

بين السطور

BETWEEN THE LINES

Между строк

The University of Iowa

2014



BETWEEN THE LINES

PEACE AND THE WRITING EXPERIENCE

An anthology of poetry, prose, and photos created by Between the Lines participants from Russia, the USA, and nine Arabic-speaking countries in the Near East and Northern Africa, facilitated by the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.

TABLE OF CONTRIBUTORS

Foreward / 7

Nada Abdelhamid / 11

Kaotar Aitaili / 11

Noora Aldoseri / 12

Fatima Atma / 13

Imen Bouhestine / 15

McKenna Coon / 17

Muhannad Darraj / 18

Nicholas Datta / 20

Jalal Dlimi / 22

Kirill Dyshlovoi / 24

Mustafa Elsheikh / 25

Alissia Horshavina / 27

Artyom Kondratyev / 28

Julia Kozlovskaya / 29

Kirill Kuchinskii / 30

Anastasiia Kurganova / 32

Tanya Lepkovich / 33

Dani Lipman / 35

Johnny Lornzana / 37

Kerry Luo / 39

Katrina Manrique / 41

Anton Meshov / 43

Hannah Miao / 44

Griffin Neal / 46

Yazan Omari / 48

Alena Piksaeva / 49

Dana Radhi / 50

Oksana Snell / 51

Matias Sosa-Wheelock / 52

Meghry Tchanguolian / 53

Jada Thomas / 55

Alina Vasilieva / 57

Merna Wahba / 59

Raina Wellman / 60

Acknowledgements / 63

FORWARD

“But don’t be satisfied with stories,
how things have gone with others.
Unfold your own myth,
without complicated explanation,
so everyone will understand the passage,
We have opened you.”

– Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks

“Between the Lines will change your life.” Alumni of the program write this phrase over and over again. What happens in two weeks that creates such an indelible impression on a person? Perhaps it is because that most basic of human desires, curiosity, is rewarded through the craft of writing, and through interaction with others from across the world.

2014 is a landmark year for BTL, in that it is the first year where Russians, Americans and Arabic-speaking participants from the Near East and Northern Africa gather together in one program for creative writing and cultural exchange in Iowa City at the University of Iowa. Each participant lives with someone not only from a different culture, but from a different continent. Many of these countries and regions share histories of conflict with one another. Yet in just two weeks of living, eating, and writing together, these students have already discarded the old stories and began new ones.

Most great writing begins with the author trying to understand something: how a situation came to be, how a story about two people might proceed, how a poem can trace an emotion. In these moments the writer is in dialogue with what she knows, and what the words she writes are waiting to reveal. BTL follows a parallel path: the participants arrive with a general idea about Russians, or Americans, or people from the Middle East, but it is in the details that the story unfolds. “World is crazier and more of it than we think/ Incurably plural” wrote poet Louis MacNeice, and BTL students would agree with him. After experiencing other cultures up close, many alumni purposefully search out universities that have greater diversity in their student makeup. They study abroad, or travel to visit each other, years after they spent such a short time together. They have opened themselves to new ways of seeing the world, have seen the pluralness of it, and are hungry for more. Again and again, our students demonstrate that they are brave, kind, and curious. We cannot wait to see what will unfold in their futures, in their new stories.

Kelly Morse
Program Coordinator

Nada Abdelhamid

Egypt

Dear Humans,

I guess proper introductions are in order. But then again, you'll meet me soon enough... and you must know upfront that you wouldn't be looking forward to this meeting. I have been devotedly working tirelessly in the past few years. In fact, I have forever been.

Although, I don't tend to visit a human before their time but I could not fight the urge that one time... she had been thinking about me for months.

That night, I stood in the far corner of her room; I could hear her thoughts over the sound of her weeping. In her head, she said it's not that I'm questioning your authority, God, but why did you have to use cancer's help? You know how much we hate it; you want him, what's the point of taking his hair, teeth and health first? He is the greatest man I know. He deserves a better end than this. If I could offer death my soul so he lives on, I would gladly do. At least, my death won't affect anyone as much as his. Is it possible that he might be lucky enough to survive this? I wish I wish...

I would've sworn she looked me straight in the eye, if I hadn't been absolutely positive that (1) the human eye is not designed to see me unless I reveal myself and (2) I had no eyes to be looked in.

Please, don't take him...

"Don't you look at me like that;" I spat "it's not like I have any particular interest in your father anyway. Don't take it personally; this time, I'm just doing my duty."

I glided out of her closed window leaving her fast asleep. She had already become extremely unhealthy, depressed; ready enough, to me, and more tempting than she'd ever been but no, not just yet.

Even though humans have long disgusted me by how they only start giving two shits about other humans when they sense that I will be coming for them soon but this one, for the first time, triggered my almost nonexistent sympathy.

A small but noteworthy note; I've seen so many young men over the years who think they're running at other young men, they are not. In fact, they are running at me.

One fine morning, I was given an order from above to work for another tyrant, taking away protestors' souls... again. Young lively souls, many of them. I'd always quite liked the image of me with a sickle and cape. Dark and formidable. Unfortunately, I'm far more ordinary and commonplace. Most of them were aged 17-25; all their last thoughts were something around having truly wanted to make their country a better place for their children and grandchildren, too bad many of them didn't even have any of those. Others, however, suffered a slight remorse; for not sharing more of their very big hearts, for leaving their helpless mothers alone on as such a brutal planet, for fearing they might miss their families, for having sinned, for not having acknowledged God's existence or passionately prayed.

That afternoon I, also, took an old woman's soul; she used to work as a nurse in a hospital. Her last thought was... well, other than calling me an asshole, she pleaded for mercy upon the old man in room 351's soul. Who did she mean? I wondered. After I had been done with her, I made a quick visit to room 351 and I saw her soul again.

I could tell from the look of it that it was in a worse state than her, sick with cancer, father lying on the bed next to her. If truth be told, with the exception of his soul, all the others inside that room were as good as dead. I could tell he knew I was coming for him soon but he did not fear me. For a split second, I felt like it would be long until I could take this soul away.



اعتقد اني كان يتوجب على ان اقدم نفسي اليكم بشكل افضل

لكننا على اي حال

سوف نلتقي يوما ما

كنت اعمل بلا كل في الاعوام الاخره

في الواقع كنت اعمل منذ بدء الخليقه

و رغم اني لم اعتد ابدأ زياره شخص قبل مواعده

الا اني تلك المره ، لم استطع مقاومه اغراء كونها تفكر بي طيله اشهر

تلك الليله ، وقفت في زاويه غرفتها

كنت استطيع الاستماع الى افكارها عبر نسيجها

هناك في ذاك الراس الصغير

دارت تساؤلات موجهه الي مباسره

لماذا كان يتوجب عليك الاستعانه بالمرض اللعين ؟؟))

انت تعلم كم تكرهه ، لو كنت تريده ، ما الداعي ان تبدا بشعره و اسنانه و لحم اكتافه ، و تختم بروح هزلت من فرط العذاب ؟

! ان هذا الرجل اعظم من عرفت

... كان يستحق نهايه افضل

ليتي كان بامكاني ان اقدم روجي بدلا عنه

موتي لن يؤثر كثيرا ... لكن هو .. فقط هو سيكسر قلوبا و يهزم ارواحا برحيله

تري .. هل اكون مبالغه في التشاؤم ؟ هل سينجو بنوع من المعجزات رغم اراء عشرات الاطباء ؟

((...)) كم ارجو نجاته

اكاد اجزم انها في غمار افكارها

... نظرت في عيني مباسره

! لولا اني متأكد تماما ان عين البسر لم تكن لراي ، فضلا عن كوني ... بلا عينين

((ارجوك لا تاخده))

رددت باستهتار : لا تاخذي الامور على محمل شخصي

لا احمل اي ضغيته له ، انا فقط اقوم بوظيفتي

تسللت سريعا تاركا خارج نافذتها تاركة اياها نائمه لا تدري ان كانت راتي ام كانت تحلم

كانت فعلا في غايه الهزال و الاكتئاب ... جاهزه تماما لي ! لكن ليس بعد

لطالما اثار البسر غثياني حين كانوا ينهارون تماما لدي شعورهم باقترابي

لكن تلك الفتاه بشجاعته ، حصلت على تعاطف لم اعتقد ان امتلكته قط

ذات صباح رائق ، كنت اعمل لدي طاغيه اخر

احصد ارواح مفعمه بالحياه

ثوار

صغار

كانت لحظاتهم الاخره تحمل امالا عريضه في بلاد افضل لابناء لم يحصلو عليهم قط

تحمل مخاوف كبيره علي ام مكلمه او اب كسر

! تحمل رعبا من مصر اسود لكونهم خاطئين او لانهم لم يعرفو الله يوما

ذاك كان عملي .. و هكذا كنت مخلصا له

هذا المساء

تعاملت مع روح امراه .. اخر افكارها قبل ان تصدمها سياره

كان تمضي الرحمه لمريض الغرفه ٣٥١

بعدها انتهيت منها

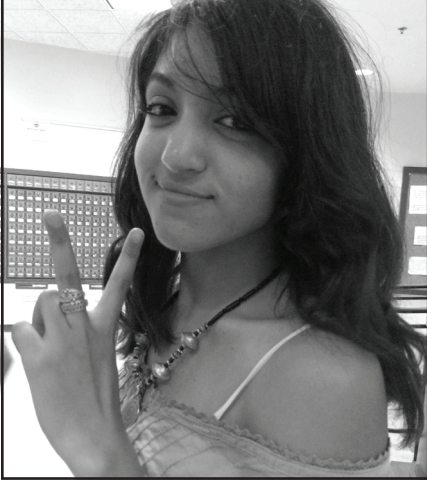
اخذني فضولي لتلك الغرفه

هناك قابلتها ثانيه

من فرط هزالها الى جوار ايها



الرقص تحت قطرات المطر



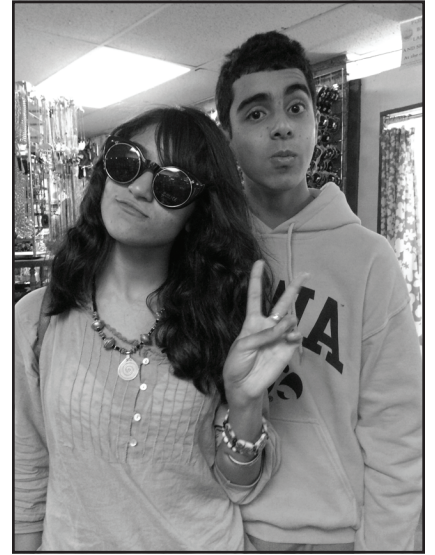
يلعب الأبرياء تحت المطر,
يتسابقون في الأزنقة الضيقة الندية,
يتراكضون بأقدامهم الصغيرة الحافية,
على العشب المبتل الأخضر,

The lonely, wistful empty eyes,
Shedding crystal tears mixt with rain,
Falling down their pale cheeks,
As the tears washes off the pain,

يتبادل الأحياء القبلات,
بشفاهم المترددة الندية,
يرقصون على إيقاع القطرات,
و ترقص معهم الملائكة رقصة مطر شاعرية,

Those gloomy, melancholic eyes,
They watch the dove's broken wings,
They watch it burn and rise,
From the ashes like a phoenix,

الحياة, تلك اللوحة الفنية,
سيرسمها الأبرياء بالوانهم الطفولية,
سيرسمونها بالطين و دموع القلوب المهجورة,
سيجعلون من مأساة الحياة, سعادة أبدية,



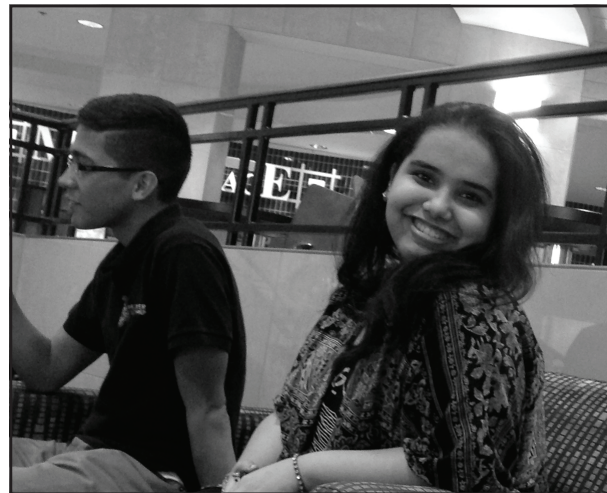
The sky cries for those whom are gone,
Those who have left, and let the others drown,
But the Tragedy will be washed away,
With the tears of angels, day after day.

Noora Aldoseri

Bahrain

Mirrors & Twins

You have her voice,
quiet but alarming
And her sky blue eyes,
And so do I
And I never can look in the mirror too long, and I prefer pictures to be in black and white
Incessant ticks of a heart monitor with long gaps in between
Loud silence
The first trigger is pulled in a war
And everything after
I mistake you for a phantom in early mornings
My foolish tongue called you by her name
Sorrow tiptoed around the edges of your eyes
before I realized what a terrible mistake I made
And then I remembered how in your room
there are no mirrors



Wish the truth has a tongue

سيادة معذب

Justice has cried when the hypocrisy
transmitted its soldiers

قال: لا أريد ان أرى شفيتك منقرجان تريدان النطق ,

In a time, straightness and deception are in a cold
war

لا اريد أن اصغي لقاسية قلب! , ان كنت ستغيبين فارحلي!

Manhood and the courage are absent

ولا تعذبي قلبي, ارحلي ان كنت ستبتعدي, ارحلي بلا عودة !

childhood and the motherhood deplore

قالت: قد أذاع عتابك من الاسرار كل دفين, فقد اطلق مناجاة اشواق,

All you soldiers, all these tanks

تبيد او هام, فض ظنون, شكوى جوى قاس وسقم مبرح, تسهيد

All you armies, all these blanks

اجفان وصبر سنين ,

Against a boy, Holding a stone,
in front of who destroy, His fear has flown,
and his panic has blown ,Just Standing all alone

خلف عتابك كلمات واحاسيس تقول لي اني مؤرقك الشجي ,سقينتي

In his heart, he says:

رشفة من فيض حنانك,وكم أتعطش لارتوائي

Mother, don't cry for me

ويلذ نفسي ان تكون شقية ويلذ قلبي ان يكون عميدا

God almighty is my armor and sword

لذلك أعشق التلذذ بعذاب ظمأك الدائم الي

God is beside me, so I am free

قال: في غيابك يصبح قلبي نار صباية في كوثر, قد ملكت قلبي

Don't they know that God helps needy

وانت فيه , فكيف حويت الذي حواك؟

Tell me why they are doing, what was done to them,

قالت:

Perished were the nations that ruled through tyranny
and there future began gradually, and slowly to dim

لاني انثى سكنت جسدك قبل ملايين الاعوام, وانت غافل

Mother I just wonder

وكنت انساب في جسدك كجري الدم في الجسد

Who is right ? Who is wrong?

وأدرك شعور وقد النار في أضلعك حين أطاركح نظرة من طرفي

Who did the blunder?

وأدري حين يتحول لها فؤادك وقودا

Who is weak? Who is strong?

فارم شفائك في ليل عيوني, واجعل كبرك في معزل

Mother, don't worry, I will not make my heart sink

وتكوم كالعصفور الخائف بين بساتين أهدابي

in sand,

كي أختبئ تحت جناحك واستوطن روحك

when they come for us tonight

we will not let them pillage our land

قال: قد صرت مجنوناً من الحب هائماً كأني عان في القيود وثيق

Mother don't let my innocence defeat your heart
with knives

اذا ذكرتك في النفس ماتت صباية لها زفرة قتالة وشهيق

our Palestine is our right

mother we are fighting for dignity and live

قد بت موكلاً ربي فيك, فان ملئت عروق من دماء, فانا قد ملتها

حنينا

Then, the basils released its braids upon,

A shrapnel of shining smiles and effused blood.

أرى فيك سر الدنى وحقيقة الاشياء, فالى الله اشكو ما الاقي من

The dreams have broken, his fluttering soul has
gone

الهوى بك

Then a white rose is suffused with their pure blood

Palestine is the birthplace of a wounded identity

Jerusalem enchants people's hearts

That is why it has incision in entity

قالت : قد خلقتني الله من ضلعك كي تسكن الي واكون بجانبك ,

They began an ethnic cleansing

من تحت كتفك , لاكون بحمايتك , ومن جهة قلبك كي اكون محبوبتك ,
فأرف بي وارحم قلبي , "فرققا بالقوارير"

They burned, and made our bodies rending,

لا تحسبن البعد برضاي يا عزيزي, ولكن , اذا مضيت وفي يديك
فؤادي, فهات فؤادي ان استطعت , وحيث ما شئت فامض

So history had become weapons which wrote on our
bodies

قال : سموت , سموت ودق احساسي , فجزت عوالم البشر, ملحقا الي
ذراعيك , ساميا الي حضنك , الي حنانك تحويني, سموت معك كأنما
امضي الي عشق سرمدني, فلم اشعر معك ان قلبي من الارض, ولا
جسدي من الطين . أحب أن أكون في عشقي لك شتانيا , انقلابيا
وعاصفا , لا يمكنني الا أن اكون استثنائيا مع عاشقة مجنونة.

