

Collected Poetry / Spring 2021

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## Landay Adaptations

*(Pashto Original)*

Because my love's American,  
blisters blossom on my heart.

*(Adapted)*

American love taps on the surface of my heart,  
as fractures dance across its pane, like frost

*(Pashto Original)*

O darling, you're American in my eyes.  
You are guilty; I apologize.

*(Adapted)*

My love, I overlook your American vice  
You lie, while I pay the price

**Cat's Cradle (two weeks' notice)**

*after Kurt Vonnegut*

my condolences. I did mean for this to bruise

and I tell myself the truth: *no damn cat.*

for evacuation. *no damn cradle.*

still

your womb, that hearth

I too was grieving. am

inside-out with heartache packing

and I felt it: danger. i had to go

all the warmth i remember

**community nursery**

*for O*

we are allowed these gentle glances.  
these are beauty's softest shapes.  
the camellias blush faintly  
under welcomed attention.  
your gaze will never be obscene.

it's okay to draw the curtains,  
for your leaves to unfurl in the dark  
for all our marvel, that bright longing  
we need not squint under the sun—  
I love her so completely,  
even now  
as I hold her in my hands,  
a delicate idea  
for the time being.

of all the things I should say to you <sup>3</sup>, (which I've learned now, as a femme)

Firstly,

I don't think most children are capable of love <sup>1</sup>

which sounds *evil* but listen:

I don't think it's love until there is (or could be)

absolutely nothing in it for you, and you('d) persist despite.<sup>2</sup>

I don't think children are capable of entertaining that sacrifice,  
they should not have to.

I know now that I did not know love—

I did *need*, once. I did

trust in

look up to

depend on

seek shelter in;

these are common comorbidities.

it is on that precedent that I know *you* did.

of all the things you (as a straight woman) have learned

you must be prepared for them not to love you back.

that is sacrifice, wife and motherhood.

I could not teach you to embrace that which I grew into.

all I could do was be that which I am no longer:

whose memory I've shackled to my ribcage,

tracing figures against my arteries

throwing tantrums in the night

I'm just as tender. all else is gone

here is the me who wants to be a livid poet— to slam and muse

about the plight of Oedipus, and how universal of a tale that is.

except it isn't. I am just a Lesbian

I find my mother in every woman I've ever loved.

Instead I realize every day how much was not your fault—  
imagine myself, round belly and all,  
arriving in a country I don't have the tongue for  
swelling in my body: a new essence, someone's else's consciousness.  
I turn twenty-one soon. I try very hard  
not to think about the morning sickness I gave you  
at that age.                      and he was thirty-five  
you should have been a sophomore like me.

I was taught, if you're getting a little too much  
pleasure out of something,  
cut it out. pleasure will always lead to sin  
(worship should not be pleasurable either)  
and you shouldn't want people to look at you  
and you shouldn't want to look at others.  
you're both sinning, in mutual attraction. this is the most horrible thing.

I teach myself now, all the ways in which love manifests in indulgence  
our home a mausoleum to the extravagance of lesbianism  
the glamor, the trinkets, the embellishments and mementos  
souvenirs and postcards that prove, with all sincerity:  
we existed here once, in love  
and in pain.  
please do look—  
the world shimmers back from the eye of my lover.

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<sup>1</sup> I think children are capable of empathy,  
admiration, reverence, trust,  
dependence, devotion, acceptance  
seeing the good parts with such beautiful innocence.

<sup>2</sup> of course I think love can be indulgent, even  
selfish; in healthy situations, it should be.  
as long as that selfishness is mutual  
and reciprocated.

<sup>3</sup> none of them are 'I love you', because I cannot say it  
truthfully. please believe me, I have tried,  
and I regret that I cannot- even if it isn't my fault  
even if it isn't entirely yours, either.

## if we're being honest

### I.

patience is so hard to learn. there's a  
fundamental difference  
dividing us.  
I love you, it's just heartbreakingly  
difficult sometimes,  
being in public with you.  
your verbosity is perplexing.  
even the strongest warrior mommas  
need a break, sweetheart.  
I can't help it. it's exhausting.

