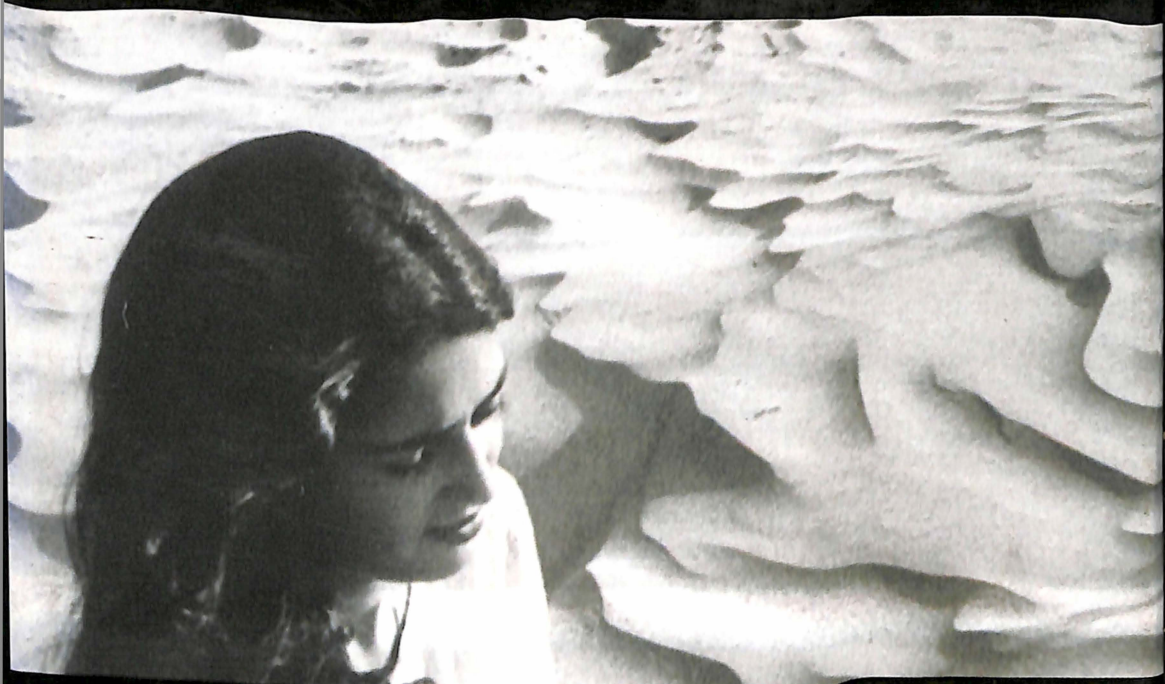


WHISPERS OF THE DESERT



FATIMA BHUTTO

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Oxford



WHISPERS OF THE DESERT



W H I S P E R S O F
T H E D E S E R T

F A T I M A B H U T T O

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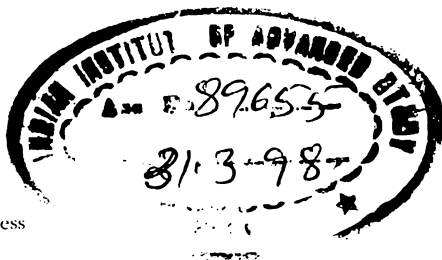
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*To my darling Papa,
with all the love in
the world...
this is our story.*

I would like to thank Tehmina Durrani, Sairah Irshad Khan, Ameenah Saiyid, Salman Kureshi, Tannaz Minwalla, Mubashir Hasan, Tyaba Habib, Anthony Harvar and Steve Takacs for their invaluable help and support. I would also like to give Salima Agha a very special thank you for working oh so silently behind the scenes.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Now for Mummy...you are too cool, none of this would've been possible without all your help and encouragement. You are the strongest woman I know—keep fighting!

Little Zulfi...keep writing poetry and soon we'll see your work in print!

Joonam, I love you very much and wish you were here with us now, the house is incredibly lonely without you.

As he waved to the crowd milling ahead of him, I saw a glimmer of hope in their eyes, and dreams and aspirations in his. These were the dreams he nurtured for the people of Pakistan. That was my father—Mir Murtaza Bhutto.

It was he who encouraged me to write, he who inspired me. The support he gave was overwhelming, the love was even greater.

I always thought how someone with so much on their mind could be so carefree and full of life. How did he escape, I wondered? But as I watched him I began to understand: just as poetry was my escape, concern for the people was his.

Whenever I wrote, I wrote about feelings I could not recognize—about losing someone dear to me, about how my life would change afterwards. I now know those were premonitions. My poems were my deepest and darkest fears—the terror of losing my father, who, from the moment I was born, was the love of my life.

A · N · O · T · E

From the beginning—four years ago—until now, I continue to write about him, hoping he can hear me and know what I'm feeling.

