

Boat People

Syria 2015

By Helen Fallon

Our husbands were at mosque the day the stranger came.
Rana and I served tea pungent with mint in a glass
rimmed with gold, a wedding gift from family in Aleppo.
The spoon tinkled as he stirred the sugar.

The men returned and circled round him.
Words - *night, boats, camps, money* - rose like steam puffs
from warm pitta bread. Samir said we should go.
I said we should stay, raise our son on Syrian soil.

The white thobe he wore on our wedding day
hangs loose and lonely in the wardrobe.
Beneath it his shoes. I smell the leather late at night.
In cracked dreams I stroke his strong back.

I wake alone. Dawn sifts through mosquito gauze.
Outside dogs bark, the hum of prayer carries
over the early morning air. I listen to our son's laugh
like a red poppy peeping up through broken earth.

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