

ALICE NOTLEY

## THE BEADED HORSE

A small white horse from another planet wishes to talk to me.  
It is only a few inches in length. Its skin is composed of white beads  
White-beaded it speaks, hesitantly, in English  
It has vocal chords. It has a pink mouth and tongue.  
Heavenly seedpearls for horsehair? Try not to reach a rationale

Only to myself on welfare and in public: for I came to you  
when you least expected new knowledge in your candled reality,  
frying squash blossoms dipped in batter, on the courthouse lawn.  
Leave this town. Oh one cannot go back on a planetary promise.

You never promised the earth your skeleton, it assumes it  
I hate this cajoling universe, these passionate black-winged moths  
telling my eyes to perceive nothing but their sisterly claws.

Can you find the Law in this town? An infidel possesses my voice.  
Who are they to degrade me, they so easily imagined?  
Only a dream could make them be of interest.

My sister the Fury had told me, I couldn't get over heartbeat.  
Or break she said heat of the orange rift, chimera of our alphabet  
The girls fly screaming above the moving walkway.  
Listen to the horsie—too white. You're painting the walls of heaven  
too white, says the African dropping his teacup I catch it

Where are you going? Anyone? Stop telling me things, staging events,  
trying to focus on agreement, in our corner of this constriction,  
room of no landscape and filthy apron. This is what I have against  
heaven.

The desert of minutes remembers us well, so do We have to?  
The people whose care was enslavement. Your drug addiction  
in my kitchen? A haunting tenant plots to take over

a street gang in this afterlife; and her passivity and nicer still,  
his manicure  
flashes dutifully across the skies. I took a bullet for you.  
We are the reminiscing convicts—One way or another, one would kill

that was our ideal. Our desperation, our incarnate bread.  
Some people are called perverse for the audience's pleasure.  
I just don't want to be here, though you have lovely qualities.  
The horse isn't of this nature, being magical  
struggling to speak to us; hasn't it come from its own revolutionary  
land?

The superior man had said, Look at these white walls we've painted.  
I can't stay, I said,  
I have a problem. Effects, he said. Yes, effects. Personal  
and consequential. But we'll meet in the living room again, to look  
at the flawless drawings. I awoke and remembered my own priceless

art work was ruined. Where grace overdue doubts you  
generations of satellites clank above the trees, bringing satisfaction  
from the vacuous regions  
Out of the dark confinement, out of the more moneyed arts.

The horse's tiny tongue is working again  
Twisted to shape you, tulip of assignment. It could be about  
heroin or shamanism. I could sing your ravenous adherences  
The woman was cut into three pieces, accompanied by successful  
yields,  
retrieval of indulgences, and a movie star's penchant for charity.

Horse says they always promise to make it up to you in other ways.  
For example as you grow old they'll wipe your dribble with a tissue.  
I speak as someone having trouble with a foreign language—Look  
the girls are back! The Furies divebomb us shrieking.

You must accompany me to complete beauty.  
Don't return to the ugly projects, mount their stairs—  
elevator danger. Heaven has always been characterized  
by the gap between the rich and the poor. *They*  
know how to rise. The oligarchs *mean* to be nice.  
These are the figures of diction and the figures of thought.

An open-minded bird erupts from my forehead; we are going away  
from lustful reversals and all 'man' has ever held dear. What's there?  
The same gibberish, customs, drugs? No way  
It's where the Law is clear. The silver malevolence  
streaming down on the ocean was projected by realism, riches, psychic  
vibrations of hierarchy. I am going for your heart.

I had wanted out but I kept returning for my purse, I tell the  
horse, it contains my effects—have I left them this time?  
Riding you away from the countries of age, are we the traveling souls  
I've got to get there, do I need my passport,  
my name, and everything I've done, to myself and everyone?

No, says the horse, not now, and No  
ancient foibles, diaries, roulette, Greek drama. Orange malicious  
boulevard  
a diet of flames reflected on my white beads'  
cadenzas: Hell brought us here. There was nothing to learn  
by following rules: this is the Law. Clamorous beauty of courage

Sunflowers everywhere clotted black centers. The tremors  
of your legs have ceased. No fear now, there was so much of it.  
Those who are contrary to the old empire, you who hated have  
arrived.

Heal more than one. We've arrived here with nothing,  
not even what we thought of us. We are more deadly and savage,  
more exalted than they've ever known;  
Here we are the City, that indelicate miracle  
not your manners or your children

did you really think you knew how to organize us  
body after body, our deaths twisting in the wind? Here, in  
our city, we don't please anyone.

Out of the orange snow and the legality of disaffection; out of the  
somber, broken crescent, and the overdue soul; out of the  
streaming forelock  
from our omniscient minds: this liquid dimension has awakened  
out of barbary and stretchers.