

## **A Blossom within a Song**

A dream spiraling within an ink-faded cassette. . .

I am the slave of the moon,  
without her I am nothing  
1974, Kabul

He sings to swooning girls with plump, luminous faces.

Boys carry portable radios to record each concert. Then, to impress girls with long black eyes, they play their tapes in nearby parks. My parents could have met like this. Ahmad Zahir's voice wrapping around two young bodies like a ribbon, while in the background my mother is scolded by her mother.

But this is only a fancy within a song . . .

Mother might as well have been a swan  
eyes so black she could drain the morning of its light.

He first felt her beauty in the creamy marrow of his bones. Father tells us this as she drifts out of the room and the volume of skirt causes swirls of air to brush against our skin. He has renamed her after a flower with an incandescent face and thin veins of palest green. A flower like the moon.

Mother and father's wedding was arranged by the elder women. But there was a before to this: as a little girl with bright ribbons fluttering at the end of her braids, she had scaled walls to deliver love letters to girls he had crushes on. Years later, they were engaged and reciting love poems in a city floating on the perfume of orange blossoms.

**Zohra Saed** is a Brooklyn-based Afghan American poet. She is co-editing the upcoming anthology, *Drop by Drop, We Make a River: Afghan Writings of War, Exile and Return*. This is the first collection of Afghan literature in English.

**Schuldt**, an artist and poet in English and German, divides his time between New York City and Germany. He is the author of sixteen volumes, acclaimed radiophonic works, and live and broadcast performances. He received the Scheerbart Award in 2000 at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Two of his works are in the English *Oulipo Compendium*. Schuldt's *Lustrufe aus Talmi-Welten*, an *a cappella* work in Croatian German for the *Berliner Festspiele*, premiered on January 1, 2000, at the Berlin Philharmonic.

**Shashi Tharoor** is the author of seven books, including the award-winning political satire, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), and *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997), a study of Indian politics, society and economic development after independence, as well as numerous articles, op-eds, and literary reviews in a wide range of publications. He is also the recipient of several journalism and literary awards, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. A United Nations official since 1978, Tharoor is currently Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at UN Headquarters in New York.

**Tod Thilleman** is the author of *The Corybantes*, *A World of Nothing But Nations*, *The New Frequency*, *Wallpaper & Lightning*, *An Artist's Diary*, *Between*, *Blank Verse*, *Anatomical Sketches and Daemon of the World*, *Entelechy*, and is finishing work on a novel, *Gowanus Notecard Abduction*.

**Rodrigo Toscano's** three books are *The Disparities*, *Partisans*, and *Platform*. His poetry has recently appeared in *Cross Cultural Poetics*, *Kenning Audio Editions*, and *Cities Of Chance: An Anthology of New Poetry from The United States and Brazil*. His work has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and German.

**Carmen Valle**, who is from Puerto Rico, has published numerous books of poetry, including, most recently, a bilingual edition, *Entre la vigilia y el sueno de las fieras*. Her poems have appeared in anthologies in Puerto Rico and the continental US, as well as in journals such as *The World*, *El Signo del gorrion*, *Scriptura*, and *The Por-*