

Firas Sulaiman

Translated by Samantha Sulaiman

Lost

With extreme joy,
the lost man contemplates himself
as a nobody.
Walking gently in the jungle of days
he never considered that
the fruit of his clouds would fall this quickly.
Disrobed as a soul
inside of which a muddy continent flops.
No.
The mad lost man in the concrete jungle
seems quiet now
tying his horse
with a rainbow at the entrance of the supermarket.

Shepherd Goddess

1.
my shepherd goddess
hurry up, there are ten sheep on the remote edge of nature
they might fall into the emptiness
hurry up, my shepherd goddess

2.
I have no desire to say
but the endless shapes of the world's smells
are on your fingers,
I don't want to cry
but time has attacked with all its ancestors
and devotees
to break my thumb trying to roll the small ring in your nose
hurry up, my shepherd goddess
the fortune teller said that my days would
move to the rhythm of your bracelets' jingle

3.
gypsies go into the cold night
you are their daughter
who was delayed

a little
by the crazy wind;
you are their icon
whose glow combined with thunder
baffling them in their dark travels.
I'm the boy who they stole
and was forgotten close to the
remaining fire
near to the open trunk from which colors fly
near animals trudging through the moonlight.
hurry up, my shepherd goddess
here I am waiting
on the street of antiquity
for you to pass by
with your embellished dress
and your anklets
and the smell of a thousand natures around your waist.
here I am with my worn life
my skinny body aimed toward you
waiting
hurry up, my shepherd goddess

4.
your body is deeper than the sharp strike of belief
more interesting than the fog
stirred by the thoughts of god,
more beautiful than horses passing heaven,
I am always in your direction.
Prayers hard to memorize
poems that hide behind the writing
your senses that grip the future,
things I don't understand
compose me each time in front of you;
I believed that there was no need for me
I, who live in the house of your wind
my shepherd goddess
I believed

A Man in the Depths of Night

No one is luckier than me, happier than me
I am the man in the depths of night
peeling an apple
and thinking about god

as if I am thinking about moving the curtain;
is there anything more wonderful than that?
Always delicate
and heavy when I want
ready for anything, desiring nothing;
I throw my eyes as two embers in death's fire
and my heart as torn socks into music's hands.
I understand life because I don't care about it
as a child, as an old man, as no one
as a real philosopher
just because I don't live it
I don't care that they don't pay attention to me
they help me to achieve my desire that I shouldn't exist

A little bread and wine,
humid space for the wisdom tooth to grow
in order to imitate the power of nothingness

A man in the depths of night
slowly like a lazy mechanic
amusing himself by removing the tires of laws
without thinking about getting up to look at the thirty years that just passed.
Thirty years are just an accidental event,
spit fallen from the mouth of a consumptive man,
an upside down hat,
an upside down hole nearby the featureless corpse,
a blue desire with the shape of a medieval carriage,
an instant with vision so sharp because it's always on the edge of vanishing

A man or perhaps some creature peeling an apple in the depths of night
thinking how delicious to be alone
crying if he's able, for no reason
inventing himself thousands of times
ending up hitting his head against the wall as a good actor.
how delicious that he discovers that
he needs clean sheets more than he needs friends
that he needs two additional eyes to gouge out in order not to see
who enthusiastically holds the tail of
the uncontrollable dead cow of arguments

How delicious for him to roll the apple across the table
and watch the loose harmony of the tremendous biography of forgetting
and watch the angels, by day, empty the universe from God's head
and by night, dry their sweat with their blankets
in the barracks made of fog.
and because of their exhaustion,

they are unable to squabble or to dream

A body without desires
a man has one shoulder made of steam
and another shoulder erased by the incessant knocking language - his wife
and after a while, he will go with all his losses fresh to his end

No one is more vital than me
what I don't know is a lot
and what I know for sure, I don't need and doesn't fortify me
I sit in my shadow and if I walk
the distance from the room to the kitchen is full of universes
I don't borrow the outside because I invent it
and I have no urge to discover the inside because I am its pampered orphan child

A man in the depths of night smiles as God
because he hears neither the noise of vehicles
nor the profanity of the drivers of life's direction
because for a long time he walks no path and takes no means of transportation
because he feels all foams overflowing from the backs of work and speech
because he delights in seeing the foam drying.

