

Poetry Series

Samah Khan

- poems -

Publication Date:

November 2008

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Poems are the property of their respective owners. This e-book was created by Samah Khan on www.poemhunter.com. For the procedures of publishing, duplicating, distributing and listing of the poems published on PoemHunter.Com in any other media, US copyright laws, international copyright agreements and other relevant legislation are applicable. Such procedures may require the permission of the individuals holding the legal publishing rights of the poems.

Adichia

Adichia stood at the edge of the sea
A shawl around her slender form
Below the blue sky, shaded by the birch tree
Her eyes squinted, her face forlorn

No man, no fowl, no beast does prowl
Where Adichia stands each day
Beauty sublime, finesse with time
Can bring no one all this way

Adichia does not sketch or paint
Adichia does not write
But yet she knows where true art shows
It passes not her sight

There she wonders with a frown
Why there is such a haven yet;
When the Earth is bent on breaking down
There is some paradise left

But then again she has a purpose,
As she looks out far into the morn
Her father is somewhere far away
Still finding his way back home

So there is poor Adichia betwixt
The golden sun and the shining green leas
Wishing for a peace that is beyond God's Canvas,
Waiting for Him to give her peace.

Samah Khan

bleeding earth

The war cry sounds across the land,
The hills tremor with fear, melting the sand,
No animal strays, nor walks a man,
When the battle cry sounds across the land

The horses bolt like lightning in squalor,
The sun hides its face and turns its back to the horror,
The wet armor and swords clash in desperate furor
As roaring demons shriek in anguish (and on they holler and holler)

Blood wets the ground, the earth bleeds fast,
The loyal servants go first, the heathens go last
And who is more loyal than the earth, I ask?
As she cries tears of blood over the sleeping grass

The night wears on in silent agony
The clouds slit open and crack like litany
Cursing the soldiers for their blatant infidelity
(How could you betray the lover who birthed you, without fear or pity? ')

Men die as horseflesh rots,
No battle is won, though the war is fought
Death is no prestigious victory, but one for naught
Evil does as is begot

Samah Khan

blind, deaf and dead

I see their dark expressions as
They try to stare me down
I lift my head, my eyes are blank
As I muster an indifferent frown

They're the same old faces I see every day,
They same looks that censured me yesterday
I can't change the way they think of me
But I pretend to be blind so I can't see

They still think me the black sheep,
The ugly duckling in their world of swans
They are with me in morn, and at night in my sleep
Haunting me, scaring my dreams away till dawn

They're the same old looks I get day after day,
The same expressions I see everyday
I can't change their thoughts; the accusations they lay clear
But I pretend to be deaf so I can't hear

It's hard to go through each day
Knowing the monotonous unforgiving schedule will return with the morning sun
And for all of worldly eternity, till natural death takes me away
I refuse to call it, till it itself does come

They're the same old frowns that feed on me everyday
The same leers that keep my happiness at bay
I can't change those emotions they don't bother to conceal
But I pretend to be dead, so I can't feel

Samah Khan

Break me

Break me
The hollowness is already in my blood
And I can hear my heart
Feebly holding on to insanity-
Life won't walk away
If you walk away first.

Break me
I won't feel the pain, numbness is my only ally,
And in the fight against darkness, I surrender
Life won't give me a break,
So I'll break first.

Break me
I have no friend, no confidante, no light
I live by the glow of a fading moon,
Ever floating away in a sky of a thousand lovers
And yet I'm the only who gazes up at it every night
Steadfastly, for the millionth time
Yet the moon disappears by day, that I know,
So I disappear from the window before the day returns.

Break me
Hatred is how I learnt to live,
How I learnt to stand in licking flames and not be burnt
How I learnt that if your skin made of thick leather, it won't bruise
Hatred is the only thing I can call truly my own-
I knew my heart would someday protest,
So I tore it out before it could.

Samah Khan

Brown hair and green eyes

I watched you from a distance-a maiden lost at sea-
(Hardly fair or bewitching to one as amply endowed as thee)
But how could I avoid the olive brown skin-your motions so lithe-
The brown hair which fell over deep sea-green eyes?

You ne'er glanced my way but once-
Caught me in mid-stare and smiled
Courteous gentleman looked at a lady dunce
You turned away and I sighed, beguiled.

May I propose a prose to your hair?
The coarseness of which lies betwixt softness and rough pagan locks-
Falling serenely-unknown to it is my plight-on skin so fair
And bounces over your head in a way that shocks

Your eyes-what may I say of them (being a gentle lady-not a bold commoner) ?
Warm-with chips of golden, which dance when merry-and spark when enraged
Languorously slumberous and I feel my heart begin to stir
Your one look has left my burning skin grazed

Boots made of steel eat the noise of the smooth floor,
As you walk towards me, green eyes pleasantly confused
I smile with baser instincts than one of my birth might possess
But what can I call it (save instincts) when but a look has left me thus bruised?

You lean over my hand and place the perfunctory kiss-

Managing to muster your disgust into a look of delight-
Ah but for a cactus to (for once) feel beautiful, so she may not miss
What the pretty daffodils by the pond-side (as a rule) invite

Hours go by in pleasant verses-you and I have much in common-
But perhaps here too the wistfulness speaks-
Foolish for one of my looks and naïve skills to even envision
Being loved by one, who of enchantment reeks

Brown hair and marble clear eyes-smile that has me captured
Do not torment my foolish young heart any longer with your lingering
For I know when you leave my side it'll be to have another lass enraptured
I cannot-do not-deserve thy hair and thy eyes and thy light (gentlemanly) fingering
Do not touch me, be it to hold my hand, or simply do what all charmers do-
I fear I might fall faint in a fanciful frenzy to the cold floor
And it might knock some sense into me-and I will steer clear of you
Ending a dream that barely began a voyage lost at sea-before someone found shore

Now you ask me if I would care to dance
I'd miss Haley's comet-but not this chance
I smile politely, acquiesce with a nod
And as you turn to lead me, my grin grows broad
I dreamt a little dream
About a man with brown hair and eyes emerald green
And a smile that brightened my fluttering heart
And tore my tormented insides apart

You lead the steps to a juggernaut
Each graceful move, a panther, imitates
Intimate smiles and bold glaring eyes,
Turquoise eyes that sealed our fates
And it was in that one moment that I felt beautiful
Felt worth beyond comprehension
Life's little mysteries-and I did not care whether it was deliberate-
Or a kindly young man showering a plain lass some kindly attention

I do not know what will happen when this ends
All I know is I want the bliss of the present to erase everything else
Perhaps you will lead me out and start a courtship; perhaps we will just be friends
Or mayhap I will never see that brown hair or those green eyes again
Samah Khan

catastrophe (acrostic)

C an I be helped if I fall too often
A nd scab a knee or break a limb?
T rust me to make myself an early coffin
A s my predicament seems quite grim
S ay people to me this everyday
T hat I am a walking manic
R eckless, unmindful, culpable, they say,
O f wreaking havoc and fear and panic
P lease, beg I, do not dig me a grave till I have breathed my last breath
H ave patience, dear friends and bear with me my loose ends
E cstatic liberation will have to wait for my death

Samah Khan

Child, go to sleep

The broken ballad hums on in my head
I've got no peace on the streets, and none in my head.
The wake-up call is a death-knoll to my ears
And my only lullaby is the sound of my tears-

Child, go to sleep, that's what mother always says,
I say, another day's just another mistake.
Child, go to sleep. But Mother, I said,
If you loved me, you'd not watch me stand and break-
If you really loved me like you should
You would let me go to sleep for good.

I can't breathe, there's a pain in my chest where my heart used to be,
One more step towards the light, one more step away from me-
Darkness isn't too bad, it hides that face that screams through the night,
Darkness isn't too bad, it will let you relieve the pain you've always kept inside.

Child, go to sleep, that's what mother always sings,
I say, pray I won't wake up again.
Child, go to sleep. But Mother, I said
If I don't go now, I'll become insane.
If you really loved me, you'd realize I'm sick
You'd rather have me sane and dead than a raving lunatic

The spasms don't stop, I've forgotten what love felt like,
Six-foot deep, the ground becomes warm-
If I've got dirt piled over my head, it'll be no different from before,
Except that this time the dirt will protect me from harm.

