

[G A T E S]

Sahar Muradi



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Executive Editor: Diane Goettel

Chapbook Editor: Kit Frick

Book Design: Amy Freels

Cover Design: Yolandi Oosthuizen

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The one that belonged to her
The one where the light hit for the first time
The one between our houses
The one I crawled through to sleep on his chest
The one the dog squeezed through
The one at three over the candle and cake
The one at three at the checkpoint
The one between the earth and the sky, the refrigerator with wings
The one where he met us after one year and was a stranger
The one at the park, the one at Up Park, the one at Down Park
The one that pierced my face and they pointed and laughed
The one that took them away from me in a tube and sent them back to me
tired
The one he went through, hairs shooting out
The one she went through, blood turning up
The one we all went through to get to the blinking lights with the cherries
The ones we put up when she was born
The ones we passed to leave for good
The ones we paid quarters to get through
The one they learned the names of Presidents for
The ones they needed social security numbers for
The one I touched in the dark of my room
The ones we couldn't talk about, ever
The one we had to close behind us to stay in, to keep neat, to not be
tempted
The one we tried to jump and failed
The one he jumped and wasn't forgiven

The ones in the books that made animals of us
The ones that told us who we weren't
The ones that hurt, that swung and cut and rattled long after they left
The ones that kept flowers
The one I went through to go north, to go abroad, to go east, to find my
 cardinal ways
The one she went through too tired to find her way
The one they have chosen to give them purpose
The different one I have chosen
The one I haven't yet found
The one I am looking through now with the narrow slots and passages
 unseen

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It's a place to live,
he said
looking out over the cranes
frozen in the sand
like seagulls with still wings

There was the glass whale
standing up in the water
a dolphin facing God

There was the cigarette skyline
blank-faced buildings
tall, white, and widowed
or blue and mirrored
hundreds of them
vacant
beaded gloriously gold at night

In between were low cubes of stores
car dealerships, jewelers
and invisible trades

There were shopping malls
with arches and sea life
supermarkets built for disasters

There were convention centers and expos
and festivals that began at sunset

There were museums for other places

There was the old city
with stout white blocks
bleeding with short brown men
who worked construction

There was sudden grass
bougainvillea on the walls
hyacinths in the sand
miles of manicured walks
blue ones and red ones
black-eyed peacocks
and falcons perched on covered hands

There was no trash

There were cars and cars and cars
big tires for the dunes
diamond caps for the night
and boys like him
laughing behind sealed glass

Everywhere
a cape of fine azure
Tall men and women
in white cotton
and black rayon

men with sinful watches
women with silver faces
who loved to shop

There was fresh fruit
bottled water
expats
pilgrims
and prayer on the side of the road

There was refrigeration

There was the Qasba
with its French seats
and flat desserts
a Ferris wheel called The Eye

We went up
and in the glow of the city
before I could say it,
he said,
this is where I grew up