

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

MILJANA CUNTA
BY HALF THE SKY

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Miljana Cunta: By Half the Sky

Medea's Five Lamentations

I

The punishment was fearful, Medea:

over the centuries you extend your limbs

in admonition.

Today

long dark hair

is falling from the sky during the fiercest storm,

lithe curves are rising

up from the ocean,

on forgotten parallels of the earth's surface

islands of your grief are visited by lost souls.

And by the informed –

to measure out the diameter of riot.

Sharp nails

scratch at the taut globe of the sky,

so that at the right time

the birth fluid is released,

the cordial teat waters the earth

during drought.

Sunk into yourself, Medea, you no longer fall asleep;

in the all-embracing repose

you listen in to the turning of the earth

and the swaying of lovers.

It is for your soul, for your soul
that the scavengers of the law are trading
for they do not know
that the punishment was
fearful,
for it was no negligence
that you could bear
to gaze at your children's blood.

II

Close the windows, bolt the doors,
that salvation may come, may come into
being here,
alone with my own breath,
alone with my own breathe.
Put out the stars, silence the babbling
of old women before the door,
they are night-moth witches
sneaking in upon the last little light of the soul,
fluttering around it until suicide.
Whose suicide?
Bring in cotton cloths, herbs,
they are bleeding – the ones I love!
Blow away the dust,
let there be no recollection,
wash clean the sooty ceiling,

let the night not rain!
Patch over the peephole
that an ant may not creep through it,
may not let in the consolations of the world.
Stifle the bird in the cage;
the ones I love stay silent,
the ones I hate are drumming
on the over-taut skin of passion,
of passion may I not know!
I am hurrying, hurrying,
they are bleeding – the ones I love,
where am I hurrying, where to?
Hair across the face,
nails to the heart,
swaddling-clothes I bind to bones,
ridiculous creature, sparrows in the garden
mock with bulging eyes.
Close the windows, bolt the doors!
Let salvation come, let it come into
being here,
with myself alone,
with you alone.

III

When you bent down over the river,
where the women wash the children's clothes,
the sun
in the cavity between belly and breasts
was setting.
Round and round
the wailing of the wind
was wooing you,
and you raised yourself up
above what you were doing –
high
like an alabaster figure
in a shrine
proudly defying the chance stares.
One palm of the hand alone
could touch the crown,
seize hold of the black mane
and shake you into forgetfulness.
Never did you beg, never did you repent,
fully you were pulsing with the promise of fidelity
to me,
until one day the river overflows its limits
and smothered the sun.
Into the cavity between belly and breasts
the night had settled, and you said:
the guilt lies in my father's house.

IV

On the third day, before you revived,
a great white whale
settled in the treetops
in the garden of the house of your childhood,
and slowly / gradually cast the shadow of shame
on the estate.

All of yours, we prayed for you
under the ever thickening dark,
right up until the last,
until the full eclipse.

Now in the fish's eyes
we seek consolation,
with lips tight-sealed we fumble
after the remnants of eelish light.
The punishment was fearful, Medea,
you have stained the house of your mother.

V

The ones I love are silent.
Silent.

A Question

When in the evening, just before going to sleep,
I ask who you are
and who let you into my home,
you smile.

I dream of a large door,
like a book it opens wide
into the dwelling.

I hear your voice
which brings to life
letters unknown to me.

With all my body
I lean against the cover
but before the door
I am small and fragile.
How, being small and fragile,
am I to prevent the silence?

Sweating I waken
and still you are there.
Again I ask who you are
and who let you into my home,
but you smile.

You think I'm talking in my sleep.

By Half the Sky

We settled like birds
on the highest tops
of the neighbour's cherry-tree,
and the light poured over our palms
and through, over the branches and trunk
down to the ground. Over the hillslope
down to the sea, famished desires
were warbling over days without hours,
which we arranged like precious jewellery
around suntanned necks
and learned how the shadow
always shifts with the sun.
We did not lock the doors of the house
made of the scent of the pines.
We each had our own key
which also unlocked the sea
on the heated surface,
so that we fell into the cooled depths
like circus monkeys
and each time returned barely by a hair
bigger.
When in the evening we observed the outcome
of the game, we were silent,
since we did not have words
for the end,

which always comes from far away and is small,

like a dot on the horizon,

big – if you look upwards from below –

by half the sky.