



From Peperonata Lane

Simon Perchik

Again this shrub each Spring
stirred by the same passion
its leaves never forgot

—one heart safely dead center
the other rash
brushes against your shoulder

and goes one from there
—they sense this bush
is pregnant, feed it blooms

and the root floats up
so the child inside is born
in the year-after-year fire

that returns even the dead

with flowers and thorns
drained dry for the later

—a splinter is enough
giving birth always to twins, one
a mast from an abandoned ship

the other floating downstream
nourished by the slow move
from leaf to leaf reaching down

as rain now that the shoreline
has disappeared and in its place
a fence, a gate and the outcome clear.

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They have no second thoughts
and still your footprints
inch by inch, gradually

made whole the way this shovel
lost its taste for dirt
carries in only snowfall

leaves its own reason at home
for a room that stays
close by, becomes those skies

one by one, done for, dives
on every path night first
—you dig for worms

as if one would tell you
or show you, or move your hand
or with the light off

a kamikaze cry for light
—you have no return
and step by step no morning.

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Gasping on air and salt
and though you can hear the soup cool
an ocean deep inside the Earth

is bubbling under your skull
exhausted —it's natural you wait
for the soup to grieve

louder and louder as if your arms
were coming too close —wave after wave
you scatter more salt

and across the bowl
that smells from rain in the beginning
—it's expected that you have this appetite

for reef, for a sea with a bone in its mouth
and along the coast the dead fingers
the dead lips listening for yours

tired from struggling —only soup
and even then a wooden chair
so nothing is forgotten.

Simon Perchik's poetry has appeared in such publications as *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The Partisan Review* and *The New Yorker*. His books include *The B Poems*, *Almost Rain* and, most recently, *The Osiris Poems*.