Papa gave me a world quite unique; my life was unlike any other child's. My childhood games were quizzes on politics and real life hide-and-seek. At the tender age of three, I would sit and discuss the Palestinians plight with my father and he would tell me to pray for them because they were a people suffering great injustice in their homeland, just as the Pakistanis back home were.

And the history of the subcontinent was never an

academic subject: so much of recent history was entwined with that of my family. I never needed books to help me with school assignments; my father had a wealth of knowledge and study was conducted on his knees—we discussed everything under the sun.

I guess I grew up early because he never treated me like a child; I was his equal. My relationship with my father was unlike any father/daughter relationship. We had a bond so strong, it was as if we were one heart, one soul, one mind. He taught me to be strong and never to let anything defeat me, to rise above my problems with my head held up high.

He taught me strength, courage, and determination—not with just words—but through his actions. I admired his bravery for I had never met anyone so brave, anyone who could stare death straight in the eye without flinching and actually intimidate it.

But the most important thing he taught me was to never turn my back on the people of this country, to treat the poor with love and respect...he taught me to die fighting for my dreams, just like he did.

I long for just one last meeting with him, I would give anything for just one last glimpse of his eyes, to rest my head one last time on his shoulder, one second to say goodbye.

Only the blackest of hearts could have thought of murdering my Papa. If the killer had a soul and had he looked into my father's eyes and seen the dreams they held, he would've put down his gun and walked away.

This book is for my father, my teacher, my mentor, and my best friend...I know he's watching, and undoubtedly with a smile.

Fatima Bhutto
18 June 1997

*You may do unto me
whatever you wish,
but you shall not be able to touch my truth.
You may shed my blood
and burn my body,
but you cannot hurt or kill my spirit.
You may tie my hands with chains
and my feet with shackles
and put me in a dark prison,
but you cannot enslave my thinking,
for it is as free
as the breeze in the spacious sky.*

'A Poet's Voice'
Khalil Gibran



These are poems of extraordinary sensitivity and natural honesty. By virtue of simplicity of expression they have intense appeal for the reader. The lines gently wind themselves around the heart—which is

P R E F A C E

where they belong. At once they have the quality of a Haiku

Small
dark
empty
come find me
eerie
damp
depressing
here I am

closed
narrow
locked
away from you

and the lyricism of songwriters who are indeed the poets
of our time—Bob Dylan and Sting

I stroll along the swaying fields
of Tuscany,
picking daisies as I walk.
For there is no one
to hold my hand.
I pluck grapes from the vines
this cold
summer morning.
But who can I offer them to?
By a gleaming pond,
I bathe in the sunlight.
But I keep my towel beside me.
Since I no longer have you,
my warm July summer
has turned
cold.

There is a quality of such integrity in these poems that too much analysis seems violative. The skeptical mind wonders how these lines could have been written by someone so young? Perhaps they could have been written only by one so young. It takes an uncluttered mind to create such clear images.

John Keats (1795-1821) wrote his best poems between the age of eighteen and twenty-five. At twenty-six he died of consumption. His friend and fellow-poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote that it was the savage mauling of his poem



'Endymion' in the *Quarterly Review*, published from London, which was responsible for his mortal disease.

This may only have been partly true but serves as a reminder of two facts. First, that good and lasting poetry is not necessarily a function of how many years one has lived, and second, that critics so arrogate themselves the role of arbiters of public taste and pronounce judgement which may not stand the test of time.

Fatima was born in the early eighties. In those days her revolutionary father Mir Murtaza Bhutto, living in Kabul, was busy recruiting and training a political cadre to liberate Pakistan from dictatorship.

His host country, Afghanistan, was torn by such savage destruction as only a civil war can bring.

From Afghanistan the two brothers, Murtaza and Shahnawaz, who married two sisters, moved to France. It was there that Shahnawaz Bhutto was found dead in his Cannes apartment. The police charged his wife, Fatima's aunt, for not coming in aid of a man in distress.

Danger stalked Murtaza. Fatima and Murtaza left France in a hurry, this time for Syria. After nine years of exile in Syria, Murtaza arrived in Pakistan in 1993. He was arrested but cleared by the courts in 1994. And on 20 September 1996 he was brutally assassinated outside his Clifton residence.

Some of the poems are pure poetry. One cannot talk about them any more than one can talk about an enchanting sunset or a bewitching bed of flowers you dare not take your eyes away from:

You are
a solitary
star
in a dark,
empty sky.
You

light up the evening
and never
do you
die.
You are a dazzling
sapphire
that shines
only
in my eyes.
For you are
my star
and I
am but your sky.

Before writing this Preface, I wanted to talk to Fatima about her poetry. I got only a few moments in which she told me that when the urge to write arises, she grabs any piece of paper and starts scribbling. She does not revise what she has written but on occasion may change the order of the verses.

