

Renuka Raghavan – Three Poems

En Silencio

I try to barricade the lie inside,
The positive thinking, an act. As is
my being strong. This is not easy because the truth is
something I choose to keep for myself.
It is reserved for those quiet times when I
am left with nothing but the low, dull
hum of my thoughtful regrets.
One teardrop is all I can spare, and spare it
I must. It deserves that much.
Undistinguished, I swipe it away before it
crosses the threshold of cognizance.
I focus again, quick, noiseless as
a bat's wings in the darkest cave.
A question is posed, and eyes begin to roam,
but no one utters a sound.
I close mine and think of ocean waves
pierced by jagged shoreline;
anything to ease this minute.
Don't do this, my heart cries.
My mind, drenched in apathy, as the sea waters
recede, and the moment passes.
Life is found in simple faith, he never had.
I am gluttonous; I revel in
self-punishment. Why else would I take such care
to witness such a betrayal?
Amidst applause and tears, their marriage now begins.

Journey Interrupted

It wasn't going to be smooth,
that much I surmised early on.
But this was a pain in the ass, this
ridiculous search. I question
the frequency of randomness, of which
I am an unwitting volunteer.
Come,
Stand,
Spread,
I do as I am ordered. I must not question;
the black box is on the journey home.
The wand floats over my body, followed by a
hand, gloved in blue latex.

Is this your bag, he shouts, in question.
You mean the black, unassuming, carry-on
suitcase? Yes, it belongs to me.
Bring it,
open it,
stand back.
He swipes a wand on
the inside and returns a minute later.
Then he pokes his hands through my clothes,
toiletries, books.
He reaches the bottom and finds the rectangle
black box, packed carefully within a white
towel, stolen from a hotel two years ago.
Its heavy, he needs both hands to take it out.
What's inside this, madam?
I reach in my purse and hand him the
certificate that accompanies the black box.
He scans it, eyebrows furrowed.
He looks at me,
my eyes somber, unamused, mirror his.
He takes the black box and paper certificate
to another booth and shows another man.
His manager.
It is what the paper says it is.
What good is a second opinion, I wonder.
The manager and his employee walk back
to me.
Can you confirm this, madam, they ask.

There is a river, Krishna, flowing through Western India,
whose banks delighted my father
as a child, I explained.
He always spoke of this river,
the life it supported,
the rage it cooled,
the calm it granted.
My father always wanted to see it again.
Now, I am bringing him back.
The manager and employee stared
soundlessly.
They returned my belongings.
The black box, with its colorless remains,
continues the journey home.

Mother Required, Apply Within

The moment they arrived,
I was needed. My reaching arms
enveloped their tiny, writhing bodies.
Though moons apart, they invoked the same:
love, light, tinged slightly
with uncertainty, fear.
Two infants, fell
one by one, into the super unknown,
my heart, released each into the world
with readiness.
My body, released with doubt.
I caressed and cooed into their
impatient countenances.
My torn flesh tailored,
stitch by stitch,
unbeknownst to me or my babes.
Eyelids flutter open,
dark gazes find mine;
I laid kisses upon soft heads
blanketed with damp, black curls.
They erase all traces of disquiet,
when my finger is gripped,
the first, with angst and spite,
the second, with steely fortitude.
Each one, transmuted into living.

Renuka Raghavan tends to focus on brief, dramatic narratives. She writes and lives in Massachusetts with her family and beloved beagle. Read her selected works at [www.renukaraghavan\(dot\)com](http://www.renukaraghavan(dot)com)