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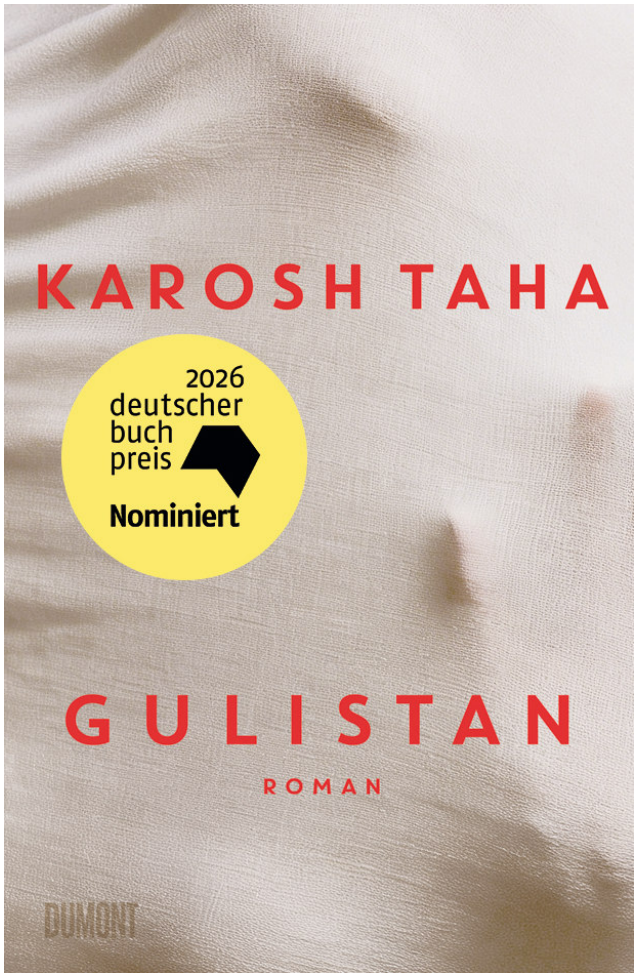

KAROSH TAHA

GULISTAN

A Novel

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Every time I sit with with president I look at him:

Says Saddam Hussein's doctor about Saddam Hussein. During the 2003 war he manages to flee to Europe, and in his spare time he paints abstract art. His English interrupted by the search for a word – this is the language in which we meet. Which Saddam did he patch up in the end? Was he wearing the line of a song above his knee: Ez ser Gulê têm kustinê. He continues to talk:

he was so so gentle
so considerate and he is
he is very clever
to to notice
every small
bits
you know without asking you
I mean he he he noticed that
I mean
if you are not comfortable
you know
I mean
can notice that
you know
and you can feel
he's really looking after
your comfort
you know
then I thought
I mean how how it comes this man
I mean
he has done all these things
you know
all these wrong decisions
all these fatal decisions
all these cruelties
I mean
how it comes
this man definitely
he got two faces
two personalities and
I don't I don't really think that

I mean

he is deliberately doing
these things but

I think this is natural
this is
this is natural
because sometimes

I have seen myself
more than more than one or two occasions

when he heard a very sad
story about

a baby or a child a woman
you know

he cried he started to cry so

I mean definitely
he got two personalities

Everything happened here.
This dream a story longed to be told. My tongue silent though I had grown a hundred hands and taking a knife I set it beneath the gills and made a clean cut in the belly.
The innards in a foreign language said: Your tongue isn't rotten. Return to the mountain where we've hidden it in a cave. For we shall tell this woman's story under the condition she can disappear from the text at any time and the words betray nothing beyond the fact this woman existed. All will say I in echo except the woman. Faces will be described only when necessary.
Çîya had left the bed. He had gone to the shop.
I wanted to draw my dream for him.
My jaw trembled again a random succession of sounds arriving in my throat. My hands could no longer grip the fish's head prevented by the fish's eyes not in the dream though the evening dusk wasn't a repeat of the morning dawn.
The eyes stopped me from preparing the Masgouf for the evening meal Çîya's favourite dish.
You were alive once I said because the fish had appeared to me in this encounter as the blink of an eye. Between the fishbones I'd found not the hundredth but another name for his tailor shop.
How this name closed my mouth and only Çîya's ears could release me.
Çîya didn't come.

