

**littlebird / Diti Ronen**

Begin from above  
slowly,  
in a blue so light, so light  
and wide and big and white  
begin, with infinity  
begin with the sky.  
With the bird.  
Look, she is taking off.  
One bird, little. Look.  
There she flies.  
Big and open –  
the entire sky is in front of her.

Begin with the bigness, yes, begin big,  
from above, big,  
begin with the all-seeing point of view  
the innocent point of view  
the point of view of God  
who does not see the detail.  
Were there other birds?  
Was there a chirp?  
There was, surely there was.  
There, another bird, taking off.

Begin with the horizon.  
Do you still see on it any wisp of smoke?  
No, it is not dusk yet,

you cannot see a thing.

And the horizon is far and the sea is close  
and the sun is in mid sky.

Now tree tops peek out,  
appearing.

Begin with the tree tops.

They spread, ever green,  
their fingers yearn for the tall,  
the divine,  
for God looking upon them, for  
the bird.

Did the sun indeed shine?

And what was the shape of the cloud?

God, watching, did He notice the bird?

Begin with the tree. With the bough,  
see how it hugs the trunk,  
leaning on it, ever so trustingly.

It too is quiet. Slightly moved by the wind.

Cuddling itself softly  
humming the sounds of its origins.

Have you noticed the nest?

Have you seen the nestling?

Begin with the tree.

With the tree next to it.

Remember the bird?

It descends here, to sit on a bough.

Begin with her.

No. Begin with her tree.

No. Begin with the tree next to her tree.

Begin with more trees.

Many trees.

A forest.

Now look. From above.

Can you see the forest clearing?

Look.

There are lager barracks there.

Begin with the barrack.

It does not matter which one,  
they are all alike.

Begin with the tenth barrack.

Look, a handsome woman now leaves it.

Her walk is proud.

Did you draw her?

Draw her pretty, please,

Pretty, bald and proud.

Did you see?

Her round face, turned slender,  
accentuating big, blue eyes.

She looks up.

Sees blue skies

sneaking between the tree tops

that you drew, and the tip of a cloud

shaped like a longing.

She notices in detail.

Remembers scent and flavor,

color and sound of before.

Thinking spring.

Sees the bird

passing in front of her,  
gliding, her wings spread open.

Begin, with the officer.

Draw him tall.

Accentuate his face, please.

It is squared. Draw his

Strong jaw, his chin

sticking out.

Now the hair: carefully done,

his hat hanging in sloppy elegance.

Have you seen his uniform?

The emblems on his sleeve?

Begin with the rifle.

The officer holds the rifle in his hands.

He stands by the barrack. The rifle in his hand.

Now he lifts his weapon,

aiming to the sky.

Pressing his cheek against the weapon

closing a non-aiming eye

and searching.

Draw him tall. And very straight.

He looks through the crosshair

up, he's searching,

what shall he shoot now?

The bird now stands on a branch.

Draw him looking, draw the look.

He moves, turning to the woman.

Look. He  
forgets his mark. His muscles relax.  
Draw the gun descending, slipping down his arms.  
Draw the firing position fading.  
He looks at the woman.  
Her walk so proud  
dressed in a sack and a simple waistband.  
He looks at the woman.  
She does not see him,  
walking forward, to the latrine,  
her gaze fixed on the bird.

Draw him looking at the woman.  
Looking at the train of her walk,  
the ripples sent forth from her behind.  
There, she has entered the latrine.  
He once again lifts his weapon.  
Determined. Indifferent to the ripples,  
indifferent to the train of her behind.  
Did you see? Once again, he presses his cheek,  
and although it is Spring in the world  
and perhaps because of  
the cold steel  
he closes one eye.  
Watch.  
He aims, concentrates, aims,  
and the bird, oh, the bird,  
her exactly –  
and shoots.  
Did you draw it?

Could you draw her sinking?

There, here, so close,  
right by, her body  
like God landing softly,  
unheard.

Begin with the woman.

She hears a shot.

One, and its echoing  
knocking at her temples  
thudding to the ends of the forest  
and back. Was she hurt?

Draw the sound, the bang,  
draw her anxiety.

Draw her leaving the latrine.

She walks. There, she walks, she is unhurt.

Stands up and fixes the sack on her body.

Straightens her back. Looks,  
the bird is gone.

She sends a wary look.

What was the shot?

She worries about her friends  
stepping quickly into the barrack,  
to arrive inside, to return.

Begin with the woman.

No, begin again with the officer.

His gaze returns to the woman.

