

## *Not As The Crow Flies*

In the beginning....at some point..... in the past.....at the start..... some pages  
lost.....some dropped out of bus and train windows.....some words stolen.....but these  
were saved.....

He shuffled over  
With a shawl around his head  
With stripes of red. Stripes of red.  
Some teeth were missing  
And in his language, asked  
“Do you go far?...Dharmashala?”  
I looked up squinting,  
Croaked: “Amritsar, amritsar”.  
A man to my left  
Dressed in shades of green,  
Sat very still. Oh so still..  
In two hands, held a gun so mean,  
His eyes were lowered.  
And he was still.

The black and grey raven sitting on top of the blue pole  
At the train station.  
Leading up to the sky.  
The dirty little barefoot girl, collecting half eaten food and coins.  
Her pants falling down. Red ribbons on her pigtails.  
The mad old man repeating the same indecipherable word. Over and over. Frantically.  
I'll never know what you see.  
Everything I see touches me.

The air is buzzing, the people buzzing, flies buzzing,  
buzzing, buzzing.  
The room smells bitter. Everything is dirt. This city is a snake pit.

This space is good, these smiles, they keep for themselves.  
Their eyes don't stray. They mind themselves.  
And glance at the stranger in their strange land from time to time.  
She is smacked up, smacked out on the train.  
On the nod.  
Scribbling first world folly.

The cool breath of the ceiling fan licks my skin. My arms, my shoulders and back.  
The violin dances. A child screams outside somewhere. I can barely open my eyelids.

My mind soars like a lost albatross. Like this. Like that. What I mean to say is I am dizzy.  
And I'm not sure I'm suitable for venturing out into the public arena.

And now..... later still...

Tomorrow I will have brand new eyes,  
the new sun will slip around that corner.  
Sun and eyes struck dumb by the reality plague.  
Yes it's true I have little white tablets.  
Fool's gold.  
Two or three packets of fool's gold.  
But ultimately,  
reality,  
in all its dread and horror, is waiting for me when I open my eyes.  
Tomorrow.  
Until tomorrow I'm signing off.  
That albatross again.  
Again, again.

It's my birthday.  
Well not really.  
But I am born with new blood today.  
This new blood will be pure.  
It will be clean.  
Like my new eyes.  
Like the new sun.  
The sun will clean my flesh.  
Rid me of this monstrous demeanor. And I will be clean  
and pure.

This face, this body conceals a monster. But not a vicious one. A disfigured monster.

I lay on my aching back.  
Arms by my side.  
Palms facing up,  
Looking up at the night heavens.  
Waiting. Waiting for a sign.  
While I breathe like a fish.  
Like a fish pulled out of its sea.  
Deep and heavy strained breath. Strained. Estranged.  
But I stare through the ceiling.  
And I stare at the ceiling fan, who is waiting for it's day to come.  
When the chain will break. It will end it's days as a tool of cool relief.  
And it's final act will be one of bloody, calculated mutilation. The mess.  
It will be a proud and mighty mess. Blood and feni and fanta and cigarette ash.

My new blood is not new at all. It is riddled with diazepam, feni and sugar.  
It tangles my thoughts. It breaks my spirit.

There is a girl and she is lost in a forest of fire. The flames are made of people,  
And they spit embers at her, through her, in her eyes  
And she cannot see  
And she cannot breathe  
And she cannot tell you the truth.

When the birds finally come for me I will be free.  
But first the worms will come for me.  
And I will know the dirt.  
I will know it better than I know you or me.  
The birds will eat the worms; they will feed them to their babies,  
And I will be free.  
I will be apart of that sky.  
The sky is waiting.  
The sun is waiting patiently.  
It will grace their wings. Their feathers will beat and glide.  
Beat and glide.  
The sun, always on their back. Moving through them,  
moving to the worms,  
and touching me.  
This sun we know.  
Other suns have their secrets. Their own type of love.

I see a dead bee and I think it must mean something meaningful.  
I see a dog with two broken, maimed legs,  
almost no fur.  
And again it must mean something.  
A woman coughs outside, and it must be because I am chain-smoking.  
Omens surround. And yet they mean nothing.  
The sweat on my face means its hot. And my body is purging poison.  
But I won't give up the poison.  
She can cough,  
the bee can die and lie crumpled.  
The dog can hobble,  
tortured by some idiot man.  
And it still means nothing.  
I keep drinking and smoking until I pass into darkness.  
And this pen stains the bed sheets again.  
It means nothing.

This is the witching hour now. And this is my second last cigarette.  
One more for my asthmatic lungs. I was a sickly child and now I am a sickly adult.  
I leave the windows open.

They.

The ants come for the filth I leave for them. And the fleas come for my poisoned blood.  
And they can have it. Misery loves company so they say.

They say a lot.

My hands have lines of hell and madness through them. The psychics tell me my future is beautiful. But their eyes don't lie. Eyes never lie. Only mouths do.

Warm hands, warm face.

Burning feni, smoke throat. I wait for hell. My mother always said hell is here on earth.  
And she should know. She has the same sad blood as I do. Her blood is in me.

Words passed in the night.

Words from another person.

They broke me.

They broke my wall.

The troops stormed, and infiltrated the fort I worked so hard to build.

These words were from my own mouth.

I betrayed myself.

I let the armies in.

the battalions came. And now I'm bare.

Skinned. Homeless.

Weak again.

I am a fool.

My silence broke with feni.

And the fools tongue wagged.

Like a hungry dog.

And now the silence in back.

But it fills my mouth now finally.

And it has stained my mind.

And then the falling, and then the madness.

A sacred kind of madness. My own madness.

And then the bloody mess.

He's got that fear in his eyes again.

My demons, those demons,  
they break out.

Sometimes sometimes.

Sometimes all the time.

But they sit there always,  
Waiting,  
Ready to move, ready to strike.  
Like a snake in the grass,  
like a cat, I can't be trusted.

The dust settles for a moment  
The light starts to sneak through  
And it shows things as they are.  
My eyes, my ears, my skin is opening to a truth.  
The illusion fades, that beautiful mad illusion.  
The truth is so cold.  
So hard.

And then there was blood  
In the early morning  
The sorry ravens  
Of grey and black landed on my skirt  
On the clothes line.  
Making strange and hostile sounds,  
But magnificent animals all the same,  
They fly up to the coconut palm trees,  
Up,  
To the top where the sly green palm leaves hold the light tight.  
Like they own the sunlight.

(The mind boggles,  
How is it I have no control over these moods? Let's call them demons.  
Where did they come from? And when?  
I wonder how long they have been with me. And if they are foreign demons. Foreign  
matter. Or my very self. Some of my layers. Or my other half. Or one quarter of me  
perhaps. Or a mask that gets pulled on, over my head.  
Smacked arse face mask.)

The water in the tank beside me trickles loudly.  
The people, the locals, move about and sometimes speak at a pace that dances with the  
falling water. This is to my right. The sun is also wiping the right side of my face and  
neck. And down over my breasts and my stomach. I wish I could climb inside the tank  
and just float.

Kattia da Silva

