

THE QUARRY

Joanne Kennedy

Riba mora plivati tri puta: u moru, ulju, vinu

Fish must swim three times: in sea, oil, wine

Franz Ferdinand died, and the men went to war,
calling women from homes to tend to the groves.
My baba was born to a mother whose hands
were worn as she hung olive wreaths
on the door.

“Fish must swim three times: in sea...”

Girls could not swim in the blue Adriatic
so she waded in secret (in shame) and in fear
of the smear to her name that would render
her used – discarded goods like an
olive bruised.

“Fish must swim three times: in oil...”

A woman’s measure was in what she achieved –
raising babies, gutting fish, chopping wood, planting seeds –
but her hands that could push down the press ‘til it spat
out green liquid gold – could not glide
through the sea.

“Fish must swim three times: in wine...”

By '44, a mother to three and two years
away as a refugee, in a desert that held no promise
of sea (or oil or wine) save Sundays, when fear
mixed with wine to bless wretched
survivors' tears.

When baba passed over, we ate fish bathed in oil,
sang *Daleko Mi Je* and drank water with wine.
We picked virgin olives that danced in the sun
as we scattered her soul in the blue Adriatic –
she could finally swim, and be home.

Le Lacrime di Fico (The Fig's Tears)

Oh dad! I wish you could hold on for another spin around the sun.

Every July you wonder why we celebrate getting older.

We say 'Because you can't see around corners and one day...'

As you approach apogee,

and mark time through others' grief,

know you taught us well –

to plant garlic in May and pick figs when

milky sap pools on top like creamy tears –

and after the last condolence is uttered,

and the gate is bolted,

we will bite into the fig we saved for you

and our tears will mix with sap

as we taste the sweet, honeyed flesh of your life.