

Poems by Sheikha A

Hermitage

The forest is empty like an arid well,
an ascetic pair of eyes watches over

the living, but vacant of life itself,
no leaves breathing to the beats

of a whistling, tap-dancing breeze.
There, in solitary solidarity, falls to

a weakling beam of teetering light,
a man, rested of age, watches the forest

breathe; his mind lost, of any thoughts
he may have borne; the moon dances

in behaving incantation to a night
downed in a lover's goodbye rush,

a patch of persimmon where apple-red
cheeks blushed, the sky is tamped in

to an obsequious violet grandeur.
Nothing moves like having held

their breaths in, faces concaved
and eyes bulge out like a carpenter bee's

sentinel gaze. The man's ears pick
a buzzing from between the tall grass,

as he sits lodged in the ground
as if like a plant's roots ridden by ennui

of a water-less season. He watches
a pair of hands carry a blade, serrated

oblong body, as it whizzes nearer
and angles against his gaunt stomach.

The blade cuts through as he feels
nothing; the years don't bleed out of him,

the wrinkles on his body chip off,
first in chunks, then reduce to sawdust

the limp air refuses to carry weight of,
he falls to the soil, particle by particle,

to meet the roots from which he grew,

his eyes watch his body break as the night

darkens in conspiracy; he waits as he did
over the years of sunlit fertility, in hope

for the ground to open, to take him back
to the womb from where he once birthed.

O Ye Skies, open to

O Ye Skies, open to
your highest sky at the Epitome,
where Heaven opens its gates
and there awaits, a castle made
of *yaqoot* and *zamrad* each
to greet faith holders,
those who absolved their time
in seeking hope amidst a warfare
not begun, never enticed by You.

I come to You with fragility
encased in the lines of my palms,
the lines You drew on me
whence I was not to deviate;
the map to my way back from
the other world.

My body is broke from
walking this world not my own,
and, now, my spirit bent
I wait alongside faces illuminated
of serenity, their hands are fleshy
and fingers plump with vitality.

The nights have been many
in number, I've watched stars die
and fall unto you visible to me;
part the skies, of my bewitched mind,
let me live in truth, and not in chaos
of this other world.

Star's Song

It is a starless night; clouds placating
and circling the courtyards of a fort
seemingly existing only in the sky
for they stoop not down steep paths
of gossamer light beams to an earth:
broken heaven. I hear a distant tinkle
amongst repressed fogs thickening
from holding its breath for too long;
it comes from a sprite carrying about
her rounds, my eyes scampering, keen
but thrift not to provoke the stolid sky
out of its feint meditation. The tempest,
little starlet, her spirited wafting, in out
of enmeshed laws of unbreathing fogs,
governing its fort, barbed from view,
zips like a firefly caught in fate's jar;
she glows through the nightly shadow
like a lone star chasing stage's spotlight,
whilst the condensing vapour holds fort,
I see; I hear the melodiously loud singing
in a night so still - bricked up motility -
her elegiac, despairing to be set free.

The same moment

The same moment I sprain the index
of my finger, I think of the physics

of bending: painful and inaccurate.
Going below the stone, further into soil,

verses of memorized holy guards begin
a loop track to face the unrecognizable

dark. He won't be there in that time
with me - metered sadness without a wage;

I will find him at a gate holding a ticket
spelling a distance the widest wings of

Fitris would fall rather than cover. Large
horizons hover over a lean sun. Too many

stars have crowded residence here. I hear
his arms razor against banishment. There

I raise my recitation. We are meeting
at cyclonic point of echoes -

An-Nur Al-Ain: Elaahi

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

You are shadow leaning on paintings;
pretend now is a brief moment of faith,
and your forehead is a full mass of hair
before her innocence thrust your age
to the shattered glinting of lightning;
falling as rain - falling like a million joy,
valium as permitted resurrection. Borders
on her heat-pressed neck bead like pearls,
pure form of sweat, the kind angels inhale
as *bakhor* from *Tooba*. Clinging on the black
cloth of God's home, my cry is of a whale
caught in a hook. Send down the tests
like a roofless shed watching stones build
sturdy paths. But give me his eyes to
take away her *noor*; my beauty is meagre,
his vision: split islands off humble coasts.