

## MOURNING NOTES

*Sahar Muradi*

he is not here  
was here

was just  
Here

was just  
a bloom

of eyes dark

ening

I held some  
once

once

a padar  
jan

I had a one  
say,  
jan-e-padar

Once

some one  
to sum

All

jahan-e-padar  
padar:

jahan

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In my mind, I trace your bony cheek. Two bumps of earlobe.  
God is as close as the soft of the ear.

Photographs erupt.

The long space.

In my eyes.

And she is soft, quaking. Reliving the hospital. The morning.  
Night. Was dark. But she misses the darkness. Even the cold  
cut of your words. You were cold.

I rubbed your feet under the sky blue blanket. Six blankets.

The oval of your mouth, drying. We took turns. The yellow  
sponge. Your teeth in the styrofoam. Cup.

You that what? That once? That long? That should forever?  
You what? You—my. Irrelevant. All.  
I keep coming back. Faithfully. To empty.

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“Why do we blush before death?”  
t’s true—I saw you shy.

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Today, December 3rd, I’m wearing you. Your long shirt and vest: peyran, waskat. The last night we were together, you dressed in the same native clothes. Going home sometime tomorrow. It hung on you, bones talking out of turn.

Today you were born—legally. –Formally. –Symbolically. Not your true calendar. Here is a candle I place on my dining table. Gardenia-scented.

It overtakes the room.

And why can’t the image NOT be the hospital?

And why couldn’t your mouth close?

That she wrapped you with gauze—so much white gauze—and so tightly, forcefully, around your chin. A child again. She said, custom.

A patient's bow. The indignity. Forcing your body for the living.

But was it, just like that? Had you been and then suddenly not? Was that your boat untethered? Let him be a boat within a boat.

And she unlocked your hands.

Your hands were yours, at last, your hands in unison.

Writing unlocked. By accident.

Was it you? Or wasn't it?

The jaw locking.

Who was it who wasn't?

Signs. Empty.

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The orphaned adult. That is the nearest language.

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It is a cold wind at my back. Constant. A kind of draft. Severed again. As if Afghanistan. Dari. The stories. Poetry. As if every stream of news. Every mud brick. Of history (ours).  
Is no longer (mine).

The family trees. The notes. The table now. With a missing leg.

All the scraps. The papers. The recordings. The notes. Your letters. I could not read. Years deciphering. Our numbers beginning with cipher. The oval of your mouth.

The stacks and stacks and unfinished and your voice like a harbor.

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Days with her. Occupying the space together. And differently. As if it's a single space. As if we are singular people.

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Wore your clothes again. To near you. To approximate the shade of your ear. I was almost there. Yes, I was there. In the hollow.

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Tried praying again. Something of consistency. Of beyond-human. (Please.) Of care. Guidance. Of nearing you.

Your face is receding behind the ordinary day.

Your dentured smile from afar. All the stars invisible to our small eyes.

And where are you? Over me? Beside me? In a pattern of light  
on the white wall? Where do you reside? Exactly?

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Any moment. Rises up. A well. A wave. An unfathomable  
plunge.

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Yesterday marching. I would have run to you after. All these  
days. We would have been clicking our tongues, shaking our  
heads at him. You would have compared him to ones there.  
Who? Dostum? Hekmatyar? One of old? Timur Lang's son  
who blinded his own brother?

We would have reviewed your pains. One after the other.

You would have said jan-e-padar.

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The hollow of your cheeks, for instance.

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Hail at the window. Glass chattering. I take my face into the  
crowd. Down Avenue A, 1st, Houston. The thing widening.

No one knows. No one knows exactly.

You. Cut out of.

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The case hardens. But the jewel inside keeps quaking. I heard this morning. Rattling loudly. Tossing from edge to edge. I neared it.

Your face. Hurts. To know from the outside.

From a page.

A glass that keeps the secret of its own shattering.

Weeks. It hardens.

My small orbit snagged on the baby teeth. Of a checklist. Of doing. Of squeezing room out of the room.

So the new month. And the quaking.

Your face appears. The faintness of your voice. You are building a kite. Consumed. In focus. How to repair the hole in the tissue paper.

You paste a piece over another piece. A word and then another. And watch it hold. It holds—until the wind again.