Child, go to sleep, that's what Mother's always saying,
I say, I'm losing control and I can stop anytime now.
Child, go to sleep. But Mother, I said
All I want to do is stop my bleeding soul somehow.
If you really love me, this is your final test
If you really love me, then lay me to rest.

Samah Khan

dearly beloved (write to me)

Write me a poem, dearly beloved,
Write of your love, your fidelity, your proclivity
For doing what is right for me, not what is right;
Speak to me of what you feel
Not sugared words served on pity tarts
Write me a poem, dearly beloved,
If you cannot, then contend to break my heart.

Write me a prose, dearly beloved,
Then narrate it on an elevated stand
To the heavens and the sea and whatever lies betwixt
The shadows of both so that all can hear;
Speak only truth for I cannot stomach lies of such art
Write me a prose, dearly beloved,
If you cannot, then contend to break my heart.

Write me a sonnet, dearly beloved
And sing it by the edge of the fast flowing stream
Sing to me as if you sang to all the forest
And called forth its life from the concealing leaves of jade
And of this assembly of the innocent, I shall be an active part
So write me a sonnet, dearly beloved,
If you cannot, then contend to break my heart.

Samah Khan

death is a good salesman

Death,
The option hangs overhead like a persistent question
Hovering above doubts, probing at loopholes,
And promising all that everyone has ever wanted-with benefits

Death,
The apothegm reads, 'Try us once, and you'll never turn back.
None of our customers have ever returned'.
And it's funny how so many people buy the drivel
And take death up for it's offer

Death,
Knocks like a tax-collector on every door
But looks like an angel with a handsome face, a million dollar smile,
So much to expect in so small a package
And his contracts look genuine, permanent and his concern, sincere, unrehearsed

Death,
Steals the crust off the cake
And then thrusts it in front of our eyes
So reachable and yet so far away,
And he throws in a dozen more made-up perks for 'good measure'
The hesitant eyes grow round with wanting
So good-looking, intelligent, such a great sales pitch-
How can we miss?

Death,
With a little apologetic winsome grin,
Informs us of some chronic side-effects, then shrugs them off
As if they didn't matter
'Oh it just might affect your loved-ones...but only just
It might also just throw blood over all the work you've done to survive-but only just
And it might just insult God-but only just.'
And then he continues rambling on the pointers if you were willing,
Ending with a no-nonsense, clear-voiced offer-cum-order,
'Take it or leave it'.

Samah Khan

death is such sweet sorrow

Death is such sweet sorrow
Rotten tears we beget, wet eyes speak while lips wail
Loud neighbours feign solicitous interest
Asking about the how's, the when's and the where's
Not seeming to understand that nobody wants to talk
When their nose is running
But one must sympathize with death
For all our qualms about it, we forget
That it takes us away, far away from the reality of life
And the monotonously punctual devils that show up
At our doors, bellowing into our ears so that our heads throb with migraine,
Our hearts weaken with disease, our blood-pressures break through the roof,
Our kidneys, livers, lungs fail-
But once death's firm embrace holds us captive
None of it matters anymore
And all you can do is cry over grave after grave
Until you finally fall into your own and learn to be thankful

Samah Khan

forgive me, love

NOTE: this poem carries a special significance for me because I left someone I cared about only because I thought it would make him happier...

Forgive me love,
I do not write these words to cause you grief-
Grief, that on my account has already been great;
I write only to mend fences around land that has grown far too steep
With but jagged rocks at the end as our fate

If I were to cry and make a sea
I'd pray you'd come and weep in me
So that when my time to drown draws near,
We would finally become one, if only by tears.
I will not be your rose from another's garden,
Nor will I let you be the dandelion that blew away,
I will either have it all-hear me out-or none
I will not allow my love to go astray.

I have much to mourn:
I have lost the one who is privy to my every thought
And in my arrogance I have lost a country as well;
I am only an inch of my life from losing my religion-
And be known as heathen, traitorous: an infidel.
I cannot lose you too-and cry at a premature funeral
For I detest tears (you know that) and I detest you
For making me seek comfort in all that I detest
And losing faith in all I hold true.
I have murdered the poet that bred within me
For she spoke too loud for the comfort of my ears;
She blind sighted me and cornered my deepest darkest emotions
And was far too well aware of my every fear;

Thus I silenced her as I now am you
And you call me cold for I am sterile-
But what could I know of being cold when I know not warmth-
I swear to you, I am without pretence or wile.
The barrenness of being alone for far too long
Gives root to my penchant for seeking solace with you day upon day;
Comfort knows neither bounds nor right and wrong
But knows only to catch a bird by its wing to stop it from flying away;

Now I leave
And you ask yourself why
You blame me, blame women for their femininity
'Damn eyes and lips and hands! '
But in your heart you know you are free of guilt
And it is I who should be damned.
I left of my own free will
Because I could not bear the thought of losing you;
And if I let you go before you realize my ineptness
I might have longer time to rot and rue.

I see your profile standing on the bridge,
(Your eyes towards the water but your heart towards the sea)
One single-stemmed red rose upon your palm;
I have seen minutes turn to days and days turn to years
But I have not seen seconds pass by with such leisurely calm.

It did not hurt when you plucked each petal out and let it drop to your feet-
(For that is like you trying to unravel my enigma)
It did not hurt when you separated the pollen from the stem-
(For that is like you stealing me away and setting me free)
It did not hurt when you kissed the top of the red bud-
(For that is as if you had kissed the pout of my lips)
But it hurt when you gathered the remains and did away with them-
(For then it was like you had finally given up on me)

Samah Khan

handsome (Acrostic)

H e embodies all that I wish embodied
A nd stays true to his word, as few men do
N ot once do I consider him party to the lot
D oes his love for pride and honour not shine through?
S uch are his attributes and I fear I am lost
O ne such man has taken my heart and soul
M ayhap I have not yet captured him
E ventually is soon enough for us both

Samah Khan

How shall I speak to you today?

I.

How shall I speak to you today?
Shall I speak with words of love upon my trembling lips?
Can I call you my sky, can I call you my sun,
Can I call you the rain or the total eclipse?

Your words are like beads strung upon a golden chain,
Forever upon my breast, they shall remain-
And do you see that I breathe you into my soul?
For you are the air that makes me whole.

Shall I not make claims of never-ending love now?
Is it time yet for me to speak of ever-abiding affection?
Ah, if only your eyes didn't wander so when I spoke-
Are my tiresome words to blame for this deflection?

You search the crowds for a lady to dance with-
The promiscuous blonde girl speaks sheer nonsense with you;
The pasty-faced brunette with the overdone rouge
Holds your interest longer than I do!

Perhaps if I were pretty-perhaps if I weren't plain,
Maybe then my affections wouldn't all be in vain!
Perhaps if the world didn't see only as far as the skin-
Then maybe you'd hear my words of the love over the swearing din.

II.

I speak out of desperation-merely to keep you here with me,
No force upon the earth is so great that would hold you against your will;
I see your eyes wandering, losing focus, getting lost-
But in a trembling voice, I drag on still.

Ours is like the last lap of a race that had long been surrendered
But yet, for the sake of a faux pride, I make us run till the end-
And as you tire, I light our fire
Two shadows, a second huddled and at once, beginning to rend.

But I have love and you have loyalty
And together perhaps we can reach a common ground
Or else, speak once and banish me to the earth
(Ah! Sweet fate hath sworn to always confound!)

 

Samah Khan

I am blood

I am blood,
Clear as a summer pool, shimmering with untamed beauty,
Caged within a boundary and unwilling to stay;
I am blood,
No human keeps me; rather, I keep humans,
And if it were not for me, no human could suffice.

I am blood,
I flow suddenly within capillaries
And alter between dirty and clean.
I keep my brethren alive, all of whom do not care much for me,
But yet, say nothing.
For it is when they complain that they meet their demise.

I am blood,
I am beautiful when unhampered,
Putrid when let,
Fascinating when scrutnized.
My only regret is exploitation
At the hands of the little life-vein that runs
In everyone's wrist to be slit.

