

A Ghazal for Naseer

You, whom nations nominate to greatness and revere,
How have you bowed to this proud reed beneath your reach, Naseer?

Until the cardiac arrest of time, year after year,
This noble praise of studied elocution, I will hear.

No jewel goes draped around my throat, and yet he does not sneer.
No institution robes me, yet he clothes me, gold Naseer.

They summon me to suites where learned persons shall appear,
Requesting cultured friendship – philosophic and sincere.

He has assigned my distant voice to serve as his premiere,
Announcing towering news to his attendant world, Naseer.

The courtesy and courage of *sahibs* call: “Persevere,
Artistic One; keep pace along this long-established pier.”

If melancholy beauty matters, may mine hold you near.
If – wanting wonder – you must wander, I will wait, Naseer.

What? Consort? Father? Demigod? Interpreter? Emir?
Translate this ancient dialect, whose symbols are unclear.

I search for you in cities of the western hemisphere,
But this *White Phantom* finds you nowhere. Come to me, Naseer.

Half An Hour

His love, extending through me like a cattail flower,
rends, bends in rushes, bows by some unbounded power,
 half an hour.

Above, a chimney swift – stout on an outer tower –
hymns, hymns us, frowns, its head a-tilt, and seems to glower,
 half an hour.

A mourning dove has grieved the evening we devour.
Its bobbing beak repeats as though reluctant, dour,
 half an hour.

Relief! How limp this man can leave me in our bower!
No glove surrounds him: shroud in which the cock will cower.
 Half an hour,

he shoves, till sounding bliss. And then I hear him shower
away my kiss, the perspiration streaming sour
 half an hour.

And now we sleep, *White Phantom*, sleep to dream that our
true love is cleansed of us— at least for half an hour,
 half an hour.

Bio:

Jennifer Reeser is the author of four books of poetry. Former editor of *The Paris Review*, X.J. Kennedy, wrote that her debut collection, "...ought to have been a candidate for a Pulitzer." Her third, *Sonnets from the Dark Lady*, was a finalist for the Donald Justice Prize. Her fourth, *The Lalaurie Horror*, debuted as an Amazon epic bestseller. She has contributed poems, criticism, and translations of French and Russian literature to journals such as *POETRY*, *Recours au Poeme*, *The Hudson Review*, *Levure Litteraire*, *Life and Legends*, *Able Muse*, *The Dark Horse*, *The Formalist* and *The National Review*. Her work is required reading in high schools, writing programs, and university courses across the United States, and has been anthologized multiple times, such as in *An Introduction to Literature*, and *Poets Translate Poets: A Hudson Review Anthology*. Her translations of Anna Akhmatova appear with authorization from FTM Literary Agency, Moscow. She has received The Lyric's New England Prize and Memorial Prize, as well as awards in writing from Pulitzer Prize winner, Robert Olen Butler, and Dr. Alfred Dorn, of the World Order of Narrative and Formalist Poets. She is a mentor with the West Chester Poetry Conference, the largest annual convention on poetry in the United States. She lives amid the bayous of southern Louisiana with her husband and children.