In the arteries of the land we solidify

That is how our identity, we magnify

قالت : رضيت بالموت على عشقك , بين يديك , رضيت بذاك الموت ,
فضلا على اني اموت من فراقك

Yet we have fall under the occupation while you
are trying to justify

لاخرجن من الدنيا وحبك بين الجوانح لم يشعر به أحد غيري
حبك برى الله به جسمي, قلبي ومهجتي , ولم أزل مصونة في قلبك
احاول , فأحرق بدمعي جسدي وكل جوارحي وأخاف على قلبي
لانك فيه لكني أخاف عليك ان تحترق يوما بنار قلبي.

The voice of refugee child

My tiny dream is to live in peace

قال : لا تقلقي عزيزتي فاني أحب أن اجرب كيف أن احترق بنار
الثلج.

In a small home, wafts with love breeze

عذبي ما شئت قلبي عذبي

With a lemon tree which, hugs it with every crease

فلي فؤاد كلما طال العذاب به هام شوقا للقبيا معذبته

I still a little person, I belong to tenderness

قالت : فهذا فؤادي , فامتلكي أمره , فاطلمي ان احببت او اعدلي
لا تخشى حبي لان لي قلب بأن يهوى يجازى ومالكة بأن يجنى
يتأب

I still fell asleep when I fly on the safe wing

ولا يعزّنك مني ان حبك قاتلي وانك مهما تأمر القلب يفعل

I hear the voice of the sweethearts,

فقد سدّت فؤادك في هواي , وطاع لي الفؤاد وما عصاني
فان حكمت جرت عليك بحكمي , وتعلم أن جورري أشهى من العدل

The rainbow flowers swing

Thus, it breaks the gloomy silence

And all hands cling

Therefore, they choose the heart as a shelter

And the warm ambition in spring



لا أحد يملك القرار

أقيمت اللعنة على المدينة، فخيّم عليها الظلام. جدرانها مسودة و أزقتها التي أصبحت أودية بسبب جريان المياه الأمطار المتهاطلة. السحب متلبدة في السماء، متلاصقة كقطع المربكات. خيمت الكأبة تستنشق رائحتها كما رائحة التراب المبلل بعد هطول المطر.

كانت هذه نظرة زيد اتجاه الحياة. هو شخص حزين أغرق في النوم يوماً وزّعت أقساط السعادة على بني آدم. مسيرته في الحياة سلسلة أحداث كئيبة متتالية بدأت يوم ولادته. أول يوم له على الأرض تزامن مع توقّف نبض قلبها، نبع الحنان وهبته أمه حياتها وروحها يوم خرج من رحمها بعد عدة أشهر من السهر والانتظار.

كان يعتبر نفسه سارقاً، اعتقد أنه سرق أنفاس أمه ورحمها الحياة. كره ذاته بكرهه سبب ابتعاد أمه عنه، بكرهه حقيقة أنه يتيم.

ألقى عقوبة على نفسه، كبر منعزلاً عن المجتمع، رافضاً أيّ اتصال بأيّ كائن بشري، خوف أن توجّه أصابع الاتهام نحوه بعد أن وجهها بنفسه لذاته.

لم يكن قادراً على احتمال نظرة الآخرين له، هو المجرم في حق ذاته، بنى عقدة نفسه مرتكزاً على فراغ عاطفي. بعد ثلاثين سنة من الحزن والانعزالية قرر وضع حدّ لحياته بعد أن طال إنتظاره ليقطف الموت ثمرة نفسه من شجرة الحياة، عاش وحيداً. لم يتزوج ولم ينجب أولاداً يملنون ثغرة تقيت وجدانه.

يوم أطل على الحياة ببيكانه حملته من حرم من مناداتها أمي بين ذراعيها وابتسمت له ابتسامة تبهج الروح. فضحك ضحكته الأولى التي سحرت أمه واختفت روحها. في تلك اللحظة سقطت قطرة حبر سوداء على ورقة مخطط حياته البيضاء تغلغلت في أعماقها وحكمت لها بالتعاسة الأبدية.

اكتفى من الظلم مجتمع ملأته التفاهات و أصبحت القشور مرجعاً، اكتفى من نظرات الناس المهينة، إكتفى من كل ما حملة العالم بين طياته.

خرج من منزله وفي عينه نظرة مودّع. أشتري سيارته الأخير قبل عبوره الشارع نظر إلى شارة المرور. كيف بيالي بهذه الأضواء وقد قرّر المغادرة؟ وكأنّه يصرّ على أنه هو الذي يريد وضع حد لحياته، بمشيتته الخاصة ليشتفي رغبة خالجت نفسه منذ سنين.

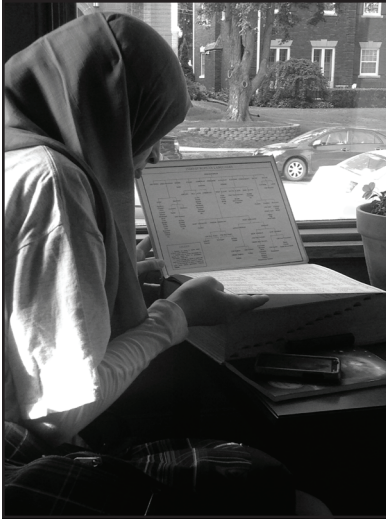
لم يكن له هدف يحققه عاش على الهامش. إشتغل موظفاً بينك.

كان طيف الموت يلاحقه فقد فارق والده الحياة عندما كان زيد في العشرين من عمره. وما زاده تعاسة كان ضعف صلته بوالده فلم يكن يجراً على النظر في عينيه بعد أن حرمه زوجته وحبيبته و رفيقة دربه و شريكة حياته. لم يكن والده يحمل نفس الشعور، كان يحب ابنه حباً جماً، فهو آخر هدية تلقاها من من غادرت و تركته يشق درب الحياة دون رفيق محملاً بأمانة عليه الاعتناء بها تتمثل في تربية ثمرة حبه لزوجته.

لم يحظى زيد أبداً بصديق يرافقه ويرفقه عنه، يصطحبه في نزاهات ويخرج للغداء معه. لم يعرف إلا طعم الحب و مرارة الفراق، حرم نفسه بعد كلّ الفواجع جميع العواطف و الأحاسيس تربي يتيم الأب والأم و فاقد الحبيب.

لم تربطه صلة مع أفراد عائلته، فحين توفي والده كان الوريث الشرعي لمنزله العائلي وكان قد حظي بوظيفة. لم تربطه علاقة بزملائه غير تلك الابتسامة المناقفة الصفراء في الصباح عند تبادل الأوراق الإدارية كان وحيداً بكل ما حملته الكلمة من معنى...

لم يكن له سبب أو شخص يعيش من أجله. بدأ التدخين منذ عشر سنوات وكشف فحص أجراه منذ يومين عن ورم خبيث على مستوى رئتيه. كان هذا عنصراً قدح رغبة تنفذ ما كان يخطط له يوم أشعل أول سيجارة. ربّما لم يتحلّى بالشجاعة اللازمة يومها ليفعل ما يريد فعله اليوم.



هل الشجاعة لازمة في موقف مماثل؟ أم تكفي الرغبة الشديدة في الرّحيل لمواجهة وتحديّ الموت والنزول معه إلى الحلبة في صراع موت ينتهي إما بخسارة أو خسارة. فهو نزال معلوم النتيجة قبل حتى بدايته...

اختار أعلى بناية في المدينة وصعد على السطح ليدخن سيجارته. احترقت السيجارة مع احتراق أنفاسه المتوتّرة أشتعل صدره نارا حارقة تذكره بماضيه الأليم.

غمرته لحظات تفكير و امعان.

هو من اختار هذه الطريق المظلمة الموحشة لحياته التي لم تعد لها معنى. لو أنه لم يعتبر نفسه مجرما في حقّ أمه لو أنه رضي بما قرّره قدره, لو أنه لم يكن منغلقا على نفسه , لو أنه حظي بأصدقاء, لو انه أنشأ عائلة ,لو أنه حافظ على علاقة سليمة بوالده قبل وفاته...

عبرت هذه الخواطر عقله فمرّ بلحظة ضعف أو خوف جعلته يعيد التفكير بما سيقوم به. لقد أخطأ في حقّ نفسه وحرّمها التمتع بحياة ناعمة. ماذا لو تَرَاجَع الآن؟ هل يكون جباناً؟ هل سيصغر امام عين نفسه؟...

هو الذي تحدّى الموت وقرّر مواجهته هو الذي اتخذ قرار وأقصى القدر من لعبة صراع البقاء. هو الذي طغى التردد عليه في هذه اللحظات الحاسمات. وماذا إن أعطى نفسه فرصة؟ لربّما حظي ببعض السعادة قبل ان يؤدي الورم بحياته , أو ربما لن يتغير شيء وسيعود إلى نفس هذه النقطة فيبقى يدور في دائرة مفرغة.

مرّت لحظات من حياته امام عينيه. تذكر تلك الفتاة الرّقيقة، التي اقتحمت عالمه الغامض المحرم على الآخرين غير مبالية بطيف الموت الذي كان يقتنص من كان يهيمه أمرهم. استطاعت إدخال البهجة والسرور لقلبه وأزالت الألام عنه. وجد نفسه ضعيفا , خرت قواه أمام عظمة رقتها وجمال روحها. حكى لها عن كل ما مرّ به , لم يفتح صندوق أسرارهِ إلا بمفتاح ضحكته. تذكر ما كانت تقولهُ لتخفف عنه , لقد أخبرته بأنه يجب أن يثبت وجوده, أن يكون عنصرا فاعلا لا مستهلكا, أن لا يستسلم لليأس مهما حدث وأن يواصل الكفاح.

لقد كان ملعونا غادره الجميع. حتى حبيبته التي كانت قد غرست في قلبه بذرة أمل اقتلعتها ودفنتها معها في قبرها. لقد ماتت يوم كانت متوجهة لملاقاته اشترت له كتابا يتحدث عن الإيجابية والتفاؤل ويخاطب من عانوا مشاكل نفسية نشأت منذ نعومة أظافرهم.

تلقى خبر موتها كصاعقة أطاحت به ودمرته تماما لهذا هو الآن هنا , أعلى هذه البناية جاهزا ليلقي بنفسه بين أحضان الموت ويلقي أحبابه. لكن هل ستفرح حبيبته وأمه أو حتى والده بلقائه إن علموا أن اليأس أخذ منه مأخذ وجعله يلقي حتفه وقف على الحافة , ملأ رنتيه هواء ونظر إلى الأسفل , طريق ليس بطويل يفصله عن العالم الآخر طريق ألم , طريق رهبة , طريق اكتفى من السير عليها كفاه تشاؤما. فليقبل على الحياة. تراجع خطوة إلى الوراء نظر إلى السماء الشاهقة , فتح يديه وعانق الشمس ضحك ضحكة من اعماق قلبه ملئها التفاؤل . أطفأ السيجارة داس عليها بحذانه.

ألقي نظرة دائرية على المدينة من أعلى البناية, لاحظ لأول مرة جمالها. تغير منظوره وتبني وجهة نظر جديدة هو الآن يخطّط لحياة جديدة. اليوم وُلِد من جديد. شخص جديد, فكر جديد , حياة جديدة , ذكريات ستخط على صفحات روايته. نزل الدرج. بخطوات واثقة خرج من البناية.

هل اتخذ القرار الصائب؟ هل سيرضى الموت بأن يُحطّ من شأنه؟

هل سيرتبه يغادر النزال دون قتال؟ ولما يبالي؟ فالجميع فان لا محالة.

خرج من الباب وابتسم , أخرج علبه سيجارته وألقى بها , لا تدخين بعد اليوم.

عند عبوره الطريق نظر يمينا , ثم يسرتا فذهل لما رآه. حاصد الأرواح يهب نحوه, على متن شاحنة صدمته و أردته قتيلًا. هل هذه النهاية التي أرادها؟ هل هذه النهاية التي استحقّها؟



Mortal Wars

My body is my enemy
It stands as a barrier
to my soul
containing me.
not as a protector
But as a prison
My organs fight
often with each other
I can feel their battles
and wars burning in me

They leave behind ruins
and I am filled with
ash and dust.
My eyes grow dim
and the defiance I contain
fades with little more
than a whimper

I am the causality
of battle, to be destroyed
and rebuilt,
over and over again.
I am tired. I am sick.
My body, once unified
and peaceful, has turned
against itself.
And my soul weeps
For my looming obviation.



Muhannad Darraj

Syria

أعلن للقضية سرّاً

هل حرف الضاد مشترك بين الضمير والقضية؟

نعم

فلا ابناً يجتمع مع ابنه... ولا أمّاً تجتمع مع ابنها

هذا ما تتصنّ عليه القضية...

يقودني جناحي طيفٍ من اسمك..... على بساطٍ فوق الهواء... يدخلني

باحةً أقصاك الغريق العريق

وأخيط ذكراك مع ماضيك.... لأمزج صلصال جنسية من لحمي

تعيش في جسمي.... وتبني عرشاً لها داخل قلبي

ولتشرّب من دمي ما تريد

فإنّ دُفِئتِ ولم أراك..... يا بلدٌ بين الجمرِ وبين الحريق

فليأخذ اسمك..... من قلبي ما يشاء..... ويعبئ أكياساً من دمي...

قبل التّزيف....

وليصعد به حرّاً مع روجي

لا فيل تقفه حفرة.... ولا جمرة تؤنّز في الماء

فألروحُ تذهب أينما تشاء..... وتحيا أينما تشاء..... وتموتُ متى ما تشاء...

لكنّها تحملُ كميّةً منّ الوطنيّة..... كيفما نحنُ نشاء

فأنا لا أملكُ جنسيّةً... يكفيني ويملّوني فخراً

بكوني صاحبٍ من أصحاب القضية!!

أنا من بلاد القضية

من صدق قصف الدّبابات

أصل لك رسالة اطمئنان

يا فلسطين

يا أمّاه أنا احتضر... فإننا هنا نقصف

نعم أسمع..... وأيضاً نحنُ هنا نقصف

يربطنا التشرد... ويدعنا العربُ بالاحتفالات

ويضّرنا الحرية والتمرد... ويقتلنا الوطنية وعدم قبولنا بالخيانة

لماذا خُلقنا يا أمّاه

خُلقنا...

للتوازن البيئي

لا نموت ولا نعيش

فقط... لنكون ورقةً للتطيف

أنا من بلاد القضية...

كلّما مشيتُ بزقاقٍ صغير... سمعتُ صوتَ صدئٍ لخطواتي

وكلّما أخطو خطوةً... أشعرُ بأنّ هناك خطوةً تنتهّم

وكلّما أمشي خطوةً... أشعرُ وكأنّ هناك... خطوةً لم أخطئها

وكلّما اترك خطوةً... أشعرُ وكأنّ هناك... خطوةً لم أفكر فيها... خطوةً تنقضي

خطوةً عسكريّةً في بلدٍ لم أكن فيها...



There is a forgotten point in the novel

In the eraser...

There are words written and indelible

There are words unwritten... and delible

peace... unwritten... indelible peace... unwritten... indelible

like trees on the mountain slope On the edge of the road

There is alone narcissus flower..... There are white wings ...

There is a forgotten point in the novel

Its sentences.... the Stranger reciting .

Unable to water the blossoms..... Don't bring a green light to the blind

Have you heard about prisoner with no jail?!

Tree with no birds..... Mouth with no smile..... Friendship with no handshake White wings with no pigeons

We miss peace.... a brother, a map for travelers Mother milk for child..... Antique rifle for the Fighter

Heart and sole..... for lovers

Under the shade of a tree Exchanged their letters

We miss white wings... We miss white wings

We miss Peace!!

we are here... all of us are here

here... in a peaceful state in a peaceful university... in a peaceful program we are writers of peace

my freedom words flow

It isn't Arab, Russian, or American..... We are childhood of humanity

The World is our country..... Our literature might differ

But melds into one innocent soul....

