

Poems by Sheikha A.

Bruise

I heard someone say: the best ideas birth
out of an empty stomach. In heed, in need
of a new thought, I sit by your horizon –

a sinking womb of premature dreams,
a gestating foetus of tomorrow's intellect,
a wounded canvas of numbed ardour.

You've stretched out much further
than your arms would normally reach.
What is it that you want – trying to grab
into the meagre capacity of your fragile
arms – all of today, having left you by
a quick sweep of disappearance,
breaking the minutes gone
into new disintegrating pasts.

I am famished, my stomach taut
and cringing with the rupturing
of your psychedelic flaunts; I gnaw
at my fingers in an attempt to bite out
words I'd otherwise never speak.

My eyes gorge on your dying beauty,
nothing appears grander than death
if it bears your hues; take me into you,
allow me to be the shadow that hovers
over your body before night takes charge.

A thought does birth. Save me from liberty;
the way your sun inspires me as it lays
its last for the day it has lived, a lifetime
amounting to twenty-four hours of infinity –
let nothing birth anymore, except for your
purple-deep mysteries.

Athene

it is one thing to pick a coin from a gutter,
and another to pluck petals from a pond;

if I had been in enough snow, I, too, would
have known it was easy to break a river
from a frozen mountain, but I sprang from war
with a ruby chest and topaz face, I came from euphoria
and the oceans of fog that were risen from sand,

knowing the curtains are thin, the view opaque
to eyes that go blind by a preference they feel
will land them in a place where rivers speak
from below, guiding the sledge to the rock

and in that moment of digging when time
turns nocturnal, ephemeral of quantitative
objectivity, you hit

the treasure in the smelly waters gurgling beneath,
a neglected pond searched for food by insect larvae,
flashes of winter taking your hands in its own,
the purity of the light that you called aloud
a delusion, your face turning the rich shade of sapphire
while the coin burns a hole in your palm.

An-Nur Al-Ain: lock and key

after An-Nur by Laura M. Kaminski (Halima Ayuba)

I've come a long way from dreams,
deciphering veins; people in flesh
are the oldest ghosts that have
saturated asphalt between the folded
skin of their knees. Pray for my death
in the same moment *Malek ul Maut*
arrives for you, on thick slippers
that sound of clanging gates. We
meet at an age of empires; my shoulders
descending as does my chest, but you
will find a clean navel on this torso
of faith; anaemic to provision of race,
for my progeny shall sprout from tunnels,
for a lock never does not find its key,
I shall part so you enter. Come with love,
a holy circle on your forehead. Remember
to fall and rise in tandem with my face's
phases. There will be one constant:
the tree parked by your bedside; sleep
without not having called out the name
of my Master first. My dreams have absolved
their feet, now stepping onto the clean white
mat in your home.

Dust Star

(en)dear me: forget about the light
bringing us no good fallacy. Pay
attention to this whisper urging
your name to form into an apparition.
You were watching stones of ice
last night. Never beleaguer rain
especially when the skies bemoan
a fallen. List these advices and send it
off to the spirits following you.
Tell them you have changed
into a believer – their knocking
on the floors has worked.
Keep the memory of last night's
dream into your consciousness,
her wide round eyes in the depths
of her eager hungering. She was
telling you to be a riot on a horse.
Cast away the call of love;
instead be inflamed.

Outage

Welcome, Outage. You herald shadows.
Mosquitoes pretend as moths fluttering to light;

their welts hard to embrace. Some voice calls
in the dark for a torch. It is a quarrel for light

to illuminate justifiably. A hungry set of hands
wait for the dark to leave to find the mouth

to morsel. At the other end, a slippery slab
of flooring has a full stomach stand with tremors

in feet, that have walked off a lifetime of medicines,
halted mid-step from not knowing how far away

the next step is from the last. Across a thousand
square feet of space clamouring in dusty largeness,

cobwebs have disbanded. Darkness, here, learns
a new language each time the city bites its light.

Chemical imbalances turn volcanic. Hunger triumphs.
Lurking mosquitoes find food.