

Bardarbunga

From Atlantis (2017)

by: Marie Silkeberg

translation Kelsi D. Vanada

A blue sulfur fog from the eruption lies over the city.

A thin haze.

You smell sulfur even in the shower.

See low houses made of wood. Corrugated metal.

A small plane flies in for a landing.

It rains.

You get soaking wet.

Eat noodle soup.

The meat tastes different. Denser.

You listen to the Chinese language as the rain pours down outside.

You walk out into it.

Ask about the boat.

We'll get back to you the woman answers.

You see the whale meat's blood-red color in the display case.

Try to drink coffee outside in the harbor and smoke

the only cigarette left in your pocket.

The rain whips in from the sea.

You swim in a large outdoor swimming pool.

A long time.

As if through the volcano.

The lava streams.

Epilepsy. Visions.

A blue juice.

A woman starts talking to you in the dressing room.

Says she recognizes you. Has seen you often.

It's my first time you say.

You see a rainbow across the sky.

A film about the ocean you say.

How the island lies in the ocean.

Deep in our memory.

You meet a woman from Uruguay.

With grandparents from Poland and Hungary.

Now living in Australia.

She tells you that outside the apartment she rents

garbage piles up.

One morning she saw a woman up to her waist in the mountain of trash.

Using a tool to scoop something edible out of it.

A man and a woman from Montreal next to you stiffen.

Really?

Wealth has returned hasn't it they say.

Could they have done something better you ask a woman.

2008.

Something more radical she answers.

You walk to the flea market in a large shed.

See hand-knit sweaters. Bracelets of lava stones.

The books in the river. Tinged blue from the ink.

You're thinking.

Remembering.

The devastated city.

The stage's memory she says.

The ghost in Hamlet.

How it should be interpreted for the deaf.

Only later you think you confused the sounds.

A theater for the dead.

An analogy between gift, loss and spectacle she says.

When you give what is most precious to you.

You become nothing.

You see the glass greenhouses. Warmed with steam.

How they glow in the dark landscape.

The biggest desert in Europe he says.

Lava fields.

Two thousand or twenty thousand big or small earthquakes per week.

Continental plates.

They slide apart at two centimeters per year he says.

As you pass over the crevice between the Eurasian
and the American.

In other places they converge he says.

At the Himalayas for example.

The longest period without sun since records began.

But you don't hear in which decade or century.

You wait a long time for the geyser to jet.

At last it does.

Jets.

In the downpour.

You take a step back when it happens.

See the bubble expanding seconds prior.

Smell the sulfur.

The waterfall.

Cascades.

The huge mist of water droplets.

You think about the similarities between Japan and Iceland.

If similarities exist.

Not tonight either will the ship depart for the northern lights.

A woman calls to say.

The hottest place on earth he says.

Under the glaciers.

Exploding lava when the volcano erupts.

And the melting glacier flows down into the crater.

Or the lava that flowed into the lake and was cooled down.

Was so hot that it became so light that it could float on water.

A new continent she said.

A new way of living.

Not a country.

A city.

The bottom of a deep fjord.

The land raising is still ongoing.

You see a brimstone butterfly at Eyjafjallajökull.

The whole summer of 2010 I drove through black clouds he says.

Two lava streams. One on each side of the village.

Do the Japanese care about the French Revolution you think.

When he tells you it's said that the big eruption of 1780

triggered the Revolution.

The famine it caused in Europe.

Long years of black clouds covering half the continent.

You arrive at a black lava beach full of huge ice blocks.

Nowhere.

To Antarctica you come.

If you go straight south he says.

A Japanese woman falls asleep on the bus. Then another.

They look like people in the subway in Tokyo.

In their heavy sleep.

Hong Kong she says they come from when you finally ask.

You don't want to be in the rain a minute longer.

But change your mind when you enter the room.

Run toward the boat.

Just before it casts off into the dark.

Reykjavik disappears.

The rain ceases.

The cold intensifies.

But you notice it only later. When the cold has pervaded your body.

Strangely happy.

You listen to the captain as he reads in his Icelandic accent

blush upon the cheek of night

posthumous, unearthly light

You circle.

Stop still.

Nothing happens.

People go below deck.

Fall asleep across the table.

You go up again.

The northern lights the captain says coming next to you.

Points.

Can you see it?

A white cloud. Barely.

Maybe.

I'm used to it he says.

That's why.

I see the activity.

How many hours of time difference you think.

How hours are counted.

From a place that's still young.

Geologically speaking.

Short minutes of joy are so rare now he writes.

Russia is reaching hell in full rage.

A fontanelle you think.

Where the world opens. Upward. On the globe.

Rotating continuously. In its gravity.

Eat it with your mouth closed the host says.

About the rotten shark.

Let your tongue taste it.

And let the taste rise into your forehead.

Chug the liquor.

Down the whole glass.