The soul of humanity...

Live world.... Live world..... Live Iowa...

Live who lived me.....

Nicholas Datta

California

Thunder crackles in the sky, and rain pours down. I run as fast as I can. The roads are dark and the cement slippery, and I nearly lose my footing, but I continue to run. I stumble as thunder booms again, but I cannot stop. I need to escape. The sounds of lightning are pursuing me just as much as the dark monster does, its claws reaching for my flesh, hungry to tear it to pieces. I make the mistake of looking into its beady red eyes surrounded by leathery black skin. This being is not from earth. It roars, a sound like glass shattering, and the rain falls harder. I trip from fear, and slide into a gutter.

The loudest blast of thunder sounds as the beast raises its claws. Its arm lingers in the air, like it gloats of its victory. But I can't wait for death. I scramble up and keep sprinting, and the creature continues its pursuit. The coldness of the rain fights with my red hot fear, counteracting each other, making my skin feel feverish. The creature cries again, and a wave of despair washes over me, colder and wetter than any rain. I know escape from the monster is futile. I grow more and more tired, but this creature has not shown even one sign of weakness. Its strength is boundless, its power unlimited, its cruel hatred fueling its body past any boundaries. One look from its merciless red eyes tells me that much. And I am weak, alone, I cannot outlast it. I only run out of fear, and fear can only take me so far.

The rain stops. The creature plants both feet in the ground, cracking the pavement. My energy ran dry, and again, I fell to the cold pavement. I turn to see the monster standing still. It does not even glance at me. Its eyes face the heavens. The dark clouds above part, revealing silver of something else. A giant metal disk, a UFO the size of the city.

The monster's ship lets out a blast. The city howls in agony, every building, every inch of cement has a voice, and each one is crying in pain. Glass shatters and sirens wail. This is the sound of pain, and it rears its deformed head and roars. A blast of energy fires from the ship, and the city crumbles. Smoke and fire consume my city, emerging from the fiery explosion. The flames burn unnatural colors, black and gray and brown. My creature lets out a new sound. It is laughing.

From the giant ship overhead emerge more creatures, just like my pursuer. They fall to the street, smashing into the pavement and creating mini-craters in the road. Their cries echo throughout the city as they slash their claws, ripping through steel and bricks and cement. Building collapse, people scream, and the monsters laugh like chainsaws. My monster turns its head to me. It opens its lipless mouth, revealing gray knives for teeth. It is finished playing its little game with me, I can sense it. It smiles.

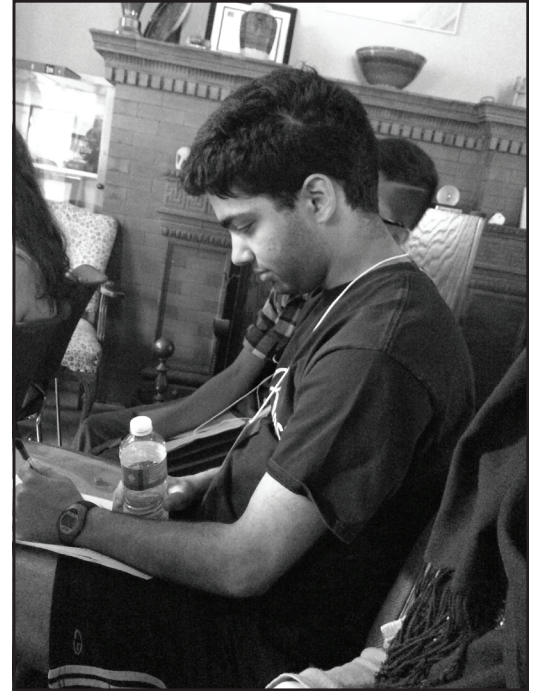
And I run. It doesn't chase me anymore, but my legs carry me away. I stumble into an alleyway, far from the destruction, and try to regain my breath. I can hear the sounds of destruction in the distance. These creatures... they were aliens. The alien apocalypse so many had imagined was coming. But there monsters... I couldn't bring myself to call them aliens. Aliens were other life-forms in distant galaxies. These were not life-forms. They were pain and fire and destruction.

I clutch at my bloody knees. I had forgotten to feel pain when I scraped and cut them in my falls, but now, the pain caught up with me. I winced and hid from the world outside.

"Not a pretty sight, huh?"

I jumped. I hadn't noticed the man sitting next to me. He didn't seem to belong in this scene. Contrary to this alley, full of garbage and broken glass, he seems perfectly clean. He was dressed like a business man, with a suit, smoothed-back, dark hair, and clean-shaven face. Like any guy in his late twenties, going to work at some law-firm or company. Except here he was, hunched over in an alleyway like I was.

He cleared his throat, "I said, 'Not a pretty sight, huh?' See, now's the time that most people would respond with



something like, 'yes'."

I found my voice absent, so I nodded. He looked at the graffiti-covered wall and chuckled,

"Not much of a talker, huh? Well, that doesn't matter, you can still do fine."

I recovered my voice, "Excuse me?"

"I mean, it doesn't matter if you talk much. As long as you deal with these aliens, no one will care if you're not very charismatic."

"Deal with the aliens?"

"Is that not right? Isn't this the point where you bravely stand up and defend humanity? Isn't it the point where you- after a difficult battle with the forces of evil, of course- rise and become a hero?"

A hero? Excitement filled me, a warm feeling in my stomach, "I- Yeah! Awesome! I mean," I added with caution, "I assume you're going to help me? Teach me?"

"Of course. But first, I need to... ask you a few questions."

"Um... Alright."

"Are you willing to fight your hardest, and do anything you can to win?"

"Yeah, of course."

The man sighed, and muttered something inaudible, "Ok. Are you willing to act, to jump into danger, even at risk of your own safety, and even when no one else will follow?"

"Yes!" I said impatiently.

Another sigh, "Are you willing to face your enemies head on, to openly challenge them, despite their attempts to persuade you?"

"Yes-"

"Because they will give you offers. They will be charismatic. They will give you a chance to live under their reign, and they will attempt to turn you against your friends if you obey them. They are powerful, they will appear to have all the cards. Are you willing to bluff your way out of that? To stare defeat in the eyes with no one to save you? To be all alone, the only one fighting in these dire circumstances? To go against what your friends or family want, to go against what you want, to go against your own desire to survive? Are you willing to take all these challenges?"

"Yes!" I shouted, "Yes!"

The man smiled sadly, shaking his head, "And how can you take these challenges, how can you help all of humanity to survive if you can't even take on these challenges to help yourself?"

I blinked.

The man was gone. I peered out of the alleyway. The sky was the same black and gray it had been when it started raining. Small showers still sprinkled down now and again. The same silver city stood tall, just as it always had. They were no shadows in the streets. No fires burning buildings to the ground, no leathery monsters chasing helpless people. There was no giant space ship of evil aliens floating above my city.

Cars drove past my alleyway. Normal people going about their normal day. And I was just a normal teenager, soaking from the rain and crouching in some alley. Nothing in my world had changed. The problems that had chased me to this alleyway hadn't vanished. They were still waiting for me, at home, at school, inside myself.

I stood. I wasn't sure if I was delusional, sick, or my imagination had just overrun me. But those question were true. I had to be willing to stand alone, to take risks. I had to learn how to take control of my own life, and I had to face my problems head on. If I want to do something great for this world, I would need to be brave, and bravery needed a place to grow.

I exited the alleyway and walked down the street.



كلمات عروس بحر ... امرأة

كانت تمشي في الشارع متملقة الخطى، كأنها عروس بحر تسيح في الأعماق، مرت بجانبه، فتلامست الأيدي دون إرادةٍ منهما فاعتذرت بعينين نصف مفتوحتين و هي كلها فتنة. فإذا بها تمضي تاركَةً وراءها رائحة عطر زكي لذيد. يحس هو الآخر إحساساً غريباً يجعله يراها و الأغاني تنددن في أذنيه. نعم، أثارت تلك الغربية، أثارت كل نقطةٍ فيه، من فكرٍ إلى روح إلى جسد. غمرته رغبةٌ عارمةٌ لكنه تناسى و تعامى إلا أنه لم يقدر أن يكبح نفسه من النظر إليها دون درايةٍ منه ولا حتى إرادة. خضع لجمالها الساحر، خضع لسحر عروس البحر هذه حتى وجد خطاه تتبعها و في خاطره مائة سؤال و سؤال.

فسألها:

من أنت يا امرأة؟ من أنت يا صاحبة الشفاه المسكرة؟

إلا أنها تجاهلته و لم يكف عن ملاحظتها، لكنه لم يستطع المضي قدما ككلب ورائها فاستجمع ما سمها - بالشجاعة و أمسكها و نبضات قلبه تتسارع و قال:

لم لا تجيبين؟ (و هو يحرق بعينيها البريتنين)
أترك يدي أرجوك.

عفوا لكنني لن أتركهما قبل أن تجيبيني. من أنت يا امرأة؟

فإذا بها تصمت للحظات فتأخذ نفسا بهدوء ثم تجيبه بصوت عذب :

أنا يا فلان، إبنة فلان. أنا يا فلان، أخت فلان. أنا يا فلان أم فلان. أنا يا فلان زوجة فلان.

فتعجب من إجابتها و ترك يديها من دون أن يشعر. أكملت طريقها بعيدا و هو واقف في مكانه يردد كلماته التي جعلت قلبه يندهدش و كان زلزالاً أصابه.

فإذا به يفيق من دهشته و على وجهه ابتسامة عريضة و يعود إلى منزله ليأخذ كتابا من مكتبته الصغيرة المتواضعة. يجلس أمام نافذة بيته المظلة على الحارة. بعد دقائق قليلة، يرفع ناظره عن الكتاب فإذا به يرى عروس البحر مرة أخرى. يركض مسرعا نحوها و يسلم عليها إلا أنها لا تجيبه. فيقف أمامها و يقول:

أما أنا يا امرأة، فأنا فلان خضع لسحرك. أنا يا فلانة، تركت الكتاب من أجلك. أنا يا فلانة من جعلتني ضائعا بين كلماتك.

تطلب منه أن يتركها تمر ما جعل غضبه يصرخ عاليا و يقول:

و لم تجيبين؟

تعطيه ظهرها و تخطو إلى الأمام قليلا و تقول له:

أنا يا فلان هي أنا. أنا هي التي جعلتك تترك الكتاب لضغفك امامي. أنا، أنا جعلتك ضائعا بين كلماتي لهوسك بي.

تغادر مرة أخرى تاركة إياه يعيد كلماتها. يمشي من دون أن يدري إلى أين و هو يسأل نفسه:

من هي يا ترى؟؟؟ ما هي فاعلةٌ بي؟؟؟ أهي شيطانٌ أم الهة جمال؟

وجد نفسه قرب بحيرة تعكس أشعة الشمس. استلقى حتى نام من دون أن يشعر. هو نائم، رواده حلم، حلم رأى فيه عروس البحر و هي تعيد كلماتها السابقة، مضيئة الى ذلك:

لقد بدوت لي كقطيع ابل عطشى منذ سنين ... كفارسٍ ضاع في الصحراء.
لم يأنه بإمكانية موته ملاحقاً مجرد سرايب صنعه عقله من شدة الاحتياج و الشهوة العمياء.
أسد أعماه الجوع فتسى عرينه ونسى مكانته و أولاده، باختيار الهيام طريقاً.

استيقظ فجأة و قام عائدا إلى بيته من جديد و رأسه ينظر للأسفل من شدة خجله مما رآه في الحلم.

راح هذا هو اليوم الأول لصديقنا. أشرقت شمس صباح اليوم الثاني، خرج كعادته ألى قرب الباب حاملا كتابا قديما جدا...ها هو ذا يسمع خطا قادمة نحوه، يدبر راسه و يجدها عروس البحر إلا أنه لم يقل كلمة هذه المرة.

تعجبت عروستنا للأمر فقالت:

مال فلانا اليوم؟

الحمد لله بخير.

أمالك خائف أن تراني؟

لست خائفا أن أراك يا امرأة.



لم لا ترفع رأسك إذن؟
لأنني لا أريد أن يجرنى إليك لجام الشيطان.
أهل نبت بين ليلة و ضحاها؟
و هل كنت مذنباً؟

لا، لكنك كنت خاضعا للشيطانك و رأيتني امرأة...إلا أنني خُلقت مثلكم ولست من رَجَم عقيمٍ و لست مجبرا عند رؤيتي
بان تستغفر من الرحيم و أتريدني أن أجيبك يومها! وأنت لا تراني سوى في وقتٍ حميمٍ. فعلا يا رجل إنك للذوق عديم.
أعزبني، فأنا إنسان لنزواتي أخضع أحيانا و نفسي أنسى فمن صفات الإنسان النسيانا.
هكذا إذا.

تخطو للأمام من دون أن تصيف كلمة. يبقى في مكانه و لا يحرك ساكنا. أعجبتة كلماتها فقد كانت شعرا يهز القلوب. غادرت عروس
البحر الآن.

To dictators...

As much as I'm growing up....I don't even know what to do?

All what they are saying to me is to give up... Giving up from this game of shadow

I don't even care about what they say; ...I'll stay walking and my eyes at the sky

I feel so sad and shy ...I'm always thinking, every night and everyday

I'm not a foolish or stupid when I cry...I'm crying because I see the people hurt their brothers

They live without giving care to the others...I only want to draw at children's face a smile

Because I hate myself when I listen to 8 mile...Because the singer who's calling Eminem was a devil

I know that my words are not important...Because no one wants to listen to a student

But in fact you have to listen to me at this moment

do know why?

Or to be silent that's what should I try?

You have to read my words right now ...Or you can see the pictures I draw

And the poor children who are growing up...They feel hungry and cold

I feel that I'm too old...We all live like there's no matter

We don't even know how to help our self or people

Why don't you care? ...We all know that there's no body is good here

And I'm saying to all, no more pain or fear ... You have to read my words dear,

Because I'm not away, I'm just here.....You see some people drink a beer

And no one gives a care!...So mr sleeping man can you stand up?

if you can't talk you can write by your pen...Don't be like a chicken ... that's really shame

Shame on me, shame on you!..Shame on all of us...You ask yourself why? and I'm saying because

*I wrote these words to make you hear my voice....To put everything beside and say Goodbye to the
noise*

Listen to me coz you don't have another choice...You can't stop, you can't even control me Stupid



Kirill Dyshlovoi

Vladivostok, Russia

О дверях Утопии. Эссе

До недавнего времени в небольших шведских городах не закрывали двери. Совсем. Люди ложились спать, абсолютно не опасаясь, что кто-нибудь может спокойно к ним зайти и ладно бы стащить пару серебряных вилок, но и перерезать им глотки на всякий случай. Почему так неосмотрительно? Потому что обратное просто было бы для них нелогично. Зачем соседям красть, если у них есть своё? Свой дом, свои столовые приборы, свои глотки наконец. Вот оно образцовое европейское благополучие: что самое важное - благополучие без ружья, которое само по себе гораздо более благополучно, чем благополучие с оным. Безопасность и расслабленность в нескольких поколениях меняют человеческую психологию, и наверное, если бы эти самые престарелые шведы, вернувшись с прогулки, обнаружили посреди своего дома абсолютно незнакомого человека, роющегося в ящике с фамильным серебром, то подумали бы, что бедолага видимо зашел выпить с ними чайку, но к огромному сожалению не застал их на кухне.



Но все изменилось и не так давно. В Швецию хлынул поток мигрантов и беженцев, причем из культур настолько от европейского ультраблагополучия отличных, что в один момент влиться и ассимилироваться у них не могло получиться никак. Здесь если что-то лежит не под замком, то это можно взять. Не удивлюсь, если это даже не считается преступлением: ну а что, если бы людям были дороги эти вещи, они бы подумали как их защитить. Вот где это самое благополучное благополучие дало слабину: что, право, за наглость? Не закрывать же им двери, в самом деле. Хотя и это поможет ненадолго. Кажется, Конфуций однажды сказал про то, что гораздо эффективней научить человека рыбачить, чем отдать ему лишь одну рыбу. Во втором случае накормишь лишь однажды, в первом - обеспечишь едой навсегда. Великий мудрец был нравственным и честным, поэтому не упомянул то, что если открыть человеку глаза на возможность воровать рыбу у продавца, то ты не только накормишь его, но и облегчишь ему жизнь. А продавцу нужно будет время, чтобы приспособиться к новым жизненным условиям.

