

Fall 2014

## Poetry and Illustrations: "Summer," "Lantern Festival," and "Benign Protection"

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## Summer

*for my father*

I want to memorize this  
our time together – what we did  
without her there to tell me  
*You wouldn't want this life*  
*you're not cut out for it* – and me  
the child holding the reins of an unruly horse  
as you took off its shoe and examined its foot  
before putting the new one in place  
for riding far away – from the dirt I had pulled carrots  
shaped like mandrakes – or had stolen sour apples  
that fell beneath the huge tree where yellow and green  
caterpillars hung like earrings in the twilight – or sugar  
I'd taken from the box in the pantry when she wasn't looking.  
It was a fortune of smuggled goods  
with which to win them over  
to keep them still and nudging me for more  
while you attended to their hooves.

She still tells me what to do  
miraculously knows if I've lost something  
she has given me – as I should only like  
what she had – and I don't care – I take these  
things – and wait for prescience to cover me  
like a blanket – she misses you – and wants to die.  
You are in every dream she has – they fill her up  
to being young – and upon waking she reaches backwards  
to you – left only with the bed half empty.

I'm dying to be honest  
and sit her down to listen finally to me  
to see me as I truly am – it's almost hopeless  
and I cannot bear her cursing in three languages  
for all the good it does her – it sends me into silence.  
I've chartered the stars to find the constellation  
of forgiveness – its open milky light inviting me forward  
to resurrection – to love – to the familiar made over  
against the odds of time and space.

I've memorized this, now, the young girl, her long hair  
slipping from the braids – the mandrake carrot in her open  
hand, the unruly horse tamed and looking at her  
with trusting eyes and her blacksmith father  
whispering in Russian,  
*Hold him – hold him tight.*

Anne Elezabeth Pluto



## Lantern Festival

this stone  
forest  
Eden  
of the dead  
the little boats  
of light  
and paper  
our fathers

forest character  
and Cyrillic prince

we let them go  
one little light  
among many lamps  
they struggle back  
to shore  
to us  
we nudge  
them forward  
ourselves  
together on  
the live earth  
the flowers brilliant  
against the darkening sky.

Anne Elezabeth Pluto



Лантерн Фестивал

## Benign Protection

*For Paula*

In the late spring – June – before summer descends – haze and mirage my father's death left a hole in the pattern – deep and unfathomable – I reached forward to make meaning and we met at your office Columbus Circle – the green park beckoning tourists, natives, and thieves – we walked to the restaurant – close by – whose name I can't recall – a diner – on 57th Street in the cool dark booth the red leather banquettes menus sized like the Times I have always wondered how they cooked so many dishes in the hidden kitchen we have a glass of wine – white and crisp – order food that quickly comes and my missing father enlightened by death wore the 20th century like a map I am tracing the route in our conversation you lost your father at 14 – in the summer before 10th grade – we four met once in the cold moon starry winter on the corner of Marlborough and Church in front of the Temple Beth Emeth us, girls in our maxi coats – yours forest green and belted mine black, as every coat I ever bought – our fathers standing in benign protection – on the verge in my reckoning the ghosts of childhood remain incredulous and strong silent and long-suffering beautiful and awful as memory herself.

*Anne Elezabeth Pluto*

