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Everything is easier when you're home

The fall of a dwindling world doesn't bother much perhaps when one is lying on his bed, hiding under favourite quilt
Or maybe it does?
I know I am home when I recognize the gentle tap of my mother's feet, bringing me a bowl of mangoes
Or how my father always switches off the light every time I fall asleep
Perhaps when one talks about home, he means being seen?

Everything is easier when you're home
Like the last time when you were diagnosed with depression
Your mother cried for days, or your father denied to look at you without feeling guilt for having raised a child who didn't know that survival sometimes meant wanting to die
On most days it was more of a sign than symptom
But sometimes it was a mere escape plan from a body that couldn't stop itself from shrinking slowly

Everything is easier when you're home
The taste of pudina chutney or the flavoured scent of home baked apple pie
Or the old songs that mother hums while cooking
The old radio sitting as still as time
Or the first television that your father bought
Everything has the same story
Of being held and being forgotten
The pale cracked walls are witness to this
Of survival and saving each other
Isn't home more about pulling each other from shallow water?

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The days when you cried yourself to sleep
Or how you witnessed your father's slow decline
Because you couldn't get out of bed or comb your hair for days
How you kept checking if your father was breathing when asleep
For you knew if anything happened, the blood would be on your hands
Is home a place where we gradually drown?

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The echoes of your father's stifled laughter on watching Punjabi movies
Or the smile on your mother's face as she discovers how hope is usually the person sitting next to you, smiling
I wonder if hope is a little crackle of fire, if hope consumes everything once we believe it is there
Everything is easier when you're home
The last days of your grandfather mumbling his son's name
Or the last phone call telling he had passed
Home is seeing your father carrying the weight of his father's death, without tears
Home is waking up after crashing into a truck because he couldn't see the shrinking distance with his lost, grieving eyes.
As much as it is the first greeting while being held by your father for the first time
It is often the last goodbye too

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Waking up to the first sunrise because you promised your mother to go on morning walks, get better or not
think about dying when seeing a speeding car
Home is your father waking up with you with a smile on his face because he believes things will get better when
you decide to take charge of your life
It is a mother's prayer despite knowing that God, perhaps is a Schrodinger' cat, it can exist as long as one
decides to look for it
Perhaps God is mostly a cat scared of being forgotten for it is the greatest misery, remembrance perhaps is a
love language too,
Maa loves God, Maa loves me
Sometimes I am what she looks in a portrait of God, sometimes she wishes she could forget the love she has for
me, debilitating love, maddening love, love without boundaries, love despite boundaries
Home is abandoning the morning walks because you no longer can drag your feet as you wobble under the
weight of your life

Everything is easier when you're home
The last sunrise you will witness through its windows
The last glass of water you will demand
The last time moving your eyes around

Seeing your photograph hung on the wall besides your parents'
The last time wishing if you could have treated them better
The last regret
Home is hearing that your children forgive you
Home is knowing that sometimes forgiveness is only a closure, not atonement
Home is accepting it regardless
The last song you sing as people you have loved, wronged surround you with tear in their eyes,
Home is uttering the first words as your eyes slowly droop,
Home is exhaling the last breath that you carry along as a sigh,
The last time remembering what it looked like, to be recklessly alive, to be so carefree it hovered around the
borders of selfishness, to be so selfless, it sometimes meant submission
Everything is easier when you're home
Holding on
Letting go
But mostly holding on while letting go

Bella Hadid and I have nothing in common

Google still hasn't answered my question
About who is the most beautiful girl in the world
Perhaps there are too many answers
And not a single algorithm to filter out one
I keep scrolling through the suggestions until I reach a page that says, "Bella Hadid has the most perfect face according to science"
I look at the analysis that says something about golden ratio and Fibonacci series
Immediately I take my mother's pocket mirror
And start counting how many fingers cover my forehead
Four, it appears
It talks about the distance between the eyes
And I realize my myopic eyes are too arrogant to admit they are lonely
Like lovers who know about their dying love but choose not to leave each other
My spectacle is a shade of red and black
Something to add color to my face
And my lips are big enough to be almost beautiful
I compare my nose with Bella's petite nose
And measure it between the thumb and index finger
Too wide, it occurs
I rush to my sister and ask her to do the same
(Insecurities are contagious that way)
And we compare the width of our nose
My eyebrows aren't the perfect shade of black, too patchy, says the girl in the parlor
I have the most ordinary eye color
(Turns out none of my ancestors were different)
But when I stand in light, as sunrays, entering through the western window of my room, fall slantly on my face, I can see the dimmer shade of brown, almost making it grey, giving my eyes a fake tint
Bella's eyes are green I suppose
Her waist too thin, unlike mine
But if I stand with my leg bent slightly
I almost look curvaceous
Is there a good metaphor for a woman's body besides moon for her face or ocean for her eyes?
I keep measuring and scaling my face
Until I see it's already an hour doing the same
The analysis finally reaches its end, stating the mathematics of beauty
I go to the front mirror in my room
Big enough to reflect my entire body