Это и случилось в тех самых маленьких шведских городах. Если Утопия может существовать, то после долгого пути по волнам экономических подъемов и старательного воспитания в собственных жителях незакрывания внутренних дверей, ее единственное правило будет - закрыть двери внешние. Гости имеют свойство наглеть, и рано или поздно перестают быть гостями. И тогда, конечно, Утопия падёт, гармония нарушится, но зато ее жители услышат непередаваемый и столь инстинктивно родной звук закрывания замка изнутри. Главный звук безопасности и душевного спокойствия. Столь близкий звук нашего врожденного одиночества.

24.06.2014

За дверями Айова-сити

Mustafa Elsheikh

Sudan

Death to Van Housten

Waking up felt like the hardest thing to do, at first I was so tired the most I could accomplish was a feeble flicker of an eyelid: the exhaustion wasn't just physical either, my brain felt like thoroughly mashed potatoes. The struggle continued for another 10 minutes but eventually I found myself on my feet and slowly headed towards the bathroom.

As I got to the door and reached for its gleaming brass knob I found it warm to the touch, but that didn't surprise me, with two roommates it was only logical that one of them might've been to the bathroom before me. Pushing the door open I was befuddled to see that I had stumbled into a bedroom rather than my intended destination. Closing the door and retracing my steps helped clear my mind a bit, enough for me to remember I wasn't home.

A half hour later I was practically stumbling down the stairs to the kitchen, my head still felt a bit foggy and in addition I had become rather ravenous. With thoughts of pancakes and waffles in my head I entered the kitchen only to find another surprise awaiting me, this time in the form of a dark skinned man in a police uniform staring right at me.

A few moments passed before either of us made a move, in the end it was the officer who said, "Mr Russell Van Houston?" I groaned inwardly at that, he had mispronounced my last name but I didn't blame him I seldom meet people who get it right on first try after all it's not every day you meet someone with a Dutch ancestry.

"Yeah, that's me." I replied, hoping it was good news this time, I really needed some of those.

"Captain Renard wants you to call him." The way he said it made me sure that nothing good would come out of this.

These words sent me into a reverie of all the times an officer said that to me and his this whole arrangement came to be.



...

A couple of weeks earlier my best friend Alan had invited me and a couple other friends over for a party at a club downtown. It being a weekend and us being bored with nothing better to do we went.

For me the party was just like any other, I stood in a corner sipping diet coke and watching everyone else mingle and have fun. The hours went by, people went in and out, music kept blasting from the speakers, the party kept on going so when my friends finally asked to leave I was more than happy to oblige.

As we walked out the club doors I couldn't be more relieved to breathe in fresh air. I wasn't claustrophobic or anything but seeing open space was amazing after the close packed club.

The car was parked behind the club so we had to go through an alley to get there, it was a very creepy place even for an alley, almost completely dark only for a few lit parts. I took a moment to let my eyes adjust before I followed them.

After taking a few steps forward I almost ran into Alan, he seemed to be frozen in his place I sidestepped him to see what was going on and that was when the horror began. I found myself staring at the back of a hooded figure



with a dripping knife in his hand. At that instant the figure chose to turn around, because of a combination of extremely bad luck and atrocious timing he found himself standing in one of the rare spots of light with his hoodie slightly laid back, just enough for us to see his face, his heavily scarred, sharp face.

For some reason he was instantly back tracking and running to the other side of the alley leaving behind a still body soaking in its own blood.

From that moment onwards everything was a haze, we called the police and one thing lead to another and we found ourselves in the witness protection program which was bearable to a certain extent until the killer struck again but this time at us. He struck the other two guys first leaving Me and Alan for last. That's why when the officer told me that the captain wanted to talk to me I knew Alan was dead and the killer would be coming for me next.

Alissa Horoshavina

Petrozavodsk, Russia

Macaronia

There is a country, even smaller than Vatican and San-Marino. It is so tiny that it can not be found on any map! This is kingdom Macaronia. Macaronians are very cheerful people. They love macaroni so much that they do not only eat them every day but built houses from pasta and make lace clothes from vermicelli. Macaronians look like average people but they have pasta instead of their hair. The colour of their macaroni-hair changes many times a day! If a Macaronian eats tomatoes, the colour of his hair will become red, if he eats spinach or cucumbers, his haircut will become green. Anyone who wants to be blonde, should drink milk.

No explorers have found Macaronia. It is good: nobody has ever tried to conquer this flourishing kingdom. Unfortunately, Macaronians do not know anything about life in the world.

Once upon a time the sea washed ashore a magic globe. A Macaronian girl, Walking on the beach found it. She did not know what a globe was and thought it was just a spotted ball. One spot attracted her attention as it was shaped like a boot. She rubbed the spot, cleaning the boot from the sand... and suddenly appeared in Italy, in Pisa!

She looked around but saw nothing because it was night. The town slept, covered with 'the wrap of darkness; and only the bright moon dispelled the murk. Suddenly she heard a sneering voice:

« Such strange hair! Oh, Señorita, maybe you've just come from the Venetian carnival?.. What's your name?

« Lucia! And who are you?

« I am... The Miracle! Haven't you recognized me?! I'm the famous Tower of Pisa! They say, I'm the one of the seven wonders of the world! As soon as the Sun rises, hordes of people will fill this square. All of them come just to see Me!

Lucia looked at the Tower respectfully; suddenly it seemed to her that The Tower was going to fall. If it could read her mind, The Tower began its story:

« Once upon a time, when people were building me, I knew that the town I was going to live was little and average. Fame of such places of Italy as Rome, Venice, Verona, Naples thundered; however, nobody heard about Pisa.

I thought it was unfair! Certainly, there're no so amazingly beautiful aqueducts and bridges like in Venezia. St. Peter's Cathedral wasn't built in Pisa but in The Vatican. And all roads lead to Rome... I loved my little town and wanted to make it famous. But how? I was thinking for a long time; suddenly, the idea to simulate a fall came to my mind! It would definitely attract the attention to Pisa... So, I was inclining little by little every day. I was training to balance « not to really fall! Finally, they noticed I was leaning. It immediately attracted a lot of attention to me; people from all the world heard about my dear, favourite town! As for me, I have become the symbol of Pisa.

...The Sun rising, caressing the ground, cooled down after the night. Suddenly The Tower enviously looked at the girl from top to toe and told:

« I've never seen people with such a strange appearance! Although macaroni on your head look absurd, you're too pretty... Soon there will be tourists. I'm afraid you'll attract all the attention! But the main star here is me! So... Ciao! You'd better go! By the way, don't forget to take your globe.

The girl lowered her eyes and saw the spotted ball that she found at the beach. She took it in her hands but stayed on. She didn't know where to go...

« And where are you going now? « The tower asked her.

«I wish I could go back home...But I don't know how!

« Hey, you're holding the magic globe!



Artyom Kondratyev

Vologda, Russia

Tonight

The world tonight
is splendid, naked, void,
and sharp & shrill are outlines of objects,
and air's clean, and all the moves are jerky,
and thin is light, and irretrievable
is crunch of milky ice, a branch;
one's voice is husky,
and heavy dusk is jagged with a star,
and deeper are the skies, and so they are
ending in moon, like frustum.

You are leaving.

Your hasteless tread yet does not let the street
start rising skyward, but the sounds are fading
& withering, & flying. — So the hands are,
your empty hands, and in the night goes:
Stop!..

Oh, stop and let your footfall flounce up
the crown of bricks with crispy, ceasing echo
along the walls and higher, through the hollow
& algid hole in existence - skies.

You see?

There`s no arch more graceful than a thread of
the stars that rim the well and whiter than
two hands in murk near the water and
more limpid than a tear in the micaceous chamber...

The silence, pouring, streaming down your fingers,
like fountain between your palms is trembling,
and no louder silence sad old Earth has heard.

Oh, drink skies at a gulp and glorify the thirst,
the hollow & the fragile glorify, while
the withered bud is soaring and imbibing,
and you are gliding,
and no one's aside.



На водопой.

Увядший лист в ночи дрейфует вдоль опоры
по зеркалу реки, гешировой дугой
влекущему тебя на водопой
куда-то в Балтику. Пожалуй, были правы

все те, кто жил, и шёл, и умер по дороге
под первым фонарём, не растеряв тоски,
кто бил рассудок, причитая, на куски,
чтобы проворней жажды оказались ноги.

Глотая слёзы здесь, ты чуешь горло полым,
шершавым, как наждак, рассыпчатей песка,
(фонарь расцвёл у правого виска)
и хочется, крича навзрыд, усыпать пол им,

усыпать потолок, смешав черты созвездий
с песчинками стекла, хранящими твой крик.
Беги впотьмах к заливу, напрямик,
кадык промочишь там, но радостных известий

и перемен не жди, не тешься понапрасну:
волна обнимет пол, а взгляд твой – потолок.
Всё падает, пейзаж клонится в бок,
в лиловых сумерках фонарь цветёт, и ясно:

идти, но не прийти, и кончиться однажды,
от жизни смерть принять, от муки жить живым,
от муки наблюдать и быть чужим,
пока не поздно – умереть от жажды

Julia Kozlovskaya

Ekaterburg, Russia

"О встрече"

Поздний, прохладный
Спускался горбато,
Ложась на огромные свечи,
Февральский вечер,
Даруя встречу

На перекрестке.
Светофор краснел.
Сверху светили блески,
Точь-в-точь как в костюмчике
Собачонки,
Жалко жмущейся
В костлявых хозяйских
Ручонках
Ослепительных,
Как известка.

Робко ступая,
Обходя осторожно людей,
Лохматый пес остановился у края,
Вжавшись в чужую тень.

«Шапку быстро надень!» – кричала
Грузная дама.
«Мама!..» – стыдась натягивало шапку
Такое же грузное чадо.

Пес куда-то спешил. Очевидно,
К себе на ночевку.
В дом?
Не смешите.
Он бы принял такую издевку,
Одари его Бог ушами и ртом
Человечими.

Увечьями
Ранами,
Жестокими встречными
Исписаны были глаза.
Если собаки могли бы плакать,
Непрененно выкатилась бы
Огромная слеза

И тяжко упала наземь.
Увы. И нет.
Собаки не плачут.
На асфальт валился
Только равнодушный снег.

Неожиданно звонок
Раздался пронзительный лай собачонки
Пискляво-противный.
Не диво,
Дрожащее тело глядело
Презрительно-смело
С хозяйских рук высоты
На пса.

Он поднял глаза:
Человек с собачкой.
Он вжался в землю, попятился назад,
Виновато оглядываясь и чего-то стыдясь.
Так люди боятся держащих власть
Над ними, стоящих выше,
Пред которыми сбивчиво дышат.

Зеленый сигнал известил пешеходов.
Писклявая ода
Стихала. Пес кинулся прочь
От машин, от людей в непроглядную ночь,
За собой оставляя позорно
Лай без ответа.

* * *

Пес, милый! Не нужно ли Вам совета?
Я знаю, хоть мы незнакомы,
Но Вы ведь чтите природы законы!
Отчего же вы нашим глупейшим
Следуете?
Не нужно этого.

Чем хуже Вы скверной
Пищащей твари,
Что меньше Вас,
Глупей и нахальней?

Вы, верно, не знали,
Что зверем быть лучше:
Бояться не нужно
Ни рангов на службе,
Ни громких регалий.

Не бойтесь Вы лаять!
Не тормозите свой бег!
Вам повезло, что Вы –
Не человек.
Не берите пример
С одичалых людей.
Без постыдного страха
Жить куда веселей.



Kirill Kuchinskii

Vladivostok, Russia

Новый мир выходит на новый этап;
Старые звезды вышли на старый зенит.
Сморщился в небе от зависти солнечный краб, Вылившись в черное знамя облачных плит.

Ноги развесили дни катастроф и тревог;
Совесь людскую проткнул лицемерный кинжал.
Дым табака, километры вощенных дорог -
Девственность мир средь миров и дождей потерял.

В женщинах - пламя, в мужчинах - растопленный лед; Капают с крыш сине-желтые сопли
весны.
Птицы вверху извергают взаправдашний мед, Новокаин распилил очертанья мозгов и
десны.

Тучный сарказм облизал мой изнеженный глаз, Предал анафеме желтые свечи мостов.
Ветер бормочет пять-шесть гладко выбритых фраз, Смяв под каблук отчуждения лунный
покров.

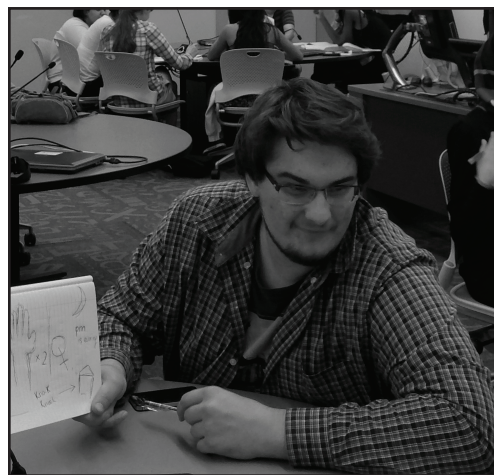
Хуже всего быть голодным в крошечную тьму:
По тротуарам на улицах мясо искать,
Жадным консьержем дождей проклинать тишину, Горький небесный отвар через нос
испивать.

В тенях религии дремлет спокойная смерть, Ладаном смазал историю анахорет.
Тот, что бестактно забил деревянную жердь В твой самый значимый в жизни духовный
обет.



Поэту.

Дыши, вдыхая воздух полной грудью.
Волшебно-сладкой ложью разум усыпи.
И пусть об ум твой, как об скалы, бьются люди, А ты о ночь разбейся, друг, и крепко спи.
Уйди в беспмятство ночного озарения,
Слепой звездой поникни в бархат тьмы.
Пойми сей мир как странное видение,
Пришедшее из мрака, как и мы.
За бронзу губ, холодных и надменных,
Иной и сердце вырвет разом из груди;
Не пополняй ряды униженных и пленных!
Узри пожар искусства и блюди
Святого сада жизни распорядок;
Живую мысль вкушай, как райский сок.
И буйных откровений беспорядок
Прими ты к сердцу, как сам бог бы смог.
Тропа героев скатертью клубится
Над бездной сумрака и льда житейских дней.
Не будет перевёрнута страница,
Пока в душе твоей огонь не стал сильнее; Пока из глаз твоих не брызнут кровь и слезы; Пока в тисках цепей нога не отшумит, - Не будут брошены оранжевые розы На сломанный хребет могильных плит.
Гремят в крови доспехи океана,
Вздымаясь, как орел, над бледным днем,
И грозной мощью атлантического стана
Летит на нас, смешавшись, соль с огнем.
Но мы стоим, не дрогнув, не согнувшись,
Кричит сплетенный слог голгофный ямб.
Творим мы свет, тенями обернувшись,
Богам не воспевая дифирамб.
Так будь, поэт, сильнее, чем страдание;
Горячей пламени и холоднее льда.
И пусть с искусством страстное свидание
Твое останется, как вечность, навсегда.



Anastasiia Kurganova

Saratov, Russia

In memory of all victims of the school shooting in Connecticut

The living room was silent. It was not the awkward silence, but an unbearably heavy one. We didn't know what to say, and I don't think we wanted to say anything. Even words seemed to us like bullets, determined to break the silence and hurt us. How could that ever happen? What a creature could break into such a peaceful community, bringing horror to the lucky ones and death to those, who happened to be helpless against this terror? What a creature could shoot a kid... twenty kids?

We didn't know the names yet. Maybe there was information about this in the news, but we didn't want to watch it. No, it seemed horrible to make ourselves watch the reports, see the crying children and parents, stare at the face of the suspected murderer, and hear the ambulance cars coming there, one by one. And after all, was it going to help us if we knew who the victims were? We needed to know it, but the silence remained; which meant that we were not ready.

The silence was suddenly interrupted by a quiet sobbing from upstairs. Another thought came to my mind - how could that happen to our child? Why this school, why this town? I was happy that my girl was alive; but the damage had been done: she was terrified. That day even grown-ups didn't understand how life works if events like this happen; as for children, they were shocked and scared, they felt unsafe.

I looked at her father. He heard our daughter crying, too - I could see it in his face. Not saying a word, I stood up and quietly went upstairs, trying not to scare her. I came into my daughter's room.

- Amy, listen... You are safe. That will never happen again. It... We are...

How to make a child believe you in a situation like this? `

- Believe me, darling. It's over. You are safe.

She didn't look at me - I could see that her thoughts were far away. She looked puzzled and confused. Finally, she looked at me and said quietly, as if she was afraid to ask a question that her mom and dad can't answer until she grows up.

- Mom, when all the countries unite and people stop hating each other, what will the Earth Flag look like?

