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VALZHYNA MORT

# NOCTURNE FOR A MOVING TRAIN

The trees I’ve glimpsed from the window
of a night train were
the saddest trees.
They seemed about to speak,
then—
vanished like soldiers.
The hostesses handed out starched linens for sleep.
Passengers bent over small icons
of sandwiches.
In a tall glass, a spoon mixed sugar into coffee
banging its silver face against the facets.
The window reflected back a figure
struggling with white sheets.
The posts with names of towns promised
a possibility of words
for what flew by.
In lit-up windows people seemed to move
as if performing surgery on tables.
Chestnut parks sighed the sighs of creatures
capable of speech.
Radiation, an etymology of soil
directed into the future, prepared
a thesis on the new origins of old roots,
on secret, disfiguring missions of misspellings,
on the shocking betrayal of apples,
on the uncompromised loyalty of cesium.
My childish voice, my hands, my feet—all my things that live
on the edges of me—
shhh now, the chestnut parks are about to speak.
But now they’ve vanished.
I was extracted from my apartment block,
chained to the earth with iron playgrounds,
where iron swings rose like oil wells,
I was extracted before I could dig a language
out of air
with my childish feet.
I was extracted by beaks—storks, cranes.
See the conductor punching out eyes

of sleeping passengers.
What is it about my face
that turns it into a document,
into a ticket stretched out by a neck?
Why does unfolding this starched bedding
feel like
skinning someone invisible?
Why can’t the spoons, head-down in glasses, stop screaming?
Shhh . . .
The chestnuts are about to speak.