

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.