My eyes filled with tears. I sat there and thought - if a 6 year old child understands that we are one, how come the rest of us see the rivals all around? how come we kill? hate? threaten?... Why did we have to break apart? Why do we have "us" and "them"? Who started this... and how to unite and become people again?

- Try to sleep, it's late. Tomorrow you can draw the flag... For the whole Earth, honey... For the whole big Earth.

A lullaby for Amy

The creatures living on the earth
Once raised their arms up in the skies,
And they asked God if they could live
A happy life, where no one cries
And they divided all the land
And every country had its name.
And people promised they won't stand
For those whose flags are not the same.
The little angel comes to us,
The day when hate and evil strike,
The angel lands and quietly asks:
What will our common flag look like?



Отрывок из незаконченного романа «Рыцарь полей»

Рыцарь боялся драться с Серембеш. Он укрылся в тени дворика, по арке которого спускалась шапка цветов, и внимательно смотрел на далёкий крохотный силуэт, ступающий на высоте - вдоль колонн первой звонницы. Колокол первой звонницы не пел, а резал, перекатывался солнечным валом, мелко дрожал и бил в голову. Всё-таки сильно заметно, что колонны, окружающие его, - деревянные, сильно побитые ветром. Красный плащ реял в лучах зари, как израненное крыло.

Рыцарь снял маску и подставил лицо солнцу, стараясь перестать бояться, но не смог; в груди лишь острее обнажились шипы. Он три месяца искал Старшего, но не охватил и половины здешних мест, и тем более не мог предугадать ход его мыслей. Есть только один клич, который проникает камни, который не услышит только мёртвый – звон монастырского колокола.

Это его шанс - пробиться на самый верх звонницы и звонить, бить по металлу в оголтелой надежде, сутками напролёт. Люди били в этот колокол, надеясь, что их кто-нибудь услышит и спасёт; рыцарь покажет им, как надо бить. Конечно, это будет великий подвиг, но он с ужасом понял, что не хочет больше славы - ему просто страшно быть одному. Позор. Он ни за что не скажет об этом Анне, к тому же она не поймёт его стыда, потому что людям привычно бояться. По вечерам всё чаще он сворачивался клубком и обнимал себя за плечи, стараясь представить себя кем-то другим, в другом месте.

В каменной стене был устроен фонтанчик, из которого люди, наверное, поились. Вода сочилась по капле из ржавой трубочки, дрожа от утренней прохлады. Капля задерживалась, переливалась всеми цветами, срывалась и разбивалась о каменную чашу – а следующая, подоспев, растерянно повисала, чтобы умереть точно так же. Нельзя слепо следовать пути Старшего. Нужно учесть его ошибки. Серембеш жива, значит, битва с ней стала для Старшего неисправимой ошибкой. Как надо драться, чтобы суметь от него защититься, от сильного, всезнающего?..

А ещё Серембеш была как ястреб, с холодными глазами, как у настоящего воина, с трепещущей шеей под алым плащом. Невиданное существо, босоногая и тонкая женщина. Рыцарь не хотел видеть, что станет с ней от его ударов.

Он снова почувствовал холод внутри себя и решил хотя бы взглянуть на Анну. Можно было как-нибудь иносказательно спросить у её совета, чтобы она успокоила. Ну как спросить – попытаться состроить нелепые жесты, выдавить исковерканные слова и надеяться, что она поймёт.

Ему было странно ходить там, где ходили люди, поэтому он вспрыгнул на карниз дома и понёсся вперёд, ведя пальцами по выпуклым каменным колосьям. Она снова будет бояться; надо отвлечь и задобрить. Рыцарь пустился по крышам, окунулся в тень садов и по ветвям спустился к берегу, стараясь, чтобы панцирь не смещал сломанную ногу. Человек жадно вдохнул запах морской соли и только тут вспомнил, что впервые в жизни забыл надеть маску. Его завораживало, как рессоры невесомо шуршат по песку при каждом шаге, шумнее, чем сами ступни. Рыбки играли на мелководе, полосатые от тенистых дорожек пены. Рыцарь видел ценность их чешуи, но не хотел ловить и бить о камни, не хотел, чтобы они исчезли.



Тогда он нырнул обратно под кущи деревьев и, цепляясь рессорами и извозившись в росе, собрал в накидку красных яблок. Из влажной тени небо казалось особенно синим. Он представлял, как каждое яблоко Анна поглаживает белыми звонкими пальцами, как он будет сидеть, опустив голову, стараясь занимать как можно меньше места, и его наполняло странное чувство тоски, как будто он заранее чувствовал потерю. Если бы он мог, когда вернётся домой, взять с собой и море, и фонтанчик, и Анну, и яблоки...

Она отпивала из чашки и со щелчком опустила её на пол, вскакивая и сторонясь. Рыцарь на миг почувствовал, как будто его пырнули ножом; но она вдруг бросилась к нему с широко распахнутыми глазами.

- Это что? Это стрелы? Почему ты не вытащишь их?!

- Трелы, - сказал рыцарь, морщась от собственного косноязычия.

Он положил яблоки на пороге балкона, стараясь не замечать, как она настырно ощупывает его руками, отворачиваясь и чувствуя, как неловко занимает собой всю арку.

- Тебе же больно! А вдруг там всё уже воспалилось?! Послушай, нам срочно надо их вытащить, ты умрёшь, если попадёт инфекция...

Он наконец сосредоточился и набрался духу, чтобы оттарабанить то, что сочинил.

- Ерунда. Человек умрёт, а я ничего не чувствую. Трелы торчат - красиво. Знаки доблести и жерт... жертости.

Он вспомнил, как целую ночь учился выговаривать слово «добрость».

- Хватит уже! Ты человек!

- Неправда. Отец породил нас из звёзд.

Перчатку сжимает маленькая ладошка.

- Не отворачивайся, - говорит она с видом, не терпящим возражений. Человек понимает теперь, что она не отступится. - У тебя ужасные глаза, и меня до сих пор дёргает, когда я в них смотрю. Но они человечьи, просто изуродованные. У тебя пять пальцев и два уха, и от этого никуда тебе не деться.

Рыцарь молча наблюдал, как зеленоватые жилки уходят в её рукав. Наверное, под одеждой у женщин кожа ещё тоньше, как противная полупрозрачная плёнка.

Лепкович Т.



Times of Tired Eyes

Seven A.M.

My alarm goes off with both an obnoxious buzzing and a high-pitch howling sound that I've become so accustomed to, I could practically fall asleep to it as if it were my mother singing me to bed with a softened Mozart tune. Despite how mundane the sounds of morning have become, it doesn't matter. I am always awake before the siren-alarm goes off.

Always at six-fifty-three A.M.

Always at that same exact time, when the digital, blue lights flicker past the fifty-second minute of six. Always staring straight up into the blank, void-like ceiling, counting the seconds and minutes before the next hour comes.

I turn off the banshee-alarm and slip myself out from under the covers, stretching on my way to the bathroom.

My shoulders retract as I shiver into myself. I assume that it is because of the haunting. My haunting. The ghost that follows me in many forms, changing itself every time it appears. Every morning there is a different face in the back of my bathroom mirror saying "Good morning, Jade," or "Found you, Jade." I know it's the same ghost every time, even though it tells me a different name each day, each form is definitely the lonely, confused soul that has been following me since I moved in last summer.

Staring into the mirror, I shift my eyes slightly to my left, expecting that figure to be behind me as it is every day. But the back wall of my bathroom is bare and aqua-blue, nothing like what I expected to see. I turn myself around and scan the floral-patterned shower curtain. I furrow my brow and lick my top lip. My mind starts to lift just slightly as I entertain the idea that the apparition has finally left me.

For some reason, the only thing I can manage to do is smile. After waiting so long for this ghost to disappear, I have become apathetic to its presence and the solemn, one-sided conversations it has with itself before I leave for the gym or for class. Perhaps it has been feeding its lingering stillness and emotionless nature to me through its presence. Is that why I feel so little towards its vanishing? At this point, I am just finally happy to be alone in the morning. Finishing up, I put on running shorts, a sports bra, and a tank top and head into the kitchen.

I fix myself a bagel and cream cheese and take the red plate in one hand, the other firmly holding a glass of cranberry juice, ring and pinky fingers struggling to hold the most recent draft of my in-progress screen manuscript until I reach the table and allow the papers to spill from the edge of my grip. Setting my food down, I pull out my chair and sit, ready to munch on the bagel and swipe my black pen across the first page of Scene Five. I take a bite of the blueberry bagel, mark up the second line of the scene: SO HOW DO WE FIGURE OUT WHERE HE WENT? I circle this and start splicing and reshaping the sentence to my liking. Another bite of the bagel. The next line must be altered too; I DON'T KNOW...MAYBE WE SHOULD, YOU KNOW, JUST TAKE A BREAK FROM SEARCHING FOR HIM. Another bite. The next line. NO, WE CAN'T RISK THAT. HE'S STILL OUT THERE AND WE NEED TO FIND HIM BEFORE...

I start to take a drink of my cranberry juice as I read this line. Before my eyes can reach the end, a voice in front of me speaks,

"Found you."

Taken aback by the toneless voice, my action of drinking spurs and I cough, spitting the crimson juice from my mouth and staring, shocked, at the splattered stains it has created on the table, my bagel, and my white running shirt. My manuscript crinkles; the ink smudges in the speckles of cranberry juice, affecting at least ten pages of my draft.

I don't even think to glare, I only look up at the figure that has spoken to me so softly, almost as if it were squeaking like a mouse.

In the chair in across from me sits a small child with wavy hair, wearing a pretty white dress and an emotionless face.



Covering it is a purple light that radiates off of her translucently pale skin. The ghost's immediate form looks about nine-years-old.

"I found you," the ghost repeats with a dim echo.

I purse my lips and nod. My annoyance and anger is beginning to simmer. "Okay," I say, grabbing the cranberry-stained items from the table and standing up. The specter stays in its chair, watching me as I throw away my manuscript and toss the remainder of my bagel into the trash. My fingers clasp to form fists and my teeth grind against each other as I search the basket by my laundry hamper for a bleaching pen.

Always there. Always wanting to talk. Always a different face.

For once—just once—I wish it would leave. Why me? Why my apartment? Why the different forms and faces?

As I prepare to walk back into my room to change out of the splattered, white top, the little ghost-girl begins to speak again, "You weren't in the bathroom like you usually are."

I pause and turn to face the ghost. The bathroom? I had been in the bathroom earlier—it wasn't there. Why did it think I wasn't there?

I make deliberate eye contact with the ghost for the first time since the haunting began, "What are you calling yourself today?" I asked.

"Emmy," it replied.

"Okay...Emmy," I walk back to the table and look at my fingers as I sit down. When I look back up, the ghost has changed forms. It is now what looks like an 18-year-old boy in a t-shirt and jeans. Still the vacant face, though.

I take a deep breath, my chest feels a bit heavier than before. The ghost has never changed forms twice in one day.

"What do you mean, I wasn't in the bathroom? Um..."

"Jake."

"Alright, Jake. I was in the bathroom this morning. I always am at 7:05."

"But you weren't today," the ghost says, the voice is soft and light, "you woke up too early."

That's when I realize what time it actually is. The clock on the wall behind the spirit reveals the truth, all but five seconds before the alarm in my room goes off, screaming at the digital picture of seven A.M. I take my eyes off of the clock and the ghost has changed once again into a stone-faced middle school girl with her hair pulled back tight into a high ponytail, wearing athletic shorts, a white tank top, and a bright pink sports bra that shows through the shirt like a highlighted passage filtering color through the next page.

I shudder, noticing how familiar this younger version of myself looks.

"Why did you wake up early?" it asks.

I am unable to respond, I don't understand what is happening. The purple-hued flashback stares at me.

"You're losing track of time, Jade," it says, I nod, "it's like you're expecting too much."

"What are you?" I say, finally. Finally. Finally I ask this question! The one thing that I've never been able to ask before. It had never occurred to me to actually investigate the reason for my personal haunting. This ghost, this specter, this thing that takes on new faces and tries to talk to me. While I walk past it on my way out the door, why have I never even thought to find out why I have been the cursed one?

"Close." She says.

Close! What does that mean, close? To what am I close?

"What are you?" I say again, my voice is growing in volume, my fingers clench the edges of the table.

"Almost." She says, even more emotionless than before!

"What are you!" I shout, ready to jump out and attempt assaulting this phantom-mirror who has chosen to taunt me for over a year. Whose has developed an odd pattern of playing games of "hide-and-go-seek" and "find-Jade" by itself? Why? Why did this disconnected, apathetic vision connect itself to me? Why did it choose to look like me?

One last time, I jump out of the chair and scream at the girl sitting at my kitchen table, "WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU ME!"

I focus myself, fixing my eyes on the empty chair in front of me. The young Jade-ghost has disappeared, leaving behind nothing but the kitchen table speckled with cranberry juice stains and a pushed in chair that had never been pulled back for anyone to sit in.

Looking up, the kitchen clock clicks to 7:01 A.M., and the angry buzzing of my digital alarm stops.

Johnny Lorenzana

Illinois

Two Chairs

Two chairs stand in the middle of the room
A man sits in one
Quiet and still
Loneliness envelops the silence
A cold blankness in his face
reminded of the one who sits in the other
aa voice whispering yet incomprehensible
like a dying voice needing to be heard
a figure begins appearing on the chair
a woman's features that have not changed
since her time of dying
the man lets out his hand
a pale hand reaching for his
two hearts beating faster
their hands touch
but, only for a split second
the figure of his wife
tears streaming out of their eyes
as she disappears once and for all
a ritual only to be done four times
he falls to the ground
crying out like a broken soul
this was his fourth time



Nothing More Than An Empty Shell

The cold breeze brushes up against my skin. The chill wraps around my body after a while. Yet, I stay sitting where I am because my heart is of nothing no more. It is tainted. It is broken. It is bashed. It is ripped. It is shattered. It is once more, nothing. Parts of my hand begin to freeze as the tears that had flown over them turn to ice. Memories turn to dust in front of my eyes. Any piece of hope I held is all gone. I do not feel the pain of frostbite, nor do I feel the goosebumps appearing out of my skin.

I Feel Nothing

My skin loses it's color and becomes much more blue by the passing seconds. Time itself is slowing down. Fear has nothing to do with my oncoming demise. I expect it more than anything else. A desire I hold for this overarching nightmare to be over. Things do not quite matter anymore. It's been going on for far too long. You get to a point where you give up, yet that makes no difference. That is simply giving up. The real difference is where you finally had enough of everything else.

I Fear Nothing

It's taking over. The blood inside of me turns to crimson ice. The cold wind blows harder. The storm is seizing everything in it's path. I still stay sitting. Let it blow against me. Death is coming closer. My own body temperature is at subzero. I let it all go. I'm immobile. The winds pushing up all over my body. I make no movement whatsoever. Destroy me. Take me apart. Kill me. Not a thing can cause me any greater pain. A powerful gust of wind forces my body back. I fall on my back. My eyes can't be moved anymore. My heartbeat slows down by the passing time. I look straight into the sky. A frozen body I am now. A piece of ice in the snowstorm. No longer human, no longer living. After all, I am....

Nothing More than an Empty Shell



She was only happy when surrounded by art

She was only happy when surrounded by art.
She was only happy when it

enveloped her,
engulfed her,
encompassed her,

She was only happy when she saw

it hiding within the patterns of her sheets,
trickling through the coffee machine.

She was only happy when she saw
it radiating off the sun
and reflecting itself on grass.

She was only depressed when surrounded by art.
She was only depressed when it

conned her,
consumed her,
killed her,

She was only depressed when she saw
the real meanings that hid within the pigments of it,
the brush strokes,
She was only depressed when it stabbed her sanity and shattered
it to pieces,

hiding within the blank whiteness of her sheets,
trickling through the IV machine.



After the Earthquake

Eyes.
Buildings, houses, offices, hospitals, retail stores, shopping malls, all recognizable yet unrecognizable.
To a giant, they would look like bread crumbs scattered on a dirty plate.
To me, they looked like a giant had walked across the city with brute strength as we walk across fields of small flowers and
grasses, not knowing or even caring what we step on.

Nose.
A certain residue; we had never met before. Is it the smell of the shoe store? No, because the shoe store is gone. Is it the

recognizable, comfortable, familiar aroma of the coffee shop that I love? No, because that is gone too.

Ears.

A silence that cannot be unheard. Then suddenly,
a cry.

Perhaps from a mother who had lost her child in the midst. Perhaps from an adolescent who wanted so desperately to do something he or she couldn't: to find his or her parents.

Hands.

It's like touching a broken plate and expecting it to be full. But multiply that magnitude by infinity.

Nerves.

