

Elizabeth Scott Tervo

Наша Ариадна [Our Ariadne]



She picked her way across the stones and sand
and trailed her steps along the baby waves
the sun was still high and bright

away on the horizon she sighted the tiny ship
she charged into the hurrying waves
deeper and deeper the waves swept past like skirts
they broke over her head and rolled her back to shore
they hid even the topmost sail

she crouched in the wet sand

She turned inland along the setting sunbeams
and found a strange table among the tree trunks
an immense stump of worn down rings
loaded down with plates and platters
an endless variety of food and drink
it cast its own circle of warmth and light
like a room among the trees.
Badgers, hedgehogs, foxes, and other forest creatures
greeted her arrival with more toasts
round after round in acorn cups

To this meeting
to this occasion
to our friendship
and to those we miss, who are no longer with us.

We used to gather there every evening
to share small news of groves, and dens, and creeks
and Ariadne became one of our company.
For us, exalted with wine and vodka

our table came to represent all tables,
the banquet at the edge of Time
our faces loomed over the world's horizon like gods

Late night when our party would break up,
each to his own home,
she had her own home too now,
a nest too big for one
in a high tree
it swayed in the cold and wind

One creature only saw and knew:
her cavalier the badger
who every time waited at the door
and helped her on with a badger's coat.
He never spoke.
That immovable snout
that mug
showed no emotion.



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Just once he muttered at her shoulder,
"He must come back, he'll come."

and it's
one sleeve
the other sleeve
up
and over

and she's out, she's gone, into the dark, into the snow.



Glasnost Belle

Every day, every hour, from afar off, these thoughts:
I am Freedom, I am Democracy, I am Youth,
I am Virginity, I am Beauty, I am Dulcinea,
I am the Unattainable Woman, I am a Dream.
I am an Idea . . . but I could become Real.

*In the frozen forest we strolled on a frozen lake.
I chopped and dragged a small dry fir
and set it on fire on the ice.
We warmed our mittens and were not afraid.
The ice was a meter thick.*

You had a secret. I asked and begged
and begged and nagged till you showed me:
a raw octopus, bigger than me, you kept in a box of ice.
One tentacle slipped over another: the thing was still alive.
Two empty saucers glared up at nothing.
I pointed, and you told me, *It only looks inward.*

*Follow me into the darkness for a moment
down the track your own thoughts have worn in my mind:
You are Delusion, You are Destruction, You are Madness,
You are Dishonor, You are Jealousy, You are Grief,
You are crawling home alone.*

It was never meant to be.
Our own hearts told us that long ago.

*Do not let your quick heart freeze to the ice.
Do not be like Lot's wife, forever looking back.*



Illustrations by
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Elizabeth Scott Tervo's poetry and stories have appeared in *St. Katherine's Review*, the *Basilian Journal*, *Eye to the Telescope*, the *New Haven Review*, and Waystone Press's anthology *Visions of Paradise: Eucatastrophe*. Her memoir about the end of the Soviet period, *The Sun Does Not Shine Without You*, is forthcoming in the republic of Georgia. She is also co-coordinator of the Doxacon Seattle writers' group for Christianity and Science Fiction/Fantasy.