

Water 5 ()urn

/

Lal jalsa

जल

जल

After

/

Affects

I am now here

distraught

You are not

engulfed

here

there is an island

a float

but there is no bridge to let me tell you

silenced

here is an ocean

flattened

you call it mine and it has

sunken

Look this is an ocean can't you taste the

sting

Of a salty inhale exhale – look I

swallowed

some sea and proclaimed it

entombed

and in its concaveness I heard you

ring

it sounds just like a marrow wave

roar

do you think sand will taste as wet as this

slipped

eel of electric proportions I call -

forgetting

?

there

the eels leave home to give their babies

a better life

the eels leave what they know to be good

to give

a better life

even eels

need

a

life without

the lingering taste of

salt

let me sink with brine

it is much better

the way

I was taught to swim-
by forgetting

how to



Not the loudest noise

Water
shaped
like a
hot pink
rusting
metal
flask

water shaped like
a porcelain cream cup with a
chipped lemon glaze and
cracks around the rim leading
to a hand painted tangerine sitting
atop a handkerchief

shaped the
water like mouth
that can't accept what it has lost
from the grooves of
its gums to the
roof of its shelter there is no
word lodged inside it that can talk
of its emptiness
more than
its
emptiness

water
body of shaped
to the like
onto a
pouring pore
bottom toasting
the bubbling
from

water shaped
like a hole
that
can
not
stop
leak
-ing

Water shaped like.
the scent of
burnt milk
foaming like a
curtain
against
a
window
pane

water change
shaped for
like ask
my I
palm when

water
shaped like
the underside
of a wooden
structure so light
it
is buoyant even when its belly
holds
bodies
like
question marked
anchors

water
shaped like a ribcage

made convex with skin that is

pink and blue and striped and dotted and

asks
to
be
held
by
the
hook

water

shaped

like

a

body

that is

less

a body

body

but more

a

body

that is

a

border

shaping

the

bodies

around

it

bleeding

like e kajal

shaped y that

water e traces the

my of window pane

I won't / tell them /

a b/order/ine

is a /cross /

burning in the frame of my man/ic

/ pause /

nausea builds it/self up/to

The he/art of my tongue so slit/her

In its two/dimensionality

So call it a sea /

Sick / ness

help / me be/fore

I am hurting/

But I am/ Not

the one/ thing I wanted/

Me/ to be/

Or/ I just learnt that

my

S

E

L

(F)

V E S are growing in a / on my stomach/

I s/have them and as they pool in the teeth of the d/rain / I

Circle it/ and wrap the remn/ants in a news/paper

I re/membered I want/ed to say that I can/t find me on/

the constellation of place/ magnets on the f/ridge

because all this/ being /

here is making me go / now/here right/

Now/ so if you want

I'll w/ash the water off / the lip / of the float but/ look

there is only the smell of / sinking her/e look/
It is just me/ and / everyone I once held
on/ to
say that would be/ a lie/

be/cause I held them/ and now my throat is swollen/

With the guilt/ I slipped/ in/to on the rocking c/hair
So I keep s/waying/ and my h/air finds a b/lad/e and /
I / can't / tell/ you/ really / how much I brush into the grooves
of my molars that still wish to / cave in / and become
a water/ bod/ied with the salt of your fore/
head
it's / ok / okay / really/
the spear/ mint tooth/
paste was a welcome/ assault to the senses un/till
it was the only thing / strong
/enough/to erase the leftovers of a violent sp/ring ink b/lot
break/in
and I remember/ my eye/lashes shed when I t/old/ you in
anti/cipation and I re/member/ you for/got how to/ b/link
and the moon held an anchor in its smile and I /
felt un/ moored
be/cause you are just what I /
be/cause you were just I /
be/cause you just/ are
/cause you were
the oyster I am/ still
cradling in the well / of roofs right/
at/ the / foot/
of what is still buoyant /
of what is/ still / a shrine for your un/ belonging
the heel of my words are / seeking you/ but you are a/foot
and I navigate/ back through you/ with my mast

my

/
tongue

Wish Wash

The only way you learn that there is a secret embankment under the soul of your sole
Is when the floor of your tongue splices it diagonally and you see the spillings of a crab that
tell you quite rudely- *even though you think this is home - you do not belong here.*

Rude Crab.

Rude Crab says you can't be here *mate*.

Rude Crab sings *your land is my land*

and this land is *their* land and

it was never *ours* because we never gave it a name they could pronounce.

You've got to own it in the folds of your tongue to prove you belong to it.

Did you not know that?

Rude Crab says they will let you through if you can say

She sells seashells on the seashore

So say,

sombre and sullen and sorrowful for sowing seeds of scathing sacrifice,

She shells

See shells

Sea sells she cells

Stop – Rude Crab doesn't like *their* words being appropriated

Sorry.

She sells

Seashells

on *our*

Sea sure

sells shells off

the shore

she sea see si

Rude Crab is scared their wincing pincers

Can't stroll into the sunken sonorous smiles of sailing sleeves

and *un*-make them *un*-citizens

It is *un*-city like to be sailing off the seashore

On the seashore

She should sell

See she should shell out

On the seashore

Everything sounds like it is not meant to be held by words in the tide of your tongue

So how can you prove you belong?

