

# Summer

by Anne Elezabeth Pluto

*for my father*

I want to memorize this  
our time together — what we did  
without her there to tell me  
*You wouldn't want this life*  
*you're not cut out for it* — and me  
the child holding the reins of an unruly horse  
as you took off its shoe and examined its foot  
before putting the new one in place  
for riding far away — from the dirt I had pulled carrots  
shaped like mandrakes — or had stolen sour apples  
that fell beneath the huge tree where yellow and green  
caterpillars hung like earrings in the twilight — or sugar  
I'd taken from the box in the pantry when she wasn't looking.  
It was a fortune of smuggled goods  
with which to win them over  
to keep them still and nudging me for more  
while you attended to their hooves.

She still tells me what to do  
miraculously knows if I've lost something  
she has given me — as I should only like  
what she had — and I don't care — I take these  
things — and wait for prescience to cover me  
like a blanket — she misses you — and wants to die.  
You are in every dream she has — they fill her up  
to being young — and upon waking she reaches backwards  
to you — left only with the bed half empty.

I'm dying to be honest

and sit her down to listen finally to me  
to see me as I truly am — it's almost hopeless  
and I cannot bear her cursing in three languages  
for all the good it does her — it sends me into silence.  
I've chartered the stars to find the constellation  
of forgiveness — its open milky light inviting me forward  
to resurrection — to love — to the familiar made over  
against the odds of time and space.  
I've memorized this, now, the young girl, her long hair  
slipping from the braids — the mandrake carrot in her open  
hand, the unruly horse tamed and looking at her  
with trusting eyes and her blacksmith father  
whispering in Russian,  
*Hold him — hold him tight.*

