

# LIES ABOUT --- LOVE

by Fatima Matar

Originally Produced at **Blank Canvas Theatre**. June, 2023  
With Dance by MadJax Dance Company.

## **FACE**

FACE, HOW WE'VE GROWN YOU AND I,

YOU SHED YOUR BABY CHEEKS, ABANDONED YOUR INNOCENT WIDE EYES

AS I QUICKLY LEARNED TO USE YOU AS MY DISGUISE.

FACE, IT WAS SO COMFORTABLE HIDING BEHIND YOU, SO EASY,  
LETTING YOU CARRY MY AGE.

I MADE YOU CONVEY, MY EVERY WHIM, MY EVERY PLEASURE, MY EVERY  
LOATHING DESPISE, MY YAWNS, MY DESPAIR, MY EVERY DETESTING,  
BELITTILING, SIGHS.

FACE, I BURDENED YOU WITH YEARS, AND ETCHED UPON YOU LIFE'S  
FEARS AND ENDLESS TEARS AND GAVE YOU NAMES, AND SHAPES, AND  
PERSONS.

LOOKING AT THE PHOTOS NOW,

I WISH I DIDN'T MAKE YOU SMILE WHEN YOU DIDN'T REALLY WANT  
TO,

I WISH I WIPED OFF YOUR RESENTFUL SNEERS, YOUR KNOTTED BROWS,  
MAKE YOU ONCE, FORGET YOUR RELENTLESS VANITY, LOOSEN YOU'RE  
YOUR UNJUSTIFIED FROWNS.

EVERY TIME I MET YOU, EVERY TIME I MET YOU IN SOME UNEXPECTED  
REFLECTION, OR FOUND YOU STARRING BACK AT ME THROUGH SOMEONE  
ELSE'S EYES, IT ALWAYS TAKES ME A MINUTE OR TWO, TO RECOGNIZE  
YOU, HOW YOU'VE CHANGED, AGAINST ALL OF MY WISHES, MY NAÏVE  
SOLID BELIEF THAT THE WARMTH OF YOUR YOUTH WOULD NEVER  
SOMEDAY CHANGE.

FACE, HOW WE'VE GROWN YOU AND I, AND IN BETWEEN THESE LIPS  
AND THESE EYES, WE'VE TOLD INCESSANT STORIES, UNFORGETTABLE  
LOVES, UNFORGIVABLE LIES

FACE, I WAS THE ONE WHO TAUGHT YOU HOW TO SAY AND INDEED YOU  
HAVE SAID, AND WHEN I COMMANDED YOU TO DISHONESTLY EXPRESS,  
YOU VERY FAITHFULLY VERY OBEDIENTLY SAID, YES.

## SILENCE HAS SOUND

SILENCE COMES BACK

STOMPS ITS MUDDY BOOTS ON MY DOORMAT, THROWS ITS WEIGHTLESS  
BODY ON MY COUCH

WITHOUT A WORD, IT PATRONIZES ME: "HE'S GONE ISN'T HE, YOU'VE  
MANAGED TO DRIVE THIS ONE AWAY TOO"

IN THE NIGHT, SILENCE IS WIDE AWAKE, I HEAR IT FLICKING  
THROUGH THE PHOTO ALBUMS THAT WERE WELL TUCKED AWAY

ITS CRICKET LIKE FOOTSTEPS UP THE STAIRS, LURKS BEHIND SHOWER  
CURTAINS, LOOSENS THE BASIN TAP, WITH THE ANNOYING DRIP,  
DROP, DRIP, DROP

IT THEN PLAYS ITS FAVORITE GAME, AMPLIFIES MY HEAVY INSOMNIAC  
BREATHING, THROWING BALLS OF FIRE AGAINST THE WALLS, THE  
HAUNTING ECHOES, SHOOTING THROUGH THE CORNERS OF THIS SMALL  
DARK ROOM

THE FLAMED TIPPED SPEARS OF HIS LONG-GONE LIPS,

THE BURNING WAVES OF HIS LONG-GONE VOICE

WHEN SILENCE HAS SOUND.

## CALM PEOPLE

I MOSTLY BEGRUDGE CALM PEOPLE THEIR CALMNESS.