I am blood,
I sustain
And I kill.

Samah Khan

I have forsaken both rest and peace

I have forsaken both rest and peace,
The silence of the forest reverberates inside my head,
And at night my bed is a hollow grave of leaves.

Twelve nights and eleven days I've walked for naught,
No bird alighted my hand, no animal hungered after my scent
Unfairly enough, even death could not be found when sought.

Such journeys as this has my life been
My eyes are blinded by the sights I've seen
Yet the meaning of existence is yet to be known,
A million people like me have tried and gone.

Plagued by the hardness of a life I hated,
And armed with the knowledge that I hated it,
I stepped out of my skin to feel the rain on my soul
And got drenched in hail that ate at me bit by bit.

No luck prevailed and sleep evaded me
As I trekked on into the treacherous Alps of my life to find the pain
And found that it wasn't a bullet wound that had pierced my soul,
But a thorn caught in the flesh of my toe.

Samah Khan

i know what a heartbreak is

I know what a heartbreak is;
It is not the actual destruction of a heart,
But the loss of something that constitutes the beat;
The rhythm is perturbed, the mind is shaken,
The soul is removed from being;

I know what a heartbreak is
for i too lost something that was special to me,
it's import made me mad with wanting
and desire, left unquenched, is but a heartbreak within itself
I know what it is to lose, to miss, to wither away into a void
when there is nothing left to live for
That is a heartbreak: where the heart still holds on feebly
to whatever science will keep it alive
but the eyes grow blank and the tears become null
all that's left is to lie awake and think about darkness
and that is a heartbreak.

Samah Khan

imperfection of perfection

I daren't gaze into my mother's eyes too long,
The image of perfection startles me-for when I peer cautiously in the mirror
To scrutinize the hideously and irrevocably deformed being-I do not see it;
I do not see any way towards the future, with only the love of my mother,
For she will wither away and yet cling on to that love,
Her hands then branches resting against the aging bark of time-
But her love still plain and as immaculate as they day when she first held
The bloody mass of tears and pink flesh in her arms-
From then began a love as old as time-unsusceptible to duplicity
Or infidelity that reigns in the blood of lovers and friends and subjects;
No king has ruled with equivocal love, nor has any serf shown such loyalty
To his overlord-these tales are of self-beneficial allegiances
Of steadfastness borne for the need of filling the self-
But a mother's love! Ah! The imperfection of her perfection is daunting.
She can neither find fault with me nor claim to any misdeed that I have deigned to
commit
For she is the one who kicking, bore me when I was yet inside of her,
And that bearing was a part of her-a heart, a mind, a soul enjoined inseparably
To hers-and when finally they did fight their way out, she held them close
To her bosom, ensuring that the eye was never denied that which the body was;
And her warmth is but a part of the perfection with which she gazes at me-
My discomfiture is not seen by her and she does not understand the pain of ugliness-
Of shattering mirrors and bleeding eyes-nay, she sees only her child-
Perfect, so perfect that not even perfection could stand against her-
And thereby perfection became convoluted into an ugliness of its own
One it is alien to-imperfection.

Samah Khan

infertility of life

The barrenness of life strangles me with its force,
Its ineptitude to gratify my appetite speaks of the misfortunes I've had;
Life has neither offered be friendship nor enmity
But has borne wilted flowers, and fruit gone bad

Life treats me as if I were abducted,
A kidnapped soul to be deprived food of the flesh and food of the mind,
There are roads and valleys and crosses and bridges
But I can seek only solace, but rarely solace I find

Crossroads lead to dead-ends, which lead to back-tracking,
But I am tired and my legs are weak;
The moon is missing, the stars are feeble,
I can hardly see my own hands, let alone see what I seek

No one offers a friendly hand, or a kind word of comfort,
They are content to censure me with skeptic looks of disdain,
But I do not wish for their approval or their sentiments,
All I want is release from my incessant pain

Samah Khan

Inspiration

My lover is as lovers are
(And as loving often goes)
My lover does not sing, he does not write
But yet he proposed a prose.

He called me his inspiration
A 'shining star in his dark, black night'
And though before him I was well blinded
His loving gave me sight

My lover does as lovers do
He flatters till I'm blushing red
And though before him sleep never came easily to me
His loving bade me rest my head
Samah Khan

Lies of the Lamb

The lamb, a childhood consort, has lied to me
She's sung songs that she cannot claim
She's sung of blue rivers, of green leas
Of bright suns and pleasant rain

The lamb, she's told me stories
Stories of innocence, of fair play
She's told me of a childhood with no worries
Of days spent grazing, of hours spent gay

But now the lamb is no longer a lamb,
She's a full-grown sheep, with a head of wool;
Though now everything she's ever said has convulsed into a sham
It's me who feels the naïve fool

Once my friend and now no more
She looks at me with saddened eyes
I look back with wisdom I ne'er had before
The sheep is to be slaughtered along with her lies

Samah Khan

lost earth

I've lost a piece of earth within me
The sacred divinity that held my sanity in its sharp claws
But when they relaxed, I fell out through the troughs
Onto the hardcore centre, where there's nothing but searing pain
And that faith which held me up still lingers,
Lightly brushing my soul like a fine painter would,
Stroking, caressing, calming the awakened beast inside of me
That shares my heart and my soul-and almost all of my brain
Except the small area refined for rationality,
Which, if lost, will cost me far more than what is visible-
It might cost me my soul.

Samah Khan

Million Stars in the Sky (child's play)

The sky does not sport a single white cloud
Where unicorns are said to fly
And chemical death hovers like a dulling shroud
A promise of death before we die
I do not find consolation in number
And tears do not do much but aggrieve me more
I await a sweet-smelling but bitter slumber
Where life will no longer be a putrid sore

I wonder at times why God lets us go on
Even after we've done nothing but disobey,
Perhaps it is relative to the mother who births
A child and spends her life hiding its sins away.
I've heard of magic and miracles of life
And I've heard of repentance and forgiveness,
Maybe if we all prayed hard enough
God will absolve our multitude of grievances.

I've heard of two children who made play across a border
Where few men were brave enough to chart,
And two children made play defying the man-made order
And unlocked the innocence that presides over their heart.
They found a way through the dirt-ridden line
Drawn by steel rods and wiring meant to kill,
They deceived nature and science and ignored law and time
To find loyalty and trust and friendship in goodwill.

I found them playing somewhere between
The contrived lands smudged with laws of the realm
Wonderfully happy and healthily unclean
They dared to rebel and overwhelm
What adults had prescribed as being obscene
And two boys sailed a ship, each with a turn at the helm

Without words they said what no language could
They spoke miles without looking back
They exchanged smiles and glee and sorrow as we would
Without bartering a single word forth-and-back.
They played without fight, for they could not argue,
They basked in the delight of each other's exultancy
And their vigor for life with each second accrued
Until the wickedness was outweighed by its discernable potency.

If only we could breach the barrier of language
And touch each other's heart with the very soul of us
No nation would crumble, no fight would ensue
As mere looks would be palatably enough.
Were it that we were all by tongue mute
We would reach out and help without distinction
And there would be no war, no fight, no dispute
No discrimination and thus no prejudiced friction.
All we would have is each other to hold

And so we would without a single word
And the world could once again let their gaze rove high
And speechlessly count the million stars in the sky

Samah Khan

My death for yours

I watch you rise from the place you rest,
Your eyes the whitest shade of pale-
Your pasty skin and stale coffin breath,
Your movements reluctant, your limbs so frail.

Yet I love you, ask me not why,
After years of yening have gone by-
My eyes are still glued to the path I wept,
When I chased you right after you left.

I remember running throw the falling snow,
Hail and storm could not stop me;
I remember tracing the outline of your absconding back,
My eyes followed you to as far as they could see.

I called your name, you did not look back,
You walked your way to the top of the hill-
And right when I thought you'd turn back around,
You waved and then the world stood still.

I watch you as you rise from your summer bed,
Long months after I watched you take your life;
Yet, my love for you has neither dwindled nor shrunk,
If anything, it has made me love the sharp edge of my knife.

