but first I call your name
Hadassa Tal

but first I call your name

translated from Hebrew
by Joanna Chen

Shearsman Books
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for Maya
within the whirlpool of your loss
I'm a reflection
this pearl of light
that falls
is you
apart from everything
nothing has changed
Maybe

I will discover your name
will shout it, shout slowly
maybe breathe
be silent
maybe
blend it with a select variety of grape,
slurp it down, roaring and moist of spirit.
Maybe I will whisper a psalm to the seaweed
will suck it out of rocks sweating in the light,
legs dangling in water.
Maybe I will rip out the silence
seal it in the belly of a cicada,
and from the landslide of its voice
your name will rise utterly human,
filling life with sweetness.
Maybe I will ply the rose with passion
sprout grief in the soil
and with the flightiness of spring
it might flower
and out of the shudders of an unpruned garden
I'll lip
come
it's dinnertime –
just speak to me, speak like the seasons,
speak to me like rain,
speak
maybe then I will know the immortal song of mortals.
Crumbs

With a scarf, because it grows cold at dusk, especially on the beach, dress unbuttoned, held by a moon-shaped pin precisely in the middle of the chest raising arms, exposing them to seagulls, slipping away between piers running along stone platforms chasing you

The water resting as the morning star and a girl fall, scattering through the air
you slipped

like silk
over skin
naked body-
breast of night
burning
star
How much yearning does time weigh?

You yearn from within me
passing a shadow over my words, pushing
toward the source of light.
On a page of the universe your face rests
softly twirling the world around

You’ve been emptied of clocks yet time happens
dangling the world from a thread
a night and seven days and always
the unknown depths
and emptiness
filled with itself
Oh days of innocence under dazzling sun
once I loaned a lupine from the bees
Rainy days are good for onions, you laughed

Our ancestors likened it to a large pearl,
the French turned it into soup.
You cannot taste it without tears.

You laughed,
a laugh removed from language,
your spirit rebelling
wandering along in the opposite direction
to laughter
Santa Rosa

With which word, which silence can I say: No. Pain is nailed, flowing outside of time. Gathering all the no mores – no more inhaling dandelions, no more plums blushing at lunch, no more winter chestnuts on the palate. We bit into them at night, we bit and bit each time the bats flew south reverberating
Lacuna

I want to lure you with words impossible
to hunt, translate or plunder.
This morning I listened to hushed tones, and then
a word, I swear, began singing –
if only it would sprout feathers
you’d never know the difference
except for
the comma-
take it, it’s yours, only promise me
don’t pause