

Mahmoud Abu Hashhash

Dream

At the crack of dawn
A bird of some sort pecks at the sleepers
spilling a flood of footsteps onto the streets and sidewalks

In the small hours of the night
I approach my house
taking one last footstep

And everything from the slam of my door
to the peck on my window
is pure
dream

Translated by S. V. Atallah

My Chair

The forest in which my chair once was a tree
May now be inhabited by scared sparrows,
Bored foxes,
Wild rabbits,
Their ears stretched with anxiety

The chair that once was a tree
Is never used

All I have done
To make it feel useful
As it stands next to the closet,
In my short seasons,
Is to hang on it the clothes I take off
Before I throw myself on the bed next to it
Once it's midnight in me

My Vine Tree

The old woman on her daily walk
Up the road to a cave behind the hill
Stares from behind my wall
At the leaves of my vine tree

I awaken from the noise behind the window
To find her under the vine tree

September's moon lit up the grapes
Untouched. Sweetness. Fatigue.

- O gray woman, what are you doing behind my window,
under my vine tree?
- Growing my wine for next December,
if you visit me one evening,
I'll fill you with drink

Off she went,
On her head an urn of wine
My throat a bowl of ashes

Perhaps wine is flowing down her throat from that urn
While my bones are chattering
And my vine tree is leafless
In this January
Chill.

Blood of the First Window.

I went up in flames
But the wall did not tumble
It was long, long enough to circle the city
since the beginning of time

I am a neglected stone

In that wall,
Stared at by people and birds
Filled by wind-blown fire
Burned to vanish
Blazed to void.
The wall never tumbles
But I became
A window for the curious
And a new hole through which
The unseen
Is glimpsed.

Tension

Singing drew me there.
I was dancing
Between the soldiers' mono-eye
And my mother's million eyes

I felt tension.
Creation's surge trains me.

My palms flail like wings in the arch of change.
Between the rifle and my stone
I was neither dead nor alive

As if all the angels
Were lifting up my small body
As if all the women
Became mothers of mine
Calling unto me
To stay, to remain

And I do not know in which sphere to stretch my wings

The One I Love

I love the one who without a reason
Brings solace to me like a stained-glass window.
Her house is my temple.
When I reach out with my guilt's eye, she reaches back
a forgiving hand.
So I caress the skin of my soul with her knee
And like a cat close my eyes on her body's songs.

I love the one whom I seek when I seek no one
Once the sun falls down the darkness of her well
She knits the evening to wear like a new shawl

And urges me to sing
And lifts me high in the air
To plunge into her sin
Whenever the Satan of her temple teases me with an apple

I love the one that creates love on barren ground
Like that of a poem.

Love

Under a barren carob tree
--a moon in the sky--
Seven women make love, spilling manhood upon the passers by

Under an olive tree brimming with oil, near-ablaze
Eleven stars lay buried in earth
Under tombs of marble, or of light

Under her palm tree,
Mary begot
A star glowing in the shepherds' field

Pour your oil in me. I am alight and I enlighten you
A forest spreads in the darkness between two bodies.

An Image

A woman trembles in front of a candle
While the wind brings down a tree.
The window in between,
And my soul, wrapped in all that warmth

She Is Not a Woman And This Is Not a Poem

Because my uncertainty is my only certainty
I wonder if you ever really have been with me.

Because you are overwhelming,
Fatigued you look like a sharp cliff

Because you like cemeteries
I see my image dead in your eyes
and so laugh when you visit me with a smile

Because both of us are strangers
We'll be killed by some stranger highway robber, or
We'll trade stabs and fall down, embracing
Each other's dagger in each other's heart.

Because you are the wave which never arrives,
Rises and falls
Approaches and departs
Calms and rages
But never arrives
You spin my head

You are a desert in which standing is like traveling,
Every other thing
Like the same.

And because you are a vast desert
The clouds pass over you, meaning nothing,
Greeting pointlessly
The sand rain and the thirst which you gain.

What is between us is enough to make me love you,
Yet what is within you will make me your enemy,
Oh Desdemona!

The cliff is deep; beware of leaping into me

Which roses do you want
Those that don't remind me of a perfume I once loved?
Which land do you love
The one that doesn't remind me of a grave whose dweller I once
knew?

At the alpha of love metaphor wins over reality
The waiting over the meeting
At the omega we fall apart

Stay another hour, let me prolong the waiting at your port by one hour
more!

At your last station I waited for no one,
But since I yearned for the waiting
You became to me
The painful labyrinth of lust.

Play

Let's stop trying to love and to play in sand
Sometimes as two rival children, other times as lovers

How many times shall we
Build a bridge to celebrate its destruction
And climb our climax
Only to roll down
Sisyphus' rock, at the end, breaking into two

Enough now, let us stop
Love, harmful jealousy,
Walking while sleeping,
And today's surprise at the laughter of yesterday.

Let's pave a way that leads to neither hell or heaven

Enough and let us go on:
You
bitter and sweet into someone else's night
I
towards the freedom to be jailed in someone else's heart,
a slave and a free man.

Translated by Kifah Fanni

The Wind

Gods of the winds, still the wind
so I can now retrieve the lanterns' lights for the passers by

The wind can never descend down the well
So it wails like a dog for a bone in its unfathomed depth

The wind blows out our pleasure of this place
It tumbles our souls in the streets' dust
and abandons us, darkened, in its home.

The wind is standing at the door
I cannot stand the beckon of her hands
and her fierce urge to break in

The wind is a tremendous Narcissus

The wind dwells in the mud of my lonely soul
In front of my cold fireplace
It barks after cats
The gaming table flipped on its face

And the chairs deserted
Occupied by no one

The wind is a broom
Sweeping passers by, the dusts of streets and sidewalks, the soldiers'
helmets, posters, festive decorations, the clouds of the moon
And, too, the homeless, those without a coat or a wall

The wind is the desire to invade silence
A forcefield's celebration of the first voice cracked into being
and of the first death

- Oh wind, move ahead of me
- I drive my clouds and my slaves to any land I wish
- I will follow your spirit wherever it goes,
In your wake
no land is my land,
and no country is my home.

Dreams Steps

Who counts his steps home
To know what remains of kin or strangers?

Who follows the road's game of ebb and flow
To know what remains of sidewalks and shades?

Who retrieves his dream-steps from their streets
To start from the road of sleep to another dream

Who counts his misspent walks
To know where the road will lead him
Within God's domain

Who counts his steps towards anything?

Translated by Khaled Mattawa