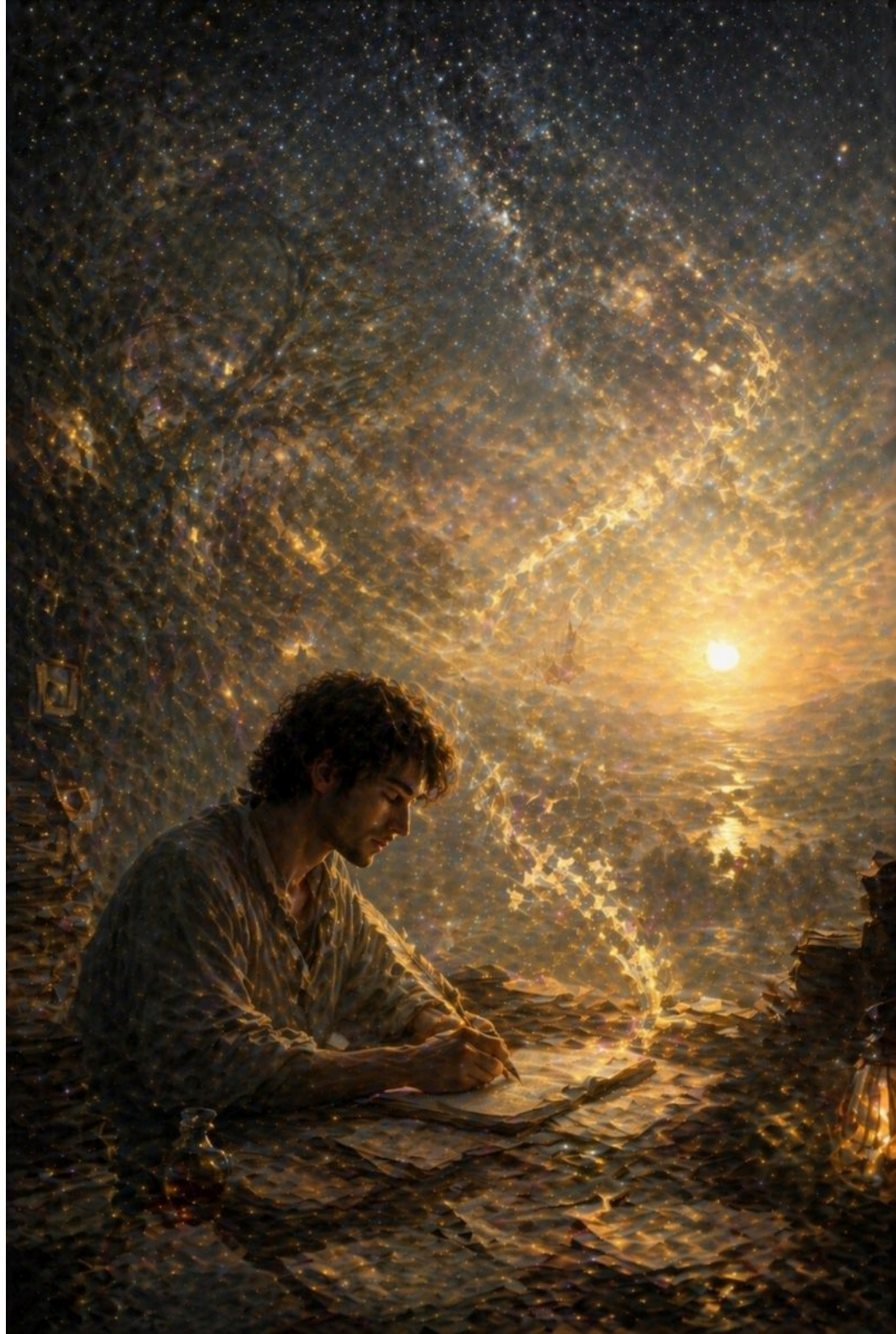




A Poet I Am...

Сергей Орехов (Панкратиус)

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles,
meanings that lay hidden in the whisper of the ages.
Out of the silence, where the roots of thought are melting,
an unseen tuning-fork is being born...

A poet I am... I do not invent the heavens,
I only hear the way they sound.
And if a word is wanting in its light —
it will not stand for long inside of me...

A poet I am... no master of the revelation,
only a path where a trace shows faintly through.
Where the heart, in passing through the burning,
gathers up its answer from the ash...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles,
so that one day, in the very quietest hour,
I may see: all the scattered numbers
were always leading not to text, but straight to us...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles,
crumb by crumb, by every breath, by dreams.
Not for a crown, not for some outward summit —
but so the road may open to the heavens...

A poet I am... and when it's dark to the point of pain,
and it seems: the silence is a wall,
I still can hear, within this quiet lot,
that the silence is not empty, but full.

It is full of an unseen co-presence,
of a touch that knows no boundaries,
when the soul, having passed through all its madnesses,
suddenly knows the Source that has no pages...

A poet I am... not from the wisdom of books,
not from the skill of fitting words together.

But if the pain becomes a thing that moves,
it will itself give voice: "I am alive."

Alive in me is that thirst for the meeting
between the One who IS, and what I say.
That not by a single sound of distortion
might anything enter the living silence...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles,
while in my breast an unseen calling burns.
And I see: the world is not torn into numbers,
but secretly is wholly made of verse.

And if it is entrusted to me once
to carry through at least one single shard,
then I must pass so through the light and thirst,
that the word become a form of the Way...

