

VALERIA ROMÁN MARROQUÍN

Comrade
january 19

TRANSLATED BY NOAH MAZER

AND YOU WEREN'T THERE

in the fields, in a factory

you were

in the street

agitating

—Dalmacia Ruiz-Rosas

i.

that afternoon i saw it rain

strange drizzle, this summer just now
sprouting its first heatwaves and
the sun that awaits us

is arching towards the upcoming month

it's january
and i saw it rain

tear gas from the roofs
the city center the asphalt bears witness
all the times i saw it rain

STONES STICKS PAINT PAMPHLETS RUBBER BULLETS

FIREARM PROJECTILES WATER CANNON WATER
PEPPER SPRAY HORSE SHIT

sweat on foreheads
i saw it rain
tears
and down in the park of tears
encrusted in the pavement
i saw people run
smash paving stones block highways cut off
avenues sing
anthems from a time to come
i saw the flags boom with the chants
and i saw the glint of motorcycle cops cop cars rockets
shining
two fronts tensing and exploding
everything at once
i saw the roaring shining masses advancing
always advancing

i saw the most gorgeous faces i've ever seen
endure the burn of the state's artillery
i saw mothers without their children
i saw siblings without a future
i saw the masters of power and war
aim their weapon and beg us
all of us to never exist ever again
that comfortable peace granted by the deaf verse of the dead

i saw their squads become an instrument of the commanders
and fire

i saw the union and the rondas
and the permanent struggle committees
and the relatives' associations and defense fronts and neighbor-
hood organizations
and how fear panted down their necks
like a cold knife

I SAW THE MASSES PART AND ADVANCE
ALWAYS ADVANCING
to get back what they stole from us

one country comes to an end and another
emerges out of the disaster they left us
builds itself with stones sticks asphalt glass dirt horse manure
rotten fruit unstuck soles empty bottles

ONE NATIONAL COLLECTION ONE SHARED POT
building itself with the remains of the generations
who couldn't get even before they left

one country comes to an end
we're collecting what's due

i saw the masses
and i saw you

that afternoon i saw it rain

ii.

in the spotless heart of repose
your sweat burns me
burns to the humid touch
of skin on skin no space left empty
we've come from the first day
over already for some

this is how we top it off
we dehydrate with beer

i hear you piss impeccably
and kilometers away
i hear them drawing close again

this is the moment of our nightmares
before the hangmen's dream:
permanent state of emergency

machinery willing
to annihilate anything that gets in the way

kilometers away the night breeze
surprises us and lulls the hair layer the pore layer
mixes up my memory of the first offenses
imported tactics war tactics
with your the contact of you
this *novo* affect
bitter stink vinegar alcohol grease tobacco

and still

we're here
and here the numbers rise

bodies piled
together in the spotless heart of the holding cell
in the spotless heart of the plazas
they organize the days of lament
and in the spotless center of the main plaza
the police are gathering
to kneel in the power of their masters
fictional power
comrade

in the spotless heart of the country
kilometers away
from the cot mattress spring platform

a people
like you and i said comrade
an organized empowered furious towering unstoppable people
is here pushing at the gears of history
AND WE'RE GOING TO WIN
nothing and no one stops on this front
slogans and pamphlets pass from hand to hand
flood walls roads columns lampposts
rooted here
bread and water pass to the ones resisting
the declarations pass

breath passes and cheers after the leader who ends
 this first round of speeches
TALK THAT TALK COMPAÑERA FROM THE BOTTOM
OF YOUR DIAPHRAGM
 and the bottom of your pain
and let's embrace one more time

 everything we have is precarious but it's ours

no one stops producing
 here we rise in full-on shortage
stomachs empty ligaments exhausted
 story of an unwritten nation
forgotten
a history etched in the skin of the people mobilizing towards
 government monoliths
singing
behind the kilometers they traveled
to shake iron and concrete
because something's got to shake
 toward the spotless scenter of the scorn
of the lords of power and war

kilometers away
 i can hear them drawing closer

it's the days ahead

but you come back

at your side i feel
fear of going out tomorrow morning
facing the sun

starting again
on the same task
and never finding you again

in the spotless center of our bond
i call you comrade
nothing else, just comrade

i cling and sink
to the broad brim of your presence

iii.

i lose sight of you
as you rush out to the front lines
after breaking your fast and slicing the bread

i lose sight of you
streets are hot flesh stupored
they're planned narrow
it's an ambush

i lose sight of you
wild turn toward the retreat route
holding hands

the most beautiful faces i've ever seen
rushing to let out a breath

they're waiting out there too:
nightsticks and steel-tips
that's why they've blocked the street
excited as ever
to put their tools to work
they work cruel

i lose sight of you
behind flags megaphones drums bandanas helmets shields

i lose sight of you
and imagine you in the closest public hospital
in state custody
in the bed of a truck with no plates headed god
knows where

i lose sight of you
and don't look for you anymore on the edge of the crowd
now we're multitudes again

from here on out we feel our way
forging the bases of our project and its program, forceful
feasible
possible
a new country, like you and i said
comrade

something different
comrade
something so that nothing nothing at all
can stay the same
comrade

then i lose sight of you

the tyranny front is waiting for us
its useful spokesmen
its de facto workers
i lose sight of you
before the clash
that inevitable disconnect
you and i have already calculated

there's something concrete and material
to give to the people
some kind of support
some way of stepping in
when violence gets ahead of our tactics

and it doesn't matter

i lose sight of you
before the repression comes

i was with the masses
and i felt like you were too