Samah Khan

my dying knave

There he lies, his shirt sodden red
His hands stretched out to me
And yet I stay back in fear I've bred
For the years he stayed at sea

Where I heard from two sailors who sayeth to me
"List to us, my lady, we come bearing truth,
And the tale of yon man's infidelity,
Truly we know he has been uncouth."

And there I stood rooted to the ground,
My throat, a harrowed leaden tool
My ears deaf to all but one sound
The beating of my heart, solid and cruel

When he returned home, two years past then
I took a knife to his throat and that was the end
He looked at me, befuddled and slain
But forgiveness lingering within his pain

And with his last few breaths he asked me what he'd done
To deserve my less than loving air
He cried when I answered, his tears worse than blood
And his sobs were torment to my ears

"My love, never did I, all these years at sea
Think of another but of thee
But I still forgive your impetuous mistake
Forgive you me-but my heart still breaks."

And so I put his head upon my bower
And kissed his brow with my tears and breath
And while his body bled with great pace within the hour
My heart bled away with him to death

Samah Khan

My fears...

I am not afraid of dying,
But ' twould be no falsehood to say I am afraid of death;
This is my life, this is the irony, the satire-
I can be nude and plain in the concluding embrace of death,
Yet I cannot don the funeral attire.

I am not afraid of committing sin,
Yet, I am afraid of forgiving those who err (and then admit) -
I condemn hypocrisy and all that lies within,
But yet I fear I am a hypocrite.

I am not afraid of the flags in a funeral procession,
As long as they drag behind a coffin within which it is I who is sheathed;
But if I were the driver of the hearse of another,
The flags would signal the toll of one's victory and the silence of another's defeat.

Samah Khan

my fight against darkness

Loneliness-it has been like my shadow,
An overgrown weed, meant to be but a midget,
Increasing in size and height until I was overtaken by its unremitting intensity,
Until it subjugated me,
Until it saw me fall within it's darkness, rolling around, as if blind in its depth;
Loneliness was all I knew before I knew you,
At first, it was a remorseless dictator, from whom I wished sovereignty
And then it turned into a way of life, from which I could not escape
And you did not know me then, while I lived like a hermit,
Alone, but surrounded my namelessness and facelessness;
You did not know me then, as you know me now,
So you do not know the pain that danced in the embers of my once-lit fire-
And then you became the fire that set me aright,
You became the North Star that gave me way;
You became my power, my light
And before you, I had nothing save for this unforgiving silence.

Loneliness-it has been like my comrade,
First the aggravating thorn under my foot,
And then the panacea to whom I turned, permanently,
Until I faced neither north nor east nor south nor west,
But I faced a new direction, where the sun neither rose
(Or perhaps it did, but I cared not)
Nor did the moon glow
(Or perhaps it did, but I cared not)
Where the stars were hidden behind mounds of gray hair
(Or perhaps they didn't, but I cared not)
Where the sky was a sunken array of nothingness,
Dots and squares fading slowly until my blurred vision
(Blurred due to incessant tears) could not make out what was or what could be,
Could not make out the eclipse from the vivid midday of the summer;
You became my clear vision, my magic potion, my medication,
You became my pleasure, my joy and my woe.
Before you, I knew neither love nor happiness,
But only a melancholy misery that spread over me like a canvas
And I lived removed from your people.

Loneliness-it has returned;
You were like the brief shower on a sizzling day;
A brief sky on a drizzling day;
A brief sun on a winter's day;
You came, you felt, you left,
You did, you conquered and you fled
Now that you're gone, I feel the sky rushing over my head
And stars becoming indecipherable resins of oblivion,
Like the remnants of some long forgotten dream;
I feel the sun once again, a foe,
One that rises everyday like a stubble under my shoe,
A reminder that I am still alive, and yet, I cannot feel its warmth;
I see the faded moon, once again, an enemy,
One that appears (rather jaded) changing shapes like a repetitive dance,
Rejoicing callously while my earth falls apart;

And yes, you were that earth;
You were the land to me, the soil, the water that I felt on my lips,
The wind I felt on my fevered brow, the fruit that filled my gut,
The world, universe, eternity.

But now you have left
Left me alone
And I feel no better than a stray animal,
Who, for a while had found a home and care,
But was kicked to the curb when the spell wore off;
You were the magic that held me together,
And now you have become my undoing; the curse that made me fall apart.
Now once again I have no one but darkness to face,
As, directionless, I rove the streets, like a madman,
Uncaring of the treachery around me,
Seeking once again the coveted chivalry of your arms,
My knight, my love, my loss.

Samah Khan

My Mother

The soft bough of my mother's arms
Entwine around me from the arms of a tree called 'Eternity'
And this bears the fruit of love and nourishment all year long;

Its strong trunk keeps me from all nature of harm
While the leaves dress me till I gain maturity
And drop, a seed from its fruit, on the ground where I belong;

Then she shades me, from a near distance,
Watches me grow with a sturdy shaft to offer
While I slowly grow taller and further away from her tenderness;

Leisurely and lingering, under her omnipresent assistance,
I leave her shade, her food, her roots, her water;
(Only to realize) As a tree, I grow big; as a child, I grow less;

Weary, but unflinching the mother, she endures
As slowly all her fruits and their seeds become sovereign
Still loving, still caring, still nurturing like ever before

And I still yearn for the coveted embrace of her branches,
Which are forever raised in prayer for me, unceasingly, as if never enough
Slowly wilting away herself, but leaving the soil more fertile,
Because till her final breath (and after) , it is yet her fruit she's thinking of

Samah Khan

No man is an Isle

No man is an isle-said the muse
To the squirmy schoolboy,
The latter barely listening through his heavy-lidded gaze.
And the entire world is an unforgiving ruse
The Supreme Game-master's pitiless ploy
To judge the spineless from the brave;

Though the Isle of man is abandoned for the better part of his days,
Said the sage to the caged bird who, fluttering its wings for dear life
Feigned impairment in its hearing;
But the man still spoke on, as if it were a craze
Though the child made his indifference well and rife
By pouting and mocking and writhing and leering.

'The story' said Master, waving a cane 'begins with a limp form
To whom manhood came.
God took clay and muddy sand
And from thence he created our first man.'
'Is God a potter, then?' asked the boy
'Aye, a potter, a painter, who can make and destroy
A thousand earths like this one without so much as a blink-
He needs neither to consider nor time to think.'

'The earth is but a smudge of oil on his canvas
That stretches much farther than we can perceive
His only true surveyor is Himself
For no one else can see as far as He sees.'

The boy, now entranced, asked once again, 'Is God truly so Divine? '
'Son, He is the embodiment of Divinity-
All things divine begin and end with Him.'
Then the boy probed, 'Does God smile or laugh or shine? '
'He laughs when you laugh and smiles when you smile and his light beams to infinity-
And His cup of mercy overflows to the top of the brim.'

The sun set just then as a sign of an exchange heard,
And God too said beautiful things with the final sunbeams
While the sky rushed over, assembling as if to a sermon;
He said, 'Here's the end of the day, the last of the flying bird,
You made both the best of it and the worst, it seems
Here's the night to settle either, in manner of what you've done.

'If you've done well by spreading my Word,
By paying the poor their share and protecting the world,
Then you will find the night a solace for your weary head,
My Mercy will be your comfort and my Love will be your bed.

'If you've done ill by detaining my Word,
By stealing for avarice and demolishing the world,
Then you will have the night for tormented remorse,
My wrath will be your nightmare and your bed a grave for your corpse.'

The Master packed away his books
And released the boy on tenterhooks-
'You must be glad to finally escape',
'Au contraire, I wait eagerly for a new day
In God's immortal landscape.'

Samah Khan

No tears left to cry by

I was once a stormy weather,
A grey cloud in a darkened sky,
A white mist on a moonsoon night,
A child's eyes, unafraid to cry

But now
I am a calm sea that has seen much sorrow
A fading cloud you won't find tomorrow
A settling fog like forgotten dust
An old lady's eyes, that have given up

I have no tears left to cry by,
There is a drought in my soul.

