

Susan Tepper – Two Poems

Meditations on dear Petrov set in 19th Century Russia during a time of war

Stitch

I stitch my love on time. Imaginings. The brightness of grass again stitched near the top. Warmth enough to float in the river stitched yellow. The flat river rocks heating my feet up through my skull stitched red. Along the borders. Everything happens along the borders you say. Blue stitching for the summer sky. Glorious blue. Almost unreal. You ask if I am making a pillow. Yes. A pillow, dear Petrov. Soft. For you to rest your head in battle. When the guns have quieted and you so long for respite. My breast and your head pressed together. The air coming out of you. Short warm bursts. Alive. You are still alive. Each night you are here your weight. Pressing me into the straw mattress. Sighs. How I long to be out dancing when there is only music. No guns or cannon fire. No screams from the almost dead. Not that I am able to hear the almost dead. Only in sleep. Accompanying nightmares. The owls and hawk. Other frightful sounds. Animals down through the chimney. Winter lightning once striking the roof. You were away at battle. I thought it was going to take down the house.

Black Diamonds

Happiness must involve deception. Diaphanous clouds that break into sudden rain. There is no other way. I pass you a currant biscuit. You call my logic absurd. Laughing. Taking a bite. Must stand and stretch my legs you say. I am of the moon, dear Petrov. How little can I spare to be left over. I pirouette. The river lies flat and gray. We made this walk on what you called a fine day. How the water glistens. It glistens when a body relinquishes to it. Squatting, you pick something off the ground. I assume you dropped the biscuit. Instead you hold out a shiny dark stone. It's a black diamond you say. Asking is it good enough. I find your question repulsive. I take all you have to give. And all what you promise that doesn't appear. I pluck the thing from your outstretched palm. Rough. Holding it up to the sun. Studying its properties. This is not a black diamond. Just another river stone. Your smirk and demeanor confirm this. I pass it back to you. You bend kissing my hand. Black diamonds are the rarest of gems you say. More blood has been shed over diamonds than all the wars. You toss it back to the river.

Susan Tepper is the author of six published books of fiction and poetry. Her seventh book, a novella in linked prose titled *Monte Carlo Days & Nights* will be released by Rain Mountain Press, NYC, in the late fall. Tepper has received many honors and awards for her writing which has been widely published throughout the free world. And in other less free zones. But, that's another story for another time. www.susantepper.com