

*Komal Mathew*

## EVERYTHING I'VE HEARD FROM THE GOD OF NATIONS

You didn't say love  
the way I made it:  
a near, new thing.  
You said abide  
like long stanzas  
like a memory  
with many owners.

You didn't say love  
when I put on armor,  
reminding myself of soft  
pashminas, counterfeits  
with ends. You said abide,  
so how important is it  
to protect my head?

You say abide  
like I've heard it  
out of a lover's mouth,  
a blood orange love.  
How could you  
say it another way?

You said abide,  
so what can I say back?  
*Of course, yes, always?*—  
like a tradition,  
like an eastern thing.

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## HOME, AFTER HOMES

1.

A bronze cross from your father's coffin hovers over our headboard. *Don't start with the dead first*, your father told you, so we start small and alive like we were just planted into the earth.

2.

You don't want a house with a yard because weekends aren't meant for work, so we grow gray plants in a city condo. You get up early—like your father did—to make me egg sandwiches. You measure ice, slice bananas and persimmons into a blender, into shapes—diamonds, toy blocks, caution cones.

3.

I learn how to call you every day, to ask what we're planting and why and when and for how long. In my old home, a black statue of Ganesh sits with crossed legs in the foyer. Some Americans keep idols in their pockets, my father tells me. Even the president, *for luck*. Pruning seems like the right thing, so I look for someplace to put a different clue to all who enter.

4.

This Is An Indian Home—but all I want is our wedding picture and my grandmother's small bowl of salt. Each night, I close one eye at a time, trying to see who we really are—the left, the right, left, right—eyes trapping gusts of wind, until I see you, my love, with three children, until I see you in a clean home with no yard.

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## SATYAGRAHA FOR THIN FEET

Like the army you were converting—  
you took my people and their thin feet  
and *colonized* them into a force.

To give them truth, you dressed holiness  
as a 240-mile braid towards a sorted beach,  
lifted them to the sea like long-grain rice

before an anointing. How was I to know  
that this was a miracle? Thousands walking  
from one sacrificial place to another.

When it passed down to me, I did not inherit  
the holiness of shifting from sea to salt, child to priest.  
I became heir to my mother and her garnet ring.

Thinking I owned her, I pulled her fingers back,  
pushed into her ring, I found a place for me  
to put my cheek: a *colonization* of skin and blood.

Then later, my mother held my hand, unpacked  
our lunch at Lavender Pond. She let go  
because I let go: a *symbiosis* of skin and blood.

And just like that I owned my body and didn't have to  
look back. What was I doing but starting my own march  
into a place of peace and rest, moving towards sacrifice?

What was I doing but converting my own body, changing  
so holiness was free from the glory of man? *Satyagraha*  
when I leave good places with thin feet, walking

into found places. *Satyagraha* when I no longer belong  
to the mutable sea. *Satyagraha* now that I am Yours,  
and You are mine. Your glorious, holy body of boats.