I was once a raging tempest,
A fearful gale the ships forestalled;
A raging wave no man could best,
A shimmering waterfall that amazed and enthralled

But now
I am a sleeping fiend lying dormant in the blue
A rushing breeze that won't matter to you
A receding wave that everyone climbs
A dried waterfall, worn out with time

I have no tears left to cry by,
There is a drought in my soul.

I await the day when my skin is pricked
And the running blood will prove me of the living,
I await the day when my eyes cloud over
And I can cry again, (my) tears embellished and unforgiving
But for now
I have no tears left to cry by,
There is a drought in my soul

Samah Khan

Null and void

If you strike me
I shall not feel the sting
For the sting has possibly been there all along
Like an aggravating itch that no one scratched away.

If you strangle me
I shall not struggle for breath
For I have been choking on lies and deception all along
And have been wrangled free of meaningful words.

Likewise
If you kill me
I shall not feel the pain of death
(Nor its bliss)
For you cannot take the life of that
Which has never lived at all

Therefore
If you hurt me
You shall get nothing but palms reddened from the sin
And I, nothing but release from misery
that has long left my embrace
For the warm arms of another soul
Which has not yet given in to darkness

Samah Khan

Of men and mice

I mince not words nor mice nor men
And I do not fear them whatsoever
But I do dislike them when it is my closet they invade
Looking for old things to break and sever
I escape mice and the other-for they both are infidels
Scurrying away from the heat of the battle;
Men and mice both cause a hefty chaos
Though they walk not louder than a mere pitter-patter;

I have turned many men into mice
And let many mice out to stray in the street;
(What I have learnt is true, though anything but nice :)
Neither men nor mice trace the footfalls of their feet.

Only men of fortune are so fortunate as to profess to virtues
While cleverly understating each vice;
I have learnt little of consequence in all my adventures
And one is: Never trust men or mice.

Samah Khan

one true love

That which keeps my sense alive
Is not the Science explained through the ages,
Nor the History of all the bloody battles and equally bloody conquests
Nor wars, plague, fires and people
But what I have learnt from my forefathers
And their forefathers (who constitute my long ancestry)
Is that never believe what you've been taught,
Until you've learnt it yourself

I've loved God-He was a panacea for every trouble
Growing up, pains and glories,
Battles fought and won
And had I listened to my pagan ancestors,
Or anyone else for that matter-
I doubt I would've learnt the entirety and satisfaction of His Love
Which stretches over boundaries like fog on a monsoon night,
Crossing oceans and continents, people and places,
Men and cattle;
His Love alone lets me lie in bed knowing that though I erred in many ways
(As humans often do) , none could belie the candor of my belief
Or say that I sin as often as he does

And if there's a singular thing I've learnt
From my forefathers and their forefathers
Is that never believe what you have been taught,
Until you've learnt it yourself

Samah Khan

pain in beauty

There is pain in your beauty
And it hurts me to look at you
My own self-esteem faltering in the throes of such perfection,
God-made, I cannot create it
And when I look at you
All I see reflected in your beautiful eyes
Is my incompetence

There is pain in your beauty
For me, if not for anyone else
At one end of my loyalty, is steadfast pride
And the other end, which is inclined towards my wishes,
Is envious of what I can never have
And you have it all
Though you are too blind to see
That you are the epitome of perfection
Maybe that is where your flaw is:
Not being able to distinguish your blessings from everyone else's
But still
All I see reflected in your chiseled features and strong face
Is my incompetence

Samah Khan

Pain is a plenty harried thing

Pain is a plenty harried thing,
It too is in plentiful pain.
Pain too prays for reprieve from the Lord,
It too wishes for a merciful end;
Pain has pained itself with the painful realization,
That it is the root of the cause of the source of all pain;
That is why pain is a plenty harried thing,
For it too is in plentiful pain.

Pain is a plenty harried thing,
It too hopes that the morrow starts at leisure
And that maybe it could rise (one day) from within itself
And become its prodigal brother: Pleasure.
We blame pain, we hate pain but we all go seeking it,
Pain doesn't stalk us, we stalk pain;
If it wasn't for us, Pain would yet be an unknown hermit,
For it too is in plentiful pain.

Pain is a plenty harried thing,
It too gazes into the stars and watches the days go by without reform;
Pain grieves for the pain it feels deep inside,
Pain too struggles against exploit and harm.
Pain is the seedling of the plant of the tree,
Of Life, which is nothing without this pain;
And I do not crave Pain and it does not crave me,
For it too is in plentiful pain.

Samah Khan

penance of the dying

My heart bleeds under the weight of my penance
And with each tear that I shed,
Ten drops of blood and sweat are freed
And then there's nothing left

Show me a valley where men forever sing,
And I'll show you ten where they do nothing but cry;
Tell me of Paradise where men forever live,
And I'll tell you of Earth, where they, forever die

The world is evanescent, like the flow of a stream;
Which ripples when perturbed, freezes over when angered,
And dries up when overlooked;
It is ever fleeting, like a pleasant dream,
Bane of one's existence, for dreams scarcely deign to appear (unhampered)
(As there must be a distinct bank, to every flowing brook)

My heart bleeds under the weight of my penance
And with each tear that I shed,
Ten drops of blood and sweat are freed
And then there's nothing left

I must live out my life in penitence,
Of the sins I've done, and the pain I've caused;
'Tis not that I was born as a child into peccadillo
'Tis only that the world prefers me flawed

Show me a land where animals live, liberated and free,
And I will show you ten lands where they are hunted for game;
Show me a rose that grows into the tickling breeze,
And I shall show you a dozen that wilt by the day

My heart cries under the strangling strength of the throngs of skeptics,
Who click their tongues and stifle mine;
I cannot defend myself, and so I am left
With nothing except contrite repentance to offer
And nothing but a sorrowful recollection to leave behind

Samah Khan

prayer of the leaf

The leaves curl with the dusk of the day,
Like cats they coil and shrink;
They bend their green (or such) crowns as if to pray
And raise it not till the sky grows pink

When dawn breaks through the hazy night,
Like cats they stretch with an unsuppressed yawn
The tree seems unbent and increased in height
As if it had swollen in the pride of dawn

Then they bathe and lave in light shower
And dress in golden beams of the sun
Until they glitter and gleam and glower
And their prayers are undone

What if they said:
"Oh Lord, give us beauty,
So we may remind your slave of his debt to You;
And he may remember his Holy duty
To stay a servant steadfast and true".

What if they said:
"Oh Lord, give us life after sleep takes us away,
But then let us wilt to yellow then black,
So man may bear in mind the patent end to his worldly stay
And that at one point, there is no going back".

Samah Khan

Secret Lover

I do not know the feel of a lover's caress-
But I have been told it is like being touched
By the barest whisper of the softest petal-
A tickle, a laugh, a short moment of ease
And then once again the world begins to settle.

I do not know of the sweet exchanges between lovers
When the shadows grow long and the world stops short-
I have not felt the tickle of words that (like a light shower)
Trickle past the ears and into the heart-
Opening up closed doors of a late blooming flower.

I do not know love, yet I speak of it-
I do not know pleasure, yet it is what I crave.
I value honour and valour and above all, faith
And the comfort of no bed beckons me more than my grave.
I know pain. Yea-I know it well,
It is constant-like a shard of glass driven through my veins.
And you amplify it tenfold, yet you know not
I know the root of my insanity, yet, I am not insane.

You do not know me
Rather, you do not wish to know-
What is there to say that hasn't been said before?
You do not love me
I do not wish to know-
All I seek is a coward's end so I can feel no more.

Late at night, I can sometimes hear your breath
Brush past the deep recesses of my soul-
When the feeble light of the moon shadows my modesty,
The darkness of you swallows me whole.
I sometimes think I see you in my reflection-
Or in the beams that creep through my diaphanous shades
And in a secret chamber deep inside my mind
You are a constant image that never fades.

Late at night, I clutch the blankets between my cold clammy hands
And my cold nose turns red while a still colder heart turns blue-
I sleep fitfully, discontented-
Each fibre of my being searching for you-
And sometimes I leave the windows open in the peak of winter,
The cold oddly warming my broken limbs
And sometimes I wake up to the softest caress
And find a secret lover in the fleeting winds.