In days gone by the cry: Gûle Gûle tu dîn bi? Have you lost your mind. A woman's face reflected in the window as if she's waiting for her husband though no-one needs a face for waiting.
Perhaps that happened if the woman didn't see the future in another face.
My fingertips shrivelled in the water.
I opened my mouth for the face in the window to close it again.
Çîya didn't come.
The words stayed in me until the patience got lost in fear.
Çîya didn't come.
In his absence the minutes broke open because men disappeared. When the power went out people knew there's a body hanging from the pylon with wire pulled tight around its neck.
In the dusk I forgot to kneel because I had to search for Çîya before someone else found him: In the dusk I set off in search of a prayer.
The Qur'an was opened in the name of the Merciful.
A report was filed in the name of the Merciful.
A death sentence was passed in the name of the Merciful.
Women children and men ate their evening meal in the name of the Merciful.
The February cold rubbed raw the skin on legs in the name of the Merciful.
Under the Abba no sweat ran down my legs and when skin touched as I walked the night's distance waned in the name of the Merciful.
Young men searched the streets for meat before being drafted in the name of the Merciful. They walked towards a woman with mouth closed filled with a word too big for the hollow of my mouth intent on finding her husband's tailor shop in the name of the Merciful.
Waiting at the bus stop the evening dusk slipped from my grasp in the name of the Merciful.
Once we say the truth and once we will lie.
In a face you can lie.

Yesterday two men stood in front of his tailor shop. And he felt afraid when these two men standing in front of the shop looked at the sign with the name. Gulistan. In the shop among the suits they asked him for prices. Reaching for the clothing they asked: What does Gulistan mean? That's my wife's name Çîya answered and he knew he'd burnt his tongue placing this name around his wife's neck.
At dinner he raised the fingertips of my left hand to his mouth and kissed five times to not forget the taste. In Gulistan the cry: Understanding will come because a third of the story lies

buried in plain sight. No unknown word is complete if a third of the story is missing. First comes the explanation. With understanding comes fear.
After a fire the skin is cooler than a man in uniform he asks for your fingers. Will you offer them? What do fingers taste of asks another after slitting open a fish belly.
The two men asked with forked tongues what the name means.
Çîya translated it as flower garden. The two men surprised they didn't immediately understand it. They said walking down the street they had understood the names of all the shops but the name of his tailor shop had confused them not understanding a word was it his intention to stir confusion among people on the street in times like these. By writing strange words.
No. Not at any time Çîya had answered.
Then you'll change the name. And your wife.
In the doorway they said they weren't accustomed to being treated like this. The other shopkeepers were always friendly. Çîya hadn't even offered them a coffee or a tea or suits as a sign of gratitude for their generous advice even though they'd helped him. With this attitude he would run into difficulties.
In his work as a tailor he couldn't offer them clothing that had been entrusted to him by his clients. He didn't want to gift them with a theft.
The mention of stolen goods in connection with these two men would have allowed them to act in any manner of ways. Like suspecting Çîya of considering theft or accusing him of defaming them as thieves or imputing greed to him or demanding he seize clothing as the Party's common property. Çîya knew that defending himself would only lead to more complications.
They asked for his name but Çîya had spoken for so long in forbidden alphabets until their jaws fell and ears twisted. His name Çîya was a mountain that betrayed him. They had assumed from his face that Çîya was one of them. Now they understood his hostility even though they were unknown to him. They ordered that the tailor shop's name be changed. You apply at the Economic Department for Inner City Trade. Explain to the official why you need an immediate name change. That Isa and Musa have sent you. You'll take down the current sign. It confuses people and in the state the country's in surely he didn't want to make a scene was he aware they were only protecting him. They could burn all the clothes turn his flower garden into a desert.

Gulistan advised he change the name. There's no point hanging ourselves on a name.
In the night of all time I dreamt of alphabet letters assembling themselves.

On the evening of his disappearance there were no buses. As though a man had come home the streets were silent. So I carried my body between the buildings.
Behind dark walls people sat before their dinners.
I presumed. When now and again I walked past people they crossed to the other side of the street and not by chance. Children betrayed adults' intentions through their side glances.
I counted two girls and a boy all around seven years old.
I counted three mothers and a father but that was impossible.
It was two fathers and a mother or was it three fathers and two mothers or only mothers only three women with three children? Were the children accompanied by adults or were they just holding the hands of shadows?
I could no longer tell the adults were so hazy. I only remembered the side glances and the children's thin arms.

