

MAROSA DI GIORGIO

from THE MARCH HARE

Translated from the Spanish by Adam Giannelli

I laid an egg, white, spotless, shiny; it looked like an oval star. Already, years apart, I had produced another, light blue, and another, pink; but this one was spotless, white, shiny, the most beautiful. I placed it in a cup, my hand held over it, so it wouldn't lose its glow; I fussed over it discreetly, with a certain feigned indifference. The women grew envious, insidious; they criticized me; ceremoniously, they covered their shoulders and smoothed their dresses.

I carried on, undaunted.

I can't say what hatched from the egg since I don't know, but whatever it was, it still follows me; its shadow, filial, gentle, descends on me.

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A faint rain was falling, hardly dampening anything. We tied the dolls high up in the trees, to punish them, the ones that had misbehaved. Squealing like little animals, the brown-capped mushrooms kept sprouting, resembling bears; after a few minutes they were taller than we were. And something else rose from the earth, broken chalices, candlesticks, from ancient ceremonies, of which we had an inkling.

And the moon, blue, lemon-colored, came out with the rain. Until mama came and touched it. And she cut flowers, untied the dolls; on her way to the house she shouted. We came to her, quickly. And we disappeared into her lap, her belly.

And all was quiet.

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Sky-blue butterflies, large, strong, sturdy, like satin, embroidered at the tips, as if a tailor had stitched them by hand, butterfly and bodkin.

And another, yellow, all by itself, that appeared one day, shining like gold, quiet as gold; everyone in the house, without thinking, leaping after it, since it was yellow and different. Swarms of black butterflies, which rose from the

depths, when mama was five and happened to pass by in a carriage. And she never could forget.

My blue butterfly, caught one April morning by the spikenards; it ended up in a book; I looked at it years later and on days when I was sick. Martyr of light-blue leaves; its body like a grape, a black tear.

Fiery red butterfly that fluttered with the others, angel of exterminations, carnation that emits signals; I made out its face under a scarlet bonnet.

White butterfly on the day of the dead. Far from the casket and tears. It spreads across the armoire, the items on the vanity, like froth, lace.

We brush into it without knowing what it is.

My butterfly costume; wide, spotted wings. Papa labored over it.

And wearing it, as a child, I faced the world,
the foxes and finches.

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Hard and pink, they overflowed from the baskets, crates, and nests, and other recesses of the walls and ceiling.

Halfway between objects and living things.

Such young custodians, anchored; I lay silent all day inside the sheets.

Outside, the world. Giant cows and horses, men without wings, and with wings, and everything else.

Sometimes an egg turned black, and cracking open let out a monster, a little weasel.

But the others remained whole and pink, awaiting a distant spring, a single day.

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The dark loquats waft whiffs of wine, of sugar.

As usual, in my old dress, I sat on a rock. The sky was launching its final bursts. The cast of the Theater of the Orchards stopped rehearsing and started to scatter. A table would serve as the stage. I surveyed the landscape. The ducks lay many eggs. The same bird produces eggs of different colors. Red, blue ones, speckled, as if painted in oils. All over appear clutches, mounds of eggs.

I don't know what'll happen to the "troupe" I'm currently directing; they're all older than me, and my tenure seems fragile.

Little by little, the people who live throughout the orchards show up, and they sit in the grass, staring at the stage.

So, the performance took place again; but the viola players, now and then, faded, and members of the audience filled in for them, and the line between dreams and reality blurred.

The night consumed the entire loquat garden.

And the ducks, hidden in their seats of honor, fashion more red eggs.

* * *

The birds sing, they sing,
with all their warbles, trills.

(And they frighten me.)

After rain, midday.

It all seems lost already, underwater.

Single days will come.

So white, so white;

a terrible concentration of hares.

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A voice said, "Butterfly," "Amelia." And I spun around in the dark air on a golden afternoon. Between the figs, like flower buds, heavy and violet.

A voice said, "Amelia," an ancient name, perhaps mine, my true name, before birth.

It was God who spoke; it was the Puma.

I spun around,
searching for his gold face, his invisible trace.

But nothing was there; only the wind playing, as always, in the garden of figs and violets.

* * *

I'm the Virgin. I realize. At night I stand by the pillars and fountains. Or I go to the road, where the drivers stare at me, mesmerized, or flee frantically.

I'm the Virgin. The Angel would speak to me among jasmine and on several levels. He said a strange thing; I didn't understand.

I wander through the old orchard—Isabel, Ana—through the old houses; I'd like to be a woman in one of these houses, a city woman, but I'm the Virgin; they don't realize; I search for another deserted village, other fields of hemp. The wind whistles. The wolves are eating the lambs. On my diadem fall stars like tears, fall roses and gladioli, black dahlias.

I'm the Virgin.

I'm alone. The wind whistles. Where to go? Where to go?

And there's never an answer.

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