Between Here and Desire

(a collection of poetry)

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To my father,
who taught me how to see the world.

FOREWORD

Since January 2024, I have had the privilege of teaching Amina English, first through the closing chapter of her IGCSE Literature and Language and now into IB Higher Level. It is a joy to introduce this collection of her poetry.

I still remember one of my very first lessons with her. Asked to describe her classmates, Amina spoke of each of them with such warmth and consideration that I was quietly moved. It was the first time I saw the kindness that runs through everything she does. In her poetry, that same empathy allows her to write about life with grace, noticing the subtle perspectives that others might miss.

Amina has always carried herself with confidence, but over these years I have watched that poise settle into a quiet certainty about who she is. She is a passionate thinker drawn to philosophy, often fascinated by the minds that have shaped how we understand the world. As an active debater, she asks questions constantly and looks past the obvious. She also brings a wonderful humour into the classroom, and has shown great strength throughout her school years, growing more self- assured because of it.

In these poems, she keeps returning to the natural world to make sense of being human, linking love and grief to the stars and the seasons. When she writes of wanting to "*run my fingers along every inch of the fabric of the universe*," that is exactly the Amina I know: someone who wants to understand everything. Yet, for all her drive, she maintains a grounded humility, asking "*what good is it to make wisdom from wounds.*" She says what she truly thinks, using language that is bold and memorable.

One of the best parts of teaching is watching a student grow up and seeing what they are capable of. Amina will step into the wider world with real persistence and an open heart, and I have every confidence she will flourish. I look forward to seeing the good she brings to it through her words and her actions.

I hope you enjoy these poems, and that in them you hear the voice I have been lucky enough to know in my classroom: curious, fearless, and kind.

Ruby Potts
English Teacher, Harrow International School Bangalore

CONTENTS

The Road Back Home 2

Dust In the Wind 4

Astra 7

Sacrificial 9

Viva 11

Civilization 13

And I Bloom 15

Winged 17

Between Here and Desire 19

Bouquets 21

Made to Last 23

Birds 25

War On All Fronts 27

Sands Of Time 30
I'm No Poet 32
Stare Not at the Sun 34
Angelic 36
Wilt 38
Battlefields 40
Deer In Headlights 42
Life Imitates Art 44

Acknowledgments 46
About the Author 47

The road back home

I'll call you when I reach home
For I am someone else on the road;
So foreign; how I long to be
A million different people
At each left turn and changed speed

So long does this path wear me down
My destination drawing ever so close
Inches away from the relief I desire;
I've driven miles away from what I love most

And alas, at my journey's end
Back where the air has a familiar scent
Where doors are mine to shut, the rooms are big enough
To stretch at the day's end and be content

I have yet to call you, for I do not know
if it was me who promised to, so long ago
So long did the road wear me down
All that rubber burnt; as did my soul

And though I love my home's porch lights
I've many a sunrise to watch, far too many sights
For when I have seen the world, I can gladly be me
Close my eyes and rest at last; I have nothing more to see


Dust in
the wind

The reaper slumbers in the sands of time,
Awakened solely by the clock's midnight chime;

In the burrows of Eden's meadows where your love may lay
Watching from the shadows, he smirks at your every smile

Though the idle skies of dawn seem to immortalise
All of life's bounties; all that is to be desired

And the world in all its splendour and grandiose lies
Let not time deceive you, fall not for his wiles

For the horizons above to the dirt below,
New seasons seem to come and go

This relentless dance of comfort and change
That all mortal men are fools to time seems strange;

Time, who dances in the meadows in which you grieve
To him, the breath of life is but a fleeting desert breeze


Astra

A soul such as mine is lost
Halved a hundred times over, and
Bound to yours; doomed to search for you forever

In our stars above, praying they align
Grasping on to the worldly things you've held,
Claiming them to be mine

Your warmth is ever fleeting, the thought of you eternal
A midsummer night's fantasy- a newfound void
Now a hunger so profound and deeply infernal

Love made to be immortalised as Aphrodite did unto Adonis
Left as embers of dying constellations,
That'd once burned with so much promise

Thus I long for you, search for our place in the stars
For upon the dirt of this earth
Our love shall not be shared between hearts.