Samah Khan

Secrets

I:

I wonder at secrets sometimes-
Fickle-minded fellows that remain quiet awhile
Till a soft word from fate undoes them
And then they come away, scattered, nude, bare and plain.

I wonder what would become of us-
You, I and all those around who are swaying in the soft melodies
Of clandestine affairs-some dangerous,
Others merely flawed-
What would become of us all if one day
Fate lost its Pandora's Box

And it fell forth with secrets from the heavens like rain
And we'd all know what the other hid-
Be it December or otherwise-we'd all be stark naked
Like autumn trees-decrepit, with leaves lying at our feet
For anyone to have a tumble and a laugh in
And harsh is such a predicament

I dare not wonder anymore
For I have my own secrets to protect
But Fate does not adhere to my silent fortitude-
Perhaps it will let down its guard and I will lose all
'Tis the evil truth, with malice as its veil-
And when removed,

Half the world would die of ecstasy,
While the other half would simply die

II:

If my secrets would speak, I fathom they would say,
"What if we are buried alive and were found later-
In some other time, some other era, some other period-
Would people laugh at us while our keeper would have
Gone to the grave to protect us?

Would they interpret us as babes born of naivety and inexperience?
Or would they frame us beneath glass
And allow others to ogle at our lost miseries?
But what good is it to stare at (in wonder) when everyday these very people
Do the same to conceal our successors, praying they are never found?
So leave us be, if you know what's good for you,
Leave us be
And let sleeping dogs lie
Samah Khan

shadows on the wall

Shadows on the wall

I envy you, shadow,
You are my counterpart and yet I feel like we are rivals
I feel like life is a contest of wits
And the name of the game is survival
Maybe I don't know where to draw the line
And in that game, I am losing
I am losing
And in that game I can see I'm losing
But you seem fine all the time

I envy you, shadow,
You come and go as you please
And though it takes two to play this game
You always hide, and I always seek
Maybe I don't stop to think enough
And I don't get the things I ask for
I don't get the things I ask for
And I can see I don't get the things I ask for
But you seem fine when the going gets tough

I envy you, shadow,
You can stand tall when there is little light
When the morning does you no favours
And the afternoon steals your height
Maybe I'm jealous that you follow me around
But get to be an outsider who's watching my every step
You never try to pick me up when I fall down
You don't need to breathe when I lose my breath
And when I don't want to be alive
And am troubled by pain and fear
You stalk me like a laughing opponent
But when I leave, you disappear
And when I don't want to be alive
And my system is blocked by frost
You seem warm with smiles of taunt
And though in the dark I am still within myself
You are all but lost

Samah Khan

Simplicity of you

I cannot define you-
You are indefinable
You're the epitome of God's finesse
You are undeniable
You are best described as the wind-
Unseen but felt like a stranger's caress
One who cannot be touched
But touches nevertheless.

You are my salvation
My saviour, my friend-
If my life were to be called a hollow tunnel
You'd be the sole light to guide me to the end.
I know no life after you
Like I knew no life ere
You are shade on a summer day
You are all the seasons of my year.

I see you and I
In a distant dream
Frolicking along in the meadows of Eden-
The grass green as life, the sky a delightful blue,
The rills bubbling over with mirth-

I see you and I,
Faces rosy from the health of the last embrace
Eyes sparkling with mischief, bereft of pain-
Hands tingling with want
And a warm feeling that wraps us head to girth

Samah Khan

tell me where it hurts

I talked to the sun one fine day
With tears streaming down in curious haste
He cocked an eyebrow and beamed a ray
And asked, disconcerted 'Why the long face? '
I hung my head and looked properly meek
And said, 'I've no one to trust, and my shoulders are weak;
If the burden is large and I must bear it for long,
I wish for a companion on whom to lean on'.

The sun smiled compassionately and knowingly replied,
'I'll be your friend to love and to hold,
I'll be the one in whom you will confide
I'll shine on you sunbeams braided from gold; '
And then he warmed me from head to girth,
And sang softly, 'Tell me where it hurts? '

The day went by in pleasant verse
As he and I did at length converse
I felt my encumbrances slip away,
But, unbeknownst to me, so did the day.
Slowly, the sun began to fade in the sky
With ignominy it began to wave goodbye
Leisurely my millstones returned to me
As the avowed friend ceased to be.

I talked to the moon, who rose from amidst nowhere
Was drifting to the clouds, before my tear-stricken face became clear
Asked he without scruple what my woes were
And what misery my heart did incur
I told him what I'd told his sibling before
That my world was crumbling to the floor

The moon, with a bold grin said rather cockily,
'Take me as your confidante and you'll never need another
I'll go through it all with you, I swear, you'll see,
I'll be by your side until forever.'
I nodded with ecstasy, my spirits alight,
Nimble-footed and my future shining bright
I thought to myself:
('Oh, moon, you give way to weary travellers
And you've saved yet another pilgrim')

We talked through the night in muted tones,
It seemed that my heart and soul had grown
All the ills of my past began to seem trivial
All the tears and curses seemed like drunken drivel
The moon inspired and held my hand
Through the breeze he blew, strand-by-strand
And said, in whooshes of air which cooled me from head to girth,
'Tell me where it hurts, child, tell me where it hurts'.
And I no longer felt lonesome and a victim of mistrust,
I held my head high and spoke with august

But then the moon began to shimmer away
Into the light poking at it from within the sky
The black turned to blue, the blue turned to grey
And the moon was gone before I could even say goodbye

And then came you;

For many nights and days you warmed my heart,
I felt my wretchedness begin to depart.
We walked together at the edge of the sea,
Our feet wet and our hair left free
No belief of love was left wanting, and I,
No long snivelled despondently, but truly did cry
And I learnt that tears of joy revive the soul starved of affection
And the hunger slowly leaves you, replacing in its stead blissful perfection
You and I made ringlets in the sand
And castles in the sky

You held me close and whispered in my ear
'Tell me where it hurts-tell me every single fear,
And I shall slay any dragons that haunt you in the night
If there be any obstacles, let me be the one to fight'
Elation filled me, as I said,
'With you, the hurt has fled'.

But then you left, why did you leave?
And all I did was wait, why did I not grieve?
Now my breast is heavy with the weight of two unwanted hearts
One given to me, the other torn apart
I did not shed a tear for you,
Nor did I stalk the path you tread
All I did was lament that the sun and moon were far better company
For with due interlude, they do return
While you, once left, your cowardly back bared to me,
Never once came back to reclaim the heart I long since burnt

Samah Khan

the fear of fear

Fear is not what I am afraid of.
True, it is a frightful thing to fear;
But the fear of fearing fear is overwhelming
Especially when its form becomes sheer

Fear is like losing a tree of shade on a bristling day
Or losing your breath when you fall below the sea;
I fear this fear of fearing these fears
And it is this fear that is part and parcel of me.

Fear is like loving without being loved back,
Fear is like leaving without being left;
And the fear of loving and leaving and being loved and being left
Is opposed by the fear of not fearing anything
And being an empty vase, noisy and bereft

I fear not death nor do I fear life,
But I fear the fear of both as my peers;
If I could release one fear from my fears
It would be the fear of fearing these fears.

Samah Khan

The jagged edge of miracles

Prayer is instinctive of the lips-
Like soft petals it falls from our eyes-
Desperation intensifies the flowers to stone,
Hearts are put on trial, while prayers are tried.

And then one day-Lo and Behold! -man finds a sympathizer in God,
Who Bestows miracles upon His servant-
(As they come to Him, easy and swift)
And man is prompted to raise his tear-stricken face to the Heavens
And belatedly Thank the Lord for His Gift.

But each miracle comes with a bit of a twist-
Like each river eventually runs into a bank,
God Teaches a valuable lesson with all He bequests,
So we know where to turn to and we know whom to thank.

Perhaps if we thanked God more often for what we had,
Before begging for more than we could undertake,
God would keep from us the jagged edge of miracles-
The butter knife that could turn into a stake.

Samah Khan

The Nymph and I (warning: it's kinda long)

THE NYMPH AND I

1.

