

Post Card Not From Santorini

Just so you know,
this is not where I really am.
Where I am is less
picturesque—dry and barren,
with olive and almond trees
bent away from the relentless
etesian meltemi that blows
for days at a time, sending
dust through the cracks
and howling around corners.

I have learned a little
Greek, and how to harvest almonds
on the steep terraced hillside
by poking a long pole into the tree
so nuts fall onto a tarp.
Also, how to sit for long hours
at a rickety table outside a café
overlooking the hills
and the sea a half mile away.

How to drink thick coffee
slowly from a small cup
with a lot of other men
who don't know me
but accept me now
after so many months.
They pull their caps low
over their faces and stare
at whoever passes by,
the only sound
the click of worry beads
like a rosary—but different.

I know the spiky shells
of the horse chestnuts
have cracked open,
leaving the bronze nuts
with their pale faces
all over Bond Street sidewalk.
Remember how Janie kept
them until they shriveled,
how we found her stash

strewn among the toys
long after she was gone.

Just so you know,
I won't be coming home.
This wizened wind-blasted island
is as good a place as any.

Lucile Burt

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