

How To Not Drown In A Poem Full Of Seas

by Sunday T. Saheed



"Depth of Sorrows" by Rabail

in a village, all a woman carries on her soles are foot-prints of water — & yet, every man that ratifies her says she holds them enough, as if her legs are oceans her sons drowned in. Someone somewhere gazes at a sarcophagus of quicksand, a sky full of songbirds: forgive me to say, of what good is a face thrown to the sky like a net of fish if it falls back onto our faces like rain-rods; to put a hole into the vanished songs on our lips? Once, a bird will croon with granulated sugar, & when it chews too much sweetness, it dissolves, shape-shifts into an egret pecking on anything that is a synonym to soil. How does a man renounce his masculinity, & sink more into a chasm of weakness: like a pneumonic cavity, in a pneumonic cavity of refracted crimsoning. a boy with an engraving of his country's name asks me to teach him language, how to let every pain he carries be blinked into a basket of large holes; so: *fa inna maha l usri yusrah* becomes a verse of pain that needs an edit// into a version without the sufferings first: *fa inna maha l yusri yusrah* — balanced. I've always known what it means to be part of a bead joined by hard hands; it means your fate is cemented on a streak of hard things// drowned things. Waking up with the day as chunks on our eyes isn't modern, same way my father tears down his nose to empty his snuff-box into; as if his tongues are full of trenches yelling to be refilled. Tomorrow, I'm waking the night — by lifting sand above my head, lowering my belly into the knees of a monsoon sunset, scrubbing my soiled body with more soil. & like a dream deferred, say: *Lord, lick me clean of this.*