

Smog Beauty

The beat in my dead room is my mother.
Pulsating my bedroom walls empty
of picture frames,
pedestaling a disjointed altar
to the ground.

The dreams still come.

Green meadows
and turpentine soaked men. Five shooting
fountains. Electric water
under the smog. Lights. Camera.
Neon. Outside the dream,
my mother stuffs toilet paper in the cracks
of glass windows
where the summer monsoon had hit
our walls. From the ground,
I am picking pictures frames
in which my mother is beautiful.

My father standing beside her
full of win against her many courtiers.

Like a horse in a race
without a jockey on top.

Like a past promising epic love
for all. When I touch my stomach,
my hand falls through. Ulcers and infections.
Smog and smell of gasoline.

Lungs full of gray sun.
Browned. Loved epic
by Lahore's pollution.

What is beauty? I ask and ask.
And everyone consoles.

By the fountain, two men approach me.
And my body.

To hand over their phones.
To my friend.

She gets up to click their photos.

Lights. Camera.

Joke.

The men laugh. My friend smiles.

The world guffaws.

I sit by myself forever

inside its quaking belly.

Like a pulsating wall shaking off its clothes.

Like a picture frame with nothing

more to hold. Back home,

the smog might as well be

coming from an altar.

Its dust masks the winter sun.

Its smoke weaves the sky's clouds.

I am in my small garden

picking pomegranates apart.

The red seeds staining

all that could have been

my beauty.

God's jewels. My mother says.

Fresh sour fruit popping

in her mouth.