

lucky inhabitant

failing to conjure even distant relatives i know not
which women precede me, believe all this pain is at least
our own on my lap experts theorize
[witchcraft is no longer a personal matter]
state plainly [the women had nails
driven into their foreheads] & full up now with steel
& scythes & a list of weapons wielded
against us, am nauseous & taking it personally though
at least am not asked to detail my assault on television
holding my chin up for photographers dubbed *icon*
& simultaneously driven out of the nation
yes you might say this makes me one of the lucky
inhabitants yes here there are no [jackfruit
trees] but in a chamber the semicircle of [men had red
eyes—the kind of eyes that saw no reason and were filled
with cruelty] & somewhere online i am blamed
for not remembering yes gone now my willful ascension
the stairs, his room & i don't fight back know what fate
awaits women who protest too much no matter dialect
or country the question is the same [*ki jani*] they ask
in the motherland & *who knows* here we throw up
our hands & it isn't in prayer
there's blood in the soil so they call it *filth* blood
on our legs so they call us *gone* they're not wrong
& they will not be fooled, won't take it back
it's night & the [jackfruit trees] close in there's chanting
in the distance who owns this world

daayan after a village feast

any way to the bottom of a bottle is one the men
will pioneer. moonlit paths through the pale green
growth. they trade tea leaves, tobacco, ghee. they trade

what we women toiled. naturally, we sneak sips, dilute
the remainder like kids, slinking on packed mud, careful
not to step too heavy. i'm the only one who takes

full flasks like this. that's not why they want
my pasture. they don't know their own skin
glows amber : we all sweat it out the same.

teeth slump against gums. bones
whittle down. maybe they feel bright yellow
in their lungs, the unsung chakra, & think it's my fault

their feet slur the dirt. they pull me in with spindly
arms, kiss me flat on the forehead, [haria]
breathing their half-lie : how capable they are

of love. moments before the blackout, all their limbs
ablaze, the whole world must seem possible & warm
& fused. it must be intoxicating

to survive. they pass out unarmed, sloughed against fences,
so we slip bottles from loose fists, tuck them into our
baskets. we become mist, shift groveward, flee.