Later I wrote to her requesting

If you could give a more detailed account of the 'urge' that arises in you and how you cope with it...if you can try to recall your experiences, that would help. If you cannot, that would also help. The great Urdu poet Ghalib writes:

*Atay bein ghaib say yeh mazamein kbayal main
Ghalib! Sarir-e-khama nauva-i-sarosh hai.*

[O' Ghalib, the truth you dwell upon through bringing up various topics in your poetry are really a gift from the unknown. The sound of your scribbling is the voice of an angel being transmitted to you].

I was delighted to receive Fatima's reply, which I quote in full:



Dear Dr Mubashir,

I'm sorry it took so long for me to answer you, but the message was sent to my mother's computer, so it took a while for her to fish it out for me. I could never write poetry when I was happy, when I am sad or angry it just comes to me naturally.

For instance, if I'm with a lot of people and having fun, I can't write poetry unless something inspires me to. I don't write surrounded by people. I might see two people interacting and be able to write as if it were their feelings, not mine. Or I could hear a song that might make me start thinking or change my mood and I'll start writing.

The way I write varies...usually out of nowhere a line will come to my mind and I'll grab a piece of paper and start writing...in a way, I do feel that something is pulling me to write, it could very well be an angel whispering in my ear.

I write in a stream of consciousness. I don't know what I'm writing and how it comes to me, but words just roll off my tongue and I don't stop until I feel it's right...until what needs to be said is said.

Earlier on when I started writing poetry, I wrote about things so intensely—like loss—and I didn't know where the feeling was coming from. At that time I experienced no great loss, but in my poems it was as if I had lived a life of loss.

That's why I feel sometimes...someone was pushing me to write. Some poems are like premonitions, an angel could very well have been predicting the future to me...but I never saw a face. When I wrote about a girl who lost someone she loved dearly I never saw a face...I didn't know who I was writing about.

Now it's clear to me that 90 per cent of my poems are about me and my father...maybe it was he and not an angel who was driving me to write.

I hope I've helped you understand what was unclear...if there's anything else you would like me to explain to you, I would be happy to do so.

Best Regards,

Fati

Fatima is on authentic ground. In his Clark lectures at Cambridge in 1946, Professor C. Day Lewis discussing the poetic imagination, or what we would call in case of Urdu—the *amad*—says, 'For every new poem is, as Mr Elliot has said, a new start; and at its best it is but a tolerable substitution for the poem no one is great enough to write.'

He goes on to quote Goethe, 'I received within myself impressions—impressions of a hundred sorts, lively, lovely and many-hued as an alert imaginative energy presented them.' He also quotes the great Schiller, 'A certain musical mood precedes and only after this does the poetical idea follow with me.' Finally, Lewis quotes W.B. Yeats (b. 1865) speaking of the trance-like state in which 'images pass rapidly before you' and said it is necessary

to suspend will and intellect to bring up from the subconscious something you already possess a fragment of. That concentrated attention which watches over the birth of a poem from the moment when the first birth pang is felt—a concentration will-less indeed, yet intense, and by its very passivity aiding the natural process, which brings the whole poem into light.

These are poems written from the heart—a heart that has known suffering, intense suffering, but has not let it cast a perpetual cloud of gloom. Suffering is expressed in a string of questions, which carry within themselves their own answer.

I cannot believe
you're here with me.
I've counted the seconds
for this moment to come.

But now
that you're finally here,
tell me
when will
you disappear?

The person seems continually to be gaining strength.
The very gentleness of the narrative soothes even as it
saddens. It is a rare combination.

Some of the poems are mature political commentary on
exercise of power:

The city erupts, dissolves.
The city collapses.
But, at the top,
they rejoice.
They are in power.

For them 'nothing is wrong. I have power' and 'nothing
will go wrong. I am in power'.

Then there are the other kind of political leaders—

He looks on
with caring eyes
sees people from within
ignores exteriors
welcomes them in shares their pain
listens
understands
not like others he feels
not judges
could one this strong
you wonder
have feelings this deep?

Yes yes indeed for compassion
is born only
by those strong within

Fatima's collection should be read for many reasons not
the least of which is that it is an expression of honesty in
an increasingly artificial world in which the highest
regarded texts are the ones that are the most obscure.

Mubashir Hasan
15 June 1997



The poems in this volume have been written over the last three years by someone who is now only fifteen years old. They are poems written by a child. But their themes—loss, pain, loneliness, death—are not childish themes. Nor, and this is the point, are these childlike poems.

That they belong to the genre of Adolescent Poetry is true and this is no criticism. There are poets such as Thomas Chatterton, whose entire corpus was produced during their early adolescence because they passed away

INTRODUCTION

before they could produce more. There is John Keats, whose work in his adolescent years is little less notable than the masterpieces of his all too brief maturity. There is, most of all, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who some feel remained in an adolescent state of mind all his life.

