

*They eye each other. Wary, glazed.  
On shores across a sea of venom  
Yellow slime bubbling, lava hot.  
Their smiles pasted on, proper and poised,  
cool beneath my fingers, shine worn out.*

*Never wanted and never had  
the one tearing her other apart  
with perfume dipped nails, short, bitten off,  
cocoon off misery, thread silky fine,  
These centuries gone, time far short...*

If, setting aside all old and not yet gone,  
we could talk without breaking down,  
pathetic laughter and cruel screams.....  
the intricate moves of the games we play,  
on and ad nuseam on.

We wait short hair standing, long tied back,  
for father time to grant reprieve  
our sore scabby exteriors sheltered yet,  
let the limp male flag lower itself,  
let the bugle sound its armistice

In sodden tumbled cartwheeling  
words, only words, lacking all else,  
I try slowly to blow dry pain  
in whispery stoned jell-o breath  
from wide inky cool cold distance.

The exercise futile, finally over,  
we prise apart from our circles,  
the bits that are only through now  
let them drift down some way  
sad reminders of us at war.

Though I firmly deny your touch  
feather light, sometimes vice strong,  
on my forehead, your clasp on my arm,

# *Umbilical*

your brand stays in scorching red  
soul embedded, hooked and torn.  
Tread lightly and reach not out  
I am a whole; apart and alone  
sustained so far without your giving  
unasked unwanted, lost and found,  
my heat, the light, is all I need.

The lie continue, long as it can,  
let me close off all doors behind  
let me forget or decide at least,  
the remembered warmth, latent felt  
in the vein lined knots of your palm.

*This frame you remember, our family shot,  
we each sported such vacuous smiles,  
clung tightly to shoulders, indifferently dark,  
made pledges broken just as soon  
with loopholes femalely built in.*

*His stars I see reflected often  
in the wetly bright sheen of your skin,  
and yet you remain firstly mine  
mine to hoard mine to prolong,  
mine to hold and drink in at will.*

*The rest are all gone, empty blanks,  
the vacuum all ours to enjoy,  
their noise echoes not protrude anymore  
break the rage that entwines  
our two lone selves lined with shame.*

*My scrabbling hands come near undone  
as they feel, quite, quite by accident,  
the curve of your shoulder; coldly dark,  
so like this, the other half,  
we made you so, but all mine to blame.  
I heave at last a sigh relieved  
as the manic glow slowly leaves*

# *Dialogue*

by Suhasini Sakhare

*your psychobable obsessed eyes,  
this terrible emptiness will not fill,  
this terror clenching will not die.*

*To think I wanted for you that all,  
never enjoyed, nor ever will,  
shelter and freedom vying their turn,  
protective wrapping that won't entomb,  
the fragile sprite I claim my own.  
To choose for now and for all time,  
safeness and selfness, selfness over safeness,  
I know you need this make-believe fight  
to leave the fold, to test, to tease,  
hold high the trophy from this brittle war.*

You women, you who once.  
begot me most reluctant  
in hideous grief postponed,  
can we not the bridges rebuild,  
can we not ever go back?

A little while now, let us be true,  
I need your shade, you need my steel  
you and me somewhere down far  
our sense to feel the cool seeping through  
our space to lock the bad world out.

Can we try?

*You my child, in bitter sweet revenge,  
you share my curse.....my womb.  
You too will forever bleed  
forever cringe, head bowed before  
stone throwing hands, to you born.*

*I hear your words, heartsick swan song,  
my little girl, too soon too grown,  
can the rays of my autumn sun,  
not warm your light; Can my hand,  
reaching out, not grip you hard?*

*Is it enough?*

*This poem arose from the author's participation in innovative assemblies, called 'Mother-Daughter Dialogue, where village women and their adolescent daughters are asked to participate in dialogue sessions with each other. The project was a very enriching and eye opening experience for the writer. Being the daughter of a feminist, with whom she shares a very close bond, it disturbed her deeply to realise just how distanced, alienated and misunderstood mothers and daughters feel within their relationship.*