

Tea with Cardamom

Warda Yassin

smith|doorstop

Published 2019 by Smith|Doorstop Books
The Poetry Business
Campo House,
54 Campo Lane,
Sheffield S1 2EG
www.poetrybusiness.co.uk

Copyright © Warda Yassin 2019
All Rights Reserved

ISBN 978-1-912196-72-2
Designed & Typeset by Utter
Printed by Biddles

Smith|Doorstop books are a member of Inpress:
www.inpressbooks.co.uk. Distributed by NBN International, Airport
Business Centre, 10 Thornbury Road Plymouth PL 6 7PP.

The Poetry Business gratefully acknowledges the support of
Arts Council England.



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Contents

5	Victoria Street
6	Cardamom
7	At 57
8	In Burco
9	Small Talk
10	Facts & Trivia
12	Stories of Boys and Men
13	Sheffield Children's Hospital
14	Weston Park
15	His Passport
16	A Love Like Skies
17	Seamstress
18	My Sisters
19	Trophy Wife
20	Blick
21	A Mother's Storm
22	Learning the Janazah Prayer
23	Sabr and Iman
24	Tales
25	Searching for My Father's Tree
26	Acknowledgements

*For Abtiyo Mohammed Aboker whom I love and miss with
equal measure. May you rest in peace.*

Victoria Street

If buildings had feelings, Victoria Street
would need a therapist.

Thugs, imams, families, woman beaters,
and a pub, reside in anarchy,

rubble, stray cats and love.
No *Morning* to each other.

The post man knows to knock once.
Children are ushered from pavements

after Maghrib, billowing garnets brush past
sloganed crop tops. The breeze

brings the Adaan, dubstep and sirens,
the smell of the sauna, the smoke of incense.

Out front, my father breaks his fast,
chews dates, offers a cautious smile

to those with heavy eyes across the way.
These parallel buildings demonstrate

difference, but reflect something
of the same. The street is anything

but royal,
we share a common fate.

Cardamom

I'm trying to pinpoint when your mother's love stopped being the neighbourhood alarm clock on school days; the cardamom songbird we no longer hear through the walls. It began with you bunking school for your brotherhood of wayward sons. How did they teach you

to unthread the ropes of her heart? Your Nikes left imprints the civil war never did. I try to remember the exact moment your school teachers felt vindicated. Your extra-terrestrial eyes, bruised and hard. The only required information.

How did you become a statistic and not the space between zero and one, where love lies? I think of the moment your mother became homeless in her Dubai imported living room. Threading the years into abaayas and daughters, serving tea without cardamom.

Was there a day you tried to teach her war was safe – the charred feet, burning neighbourhoods, familiar limbs, counting heads? The running and the loss, the losing, and the praying next to your empty bed? Why didn't you learn that mothers turn into refugees when we leave?

At 57

Nasra changed the entire decor, ripped up the carpet,
put her bed by the window and his cupboard by the door.
She threw away his bedside dates, dry without his warmth,

and stole away the gabays, prescriptions, his brown leather jacket
from prying eyes. She placed her vanity box by his old radio
to hide the truth; the dim lit hallway looks like him at night.

The coffee table is still swarmed with his books: the Quran,
Sunnah, Dreams of my Father. She envies the spines. Yesterday,
she wore his shoes to garden, her toes somehow finding the soil.