

# Midsummer Night's Wake

by Beate Sigriddaughter

1.

Nothing has died  
except my cancerous ambition.

2.

I stay awake at the window  
through the last glimmer of light  
though it is not clear  
when it comes. Eventually it is mostly dark  
except for the glow of the village below.  
I have vowed to honor each last  
nuance of shimmer, and if it is no longer  
the sun but the town instead, I will  
honor that too.

I have been betrayed,  
cheated of some of the best moments  
of my life so far. I promise to change this,  
not myself, no, but the constant  
harshness of conformity.

I listen to sweet music as I honor the light.  
Later I will not remember what that music is.  
It is pretty, but not as important  
as the pulse of my soul. My love  
is important, my yearning, the exact love  
I've let myself be talked out of  
in the name of respectability.

3.

It was the longest day  
of the year.

I think of my first love who once wrote  
in a letter: "This young man did well for  
himself," as he got honors, but also betrayals  
from a world that praised his intellect and  
claimed his body for war.

I too have done well in your world, my love,  
I played quite well in it, only I never  
belonged. And perhaps you did not  
either as your body crumpled around  
your astonishing brain.

I'm determined to walk home now,  
limping a little from all the falseness,  
all the breaking.

4.

Believe me, when something  
miraculous happens, like a sip  
of champagne or a forget-me-not  
among the roses, don't try to repeat it.  
Simply bow to miracles.  
Savor them as I savor the light.

I remember spending other  
midsummer nights staying late  
at the office, collating last minute  
FedExes for the bottom line.

I will no longer be betrayed.

At least not voluntarily. At least  
not for praise or overtime pay.

5.

I am not Athena, sprung  
from Daddy's brain. Or am I?  
With my fears, my fairness, my  
obedience.

I am not Cassandra, praying  
to Athena in vain: Shelter me, don't let him  
drag me away to be raped, don't,  
oh, goddess, don't let this last piece  
of humiliation of all that is life happen  
to me.

Or am I? Dragged out  
into the rat race as fodder for  
immeasurable greed.

I am both and neither, sitting crouched  
in the corner, huddled around  
the sorrow of my soul.

I cannot promise that you will  
not again be betrayed, my soul,  
but I promise the one betraying you  
from here on out will not be me.

I will be the one sheltering you, doing  
my best, building higher sanctuary walls,  
if necessary, telling you it is all right, for I  
will cradle you through the last glimmer of light,  
through the last flicker of life  
with a fox's vast talent for invisibility

despite its great beauty.

If anyone sees you, it will be someone  
who knows or yearns to know  
how to love, how to treasure  
the great romance of life.