And keep calculating what's missing in my body
Until I try to smile and see a dimple forming in my right cheek
Bella doesn't have a dimple, I say to myself amusingly
(A placebo to compensate the simplicity; or lack of it thereafter)
So, I keep smiling throughout the day
At strangers, my mother, while posing for a quick photograph
Constantly reminding myself how my dimple is perhaps a flaw in scientific theory
How I am different in most ordinary ways
I smile and smile until the day ends
And look at different photographs I have clicked of myself by then.
Google photos then pops up with a notification that says, "you might want to check these shots of sunsets"
And I see my smiling face there, blooming, drooping, spreading like last few rays of sun; a beautiful
transcendence of a movement so gradual, yet so timed, it appears almost automatic

Women

I live under the shadows of my birthgivers
Shadow formed by my mother's infinite sacrifices and my father's intolerance for his own emotions
He believes that men should never curl themselves into a tiny speck of a dot, lay on bed and cry on their lover's chest
Yet every single day I see him negotiating with the beliefs that are not his own
But given to him as souvenirs from his father who fell in love twice, under the same house where his two beloved lived, as women should, without a voice, and stifled anger boiling like a hot spring in a cold valley.
I dare not challenge my father's silence
For everything which is not a rebellion, is a fight without victory
Maa has told me times and again how women should suppress their discontent as heavy sighs and sleepless nights
This is not to say my father is a bad man
(I cannot write without feeling the weight of his love, you see guilt sometimes is an apology)
My father has shaped me into a woman who carries her silence with her, and firmly seeks to be heard without saying a word.
In our home, what's not said lingers in air like ghost of a child dying in a war, who believes God grants his every wish, so he stands in front of the gun and takes the bullet in the hope of being rewarded for being a good kid
In our world, we don't accept apologies for the mistakes of our parents, but simply forget who we are.
Forgetfulness saves especially when one is drowning, and we are the kids of adults who couldn't row the boats to the shore, so they told how water's was the only surface that held bodies.
I am writhing with this foreboding sorrow
Asking my mother if time really heals wounds or does one become complacent?
I have seen my grandmother shaping her seven daughters into women who should and must know that men hide their hearts, either in noisy anger or sullen silence
So they must listen to the words that lie at the tip of their tongues.
My mother has spent years trying to hear what my father didn't have the courage to say
My aunts have walked the same path, standing under the same tree which bears the same fruit they have tasted over and over again.
And now when I have grown into an adult, I know that love doesn't compensate for the space left behind by the absent conversations.
Our house is an alias for conformity
I wake up to the same old beats of my heart trying to make sense of this need to be free
From the wounds my parents passed on unknowingly,
I am trying to forgive my mind for forgetting that my body isn't just a space where goodness of character blooms,
That womanhood doesn't not mean blind acceptance
That even though I have seen women of my life trying and trying,

I should remember how sometimes too much forgiveness isn't love

But a reflex, of generations of women doing the same,

Because they weren't told anything better than this.

I forgive my father for not knowing the difference between hurt and anger, or how love can become a saviour only if one dares to look beyond the confined windows of truth they were taught by their fathers and grandfathers.

I forgive myself for believing that sacrifice is the only love language, or strength is just a woman carrying grief like foetus, nurturing it as it becomes parasitic,

I forgive myself for not knowing that my grandmother didn't deserve all of this hurt, for her patience wasn't sheer acceptance but scream that I still hear the echoes of.

Yellow

Yellow gaze of the setting sun
Reminds me of the days
When the flowers wouldn't droop at the sight of me
I wonder if happiness is all glammed up
In the little corner of my heart
Waiting for the train to arrive
And take her farther from this lonely world
Glimmering sunflowers
And setting sun
Teal blue sky
And violet eyes
Is it too much to ask for beauty?
I wonder if things when left alone
Come back together like a lost cat to its home
It's still feral
This need to be happy
But tell me a sober way
Where I don't run away
From striking realities
Steel countenance of a monotonous life
I am afraid if I wait long enough
I might fade into nothingness
Empty cans and unread books
Vacant roads leading nowhere
Is it enough if dreams remain distant
Ghost of memories haunting at dusk
And me wondering things if touched become real
Everything sleeps to the lullaby of silent sky
The flowers
The birds
The pages of a half read book
And the girl who wonders about her place in this sinful world
Everything eventually comes to an end
The colourful skies
The lonely birdling
The pigmented dreams
The rebellious blue moon

And me, entranced and sad
Like the little star falling and fulfilling wishes