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Song for My Sisters

You were two I think,
only beans in this world
but women in another.

Who were to be the coaches
through my clumsy games,
or the mortar binding tradition
to honour.

Love is an unbreachable mass,
Mama taught me.
It's only moved
from one place to another.

You'd both already taken root.

To be part sister
in a brother's body
is a special kind of cruelty.
But in a world already burning
with what it means to be a man,
maybe that
is the only mercy.

Apophenia

You appeared
to a chorus of
old men's cracking knees and backs
as we straightened up out of sajdah
at Friday prayer,
your face unmistakable
in the mosaic patterns
on the walls of the masjid.

Day by day, I stayed there gazing,
longing once again
for the sharp lines of your eyes and mouth.

The imam grinned proudly
mistaking my obsession for piety.

Fasted, or maybe just forgot to eat
until like you, I became
a shadow of lines and angles.

I began to inch my way towards you
on memory's dusty beams.

Gravity

An insignificant thing
lacks the needed weight to attract,
laws state
it will barely inspire a reaction.
An insignificant thing
will always try to accrete,
even if hate is the only available mass.

Let it build
until you collapse alone
beneath your own weight.
Then for a moment
you will become a fire on the horizon,
beautiful
and impossible to ignore.

IBN Salam

This is the story of two stars
and the ever present third

whose collision with Layla
had first sent her hurtling
into Majnun's arms,
the third to whom
she was always fated to return.

This is the surrender to grief.
The ignition of a much greater madness.

Only this Layla wasn't taken
by a cruel, cosmic whim –
she escaped of her own volition.

Irfaan

means knowledge, that much you'd heard.
But knowledge of exactly what sort?

It's a knowing of God, our daughter told you,
something like nirvana. The love you left behind
in your struggle to adapt.

That same daughter told you love is a mass,
a root sunk deep.

You thought that a threat like you
thought life a race.
That seed in you
is just now starting to sprout.
Don't hurry love,
this alone is our wish