



## *Afflatus Creations*

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### **If You to Love One of Them**

By Faleeha Hassan

Translated by William M. Hutchins

Because love is as hard as a walnut in a toothless mouth,  
Because you might stand for hours, as your breathy gasps burn in the frost, waiting for a rose  
to whisper to you,  
While you forget that time ignores women who labor neglected in kitchens,  
And men withering in coffeehouses.  
All that you earn to is to steal a single rosy pulse for your heart,  
No chocolate bars will suffice to cheer you up,  
No cartons of ice cream, and  
Not even hours of seated meditation in yoga studios.  
You write your son: "I'm alarmed I'll slap my exile, fearing that my hand will get sullied by  
separation."  
He shares your comment with his friend, and they both guffaw!  
"I feel parched!"  
You repeat this almost every day within earshot of your daughter, before she slams the door  
and leaves.  
"Sorrow chokes me."  
I write down this phrase and quickly erase it, fearing that the world's serenity will be  
perturbed.  
For me to love you  
Is as impossible as for you to be here now,  
While I'm alone and repeat  
In my bedroom,  
In the kitchen,  
While climbing the stairs,  
At the door, and  
On the couch,  
In front of the TV,  
That I'm turning into a wall so dilapidated that mirrors dread it.  
Death will never die; I'm the one who always does.  
My blood boils.  
My fingers are live embers.  
I have no whispering bed,  
No gently undulating swimming pool.  
Instead, I'm surrounded by snow drifts and memories of reverberating bombs,  
And, when I sleep, my eyelids cling together over a dark void.  
You loving one of them,  
Means you must ditch your wristwatch, so it doesn't make you feel that time is evaporating  
Or remind you that he is slow to respond.

You will need to dispose of your phone, so it won't upset you with its silent howl.  
 I really wish we had never met  
 And I had remained just as I was:  
 Oblivious to everything happening around me,  
 Needing only a piece of paper  
 With which to bandage a tree struck down by the gust of a violent storm  
 Or  
 On which I draw a map of my country after the Emperor's fingers sliced and diced it.  
 Just a sheet of paper that  
 I would stuff down the neck of a bottle,  
 Throw to the center of the river while I run by,  
 Or cram into the crannies of my worm-eaten days.  
 For you to love as I do now,  
 A young man, who is only fifty,  
 Whenever the pounding of his heart reaches the hem of my dress, I swallow an aspirin  
 And tell him to bring me a tree.  
 He's gone till the forest is stripped of verdure.  
 Totally disinterested in arithmetic,  
 He counts only the moments we will spend together, one day,  
 When we won't be separated as we once were, when  
 Clandestine meetings made us prick up our ears.  
 I dream of him every day,  
 But rarely find a spot for myself in the folds of his consideration of some other girl.  
 I write to him:  
 "My window, which looks down on you, has grown weary,  
 Because the branch tips grow no closer  
 Nor curl up and fall asleep."  
 He laughs!  
 "I love you: you!"  
 Daybreak and nighttime mingle.  
 Language condenses till your name belongs only to you, not anyone else.  
 The long roads extend, cutting short, to you and  
 Become you, who are the goal of my trip.  
 I love you now like this:  
 My heart needs another heart  
 So, it won't dissolve, the way it did two months ago  
 When your fingers approached me  
 To tear from my new blouse's collar, the sales tag I had forgotten to remove!



Faleeha Hassan

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