

TAHIR HAMUT

**THE STONE MIRROR
WALL
SAWUTJAN THE ICE CREAM MAN
PRAYER**

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THE STONE MIRROR

I saw you looking in the stone mirror before,
dripping water, your idea was so close to me then.
Today you tasted the winter wind, a bitter taste.
The same depression, the same downcast features.
Two drops of the black night, your eyes!
You can't imagine a homeland you've never seen.
Where did you find the stone mirror? In a bygone age, or in your dream?
In those times all hearts were sand, were wind,
and they had a black smell that wouldn't fade.
Now, clouds crowd into the bottom of your ear, you can't hear,
you feel the mournful cold, you slowly lift your head,
loneliness follows loneliness, as sunlight sinks into sunlight.
Tell me, can I kiss you with frozen lips?
Tell me, will the sun that lights the stone mirror swallow us?
Goodbye my dearest, flee, get far from here!
But a tree will not defy the land.
Here it's still winter, the trees haven't yet grown leaves.
A handful of pale gold soul in my palm, in my fingers.
The spring season is my resolve.
Time is still long, like time itself.
Oh my dearest, tell me now: which one of us should die first?

November 1995, Ürümchi

WALL

At daybreak cold air brushed my face,
dawn's bitter smell is closing in.
The stars above me are small and high,
I stand wrapped in a coat of sheepskin.
The cold of Kashgar is nothing new,
nature is strange like my heart, and black as jet.
Up on a high wall I wrote these words:
My freedom—to remember, and to forget.
Last night's boiled water must be frozen by now,
the bark on the trees has probably split.
Rag shoes on my feet, a fur hat on my head,
my mood sours, I look around me a bit.
The sun will rise again from the tips of the trees,
in the east, in the mountains, still no dim light in view.
The wake-up horn will be sounded now,
Rizwan'göl, at that moment I thought of you.

February 1998, Kashgar

SAWUTJAN THE ICE CREAM MAN

On a familiar street where chilly winds stirred the firm city
in a cool season when desire and lust were forgotten
in a time when people whistled
to the lowly roadside flower's leaf
taking it for an iron bird
in conditions when no one could think of water or ice
in a place without boys longing to suffer and be men
without girls yearning for a thrill to quench their flames
I came upon Sawutjan the ice cream man

And before my eyes flashed
the weak and hesitant door
the humiliated bunk bed
the pockmarked table that gambled with fate
the constantly hungry half-open window
the melancholy four-legged chair
the spotless ceiling whose kin were senselessly slaughtered
This was a college dormitory
The dormitory where I first met Sawutjan

I thought
someone had inspired him to write a poem
as someone's apprentice he had learned a craft
someone had been his research topic
with someone he had opened a restaurant
he had worked for someone as an editor

Who could imagine Sawutjan making ice cream at daybreak
I haven't seen him
take off his clothes
ache with illness
become husband and father
take out a loan

tease his wife
vomit drunkenly
hit his child
dance
cry mournfully
and do so many other things

How miraculous that we keep on
for it makes no sense
I mean to say
we are miraculous

15 March 2015, Ürümchi

PRAYER

Every time
my two palms draw close to my face,
the light in my eyes
turns to silence between them.
It's true, I'm a sinner who takes care of himself,
who swallows his fury soundlessly.
When the heat of my palms and the wind of my breath
are joined with no help and no compromise,
my vague lips tremble without meaning.
When I hesitate shamelessly
amidst gratitude, songs of praise, blessings
I recall that a camel passed through a needle's eye.
Straining to understand love
I confirm that it's an elliptical field.
When the steady voice filling the universe
throws me off balance
I stroke my face with my palms.
Perhaps I do this too rudely, too quickly,
because there's something I'm hurrying to do:
I must find an old crow
I can lovingly call Dad
and look toward longingly!

November 2015, Ürümchi