THE TIDINESS OF THEIR EMOTIONS.

HOW EVERY SENTIMENT HANGS PERFECTLY STILL, ON THE WALLS OF THEIR BEING, POLITELY DISCUSSED, LIKE A WORK OF ART, WHEN THE OCCASION CALLS.

ALWAYS STANDING NEAR THEIR FEELINGS, NEVER INSIDE THEM. AS AN ELEGANT LADY STANDS TO BE PAINTED, BESIDE A BEAUTIFUL PIANO.

NO FLAMING PASSION, NO VIOLENT THROBING OF A CHAOTIC HEART,  
NO SAVAGE, BARBARIC TORMENT OF TEARS,

NO BLOOD BOILING WITHIN THEIR VEINS,

NO HURRICANES RAGING WITHIN THEM,

NO THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION OF ANGER,

NO LIGHTNING SHATTERING THEIR SENSE OF REASON,

NO FOREST FIRES CONSUMING THEIR SANITY,

NO STORMY OCEANS TOPPLING THEIR COMPOSURE,

NO MONSOONS DROWNING THEIR RESOLVE,

NO GALES, NO GUSTS, NO HAILSTONES,

NO DARK, DEVOURING, SADNESS SWAMPS,

BUT A LUXURIOUS DORMANT PEACEFUL SPRING, UNDER A QUIET,  
TRANQUIL, SHEET OF SNOW.

**ANOTHER BIRTH** - BY FORUGH FARROKHZAD

MY WHOLE BEING IS A DARK CHANT

MY WHOLE BEING IS A DARK CHANT

WHICH WILL CARRY YOU TO THE DAWN OF ETERNAL GROWTHS AND  
BLOSSOMING

IN THIS CHANT I SIGHED YOU SIGHED

IN THIS CHANT, I GRAFTED YOU TO THE TREES, TO THE WATER, TO  
THE FIRE.

LIFE?

LIFE IS PERHAPS A LONG STREET THROUGH WHICH A WOMAN HOLDING A  
BASKET PASSES EVERY DAY

LIFE IS PERHAPS A ROPE WITH WHICH A MAN HANGS HIMSELF FROM A  
BRANCH

LIFE IS PERHAPS A CHILD RETURNING HOME FROM SCHOOL.

LIFE IS PERHAPS LIGHTING UP A CIGARETTE, IN THE NARCOTIC  
REPOSE BETWEEN TWO LOVE-MAKINGS

LIFE IS PERHAPS THAT ENCLOSED MOMENT, WHEN MY GAZE DESTROYS  
ITSELF IN THE PUPIL OF YOUR EYES

IN A ROOM AS BIG AS LONELINESS

MY HEART WHICH IS AS BIG AS LOVE

LOOKS AT THE SIMPLE PRETEXTS OF ITS HAPPINESS

AT THE BEAUTIFUL DECAY OF FLOWERS IN THE VASE

AT THE SAPLING YOU PLANTED IN OUR GARDEN

AT THE SKY, TAKEN AWAY AT THE DROP OF A CURTAIN

I KNOW A SAD LITTLE FAIRY WHO LIVES IN AN OCEAN

AND EVER SO SOFTLY PLAYS HER HEART INTO A MAGIC FLUTE

A SAD LITTLE FAIRY

WHO DIES WITH ONE KISS EACH NIGHT

AND IS REBORN WITH ONE KISS EACH MORNING.

## LET IT BE FAST

MAKE IT A SWIFT DEATH, AN EASY DEATH.

A SILENT DEATH,

A GONE WHILE SHE SLEPT COMFORTABLY IN HER BED, DEATH.

DON'T LET IT BE A CRUSHED SKULL, A SHATTERED WINDSHIELD,  
BROKEN BONES, A HORRID, SCARRED DISFIGURED FLESH.

DON'T LET IT BE A MINDLESS BULLET TO THE CHEST, MY BODY  
SPRAWLED ON THE DIRTY FLOOR OF A GROCERY STORE. BLOOD  
SPLATTERED ON GLISTENING GREEN CABBAGES, SEEPING UNDER  
AISLES.