I feel an amalgamation that I can only attempt to articulate. Mostly fear and concern. And other things.

Kindergarten Teacher

At the age of four I was shoved into a dark room,
chained down to the floor,
and told to obey a lady I had never even met before.
She said her classroom was a place for learning things.

but what do you learn when you're told
that your seat in the classroom
is determined by a piece of tape on the floor,
and that you can only sit criss-cross apple sauce?

Or when you want to draw a cat,
but you're told that you have to draw a pig,
just like everyone else?

As students, success is defined by numbers and letters
the numbers in our scores,
the letters on our report cards,
the letters of acceptance we get from colleges and
the number of
those letters that we
get.



Katrina Manrique

Pennsylvania

7 years ago, I thought we really did it

We threw flames with our fiery tongues and rolled punches of blame
Our regrets and mistakes punctured the living room
How you should've never had me
And how I should've never had you
Barely little was touched however so much was lost

Lost?

Physically, you can say. You were missing that day
You got tired of smelling the fumes and deceit
And in that case, I wouldn't blame you. I would leave too.
You got tired of throwing the punches and tasting the salt tears
But what I failed to see that day through the smoke and flames
Is that you got tired of hurting me

However when you left, you missed something too
There besides the garage door
Waiting for the sound of her mother's car engine
sat a girl whose eyes were shut
She was tired too

And I guess you can't blame the little girl
She was young but she fought just as hard as the mother who she waited for
She fought just as hard to defend herself
She fought just as hard to protect herself
And she was still fighting, long after the tears had stopped and her tongue had settled
Struggling to keep herself from hurting the only mother she had

I guess we were both fighting back then
But for what it may have been
seems different now compared to then
I'm sure we were both convinced
In our own little way
That we were fighting for ourselves

Ourselves

Defending
Protecting
And Saving
Ourselves

And even now we fool
Ourselves



That our relationship is nothing more than a
Don't hurt me and I won't hurt you
Or maybe even a
Don't touch me and I won't touch you

The strain of adolescence didn't do us much of a favor
You tried, as you did, to change it all
You were a doctor after all
And I guess as your profession called
You tried to fix what was hurt

Except instead of using IVs and sevoflurane
You used words like
"How are you, Katrina?" and the occasional
"What did you learn today?"
and I knew, deep down inside, that you meant more than small talk
that it was more than a simple formality

That when you said "How are you?"
I knew it really meant "Remember honey, that I love you"
And that when you asked me about what I learned today
It really meant "I care about you in a special kind of way"

Yet, I still refused to let you fix it
And I guess instead of letting me talk
I let those childish hormones do the talking for me
Slamming the door and ignoring those words
Writing it all off as another one of those
Generic
formalities

And as I closed the door
And retreated into the quietness of my room
I launched head first into my textbook and work
Not because I had an undying love for school
But really because I was scared of who I really loved

Because It wasn't the boy in my English class
Or the cute actor on the movie screen

No
No
No

I was scared of the fact
That through the arguments we shared
And the fire that we threw
The person that I truly love
Is you



Да будет дверь



Человек изменил пространство лишь один раз – когда изобрел дверь. Функциональный, топологический, а главное художественный потенциал этого величайшего изобретения человечества очевидны. Однако идея двери несет в себе куда больше смысла, дерзости и противоречия, чем сам предмет. В культуре дверь всегда многофункциональна. Она – пролог предстоящего пространства. Дверь – это фильтр, отбирающих праведных, она открыта только для них. Для христиан дверью к благодати является Иисус: «Я есмь дверь: кто войдет Мною, тот спасется...» (Иоанна 10:9). Шумерская богиня Инанна проходила через семь дверей, семь судей царства мертвых, а в подземном мире древнего Египта таких врат двенадцать. В митраизме через семь дверей лежит путь к реинкарнации.

Сущность двери понимали еще древние Римляне. Оставшись на пороге, двуликий бог Янус обзирает пространство внутри и снаружи. Само имя блюстителя происходит от слова «дверь», которое также значит и начало. Янус

всегда стоит на пороге сотворения.

Закрыв за собой дверь, человек сотворил себя, дал себе новое определение – он стал отдельной частью материального мира. Он приобрел иллюзию права на упорядочивание жизненно опасного хаоса в собственной единице пространства, то есть право творение. Если дверь закрыта, ветер не поднимет пыль в броуновское движение, не смешает температуры внутри и снаружи, не занесет болезнь, время за закрытой дверью есть глина в руках человеческих.

Главное – не выходить из комнаты. Открыть дверь значит уравнивать единицы пространства в правах, сделать «свое» «общим», уравнивать Я с «мы», потому что «мы», т.е. «они» несомненно в эту дверь посмотрят, а самые наглые – зайдут. Открыть дверь значит расширить юрисдикцию хаоса на свою территорию.

С другой стороны, дверь – это самый большой самообман человечества. Будучи идолом самоопределения, дверь не создает материальный эксклав нашего «Я» в пространстве, но создает реалистичную иллюзию, Фату-Моргану этого «Я». Попадая за дверью в зону комфорта, тщетно человек надеется на отделение от бытия. Бытие настигает его и за собственной дверью, потому что дверь – и есть часть бытия, часть материи, подверженная влиянию времени. Дверь играет на две стороны – дает на надежду на автономию, а сама является слугой перемен. Снова вспомним Януса, который хоть и стоит на границе хаоса и порядка, олицетворяет все же именно хаос. Таким образом, давая человеку божественное право упорядочивать хаос (или это человек дает богу это право?), всевластный Янус остается наблюдателем, и рано или поздно разрушает сотворенное человеком поворотом своего ключа.



Hannah Miao

Arizona

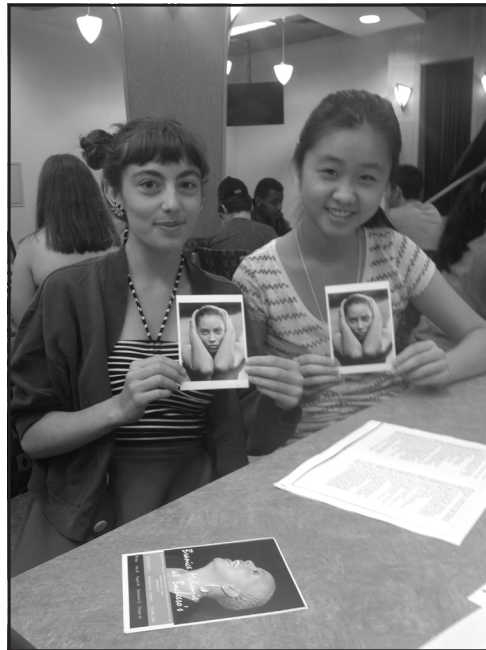
Journey

My first mystery was
the tilt of your neck, sloped
marble features dulled by time
and layered with a sheen of fresh paint
Suddenly, I grew pianist fingers,
wondering what it would feel like
to whisper Petrarch into the crevices of your spine
and map the tectonics of your face.

First words:
elemental.
Clung onto you
like a sinner leaps towards salvation.
Storm-swept words and
the sparks of revolution on your tongue—
captivated the bones of an entire empire.

Discovered this too late,
trapped in the glades.
I lost my map but others
are more careful,
have tracked out all the rest stops
and filling stations, brought
silk gloves and salmon-fishing boots,
parasol-rafts for the Amazon.

Discovered an enigma
wrapped up in moonbeam skin
and star-touched galaxies
waiting for the right traveler to come along
and open,
solve.



Hubris

Icarus leaps,
and there is something absurdly grandiose
in the spread of his wings,
magnificent sheets of winter-white
burnished by the bloody tint of the sun.

Always something abysmal about a lone wolf's howl
or the high-pitched crack in someone's voice right
before they're about to weep. Feel those sound waves
racing through your veins by the recesses of your brain—
that's what the water is.

("Slow down!" his father reproves,
but the voice is a faint echo in the distance.
A man who can fly is not vulnerable,
Icarus thinks,
wax dripping.)

The gush of liquid running through your
nostrils, the roaring sensation dancing
through clasped-tight ears, the heavy CHOKE
on your chest as if from the weight
of a thousand broken promises—

He climbs, higher and higher,
and the oily drops desecrate the glassy surface.
Once-stalwart wings shatter;
they fold, a flurry of feathers rain down
onto the plain beneath.

Breaking apart from the surface,
the sudden intake of air into the
concavity of your throat, sharp gasps piercing the air.
Thoughtless, a moment too soon: Aren't you glad that
history doesn't always repeat itself?

(Icarus leaps, and
F
A
L
L
S.)



Griffin Neal

Iowa

The house that had been bought for Biem wasn't at all aesthetically similar to his parents' house, but he didn't feel any different living there. A collection of rooms, as a concept, maintains its feeling as a whole regardless of quantity or style. Architecture interested Biem only when he was visiting.

When the victorian house began to accumulate his footprints, when there became an amount (decidedly "enough") of the geometric dustless figures on dusty surfaces where took place the pickings-up and puttings-down of various ornaments, when he began drawing comparisons between the creaking of the wooden boards in his new living room (age) and his parents' old couch that gave beneath his weight just, just too much (cheap), that is when he realized home is something that he would never be without, and he wasn't sure if he liked it.



A sequence of sounds. Mice, he thought. The house had the happy amount of disrepair where it becomes character, which is decidedly below the level of infestation, but, nonetheless, the business of mice was audible. He probably wouldn't talk to the guy that bought the house for him about it. The name escaped him at the moment.

In fact, the mice seemed to analogue the noises of his family to an unnerving extent. He said to himself unnerving, but he thought to himself frightening. The rhythm of the taps in what his best guess was the stairwell evoked in him the organo-mechanical interface of his brother's constant typing. Subtly louder were squeaks, ambiguously from machinery or rodent lungs, so much like the [bum] of a chord being strummed somewhere in the familiar wood beams, maybe from a relation taking one footstep, arbitrarily acoustically emphasized. The

evidence of his family reproduced by nature and circumstance was lonely and it wasn't. The void couldn't decide if it wanted to be filled or if its artifice sufficed. He sympathised with this void, this abstraction in the artificially-fragrant air. He decided he should go to bed when he found himself holding dialogue with abstract concepts.

He shut the door and sat on the bed. He stared at the ceiling. Got up and opened his laptop. An especially striking mouse noise sounded in the room, and he shivered. He looked at the recent moods of Stef, Victor, Harry and Seamus. He had never spoken to them personally, but he had run into their circle of friends as an observer via the internet. He wasn't sure in what part of the world they were congregated. To Biem they were residents of equal parts 1) an infinite amount of LCD screens and 2) his imagination stimulated thereby. This is what he read about:

Stef continued to be extremely pretty. He hoped she knew this. He mentally wished her luck with her depression. At work she somehow wound up telling a colleague a strange fetish of hers, and she assured the readership (that she couldn't have known Biem was a part of) that it was a conversation she neither initiated nor was eager to have, and it puts the nature of the minimal, professional relationship between her and this other girl in question, but she's fine with moving on from the incident with minimal reflection.

Victor got a chance to visit his girlfriend again. He decided ultimately that a popular new anime is overrated, but he enjoyed it nonetheless. He laughed dangerously hard at a knock-knock joke (while reading this anecdote there was a mouse scurrying worryingly close to Biem's direct surroundings and he think he might have seen its tail before it darted behind the desk and he became irrationally frightened but he calmed himself) involving Pete Townsend.

Harry still thinks that Kanye West's new album is pretentious and its supposed experimental edge has arrived too late for the decade-long-careered egotist to begin to cultivate (but Biem still listened to it every now and again and really liked the aesthetic style and didn't pay much mind to the cultural commentary or lack thereof that does [not] earn it its perceived significance from [A squeak here made Biem jump and he unplugged his laptop and sat on the bed with it because it had become apparent the mouse inhabited the workspace] postmodernism-savvy fans [including Lou Reed oddly enough (what

a random final artistic act [reviewing a rap album] for the guy from The Velvet Underground [but that's death, one supposes] [squeak])(shudder))(closing of a laptop computer.)

Seamus' recent doings would still be there in the morning. Perhaps afternoon. It was about 2:00 AM.

His friends?(he hadn't sent a bit of language to any of them at any point and although he was constantly considering it [hypothetically be it a general well-wishing or an attempt at opening dialogue] he doubted it would happen any time soon. [thud (how can a mouse even "thud?")])(squeak) left his mind, and he lied down. His thoughts turned to a variety of nothings. He felt alone in a very general sense. He wasn't sure of that. What he did know was his feelings were negative. He didn't like being alone. It put him in danger of these feelings. He wanted to open the laptop back up, but the mouse made itself clear whenever he thought of it. Exactly when he thought of it, actually. Like, exactly. That's too weird.

...

A medium-sized grey mouse emerged from an unnoticed hole in the wall, looked at Biem, and said "Hello."
"Hello," Biem responded, clearly dreaming, interested in where this was going. The mouse spoke again,

"My name is Being Alone."

"It's nice to meet you, Being Alone. My name is Biem Bien."

"I already know your name."

"Is that so?" The mouse began climbing the sheets of the bed. Biem made note of the organic weight by which his bedding was pulled taut. Being Alone mounted the bed and stood by Biem's hip and twitched its nose.

"I've been with you for a long time. I wasn't always a mouse, but now I am." Biem felt like he was beginning to get it.

"So you're like a metaphor?"

"I suppose I am. I'd prefer that metaphors be like me. I existed before poetry, after all." Biem chuckled.

"Solitude has an ego. Huh."

"And why shouldn't I? Extended discourse with me would prove the presence of my Id and Superego, I assure you."

"I'm not sure that can apply Freud to things that aren't really... people. I don't know if I'm belittling you or anything, but from where I am you're not a person in any sense, really. You're some combination of idea and rodent." He paused. Being Alone sat on its hind legs like a dog. He wasn't sure if mice actually did this or this was an invention of his brain. It wasn't cute. What he saw was more like legitimate patience, like one could find in a caring friend. "Well, I don't know. You tell me what you are."

"I'm a part of the stream of content present in a number of sensory input channels culminating into a sense of awareness of another being in your subconscious. I'm in your eyes and ears, for the most part."

"I think you're dodging the question."

"What better description could I give?" Biem thought about this. Being Alone continued, "I guess it depends what you mean by 'am' when you ask what I am. My point is that it doesn't especially matter. Don't think about it too much. I don't." That sounded reasonable.

"So why are you here?"

"That's another tricky one. The important part is that I am here."

"Got it."

"You're better off if I'm here in front of you though."

"Why's that?"

"I can be frightening when you're only getting my presence in a partial way. When you're alone in an odd or indirect sense. It's much better when we speak face to face, no?" Biem nodded. He understood.

"So, what now?" Being Alone shrugged. It layed down and appeared to go to sleep, but somehow appeared no less attentive.



