

# Two poems by Raquel Chalfi in translation

*by tsipi keller*

## **On the Shore, Tel Aviv, Winter 1974**

A crocodile cloud swallowed a cloud-cloud.  
All is clogged  
and where did the war go?  
The pier is painted yellow and red  
with the inscription: Tel Aviv.  
The drums of the depths are indifferent.  
In the sky shadowy figures  
slowly go berserk. An infinite wrestling arena  
in slow-motion takes.  
A crane rises above the luxury hotel  
Hilton. And where did the war go.  
A crocodile cloud swallowed a cloud-cloud. Where  
did the war go. Up in the depths  
soft clouds make love to planes.  
The air fills the lungs  
with spiky salt and laughter.  
The sun, a fading photograph.  
Shorebirds grayly peck the sand.  
The sea — its muscles groan.  
A lone woman, a synthetic kerchief  
on her head what is she  
in face of a thunderstorm.  
The diving board, too, is painted orange.

An old woman, her lips attempt:

He was an angel

He was an angel

## From the Songs of Crazy Dolores

1.

I am the child  
above whose bed  
Mexican gods laugh

Seasons go by, a sun reigns  
and pyramids do not turn upside down

There are many antiquities in the land of *Mejico*  
and I am the smallest among them

2.

I love Beli-Belik-Boom  
(once I called him Le-Le-Le)  
and I'll always love Le-Le-Le.  
But Belik does not understand  
what love is.

Belik is a strange man.  
He wrote me a poem of love  
yet refused to kiss my bare soul  
under the *huppa*. It was a *huppa*  
of a parachute  
and he jumped with it out of there  
down,  
leaving me to freefall.

Of course I arrived before him.  
Boom.

I managed somehow  
to break my bones.  
And I have a few memories left.

When I was broken  
and a memory only  
Belik would kiss me on my cheek (Le-Le-Le)  
every evening.  
Later he swapped me  
for a cat.  
When he photographed me  
he would photograph me in double  
exposure.  
Somehow I managed to appear in the picture.  
Boom.

3.  
I am made of glass  
and my father is a glazier  
I tell you I'm as  
transparent as a yogurt jar  
without the yogurt  
try to look through me just try  
and you'll see that you can see everything  
lean your head on me children  
and your noses will be squashed flat  
and your mouths will be pulled  
like a down-in-the-mouth blowfish  
take a look inside me I'm transparent  
absolutely  
I am made of glass  
because my daddy is a glazier  
and my mother dons a tulle dress  
take a look children take a look  
it will do you good  
only be a little cautious please  
yesterday someone looked through me too hard  
and saw as far as the Bali islands  
and he rode a blue whale in the Bali islands

and then my glass broke  
into a zillion shards  
and I was pricked and pricked and pricked  
and I was all glass glass  
in a zillion red puddles

4.  
Dolores jumps rope  
Dolores plays hopscotch

She looks into a kaleidoscope  
tube builds  
broken tunnels in a dream  
Dolores lives her life backward  
swings on a rusty groaning gate  
looks for puppies to adopt  
dead chicks to revive  
diamonds buried in trashcans  
in order to help refugees  
hiding in a tunnel under  
Keren Hakayemet Boulevard  
on the other side of the world

Dolores jumps rope  
always jumps rope  
to the other side of the world

5.  
I am Dolores-not-Dolores  
I am in the dream of some god

It seems to me that my life is a life  
but really it is only  
a particle in the dream  
of a sleeping god

who dreams me with love

Dolores-not-Dolores

I have to pinch myself hard  
because the hour when images switch in his brain  
is near

Yes Dolores no Dolores yes Dolores no  
Dolores birds Dolores sea Dolores  
a loose shoelace Dolores a broken blue glass a milky  
way bathing a world  
a white horse lost in the plain  
tunnels inside time  
time going backward  
a snake shedding its skin a mobile of broken galaxies  
suspended on fine transparent fiber

I have to pinch myself hard  
because the hour when images switch in his brain is near  
I must watch myself so I don't sink  
in a dream  
when he dumps me from his brain  
like a crumb dropping  
from indolent fingers

<http://www.sunypress.edu/p-6092-reality-crumbs.aspx>

