

THE RED ONE

by Alexandra Chaushova

translated from the Bulgarian by Christopher Buxton

.....because every one of my imaginings is me,
his transparent skin
that is me,
his seed – that is
me

I am sketching myself
I kiss my orange lips.
I was the red one,
Him – was it him?"

Men Like Colours

Every day I think that he still exists somewhere out there, within the borders of this town, in the streets of this town, and we don't meet. But he's out there and breathes, and eats, wakes up, even goes to the toilet. Sometimes I wish I was a ghost so I could come right up to his back, peep from behind his ear, while he doesn't know and laughs.

I sit at home and think up stories. I work out my life. I always reckon to do something and so I dream at least several hours a day. If you could look into my head, there would be the morning awakening – an hour of random thoughts, little about my parents, and several hours reading from a book others' thoughts and dreams.

I want to dream of him. I can't.

I can't find him.

I search for him, but in my dreams there appear only useless wet beaches after the rain. A dove is buried in the damp sand, just its head can be seen. I approach. I cannot believe it. It feels such terror that only its head flies away. I bend down and see in the sand the red ring of his throat.

I try and do something else. I write. In a story I write about myself, with myself. Sometimes I am a man, I can be a thing too. I change my eyes, I examine myself alone. I distance myself from my imaginings, write them down and let them go, they don't torment me any more. I am doing the same thing now. The red one should have disappeared after the full stop. I am running from a man who I can't even dream about. In the morning I love the sun, which shines at my window. I look through the railings of the balcony, how down below people are passing, strange how they hurry towards somewhere; some even run. Surely they have names. Surely the world begins with each one's birth and ends in his death. How many worlds are ending at the moment? Two thousand apocalypses are the result of heart attacks today. After I wake up I like to eat grapefruit, I delight in the texture of the small transparent pink segments and the way the light filters through them. The juice sprays just for a second in a transparent moist cloud, then subsides. It gets in my nose and it smarts a little.

I wonder what he smells like.

Once with an acquaintance I climbed up, while the bells of Alexander Nevski Cathedral were ringing. He said he had the feeling that he could smell the sound.

Perhaps he smells like a copper bell.