

My Head Is Full of Pakistan

Riotous confusion—colour, light, noise—a bowl of jewels
poured into my hand by my friend, who keeps leaving
Canada to return to its gardens, its temples,
its feasts and ululations.

Its sudden kills.

A bomb in the street crashes without warning
on the vendor who yesterday sold sweet almonds.
And on his child.

Walls lock Westerners into deeper and smaller spaces
as the barrage grows.

North, where I sit at the table on my porch in pale spring sun,
a bowl of stones—clear quartz, blue calcite,
fool's gold, haematite, lake-polished glass—
gathers the light.

The river, in May, is almost ice-free. A swimming beaver
crosses the flooded road in front of the truck.
My husband will tell me this
when he returns bearing rainbows—
more trout than we can eat.

For now, the radio is my link to Sunday acts.
In Sweden, a pill frees a woman in pain
from too much life.

Twins in Belgium who are losing both sight and sound
decide they've had enough.

My mother asks, Why am I still here?
Her brain has turned to snow.
My father's is a blizzard.

The garden beyond the railing is pink and ferny green.
The sparrows never stop, robins insist, blackbirds whirr.

February hovers behind their songs: not bombs
but snow, thigh deep, shoulder deep,
a path unmarked.

“I’m just going outside and may be some time.”

Unearned riches. Undeserved cold.

Too many jewels. Too many stones.
I can’t use them all.
I don’t know how to save them.

[Note: the quotation is the reputed last words of Captain Oates, who walked into a blizzard on Scott’s doomed Antarctic expedition to save food for the remaining explorers. They died anyway.]

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