My eyes scoured the places as though my feet were touching this ground for the first time. On this evening I declared myself a stranger who was Gulistan for an indefinite period. A ghost only exists when seen. Sometimes a person took pity and looked at me.
The path to Çîya's tailor shop refused to end. New streets and turnings kept inventing themselves.
Memories of grown-ups clung to children's arms. Memory clung to a bus stop memory clung to silent streets memory clung to an evening dusk and the dream of a fish. I counted memories in order not to reach the end of a missing person case.
You can also reach a destination on tacitly empty streets on this night it was the tailor shop. The shutters pulled down and locked. The name sign taken down. The clothing between walls mere silhouettes for silhouettes. In front of his shop I saw until yesterday how two men entered the shop among the suits asked the prices and touched the fabrics but when had I bought the fish? It made its way into my hands for dinner prep like writing on the wall of a prison cell where yesterday and tomorrow collapse into one if the tongue doesn't rot. Return to the mountain where we've hidden it in a cave.
The two men from the previous day could have thrown Çîya in the river. He returned as a fish and I couldn't set the knife to it. In the inversion of the Last Day the streets were empty of people. Along abandoned paths I walked past closed restaurants bars amusement arcades and tea houses. My breath in front of me how it had surprised me there was no bus. The city responded

to Çîya's disappearance by retreating. As though it had been gassed the city lay in the silence of a place years away let it be called Helebçe.
Because the movement of a hand in my hand was missing I turned around in the silence of the street. It reminded me of birth more than death and I went into the hospital. Çîya could be in there because two men have questioned him. I went there even though I knew an injured tailor called Çîya wouldn't be brought to the hospital. This evening repeated itself in another evening. This evening a person buried alive. This evening would continue until the spring brought new names. Nobody knew February was the longest month of the year.

In the hospital they said: We don't know where he is as though I were holding the staff responsible. We have injured people here but they already have family members with them. We can't find your husband. His name isn't on our lists. You need to remember people are always coming in here and asking us about missing persons. It's too much work for us. It isn't our job to take down missing person reports.
I saw Saddam Hussein may God set him alight on the laughing mouth. These two cast-offs spat from the maw of an idol sitting behind a desk.
But
I said and the first syllable repeated itself until the following syllables found my mouth.
The hospital worker impatient with the stuttering of my jaw and eventually my tongue found the rhythm of a familiar language:
But

I didn't
ask
to make a missing person's report

You asked whether your husband is with us and told us to search for his name. What else would that be if not a missing person's report? If your husband was ill then he would have been brought to us and you would know that but we can't search for people who aren't ill. Do you even know for sure whether he's injured? You can't answer that and yet on a whim you've chosen to come here and interrogate us about your husband. How would we know whether something has happened to your husband? Only people to whom something has already happened come into this hospital.
It's all a misunderstanding
just a misunderstanding

I asked their forgiveness and wanted to get out of the hospital because my head was spinning there were no exits.
How
do I
get out of here
and the two hospital workers looked at me for a long time and said: the same way you got in. I wanted to laugh to signal in my confusion I hadn't paid attention to the way I'd come. And I didn't know how I'd stumbled across these two men in the hospital. Did the neon light cast a premonition on the second third of a night with stab wounds?
You're still here. You said you want to find your husband but you're dawdling in the corridors and asking where the exit is though it's right before your eyes. It's as though you don't actually want to look for your husband. As though you're intentionally making it hard for yourself to find him. Maybe your husband is at home and you're roaming around the night looking for a man.
I saw the night in the entrance wanted to run but feared this could provoke them. The men already doubted my trustworthiness. Any additional divergence would give them reason to prevent my exit.

