

When the Translator Disappears, the Translation Withers and Dies

by Bill Yarrow

The kidnapping of the translator made big news for a short time but then the general incomprehensibility of things resumed and everyone, except Lorraine, went back to work. Lorraine refused to extend the futility of human communication—what was the point? she wanted to know. What was the point of speaking if, now that the translator had been kidnapped, no one (no one!) could decipher what she or anyone else had to say? Lorraine could not fathom how people could return to work. How was work even possible? she wondered. An iron silence began to oppress her as she slept. It crept into her body and she felt herself incapable of raising her arms in greeting or to ward off a blow. She sank deep into bitterness, dreading the dawn and the sight of neighbors egregious in their pretense of meaningful speech. She pined for the return of the translator who became messianic in her eyes. Her dreams became denuded of images, infused only with two lines of unvarying dialogue. “Come back to me.” “Can't.

Can't you see I've never left?" It was the translator speaking. He was holding her in his arms. He was looking at her with the tenderness she so terribly craved. She felt, suddenly, as if for the first time, understood. And she understood perfectly, perfectly, the repressed caress of words that poured from his mouth.