Sacrificial

Like a lamb to slaughter
I surrender thee
The death of innocence in my arms
At the hands of prophecy
Your sacrifice is written;
My cruelty determined,
To enact god's will:

So righteous is the face of your penance,
So just are these unempathetic eyes
Which yield no mercy for your sins;
No room to recognise
That soul which lives under your flesh
As being one of its own:
Another being that longs to live
Another man who has known

The taste of love, the warmth of home
That fleeting rush which comes
with every touch, in every poem
And like the blazing sun
The hope of seeing another dawn

— All stolen from your arms


Viva

To live again; to run my fingers
Along every inch of the fabric of the universe
Spider-spun silk caresses my skin
I want to know the touch of all that exists

I am lone, I am hungered
To eat from God's own plate would satiate
My craving to taste all the flavours of life;
The bitter and sweet; the lows and the highs

In solitude I stay suffocated,
There is no air I long to breathe
Quite like the air that's been polluted
With the dense fog of vitality

And in my veins I carry passion
The rivers of life flow within me
So when I bleed, I bleed to water
The dying forests that have sheltered me



12

The sky's been pierced by metal daggers
Whose light we're drawn to; moths to a flame
A mockery of the stars; we romanticise something mundane
We worship concrete, light and windowpanes

What peace do we find in their brutish countenance
Watching, towering, hiding the sunlight
Rest assured; they too burn yellow at night
Powered by a hundred cages; captors of human life

Confined together, yet so apart
Deadbolted doors, 50 square feet of privacy
Looking out to the world behind the safety of glass
But what happens next door's not theirs to see

O mighty skyscraper,
In thy fearful symmetry
How high you climb, how fast you fall

You were too quick to try and reach God


And i bloom

You were my birth
You were my death
and I; the flower that blooms once a blue moon
For in my birth you made me blossom
And at the beautiful hours of death
I wilt at your mercy;
How serene a dying floret looks,
For she knows in her heart
This is not death;
Once again she shall bloom
But in that spring
That flower that resurrects
Is a new birth,
I will not be the same bud
That grows
With such resilient fierceness
New bouquets are grown and plucked
While I hold onto the scent of you


Winged

Flightless bird, I hear your cries
Your great wings bound back
Bound back by the hand of God
He has birthed you in the glass cage
Of what could have been;
I hear your cries, which make skies shudder
Like the cries of battle, stronger than thunder
That shake the winds out of rhythm

As you watch planes soaring by;
Those hideous, heavy beasts
Who fly so seamlessly, mocking the essence of your being
Mutilating the sky with the blades they carry
Each one you see makes your heart heavy with the envy
That they live as you were meant to
And never truly live enough to feel


Between here
&
desire

Lord, don't kick a horse while it's down
Your love's stallion laying limp and lifeless in the dirt
Longing to be euphemised, craving his return to the Earth
Which lays beneath him, ever so out of reach yet so close
Still nearer than the horizon seemed on the days that he could run
Ever reaching; so hopefully distant, just enough
For a thousand worlds to exist in the space between here and desire
For at the end of that solemn road was the sun ablaze,
And when it'd set, the tales of a hundred stars and one man's voyage
Off his high horse now, no longer by the free winds caressed
Other than for sweet breezes to blind him with the desert sand
While he lays, dreaming of that faraway land

Bouquets

No one can pass up on a beautiful bouquet
Blooming with abundance
Which looks like a garden in your hands;
Whose flowers are so faultlessly arranged
Who never wilts, or shows her stems
Immaculate, for even in death, never looks strange
Whose scent so rich, so sweet
May tempt from afar, invite from miles away
Everybody loves roses,
But much to their dismay

Once you've killed and bound them up
So temporary is their beauty and vitality
How romantic is a gesture
That reveals your love is fleeting?


Made to last

Flowers of a field
Sprung together till bud from seed
Have seen the sun rise and fall like a tide
And shared the mercy of horizons crying
For a new eve had euphemised
This sweet escape twas their demise
For a mortal hath his affectionate say
Confined them to but one bouquet
The essence of love in its scent
A sight at which a true lover doth repent
Which once was love; lost its appeal
And the two: doomed to touch but never feel


Birds

Memories are like birds;
Never meant to capture
Yet we hold them by their tails, manipulate their feathers
They're creatures; fleeting and free
Yet we've turned to such reminiscent beings
Who cage birds; out of fear
That we'll never see one again,
That they'll all disappear
Too cruel, too selfish to look out at the sky
Where a thousand birds together fly


War on all
Fronts

I wake up to bells ever chiming
That sing songs of the hours to come
Wake up to their ringing, like artillery
Purveyors of a foreign war

My time has come, to play the soldier
And dress myself in a suit of armour;
Consumed by the look of its scars
Collateral damage of horrors much larger

Each day I leave the door, carrying
the weight of fortified steel on my shoulders
And beneath it a heart so heavy
With all the terrors foregone

I'd be better off wearing more armour
Perhaps I'd live longer, go further
Down this promenade of trenches
And familiarise myself with its evils

