

THE FINNISH INSTITUTE IN LONDON

Submission for the Finnish Institute's fiction translation competition, 2009

Maritta Lintunen: "Piinaviikko" | From the Collection *Ovisilma* (WSOY, 2006)

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"Holy Week" (sample)

My first sight was that of round, bulbous shapes alone. Some golden-brown, some pale, some shiny-egged or coated with crystals of sugar - dozens of little buns scattered before me.

My eyes next made out a baking tray resting against the table leg. Then an eggcup and a rolling pin, both on the floor in front of the oven, and a broken egg as a wet splotch on the floorboards near my left shoulder.

As I took in all that, understanding nothing, I sank back into a deep sleep - and as I came to, after an undefined time, I found the very same sight before me.

I was breathing, slowly. I could feel a draft somewhere.

There was a rustling, singing noise above me. I could make out faint speech amongst the noise.

A vein on my temple was throbbing - a light pulse, then a shooting pain running from the temple to the top of my head and around to the back.

I blinked my eyelids as if exercising them.

The floorboards pressed against my bare stomach. I could feel a glowing heat

on my left side, and a cool stream flowing from my right.

Little by little, the fragmented images formed a sequence.

Vaguely, I began to recollect Miliza Korjus singing 'Warum?' at the precise moment I had been sticking my second trayful in the oven. The radio was playing requests. I had a habit of listening to it with one ear, really more for the conversation than the music.

The chattering radio on my worktop was from the sixties; my little teak cased companion.

It was a very suitable kitchen radio, a talk machine to sweep away the silence.

I remember even trying to hum along to the radio, as suddenly my hands fell limp and powerless. The door opened the wrong way; the dish cupboards suddenly flipped to the other wall, and my back slammed into the sharp edge of the kitchen table.

I know it had been a Tuesday evening. My son had called on the previous day, announcing he would make it for Easter after all. He would arrive on the Saturday afternoon train.

Living alone, one waits for another person's visit, to do even the most trivial of things. It was nice to clean, to change the curtains, to plan meals or bake for someone after a long time. My son so rarely has the time to visit me.

The cold made my shoulders shiver. The living room window must have been ajar.

I lay on my stomach and realised that I could move only my right hand.

I could raise my head, turn it from side to side.

My feet - well, they existed, I could see that.

The singing above my head stopped and a radio announcer's voice enveloped

the silenced kitchen.

Maundy Thursday's service will be broadcast from Porvoo Cathedral.

Judging by the amount of light, it was evening. A Thursday evening.

Skeptically, I counted the hours time and time again. I felt a tight fist grabbing my heart.

Two whole days had been erased from my memory.