

Auesta Safi

FIRST LESSONS IN AWARENESS: DISTANCE

Two days before September 11th
Ahmad Shah Massoud was assassinated
and the television in my house
has been on ever since, my father
becoming more and more aware
of the distance between his country
and himself. He tells me of a rooftop
in Kabul where he captured pigeons
and let them go, and every time
we buy meat at the halal store
he asks the owner if he will sell
his canaries perched in their cages
along the top shelves. My father
loves their singing and I want
to see him be like he might
have been if I had been born in Kabul, too,
how he might have brought me to the rooftop
and taught me how to place my thumb
and middle finger around the bird's neck
so that I would not hurt it,
but each time the owner says yes,
my father says never mind.

