

DUNIYA

FONDEST MEMORY OF GRACE
IS THE RAT-TAT-TAT OF RAIN
AGAINST CORRUGATED ZINC,
BERATING THE SHODDY WORKMANSHIP
OF ALHAJI'S HOUSE.

IT IS UNWELCOME—
ALHAJI CAN FIX EVERYTHING
FROM BROKEN ZIPPERS
TO SNARKY MOUTHS,
BUT HE'S NEVER BOTHERED WITH THE ROOF,
HAPPY TO HUM TO THE NOISE.

"ALHAJI, HOW FAR?
YOU'VE NEVER FIXED THE ROOF?"

HIS GRIN IS BRIGHT,
HIS EYES ARE YELLOW.
HE SUCKS AIR THROUGH HIS TEETH.
"DUNIYA."

"DUNIYA?"

"THE WORLD.
IF I BLOCK OUT THE WORLD,
I HAVE NO CONSCIENCE
WHEN I CUT A TREE.
I CAN DO IT AGAIN TOMORROW,
AND KILL THE BIRDS THAT LIVE IN IT."

THE WORDS ARE FAMILIAR,
BUT THEY MEAN FOREIGN.
HE SUCKS AIR AGAIN,
BREATHES IN PETRICHOR.

"IF I HEAR THE RAIN,
I KNOW THE WORLD.
THE WORLD KNOWS ME.

I LIVE FOR IT,
SO I MUST HEAR IT—
AND TREAT IT
AS MY FORLORN LOVER."

"DUNIYA," I WHISPER.

"DUNIYA."