Unable to sleep not for the first nor last time I sat in the bus behind a man whose ears impersonated Çîya's the earlobes with the diagonal fold along the edge two birthmarks a little tick mark I wanted to touch.
It was notable how large these ears were in relation to the head and the hands laid in his lap so large these ears as though they wanted to fill the bus the way they expanded towards the window. Disembarking the people stooped down in their silence past the ears gathering their speculations out of the vehicle. On the street freed from these ears they reached for their own to discover the ear man had cut them off. With every stop the ears grew absorbing the entire bus meaning I couldn't find my destination. First the ear man got off then the bus driver changed the direction of travel. In the night I had waited at the bus stop no bus had appeared until midday only human beings said the driver.
He stopped outside the police station.

How did you know
I wanted
to go to
the police?

The driver said: I didn't. Or he said: You were talking about the police the whole time. You scared all the passengers. I forgot that as I made my way through the hard cold into the police station.

Wait until you're called someone shouts into the silence. There are no footprints scattered between my feet. One could say I didn't exist. My tongue framed by toothprints lay heavy in my mouth I had to wait until a police officer summoned me who only ever summoned young women. Whenever he called one the other police officers laughed through closed mouths. He led the women with closed mouths into a space at the end of the corridor between doors like wires.

We have no water said the policeman. If everyone got a glass of water the Euphrates would be empty. My eyes were dry with words. A glass of water wouldn't have quenched them.

Your name.

Gulistan.

Gul Ist An he said.

Your job?

I teach art at the university

Who sent you here?

I'm looking for my husband

he has disappeared.

Men disappear every day. Are we supposed to look for all men because they disappear. If we did we'd never get any work done. We can't suspect a crime behind every marital dispute.

We didn't argue

Well he's not with you anymore is he you stutterer. You trembler.

The stuttering formed the first letters of a new language: Alif-Lâm-Mîm. The knot in a tongue is loosened by a different sequence of speaking. They burnt Musa's tongue because he brought the written law. He needed Harun who spoke the old tongue. The letters hid themselves in the cave of your stuttering Gulistan.

Why are you stuttering?

He isn't anywhere

Are you afraid of me?

I've looked for him everywhere

and I haven't found him

We will say we've hidden him so she tells of her search as the sun lost distance. The planes in the sky weren't stones people prayed to. And Gulistan went to the stones they offered her no support. And the wind carried with it only sand as though buried alive. Gulistan won't forget to draw her husband's shadow even if the lashes split open the skin.
The policeman left the room came back with a glass of black tea stirred beneath his tongue sentences that sounded like rust: If you've searched everywhere and couldn't find him then we can't do anything either.

I'd like to report him missing
and for you to search for him

Who's supposed to do that?
You're a policeman
We're facing a war and you have the crazy idea of burdening the police with searching for a man.
If the smell of petroleum would stop dizzying my head like hospital corridors if only there were windows if only a person could hide in mountain caves.
No one can help you. Go home.
I prefer to kill you. To express this wish without consequence: Not to go through with it. Just the assertion as the possibility of depicting this reality differently. Telling this wish earnestly like the heaviness of a sororicide.

It
has to be
registered
that
a person is missing

The man knew the difference between a warning and an admonition. Finally he drew up a file in the name of the Merciful.
How many children do you have? And what are their names?

None

What is your father's name? What is his job? What is his father's name? What is your mother's name? What is her father's name? Where do your parents live? How many brothers do you have? How many sisters? How old are they? Are they married? What are their husbands' names? How many children do they have? How old are the children? What schools do the children go to?
I gave him answers to spin a web.

How long were your brothers in prison?

They weren't

in prison.

Are they serving?

The younger one.

How long did he serve?

A few weeks. He

came back injured.

What was his injury?

His left leg

had to be amputated.

What about the other leg?

That's whole.

Any other injuries?

The man noted down the useless into the useful.

He lost two fingers

Index finger

Middle finger

The man made a hand gesture that demanded more injuries.

No others my

husband is called

Speak only

Çîya

when

you're Please

questioned

write down

The policeman's voice remained steady though his face hid itself in furrows.

that my

husband is missing

I can have you arrested

for lecturing the police Çîya

on how to do their work. I can have you arrested because you occupied a policeman's time

disappeared

and he can't work. I can

yesterday

have you arrested because you carry the name of the Party enemy. I have so many reasons to arrest you and none of them relate to your husband.

