

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/1

Translated from the Urdu by Alamgir Hashmi

WHERE AM I?

Where am I
in your life?

In the morning breeze
or the evening star,
hesitant drizzle
or sharp rain,
silver moonlight
or hot noon,
deep thoughts
or casual tunes?

Where am I
in your life?

Down from work,
a weekend's interval
on a beach,
or an unintended
silken release between your fingers
from serial smoke?
Or a readily replenished,
freshened moment without wine,
or a moment's leave, anonymous,
between the breaking of one dream
of love and another's beginning?

Where am I
in your life?

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VANITY / *Vanity Thy Name Is...*

He is so simple.
His world is so different from mine.
So separate are his dreams
and his preferences.
He says very little.
He writes
this morning I saw
some lovely flowers in the lawn
and thought of you.

I know
I am at that dishevelled stage of life
when my face
is not much like any flower.
But I wish— whatever he says—
I could believe it a while.

- Parveen Shakir(1952–1994), from *Inkar* (1990).

WAITING

All night the rain by the window
creeping along the champac
drop after drop sent down the poison.

My eyes kept remembering your face.

In the morning, there was a heap of leaves
on the floor, the face of fallow earth.
A revenge—because I wait for the sun.

- Sahar Ansari(1941-), from *Namood* (1976).