

spectator ghazal

Lara Atallah

Poetry

after Hala Alyan

I've lost track of the seasons, which fall
came before which winter? watch,
here are the riches of my kingdom: a kitchen sink
that leaks like a wound, and my mother's watch.
tomorrow, the sun again. its heat, a curse.
in my delirium, the leak becomes flood. I watch
a colony hurtle towards its promised demise.
front row seat on the nightmare express, I watch
the nearby sea hissing like a taunt. mothers'
wails hurricane unto scorched earth. I watch
severed lifespans trickle into empire's mulch while
I tear dollars into shrapnel. in America, I watch
you with your gun, your hand on the trigger.
my beating heart, a flag at half-mast. watch
me do a bait and switch. half past noon. in a stranger's
arms, I think of carnations. he asks me to watch.
says, imagine a seesaw with a heart on one end, a cluster bomb
on the other. says, name someone you can't lose, now watch
me kill them on my lunch break, one happy meal at a time.
half past midnight. sleep comes. I am made to watch:
the boy with a cracked skull, all over again, his sister
with half an arm, you, with not even half a spine, watch
your sales tax wash off the coast of a mass grave. how many
missiles for your coffee, your quiet, your killer moves? watch

me as I am remade in the shape of a phantom pain
swollen, loud, invincible, impossible to ignore. watch

me turn on you like a coin. by which I mean, show me how you come
undone when the curtain starts burning, and there's nothing left to watch.

Lara Atallah is a multidisciplinary artist and writer. Her practice explores the political dimensions of landscape, probing both the futility and fluidity of borders as manmade constructs. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *Camera Austria*, *Flash Art Italia*, *Koukash*, *128Lit*, among others. She is the author of *Exit signs on a seaside highway* (Everybody Press, 2023)