Çîya

Be quiet.
Whenever he spoke his tongue grew out of his mouth. The reason for this couldn't have been explained until I saw he was nothing but a self-inhibiting tongue.
But maybe I'll do that in future he said. If you can explain to me why I should report a man missing when there's no reason for his disappearance. If you can prove his circumstances to be life threatening then I'll enter him on the list. I'm telling you one last time: Don't hinder my work. Only come here with good reason. Just like a person should only speak when they're questioned.
The tongue grew back into his mouth and I quickly left the police station.

When I sketched the streets with my legs all the days vanished to a past when there was nothing but faces hunting me. Our mouth was repeated in the mouth of another in prayer: break open this city. Open the mountain with the desperation of a blacksmith. Open a prayer with the desperation of a tailor. Aren't you healed Gulistan? Didn't they take you to a sheikh who draped you with holy verses?
You all knew even less about the faces. Gulistan had a face too. If someone wanted to picture her face the explosion in the eye would prevent it. You didn't have a weapon but we tracked down a chord to narrate with. It was a song: Ez ser Gulê têm kuştinê. This is how you could imagine her face: Boys and girls chase a child through the streets with her name between the graves of their mouths where the hour of shootings began. The hands and fingers tore at Gulistan's clothing until I stood at the front door and was beaten.

Five times I knocked until Mother opened the door. My mother always appeared when the times were collapsing. Gulê Gulê crazy Gulê. Stop running. Stop screaming. They didn't hurt you. Stop crying she hit me with her fist with the desperation of a hand. I didn't birth you crazy.

Out of her senses Gulistan will speak because we have seen everything in unnamed tongues. No one will dare rob Gulistan of her tongue. Gulistan will hide it so well buried in unfamiliar earth drenched in lead acid.
When Gulistan stopped crying I repeated mother's sentences in a sing-song: Gulê Gulê Gula dîn.
Stop calling your own name otherwise I'll only call you Dîne.
On Mother's apron flour that she brushed off but she couldn't rid herself of the phantom pain.

Çîya has disappeared.

Stop spreading your secrets around the street.

It's not a secret I have to
speak to my brothers

Gula dîn your mouth is their abyss.

In my brother's eyes one lay close together. Behind his ear he dug bugs out of his skin and draped them in holy verses.
Be rocks or iron or something created of the kind that would be even graver in your imagination.
Gulistan asks him: Who is talking to you?
In all times my brother asked a person next to him: Gulistan who will bring us back to life?
Say: The One who first created you. People will shake their head and say: When will that be?
Say: Perhaps soon.
My brother opened his mouth to close it again. Something clung to the windowpane and we knew he is with us. In his gait the weight of five additional men.

What is happening to you?

The windows no longer obey me he wanted to say or maybe he wanted to say: The windows no longer belong to me. The spiders are tearing up their webs outside our front door and we'll be accused of not respecting the spider's web.
His right hand with three fingers disfigured my brother scratched his neck open so a second voice spoke out of him. In the folds of his skin lice laid their eggs next to the fears of other prisoners until the spot was scratched raw. No one knew fear can become inflamed.
My brother looked all around him spoke so quietly. So quietly that no lice could hear us but they're everywhere in your skin in your hair sometimes between your teeth and they watch all the words leave your jaw. Beneath them the wrong words march you away. Spun into a web of people with numbers and letters.

Which names?

I can't say my hand misses its fingers because my hand still believes in my fingers even though every night my fingers are hacked into pieces until I give them names. But all I can think of are flowers because one spring I list all the names.

Nergiz?

Yes?

Heliz?

Yes.

Beybin?

Here.

Çîya?

Yes.

Gulistan.

Yes.

Have you named our brother Adar's names?

I've named all the people who exist and who don't exist.

My hand has a memory of two fingers that confess to lies. My leg lying next to me in bed longs for me.

Does your leg have a memory?

My leg is grieving.

Çîya has
disappeared

My brother looked over his shoulder greeting the guard before he continued speaking: People don't disappear Gulistan. They reappear in a different form. We know our brother Adar won't come. The legs scattered in the desert. The hands on the border to Iran. The head in a black plastic bag before the family home. The body in a white plastic box cut up so the parents don't bury their child in white linen. The ribs in the mortar of a tyrant's nineteen palaces.