LET IT BE, "IT'S WHAT SHE WOULD HAVE WANTED", LET IT BE "SHE  
WAS AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD, AND HERSELF." DON'T HOOK ME TO  
NUMEROUS BEEPING MACHINES. HASTY INDIFFERENT EYES ABOVE  
FACEMASKS, HURRIED GLANCES AT RIDDLED CHARTS. A SIGH OF  
RELIEF "FINALLY! SHE CAN FINALLY REST!"

DON'T LET IT BE A BRUTAL, BLAZING FIRE, BODY GROTESQUELY  
WRITHING. HYSTERICAL GUTTURAL SCREAMS, SMOKE FILLED LUNGS  
(FAILING), CHARRED EYES, SINGED HAIR, SEARED LIMBS, THE  
STENCH OF BURNING FLESH.

DON'T LET IT BE NAILS DIGGING AT AN AIRPLANE SEAT, THE TERROR  
OF DESCENDING 600 MILES AN HOUR TO AN IMMINENT DEATH, BABIES'  
DESPERATE CRIES TEARING AT THEIR MOTHERS' CHESTS, THE HORROR  
OF WATCHING, OF WAITING FOR IT TO ALL END

DON'T LET IT BE BRAIN MATTER, GUTS, AND GORE. DON'T LET IT BE  
A HIDEOUS, GRISLY FRIGHT OF A DISMEMBERED CORPSE, DON'T LET  
IT BE A PROLONGED, DECAYING, SUFFERING,

LET IT BE FAST, LIKE A STOLEN LOVERS' KISS, OR A BITTER SHARP  
SLAP, LET IT BE EXACT.

LET IT BE AN AWAKENING FROM A LONG TIRESOME DREAM, LET IT BE  
AS LIBERATING AS WIDE OPEN DOORS, AS UPLIFTING AS A THOUSAND  
FLAPPING WINGS OF DOVES IN FLIGHT.

## WHEN THE CANCER TOOK

WHEN THE CANCER TOOK,  
YOU GRACEFULLY UNKNOTTED THE TANGLED EMOTIONS.  
YOU SLOWLY AND GENTLY UNWRAPPED LOVE.  
YOU UNTIED ITS TETHER.  
AS IF YOU HAVE SAVED SOME SPRING FOR THE LONG INDEFINITE  
WINTERS.

YOU GAZED AT YOUR LOVED ONES CONDOLING FACES, RECORDED EVERY  
EXPRESSION,  
WHILE THE SICK SWAMP GREEN CELLS MULTIPLIED,  
YOU WONDERED IN SILENCE,  
HOW CAN DEATH BREED IN SUCH FRIGHTENING SPEED?

YOU WERE ASTOUNDED AT HOW LACK OF TIME SUDDENLY BREATHED  
ENCHANTMENT INTO EVERYTHING YOU TOOK FOR GRANTED,  
HOW ONLY LACK OF TIME CAN MAKE A MOMENT LAST.

YOU TOLD ME, YOU HOPED DEATH WOULD BE LIKE, BEING CARRIED TO  
BED,  
GENTLY, LIKE A CHILD  
YOU HOPED DEATH IS A PLACE WHERE ONLY THE BENIGN MULTIPLY.

FUNNY THIS LIFE.. FUNNY THIS LIFE..  
ONLY WHEN WE'RE ASKED TO HAND BACK THE KEY  
DO WE REALIZE, WE NEVER EVEN TOOK THE TIME TO UNLOCK THE  
DOORS.

## WINTER MORNING

IT WAS A COLD WINTER MORNING,

I TAUGHT HER TO HOLD THE EDGES OF HER CUFFS WITH HER TINY  
FINGERS

WHILE I SCREWED ANOTHER WOOLLY SWEATER OVER HER HEAD,

PULLING HER ARMS INTO ANOTHER PAIR OF SLEEVES

THE CUFFS OF THE UNDERGARMENT SLIGHTLY PEEKING THROUGH.

I WANTED TO SPARE HER THE DISCOMFORT OF THE FIRST SLEEVE  
PULLED UP AND GATHERED AT HER ELBOW.

SHE WAS ALMOST THREE AND DELIGHTED WITH THE NEW DISCOVERY

SHE DID IT EVERY MORNING SINCE

"SHALL I LET GO NOW MUMMY?"

