

## **You don't know my hurt**

what makes me laugh  
awkward running,  
falling bellies up  
to the sun  
then bowing  
down to leaves  
thanking roots  
until the winds run  
dew on upper lips  
like snot  
mouths explode  
spitting flames  
until humor can  
no longer hide from heat  
when I get lost  
it's in translation,  
our native tongue  
sticks to the roof  
of my mouth  
until I can  
pronounce *home*  
the right way,  
you laugh at the way  
I place accents,  
say I sound 3  
now I'm 23  
and can barely look  
grandma in the eye,  
only call you when I'm hungry  
or need a ride to the funeral,  
you say don't bother  
with goodbyes  
if it's in English.  
I kill plants  
once a week  
when I return home  
to sunflowers  
with the shortest  
life indoors,  
I place them by the window  
until they're tired

of gloom,  
I swallow  
their dried seeds  
so they can finally kiss  
the sun in my belly

## **I Don't Know Your Hurt**

You built a border with recycled grocery bags,  
compacted the fridge with frozen foods,  
filled the pantry with pistachios, barberries, and dates  
but left nothing to feed on my indulgences,  
so that I will always need you at dinnertime.

Dinnertime is no time for questions — no space  
at the table for grace — you fight with the TV,  
hating the stillness — my cousin said Dad  
always threw the remote at you after dinner,  
you clench the controls, scolding my taste in men.

*Men will suck you for your youth and children will suck  
you for your milk until they're all full and you're dry —*  
you loved me the most when I bought you a new fridge,  
now you're lactose intolerant and hate the way my boyfriend laughs,  
telling me he's like my dad, and my cousin's dad.

Dad's cigarette ashes left a trail, you never stepped on  
or swept away — you keep the stove on overnight,  
burn incense every Friday and overlook strangers  
from the balcony, tucking your prayer beads in,  
when it's too quiet, you leave to pray.

*Pray for a two-story house with a backyard and a pool*  
you pray for pearls and peace — when asked about you  
all I can say is I don't know your birth year or your dress size  
or if you ever flirted with demons, I pray that I do but  
I don't — I don't know — I don't know you.

## **Moon Daisies Were All We Had**

The ones with the three yellow heads  
that could illuminate the gray in your hands,  
The ones you used to nurse in your flourishing  
garden, not because you believed its beauty  
was worth tending — its stems could  
not compare to Persian tulips,  
but it was the best our soil could handle.

You were shipped to a white storage unit,  
hooked into machinery and glass tubes,  
slept in a bed of radiation, then returned home.  
On and off you'd go for the past three years,  
until your last strawberry bush surrendered  
to neglect — we can't recall our last visit,  
but we knew you still had rose in your cheeks.

The moon was full and our daisies glowed  
in the light — you had three minutes left  
on your monitor and we thought we had more  
time to buy you flowers before the light turned  
green before the phone rang before the last  
beep we didn't even say goodbye  
all we could do was weep in your abandoned  
garden in hopes that our tears would wash away  
the rot — all I could do was ruminate on Persian tulips,  
the ones you've always longed for.

## Sea of Detachment

*“Yield your soul  
surrender your heart,  
or else they will divert you,  
waylay you far from the Valley of Detachment”  
- Attar, The Conference of the Birds*

we ironed our prayers  
out on the bed, with argan —  
sweated palms  
compressed steam  
before releasing  
to blur the stars

God granted us custody  
for one night, gifting  
us shearwater wings,  
and we flew to  
the Sea of Detachment,  
in search of our king

whom we can call father  
but all that stood  
was a marauder, hidden  
under ruffled skirts,  
voyaging from daughter  
to daughter forgetting  
their last names,  
he lights his cigar  
and that becomes our  
only star

not enough warmth  
in our hands for a prayer  
back to our wrinkled bed  
we wade on the water  
afraid of the ripples  
that reflect his embers  
back to us

## The Mourning Song

the birds are too rowdy  
too early, they peck  
at me through the window —  
how I never water the garden  
how I welcome weeds

how I let the sun beat  
the alarm again,  
snoozing to waste  
the last of it  
before I unload  
the morning —  
strawberry jam, whole milk,  
and raisin bread  
all store-bought and ready —  
I thought I could handle the heat,  
grow my groceries from the ground  
maybe the jam would taste sweeter,  
the milk would last longer than two weeks

I count what's left of it  
to keep up with the hyperbole of the morning —  
no one believes a flood  
after a ten year drought  
no one believes me —  
when I say there's no more  
sweetness left in the breakfast cream —  
I spread the layers of my tears way too thick,  
no more time to cry over stale bread.