Hell is guarded by
nineteen guards

Gulistan in our sleep we will call the city by its name when we become witnesses of its destruction. We must squint when we see something. We must limp when we're hunted. We must play deaf when a police officer speaks to us.

His voice changed direction.

One time we say the truth and one time we lie. No one will be able to tell the difference. We put the truth into delusion. We put the lies in a mouth. People will have the choice whether to believe you Gulistan.
Mother lowers her voice: the superior's hand touched her as Adar was taken away. She screamed all the creatures in the darkest corners awake. We can no longer do anything for her. Only pray.
In the middle of a prayer Çinar the wife of our brother Adar sat legs bent two children hidden beneath her dress from the superior.
Cinar's hands opened to the sky bore a stillborn on the night of her husband's arrest. A soft body like a wet cloth lay in her hands because the blood wouldn't stop flowing. The infant was taken to the mosque to be washed. They slammed the earth down hard so there would be no resurrection.
Mother offered comfort: Your child is waiting for you in Paradise with a jug of water from the Kawthar. Let's name the child after the holy river.
I've nothing left said Çinar hit herself in the face until she found blasphemy in the prayer. In the water it streamed out of her mouth which couldn't hold a newborn. With tongue and teeth she devoured her own mouth swollen her husband's legs tied. The salt in her body inflamed her mouth attempting to eat her own face.

Gulistan heard her sister-in-law: My God I confess in the night I lie down on the floor next to the grave.
My God in the ground his eyes grow back his eyelids coalesce as a farewell from the sun.
My God I offer the still-born in my hands do not abandon your subordinate.

But God answered: You cannot
offer Us what is already Ours.

I'll hide him in the blink of my eye as a phantom if you bring me his father.

But God answered: We don't make
trades.

My God in my mouth I host your name between my teeth I find forgotten splinters of bone.

But God answered: The flesh
of those you maligned
We gave
to you to eat.

My God your Mercifulness is the ocean help me not to stab them in the eyes.

But God answered: If you rise up
above another
human being We will
make your punishment unending
as We once did with
the foe.

My God help me not to tear their tongues out of their mouths.

But God answered: We are
not your servants.

When I forget you I stare into the sky where I left my eyes.
My God if you bring me the father I will tear all the secrets from my body wash my body with clay and Hadiths.
My God only your Mercifulness is complete they laid my newborn in a white cloth.
My God take the child with explosions in its eye but also take the thirst which in its endlessness knows the child.
Take the child that got lost in the deepest layers but also take the child dreamed by water.
Take the child with hunger between its ribs and the child with the solitary leg and the child with graves in its hands and the child with torn-out Qur'an verses on its tongue.

Without eyes the sister-in-law saw me flee from ground dense with explosives. She spoke: Gulistan I see all the words leave your throat. Even the wrong ones. I see betrayal.

On the street a man said to other men: no pain compares with earache.
No there's more pain in the teeth.
No the pain in the kidney stones is the worst.
Another told a short story: A Shia asked his mullah: ever since my wife left prison she doesn't want to sleep with me. Why? The mullah answered: The devil is sleeping with your wife and she likes it. The man went home and beat his wife to death. The men laughed.
Gulistan's words stayed in her throat as the Last Supper. When people were hungry they invented stories to eat: Your leg is lame because an Agˇnn is sleeping on it. Once you cried loudly because an Agˇnn put its finger in your mouth until you stuttered. A mother told her daughter a bedtime story while she burned to death.

On walls I wrote his name with the date of his disappearance and the fact that Çîya misses Gulistan until every building and every street cried Çîya until an entire city knew our names. White chalk left my fingers swollen red. On the walls we were united. Did the night swallow you so the day can no longer find you? Which river must I cross to see you again? Or should I search between the power masts for your body hanging next to the others in the sky so cold the clouds disappear into it. Çîya I'll search for you among the rocks in the river in the cold by a shadow in the walls but not between the wires in the sky. Never between the wires in the sky.

Outstretched voices pointed in my direction astonished I wrote so much although I was drawing. Some people thought they knew me because I taught their daughters and sons to draw. They asked whether I could be helped until someone called: Stay away from her. She's crazy.
I forgot when my legs broke but as I searched this torso hovered over the ground.