Burnt Sugar Also Has A Name

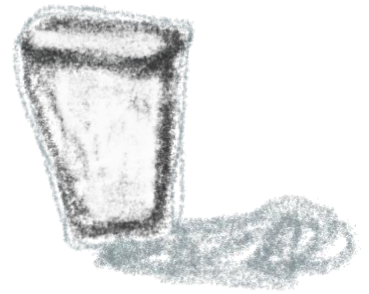
we are full
they said
we are full glasses
filled with liquid
so white it
colonises the light
around it
full fully to the brim
fulfilling every ounce of
filling up
we are full
they said

they were a land
with peoples
that belonged
to here there and nowhere
but they were full with them
selves
they were full because
they held a glass
full with milk
they said
we are full

but We were
people far from
the land We
belonged to
because it did
not belong to us
any more than
it did to
those that called us theirs

We were far
from
land that our light
could belong to
even in passing
we wanted to
stop passing

our anchors
were hungry
our bellies were left
behind in the land
of red pomegranates
the land of red



seeds
fruiting red rivers
of blood as
red as pomegranates
here it is lighter

We were on
ships shaped like
the horizon that carried
us here
far from red
far from blood that
tasted like seeds
we grew back home
back
home

we can drown
We said
do not mistake
our buoyant vessel for
our bodies
we can dissolve
and drown amongst
you
just watch

their full glasses
of full liquid
fully
brimming
with
full milk
We held them

brought a small spoon
to its lip
whose belly was
full of sugar.
once concave now
vexed with
sweet sands
of saccharine
Now they will tell you the
milk had to(oth) ache
but look it is not crying any more

We are now
They are now *full*

khatta-meetha Or one by two mother tongues And little Indian English

namakh haram

you said

how ungrateful

We are

you swallow our salt and tell us to pay bill

We are good at digesting everything but

that

which lack in

taste

namakh haram

I can't cook meals from this side of border

you have all the salt

on your side

and here look, now the ocean

has imposter syndrome

tell me what I should tell her

she asks *who stole myself from me?*

tell me what should I tell (e)arth

who robbed her of her teeth?

namakh haram

take my blood

give me salt

it's just that

my tongue can't breathe

you are sitting on my lap

but you tax me for sitting

here

even my legs are folded they don't know how to eat

without tongue clicks after every swallow

mmm click

no gulp

namakh

march here

June there

April may tell you it is summer

But it only springs with kacha mango

Dipped in spicy salt

Aye give it to me-

You pinched it from under my foot

Aye my foot!

you took that from me and now to take it back again

You are calling it import



Export this extorting
We are lacking
Only of everything you
took
from my house
Sorry
This is your house because you came and started living here
This is my home because I
came and drowned and the full milk was full only
but the full place got fully sweeter

You? you only want to bleed pockets dry of all
the Gandhis
and you hold them in the palm of your hand and you
say they march to you for us?
Don't strip my air from that which was corroding my water pipe
I will charge

fully telling you
this is not solid thing you did
it is true I only like salt when it tastes like sugar but
does that mean
I donnot want to lick the air with the tongues of my hair
no
Because it has the grains of what you took to scrub your hands clean

my foot-
haram
nah

this poyem
is not for you
it is for
me when I was baby
when I was born where the
air tasted like
mirchi
and
my tongue knew only its mother
but you were there before
so every
one
told
me
that only
if I knew you better

you would read that I had to say to you something
I wanted to say – *please eat nicely*
It is (un)seasoned, special for you



i looked inside the well and i saw the tortoise and i saw myself looking in but i didn't see you

you are in the arm chair by the window in the apartment that faces the sea and caresses rocks

you are in the river closest to your house where we paid a man to empty what was left of you

you are in the hug I left in the salt air

there has to be salt in the air and there you are

you are in the paint that needs more water than paint because that is the only paint you liked

you are in the sketches you made of houses and boats parked where boats were meant to be

you are in every word you spelt with every letter you got wrong

you are there where i sit when i remember that once we had a photo clicked there - right there

you are the rain I catch with the tip of my tongue when I curl it out like an upturned umbrella

you are in the sweat between the white kurta and my skin when I am standing next to the fire

when I am at home because I cannot be where you are to wave at you one last time

you are next to me because wherever I go there is always a body
of water

wherever I go
there will always be a tide shaped presence

and I remember

all you yous crossed oceans just so I could cross two and write my way back to

write my way to

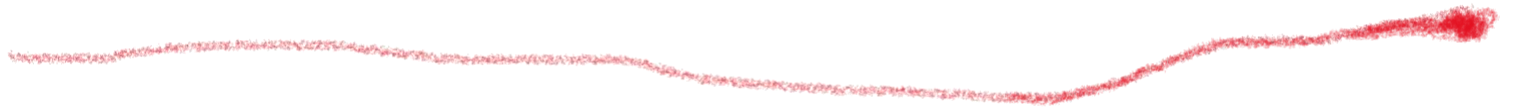
write to a

shoreline

that smiles

just

like



by **A**arushi **Z**arhoshtimanesh