

Storm Sestina

We went to collect what had washed up on the shore.
Sun-bleached driftwood.
As if it had had a will before
finding itself lost at sea.
The air was clear after the storm.
All around was silence.

We drove in silence.
We drove on the road which wound its way along the shore
littered with debris from the storm:
a worn-out tire, scraps of paper, plastic and piles of pale, withered wood
The pebbled beach scattered with offerings from the sea,
littered with debris from the night before.

Regretting things said the night before,
half wishing we'd said more, we walked along in silence.
Words slapping like the waves of the sea now.
Without speaking, we picked our way along the shore,
our arms piled high with enough wood
to weather any coming winter storm.

I never imagined there could be such a storm.
That one could rise up so suddenly in this shining blue sea.
One that tosses newly painted fishing boats, little boats of wood
adorned with a calm eye, painted in silence.
Now the gentle waves rake up and down the shingle of the shore
turning over the same stones and pebbles from centuries before.

And there you stand. Like Ulysses from centuries before.
Washed up with a storm.
Washed up on a shore.
Cast back by the nymphs of the sea.
A siren song shatters the echoing silence
as he returns home to bend a bow of wood.

My heart has unravelled, shattered in splinters like wood.
You turn to silhouette, the sun behind, you before.
The gulls' cries break the silence

as they wing their way back from their shelter in the storm
and fly broad-winged across the sea
and across the shore.

We stand on the shore admiring our pile of wood.
Marveling at what the sea cast up, as if nothing else existed before.
Look what the storm washed up, you say -- breaking our silence.

-Nora Louise Syran

The Course of Time

It was a hurricane, they said.
In the Med.
Like the storm that washed Ulysses ashore a pebbled beach.
A body was found. Poor man.

Now the surf sifts itself through the shingle
like the rain that courses its way over the roman tiles on our roof.
We lie awake and listen
to the steady drip, drip, drip
of the water from the terracotta tiles above our heads.

The same earth ochre tiles as we saw stacked up high in
an age-old work pile of an ash-hollow mason in Pompeii.
Forever now forgiven his procrastination.
He dropped his mallet at the first explosion of
smoke and ash from the great triangular mountain dominating the horizon
with a clear view
down
to the sea
so blue.

Green in good weather, my husband says
over the drip, drip, drip
of the water through the cracks in the tiles above our heads.

There's time tomorrow to walk the roof
and fix what's broken.

-Nora Louise Syran

No Need to Shout - A Villanelle

“Stop, wait, there is no need to shout.”
Though shaking up with bottled anger, too
Remember, “time works most things out.”

A wall will lean which once was stout
‘Tween stones ivy works its way, jutting through.
“Stop, wait, there is no need to shout.”

The earth’s dry, cracked by summer drought.
The ground shifts and moves, the stones stand askew.
Remember, “time works most things out.”

But grief for me, there’s little doubt,
Like smoldering ashes will burn anew.
“Stop, wait, there is no need to shout.”

The years like water slowly mount
And time turns lakes and rivers into dew.
Remember, “time works most things out.”

The tide rises, the current moves about.
As waters ebb and flow, so I lost you —
“Stop, wait, there is no need to shout.
Remember, time works most things out.”

Nora Louise Syran