i.

‘i forgive you’

he said

‘i want you

to know

that you are

forgiven...’

and

as he moves in

i breathe out

praying he’s

looking

for someone else

though

i know already

its me

and he’s

stooping

low

willing up

my chin,

trying to catch

my eyeballs

looking

so this time

i engage,

shoulders back

knuckling

my keys

hoping

to survive

this encounter

as I have

many before
and as he
edges
in
under me
i can smell
this
noxious
haze,
all
exhaust fumes
and ale
eroding
the air
around me
clotting
the back
my throat

‘i forgive you’ he said

‘for the bombs’

(the penny drops)

and as our eyes
meet
it’s like
he’s not looking at me
but
over me
with this
obscene gaze,
full
of terror
and disease,

unfeeling
uncanny
gliding
from
limb to limb
with
a precise vision

   a drone’s eye
   view

and I’m
looking all around
   for
   an intervention
   a random act
   but
i can see
everyone’s eyes fixed
   on the deck

so i breathe deep
wait for
   all the things
   i have ever wanted to say
   to come back
   to me
   to fill my mouth,
   to sharpen my tongue
so i can spit
   them
   at him

but as i inhale,
it’s like
   there’s
this toxicity
seeping in
through the gaps
in my teeth

   a
   silence
insidious
caustic
thick
blistering
the inside
of my lip

and he's repeating himself
like I haven't heard
what he's been saying

'i forgive you,
for the bombs'

and the whole time
i am pleading
with myself
to take my own
hands from
around my own
throat
and cry out

that his
forgiveness
is an
unspeakable trauma
that
touches the deepest
part of me

that
i must bear the weight
of responsibility
for the actions of others

no them without me

all of us held
in contempt

accused
of this
pre-crime
this
brown anomie
‘we forgive you’

and all i can think
is
what
he must be
seeing of me

a twoness

two headed,
two hearted

see it say it sort it

one part human
one part djinn

but

if this bus
were to blow
and our
bodies found themselves
strewn
then
together
we would be
an accumulated wreckage

of entrails
western values
and all of this
sanctimony

so
i swallow it
all the way
donw
choke on
the scraps
of this diseased imaginary
lumpen, unctuous
laced with white fury

and
i can feel this
    blunt ache
of a stomach
both
full and empty

stuck

metabolising
the
supreme fiction
of another’s
bankrupt ideology

alien,
unknowable,
religious,
fundamental

all myth,
no reality.
because when you have been outnumbered your whole life

sometimes it's not about who you claim
but about who claims you

and most days we walk the main drag with this practiced lean all loose and slow chest out arms in waist low

with my brothers in arms

the axis of evil the deviants the destructors

all equally to blame all as bad as each other

stalking the same corner of the street our folks were firebombed and spat on
and
i’m wearing
my friday’s best

jeans crisp
hands dipped
all
armoured against
each
pale stare

top down
bottom up

weighing heavy
on our whole

and
we’re here
because
there’s nowhere
else
we can be

just this
feeling
holding us

a native energy

of love,
location,
solidarity

and always being ready
to run for our lives
fleet of foot
preparing our route
to safety

because every time
i hear those
sirens coming
it’s like
i feel this ache
in the balls of my feet

of having taken my leave
over trip-wired ground

    with the best laid plans
    someone else
    has made
    for me

and we know what it is
    we’re accused of
but never what
    it is
    we have
done

    all of us IC4s
    with no fight left
because we’ve been
emptied so many times
before

and
in the ruin
of
young faces
    it’s like
they’re seeing
the enemy within

limbs
    scattered
    across far continents
in
martyrdom
and
myth

and sometimes there
is
a harshness
between us
a toughened skin
where our
foreheads meet

but
in each other

we are measuring
the extent
of our
    selves

young innocents

full of infinity

and
at the hard end
of the deep state

we're just trying
to survive
the condition we
find ourselves
    in

under protected
and
over exposed

to a dense
    suffering.
and
i remember
the feeling
of being loved

i can remember
it deep in
my marrow

but i can’t
remember
all the parts
of her
anymore

because
i’ve
already seen
so much

and i can still feel
the weight
of carrying her
as she had once
carried me

feeding her
as she had
once fed me

cleaning her
as she had
once cleaned me

and i remember
that as her
body
failed
mine became stronger
like this curse

a theft
of her vitality
and i remember
  the incense
  the prayers
  the calm
  and this divine maternal energy

all
infused with
the lingering musk
  of latex gloves
  and
  stale bedsheets

and
  i remember
being turned away
because no matter how bad
it got
there was no capacity

and when
the nurse asked
  loud, slow
'just what is it that you believe?'

and
  all this
apparatus
would dangle
  from the walls
  of the house
  like limbs,
  half-heartedly

  because
they could no
  longer
abide by the cost
  of
what was left
  of her autonomy
and when the state finally gave up on her

the world became small

and we were left in a heap

the sunken cost of austerity and the bodies that lie beneath

and I think of the worlds that have been plundered wars waged far away from me

and how everyday she would pay the price of staying alive with some small sense of dignity

because when the welfare state is the warfare state

and we are so invested in pale supremacy

then it seems that brown life can both cost too much and seem so very cheap
and when i think
of that time

there's
this ulcerous rage
that i fear
will immolate
    undyingly

and if i let it touch
all my sides
i know
    it will
    lay waste
    to the softest parts
    of me

so
i consume myself
instead
with the earth-shattering labour
of learning to aim
my ire
    vertically

and
    now
    i can see

why every time
we embraced
    she would
hold me
    still

    talk me down
from all these
unthinkable
    masculinities

wait for me to
relent,
to soften into
    the creases of her
    limbs
so that i would know
without a doubt
that my body
belonged
safely
to someone
even if
it did not
feel like
it belonged to me

and
she knew
in a way that
took time
to reveal itself
to me

from before
those twin towers
came crashing
down

that embodiment
would be an everyday
cruelty

because
i had come to her
endangered
in a loveless world
of
endless hostility

where i could only
see something
of myself
in the faces
of deviants
and detainees

and as i strained
with every fiber
to
become

she would
hold our whole
so delicately

and
rub away
everyday at the
target
that
grew on my back

world-making
a beloved imaginary

in which we
could both
believe.