

Léda et le cygne

Given that the cyan door was locked shut,
and given that Nani had forbidden her
to roam around her own
house, the floors of which she had
memorized like the finger
prints of her palm, about suffering, they were very right—

it was mostly self-inflicted, as she was told:
if her fingers did not grace upon the cyan gate,
given she had listened to her Nanu, given
she had sat there silently
like the seed that was planted
to die, it would have been easier
to remember what happened
next, given— just given, had she, for once, listened

to her all-knowing, caring dear guardian-
husband. Because at midnight, King Tyndareus had asked his child
bride to sit by the bank of Eurota. Half-naked, Leda
waited. Like the boulder that rested under her
back, she waited. Like how her tunic swayed by the autumn breeze, left
only her left calf wearing

some fragment of dignity, she waited. She mustered within
herself, any ounce of anger her small child
like body could hold. Anger, which seeped into her fist and
aged her with a belly; anger, which filled her breasts and
up her cervix with
rotten eggs: anger that she held in the small
of her palm and claw
that strangled the boulder and the beast.

The magnificent span of ivory wings shivered and sniveled—
about suffering, they were rarely wrong.

Under the Mattress

On a sunny summer morning in January, the streets of Pachimpara were crowded by the act of dragging and pushing of my grandfather by the state military police. The faint brown blood streaked on his shirt from the brother he lost during a bombing in 1970s, smiles at the face of the man with a pair of handcuffs which were once molded by the same hand that it now snuggles around.

The phone of his wife rings with the tune of a call from the green-swathed stolen land in the Midwest of, somewhere in America that once used to be known as Kiowa, from a son lost to the American Dream who, in the cozy hazy morning of winter with a mug of Columbian coffee in his left hand had flipped open the local news of his motherland and found the picture of his father on the headline.

The second paragraph of Prothom Alo reported the couple of rusty guns and five bags of ganja that were hidden under the mattress which the mother of my grandfather had sewn sitting under the clear blue sky, belly bubbling with my grandfather, the first in the family to echo the noises of the pale white men, who with their piercing blue eyes and brandishing rifles, kicked the bucket of milk his father spent the entire day milking.

The mattress sewn was a faded shade of blue, worn out from the constant use in the last fifty-seven years as old as my grandfather, who now stares at the black, distant eyes of the policeman— who spent nights caring for his newborn daughter sleepless, granting his wife a good night's sleep— his eyes now begging the red, blood-shot eyes flooding like the thunderstorm from the night their wives spent drying the pillowcase soaked with tears

1 in every 15 minutes

I have mastered the art
of crying
quietly

the same way Padmā nadī twirls
near the bank
of Shitalokkha

it has mastered the craft
of flowing
endlessly

the same way leaves of Batgachh
climb your sky
for Doels

those have mastered the dance
of holding
hands

the same way the morning crows
suckle the ripe
green worms

we have mastered the art
of turning
our

EYES FROM THE GENOCIDE

BLOOD

CHILDREN

**CHILDREN'S BLOOD
DEAD CHILDREN
CORPSE OF CHILDREN
LIMBS OF CHILDREN
BLOOD-STAINED TOYS OF:**

**HOSO,
FADI,
RAHIM,
ESSAM,
SAMIR,
IBRAHIM,
EZZAT,
GHAZAL,
HAMZAH,
HAYA,
ISSA,
JANNAT,
JURI,
JURI,
JURI,
JOURD,
KARIM,
KARIMA,
LANA,
LAYAN,
MAHA,
MAHMOUD,
NASR,
OMAR,
RAAFAT,
SABAH,
SARAH, Sarah, sarah,**

the same way my youngest sister

is Sarah; I
named her

AND CALLED HER LIKE THE PALESTINIAN MOTHERS AND
FATHERS AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS

who have mastered the scream

of crying

quietly:

Sarah, Sewar, Sila, Tala, Tasneem,

Tia, Toleen, Tuqa, Uday,

Watan,

Watin,

Yahya,

Yasmin,

Yassin,

Youmna,

Younis,

Youssef,

Zaher,

Zaid,
Zain
Zainab
Zakaria
Zein
Zeina
Zuhair
Zila
Ziya
Zoya

I Am After Sorrow

—after Gwendolyn Brooks and inspired by Ross Gay

Do you notice the stillness in the air? Despite
the sleepless night, the restless turnings, and
the sinister dreams,
You are here, you
are here today, awake
breathing in the new season of mangoes and jasmines and
despite how inviting the lake is, how it beckons you forward like the geese
that nest behind Rhoads, you
stop and arch your head, and
take a moment to close your eyes and
I notice— the air is cooler despite the warm rays of sunlight,
the sunlight, which is orange and blazing, is also calm and invisible, and you
want to indulge yourself some more, because
the lake can wait
the tendrils of the leaves wreathing for you
can wait, can wait—
will wait: they have
waited 8438 days, and they can
wait a million few more even
though the air now suddenly smells like biryani, and you know,
oh, you know too well, that this isn't
real and I say—no matter how much it smells like home,
it can never be home; so you let
the moment rise and disappear, and
I lay down on the grass, and
I water it some more—
it is blooming like the cherry blossoms I saw
my sister running around in her pink tulle—
something's happening, I am blooming—Oh.
I remember. I think I remember. My color's green. I am Spring.

From The Water Into The Frying Pan

Home is how I know the birds are singing
with the morning Azan breaking the cacophony; I hear
my mother is awake, rinsing the rice, raising the beings
of the flavor of the fermented rice, carefully
placing the pan over the fire
that once carved a flower on my feet
when I was six, I am reminded of the time I was
four and it was 2004 in Shishu Park, and
the flowers were blooming along with
a planted bomb and that is to say that the fish my father caught
last week is still missing in the sea, and as its taste still lingers
in my mouth—the spice concoction twisting around my tongue—
I can't help but think how its parents must be looking
for it, not knowing it is now swimming inside of me; how
it is a part of me, like
how I am a bangali and a muslim
a contradictory, a confusion
a diary of dissonance, where,
here, women like me wear salwar,
but orna is the most essential accessory
in my religion in the eyes of the men
who forget to look away, from the eyes
of the men who dig a grave so deep
full of worms and snakes and sins, so fixed because
without my two-yard piece of fabric shaped
around my flat sore breasts I am not—I cannot because
without it, I am not me, without it, I cannot be,
without it, I am not to be, because without it
I am upsetting a God who probably knows
my heart and doesn't care, who also knows that
when I am back home in winter, my mother hugs
a thick shawl around me like a child

bride who is being adorned with century-old heirloom
jewelry after the auction, and I hear her
say she is covering me, and
I say: she is *covering* me, like
the way my skin is covered with
the absence of a mother's embrace, like
the way the morning water warms her
fingers as it's slipping from her, like
the way the aroma of carmine and cloves spiral
around my mind and it is swirling like
the water that is dancing with mother
fish in the sea, how it lays massaged in oil, like
how the grass is wearing the sunset dew
in sunlight, like the fish that is bathing in a pan just like
how the morning Azan snuggles me
awake inside the moshari, like
how I know it is the absence that is the reminder
of someplace like
the memory that used to be home.