



hive

IMRAN BOE KHAN

to my wife, Victoria

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BODY SQUATTERS CAUGHT DANCING

The knot in my lungs will scamper and fly,
depart through this messy grove of bones.

It will cloy to the loneliness that feeds my skin,
and walk through my wounds with no thought of staying.

My grandma said that's how you get old--
things come to stay. She had a tumor

no one found, squatting in her throat. She said
something doesn't have to be real to kill you.

Later she was breathing laser light, coughing up her self;
no healing of her scattered bits of matter.

Decay was the wilderness, body the spring.
I sensed she was putting off telling me

something which might have been important,
like how the vastness that would come between us

would shrink to the size of a bee
and spread its hive throughout my lungs.

ANNUNCIATION

The attic claims the bridal dress for food, that perfect slant of light. As white darkens, an abandoned thing learns to keep to itself, a shrine for feelings its former owner can no longer pronounce. In an outgrown clothes pile, a stray pelargonium branch flowers through the dust of a single-use kimono, its green beak peering through the loft's cracks like a god hunting the anxious dead for a sinner. We fashioned this rot, love on a leash we're walking, and when its soul inherits the Earth, no one will know who spared it, no one will know the ones who died apologizing for the fact it was ever here.

A DOT IN THE SKY

I fell asleep thrumming in the power grid,
swallowing an axis no one could cross.

Now I exhale light. Nature and boundary have collapsed
on an underside of tongue. Broken teeth envelop

the flushed glow. Have you ever seen the solstice
do its work, stained yellow meat and bright liquid,

the spectacle festival, tiny hands cupping the flame?
Trickery has always been the vice which rules me

hardest. I have a strong urge to radiate visions impossibly
impure, to empty intention from a stranger's eye socket.

I court renewal, worlds made and unmade.
Not everyone believes in devotion;

even light pulls back.

I want from life every secret box of scat-black karma,

the stunned night. I want absence to get attention.

I wish to be all that the world could want.

WHO OWNS THIS ...

... utility coat of malice? Your son picks
burnt metal off the driveway, brined in waves
of grief. He crosses biblical at the four points,
punctures your existence.

His anger is non-specific and yet, a centerpiece.
He wants to break something expensive—
your television, your cocktail cabinet, your reputation,
the strings holding them together.

But he knows that's the wrong thing to want.
He's waiting for you to come down the stairs,
to tell him you've found the pigeon
matted at the bottom of his closet,

for his brother to pinch revelations
into his innermost sanctums,

for a cop to plunge him wrist-deep in handcuffs
and drag him across your lawn as he thrashes his depths

and fumbles the metal he meant for your portrait—
a sign he'd come for his final Eucharist,
that he'd worn his old man's shoulders,
that the fear was real, the threat.

MY FATHER EXHALED LIKE A FIREFLY

We watched his glow bruise the night,
poke through the bars of its skin,

make it scream until it souled,
until it knew the difference between air

and the wings that live inside it.
He told me forever's a gesture that has been lost;

life sparks in spite of itself,
unburdened by the cruelty of limbs.

He had so studied the world,
but had never learned how to disappear.

Stripped of a sense of occasion,
he milled around in the trash,

dangled from the drop doors like
a bouquet of snapdragons

as he breathed to break the world apart,
saying: 'things aren't meant to last forever'

til he was ready for the next thing,
what we couldn't know.

He dealt himself out as to a gambler,
held his body like a runaway train.

Now we trace the past the way light does.
Whatever he touched has nowhere else to go.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imran Boe Khan is a winner of the Thomas Hardy Award and past nominee for the Best of the Net Award. His academic and creative writing has been published by Routledge, *The Rumpus*, *Juked*, *Cosmonauts Avenue* and other venues.



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