She hurries her step,  
looking around frightened, anxious,

her pace a near-run.  
He still looks at her.  
Amazed. Bending down, spell-bound,  
lifts the bird from the ground.  
She's twitching, her body still warm.  
Feels her weight, how tiny she is,  
and so pretty,  
now he hands the bird to the woman.

Now please draw the woman.  
Hurry, now everything happens quickly,  
she takes the bird  
as though it was planned,  
as though it was obvious,  
as though the bird was meant for her,  
she takes the bird,  
in her hand, without shaking,  
she takes the bird  
without so much as a look,  
she takes the bird,  
opens the barrack door,  
and enters, now running,  
breathless, to her friends,  
a little bird in her hand.

The door is now open and she sees  
they are not hurt. Now they are all inside.  
They worried about her, what was that shot?  
Now they are all inside.  
And a little bird, dead.  
Now they are all inside. And a little bird held in her hand.

Begin with the woman's friend.

No. Begin with the Blockalteste.

She's Czech. Religious. Short.

Hides her daughter in a little cabin.

She is good. Begin with the baking oven.

No. Begin with the bird.

Begin, with the pot.

No. Begin with the bird.

Who plucked the feathers out?

Why should the feathers be plucked?

And what does the Blockalteste have to do with the bird?

Begin, from the beginning.

Begin with the bird.

Please draw for me a little bird.

No. Please draw for me a little pot.

No. Please draw for me a little oven.

Look.

Inside the belly of the oven is a pot,

And inside the belly of the pot is a bird.

That you don't have to draw.

Begin, begin with the woman's friend.

No, begin with the woman.

The woman is still shocked. The barrack door is closed

her eyes grow accustomed to the darkness.

She looks at her friends, holds the bird.

No. Begin with the woman's friend.

she's older. No, not that old.

She's still young, just a little more mature.

She takes the bird from the woman's hands  
and walks over to the Blockalteste.  
Watch her. How she  
grasps the little bird,  
elevating it ever so slightly,  
and hinting to the little oven.  
Gently. And awaits understanding.  
Elevates, and hints to the little pot.  
She has time.  
Elevates, slowly, and hints to the margarine.  
Lightly tilts her head to the right.  
Elevates, pauses, and hints to the flour.  
She has patience. For pepper and for salt.  
Look. Now they are huddling in sweet secrecy.  
Draw the gaze.  
Draw the hunger.  
Draw the secret.  
Draw the agreement.  
Draw the hope. The hunger.  
Begin with the hunger.  
No. Begin with the bird.  
No. Begin with the woman.  
With the officer. The gun. With the  
with the barrack. The oven. The pot. The bird. With the –  
begin already. Come on, begin.  
Begin with the memory.  
Begin with the, the, with the quiet.  
In silence.  
Begin with muteness.  
Begin with the silence. The silences.

No. Don't begin.

Just be silent and don't begin.

And never say a thing.

Don't write and don't draw a thing.

Forget all that you've said. And be silent.

Erase all that you've written. And be silent.

Erase and forget. Forget and erase.

And be silent.

And let go of the barrack. Let go of the officer, let go of the woman.

Let go of the hunger, let go of the gaze, let go of hope.

Leave the silences, leave the voices.

And don't think oven, or pot.

And don't touch story, or song.

Expel the bird. God.

Swallow the words.

And be silent.

Forget. Erase. And don't speak.

And if you must, begin at least with noiseless.

In your head, in a whisper. Whispering.

Begin with the longing. The yearning.

Do you know what bechinalt is? Of course you do.

Begin with the bechinalt.

Draw its aroma rising

spreading through the house.

Rising from the pot, leaving the kitchen,

crawling to the living room,

reaching all the way to the carpet,

to the radio,

to the search-for-relatives program

making the senses lose their mind.

Begin in the afternoon.

Draw the little apartment in Givataim.

The sun moves to a diagonal  
and a light breeze comes in from the sea.

Begin with mother.

Begin with mother, in the afternoon.

Draw her cooking, a wooden spoon in hand,  
explaining to me about flour, and how to make roux.

Begin with mother, afternoon.

Draw her tall, by the stove.

Draw her closely, close.

Draw her touching me.

Begin with me.

Begin with mother, afternoon.

Draw her pretty, on high heels.

It's the hour of the day when sometimes,  
having stopped by the butcher's and having bought some chicken,  
she would cook bechinalt

from a little bird

that she got from an officer

With the taste of much, so much, so very much time.

Translation from Hebrew: Elazar Tal Ronen  
English Editor: Lynn Dion