

INVIGORATEU

CONTEST

A Continent Is Not a Waiting Room

by Agnese Moschella



POETRY: WINNING SUBMISSION

A Continent Is Not a Waiting Room

I learned Europe at railway stations,
in departures announced in three languages,
in the quiet privilege
of not noticing where one country ended
and another began.

On another platform, in another place
not far away,
the candidate waits for years
beneath a departures board
that keeps changing the time.

But war does not queue at passport control.

Smoke does not request a visa.

A blackout does not ask
whether the darkness falls
inside the Union.

Do not call it charity
to mend the roof
when the same storm
beats against every window.

War travels on the same tracks as commuters.

Disinformation crosses every screen.

Fear does not stop
where the Union does.

Do not call it charity
to repair the tracks
on which all our futures travel.

A wider house needs stronger foundations:
law, democracy, responsibility.

The door should not open
because the rules no longer matter,
but because a promise
must eventually become a path.

We have called them neighbours for so long
the word has hardened into a fence:
near enough to share the storm,
too far to share the key.

But no one waits there empty-handed.
They bring work, knowledge, memory,
and futures already tied to ours.
They are not asking to be carried,
only for the road marked Europe
to lead somewhere.

I learned Europe in supermarket aisles,
finding the same biscuits my Nonna used to buy,
and discovering that home
could travel farther than I had.

I learned Europe in calls without roaming charges,
in one cable where there used to be five,
in classrooms where accents met
before governments did.

Maybe Europe is most real
in the things we stop noticing
until a border returns
and makes them visible again.

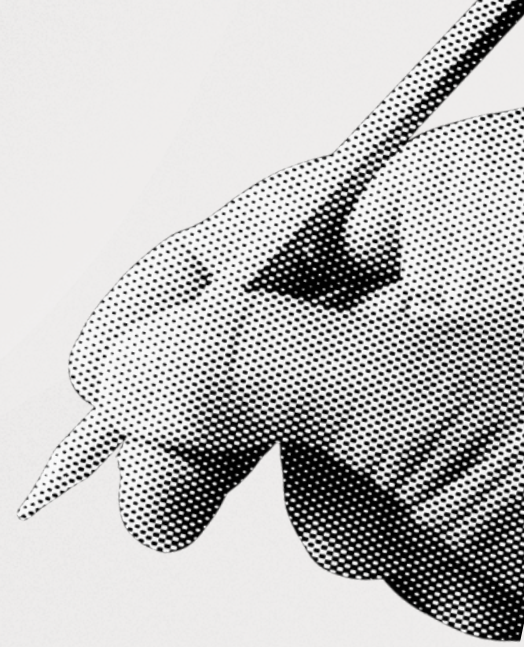
One day, perhaps,
the departures board will no longer divide us
between those who travel
and those who are told to wait.

A continent is not united
while some are free to travel
and others are taught only to wait.

No continent is secure
while its neighbours
remain a waiting room.

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