

*Ioana Nicolaie*

Poems

*Translated from Romanian by Adam J. Sorkin and Irma Giannetti*

*Ioana Nicolaie was born in 1974 in Sângeorz-Bai in the north of Romania. A poet, novelist, and literary critic, she published four collections of poems: Retouched Photograph, The North, Cenotaph and The Faith. She has also published a novel The Sky in the Womb. Her poetry appears in the anthology New European Poets.*

## It Could Happen

If overnight the trolley stops  
turned into roses, inexpressibly yellow,  
don't mind that the kiosks' faces seem different  
looking back through them

if the support cables  
breathe like a bottle of flat peps  
don't take the ground from under your feet  
    however bitter the gossip  
    it's good for something

if the fluid in the cigarette lighter seems to you  
the least of gains  
    though a gain nonetheless  
don't celebrate too soon

there are mornings without rhyme or reason  
    looking back through them  
    idle weeks entirely without substance  
    what's yours has been set aside  
what's yours has been set aside

if the poem's no more than an unraveling  
don't lose yourself in its abyss  
it's made for me  
my contorted problems  
my frothy confusions.

Dear Ioana

I'm looking at the sullen teeth of the comb  
at the grimaces of the fruit set over the flame to stew  
and the snarled hair that cascades  
into the body of the little girl whose hand shades her eyes  
as she waits in the hollow of the mulberry tree  
for all my family to come from the village

I'm looking at calluses and burns on the neck  
near the chimney winter becomes an owl  
snow blazes in its eyes  
and I go on searching for hiding places  
among the same legs specked with leeches  
or the terrible tears hidden  
in the seeds roasted with unhappiness  
among fears shriveled into insults and trinkets

and my snarled hair is the beauty parlor's dress  
with you stifled in the first row  
among immature and pinched faces  
I prize my scorn, I store up  
my powerlessness.