LOVE MAKES US DO THAT,

SPARE THEM THE DISCOMFORT OF THINGS

LIFE'S LITTLE TROUBLES

THE SMALL ANXIETIES OFTEN OVERLOOKED.

I WONDERED HOW MANY OF LIFE'S DISCOMFORTS I'LL BE ABLE TO  
SPARE HER

OR WHETHER MY REMEDIES WILL CONTINUE TO DELIGHT HER

I WONDERED IF I WOULD HAVE THE REMEDY AT ALL.



**THE SUNSHINE CAT** - BY KAMALA DAS

THEY DID THIS TO HER, THE MEN WHO KNOW HER, THE MAN SHE LOVED, WHO LOVED HER NOT ENOUGH, BEING SELFISH AND A COWARD, AND THE HUSBAND WHO NEITHER LOVED NOR USED HER, BUT WAS A RUTHLESS WATCHER, AND THE BAND OF CYNICS SHE TURNED TO, CLINGING TO THEIR CHESTS WHERE NEW HAIR SPROUTED LIKE GREAT-WINGED MOTHS, BURROWING HER FACE INTO THEIR SMELLS AND THEIR YOUNG LUSTS TO FORGET TO FORGET, OH, TO FORGET, AND, THEY SAID, EACH OF THEM, I DO NOT LOVE, I CANNOT LOVE, IT IS NOT IN MY NATURE TO LOVE, BUT I CAN BE KIND TO YOU. THEY LET HER SLIDE FROM PEGS OF SANITY INTO A BED MADE SOFT WITH TEARS, AND SHE LAY THERE WEEPING, FOR SLEEP HAD LOST ITS USE. I SHALL BUILD WALLS WITH TEARS, SHE SAID, WALLS TO SHUT ME IN. HER HUSBAND SHUT HER IN, EVERY MORNING, LOCKED HER IN A ROOM OF BOOKS WITH A STREAK OF SUNSHINE LYING NEAR THE DOOR LIKE A YELLOW CAT TO KEEP HER COMPANY, BUT SOON WINTER CAME, AND ONE DAY WHILE LOCKING HER IN, HE NOTICED THAT THE CAT OF SUNSHINE WAS ONLY A LINE, A HALF-THIN LINE, AND IN THE EVENING WHEN HE RETURNED TO TAKE HER OUT, SHE WAS A COLD AND HALF DEAD WOMAN, NOW OF NO USE AT ALL TO MEN.

## BEING BORN A WOMAN

I HAVE ALREADY FAILED, BEING BORN A WOMAN, SAID THE WOMAN TO  
HER FEMALE REFLECTION ON THE WALL.

THE ENDLESS REMEDIES TO MY IMPERFECTIONS ALREADY STIRRED

THEY WROTE THE ANSWERS TO ALL MY LACKING THEN THEY ANALYZED  
AND COMPARED

HAD BEEN BORN TO SHORT THEY'D FIT ME WITH 4 INCH HEELS

HAD I BEEN BORN TO PALE THEY'D PENCIL ME AND RENDER MY  
COMPLEXION

HAD I BEEN BORN TOO BEAUTIFUL, THEY'D LABEL ME DIM-WITTED,  
NAÏVE.

AND YET, THE BORE ME THE HEAVIES OF LOADS

HOW MANY WERE THE TIMES WHEN A STRONG MAN HAD A AGAINST ME  
LEANED

HOW MANY BEAUTIFUL BABIES, INTELLIGENT THINKERS, GENIUSES DID  
I CONCEIVE

BUT THE ONLY NUMBER THEY COUNTED WAS THE NUMBER OF MY YEARS

THEY SNIFFED AT EVER WRINKLE  
THEY SCRUTINIZED EVERY GRAY HAIR  
THEN THEY SMOTHERED ME WITH SINS

MY EVERY MOVEMENT RAISED A THOUSAND QUESTIONS  
MY EVERY CURVE YIELDED AN OBJECTION

THEY SCORNE ME WHEN I WAS TOO COLD  
THEN THEY DISOWNED ME WHEN I WAS LUSTFUL.

