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Extract from...

The Mirabelles

Written by Annie Freud

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Annie Freud

The Mirabelles

PICADOR POETRY



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'Marc Almond Poem' is based on the article 'Why did I live?',
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for Dave, May, Annabel, Eve, Rose,
Carl, Dawn and Barbara

Squid Sonnet

The look you shot me, milk-blue squid of Kimmeridge,
was one of recognition.
To you, I must have seemed an ogre, the kind that mothers
warn their children of. Something in you stiffened –

and the whole wild treble-clef of you leapt five foot
clear of the water,
then vanished through the bladder-wrack. Love you as I did,
I would have been the death of you.

And so, half-honoured and half-humbled,
I went back along the beach to the obsessive clink
of fossil-hunters' hammers, and the burdened buggies,

over the bridge and up the narrow, foot-worn path
where the eyes of people coming down declined
to meet the eyes of those returning to their cars.

Pheasant

Driving home from Winterbourne Abbas
with chipolatas, chops and cheese,
I pass a pheasant dead on the road.
I hit the brakes, put the car in reverse.
Her body is warm, her plumage intact.
I pick her up by her scaly feet
and, laying her gently in the boot,
home I go with my fabulous loot.
Working fast with criminal haste,
I pluck the feathers against the grain,
trying not to tear her skin.
I chop off her feet, her head, her wings,
knocking the knife with the rolling-pin
to make my cuts strike clean.
I open her body and pull out her guts,
her lungs, her heart and pearly eggs;
I throw them out in the unread paper,
setting aside the morsel of liver.
Her flesh is coral brushed with silver,
her fat, the colour of buttercups.

Marrying Strange Men

I cannot dodge you, though I have tried
to dodge the fact of your insistence that all
anemones be Japanese, that your hand-milk's smell
is redolent of almonds, your allergy to bees,

your wayward toothpicks in their livid green,
your migraines, your eyebrows plucked to non-existence,
your beauty, your invention of the disease
that only those with stripy irises contract,

your love of Proust, your hatred of machines,
your letters from the US full of deprecation
of their Groundhog Day, full of longing for English
laissez-faire, of illustrations of your CAT scans,

venal chiropractors, contemplations on a glass
of Pinot Grigio, the walnut shade of Cowper's Tiney,
the acquisition of a bouclé jacket, the prowler in the topiary,
your fear of Hell, your envy of rich women.

The book you meant to write about your life
would have been called *Marrying Strange Men*.