast, as wool,
as birds. I saw him lean out
with his wind-lifted hair,
for the rush of water-sound, for air,
displaced by the body of the moving sea
to take some recollections with it.
But for some thoughts,
there is no perishing.
I've tried to signal my distress in other ways:
the kettle, hot,
left empty on the flame;
a kiss that's halved and halved again
until it is mistaken
for nothing at all. I remember,
on the ocean, we were ships then,
faces mottled with cold
to match the sea below,
so I lift my lantern high
in the night:
Red, right,
return to me.

Landscape with Cast Commentary

My favorite movies are the ones
where the answer was right
in front of them all along
and somebody has to say so, awed
and out loud and beautifully lit
as they realize and raise their eyes
skyward. Sometimes I shout
upstairs to let me do it up right
for once, to play the holy music
while I flick on the waterfall
and the clouds worry themselves
into smaller clouds. If I have a sword
I raise it now and a hush
falls over the slow-motion crowd
because how else would I know
I am seconds from the ending?
All those faces stare up at me
in reconstituted moonlight. Beneath the roar
of the assembly a voice complains
I thought it would be different but
she means *I thought I would stay*
the same. In the name of my vanity
we have been to the mountain
and it gave us nothing. But I press on.
Who on earth, I cry, can keep me
from this beauty, and if he could,
what good would come of trying?

Based on a True Story by Hans Christian Andersen

In this new adaptation of your life, you are cast as strong and ruddy, to better make a foil for the Snow Queen who is, as always, sylphlike and deadly with her blueberry lips. We made an alteration to the dream scene; when in the moonlit glade you are approached by the four men from its four corners, this time it will be you who remains clothed. We realize remaining clothed was not in the contract, but focus groups found the early cuts lacked tension: you, milky, shivering, them in their well-cut suits and power ties. Everybody knew what was going to happen.

This new version will feature a smart woolen pea coat, leaving more to the imagination, and it is truer this way for daily you trust yourself to imaginations not your own. When winter steals your other half and you embark upon your lengthy trek to Svalbard, you find the Snow Queen in her castle, refined and tasteful despite being made of ice and therefore powerless to stop its glittering. You barge in through the stained glass doors and tell her she won't like what happens if she doesn't give you what she's hiding: the piece of you in chains in cobalt dungeons where it's learning to love the cold and frost in its eyes makes it hard to comprehend what's happened.

The frame starts tight on you and then on her, and she's so beautiful you're glad you got your close-up first. You wrap a hand around her neck and lift her up against the wall to feel the solitary thrashing of her pulse beneath your thumb, and you shake her, shake her and she's lost her human face so you can see her, not how lovely but how cruel, afraid of daylight and of you and your hand threatening to melt right through her, and when she goes still and eyelids heavy fall, lashes long as daggers, you let her body drop, taste bile, fingers flexed at the pinprick of your life as it rushes back to them.

Hilary Vaughn Dobel is a poet, Spanish-to-English translator, and an editor at Circumference. Her manuscripts, *Hot Cognition* and *He Imagined Himself Laughing*, have been finalists for the Brittingham Prize and the Colorado Prize for Poetry, respectively. She lives in Boston.