

Five poems from *The Sleeping House*

Chandra Livia Candiani, Translated by Olivia Sears

THE DOOR HANDLE.

Her gesture gently settles
on my thirst to be useful
I open into hallways and interrupted
phrases and little girl.
They are all sleeping but she
outruns the hours like
straitjackets and wanders
sly and wild
in the folds and the surrender
of the whirlwind of hunted light,
the ornate windows
glow with the black
black night, immense
amorphous animal
and little girl,
she steals a glance there, counts and recounts
her footsteps, white glimpses
and rustle of shawls.
The cat slips forgotten
among dreams of intense serenity and little girl. It rains
or doesn't rain the drawers shut
with a click clothes heavy
with the years and little girl.
Skirt in the closet and little girl
geranium darkness balcony and little girl
footsteps of no one and little girl
glass
with no water
inside
and little girl.

THE WINDOWS.

We are the windows
for us there is no back
behind which to observe
traces of others,
we face
all the bad weather
of the soul and of the air
well-founded family storms
invisible obstacles of wind
the dead entangled in threads
of conversation.
From us spill the glances
gliding
over barriers built against love,
over the houses.

THE DESK.

I carry on my broad shoulder
the memory of the forest
cut down. I carry the cut
and I carry the name
that embraced all
trees and animals
leaves of grass and gusts
of wind in a single
roar. I carry the weight
of your words and the feather-light laws
of objects, don't pursue
your yearning for the target,
make yourself a candle
among blinding lights,
let yourself drop down
the throat of the dark
and flutter like an eyelid
on the boundless body
of the night, let yourself be
extinguished all in one breath
like a star reaching its end
like a leap
in the dark.
Entirely.

THE SHEET.

I sleep
over the alphabet body
of the girl
soundless beast
with wounded skin
she sleeps fighting sleep
desperate absence
of someone hounded
from her den. I sleep
over the child
shrouding her present-day
pain, white cloth
over her contours
dissolved in the waters of oblivion:
no thought
contains her. I
stand in
for snow
and for membrane.

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THE SOFA.

We all have a world inside
and we all tolerate solitude
to say that inside me
there are only springs and wood
is like saying that inside of you
there are only heart liver or lungs.
I watch not unmoved
over lives complex or shattered
I absorb conversations, irascible
or full of promise but
in this sleepless house
I am the spaceship.
In my framework of feathers
I hold up a little girl I hide her
I carry her on the high seas
and in the depths of the sky
she is an expert on drift
on tunnels dug through the essence
of night, I keep her among the cushions
like an unexpected sobriety.
On this journey of separation
I know she dreams
of someone who will cross the distance
with nothing to offer
a face that will fade
and let her watch,
a terrestrial protection.
When it comes to strength the little girl
has only the shoulders
and thoughts that give bells of wisdom
to the night.
On this march to draw in closer
I am struck by her intimate trust
with no second thoughts and I test
my flexibility
not under the weight of a little girl
but of a grief

equal to that of an adult
but one without a world.
I am a sofa
that leads to a vision
opening
onto you blasphemers of objects
harboring
a wound of arctic night
in complete nakedness.

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