

IN MAY WE WILL START AGAIN*

October 1956

At sixty he is only ever seven
and it is always winter—
queuing for hours at dawn
in a freezing Budapest back-alley
for bread he is not permitted to buy.
Everybody whispers
even now his voice is a careful murmur
only his eyes are still loud
flashing and fast with glances and fear.
These years are grey
punctuated by black leather
and Chajka sedan cars
that come in the night with knocking
and take his parents away.
The only other colour his memory permits
is red—
dark and dried on flagstones in the square
no one goes near for weeks
and even keeps the flies away.
Other than that a small can of crimson-lake
he conceals in his schoolbag:
while his friends watch for security police
paints in huge letters on a local shop
M U K*
After that bullets they lay on tram lines
and a dozen other subversive things.
Nothing prepares him for the future
it was always going to be
a much more difficult struggle
endlessly squeezing him back
to his bomb ravaged bedroom
in the two-storey communal flats
never ever to be so alive and afraid again

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