

Junior Division, Poetry

Youssef Wasef, St. John's

Such A Beautiful World (an excerpt)

I remember the nights you put me to sleep.
My teeth were already clean
The mint aftertaste lingering in my mouth
That cold sting settled on my tongue
Unrinsed toothpaste buried in crevices of bone.
Nothing we did then was ever fully complete
Don't waste time you're not promised, you told me
And, as none was promised
That implied every last moment.

I remember my distorted nose
Pressed against the window, cold to the touch
Forming a gray fog
Disappearing and reappearing with every eager breath.
It was dangerous to look.
But didn't you get curious, mother?
Didn't you want to see what the news anchors
With those monotone voices
Projected from faces warped in frozen terror were warning us
of?
Why only the strong men
With the samurai swords and the wide builds
Were to leave the house?

You must have been curious then.

For the mistakes that put us to eternal rest
Birthed from that traitorous curiosity
Aren't cultivated from spontaneity.

I remember your soft voice startling me.
Shame enveloped your face
Concealing the convivial facade of bright teeth
And deep round dimples like a shroud.
I remember I pressed my hand to my heart in fear
Feeling the throbbing, the warm, frantic surge of blood.
Sorry, Dear, you said.

You would then push the single blind down ever so gracefully.
You had a knack for that secrecy
Making the gentlest of movements, drawing no attention at all.
It was better that way
Hidden, secure.
It's not safe out there for us, Darling. Not us women.