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Illiterate Fish

Poem by David Mills
ILLITERATE FISH

As the Gypsy Kings snap and tickle starlight, your feet summon tapioca ghosts from Lodz’ dust. The way doves dress themselves in glass, after mistaking a window pane for a cloud, my pupils confuse your sable bangs for condors streaking above your eyes’ azure skies. We serve each other words as Pavel becomes the net in our singles ping-pong match. *May I buy you a drink?* The whites of Pavel’s eyes back spin with your volley: “barze dobje, why won’t he ask to make love?” *Pavel don’t ruin this.*

*May I drink you by the light crawling out of the moon?* Due to his tipsy fibs I place a word on Pavel’s tongue, *esplanade* (v): to attempt an explanation while drunk. Another, *flatulence* (n): the emergency vehicle commandeered by me— that peels up Pavel once he’s plastered by a steamroller for thwarting my chances. This way he wouldn’t have to get around with a *lymph* (v): to walk with a lisp. At a bar, you mix potions that unbutton tongues, pour me upstairs. The angel twirling beneath the slick tent our tongues make tumbles backwards through time. Our first kiss flew to Iceland, then ripped the inseam between Bavaria and the country this kiss was headed for. In Sublice, a Polish whistle stop, this kiss had to show its passport three times. Apparently, this kiss was unrecognizable with its duds: a moustache and brown eyes. Dressed in darkness, this kiss wondered how the night work its way into two men’s clavicles, like snow kneads its way into stone? This kiss noticed people staring as it boarded a 10:07 train to Lodz. What’s so unusual about a pair of lips kicking back in the dining car? I wonder if you now know this kiss, inches from your lips, hums with all this history? I carve your bone black outfit from your skin. My tongue appraises your creamy, naked landscape. I’ll never have to teach you words like: *flabbergasted* (adj): to give up all hope of ever having a flat tummy. As your hands clamp down on my BVDs, I teach you your first word in English, *circumvent* (n): the opening in the front of boxer shorts.

Wearing a condom, I slowly enter a foreign country where words like *oyster* (n), a person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddish, are uttered. As we scrub each other’s skin ‘til daylight creeps, you repeatedly *coo: barze dobje.* I cum, white chocolate anoints the roof of my Trojan. *Ni spac, ni spac.* You break night; but

moments later you’re yanking on me like a poodle too stupid to follow the edicts in your leash. We spoon in Pavel’s bed with this yellow Polish-English dictionary snug
between us: our Berlitz Berlin Wall; east to west, woman to man, communicating ‘til
the sea purring between us burns and flees. We glisten with brief interludes of, You

tired? Or answering the door, you learn negligent (adj); a condition where you absent-
mindedly get the door in your nightie. I now know barze dobje means very good. And
back on the backside of the Atlantic, now my heart is two question marks staring at
each other but afraid to come closer, afraid that no dictionary is equipped to translate
two
tongues
that
once
danced
like
illiterate
fish.

1. Lodz—a town in Poland famous for its film school.
2. Sublice—a town in Poland
3. Ni Spac—don’t sleep