

***THE FIRST MORNING AND OTHER POEMS***

**By Reena Prasad**

When it dawns

The crow pheasant will sit on the well's rim  
and call the sun down with a soft, booming 'coop' 'coop'  
The front door will not groan

The fish monger boy will toot his rubber horn  
while moving up and down the street on his bike  
An orange tabby will run to the gate  
The front door will look the other way

The old rose bush will creak and bow low  
under the weight of its rain-drunk blooms  
The curry plant will be looted by the neighbour  
The front door will not move

The milking lady will pass by the low wall  
looking in at the shed of the big-horned brown cow  
Squabbling hens will squeeze in under the fence  
The door will make no sound

The wind will shake the slanting rubber grove  
looking for the man who cuts and milks the sap  
He will clang in with a chain to lock up the farm gate  
The front door still won't budge

I wish they wouldn't make such a racket  
trying to tug at the strings the night broke  
All these pleas cannot rouse her  
And the front door? It never had ears

***ARITHMETIC***

This time  
everything will look different  
There will be no blurred sides  
only a steel-gray clarity  
I have put mine away  
and borrowed your eyes

The trees are taller than the house  
A few thin waists have snapped in the wind  
They need to be fed more  
but the leaves are healthy  
The ground is covered with button weed  
My feet ache where thorns  
have marched through them  
Pain is a phantom  
Your eyes could never see wounds

They are busy measuring and taking count  
of the gaps in the broken wire fence  
the cost of fertilizer from the depot  
the balance in the passbook

and the days left before a month is up  
Nothing adds up

I abandon them on a border stone  
You reclaim them eagerly  
to glare at a tree  
which dared to thrust a branch  
past its boundaries

Through the barbed-wire  
the sun sinks into a paddy field  
White egrets awash with an orange glow  
settle on a buffalo  
My eyes fresh from a nap  
nuzzle at the scene  
You see the darkening sky  
and the delight in mine  
then add them up perfectly as rain

We hurry home  
just before the storm breaks

**Bio**

**Reena Prasad** is a poet from India, currently living in Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). Her poems have been published in several anthologies and journals e.g. The Copperfield Review, First Literary Review-East, Angle Journal, Poetry Quarterly, York Literary Review, Lakeview International Journal, Duane's PoeTree, Mad Swirl etc. She is also the Destiny Poets UK's, Poet of the year for 2014 and one of the editors of The Significant Anthology released in July 2015.

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More recently, her poem was adjudged second in the World Union of Poet's poetry competition, 2016.

EPISTEME