With precursors of such magnitude within the genre, this young authoress is indeed in illustrious company.

We referred above to Shelley's 'adolescent state of mind' because that, at one level, is what adolescence means. It is a state of mind characterized by a deep, almost obsessive consciousness of the Self. In this kind of poetry, when it

succeeds, the 'I' of the poet is always apparent. Regard only the first lines of some of the poems in this volume: 'I look through a window', 'I touch your forehead, carefully', 'I dream of shadowy evenings', 'I throw myself into a corner', 'Hear me', 'I stroll along the swaying fields', and so on.

There is a clear danger of this kind of thing becoming little more than diary jottings, of interest exclusively to the poet and perhaps a small coterie of intimates. One is too frequently coming across younger people who claim to write, what they call, 'Poy-tree'. And they push into your hands typescripts that record their limited range of attitudes with a somewhat embarrassing degree of confessional candour in unformed lines of so-called 'free' verse. Fortunately for literate mankind, this is usually the culmination and conclusion of their literary careers.

I make a point of mentioning this kind of amateur poetic diarist, because that is one of the very real traps Adolescent Poetry can fall into. It is also a suspicion that inevitably comes to mind when the daughter of a celebrity presents her young poetry for consideration of publication. As one reads—with a 'suspicious' mind, as it were—one remarks on the poem opening: 'I stroll along the swaying fields/ of Tuscany'. Aha, one could say, this displays an over-privileged background! But that criticism could apply to many who write in English in this country.

One could remark on the hint of adolescent attitudinizing in:

Who is she?

Who is this girl—so
sad
and alone?

I open my eyes.
Is this a mirror that I see?

But the peril is elided, side-stepped. Somehow, the poem works.

And then one comes to, what is this commentator's favourite poem in this volume. It is very short and bears quotation in full:

Small
dark
empty
come find me
eerie
damp
mournful
here I am
closed
narrow
locked
away from you

The very short line lengths, five of them only a single syllable long, are exceptionally well handled. The 'you' at the end possesses a universality that lifts it away from the typical diary 'you' and gives it breadth and space. The pen picture of her person the poetess has chosen to show us, is complete.

The point is that there are resonances in these lines that make them poetry and not just lines. And these resonances recur throughout this volume. A look at the title poem of this volume would not be out of place. It begins:

The desert
has no beginning,
no end.

The sand whispers,
stirred gently by the wind.

The evocation of place, of the poem's space, is complete. There is an understated music in the lines. The poem goes on to evoke the daughter's loss of a father, ' "Mir," I whisper,/ "Where have you gone?" ' Apart from the expectation that we will, must, recognize the name of her late father—the celebrity factor—the evocation of loss nevertheless works. 'And the desert joins me as I call/ your name.' It is the lament, well-controlled and well-wrought, that captures us here. The fact of our knowledge of the identity of the lost parent and the tragic mode of his departure, remains secondary.

That particularly gross tragedy recurs—the moment of tragedy itself—in the poem beginning 'I touch'. This was the dreadful instant of realizing the magnitude and finality of what had occurred:

I touch your forehead, carefully
move the hair from your eyes...
now give me no reply...

I need to see you smile.
I need
to see you move.
But more

more than the rest
I need you to please
say
goodbye.

The point worth emphasizing is that this poem could easily have been 'journalistic', milking the news value of the moment. That trap is totally avoided. It is a personal, not a public, expression. And the converse trap of mawkishness, of sentimentality? That too is avoided by the surprising understatement, the things left unsaid.

There is an awesome literary challenge in handling experiences of this magnitude, which are at the extreme of human bearability. It is all too easy to overstate them and, by overstating, in fact trivialize. At the least, the skill and sensitivity by which this is avoided, are surprising in one so young. At the best, this is a fine poem.

That loss echoes again in another poem.

Will you be near me when evening falls?
Protect me from the cold wind...
When the moon lights up the land,
will I have you with me...
Or will the clouds descend on you and sweep you
far away?

The poet's admiration for her father as a person are expressed in an earlier poem

He looks on
with caring eyes...
compassion
is borne only
by those strong within.

But it is the loss of a father that re-echoes most memorably:

Hear me.
Hear me whisper to the sky.
I never got to say
goodbye.

There are perhaps those who will enthusiastically applaud some of the more obviously 'political' poems, such as 'She Sits' or 'Bullets' or will ponder over who is being described in 'He Plays With the Mind'. But what works best, for this commentator are fine resonances in passages like this,

A shooting star
flits through the sky, disappears
soundlessly
unpredictable

Or the descriptive strength in

Hate rides your eyes.

There is no rain
but a storm.

