

Good Morning Heartache

Sahara Sidi

Poetry

– *after Billie Holiday*

we grapple loss to the floor
of our mouths searching for a word in this language
of conquest
to name loss
leaves that doesn't leave you empty so much as it
you yearning
to hold more than a ragged breath
look
my father
years still,
yearns

alongside Fairuz
whose voice has blown the Sony speakers to a white static chorus
a hush of melancholy raising a frail finger to its lips
what you might call futile or half-ass in its attempt to quiet the sirens
to hush Dre's 808 that shakes the whole complex awake at 2 A.M.

again

my father pretends not to smell the jazz Black & Mild on my fingertips
when I serve him tea and peanuts a shit offering for a man
who cannot attend his own mother's funeral who cannot stop for Death who cannot
afford to feel and not for lack of feeling
still a poet
even if his grief doesn't rhyme
with sixteen-hour shifts and several mistresses Upon insistence
I pray I try yoga Then, pills

some prescribed some pressed with god knows what and still, I wake
By the grace of god I cut my throat on good morning, heartache
morning to the drunken beat of my chest to another face coated in crust
to a roach in the ashtray a few missed calls overdraft fees
and at my lowest I will summon the audacity to beg you
to return me clean as a native tongue singing the hymn spit into the cupped hands of
an imam who gropes at the cold side of his bed searching
for comfort out of god's earshot still well within reach

Economy of Language

Sahara Sidi

Poetry

I hiccup a new prayer, choking
on the \dot{c} crowning his name.
I cry for the cuts on his chin

and the hours he spent alone
in the cramped bathroom
wishing for a father's hand

to steady his own. My baby brother knows I love him like my own. I would kill

a mother fucker, even my own.

I try to find peace in places
that will never feel familiar.
I only know a fraction of that

solitude he's shacked up with.

In the belly of his cell, he'll
stare down the tight window

only a bullet could bust open.

And when the voice interrupts,
stealing 7 seconds to warn us
we only have one minute left

on the line. He whispers a *love you too* into the corrections payphone.

Sahara Sidi is a writer whose work is deeply influenced by her Mauritanian, Yemeni, and Irish heritage. Her poems & essays appear in Salt Hill Journal, The Offing, Chestnut Review, Beloit Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA in poetry from the University of Michigan Helen Zell Writers Program. Goofy in person, existential on paper. Based in Detroit, Michigan.