Yet to shield myself withal
Would take me longer to strip when night falls
No more wars to be fought, still
I'm three parts metal and one part mortal

And why I fight I know not yet
Born unto a battlefield
And forged so fearfully like a sword
Intended for victory

"Go far, for you are strong
Go as far as you may
We live in ruthless times,
Time could end today"

Do they know I'm but a pawn
In God's great game of chess
I fight; beside knights and kings
Even my greatest victory could never impress

We all bear arms, in secret
Every man his own warrior
Disposable until he has won;
Life is but a battle on all fronts


Sands of Time

Times are like the free winds
How they fly; ceaselessly ripping us apart
Like the tides upon our shores which crash so fast,
They rise too high to ever last

That beastly force which they possess
Sweet winds of change, these winds of time
By their will; our lives repressed
By their whims, thrown out of rhyme

And with our ships on open seas
We navigate them with our sails
Hostage behind glass, the minute hand
Assuring us when all else fails

The times will race like rabbits;
You and I are much too slow
When the sands of time have run out
There's still a world unknown


I'm no poet

To entice with deluded fantasies
Turned to songs I may dance to
These ballads I sing no more
For I once knew to paint roses
Of an intoxicatingly deep hue
But what good is it to make wisdom from wounds
When a fool bleeds the same red too?


Stare not
at the sun

She bore a heart
Quite like the sun;
That which shone itself far and wide
Into unknown crevices of each soul
Illuminated each woeful wile
The invoker of newfound hope
Its rays rekindled flames of passions unbeknownst
And held all within its wake
With its sunlight's sweet embrace

This being was merely a heart;
An amalgamation of perplexities
A poem waiting to be interpreted;
Art longing to be perceived

It knew not of
A mortal brave enough
Willing to blind himself
By staring into the sun
And thus; it beat no longer
And died a martyr;
An unseen heart.


Angelic

An angel's wings are grown
By painfully piercing her skin
As her bones cruelly contort and
She bleeds brutally in this war of flesh and feathers
How very grotesque, this sickening sight
Enough to throw even this poem out of rhyme
If only she were skin and bones
Her wings may pierce her quicker
Sooner would she be an angel
Less blood to watch, how
pleasant a struggle which may entice
those who long for a perfect little angel
in their lives


Wilt

In your arms I was born again
In the wake of your memory I begin to wilt
So vital and sacred is this cycle
Which makes cries be spoken in tongues
For even soil watered in the finest tears
Could not stop these petals as they wear
As the floret feels herself start anew
And has not a choice to hold on to
That warmth of the sun that wanes each winter
Which once caressed her now makes her wither
A beggar; so bare
Stripped of her love and in despair
Hath no choice but to succumb to the divine;
Nothing lasts forever
and flowers only wilt with time.

Battlefields

Come ye mighty soldiers;
On the cold front be men
Run for thine disposable lives
And may the fastest man win
Run past each other you must
To be the sole victor
Of a race so very just
At this field's end where you dream a prize
Awaiting you cold is your demise
For in this battlefield relay,
Did the spears of the adversary lay

Deer in headlights

So predatory with your praise
I wished those eyes looked at me with love
Not intently watching me, as prey
Like a deer caught
In the headlights of your fierceful gaze
I knew only to bask in the light
Of what I thought was the sun; what I hoped was
Your warmth: faithfully your clandestine fire
Faithfully yours, burning at the mercy of your desire


Life imitates art

I could force myself to love you
To squint hard and see the light linger at sunset
To speak in tongues; sing your favourite songs in languages unknown
And only hope as I stare into the remnants of a dying dawn
That the sun shall rise again soon
For love is a carefully crafted art; and art imitates life
Just as the colours on God's grand canvas
The ultimatum of divinity itself changes every hour only exceeding in beauty
I can only hope that there is no learning this art
That simply letting it express itself in the skies' many hues
Is the sole way to paint the picture of me and you

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Those I have lost, who have been a constant reminder to embrace the privileges of connection and life, every day.

The person I am today, and my motivation to write, to capture the world as I see it, would not be possible without all of you. You have built a life so rich for me that there is always something worth seeing, feeling, remembering, and putting into words.

About The Author

Amina Sharief is a 17 year old poet, avid reader, older sister and a musician, but above all a student to life. She began her writing journey long before she was old enough to spell the words she was eager to pen down, and has since honed this passion.

Her writing explores spaces between the mundane and the transcendent, specifically questions of mortality, time, love, memory and desire.

She is fascinated with the ability of words to capture the essence of an experience and to relate images to the surreal emotions and universal experiences they evoke.

Between Here and Desire is her first collection.