

## Icarus

Tamara Natt

She spends her days as the widow of a woman she has never met.

She wears black.

And visits the butcher, the market and the newsagent for the morning paper, pushing a canvas trolley in front of her that carries heavy bags of loneliness that the skin beneath her eyes can no longer bear.

She would be happy. She would be. She would.

If that meant every show in her TV program starting on time. If that meant socks without holes in the toes.

If that meant being able to dream in a dark cinema with her eyes open.

If that meant being able to nurse a rose back to health but not being able to feel a pulse in her neck or either wrist.

If that meant drawing a line on her wine glass for moderation.

If that meant putting her roses on the headstones of strangers whose names sounded the most beautiful when said out loud.

If the company of those names hanging in the air for a moment was more satisfying than the straining of her old fridge in a room that no longer says "I missed you. How as your day?".

Not even when she falls into its arms at the collapse of the light and asks gently to be ravished.

If that meant knowing that the only thing lonelier than you was the sun. For the moon had the stars for company.

And clouds are fickle, they come and go.

She watched rain gather around the sun's face like a scarf, blowing mouthfuls of air scented with hot pavement after a thunderstorm, growing grey and heavy with whispered promises of splashing cool water over it's face, relief from the furnace of her being.

Then, like in this matinee performance of betrayal, falls in the other direction, into the arms of the earth.

When it rains like this, she weeps for the sorrow of the sun.

And at night, when the sky is lit by the vain moon and its entourage of adoring mirrored stars, she burns candles.

She lights her house like a cathedral, yellowed and dripping by the fire of a hundred wicks.

This way, she still goes to bed with her lover behind her eyes, despite it having already fallen into the cracks of the ocean hours before her.

This way, her pupils never know their own beauty the violence of the inextinguishable dark.

And in the mornings, she collects the candle wax, prying it from window sill, carpet, stovetop, bedhead.

Then, she melts it once more to pour it into her wings. Her wings that, twice her size in length, she has made from the wax of 500 nights spent alone in her cathedral.

At 501, she will fly to the sun.

And yes, she knows the story of Icarus. She is well-read.

Each morning, the butcher, the grocer and the gambler tell her that she is dreaming. But, she asks them, is that not love? But, she asks them, would you know?

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Besides, she tells them, her wings are not as heavy nor as foolish as history.

They are hollow, lighter than air, coated in a layer of fat and oil that she massages into their feathers as her final act of each passing day.

Tomorrow, she flies.

Tonight, she burns her church to the ground.

\* \* \*

The straps are sharp, they are cutting deep into her shoulders. She should have sanded down the edges but there is no time for that now.

All she can do is imagine how the sun will feel when she finally takes her place alongside it in the sky. Will I burn as bright? Will people now have two suns to look upon?

She knows she will have no trouble taking flight. She has fasted her whole life for this, she has held onto nothing. Her soul weighs less than it's name.

And now –

She must cut a handsome figure in the sky. An angel, blessed with glorious waxen wings, beating against the deep blue of a sorrowless sky.

Not once does she look down.

She is striving for the sun, staring at it's face whole so it feels her devotion, sees her pilgrimage, lights her journey.

She knows not to blink, never to blink, but the cool breath of the wind stings at her eyes, sending tears streaming down her chin.

She can feel the muscular effort of their trying not to close. She wants to reassure the sun that this is not crying from

sadness, that she is in love, it's the wind testing her intentions as the sun's suitor. But the altitude has her by the throat. And in that moment of chaos and unsaid things, she blinks.

And when she opens her eyes again, the sun has multiplied, burning itself into the most gullible flesh behind her eyelids and appearing a hundred times in the space in front of her, as if daring her to know its true face.

Desperation prickles in her right mind, and she begins to struggle, cursing and blinking away the black suns that have corrupted her clear lover's sight.

And for a fatal second of humanity and good intentions, she tries to bring her hand to rub her eyes clean.

Her wings tangle and twist beneath her, taking the wind's helpful words the wrong way with each stroke towards flight. They seem to capsize suddenly beneath her, their soft underbelly, the side she did not think to coat with fat and oil, facing the heat of the sun. She looks across their span and watches in horror as beautiful beads of pink wax begin to form and pour gently away from her, falling to the earth like molten rain.

Seven thousand feet in the air, she has found a new depth to solitude, a lonely cloud raining wax and heartbreak on the smouldering ashes of her former home.

And in this state, she finally allows her gaze to slip from the sun's disappearing face. It slides across the stricken sky to settle briefly on the most delicate and glorious sunset her eyes had ever witnessed, pouring colour down soft cheeks of earth and sea.

And there, between herself and the horizon, surrounded by strokes of impossible golds and peaches more beautiful than

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plain sunlight ever knew how to be — she sees wax pouring  
from the wings of someone else.

\* \* \*

I.

Water bubbles up from your belly  
Candles drip towards ceilings  
We bury our parents in the sky  
Questions hang in the air  
Ballooning in expanding wonder  
Never knowing the violence of answers  
And Icarus flies past the sun

II.

We thought we were falling  
But we rose  
Time and time again  
More splendidly  
Than the sun ever learned how

III.

We talked before long before dawn  
She played me a song she'd been working on  
Put the smell of her mother's cooking under my nose  
Told me  
Rain is the vapour of our dreams  
Clouds  
Tinged grey  
Having rubbed elbows  
With the night

Ruler of the reckless  
Who  
With every moon  
Opens her mouth  
Wide enough  
To contain the fevers of men  
The conjurings  
The reminders  
The brilliant notions  
That pale and hide behind the strong calves  
Of daylight  
Gargles  
And spits them  
Between valleys  
Down the necks of mountains  
The blue-rinse backwash  
That babies are crossed with  
And sinners have quiet  
Living room faith  
Will one day put out the spot fires  
Burning their senses alive  
And the forgetful glass  
Encircling the earth  
God's paddling pool  
The great goldfish in the sky  
Seeing itself  
In the sea  
Blushes beauty  
And believes itself blue

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Every day like this  
Until the sticky ink  
Of self-awareness  
Shames its cheeks  
Shading it with night  
Until it swims another lap of the moon  
And forgets again  
The sight of its own face.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR MY BURIAL

Don't let me just lie there. Take me.

Hoist me upon your shoulders and carry me naked through  
the streets.

Hold me in such a way that allows my chest to be open, my  
collarbones to the sky.

Don't be too gentle.

Touch me everywhere so you know what my skin has felt  
like this whole time.

What it's like to press my flesh in ways you could not before.

Let my hair spill over my lips and get in your face so you  
have to brush it away from your mouth.

Let my head dangle from my open throat.

I hope it is a warm day with a light summer rain that is  
warm, so light it covers your skin like sweat, no real *wet*.

It will be daytime.

Lay me down on a piece of earth that is as raw but soft as  
you can find.

It will have a sweeping view of mountains and valleys and a tree dangling over it, not too much so that there is the risk of being in shade.

Here, it will always be warm.

The sun is always kind, never brash or burning. it will keep my body gold.

Put nothing between the earth and I. massage it into my skin so I can feel where I am. Dust my lips so I can taste it.

Cover my feet with it like socks. Here, you can press it close me but for the rest of me, sprinkle it like a sheet over a bed in summer. Light.

When just my face and my shoulders remain, leave me.

Plant flowers to bloom over my body and crown my head.

Leave me to look at the sunset that is red and gold.

The sun will disappear over the ocean and a full moon will rise to look me in the eyes.