

ShaziaHafizRamji

DEAR KIN

Dear kin when I look for you there is always water
there is always light and food and whisky
I know this was not true you having hauled me up
from knives of hunger where the Empire never
set when I call you I call ships and alcohol
I call myself by the names that others have for me
this is wrong I know so I call you by your long names
the Persian ones the Indian ones from centuries ago
when you were from elsewhere as I see it now
those names tart gooseberries the weight of heartbeats
on my tongue tissue-thin skin beating light beating
rain on dry sand dust rising whispers of stars
but it feels wrong
to think of you in the same breath as ships and stars
so then tell me what else I have tell me how else
to think of you am I not giving you
tired romance
currents of starlight
reach for me kin
you know the kind of lonely I am
I go to the ocean even in winter I say our secret names
like the prayer the seagull takes from carrion
I have to hold so much from others
in the family yet I can only think of you
in adventures on *Angrezi* ships my breath goes out
when I see you suffering you see
I have to try to remember my happiness
when we were all together
scraping burnt rice from hard silver
scraping our warm gums to unstick
syllables this is the only way
to find you sometimes ships sand
booze burnt rice
my happiness is inevitable
and misunderstood
only because you give it to me
even in a different language a conspiracy of shore.

DEAR KIN (VI)

Hi I know you were there the night I almost died
after taking those drugs the blue ones like Mary
Magdalene's robes in a postcard from a pilgrim
in the south of France blue like all the words
for the quarry-deep and sun-bent the sorrow of passengers
over scripted water but I am not asking
for the blue river I am not asking for water
I am linen-dry content all I am saying is that I know
you were there the night I almost died
there is nothing to remember I was in my body
but there were no sounds in me
if this sounds like madness to you please excuse
the weight of my eyelashes on your fruit
if this sounds like faith to you please excuse
nothing the thing about belief is its face
its orifices of breath pressed against the dark gaping.