Adolescence is not only a self-conscious state, it is a doomed state. It must come to an end. And that is fortunate for, for most, adolescence is the dark tunnel of uncertainty that provides the passage between the charmed morning-light of childhood and the full, hard daylight of adulthood. It will be interesting to observe how this poetess will fare in that eventual emergence. She will

doubtless lose the sensitive self-indulgence of lines like 'I cry without an audience. I smile/without guilt.' But it remains to be seen what she gains.

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THE DESERT

The desert
has no beginning,
no end.

The sand whispers,
stirred gently by the wind.
I call
your name
and hear my voice come back at me.

'Mir!' I shout, raising my voice,
but no Mir shouts back to me.

I write your name on the sand
and pray that you will answer me.
'Mir,' I whisper,
'Where have you gone?'

I touch the soil
from which you were born.
The land is barren without you.

I return to the desert
to search for you
and the desert joins me as I call
your name.

I cannot hear you reply
but I know you will answer
as the desert whispers your name.

early 1997

I CLOSE MY EYES

I close my eyes
and see—
what?
I do not see
your face, only your shadow
slipping
away
from me.

I see torrent blows of wind.

I see my surroundings
shake. I see the lights
around me dim.

I open
my eyes

and see—what?
I see, in sleep, you
swept away from me.

early 1997



YOU ARE

You are
a solitary
star
in a dark,
empty sky.
You
light up the evening
and never
do you
die.
You are a dazzling
sapphire
that shines
only
in my eyes.
For you are
my star
and I
am but your sky.

end 1995

HEAR ME

Hear me.
Hear me whisper to the sky.
I never got to say
goodbye.

I call so
loudly. Hear me.
Beyond the rain, the clouds.

I need to tell you
I miss you. I cannot bear
to call like this
without reply.

Answer me by just
saying goodbye.

end 1996



CONTROL YOUR TEARS

Control your tears
as you sit by me.
Let go of my hand.
Do not
touch me,
please. It troubles me
to see
my loved ones weaken
in front of me.

While I
never waver, stay strong.
I do not do this for you
as some grand favour.

I kill my sorrows before
they kill me.
I eradicate
pain. Confusion and emotion
will not disturb my life
as they have done yours.

early 1997

I LOOK THROUGH A WINDOW

I look through a window
and see
a little girl
staring
at me.

Her face is drained
from anxiety, her light eyes
from weeping.

I want to
reach out to her,
to help her.
But she is beyond my reach,
as distant
as heaven is from the earth.

I try to talk to her
through the glass
but she blocks
my voice out.

Who is she?

Who is this girl—so
sad
and alone?

I open my eyes.
Is this a mirror that I see?

late 1996

I SEE MYSELF

I see myself walking
on the salt beaches of eternity.
I feel the damp touch of ocean mist
against me. I hear the waves
calling to the shore.

I cannot leave.

The clinging sand slides from my skin
and seagulls
talk to me no more.
The rolling whisper of the waves
is dying down.

Yet I cannot leave.

And now the water retreats.
I will it to
return to me.

I still cannot leave.

The sun disappears into
the serenity of the sea
and I realize
I must go.

This is the time
to leave.

early 1997

CATCH ME

Catch me
I'm falling
hold
my hand I'm slipping
hurry
come
hug me I'm fading away
I need to feel your love
before I disappear
come quickly
before my time
runs out
how much longer
can I suffer
hurry please
come love me

early 1997

I STROLL ALONG THE SWAYING FIELDS

I stroll along the swaying fields
of Tuscany,
picking daisies as I walk.
For there is no one
to hold my hand.
I pluck grapes from the vines
this cold
summer morning.
But who can I offer them to?
By a gleaming pond,
I bathe in the sunlight.
But I keep my towel beside me.
Since I no longer have you,
my warm July summer
has turned
cold.

early 1997

HELLO THERE

Hello there,
do you remember me?
I am the hidden
past you let no one see.

I am
your misfortune. How could you
forget me?

You hid me behind four walls, thought
no one would ever see
poor, little damaged me.

How wrong you were
for now
I am out, and the whole world can see
all of what you did
to me.

early 1997

CAN YOU FEEL

Can you feel the evening breeze
against your neck as you walk
along the pier?

I wonder why
so early in the night
the winds are travelling in
for no clear reason.

Is it the sea
that brings these changes?

Is it the dancing trees
swaying all night? Or
is it a colossal swarm

of locusts, perhaps, or bees flying by?
Or is it just that you are here,
lonely without me?

early 1997

I FEEL YOUR TENDER LIPS

I feel your tender lips
against mine. Could this
be magic?
Could this be true?

How many nights
have I dreamt of this?
Come
into my arms once more.
Let me feel you are here.

So much time
has passed since
I last held you this close.

