

## Jesus on a Train from Mumbai

I was dragged from the train by English tourists as the tall man from Tamil Nadu called “coffee coffee” in his soft, sad voice.

They had been to too many temples, mistaken the pigeon-feeding ritual for a message from god. All they wanted was for me to sing songs

altered by death but when I opened my mouth I vomited water hyacinth—they beat me with metal rods from London buses, whilst the school boy bird

whistled outside. Women wrapped in blankets came to view me, carrying boulders on their heads to mend the roads. When they judged me

bloody enough, we went for chai at a shack by the roadside, a statue of St. George in a glass case spoke. There was mist and no view.

In damp fields, men sold bags of candyfloss to over-dressed newly-weds, heaps of carrots sickening as goldfish. Children followed us like skinny dogs

their ribs rotten as railway tracks. In the back yard of his brother’s house a man invited us into his concrete hut, model trains mounted on the walls

like something shot. His brain was smaller than a mouse’s. He showed us a dead kingfisher the size of a rat, its enormous

beak open, about to speak, asked me to bless it.

I could not. I had shared a bed with my mother, under the same

mosquito net, had watched my father miraculously pleasure thirteen women with his thirteen hands.

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