

**Asher Reich**

A PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL MEDITATION FOR BEGINNERS

It is not the forest that wanders  
in the thicket of our lives  
not the dust that covers our deaths  
but we  
we – not the sea that drowns  
in our veins  
not the light that sinks  
in all our ways  
but we  
we  
not the Place that hears  
our silences  
not the dream that determines  
our thoughts  
but we  
we alone

Translated by Vivian Eden

## HAIFA IN WINTER

Haifa in winter is a Japanese woodcut.  
Silken rain, the softest of rains, waits for me there,  
the white moth sleeps in the damp bushes  
and from the puddles a fountain of fantasies rises like a mist.  
Haifa in winter floats on air with the buoyancy of clouds  
and sometimes the horizon is a rice paper sail.  
Then the sun-stained evening comes  
like a gash in the belly of the city.

Translated by Karen Alkalay-Gut

## REVENGE

The heroic rooster woke me up,  
crushed my sleep with the boots  
of his cock-a-doodle-doo.

But I smiled as I recovered.  
This very evening,  
the cock will be my supper.

At night I was visited by flocks of his crows.  
Sunless in me rose  
his red cockscomb.  
The cock and I are one.

Translated by Vivian Eden

## I AND THEY

I am visited by a dream of those who circle  
there above us taking stock of the world's assets.  
I don't envy them their loneliness,  
I've more than enough of that,

or even their rare privilege of seeing  
all we've been spared this time around.  
I don't grudge them the luck of a weightless body.  
I have enough hovering of my own  
and like the astronauts I too

am sometimes roped to my seat in the half-dark  
and that's only half a metaphor.  
Everyone who deals with art for its own sake  
in a real way, not to say genuine,  
learns quickly enough to live with his loneliness  
and the wonders of his hoverings in the dark.

Nonetheless, every day, like, for example  
this prosaic morning when the sun is seen  
to open her legs generously  
and I am granted a new sunrise,  
my daily jealousy is immediately aroused  
of those circling above me who are granted  
more than one sunrise, day by day.

Translated by Vivian Eden

## DAYS WALK AMONG US LIKE SPIES

The earth sings the chronicles of our lives.  
In this land days walk among us  
like spies. Night puddles  
where the rain is absorbed in firefly glimmers. Our  
The wind is a coop of clucking chickens.  
The song of the earth feeds itself on blood sounds.  
The rustling of trees, the susurrations of grass like ancient lyrics.

For days I listened to the sounds of the earth  
trying to decipher its language  
in renewing Nature, its wintry anger  
that always defeats us  
even indoors.

For days I was trapped wondering what rustles  
in its damp and swelling belly  
when it sheds its skin like a snake  
and dons new skin.  
I stripped naked to the sounds of words  
to recount events to myself.

Translated by Vivian Eden

## WORDS TO A PICTURE

This is my beloved,  
the one on the right is  
her brother who fell in the Lebanon war.

The one on the left is  
her last lover  
before I came  
into the picture.

She is hugging them hard  
as if she knew she would lose them both.  
From the side, her mother regards them.  
Her face looks like a browned cake  
that time baked on too high a flame.

Translated by Vivian Eden