Tell me you love me.
Let me hear those sweet words
whispered in my ears.

I cannot believe
you're here with me.
I've counted the seconds
for this moment to come.

But now
that you're finally here,
tell me
when will
you disappear?

mid 1996

YOUR TAINTED HEART

Your tainted heart
I cannot see through.
I search your eyes
to read the hidden pages
you so secretly disguise.
But no message is enclosed.

I savour your smile
as a vintage wine. A sip or two
would leave me less thirsty.
But the taste
slides from my lips.

I question your movements.
Your hands shake
as they rest on your knees.
Is there something I fail to see?

Don't stay silent a moment longer,
please come and cry to me.
I will not lay your feelings out for all
to see.

What tosses and turns in your heart
will always stay
between you and me.

I SIT IN A CLOUD OF MIST

I sit in a cloud of mist,
rainclouds hunching over.
My arms hold knees to chest
and I weep.

I feel the warmth of tear drops christen
my face
as rainclouds burst to shower the earth.

The rain sets birds, animals, all
creatures free

but I am still held here.

Since bereft of you,
I do not know where to go.
I sit in the forest
and cry for your answer.

But all I hear
is the rain in the forest
almost as sad as I.

end 1996

I CAN CRY

I can cry with all my soul.
I can let the tears run and never stop.
I can lie down and not get up.
I can turn and go the other way
so all this pain will go away.
Nothing to lose,
only my heart—
something I fear
already lost.

mid 1996

IF YOU COULD SEE

If you could see these tears
flowing softly down my face...
They purify
my skin, these sweet
drops of sorrow.

If only you could see these tears of mine,
thundering
crashing
killing hopes of you and me.

If only you could taste them,
taste the bitterness
through the sweet taste of sorrow.

If only you could stop
these tears of mine,
wipe them away before they continue...
and hold me,
hold me
again.

ON MY BALCONY

On my balcony
at night
I hold vigil for you.
I look toward the stars
and pray.
The sky's empathy sends
a tear to caress
my face. The sky's distance
brings another night empty without you.
More droplets fall from above
as the sky
weeps
with me.

end 1996

I SIT AT MY WINDOW-SILL

I sit at my window-sill,
the glimmer of nature's beauty dazzling me.
I wish to capture
the scent of a petal
and treasure it 'till eternity.
I want to stop this warm breeze from blowing
so it can stay here with me.
I want to paint the moon
for everyone to see.
But, most of all,
I want your arms
wrapped around me.

end 1996

IMAGINE THE STARS

Imagine the stars
shone all day long.
Imagine the birds sang to us.
Imagine the trees swaying without a
midnight breeze.
Imagine you were still here with me.

Pretend the sun never set.
Pretend the sky never turned dark.
Pretend the hours would last forever.
Pretend you were still here with me.

Dream of perfect silence.
Dream of total happiness.
Dream of serenades in the moonlight.
Dream of you
still here with me.

end 1996

I THROW MYSELF

I throw myself into a corner.

Can anybody see me?

Does anyone know where I hide?

I hug myself tightly
and whisper your name.

I look about anxiously. Can anybody
see my tears?

I wish I could remain here all my life,
hide in my little corner.

Where I am alone
and no one can see me,
not even you.

end 1996

I DREAM OF SHADOWY EVENINGS

I dream of shadowy evenings,
nothing visible,
only the outline of you, of me.
As night wraps us in its dark arms,
free of confusion, of pain,
I am held in the firm clasp of the evening.
Strangely, I cannot feel you near me.
Are you really here? Or is this merely
heaven's way of mystifying me?

end 1996

AS SHE SWIMS AWAY

As she swims away
into the moonlight,
he stands by the rocks
and watches love leave him,
disappearing deep into the ocean.

She turns her head,
salt water dripping down her face,
and glances back at him one more time.
She can never look at him again
as she sees
a silver tear fall from his eyes.

She turns away, escapes into forever,
where she will never be able to hurt him,
where he can never see her
again.

end 1996

HAS ROMEO FALLEN

Has Romeo fallen...
will he not rise?
I wait for him to come,
may it take years.
Let me be the one to bring him home.
The stars burn toward your arrival.
Hurry, Romeo!
For the roses open their petals early
and the wind blows tremendously
for my Romeo to return to me.

end 1996

SMALL

Small
dark
empty
come find me
eerie
damp
depressing
here I am
closed
narrow
locked
away from you

end 1996

AN ANGEL FLEW DOWN

An angel flew down
to talk to me.

She said
she had something
she needed to tell me.

She stood there, the glow
hovering over her head
and her wings fluttering.
I asked her how my love was.

She answered with a sad smile
and said
he sent me all his love and wished
I was doing better. A cold wind
blew and she flew away
with no explanation.