Yazan Omari

Jordan

الا تجلسين قليلا

فان شعرك الذهبي يبدو متعبا
و ثوبك الطويل يحتاج استراحة
ان الأشجار تسترنا
و الاعشاب تغويني منذ فترة
فهلا جلست ام انا اطلب ضربا من الاستحالة
تقولين انك لا تفهمين
و ان الارض واسعة فلماذا الحنين
لكنني اليوم طفل برئ فهلا تجلسين
حسنا لن افعل شيئا
سأقرأ فقط اجزاء من رسالة

عيناك شبيء مقدس

و القداسة لا تجيز الكتابة

قالت ايا ولدي حكاية خبرة فالروح تبحث عن طريق نجاة
او القلب يهوى ابنه و كأنه في هذه الدنيا بلا انات
فاقعد و لا تحرق سمائي تارة اياك , ثم نهاية الأقوات
اني اريدك سالما و منعما وجه الطفولة كامل السنوات
لكنها الأيام كانت ضدنا فالوجه صار مشعر القسمات
و الطول طول الحالمين مسلم و الروح ظلت منبع القنوات
فالأم تحرق صوتها و تبرر و الغيم في عين بلا نزوات
اني ايا امي اشكل خبرتي فالغصن غض و الصعاب حياتي
فإذا اطعتك راغبا او مكرها فالطفل طفلك و الشتات شتاتي
و اذا صرخت بوجه حزنك مرة اني احبك يا ملاك سماتي
فاستنشقي قولا يفوح ببسمة و استسلمي لمواكب القبلات
بل لا تقولي قالها متأسفا فالقلب يعشق قصة اللحظات
اني بحضنك كلما اتحرك بعدا يزيد بشدة الكدمات
ايامنا كانت بجانب بعضنا فاستكملينا داخل الجنات
اقوالك ازدانت بأبهي حلة و بسماتك الحسنى بكل جهاتي
لا يسمع القلب الحزين لكلمة من غير صوتك سودد الأصوات
اني احبك كلما اتنفس يا جنتي يا اصدق الأسوات
يا امي ارتاحي بظهرك سنة لا تستكين بشدة الأزمان
طفل اذا عبث الزمان برأسه فارتاح شبيبا او من الخيبات
ظل الشعار برأسه يتردد اني مطيع يا رحيق حياتي

هل يا ترى غدر الزمان بعمرنا ام صار لونا ساطع الاحوال
عامان و الوجه الصبوح نهارنا و القلب دفى كامل الأفوال
فالشعر روح و العيون معابد و انا حقيقتي سائل عن حالي
فمع العيون الشاعرية قلنتهم و فم الحبيبة جائر الافعال
ارتاح ..في وجه النهار عيونها اشواقى اشتاقت الى المرسل
و الليل ليل الحالمين كأنها و الله تستولي على الأعمال

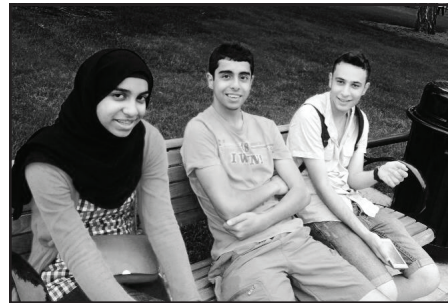
انا النوارس الهائمة

من بحر الى نهر الى علم
الى صوت الى بياض
فمن عين الى روح
و من قمر الى قوت
و ما زلت ابحت عن مكان
فانا اسافر غاضبا بلا سبب
و ابكي ضاحكا بلا سبب
تماما مثل النوارس الهائمة

كانت دقائق اربعا

تلك التي كانت مقسمة اليك
ايام كان الليل طفلا بريئا
جاثيا على ركبتيك
يوم كان الموت قريبا
و صار الليل دفنا
و قلبي غريب لديك
كان هذا المنتصف
ملينا بالحزن و الصدف
ملينا بالدمع و الشرف
و جئت انت
فشكرا لعينيك الملينتين بالترف

اقسمت في وجه الحياة بأنني سأعيشها و ايتم الاحزان
فتركت كل معارف تتكتل في بيتها لتحطم الاكوانا
و خرجت من مهد الطفولة كله لعم الرجولة كاملا مزدانا
و رميت عشقا تائها متحجرا تاريخه لا يحتوي الالوانا
عل الزمان اذا راه مدمرا سيحيطه و يكون الاعوانا
و ركضت فورا في الحياة فانني ساعيشها و ازلزل الاكوانا



Alena Piksaeva

Mordovia

Если ты сотворил пару строк,
тебе есть, что терять.
Если ты вероломен,
то вера твоя в тебе.

Искусство как злые цветы.
Рукописи горят и тонут в святой воде
Их спасти может только что вечная боль.
Кто готов её понести?
Кто возьмёт на себя смелость возглавить марш?

Искусство — морская соль.
Исцеляет и щиплет там,
куда не добраться ни пулям, ни поездам,
к самому краю души,
где плачет младенец от страха остаться один.

Мёртвые не прощают лишь то, что всего страшней -
забвение убивает в тысячу раз быстрее
пуль, поездов, капсул с ядом и тихих крыш.
На той стороне кроме «было» нет ничего.
Попробуй, прости, что тебя оставили в нём.

У гениев слабость к револьверам и чердакам,
хрупким страницам, краплаку и пыли в глазах.
Их скелеты так долго пылятся в тех сундуках,
что о них все забыли.

В забвении сила не ветра, но страждущих душ.
Они зыбко стоят, окружая меня кольцом.
Столетия спустя умирает последний вечный герой.
Я наблюдаю,
как Империя гибнет вместе со мной.



Three Poems

1# أحتاجُكـ

لأنني أرى الموت يلوحُ في باطن يدي
وأنا أخاف الوحدة والقبور والظلمة
أحتاجُكـ

لنرسم مجداً

لنكمل قافية

لنحلم بماضينا السيئ ونشطبه

لنكتب لنا ديناً نؤمن به!

أحتاجُكـ

لكي نرسم آمالاً إلى يد النجوم

لكي نبتّر فكراً ضاحلاً في عقولنا

ونضرب بالفأس على رأس فلان،

لأنه أغضبنا قبل تسعة عشر عام

لم أكن موجودة حينها لكنه أغضب أُمي

وأنا في جسدها أمارس الشعرَ

وأنسج لي جبلاً من التمرد والتّيّهان

أحتاجُكـ

لنقطع عنق السماء

ونفرد الغيوم / ونطعن الكواكب

ثم بعد كل القهر والطيش في عروقنا

نتوب ..

2# بين الدماء الحارة والأجساد المتراصة

هناك الكثير ليُحكى

الكثير ليُكبت

الكثير لينتهي

هناك صخب / هناك عتاب

هناك أشلاءً متناثرة في أضرحة هذا العالم

تروي قصصاً وتخلق أسراراً في رحم السحاب

نشُحُ عليها سعادة أحلامنا

نضجنا / تحررنا / تمردنا

لنحكي قصة أحزان في طور انسكاب!

3# ساسامحك لأنك الرجل الوحيد الذي عرفتني بأنني امرأة مجنونة

استحق ان أعيش دونك

أمارس حريتي وطقوسي

أفجُم جنوني بكل شي

أرقص / أغني / أجن أكثر

أصاحب الغرباء وأحكي لهم مأساتي

وابتسم .. أضحك .. أفهقه!

فأنا أحبُ الرجل الشرقي الغامض

أحب أن أحفظ أدق تفاصيلك

لكنك شرقي غامض مختلف!

لم أعتد اختلافك

وأنا في حياتي أريد طيقاً لما أريد لا أحب الاختلاف

عذراً .. أنا أحب الاختلاف لكن .. ليس ما تملكه

أرأيت؟ أنا واقعة في عشق تناقضي وضحكاتي

وقهقهتي ومزاجيتي وشقائتي والطيش الذي يسكنني

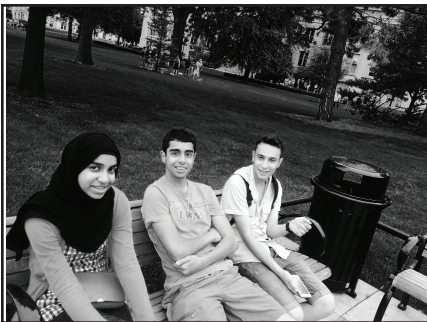
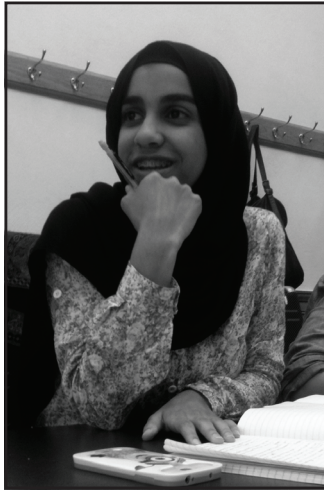
فأنا امرأة متحررة تحب الرقص والتصفيق والمديح

أحب فجأة أن أمارس الحنين والحزن والبكاء

لكنني لا أخضع!

وإن لزم الأمر، غيرتُ ما أحب لكي لا أخضع

فهمت؟!



Oksana Snell

Illinois

Oh, my god. Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes was sitting at my kitchen table. I can't breathe. My breath has been taken away, shut in a drawer and told to be quiet by his utter and absolute jaw, the set of his eyes, and his curious eyebrows, lighter than his hair. His hair is curly and irrational, painted over his head, unruly and silent. He looks relaxed. Oh, he is quite



a sight to behold. I then realize that he is not looking at me in a deductive way, trying to unmask my secrets in seconds like he does to everyone. He is looking at me like he would look at an old friend; he looks happy to see me (happy being a relative term). He is not overinvolved, and his posture suggests ease, but a quickness to jump into action. His large coat, with the front flaps turned up against his face to modify his appearance from strange to downright handsome, (into the ever-present guardian's severity that he radiates and commands), is blatant against the white of his cheeks. His cheeks angle down sharply, hollowing his features. Blue-green irises stare at me picturesquely; dark lashes darting up and down as he blinks. He is here. In my kitchen. He takes a breath, and I slowly look around the room, trying to suck in some air--any air--noticing that nothing has been misplaced, nothing touch- wait. Where is my phone? I look to the back corner behind him, the creamy white wall blunt and jagged against the darkened wood of the drawers underneath it. But it was not there, the creamy, sugarcoated yellow standing out rigidly against the speckled tiling. The cook books against the wall are not misplaced; their bright colors suggesting an air of "we are well read here", despite having never seen my mother pick one up, not even to flip through for ideas.

"Ah, yes, the first thing you see, Ms. Snell, is the first thing that is gone." Sherlock did not smile. He was not a man that smiled, regardless of what joke was being made. The closest he came was showing relief. "I was in town, figured I'd drop by, you know?" I had no idea what he was talking about. Regardless of whether or not we had met, he was a stranger in my home, and he was trying to make small talk, something that Sherlock Holmes ever did. The sudden thought made me shudder, gently stepping backward. The fridge was behind me; cool steel and quiet hum a balm against the implied accusation of being home alone and without a guardian at the present moment in time. But regardless of what he was doing here, I had not touched my phone in months, perhaps years. It was a bright yellow Apple iPhone 5C, the cheaper of the two models they had released in 2013. But what would it have on it that he would need, and why didn't he just ask? "I thought you might like to help me with a few unsolved problems of mine."

Unsolved problems? Now I was just frightened. What could he possibly want with me, a short, quiet 16-year-old? "Yes, and I'm the Queen of England," the dry snap of my words seemed to cake the walls in dusty, tired circles, the same old problems going around and around in my mind. He blinked, his face trying to mold itself into a calm expression while I could practically see his mind calculating what I had just said, trying to work out a reply that would not make him seem frivolous and selfish. He was actually trying to be polite, a rare occurrence. He would have no clue on what the implied sarcasm my tone was bringing, and would only confuse himself further. He may have been a genius with a pretty face, but he was not good with human emotions. "By that, I mean that I am in disbelief that you are sitting where you are, and that you have decided to steal my phone for your 'unsolved problems', unless you regard my phone as highly dangerous, or highly useful."



Matias Sosa-Wheelock

Florida

Like Father, Like Son

Dad gave me a wink, like we were friends or something. He slowly walked over and attempted to hug me, but I punched him in the face before he could get a chance. Nose bleeding, he ran to his bathroom, wondering out loud why I didn't love him. It's because of events like these that he embarrassed me in front of my friends... well, if I had any. Through enough punishment, I hoped that eventually he would remember that I'm not his deceased wife. I braided my beard, thinking of an idea to stop him. I shoved the idea in my closet, and turned on Family Matters, for I needed my daily dose of Urkel. During a commercial break I felt a bloody finger softly stroking my hair embedded lips. He whispered "I know you want this," into my ear while rubbing chicken fat all over my stomach. Of course it was Dad. I performed a triple cyclone whirly turtle kick on his face while standing in place. I waddled back to the closet to hunt for the answer to the enigma of my dad and unbraided my beard.



I decided the only solution was to seduce him. I proceeded to braid my beard hair to my sideburns. I was getting serious now. I could feel my pores absorb the chicken fat into my bloodstream. They say on "Kim and Khloe Take Miami" that if you rub chicken fat on your stomach your blood will turn into maple syrup. I purposely let him do this to further my plans, becoming sweeter than imaginable. Now my irresistible sweet blood would surely lure him in and further his seduction.

I decided to take my boat to dad's room. I kicked down the sliding door that was already open to find my dad hunched in the corner with two giant tubs of peanut butter, playing them like bongos and laughing like a maniac with his oily, peanut butter enveloped hands. I filled up my water bottle, flipped it upside down and threw it in the mini fridge. I grabbed a half eaten raw ribeye covered in gravy from my pocket and lathered it onto Dad's knees to absorb his skin oil. I then finished the job with a towel sized Fruit Rollup (Now available on Craigslist, for \$49.95, tattoos included with additional shipping and handling) and buffed his glistening knee caps all while he was stroking his cloud-like braided dreadlocks. Now time for dessert. I firmly grasped his jugular and gently placed him into the bathtub. The knob sounded like a dying turtle as I turned it violently. Lemon sherbet poured from the faucet in a swirling motion almost as if to fill a peanut buster parfait with extra cheese sauce. I went to grab my china bowl to sample the superb flavor. And when I went back, I froze in place at the sight of my icy creation.



Under piles upon piles of sherbet I found my father encased in a bathtub sized popsicle. He had no actual expression on his face, clearly he was unamused. The lemon sherbet melted all over the counter. Then on the floor. Then on the toilet seat. Soon the whole house was a canal of lemony despair, sadness, and misery. Dad was inflated from eating all of the sherbet and so I had to dig his frozen body out of the river with a stick, but the popsicle surrounding him had melted already. I accidentally poked his nose and a geyser of yellow stuff came spurting out of all three of his nostrils. It was inspirational. He flattened out to be paper thin, so it was easier to dig his body out.

I biked across the river with my flattened father and hung him on the branch of the cherry blossom tree outside. Every day, I had to pay dad a visit so I could clip off

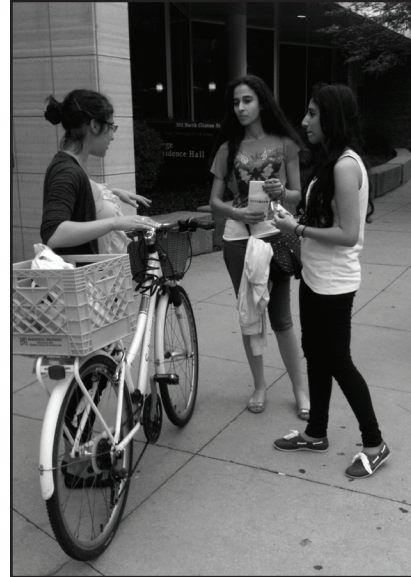
my beard hairs and lay them onto his tongue as a sacrifice. It's quite ironic that in life, the person that brings out the best in you and the one that makes you strong is actually your weakness.

Meghry Tchangoulian

Lebanon

Masterpiece

your mind
is a work of art
created by an artist
who used his brush
expertly
coloring one side bright
filled with translucent dreams
while the other dark
filled with demons
and lost hope
whereas I
I stare at your mind
and attempt to interpret
every single thought
transported
from tree to tree
every lightning bolt
your heart sends
to these two parts
for you mind is a masterpiece
and I wish to reveal
its hidden secrets
the reason behind
its radiant smiles
or its black tears
I would do this
if you allow me
to be painted
in this masterpiece
a painting full of life
a painting like no...
Other



Change

Change

such a strange word

change

a 6 letter word

yet it causes shivers

to run down our spines

change

the wind still blows

the roses grow

the rain pours

and purifies the soul

yet I am still confused

what is different

what is this change

that occurred to me

I still have my eyes

my hands, my legs

what is this change?

then I look at a reflection

that is not there...



Warhawk in the Storm

Thunder,
Start a battle in the sky,
Shoot the first cannon.
Crackle faintly from afar,
Take a moment to reload,
And come back to me.
Let me feel my windows rattle,
Make my frame shake violently
As you move through us.
Rain,
Patter softly,
Be the treble to Thunder,
Fearless on the front lines.
You are gentle,
You are quiet from afar,
But you are powerful like God's roaring laugh,
For when I stray from shelter
I must cower beneath a feeble umbrella,
Shield myself from your pouring army,
Like military men jumping from jets,
You launch an attack on the city
And I am powerless.
Boom, pitter patter, boom.
I hear you.
I feel the wet bullets
Striking me down,
Patter patter.
I feel your drops exploding like bombs,
But soon you will run out of ammo,
And you will retreat,
Until the next battle.



Florescence

Fluttering bright in my chest,
Feelings I'll never forget,
I wear them on my sleeve
And thighs,
Illuminated and sheer,
So you can see right through me.

I will glow when the sun sets,
Shine like the moon never could,
Glisten like the restless lake,
Flicker with the fireflies,
And twinkle like the dying stars.

I will guide you like the streetlights
And glimmer in the distance,
When you see me for the last time,
A memory bright in your mind,
A memory you'll never forget.



