

The Poetry Issue 2023: The Two-Faced Mirror Between Us and other poems



Narayan Sinha, Wounds of Time, Copper. Photo courtesy of Iram Art Gallery



Sanket Mhatre

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Grief Shaped

Dazed
Little strands of white hair rise like reluctant smoke over her scalp
(or past) hiding an unwritten letter of regret
tucked inside a side pocket along with prescriptions
She wobbles out
room after room awaiting report after report
Scratching moments with dry blue nails
from the surface of time
While clocks melt clockwise off walls
Time drips blood like - a symphony of saline
She turns her back to them when bottles of Bevacizumap
run into her veins like children on open esplanades
over relapsed cells frothing and foaming like crystallized dynamite
awaiting a wink from infinity —
Her skin turns darker than most suburban evenings
A forest abandoned by moonlit nights and murmurs of analeptic embers
Our embrace turning tinier after every chemo
to harbor her shrinking frame
I have been preserving a packet of tears
pickled with her soused smile and sepia tinted flashbacks
as a final remedy
while she slumbers, grief shaped
into her hospital bed

The Two-Faced Mirror Between Us

We borrow the texture of our irises —
the muscle of our tissue redrawing outlines of crusty sunsets
Corneas overlapping carved dunes of a blazing afternoon
Pupils pairing the brimming emptiness under our window panes
The clay of our earth seeping under the soil of our red past
The scars of our forehead realigning their structure
Reversing the journey of their serrated roots
Lips bulge and scurry seeking the midpoint of a conjoined shape
So, when we kiss
our lips can port themselves like faint ships —
after braving the tempest or trudging through thick ice
Chins expand —
Engraving wireframes of our laughter
Echoes of our laugh lines appear mirroring
The last known smile -
from a distant future
Age completes the anatomy of our skin
conferring a final touch
of its translucent tracing
Until we turn amorphous
Fooling the two-faced mirror
between us

Threshold

We write on the threshold of somebody else's death
Camouflaged as our own.
It takes a great deal for death to enter our veins
shadow to blend in with a darker hue of our blood
It takes an age of loneliness multiplied by utter despair
of unread messages —
Slow trickling reality dripping straight into our nostrils
Mostly responsible for the loss of smell
kisses dried on the back of our tongue
that tastes like barren white earth where nothing could grow
not even salt
That's when you lose taste too
It takes so much for death to still creep in —
The smoke of burnt letters
painfully painless forgiving
That make up for most of your breathlessness
The falling of your heart rate from 78 to 58 BPM
That's when you leave the body to ether
and still somehow clutch on to it
Only to embrace it in darkness
Like the most delicate blessing
and to feel that you have life left on your fingertips
which glow at night just to reassure you
Until morning sets in
waiting to swallow you like a yellow Curcon pill
into possibilities of departures and arrivals

That's when you take a deep breath (although it does hurt your chest)
To push life through
So that it somehow makes it to the ink
before disintegrating into somebody else's truth.

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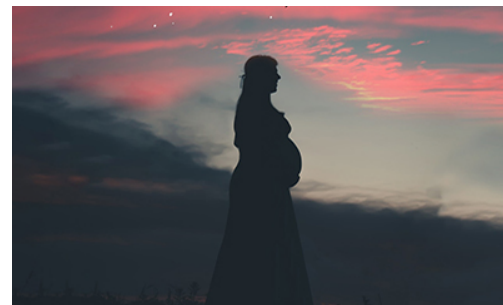
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