

Mujib MEHRDAD

Poems

A soldier's letter to his lover

I don't remember the Mississippi river and its warm sand
what I think is, will the sand of your eyes touch my body again?
the black cat in my house
can climb into your bed
he doesn't drink
but sits on the sofa and listens
to you singing in the kitchen or the bath

It's his voice that comes from the doorway
and you close the door behind him
many times in the day

He goes to the park with you and on the bench
licks your fingers
and you massage his neck
he is calmer when the pain comes from your fingertips

The planters we bought
harm the flowers while we are out
and if we don't open the windows
rooms spread their poison

It's called Helmand,
a wilderness illuminated at night by thousands of stars
during the day
the sun is so hot I can hear my blood
boiling in my veins
On the verge of the wilderness live hard men
women move like ghosts through the corn fields
they even hide their faces
in front of sunflowers

Men fall in love with these ghosts
and when they are invited to holy war
they leave them alone with sad songs in the fields
women pass time by looking and touching the plants
they are sad
like when you kiss my photo in the mornings
they don't have photos of their men when they are upset
they work like you, but in the sunny fields
which belong to the snakes as well
they also take care of herds of children

they work hard in the fields
planted with mines by their lovers
and they like the details of life, just like you do
and like in your house, love is like a mist everywhere in the fields

Neighbors!

We were shamed by your insistent stare at our immigrant form,
Afraid when our children laughed too loudly in your parks.
We are guilty of inhabiting your battle fields.
It's our fault we call each other comrade.
Only in others' lands,
Under the baton,
When there is no safe country to which to return,
Let them strike you in the head.
Still we have a right to live,
And like you
We're afraid of bloody bodies.
Think for a moment that
Children are passing in the streets,
And lucky women likewise,
On the way to prepare breakfast for nervous men
Have you seen
the rush of shrapnel at throngs of children in the road?
Enough! Your children return safe to your homes
and explosions haven't yet sprinkled blood
on your city walls.
The mines you plant,
Grow your flags on our soil,
And the suicide bombers of Kabul
Moan in the parks.

Our blood does not speak of anyone,
And beneath cabinet members' cars,
Streaming silently,
On its way to the presidential palace,
It dries
under the hot sun.

Specks of a birthplace

I have come again and am shining like gold
On the dusty road
After all those years
It is not the smell of the earth
It is the smell of my birthplace
The wind that made me snivel with cold
Is now ruffling my gray hair
O specks! that cover my hair
my tears
my cheeks
my eyelash
my lips and body
Whether you sprung from much enthusiasm
Or was it the wind that scattered you

Translated from the Persian by Hilal Nazki and Mujib Mehrdad

Afghanistan is a place on mars
women and children are howling
and no one from the earth can help them

To Malala

A head without burqa is a head with a bullet
which is why you took a pencil
and drew a head without burqa

A crying woman on the donkey
A man with a whip behind the donkey

Little mothers

Suddenly
my dolls start crying
and
calling me mother

I saw her when we stood around a dead body
her scarf slid off her hair
when she was crying for him
in my country
most of the time love begins
in a place
where a life ends

Real tanks

There wasn't a single plastic tank in the village
now we are on our way to the village in a real one
