

convince me to sit here
samar abulhassan

i build a lighted house and dwell inside. i slip a home inside
a book, tie red ribbon around the pipes to free the trapped
areas.

i drag a garden hose and water into the night.

(in this neighborhood, there are small fires and big ones,
carcasses of cafes and theaters and restaurants.)

this morning woke with a weight on my chest. last night
dreamt of my death, california storms above my remains. my
mother sends my sister-in-law out for scentless soaps.

your mother about to embark on a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage. between my rib cage and my belly, like the soft part of an infant's head, toothed edges.

i leave, press against my edge, which, if one less knot, or
crawl uninhibited or palm suspended, or fake jump or arms
sore from giving or pinky swear.

a child lifts a pomegranate to his ear, imagines planets, fist
fights, seeds of wondrous villages. (*mother, who are your
fellow pilgrims, those you brush fences with?*)

i do not memorize their coats. when we sit down to have an
experience with language together, i am aware of words
hovering at the lower lids.

flecks of color in dream: funfetti cake on paper plates
balanced on the laps of your friends. i eat out of silver bowls:
dhal, roasted vegetables, tamarind, rice, one-half of a
summer fig perfectly ripe.

for months i cannot hold food down for more than a few days at a time. a chronic pain which fumbles with its return mask.

i was always swallowing my words, afraid to speak, the young woman asks, “how do you spell *refugee*? we gather words together, let them live together for a while, then dissolve them.

his body weight presses into me, shuttles me into private
corners. dismantled, flickers of well-being.

i trace the skin of her suitcase, feels its weight against my
chest expand and lighten.

mother, walk around with a hand in the small of your back.
body knotted from preparations. I do not know how she
swallows or walks. (*convince me to sit here.*)

the sentence on a journey no longer circling in on its subject,
but i press on its insides to force an expanse: skin boils, a
gash, a streak of “impulsive behavior.”

i can no longer discern your deep sea lament or mine,
longing for your lost siblings.

mother, there are no prescribed prayers here. in the dark room, what wanes and swells, a sudden struck. i loved his hands, which formed their own knitting club, steering toward an esoteric language all their own.

threads of phone conversation with my mother, in which she tries to get me to grow my hair.

my skin hums next to his, decades of wounds softened by
tender collapse and slumber.

place phrases under a water glass. in saudi arabia it is
crawling into saturday. my mother has gathered pebbles.

a fragment or an eyelash. sea of faces. white garb to insist
we deliver our faces to each other, scruffy or clean, pores
wide.

