

# 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*  
                                  that doesn't leave you empty    so much as it  
 leaves  
                                  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 خ 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 shackled 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.