

# Love poem for the reflection in the mirror

A.M. FAHAD

The earth splits itself open in cold streams of water  
And the trees sway to the wind and bend with all their glory  
Leaves fall and leaves grow  
Colours fade and colours change, for you, they do  
With the rustling of the leaves and the shades of the skies  
With a dog standing on its hind legs with its arms  
Clasped to your waist, singing you lullabies  
The bed turns warm when your back needs something soft  
When the wind passes through the lonely corners of this city  
With your back against the world  
You look for some quiet  
And the birds give it to you with their songs  
Soft sunlight on your cheek  
A flower on your ear, and a gentle autumn breeze  
I will not even begin with the skies  
To begin, you need a starting point  
There is no start, and there is no end  
Tell me you don't think  
It's not all for you  
Look at me  
Tell me  
You're not full of love

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

# STATES

NOWREEN SARWAR

"You cannot take that past this point, ma'am."  
"Why?"  
"It's a fluid. You cannot take fluids beyond this point."  
"It's frozen. It's not a liquid."  
"I cannot let you take fluids on the plane, ma'am."  
"This is ice."  
"Step aside, ma'am."  
"Why?"  
"We need to check the rest of your belongings."  
"Why did I pass through those machines then? Are you letting people pass without those radioactive things working?"  
"Step aside, ma'am. Now."  
The issue, of course, was the gallon of water labelled "09.12.2019-Dhaka-Ecstasy".  
The Transportation Security Administration agent appeared to be unaware of the three states that water took on with temperature fluctuations. It was ice then. It was, however, water yesterday when she decided to freeze it overnight. This was the only jar which she couldn't fit inside the two pieces of luggage she had checked in. Plastic, bubble, and paper-wrapped jars of water occupied one. The other had her winter clothes and some postcards.  
Her son needed them, you see. God was in the rain.  
"You don't understand. It's ice."  
"What's your final destination, ma'am?"  
"Chicago."  
"And what's your purpose of this visit?"  
"I'm going to see my son."  
"May I see your ID and passport?"  
She handed her Bangladeshi passport, the ticket tucked inside, and the luggage tags. She handed him her driver's license. He examined the passport with great concentration and looked over the stamps from previous years: Colombia, Panama, Samoa, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Solomon Islands, India, and Papua New Guinea.  
The driver's license was from the UK. He glanced at her curiously in between flipping through the pages. Her eyes were on the mason jar. It sweated under her frozen white fingertips which grazed its narrow neck.  
"He lives in Chicago?"  
"No, he lives in Zimbabwe. If I'm going to see him in Chicago, then of course, he lives there!"  
"Don't use that tone with me, ma'am. I'm trying to help you."  
"I'm sorry. You're making me very tense. I need to take this to him."  
"What's in the jar?"  
"Rainwater. From God."  
At this point, the agent's body became rigid, far tauter, and more elongated than before. He seemed alarmed. His face, however, remained unfazed.  
"Is anyone travelling with you?"  
"No."  
"Ma'am, are you on any drugs?"  
"I'm fifty-six years old; of course, I'm on a lot of medication."  
"Do you have a prescription for the drugs?"  
"Do I look like a drug peddler? Yes, I do have prescriptions."  
"Show me."  
"Why on earth would I carry my prescriptions?"  
"Are you carrying the drugs?"  
"Of course, I am carrying the drugs. I need them to stay alive!"  
"Then why are you not carrying the prescriptions?"  
"Are you serious? Who carries prescriptions? Are you carrying your prescriptions now?"  
At this point, the officer frowned and grabbed his transceiver. He requested another officer's assistance in the lowest voice coherent to the receiver. She felt confused, but the situation humoured her. It was just ice.  
"What's the matter, Johnny?"  
"This passenger here with Alaskan Airlines is trying

to go through security with a jar of rainwater. The final destination is O'Hare."  
"Well, that's simply not possible, ma'am," said the woman with shiny, long braids which went down to her waist.  
"It's ice."  
"Ice is still considered a fluid, ma'am."  
"And the Earth is flat? It's solid."  
"You're more than welcome to put it inside your check-in luggage."  
"I can't! I collected the rain from all over the world for him. This one's from Dhaka. My luggage has more of these and forcing another in could break them all."  
The agents exchanged glances of mockery mixed with sorrow. This was a lady in her fifties, in an ochre salwar-kameez, hair oiled and braided, wrinkled skin, soiled Keds and fingernails, putting up a fight against immigration officers to take a gallon of rainwater inside a plane.  
Marvellous Tuesday afternoon.  
"Well, if you got so many other jars, why can't you discard just this one?"  
"God, God is in them."  
There were a pair of raised eyebrows, Johnny did not react this time either.  
"What do you mean God is in this water? Is it blessed?"



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

"Well, whenever I felt something, anything when it rained, I'd store the rain and write my emotions on the jars. I want to share my emotions with my son. That's why I have jars of jealousy, anger, sadness, monotony, but this – it's important. This is ecstasy. I was so happy when I stored this rainwater at home. My grandson had just been born. From my daughter. In Australia."  
"Ecstasy, the drug?"  
"Ecstasy, the feeling. Why on earth would I carry ecstasy, the drug in a jar, Johnny?"  
"Ma'am, this is your final warning about the tone. I can and will cancel your flight."  
"You can't do that! He needs to bathe in these. It'll cure him."  
"He's sick?" asked the lady with braids.  
"He's had cancer of the brain for years; he's been in a coma for about a month now. His wife said the doctors have given their answer. Now I'm going to heal him. I'll sponge his body. I brought these from Dhaka. The rain is marvellous there, you should visit. I also collected some in Seattle, but this rain has less oomph... You must visit."  
"Ma'am, we're sorry for your son, but we must comply with the rules we have. We cannot let you pass with this. It's mostly liquid now anyway. I'm sorry. Truly."  
Her small, mousy pupils gleamed. She popped open the jar without delay and drank its contents. The two watched in absolute amazement as she drank a gallon of rainwater, including the sedimented grime and dirt. She didn't wait for their permission. She swung her luggage in one hand and her jar in the other from the counter and sprinted towards her gate – relieved, knowing she would refill the rainwater when the seat belt sign turned off. God was in the rain.

The writer is pursuing a master's at University of Washington, Seattle and is a storyteller at heart.