### II.

help us bridge that gap,  
won't you all?  
could some self-advocate please enlighten us as to why  
people afflicted with allism subject themselves  
to impossibly strict codes of conduct, for the sake of  
'professional settings'. if we all funnel money into  
detecting this condition before birth, we'd be  
one step closer to a world without passive-aggression  
and useless convention at family dinners. thank god—  
the way some of you insist on having the type  
we can't just set aside  
gives me secondhand embarrassment.

### III.

I tend to forget  
my experience is not universal.  
allism is an important issue  
I'm trying to be more understanding  
I participate in the hashtags.  
I'm a good ally  
I hope you're aware.

#### IV.

we're subjected to so much— which isn't their fault, but  
then the normal-looking ones cry *accommodation*,  
as if you're all entitled to our saving graces.  
really, only the tragics should be allowed to  
get away with that,  
*they* can be excused, the poor things. but  
don't you want to be treated just the same?  
why then, do you insist on  
the easy way out,  
our exceptions for the pitifully deviant?  
choose one. be capable  
or be believably lamentable.  
otherwise, do me a favor and do that  
funny thing you do with your eyebrows, please.  
don't they call it *sarcastic expression*—  
I'm getting it on my story for allistic awareness month.  
dear god, someone find a fucking cure.  
put us normal folk out of our misery.

#### u-hauling

##### I.

I cannot believe you're being serious. do you have any idea  
about the consequences of your actions, truthfully? I'm aware  
lesbians tend to move fast because *society* or something, but  
this isn't fast,  
this is insane.

...you guys know that y'all are the only  
*real* friends I have, right?  
you two plus him.  
we're a team.  
it's the four of us, it always has been.



you understood the implications enough to hesitate  
breaking the news of your romance at all,  
but you couldn't *clearly* see the potential consequences  
of something as monumental as this?  
that's selfish to me.  
you two are being selfish.  
...listen, please don't take this the wrong way, but  
I think it's because of your... y'know.

and you know I don't mean it like *that*  
look, you always forget, I'm ADHD, so I'm neurodivergent too!  
it's not ableism. it's realism. of course I'm rooting for you  
like nothing I've ever rooted for,  
because you are my best friends,  
and I'm scared of what could happen if I stop.  
I don't trust that you really understand what you're doing.  
she's impulsive and you're... y'know.  
I really don't understand why you're so insistent either. there is no  
pressing circumstance. no one's pregnant and no one's Mormon.  
just date normally. there's no rush.

## II.

oh that's *fucking adorable*— wait, everyone needs to look at this,  
this video just restored my faith in humanity. oh my god look,  
they were friends at the adult special needs center,  
dated for a month,  
and now they're declaring their marriage?  
they must have so much fun together... aw.  
Wholesome video of the day: Autistic man proposes to his  
girlfriend with Down syndrome, claims they're soulmates.

## the claim

we know which corners of the bed to fold,  
who's pillow is whose, which direction to plant our feet  
carefully fill each other's vulnerabilities

with spackle— patience, adaptive tech.  
for the first time since childhood  
we're granted that familiar,  
monitored self-sufficiency—  
difference is, in place of  
tired obligation,  
there stands love. just that.

like I said,  
I forget my experience is not universal.  
I could never fathom a state unlike this,  
not *set free* by this kind of love.

this morning you woke by yourself, with  
the dexterity enough to brush your teeth,  
executive function enough to shower,  
planning skills enough to eat a real breakfast,  
and the spacial awareness, reaction time,  
navigation enough to drive yourself to work,  
where you performed your job without  
needing meds to sit through it,  
frowned-upon breaks to 'manage' your 'personal issues',  
learning the hard way that nondisclosure is *much* safer,  
or any elephant in the room.

you'll do that well and good tomorrow  
when my lover kisses me awake,  
humming a tune with perfect softness  
as I adjust to the bright.  
cradled by the rhythm of cause and effect  
we'll arm ourselves with each other  
dance to that mutual, endless, elegant song  
day in,  
day out,  
no more,  
never less.