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It Happened in the Afternoon, Imre Oravecz

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Imre Oravec

IT HAPPENED IN THE AFTERNOON,

in the moderately high mountain range, end-of-autumn gray outside and inside, hoarfrost and titmice in the gardens already, I was working on something, I got up early to prolong the day, after lunch I was overcome by an irresistible drowsiness, I wasn't finished yet, but I stretched out on the bed in my clothes, I looked first at the opposite wall, then fastened my eyes on the newly installed paneling on the ceiling, I liked it, L. was right when he complimented me on it, we'd done a good job, the fragrance of the wood permeated the air, it was not yet overwhelmed by the smell of preservative, I was restless, I clasped my hands behind my neck, the fire was burning in the tile stove, I shivered anyway under the blanket, I went over all the things I had to do, I mulled over the properties of wall coverings, deadlines and items in short supply flitted through my mind, I thought about the custody suit and all its attendant complications, I worried about my financial situation and my lack of regular exercise, I remembered the photograph of my mother as a young girl, where in a white dress she was feeding ducks, and the death of the poet-monk T. M., I closed my eyes, then got engrossed in how I'd behave at my father's funeral, if I outlived him, this lasted a long time, meanwhile a summer pasture swam in, wild pear trees, blackberry and dog rose bushes, someone squatted in the grass and set a rabbit trap, near Sz., my native village, judging from the ripeness of the fruit it must have been July, a motor coach roared by outside, dogs were barking at someone, I opened and closed my eyes again, the previous image returned, it was summer again, but in C. already, on another continent, where I lived for a year with my son, the pasture led into a broad valley, there were *ranches* in the valley, it was hot, the yellow hillsides crackled from the drought, they were slaughtering cattle near a corral, as in Spanish times, then a fire broke out, everything was burning, the sycamores were in flame, firemen came, but extinguishing it seemed hopeless, then everything vanished, and I don't know why, still on the borderline between sleeping and waking, suddenly I thought of a date, *fifteen years*, that's how much time has elapsed since I lived with you, another fifteen years and I'll be retired, if I'm still alive, and as

if I'd been stung by a wasp, I leapt up, and from the shame of how ridiculous I'll look, if even then, as an old man, I'm still tormented by you, I ran outside.

Translated from the Hungarian by **Bruce Berlind**