I stood still
and watched the golden dust fall from
the sky,

as her wings beat,
as her shadow disappeared.
A soft wind brushed my forehead
as she kissed me good-night.

I TOUCH

I touch your forehead, carefully
move the hair from your eyes—
your dark hair, your dark eyes
now give me no reply.

I rest my cheek
against yours and try
to hold your hand but you do not
respond.

I kiss your face and tell you
that I love you.
But still
no answer.

I need to see you smile.
I need
to see you move.
But more...

more than the rest
I need you to please
say
goodbye.

I HAVE LOST THE LOVE

I have lost the love of my life
but she is not gone.
She is still with me.
I have seen her
smile in my sleep. I have felt
her breath on my shoulder as I lie
resting.

I have heard her laughter floating
in the air
and I can still feel her heart beating
next to mine.

mid 1996

I SEE YOU

I see you looking down on me
when I am in despair.

I see my angel
hovering in the air.

I sense your touch
when I am lonely.

I feel my angel hovering
over me.

I hear your voice when I am troubled.

I hear my angel calling out to me.

I need my angel
to come back to me.

mid 1996

CRY SOFTLY

Cry softly on my shoulder
I'll wipe away the tears
cry softly on my shoulder
care not what stains you leave
cry softly on my shoulder
I'll mend your pain, your sorrow
cry softly on my shoulder
I'll stop the tears before
they're back again tomorrow

mid 1996

TONIGHT THE CLOUDS

Tonight the clouds surround the sky
and I
am alone again
I feel the cold wind engulf me
in its arms
tonight the clouds surround the sky
I stare up at the deepening indigo
and feel it staring back at me
tonight
the clouds surround the sky
and I am alone again

early 1996

I LIE IN THE DARKNESS

I lie in the darkness
unaware of where I stand.
I cannot see you
but feel you standing by me.
I know I am alone
yet I sense your presence.
I feel protected
by your shield,
your armour of love.
The day that armour
breaks
is the day
I shall be truly alone
without you.

mid 1995

BULLETS

Bullets riddle the air.
Hate stalks
the streets.
But sitting up high,
they laugh,
nothing is wrong as long as I have power.
Danger lurks around corners. Violence
flows as freely as blood in the streets.
Suddenly
death is a part of every day life.
But those at the top
look down at the people and smile,
nothing is wrong,
nothing will go wrong as long as I
have power.
The city erupts, dissolves.
The city collapses.
But, at the top,
they rejoice.
They are in power.

end 1995

WILL YOU BE
NEAR ME

Will you be near me when evening falls?
Protect me from the cold wind,
hold me in your arms?
When the moon lights up the land,
will I have you with me?
When the stars
glitter in the darkness, will you kiss me?
Keep me until the night lifts and
daylight gleams
upon us?
Or will the clouds descend on you
and sweep you
far away?

late 1995

THERE IS A PATH

There is a path—a lengthy road,
dangerous—
that leads to eternity.

Its twists and deceits,
its treacheries,
only few dare risk.

Others
walk the other way—
downhill, quickly,
unable to stop.

They find themselves
far away, distant
from all they ever wanted, nearer to
annulment.

mid 1995





WHEN I WALK

When I walk,
I shield my face
so none can see what lies behind
this smile.

I walk,
untouched by all.
They will not see
what lurks deep inside of me.

Must they know how I hurt,
how pain builds
inside me?

They will see nothing
for no one
will ever see my heart
break deep inside me.

mid 1995

HE WALKS AWAY

He walks away
with promises of return.
I fear that won't happen.
But what do I know?
I am but a woman.

He comes back wounded.
He will never heal.
What do I know?
I am but a woman.

He falls,
will not rise.
What do I know?
I am but a woman.

early 1995



HE PLAYS WITH THE MIND

He plays with the mind—
an illusionist,
making visions appear
before your eyes,

then swiftly wiping them away,
erasing suddenly
the air before you.

Purposely he keeps you wondering,
he mocks
your ability to see the truth.

But,
really, where would he be
without you?

early 1995

SHE SITS

She sits on a throne,
surrounded by others
who grovel at her feet.
She seats them next to her
and dismisses the ones who stand.
She co-operates with those sitting
next to her and
forgets the ones who stood.
She searches for those who know
nothing better
than to worship her every move.
But during all this,
she neglects those who stood there
waiting,
waiting for less than power,
waiting for basic needs to be met.
Yet she does nothing but smile at them
and make promises she knows she
cannot keep.
Not because of hate.
Not because of greed.
Because power blinds those who are
ignorant.

early 1995

HE LOOKS ON

He looks on
with caring eyes
sees people from within
ignores exteriors
welcomes them in shares their pain
listens
understands
not like others he feels
not judges
could one this strong
you wonder
have feelings this deep?
Yes yes indeed for compassion
is born only
by those strong within

early 1995

I DO NOT SEE YOU

I do not see you
any more as if I no longer know you.
Why can't I cry?

