

CutBank

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Note

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Note

*"In the madhouse of the inhuman
I refuse to live."*

*Marina Tsvetaeva,
1892-August 31, 1941*

Loons at the edge of this town
translate my voice—nothing lost.
In the scrunched acmeism of this room,
in the cold, dark arc
of the fireplace: syllabic
ash, a piano's
insistent fortissimo, whiff
of kvass souring in jugs, paper
prohibitions, black snow. Again,
Osip tours the cemeteries,
fusses over lack
of sleep, and I the empty
synagogues, honey
I buy hard, scarce
kopecks, molded loaves. So many
bricks, matches struck
against them, blue spurts—
Efron's skin now
a last shovelful of dirt
thrown over him,
Irina given away like a shrivelled goat,
Alya dew on a Gulag boot.
My mouth a noose
swings across my face, another zero
lined up, added to zeros, August here
long as Octobers.
Who holds my work, holds my body.
This note, my echo.
From Yelabuga, Yelabuga.