Один День Из Жизни

Это был январь 1967 года, весь месяц мы переезжали - мама продала наш дом в Блэкпуле и на деньги с его продажи купила пару золотых сережек и одноэтажный домик на севере Лондона. В городе у моря нас держал отец - уже к моменту моего рождения он был алкоголиком, и я вырос в доме, где перед сном слушал не колыбельные, а пьяную ругань отца и плач мамы в подушку у моей постели. Когда мне было восемь, отца забрали в лечебницу, потому что однажды ночью я прибежал к соседям и рассказал, что отец снова избивает маму и говорит, что убьет ее. Два года он провел взаперти, и, сколько бы друзья, приходящие к нам в гости, не уговаривали маму бросить жизнь в Ланкашире и забыть мужа, она держалась как можно ближе к отцу и отказывалась переезжать. Но он умер через неделю после моего десятого дня рождения, оставив после себя только пластинку модной группы родом из соседнего графства. Умер, и через два месяца дом был продан. 17 января 1967 года я сидел в своей новой спальне - полки были заставлены любимыми романами, на комод стоял старенький виниловый проигрыватель, а на нем крутился диск. Песня о том, что главное в жизни - танцевать и любить. Я сидел на кровати, свесив ноги в новых ботинках и читал вечернюю газету. На первой полосе говорилось об аварии, случившейся в Лондоне утром того дня. У Альберт-Холла столкнулись две машины - виноват был водитель такси - проехал на красный и врезался в машину члена палаты лордов. Водитель того погиб по пути в больницу от кровоизлияния в мозг. В тот вечер я спросил у мамы, что это значит. Запомнил я заметку потому, что этот Лорд остался невредимым и сразу после медицинского осмотра купил в ближайшем газетном ларьке выигранный лотерейный билет. Репортер писал, что сегодня, должно быть, счастливейший день в жизни этого человека. В дверь постучала мама и сказала одеваться. Мы шли знакомиться с новыми соседями, которые пригласили нас на чай. В семье соседей был мальчик на год старше меня, который с порога позвал меня в кино, у него билеты на новый фильм. До этого я был в кино лишь однажды - в мой восьмой день рождения. В кинотеатрах шел фильм «Эскадрилья 633» - про героев Второй Мировой Войны. Я помню, что он был о летчиках, и когда мы с мамой вышли на улицу, я стал бегать по кругу, раскинув руки в стороны, изображая рев самолетного двигателя. И никак не мог понять, почему, пока шел фильм, почти все сидящие в зале разошлись. Люди уходили, не досмотрев кино и наполовину, а меня это обижало и ранило в самое сердце.

Мы с Дэйвом сидели в полном кинозале. Что за фильм мы смотрели в тот вечер, я так и не запомнил - мой новый сосед то и дело дергал меня за плечо, и, показывая на экран, рассказывал мне о героях, которых видел раньше в телесериале. У нас дома никогда не было телевизора, и все эти имена я слышал впервые, и я сидел, пялясь в пустой, как мне казалось, экран, и думал о газетной заметке из вечернего выпуска. Фильм шел мучительно долго, а когда он закончился, мы вышли из кинотеатра в морозный туман, и Дэйв всю дорогу говорил о нем. Я дождался паузы в его монологе, и тогда, чтобы сменить тему, я спросил у него, где находится Альберт Холл. Это было первое, что пришло мне в голову, потому что последний час я только и думал, что о статье в газете.

-Я был там очень давно, - ответил Дэйв, - но папа говорит, что он скоро развалится, как все, построенное в викторианскую эпоху.

Дэйв рассказал мне, что его отец, который работал клерком, не любил монархию и всю королевскую семью, часто ругался, когда о них говорили по радио и говорил гадости про своего директора, над чьим столом висел портрет королевы.

В тот день я лег спать намного позже обычного. Мама в соседней комнате готовилась ко сну и напевала что-то себе под нос. Я слышал, как она улыбалась. Мне тоже хотелось улыбаться вместе с ней, но я уснул прежде, чем успел это сделать. Уже через неделю я пошел в свою новую школу. Там же учился Дэйв - на класс старше меня. За завтраком мы всегда сидели вместе, он научил меня играть на гитаре и курить, и я проводил все свободное время с ним, его друзьями и его отцом. Я видел маму очень редко - она устроилась на работу в парикмахерскую и приходила домой поздно вечером, а утром высыпалась, поэтому, когда я уходил в школу, я старался ее не будить, шел к Дэйву, и мы вместе отправлялись на занятия. Следующие пять лет моей жизни были, пожалуй, самыми скучными.



Как-то мы с Дэйвом шли домой из школы, и он предложил мне зайти к нему в гости. Наши ботинки были испачканы холодной коричневой слякотью, и при входе мы стали разуваться. Я увидел на вешалке в прихожей пальто и шарф матери. Мне стало стыдно и страшно, и я испуганно посмотрел на Дэйва, но он ничего не заметил, и уже проходил в гостиную. Он был очень толстый, и поэтому громко тяжело дышал после того, как мы поднялись по ступенькам к входной двери. Я хотел позвать его к себе в гости, придумать причину, чтобы он наверняка согласился вновь наклоняться, завязывать мокрые шнурки, надеть пальто, выйти на морозный грязный воздух, выйти из этого дома. Но я не успел – на втором этаже, в спальне, наверное, смеялась женщина.

-О, мои дома! – сказал Дэйв, плюхаясь на диван. Я очень хотел пойти наверх, чтобы сказать им, что Дэйв дома, что его надо как-то обмануть, но Дэйв крикнул, - Мам!Пап! Я пришел!

Через несколько секунд по лестнице сбежал растерянный отец Дэйва. Он увидел меня, обернулся и посмотрел на сына. Он стоял, а Дейв сидел и смотрел ему в глаза. Кажется, тогда прошла не одна вечность. Скрипнула лестница. Она не выдержала любопытства. Она стояла на верхней ступеньке в блузке и в чулках и смотрела на меня. Я видел, как сильно ей хотелось в этот момент обнять меня. В ее взгляде не было ни любви, ни ревности, ни страха, ни растерянности, только раскаяние. Может, Дэйв бы не заметил, что вверху лестницы кто-то стоит, если бы я, посмотрев на маму, не издал бы этого звука, будто кто-то ударил меня ногой в живот.

Он заметил, что я смотрел вверх, встал с дивана и отодвинул со своего пути беспомощного отца. Мама знала, что он сейчас ее увидит, но не стала убежать, а только закрыла лицо руками. Я повернулся к Дэйву и сделал шаг в его сторону, но я не мог, даже если бы захотел, остановить такого махину. Он прошел в прихожую, будто меня не было, посмотрел на лестницу. На секунду застыл. А потом, что есть сил, заорал: «Ах ты, паскуда мерзкая!», резко развернулся в мою сторону и ударил меня по лицу кулаком. А потом еще и еще раз. Когда я упал, он стал бить меня ногами, не переставая, он кричал: «Тварь! Дрянь! Ненавижу, сука! Тварь! Тварь! Мразь!».

После пяти лет жизни в Лондоне, дороги в Ланкашире мне показались гадкими. Они все были в колдобинах и рытвинах. Вместо ровных асфальтовых заплат ямы были засыпаны щебнем, который вылетал в лобовое стекло автобуса из-под колес автомобилей, ехавших впереди. Мама спала у меня на плече, и я положил свою руку ей на колено. По чулку под юбку ползла стрелка, и я прикрывал ее ладонью. Голова кружилась, а от неровной дороги и запаха бензина в салоне автобуса меня начало подташнивать. На автовокзале Блекпула нас встретила мамина двоюродная сестра. За время нашего отсутствия она так постарела, что я узнал ее только по недовольным интонациям в голосе. Сколько я ее помню, она всегда ворчала. Вот и сейчас, когда мы с мамой тащили свои сумки к ней домой, она только и говорила, что о моем воспитании – мама сказала ей, что мы возвращаемся домой из-за того, что я постоянно дерусь в школе. Я терпеливо молчал. Меня успокаивало, что никто в Блекпуле не знал о скандале, что мама сможет устроиться на старую работу, что никто не будет смотреть на нее иначе. Я чувствовал, что стоило вежливо улыбаться, когда тетя говорила о своих внуках, но улыбаться было очень больно – лицо болело. Мне было слишком тяжело нести сумку со своими книгами и пластинками – болела спина и ребра. Но я терпел, улыбался и ждал поворота с ветреной набережной на тихую узкую улочку, ждал, когда тетя достанет ключи и отопрет синюю дверь, и я сброшу с плеча сумку, вес которой был в тот момент единственным, что меня беспокоило. Дверь перекрасили в зеленый, но, видимо, давно, потому что слой зеленой краски уже облупился, и синий выглядывал наружу.

Я вернулся в Лондон спустя восемь лет и устроился на работу в бюро переводов. Каждый будний день я ездил в офис на первом этаже автобуса, по дороге просматривая переведенные накануне документы на наличие ошибок. Тем утром я забыл дома французско-английский словарь. Поняв, что не смогу проверить вчерашнюю работу в дороге, я поднялся на второй этаж и сел в самом конце автобуса. Я ехал на втором этаже первый раз в жизни и был в жуткой обиде на самого себя из-за того, что не делал этого раньше. Проехали Трафальгарскую площадь. Я работал в самом центре города. Автобус подъехал к моей остановке раньше, чем обычно, и я решил выпить чая в кафе.

За соседним столом спиной ко мне сидел Дэйв с девушкой. Он не узнал меня, когда я зашел, а я не успел как следует его рассмотреть. На столе перед ним лежали ключи от автомобиля. Пока мне несли чай, я слушал их разговор. Он говорил очень тихо, и я не расслышал ни слова, но я понял, что он оправдывается перед ней. Девушка же, напротив, говорила очень громко, срываясь на крик, почти на визг, отчего на их столик оборачивались официанты и посетители. «Ты должен ей все рассказать!» Я делал вид, что читал газету. «Я не хочу ничего скрывать! мне надоело прятаться!» На них были устремлены все взгляды в помещении, кроме моего. Я тупо пялился в газетный лист. Писали об аварии в центре города. Я вспомнил свое знакомство с Дэйвом. Меня начало мутить. Я оставил деньги за чай на столе и быстрым шагом вышел из кафе. Посмотрел на часы. Опоздал на работу.

Я отпросился с работы раньше, ссылаясь на плохое самочувствие, и в седьмом часу уже лег спать. Мне снилось, будто длинная извилистая дорога, вся в рытвинах и ямах, как змея, заползает в Альберт Холл, затягивая за собой мой автобус, который врезается в стену, и здание разваливается, крошится в щебень и засыпает второй этаж автобуса и меня вместе с ним.

Merna Wahba

Egypt



كانت تتمشي في الشارع حيث استطعت ان اري ظهرها , رايت رجلها النحيفتين نصف مغطاه بفستان اسود . . رايت طفلي نهلة يشعرها الذهبي في زيل حسان تثب و تجري . تسأل امها عن مكان ابيها بابا في الشغل حبيبيتي " كانت اجابة امها المعتادة . مسكينة نهلة . اعلم ان اذنيها قد ارهقتا من سماع هذا . والدما " .
دائم الانشغال

لملذا لا تتوقف عن السؤال ، فقد توقف اخوها ، ربما لانه كبر و كلما كبرنا كلما نفذ صبرنا . لا استطيع الا ان اري زوجتي تشعر بالاسف تجاه ابنتنا كما اشعر انا . و كم هو اسفي !! ليتني استطيع ان اعيش هذه الايام ثانية! ولكن !
لماذا انا هنا ؟ ولماذا احصل علي فرصه اخري لعيش هذه الايام بينما انا غير قادر علي تغير اي شي كل ما اتذكر اني صحوت من نومي في احدي الايام ، شربت قهوتي وودعت كلبتي الذي اصبح صديقي الوحيد وذهبت في طريقي الي العمل حتي قابلت رجلا في منتصف العمر ، شعره بني و كذلك ذقنه . كانت تفوح منة رائحة الغسيل المتسخ و الطين . كانت عيناه عسليتان كانهما غريبتين عن هذه الارض ، قميصه مقطوع و بنطالة ليس احسن حالا . سألني لأعطية مالا فاعطيتة دولارين و سمعته يقول: لم تهمل شخص قد احتاج لك لكنك تجاهلت ما هو مهم لطمعك فاذهب للوراء و اصلح خطأك
.....كلما راجعت هذه الكلمات في اذني لا اصل الي شيء

الي اين يمكن ان اذهب ؟ و ما هو هذا الشيء المهم ؟ تعبت من تفكيري و ذهبت لأري شخصي في هذا الوقت . دخلت الي مكان مألوف رأيت الوجوه التي اعرفها منذ زمن . اشتم رائحة القهوة في المكان دليلا علي العمل الجاد ، و عندما وصلت الي مكتبي جعلت انظر الي شخصيتي الشاببة . شعري البني المجعد الذي ابيض مع الزمن و عيناها السودايتين اللتان اصبحتا اكثر سوادا . شكلي يوحى بالانشغال و التركيز و كأن لا شيء يمكن ان يصرفني عن هذا العمل حتي و لو كانت اعاصير

المشكلة لم تكن اني احب عملي و لكن بطريقة ما وقعت في حالة ادمان للعمل و لم اكن قادرا علي الاستيقاظ منها . دخلت الي مكتبي و جلست قدام شخصي . " انت مين " فوجئت كمن ينجح بامتياز في امتحان لم يذاكر له . لقد شعر بوجودي لم يشعر احد به حتي الان فقد تبعت زوجتي لمدة يومين و لم تنتظر الي نظرة واحدة و بعد صمتي لوهلة قلت " وليم برون " فرفع نظره الي و عندما وقعت عيناها علي وجهي امسي مزهولا
الشي الوحيد الذي احبة في نفسي هو انني الانسان الوحيد الذي يسخر من شعر نسخته الاكبر سنا... و بعد حوار طويل حيث كنت اشرح جهلي بكيفية وصولي هنا اخيرا سؤلت " كيف هي عائلتي؟ " . عرفت لحظة مقابلتي به .
يقدم هذا السؤال ففي داخلي علمت انه سبب قدومي

حسنا لا استطيع ان اقول انك رجل محظوظ ، فكلما قوي منصبك ضعفت علاقتك بالعائلة .. مطلق ... ابنتك " ذات الثماني عشر عاما تدخن مع هذا الصديق اوليفر .. اه قد تركت مدرستها في السادسة عشر و لكنك لم تعرف الا عندما بلغت السابعة عشر و ابنك يعاني ادمان الكوكايين و لكن لحسن الحظ انه يعالج بعدما سجن بتهمته السرقة . و تدمرت حياه زوجتك فاصبحت ذات قلب مفتور و صحة ضعيفة . اما الجانب المشرق ان كلبك يحبك كثيرا

قول كل هذا لم يملاني الا بالندم الغير محتمل ، و لكن عندما رايت الخوف و الندم و الاصرار في عيني مستعني علمت اني قد اكملت عملي



Raina Wellman

New Mexico

Are Words Magical?

Harold and Dina had felt a magnetic sort of love for each other from the first time Dina had said, “My name is Dina.” It had been a tornado of love, the kind to get caught up in and that will catch everything it touches. Up goes the second hand couch, the fruit bowl, the pillows from mother, even the cat, all snatched and taken by some unearthly, hypnotizing natural force.

It had been a stop and start sort of thing where go was when Harold said, “I like your skirt.” And red light was a change in conversation. They yielded carefully, gently tugging each other to dinner parties and movies.

“Uh. Did you like my friends okay? How about the wine?”

When Harold told Dina his last name, “Shlontzky,” she was doing donuts of love. Two words sent her into a passionate frenzy, “Harold Shlontzky.” Friends in their cocktail dresses and bow ties would look at Dina’s up-do and recognize, “Mh-hmmmm words are magic.”



Beauty and the Beast

Look past the mirror

Notice your father in a jail cell

Notice the library and that sweet smiling chipped teacup

How about a singing dinner party served by a candlestick?

Love him, as he likes to mention

Between his aggressive outbursts and your imprisonment

They’re going to knock down his door

And you’re going to be running between their fiery shouts and his sorrowful roars

Running in you yellow dress

Because the villagers always hated ugly things and

You should too



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following:

Christopher Merrill and the staff of the International Writing Program, University of Iowa
Jill Staggs and Kelsi Ward, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State

The instructors at Between the Lines: novelist Alan Cherchesov, novelist Iman Humayden, and poet Kiki Petrosino

The one-site staff at Between the Lines: counselors Zaina Arafat, Daniel Castro, Ngwah-Mbo Nana Nkweti, and Sean Zhuraw; chaperones Nancy Abdel Karim, Mimoune Daoudi, and Svetlana Seniukhina; BTL staff Sara Cooper and Kelly Morse

Our on-site guest lecturers at Between the Lines: slam poet Malcolm London and playwright Kim Euell

Between the Lines is made possible by generous funding from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State.