With every word we return to the land without return. A fifth remained buried in the ground. Panel by panel this story is raised. Letters in all layers of the ground legs defeated a time when we forgot to narrate.
The search for Çîya was the disappearance of a face before an explosion and the arrival of a phantom.
Your name mountain is a prayer.
The man was once a boy who chased a girl through the streets. Shamelessly his eyes moved toward me. Stop writing he said. Shamelessly upright in a dark green uniform: light-green beige dark-blue green-black marbled blue-black marbled beige dark beige a sand desert imitating a forest imitating cloud formations imitating the asphalt imitating. They switched uniforms like faces. The eyes recognised Gulistan but the face raised on commands was formulated with teeth:
Give me your fingers.
His voice yielded in time.

I can

not

Give me your hand so I can break it.

I have to draw faces if not

the wrong face will be drawn

In these times we contemplated death but did a person do the work on their own body?
Gulistan's fingers stained mustard yellow from tabun and sarin.

If I don't
draw I will disappear

His hand still in the action of breaking mine. I knew these lines on the palms I knew when I asked Çîya to lay his hands on the table so I could draw them. I drew the forked paths in the shadows of the lines the intersections like razor cuts of all the ancestors.
We have lines on our hands Çîya once said because we wanted to prove the beauty of the Prophet Yusuf son of Ya'qub. In the fist our greed for beauty. Here are the last cuts of an attempted rape of the Prophet Yusuf. His inhuman beauty unreasonable for us cut into our skin leaving behind scars textured like wrinkles. No palm resembles the other because everyone sets the knife differently.
I would have to speak of deceptive lines like streets entered from the wrong direction like roads that fork before my eyes like paths that end without reason and run into the abyss that's how your palms are.
Everyone sets the pen differently.
The man in the police uniform spoke sentences: I'll cut you into pieces whore if you don't put down the chalk and go home. I'll tear you into bits from the legs up if you don't hide away at home. If you've forgotten how I twisted your ponytail around my fist I'll tear you open again.

An older man ranted at the policeman as though he remembered a time without lashings. Another policeman came and gripped his colleague's arm. This isn't our business. Are you messing with crazy people? He laughed as though on command. And with crazy women too. Didn't our President may God bless and protect him say in his speech at the opening of the insane asylum: Let the lunatic beat you over the head because their insanity is punishment enough.
Was the President may God bless and protect him there?
No. But his third cousin quoted the President may God bless and protect him.
I used this moment to flee.
We are forced to speak of moments because Gulistan can't describe them. Of moments when people argued about her as though over the touch of a fire being.

Her eyes strayed to her husband's features scattered in strangers' faces and bodies. I found Çîya's sluggish eyelids in the eyes of another.
I found his rounded chin arranged into a different chin.
I found his gait in legs without Çîya.
Gulistan reminded herself to follow her husband's silhouette around his shadow. A mountain too can speak a prophecy: The tongue is not yet rotten. Gulistan return to the street.
In these times women hid newborns beneath their eyelids when missiles from another land hit the cities. The features of a lost body appeared like the severed sentences of a stuttering woman.
When I find you Çîya I'll cover your face and purify myself of this name until we arrive in the north.
If you looked at the sky you would have seen.
In the sky there were no birds they didn't want to be witnesses.
One day the birds would sing with broken necks and stiff voices as they shared the wires with corpses.
With the voices of the dead sitting on their shoulders they would witness how long a strangulation lasts.
There were no birds in the sky.
They hid beneath the leaves.
There were no birds in the sky. They flew north.
There were no birds in the sky only fire.
There were no birds in the sky as the spider spun her web numerous bodies surrounding me.
Women children the elderly the young musicians mullahs policemen and men in suits. If I find you Çîya I'll dig a grave around myself to lie next to you in the earth before the sun sets. The people were one mouth.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
In the streets Gulistan saw them shot.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
Against the walls Gulistan saw them fall.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
In the earth Gulistan saw them suffocate.

They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
On the television Gulistan saw them hanged.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
Between the walls Gulistan saw them buried.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
In the sewer system Gulistan saw them swell.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
In the courtyard Gulistan saw them slain.
They cried: Long live the Ba'ath Party.
Long live Saddam Hussein.
In the desert Gulistan saw them die of thirst.
Three days decided one moment.