

from *The Lyre's Lament*

Tina Giannoukos

xi

It takes forever to unpick a seam.
You handed me the skull of the Baptist
and said dance the dance of the seven veils.
I'd have done anything to keep your love,
but you try ripping off veils day after day after day.
It turned out you weren't impressed.
You were smug when I called to say the cat was dead.
You said: "You're monopolising my time".
You blew me away when you claimed you knew pain
then challenged me to a duel but didn't show up.
That's how it is on bad dates. You get let down.
I strewed chrysanthemums on my way
to the tower where you'd have lopped my head.
I'd sewn myself a shroud. I ripped it up.

x

On what reading is this failed love based?
The world breathes and I am surprised. I have
no letters only words on my computer
to tell me you and I made love, were louts.
The cat on the roof opposite my bedroom
stretches and I think what truth did we draw out?
The voice is seductive and yours licks
wounds then torments with silence.
I am in love with your sound not a man.
Be quick. Flesh is forgotten All skin is soft.
You promised to come, but didn't.
The voice that torments me is the voice of God.
I forgot we'd parted as friends and begged
the gods to flay you alive for your lie.

xii

You must sever my aorta,
snap the spinal cord. Be quick.
Make the fans happy. Do not be slow.
They want blood. You know this.
Humour them. This is cowardice,
not tenderness. This is unhelpful.
You know I can gore you.
Don't listen to your critics. Mine
are drinking wine in anticipation.
I'm ready. Your men did their bit.
Now do yours. I hang my head.
My back gleams red. Celebrate
this richness. I am waiting.
Blood drenches my mouth.

xiv

The eruption of this love turns blue. I
saw the crescent moon turn blue. I saw
the half-moon turn blue. I saw two blue moons
in a month. All the moons I saw were blue.
The plumes of ash from the eruption of
your love rose to the top of Earth's hardwired
body. And I saw the moon turn blue
in shame. The ashes of your love bled

into the red sunset I saw in Egypt.
The fire in the forests of your love had
smouldered for years. Blew up into the blaze
the wind fanned from spite. The sun turned blue.
In the smoke-filled sky the sun was indigo.
The moon was blue again that evening.

xxi

We played as girls in the carpark
behind the shops. The carpark's no longer
there, as so much from that time isn't.
The girl didn't become a woman.
The woman carries the wound of it.
Somewhere is a grave. She hopes
they've scraped off all the names.
Love blows in like a storm,
stirs up the dirt and grit. It's muck.
The woman knows the articulation:
the heart is a murdering beast and then
the tired references to moon and stars
creep in. O! The night won't release
its poison quick enough and I'm worn-out.

xxv

I'm alone again at this computer
making rhymes that musn't cross the line
between what's nice and merely crass.
It's a tightrope I'm willing to walk
though I know the point of tension. In slack
mode it's still a noose round my neck.
Bitter recrimination is sour grapes.
I'll drink the glass that's poured. This is heartbreak.
The taste lingers like all good wine, so there's
something to be said for savouring more
yet confine myself to one pure swill
of liquid catastrophe. I need an aftertaste,
more character. Wine tastings are perfect
for ditching a lover and getting a new one.

The Author

Tina Giannoukos is a poet and fiction writer. Her first collection of poetry, *In a Bigger City* is published by Five Islands Press. She studied Arts/Law at the University of Melbourne, later obtaining a Master of Arts. In 1997 she was awarded a Varuna Fellowship for New Writers. She has practised law, but now teaches creative writing and works part-time as a journalist. In *The Lyre's Lament* she explores the erotics of poetry.