A poet I am... and, bending over the line,
I no longer set the light apart from dark:
for even the dark, lived through by the soul,
becomes the threshold of a coming spring,
so that later, beneath the snow gone numb,
in depths inaccessible to the mind,
a sprout may ripen, not yet of the spring,
yet knowing that the winter has come to its end...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles,
and each puzzle — not a thought, but someone's call.
And that is why so carefully and purely
I listen close to the music of the roots.

And if one day it all becomes a whole,
and the circle closes into a thread of fire,
I will keep silent. And that will be the true thing.
For the main thing — is not to speak, but to be...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles.
Out of words, out of pauses, out of others' roads.
Out of those minutes where the sky is close, so close,
and out of those where you are chilled to the bone...

A poet I am... only this is not about fame,
not about a graceful gesture and a thunderous sound.
I simply listened, long, into the truth,
into its almost imperceptible knock.

It does not enter with fanfares and light,
it asks for neither a stage nor a crown.
It comes as a small answer
to where the pain has reached its very floor...

A poet I am... and, probably, for this reason
I hold not to the rhyme — but to an inner “yes.”
When a line is beautiful and obedient,
yet has no life in it — that is emptiness...

I have no need of fabricated distances,
a lofty tone, a fire that's been made up.
I know: the meaning comes through the detail —
through a glance, through silence, into the palm...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles
not so as to explain it to the world.
But so that what in us went sour long ago
might suddenly stir and begin to live.

So that a person, reading these lines,
might not admire a word in passing by,
but suddenly fall still — and in that pausing
might hear the thing they hid down in the deep...

A poet I am... and my labor is not loud at all.
It is like a campfire left behind in the embers.

Like a fragment found by a small boy,
of something whole that once was on the earth...

And I sit, and I sift through the parts:
here is this one — pain, and here is this — silence,
here is this one — memory, here a shard of happiness,
here is this one — a night that knew no sleep.

Then I look: they fit together strangely.
Not at once, not easily, not by chance.
And suddenly, without any drama, from them rises
a simple, but a real, Someone's gaze...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles.
I won't fit all. And that is no sin, either.
But if even one fragment finds
itself in another — then my trace was not in vain.

Inside each one there lie the broken pieces:
a scrap of hope, an answer that has faded,
the shards of faith, a thin and childish voice,
which, it had seemed, was there no more...

We walk about with this, tucked into pockets,
pretending that we are whole and strong.
But there lives in us an ungathered something,
that did not make it through the roar of that war.

And then one single simple word,
not loud, almost out of place,
suddenly stands beside you, honest and severe,
as if you'd long been a brother to it...

A poet I am... and, probably, that is the point:
not to compose, not to invent, not to sing,
but so to speak, that in a whole person
at least one thing might cease its smouldering.

That he might gather himself not by patterns,
not by others' counsel and the mind,
but by the thing that breathed within him
and for so many years had not believed in him...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles.
I sit in the quiet above a heap of muteness.
Until there flashes from the scattered, dusty pieces
a simple word: "this, too, is You."

And maybe it will not grow easier at once,
and life will not lift the weight off of your shoulders.
But if you come to know yourself in a phrase —
then it means the light still lives among the living.

And after — a day. An ordinary, meager one.
Cold tea. A weary window.
And a person, like all the rest, goes somewhere,
not knowing that in him something shifted long ago.

He is just as silent, slightly stooped,
the same gaze, the habitual gesture of the hand.
But the word, like a coal in a dark mould,
still keeps a living thing within...

It does not press, demand, or judge,
it promises no paradise ahead.
It only waits, until through the muteness and the cold
at least something answers in the breast...

A poet I am... and I need nothing greater
than to know that there, where there had been one void,
suddenly there appeared air, a crack, a coolness,
and someone in the dark called to himself.

Not by me — by himself. Not aloud — almost soundless.
Not in triumph, but as if through a shiver.

But so, that the parts that had been parted,
suddenly began to seek a single source.

That, probably, is how the fragments come together.
Not on command, not in a single move.
First — the pain. Then — a gap of light in the moment.
Then — you suddenly recognize yourself in everything.

In a chance light, in a window on the street,
in dry grass, nailed down to March by ice,
in the weary, quiet middle of a stranger,
in your own long-abandoned emptiness...

And you stand there, not loud, not saved,
not grown all at once purer and stronger,
but for some reason returned again
to that part of the heart that was more alive...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles
not because I know the whole design myself.
I simply believe: if the word is pure,
it will find its road through human hearts.

It will not skirt a single crack or wound,
it will not fear the ash, nor yet the cinders.
It will go in there, where far too soon
you came to believe there is no spring at all.

And maybe, out of these coincidences,
out of these lines where all is without false poses,
one day in a person there will flare a sight
that tells the essence apart from the question.

Then you will see: the pain was not for nothing,
and the muteness clenched your mouth not in vain.
Out of all the losses, the collapses, the lulls,
within you there has already risen a vault.

And you are not all broken. Not all lost.
Not all gone over to weariness and armor.
There is a place in you where it has not yet dimmed —
the fire that reaches out toward fire...

A poet I am... gathering meanings into puzzles.
And if to me a sense has been bestowed,
I will discern among the shards, the numbers,
not simply life — but Her Presence.

And therefore, bending close to every phrase,
I listen not to rhyme, but to the steps:
how someone in a person, time and again,
out of the dark comes forth, still, after all, alive.

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