

SARAH GLAZ

The Red Balloon

Every Saturday evening we round the corner
toward the old factory grounds
A restless crowd of workers
slowly gathers at the gate

Inside —
people's republic miraculous gift
blares
black and white images
the worker's anthem
We rather than *You* or *Me*
of communist parlance

The Hammer and Sickle affixed to the wall
and Lenin
in benevolent goatee
Study! Study! Study!
fade to a neutral tone in honor of the day

This time —
no red parade
no Kremlin domes and minarets
no chain of shiny tanks

The windows frame
a wisp of smoke
escaping
factory's tall chimney
austerity
wooden chairs
television box
smell of sweat and onions
and the invariable war time movie
dubbed from Russian:

On the Russian steppe a train departs
The cap of a soldier boy —
a factory worker
a lover

the sweet round face of a Slovak girl
triangular scarf tied under her chin
Close up —
to parted lips
to glance full of longing
like Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*
a tear falls
a sigh of sad farewell
She will never see him again —
till next Saturday evening

One day I am given a present
a movie in a real movie theater
in French
in color
The Red Balloon

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