



harvest

What We Leave Behind

Winter pushes into my room. I waken
And walk to the porch. Windows rattle
Threats of falling. Fragments of glass,
Veins of dark wood.
I hold the windows still, watch the trees
Struggle in the cold. Winter mists
From my mouth. Invisible fire.

Cold flattens against our cheeks, faces us,
Steals the warmth from the goblets
Cupped in our hands. The sun cannot
Sink into the tops of our shoulders
We do not walk the field from end to end.
A name you hear makes you shiver;
The pages I am writing mark my days.

When I place my hand upon the glass,
The print released is no longer mine.
I do not want to be alone. Without amber.
Without the steam rising on a city street
Back in my room is a whirlpool of light
I leave thumbprint and palm, and the porch
Becomes ruins behind me.

—Elmaz Abinader

On a Summer Night

The fireflies floated up from the grass.
At the top of the yard, they signalled
to me. I swipe one from the air
and peeked through the cracks of my fingers
to watch its flicker.

I must spend each night alone with my morrors
around me: books, photographs, pillows
and an open space. I do not trust
myself in sleep; I will not drop off
into the leisure of a dream. I am the keeper
of this night and its silences.

We lay in the yard and watch the bats
swoop and scream. I could not believe
their blindness as they dove and punched
at the stars. I held my breathing
so they would not hear me.

Sometimes I sit at this window for hours
with a candle behind me in the room.
No bats pass through this sky. It has
no real darkness. And when I see a star,
I watch it disappear through my fingers.

—Elmaz Abinader

Learning About Cottonwoods

Where the Pawnee eats away at the bank, a voice
calls from the back of the canoe. Carp sputter
in lines across the darkening lake. Seagulls somewhere
circle and screech. I pull the rope thrown to me.
Mud shifts and gives way to water, soaking
my shoes. Motors buzz beyond us.

The wind is low enough, he tells me. I follow
and lift my feet high above the wet grass.
Mosquitos whirl. *Over there*, he show me.
I see the cottonwood and its swirling leaves,
imprecise and flirtatious. *Closer*. I hear
small children whisper, twenty or thirty.
I listen again. His hand is wet and strong.

—Elmaz Abinader

Darlene

Darlene Perry used to pray for ants
who were accidentally stepped on.
She held funerals for them
hoping no revenge would be planned
by the black crowd of comrades
in the sidewalk crack. Often they
would come, to carry off their dead.
Yet Darlene would make her small mound
in honor, bearing a twig cross.
Darlene's mother lent her a black book
for eulogies. I would have no graves
in my yard. I even caught fireflies in jars
and sometimes never let them go.
There was blasphemy in praying for ants.
Their tiny bubble-bodies scavenged
every crumb before them. I tried
to make my cat eat them, in front
of Darlene but he wouldn't. So I ran
them over with my bike and felt no bumps
under my wheels.

—Elmaz Abinader

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The Sower

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