BUT THERE WAS NEVER IN BETWEEN YOU SEE  
BUT THERE WAS NEVER IN BETWEEN YOU SEE

I WAS EITHER TOO YOUNG OR TOO OLD

TOO BASHFUL OR TOO BOLD  
TOO JEALOUS OR TOO TRUSTFUL  
TOO LOVING OR TOO NEGLECTFUL

THERE WAS NEVER IN BETWEEN YOU SEE

FOR ME

BEING BORN A WOMAN TO HER FEMALE REFLECTION ON THE WALL

## WHITE, OLD, MALE BOSS.

MY WHITE, OLD, MALE BOSS TELLS ME: "THERE SHOULD BE A LAW FORCING WOMEN TO WEAR MAKEUP!"

I TELL HIM HE'S A SEXIST AND A MISOGYNIST - I DON'T ADD "PIG."

HE'S SURPRISED AT MY TAKING OFFENSE.

MY BOSS CLAIMS HE IS FROM A GENERATION WHEN MEN SAID THINGS LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME, AND "GOT AWAY WITH IT."

I EXAMINE THIS "GETTING AWAY WITH IT" AS IF IT WERE A ROCK IN MY HAND, A FOSSIL, A STUBBORN, JAGGED, ANCIENT THING, HARDENING AND THICKENING WITH LAYERS AND LAYERS OF MUD AND VOLCANIC ASH,

AS INDESTRUCTIBLE AS TIME, THIS PRIVILEGE, THIS ENTITLEMENT OF A BREAST CALLED "GETTING AWAY WITH IT" WHICH MY BOSS AND HIS GENERATION OF MEN SUCKLED ON, FATTENED, AND GREW EMBOLDENED.

"COME'ER!" HE YELLS AT ME TO STOP YELLING, "COME'ER!" CURLING HIS INDEX FINGER TOWARDS HIS PALM IN DEGRADATION, BECKONING ME TO LISTEN TO HIM,

TO LISTEN TO HIM, TO LISTEN TO HIM, THAT'S THE KIND OF VENERATION MY BOSS BELIEVES I OWE HIM,

CONSUMED BY THE HELL OF WOMANHOOD THAT HOUSES ME. THE GIRL IN ME IS TERRIFIED OF HIS TYRANNICAL FINGERS, HIS FLARED NOSTRILS, HIS HOSTILE RED EYES. THE MOTHER IN ME TREMBLES - I NEED THIS JOB.

I TELL MY BOSSES BOSS, WHO IS ANOTHER OLD WHITE MAN, MY BOSS'S BOSS TELLS HIS BOSS, WHO IS ANOTHER OLD WHITE MAN, AND SO, FOREVER GOES THIS MAZE OF DOMINOS, HOWEVER FLICKED, THEY NEVER CRUMBLE.

## STAINS

THE DAY YOU LEFT, I GAVE ALL OF YOUR GUCCI SHOES TO CHARITY.

IT WAS CLEANING THE OVEN DAY, YOUR ARMANI SHIRTS FINALLY CAME  
IN HANDY

AND THEN THERE WAS THAT DISGUSTING LIMESCALE ON THE TOILET  
SEAT, WELL,

YOUR DUNHILL SUITES WORKED WONDERS THERE.

I TIED ALL OF YOUR HUGO BOOS TIES TOGETHER AND MADE THEM A  
LINE FOR MY LAUNDRY.

BUT THERE WAS THAT NASTY SATIN ON THE CARPET,

THERE WAS THAT NASTY STAIN ON THE CARPET FROM THE TIME WHEN  
YOU SLAPPED THE COFFEE MUG OUT OF MY HAND IN RAGE, AND ANGER.

SOME STAINS ARE PERMANENT.

## THE THOUGHT

WHERE WERE WE, BEFORE WE WERE BORN?

WERE WE A THOUGHT? A PASSING, MELANCHOLY THOUGHT?

WAS SHE SECRETLY MURMURING 'NOT ANOTHER GIRL I HOPE?' AS I BULGED INSIDE HER DESPAIRING STOMACH. A RANDOM FATE DECIDING THE SOUND OF MY VOICE, THE COLOR OF MY HAIR.

WE WERE, SOME OF US, A DREAM. AND SOME A DREAD.

