

Spring 2017

Doctorappa

Prabakar T. Rajan

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Prabakar T. Rajan

Doctorappa

I want to thank you for the beer I stole.
Smuggling it still warm
up to the open terrace where it lunged
at me as I sat with the clay
tiles scorching my thighs. The still wall
of afternoon dangled its feet. Below,
in dim parlors decked in hot snakes
of air swirling from ceiling fans,
the women sat with folded hands,
staring into silences.

We remained strangers almost
to the very end, you and I, clutching
at each other but coming away
with tufts of air. We couldn't even synchronize an embrace.
You wanted a real boy, something tough, tousled,
grinning. Not girly plump and prickly. And I
wanted more of you, much more—
in the ordinary doorway of evenings, and in crumbs
such as burnt breakfasts, milk-snorted laughter,
trouser-splits, anecdotes wearing threadbare. . . .

We had that moment alone
before the very end. You
cried very simply, being afraid to die,
and I held your hand. And I spoke to you
of all the years of your fingers gentle
with the fear in large eyes. And that soft,
serious courtesy you stiffened into
with the very old, and the very poor.

After the funeral I went back
up to the terrace before leaving. The evening
was a parrot, red-green and screeching. I sat
thinking of nights of hot milk, and bananas and noses
in books. Of how quietly you shook us at dawn.

Prabakar T. Rajan

Of the quivering of your moustache
before the gap-toothed laughter. Of the flowing
narrative of your hands. And I made
peace with you, lifting up an offering
of forgiveness asked
and given. "Cheers,"

I said, and took another swig.

Sheryl L. Nelms

Outside of Taos

the pine-
filled

mountain
valley

disappears

into the whiteness
of early morning

fog