

Where is Our Motherland Heading?

In these terrible lonely nights
I hear them whispering. Then – GINGG
GINGGGGGggggggggggggggggggggg!
Another bomb.

What they plan secretly
makes me tremble.
To avoid worrying
I keep my eyes closed tightly.

The sky is a devil
who roars with thunder:
Don't open your eyes.
Don't try to hear our whispers.
Don't try to interpret our plans.

I question my mother often:
Mader, who have you introduced me to?
and where are they leading us?
Shhhhhh! Mother pleads.
Hugs me and puts me to sleep in her lap.
I feel her tears as they fall,
hear fear in her heartbeat.
Mader? I ask. Shhhhhh! she pleads.
Bachaim, my son, be quiet! Be quiet.

Just wait for the sun.

*OMID,
CANBERRA ACT
[FROM AFGHANISTAN, FORMERLY IN AUSTRALIAN
REFUGEE DETENTION FACILITIES]*

The News, Pontville Tasmania, 6 October 2011

As I wake from sleep
I find that yesterday's feelings I keep.
Then many friends were released, and I'm glad
but my own longing for freedom is biting me bad.
How will I pass the time today?
In a Detention Centre, every day is a 'holiday'.

I decide on the Library. There Irma Madam is sitting.
She asks, 'Can you bring me some more writing?'
I'm not in the mood to fetch my poetry now
But since it's her wish, to that I'll bow.
On the way to my room I pass the Centre's case managers;
Ian's caught up so I greet Alexandra.
This social worker asks, 'What's making you sad?'
Is my sorrow engraved on my forehead?

I explain all the reasons I'm feeling fragile
then Ian taps my shoulder and holds up my file.
'No no! Say nothing! There'll be no good news for me.'
He smiles and shrugs, 'As you please. Why not see?'
'Sorry for my words, tell me what I must hear.'
'Your security check is done – you're in the clear.'
I close my eyes and breathe a deep sigh.
No more failures, I think, I'm going to get by.

*OMID,
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[FROM AFGHANISTAN, FORMERLY IN AUSTRALIAN
REFUGEE DETENTION FACILITIES]
DEDICATED TO THOSE KIND PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED ME TO CONTINUE: MY
FELLOW-DETAINEES, THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED ME WITH ENGLISH, AND
SOME OF THE STAFF.*