It was a time, all beauty lost,
Not to age, but in utter grief;
Upon this epoch, what had me engrossed,
Was a nymph who lived by the creek

Day upon day, I saw her rise,
Like a fallen angel from the leaden sea;
Which hardly e'er moved, save for in disguise,
As rain or as mist, but forever with insularity

I would stand next to the large oak tree
Strewn with leaves and grass and tears;
There she would swim from underneath the tree
Shadowed but yet unblemished and clear;

Walked I to her on one such meet,
Said I to her, in place of greet,
'What, nymph, speak, is the secret of thy beauty?
What, speak, nymph is the secret of this, thy beauty? '

No modest bridal blush she shewed,
Nor any sign of discomfiture I kenned;
I took upon my palm a leaf and some coal,
Vigilant to see all her words penned.

'Speak now, dear nymph, what is the secret of thy beauty? '
Here she gave pause-her hair cascading over her shoulders in waves of gold;
Her eyes alight with mythical sight,
I, like the hidden bud of a flower, she like the petals all do wish to behold;

'Dear mortal being, dear daughter of Adam,
Why do you envy me?
My beauty is naught but a word and a glance,
But you, dear mortal, you are free'.

I did not comprehend at first as my eyes began to wet,
'Go sea', I said, 'take more tears from me, and find yourself manifest;
For it is almost as if it was I who wept
In the river you call thy home and thy nest'

'Dear daughter of Eve', she said in compassion,
'tis not that I wish to lie or deceive;
'Tis only that I am not built with your fire or your passion,
I am but a picture to behold but not to perceive.'

'Yet', I persisted, 'you must have some counsel,
For your words are wise and you speak the letter;
You do not sing of oddities, nor speak of the world in frill,

But you sing of truth and pain, which is better.

'Many an eve have I heard from you sung,
The songs of Odysseus, Achilles and Jung;
The songs of myth and veracity and all that lies betwixt,
Before the dusk wanes and you disappear into the faint mist.'

'Ah', she declares, I do not know, whether in lyric or in speech-
For by her, both sound melodious and saccharine;
As if sweetened by the honey of the yellow jackets, and seen over by the mythical
songbirds-so sweet,
Like a child's throaty laughter, tears of joy, whisper of the leaves, the broken-hearts
voice and all that lies therein.

'Ah', she said (I digress, pray pardon me)
'You wish to know of some magic, I gather,
Some witch's stew made of herbs and hexes
Boiled just right and rinsed with butter to lather? '

I nodded, eager, keen of ear,
Willing to comprehend and fervent to hear;
She took from her hair a burette made of shell,
And in her palm she bared not an oddity, nor a spell

There it sat, between the ring at her thumb and the littlest one,
A rock the size of a heart, smooth as a babe's head be;
I stared not, gaped not, nor did I poke fun,
But cried out in agony, 'Why doth thee taunt me? '

'Nay', she said. 'This be no ordinary piece of boulder,
This is a gem, that makes one's beauty grow bolder,
I used it to call back Poseidon when he fled,
Yea, many a virtuous man has this gem misled'.

Her eyes then took a shade of reminiscent mahogany,
Where before they were dark and animated brown;
And I could see the past flicker dimly between each eyelid,
And thereupon the ferry of relief did my craft of doubt, drown.

I took it in my hand and she, ran away quite readily,
Swam below and disappeared into the fog-
Where once the sound of dusk did heat my blood,
That night, it spoke in rather pleasant brogue;

2.

Went I on my way, in the aisle of the lost,
Next to the house of dearth and misplaced rot,
In mine own I spied the usual clutter of my gaucherie,
Now to be replaced by an elegance my heart did foresee

I slept upon my bed that night, the stone tucked away under my quilt,

One hand I did place upon its face, the other on mine own,
And that night, ah the dream I dreamt!
(It could not be for it to be known.)

The sun did come in no haste out of norm
And the mirror stood by its usual place,
I brought it forth and studied my form
And then slowly I studied my face.

Ah! What beauty I beheld! At first sight it seemed not mine,
But yet the face and body belonged to me!
It seemed unchanged in some ways and in others
It seemed transformed unequivocally.

I took to the streets in a brazen pace,
My head held level, eye to the sky
And the sun throwing shadows off my face.
No passerby looked, but better yet, none scorned,
And some even did so much as to accolade,
Not sycophantically, but quite genuinely,
For once I knew what it was to blush at praise;

My kith and kin all noted the change,
My friends and foes for once thought alike;
Many a flower was given; many a kind word was taken,
'Oh my, dear child, you look warm and alive!'

I was allayed of grief for that one day,
But grief as ever with life does return,
And after twelve days and twelve nights,
Restively my heart once again did turn;

So I went back to the very same place
And stood my once devout vigil beneath the same oak tree,
And there I waited upon the nymph who dwelled therein,
In the silent sad reflective sea;
'twas almost the morn when a flawless form
Jumped up to the bank and shook hair free from her head;
She noticed me not, so I did not inform
Yet I watched as from her locks the sea she did shed.

'Dear nymph, pray, what is the secret of thy beauty?' I whispered,
'What is the secret of this-thy beauty?'
'Do you not have the gem I had bequeathed?'
'Indeed, that is the secret of my beauty.'

'Aye', agreed I, 'but now I am done,
I feel as if I am the moon who had set for a while,
And made way for the rising of the glorious sun,
But if the gold can enchant, so can the night's blue well beguile.'

'What say you?' the nymph befuddled inquired,

'Do you mean you would rather be the moon than the sun?
Do you not know that people play in the day,
And by nighttime do not they all run? '

'tis true', said I to beget a short truce
'They seek their hearths at the end of the day.
But had it not been for the night', steadfastly I mused,
'Would they not have spent all their years in foolish play? '

'Had it not been for the night, would they have prayed?
Had it not been for the moon, would they await the day?
Had it not been for the darkened hue of the hour, would lovers meet?
Had it not been for the night, would the trees ever sleep? '

The nymph, astonished, looked awry,
Then smiled with joy I did not recognize,
'Seems you have learnt the lesson I wished to teach',
And with that she took the gem and threw it well out of reach.

'Why do you throw an object of such use? ' I cried,
'Nay, 'tis no more than I stone which had you entranced
I believed you would find yourself more favorable, so I,
Deceived your begging soul with the gift of (self) assurance.'

'Cruel nymph though you are', I said, but not harsh,
'Your lesson I did take and placed deep within my heart;
I have learnt that if I can face my reflection with ease,
Then it doesn't make a difference who else I can please.

'Your words have had a bearing upon my weakened convictions,
But now that you are no longer threatened, be open with me;
What is the secret, dear nymph of the deep, of thy splendor?
Dear nymph, what is the secret of this-thy beauty? '

'Tis but a nuisance in the guise of a boon,
I feel it a hump on my back-bone;
I cannot live under the sky when 'tis the charge of the moon,
I can endure life in the bright morn alone.

'Unlike you, mortal, I am cursed to rove the earth for many centuries,
When death does come, it comes slow and leisurely.
I cannot feel pain or grief, but neither love or gaiety,
Only the sporadic exploit of a warrior who craves naught but my beauty.

'You are free, dear child, while I am not,
As it is my secrets you seek, yours are what I have always sought,
Do not fret for what you do not own, but rejoice rather in what you've got,
For with every mourning human of the night, ten drowning nymphs are lost'

Samah Khan

the pretence of success

The pretence of success

Failure does not bode well with me;
The taste is like delving into a cup of the much needed
Morning coffee-and ending up with raw beans in your mouth.
But yet I awaken from divine slumber
And walk out into the world looking my best
Yet feeling my worst.
Sometimes I pray I could imitate what the world sees
And what I feel-them being the complete polar opposite of each other
Doesn't help my cause much-
But I still wake up to the call of the sun
With the pretence of success masking my failure,
Hoping it does not become manifest
In the times my voice breaks when I laugh.

I spend my time in the company of people who seem equally desolate,
Comforting them through mutual understanding of pain.
To them I am what they are not: satisfied with my position in life,
Accepting what has been given with open arms
But yet when the actual test arrives, it is them who boast success
While my comforting self remembers that while it spent its time trying
to ease the pain of other's, it forgot to ease its own.
The pretence of success is no match for good old failure
And I do not pretend any longer, but declare to all who will not shut
their ears to me, I declare:
I am a failure.
I am a failure.

