

Sounds of the Heart

will be published in Multimedia Asterism Literary Magazine, February 14th, 2025

Aashna Soni

Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.

She listens to the sounds of my heart.

ਦਬਾ ਅਏ—

Dabaa aaye.

We buried our valuables, packed our pots and pans
and came because we thought
we would return and find everything
exactly where we left it.

Gold chains, silver earrings, diamond rings
hidden under the firm, unbreakable, unshakable earth
that would yield only to our tender hands
cupped as shovels,
palms greeting the sky—
in prayer or excavation or both.

What I thought I buried behind me lies buried within me.

Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.

Your heart beats normally, no whooshes or clicks, 76 beats per minute.
Tell me about the sensations.

Words escape my mouth in a foreign language—

ghau mau and khujli khujli and bhara bhara—

Echoes and itches and heaviness?

They are of no medical relevance.

Go home.

Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.

I listen to the beats while I sleep.
How do I explain to her that they told me
to pour out my heart,
and now the heart on the echocardiogram
is hollow, functional only superficially?

Lies, delusion.

I drew the slit down the middle
praying in symmetry to yield something beautiful.
Scalpel in trembling hand I pierced the pericardium,
glided past the epicardium,
the muscular myocardium,
reached the dense, fibrous, uneven septum.
The heart did not split in perfect half.
It is uneven it always will be it was broken even when it wasn't.

Caves of memories came into blinding metallic light.
Packing and moving and leaving
ਸਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ: hello and goodbye.
ਕੱਲ: yesterday and tomorrow.
Words that sound the same and mean different things
or is it all just the same
Too bright.

Crimson picking up shimmers and sparkles along the
deceptively smooth endocardium,
turning into rivers of gold then silver—
the chains and rings and earrings.
But when poured out sideways
The valves no longer gatekeepers
they lost all distinction,
Forming a puddle of gray.

There is nothing left to remember.
It is all just the same.

There exists no medicine to treat this condition
Because it is not a condition at all.