WALKING THIS DIRTY, DISEASED EARTH. KNOTS IN OUR THROATS, MOUNTAINS ON OUR BACK, UGLY WORDS SHACKLING OUR FEET.

AND PEOPLE! GRAY, LOVELESS, BRUISED AND FLAT, KEPT ON TALKING, THEY KEPT ON WALKING, THEY KEPT ON EATING, AND SHITTING, AND FUCKING, AND PRAYING, AN ENDLESS MISERABLE, MEANINGLESS EXISTENCE. ONLY TO PRODUCE YET MORE TRAGEDIES. MORE GREY, LOVELESS, PEOPLE, BRUISED AND FLAT.

UNFULFILLED, EMPTY SOULS, STONE HARD EYES. THE SHARDS OF BROKEN SPIRITS, ENOUGH TO BURY OCEANS, ENOUGH TO COVER SKIES.

WE CAME FROM NOTHING. A PASSIVE, FEARFUL THOUGHT, ONLY TO POUR INTO THE POOL OF FILTHY, COWERING THOUGHTS.

MARBLE HEAVY EGOS, CARRYING GENERATIONS UPON GENERATIONS OF SHAME

REPEATED, REPLICATED PERSONAS, AND A PATHETIC LIFETIME OF COMPROMISE, I THOUGHT,

WHERE WERE WE, BEFORE WE WERE BORN?

WERE WE A THOUGHT? A PASSIVE MELANCHOLY THOUGHT?

**THE LAUGHING HEART** -BY CHARLES BUKOWSKI

YOUR LIFE IS YOUR LIFE

DON'T LET IT BE CLUBBED INTO DANK SUBMISSION.

BE ON THE WATCH.

THERE ARE WAYS OUT.

THERE IS LIGHT SOMEWHERE.

IT MAY NOT BE MUCH LIGHT BUT

IT BEATS THE DARKNESS.

BE ON THE WATCH.

THE GODS WILL OFFER YOU CHANCES.

KNOW THEM.

TAKE THEM.

YOU CAN'T BEAT DEATH BUT

YOU CAN BEAT DEATH IN LIFE, SOMETIMES.

AND THE MORE OFTEN YOU LEARN TO DO IT,

THE MORE LIGHT THERE WILL BE.

YOUR LIFE IS YOUR LIFE.

KNOW IT WHILE YOU HAVE IT.

YOU ARE MARVELOUS

THE GODS WAIT TO DELIGHT IN YOU.

**SOMEWHERE I HAVE NEVER TRAVELED****- BY E. E. CUMMINGS**

SOMEWHERE I HAVE NEVER TRAVELLED, GLADLY BEYOND  
ANY EXPERIENCE, YOUR EYES HAVE THEIR SILENCE:  
IN YOUR MOST FRAIL GESTURES ARE THINGS WHICH ENCLOSE ME,  
OR WHICH I CANNOT TOUCH BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO NEAR

YOUR SLIGHTEST LOOK EASILY WILL UNCLOSE ME  
THOUGH I HAVE CLOSED MYSELF AS FINGERS,  
YOU OPEN ALWAYS PETAL BY PETAL MYSELF AS SPRING OPENS  
(TOUCHING SKILLFULLY, MYSTERIOUSLY) HER FIRST ROSE

OR IF YOUR WISH BE TO CLOSE ME, I AND  
MY LIFE WILL SHUT VERY BEAUTIFULLY, SUDDENLY,  
AS WHEN THE HEART OF THIS FLOWER IMAGINES  
THE SNOW CAREFULLY EVERYWHERE DESCENDING;

NOTHING WHICH WE ARE TO PERCEIVE IN THIS WORLD EQUALS  
THE POWER OF YOUR INTENSE FRAGILITY: WHOSE TEXTURE  
COMPELS ME WITH THE COLOR OF ITS COUNTRIES,  
RENDERING DEATH AND FOREVER WITH EACH BREATHING

(I DO NOT KNOW WHAT IT IS ABOUT YOU THAT CLOSES  
AND OPENS; ONLY SOMETHING IN ME UNDERSTANDS  
THE VOICE OF YOUR EYES IS DEEPER THAN ALL ROSES)  
NO ONE, NOT EVEN THE RAIN, HAS SUCH SMALL HANDS