



If There is Something to Desire: One Hundred Poems

Vera Pavlova

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I broke your heart. / Now barefoot I tread / on shards.

Such is the elegant simplicity—a whole poem in ten words, vibrating with image and emotion—of the best-selling Russian poet Vera Pavlova. The one hundred poems in this book, her first full-length volume in English, all have the same salty immediacy, as if spoken by a woman who feels that, as the title poem concludes, “If there was nothing to regret, / there was nothing to desire.”

Pavlova’s economy and directness make her delightfully accessible to us in all of the widely ranging topics she covers here: love, both sexual and the love that reaches beyond sex; motherhood; the memories of childhood that continue to feed us; our lives as passionate souls abroad in the world and the fullness of experience that entails. Expertly translated by her husband, Steven Seymour, Pavlova’s poems are highly disciplined miniatures, exhorting us without hesitation: “Enough painkilling, heal. / Enough cajoling, command.”

It is a great pleasure to discover a new Russian poet—one who storms our hearts with pure talent and a seemingly effortless gift for shaping poems.

From the Hardcover edition.



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