I don't care that they don't pay attention to me
so they help me to make a quick paradise with a little evil and one jump of absence
I don't care, I am the man in the depths of the night
I invent myself a thousand times
and end it all hitting my head against the wall as a bad actor
and screaming with voice barely audible
no one is luckier than me
no one is happier than me

Saint

No one knows who offered him the privilege
to not think about the surface
and the depth
the saint who emerged from his dream
stained with blood
raven on his shoulder
broken black bell in hand
foam tortured on his voice
while he moved the language to its real corner.
The saint stumbled on his robe
fixing the crooked icon
and no one sees him

Bedouin Songs

1.

I am the one who washes the saddle of your horse
with the curl of my hair
Crying, I will seclude myself on the edge of the neighing
until your return.

2.

With the black scarf that you left behind
I tried to tie the wind
With your scarf, wet with my tears, I waive to you
I am the wounded one who fell into the expanse
A cloud, just like your hand, appeared around my neck
and gently dragged me to my mother's lap

3.

The angles who helped me sort the lentils
were the same as those who helped clean my dress of the dust raised by your horse

4.

Because you love dandelions
I will go to the end of the wilderness
to the farthest reaches
a knife in my hand
the scars of the wind on my face

5.

With a bleeding mouth
from the repetition of your name, I sing for you
With a bleeding heart
I scatter the birds who land on your foot prints

6.

My waist shrank a lot
because your hand didn't embrace it
your hand that used to toss the small intimate pebbles
toward the dry trunk of the tree
Here I collected all your pebbles
and I built from them tiny houses
wet with my tears
Houses, not destroyed by the sweat of your longing hands
But, by the wind
The wind, does it mean that you forgot?

7.

Your uncle bought seven sheep
they grew and got slaughtered
yet you didn't come
My sister was kidnapped by a strange shepherd
my mother is dying
and my grandfather's wisdom is of no help
the colorful bird of your sister died
the small blue radio broke
yet you didn't come
we ran out of fire wood
my hands got raw from fetching water
and two creases appeared above my brow
Many things happened
yet you didn't come
And the flowers left on the bank of the creek
are no longer picked
Our tents are fading
and the animals are ill
Come, the winter is cruel this year
I no longer want to adorn my calves in anklets
I want none of the gifts from the cities
Just in this crazy storm with everyone busy preparing to leave
sneak quietly
wipe my tears with your strong hands, kiss my forehead
comforted, I can die.

God

1.

God is now afraid
afraid in his cellar
like nobody could ever imagine
too old
untouched by time
unable to lean onto the tired shoulder of his memories
he needs no metaphor
to prove how much he trembles
he says no words
afresh he sags in the ancient inns of essence
in the narrow taut moment between what happens and what didn't happen
god, who's scared of everything
glowing in the shackles

2.

I am the god they lost when they got found
it's time to lean on myself and cry
with no one to help shake off the universal mosquitoes that land on my dreams
glory unto me, how I accepted the trick until my heart putrefied
how I accepted the name knowing it would be embodied
glory unto me, how I bestowed upon them my labyrinth as a question
to create me from mud and fear
I am God, it is time for me to send my angels and soldiers into retirement
to turn heaven and hell into a swing
it's time to leave this throne to emptiness
or, at least, to the humidity of my regrets

3.

God desires to sweat,
to get tired,
to sleep,
to go to the market,
to feel the candy melt in his pocket hidden from his greedy friends,
to gamble,
to get scared,
to lust after beautiful women, then isolate himself lonely in his room,
to become like ordinary people or failed geniuses,
to cloister himself to be different,
to stay up as a lover, as a guard, as ill
to become a father of a good or a bad boy
he desires to demonstrate against himself
to argue with those who replaced him with something worse
he desires to be misunderstood in another way
to write a forgettable book
to weep and get sympathy
to love nature
to hate life made by men whose pictures fill the screens
he desires to be as simple and naïve as his believers, as pretentious as those who don't believe in
him, and as lost and sensitive as those who are still considering him
he desires to love a woman, seek shelter in her then get bored with her
god desires to be a woman
and to know why the music turns him into a wide moment imprisoned in form
god desires to rip off the tight loose shirt of the word
to succumb to the calls of his body
god desires to dream
desires to live, live
then no matter if he dies tomorrow or after tomorrow
god desires to be.



Firas Sulaiman is a Syrian poet with multiple publications in Arabic, including six volumes of poetry and a collection forthcoming in English translation. He has also published a collection of short stories, experimental fiction and numerous articles, in addition to appearing in several anthologies. His work has appeared in English in *Banipal*, *The Wolf*, *The Manhattan Review*, *22 Magazine* and *Washington Square*. In addition, his work has been translated into French, Romanian, Spanish, and Croatian. He currently lives with his wife in New York City.