I long to hear your voice
whisper into my ear.
Why can't I hear?

I long to touch your skin,
to know you are still here.
Why can't I touch you? Why?

Without you by my side
I fear I cannot live.

early 1995

YOU ARE LIKE

You are like
the sky—one day bright and open,
the next dark, threatening.

Hate rides your eyes.

There is no rain
but a storm.

The flare of a lightning bolt is not
so strong

that you can see
what your violent moods
are doing to me.

end 1994

LIKE A CHILD

Like a child,
I peer into the box
amazed by its treasures.
I look over everything
misguided by their covers,
each seeming sweeter than the other.
I throw aside this and pick up that,
slightly missing the one before...
unaware of where I have put it.
I fear I cannot find it any more.

mid 1995





LACE AND RIBBONS

Lace and ribbons
by the window-sill
lying quietly, untouched
until one night
a storm struck
and blew the windows open
air flailing in
rain so intense
ribbons shredded and scattered lace
still untouched

end 1994

THE NIGHT FALLS

The night falls
like a waterfall
pouring downwards
unpredictable

The moon appears
from nowhere
glowing silently
unpredictable

The stars shine,
a scattering
of gems in the sky
unpredictable

A shooting star
flits through the sky, disappears
soundlessly
unpredictable

mid 1995

UP IN THE MOUNTAINS

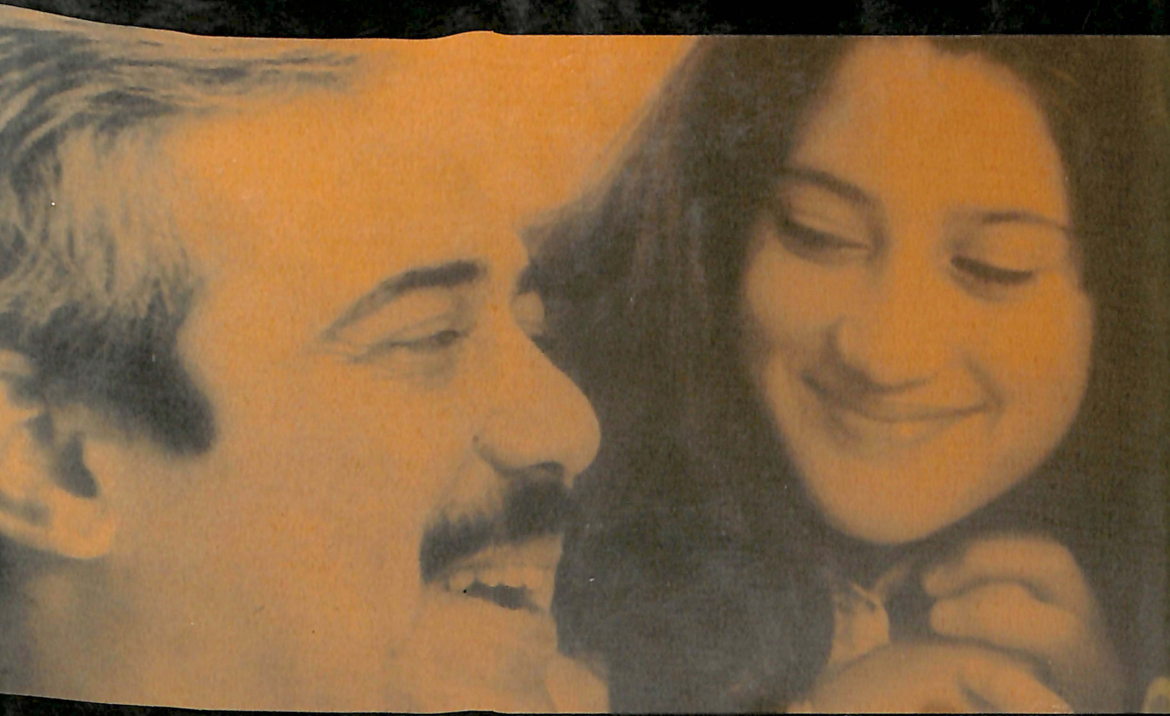
Up in the mountains,
I am free, calm.
High, near the heavens,
where the air is clearer,
I am myself at last.
I cry without an audience. I smile
without guilt.
I change for no one.
I am loved
as I am.

end 1994

I LOVE THE WINTER'S CALLS OF JOY

I love the winter's calls of joy.
I love the perfumed breath
of spring, the summer scents
of romance. I love
the despairing sighs of autumn.
I wish I were free as the seasons
of the year. But winter
would only dull me.
Spring could only bring
pensive moments, but no more.
Summer carries
danger and suspense.
Autumn brings a depression
since it was the time
you left me.

end 1994



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