Samah Khan

the thought of losing you

The thought of losing you is no less than a catastrophe,
Even such a notion in itself is a disaster.
Suns and moons have faded away all my life,
This is one talent I can claim to have mastered.

Yours has been a presence I have needed
So badly that my gut clenches when you are away;
You have conquered and I have conceded
You have been both my healer and the chaotic fray.

The thought of missing you and lying through my teeth
About being alright and having grown
Makes me sick and weary and weak
And this is one talent I cannot claim to own

Samah Khan

'tis not the fear of death in slumber

'Tis not the fear of death in slumber
That keeps me awake night after night,
But rather the thought of waking up
In another day just like the last-
That is the cause for my fright;

How could but a few days shatter illusions that
Had built within my breast for many a year?
How could every resolution, every dream,
Every hope be drowned in the intensity of a singular tear?

'Tis not the fear of losing hope
That keeps me awake night after night,
But rather the thought of waking up
In another day where there is still time to envisage
All that I yen for: that is the cause for my fright

Now I am fearful and afraid of an uncertain future,
Where there will be no telling one melancholy day from another;
And there will be no knight in shining armour, nor any saintly figure
Nor will there be forever the sanctuary of my mother

'Tis not the fear of loss
That keeps me awake night upon night,
But rather the thought of waking up and gaining something,
In company with the fear of losing it-
That is the cause for my fright;

And you may deem me a coward for this, my crude demise,
You may say I threw away fortune, for I threw away my life;
But in the clear limpid eyes of death I see sanctity
That in life was never mine to be;

So, 'tis not the fear of death
That keeps me awake night after night;
But the fear of living another day
That has rendered me vulnerable to a coward's flight

Samah Khan

To Dad

A creak as the gear falls into place
And then a protest from the screeching wheels-
Off we go: I, the midget twitching compulsively in the backseat,
He, the giant with the shiny midnight boots.
A storm rumbles in the backdropp as the engines get to work
And I cover my ears with pink palms, crinkling my nose and squinting against
The glare of morning.

Mother packed a hefty lunch, though we said we'd be back by two-
But she turned to us a deaf ear as mothers often do;
And along the winding paths that narrowed down to slits in my obscure brain,
I saw the green grass wave at me as it danced in the wind:
Inclined and disinclined
Inclined and disinclined
In a joyous cycle that repeats history.

I remember that weekend like any other,
Where my father and I frolicked aimlessly, poking fun at each other,
Playing with blocks or bricks or pebbles-
And here is where I learnt the best lessons of my life-
From the serene ducks that waded about in the greying pond
To the hint of rain that sometimes touched the ground in the health of July.

Here is where my father sat me down and taught me to cross my legs
As we pondered the many mysteries of life-
Here is where I was duly chastised for all wrong,
And robustly praised for all right-
Here, among the weeds and the shrubs and the boulders
And the songs of bopping birds and the foxtrot of the squirrels
And the titters of the toddlers and the toddling of the trekkers-
Here, is where I was bequeathed the divine knowledge
That will become legacy in time.

And now, a decade forth, I miss him-
He is still here but perhaps I am not.
Perhaps, in my inevitable search for self
And a definition for my identity
I have left him behind;
In my haste to flower and bear fruit,
I have forgotten the seed from whence I came,
The seed that gave me stem and root,
The seed that bore my weight (sans distinction) from that of a wispy stalk
To the tree which I aim to become.

I have left him behind,
Somewhere between the carefree childhood
And the pursuit of individuality-
But on days when sooty clouds loom overhead
And nothing seems eternal or enduring-
I can walk to the park in the middle of the day
And bask in the protective shade of my father's shadow
Imprinted upon the white picket fence.

Samah Khan

Untitled

Untitled

...And it rained, and it snowed and it hailed all in one-
The sky held everything in place but for the sun
No leaves on the trees, on the bare boughs none,
For it rained and it snowed and it hailed all in one.

God's Wrath undone, they said in unison,
Flowers died in mid-bloom, right beneath the sun,
(Its watchful eye deceives no one) , But it was helpless when it rained and hailed and
snowed all in one.

So I closed my eyes and began to run,
That's when the rain and the snow and the hail had come undone,
I'd had enough-so they stopped (though they'd barely begun)
Right before I found out that it rained and snowed and hailed on me,
And besides me, no one.

Samah Khan

will you

Will you not walk a mile,
Where ten are asked?
Will you not hold on to the line
Over which the rest have surpassed?
Will you not hold the end of the tail
Of a generation gone bad?
Will you not be the vaccine that saved
The world that the Kings once had?

Will you not feed the poor and protect the rich?
Ask wisdom of men and purity of soul?
Will you not propagate the Message of God and man
And their relationship that makes one whole?
Will you not love thy neighbor and conciliate with your foe?
Use what you have and learn what you do not know?

Will you not liberate the innocent and imprison the shrewd?
Will you not praise the child and tolerate the imprudent?
Will you not lend a helping hand to aid a friend?
Will you not lend a listening ear to the protesting (fraught) student?

Ask God for nothing but Hope and Faith
And you might be able to change the world
Ask King Midas the value of riches and (spiritual) treasure
And your touch might change copper to gold

Samah Khan

Without You

Without you, the mundane morning clattering of the maid's cutlery,
Is naught but senseless noise; with you, it is music-
Without you, the biting summer sun in all its glory is barely more
Than a faceless speck on the horizon; with you I dare not confuse it.
For if the kitchen sounds didn't wake me up,
I would not wake up to you;
And if I could not make out the sun in this vast sky,
The hours we could be together would be a numbered few

Without you, humiliation is manifest, unhappiness is strenuous;
With you, awkwardness is poise and insanity is a device-
Without you, each white hair upon my head is a tragic parable,
With you, 'tis is blessing in disguise.
For if you were not there to make my falls seem like my victories,
I would not walk straight as a plank and rigid as a soldier;
And If I could not count the white hairs on my head,
I could not tell how far together we'd grown older.

Without you each bruise, each wound, each painful thorn,
Is just what it is: pain in its many forms;
With you, they are like insignias of my conquests-
And for you I'd walk over a hundred such thorns.
For if I were to fight-I would not fight for any country
Or any nation-as you are all those and more-
I would take upon my heart all burden worth the taking,
And upon my face I would wear the scars of my valor.

Without you, each crazy happiness, each moment of surprise
Or hope-seems hopeless and without fruit;
With you, I see the day in the night and the night past its hours,
And happiness where happiness is due.
For you are that crazy happiness, that moment of surprise and hope,
You are the light at the end of the tunnel, the night when I need respite;
You are the staircase in the dark and when I drown, you are the rope
That rescues my soul when my mind and body lose the energy to fight;

Without you, my sweet, I would be but a paling shadow,
Whose shape from dawn to dusk takes rout-
But with you I am the constant North Star-yet I am so very different
And that is why I am with you and not without.

Samah Khan

You and I

You and I

You and I are both caught in a tide of emotions,
Swept away by the ever present waves that lap at our feet
Like hungry tongues-hungry for passion in this love-starved world.
Begging raindrops drench us in their invocations,
As they behold a sight long since lost to anger and greed-
It is because of you and I that Nature has unfurled.

You and I both know how terribly transient our stay is,
For as the beasts who sit on rocks and mete out punishments
Are the very fathers that govern our every move.
There is no future in this perpetually shortening tryst,
As we will be bidden, so shall our senses be lent,
Then there will be no long-dead lover's tale to prove.

You and I- we are both worlds and worlds apart,
I, from below the shade of an aging but firm tree,
You the bird that flies above it with art;
We met somewhere in the tumble of the leaves, somewhere by the heart,
Somewhere where the tresses were attached to the scalp, yet soared free
Somewhere of which we were both a distant part

You and I shall not gain much from this love,
Save for a few moments of poignant feeling,
In a world that now forbids ardor and all its vested forms.
Perhaps in time, while our lives are at the close
We could merge our souls together and begin healing
Past the earth, past the sky, past the worldly storms
In Heaven where only love abides

Samah Khan