

# *birthdays*

## **Ammarah Siddiqui**

i'd begin my vigil on your birthday and stay  
till the grass becomes matted and wilts unto itself  
as leaves, snow, and sun befall stone

i'd trace the letters of your name  
till grey grooves deepen and lean into my touch

i'd mouth your epitaph with soft lips and wait  
for my breathing to hitch right before the last word  
of your final line

i'd redo my speech verbatim till our crude jokes sound like poetry  
melancholic expression giving my stoic voice  
hyperexposure therapy

i'd stop counting days because you wouldn't know  
that your birthday just passed  
and soon mine will too

i'd watch them bring flowers and leave a hand on my back  
i'd be your gargoyle guardian  
from life, to after, and back

i'd sit and i'd stand and i'd prick my fingers  
on a dying rose  
till the branch draws blood and i can emblazon your tomb

i'd reminisce till i'm dizzy then forget till i'm drunk  
and i'd lie beside you  
pacing, tracing, waiting  
i'd rub the braid of embroidery thread between my cracked fingers

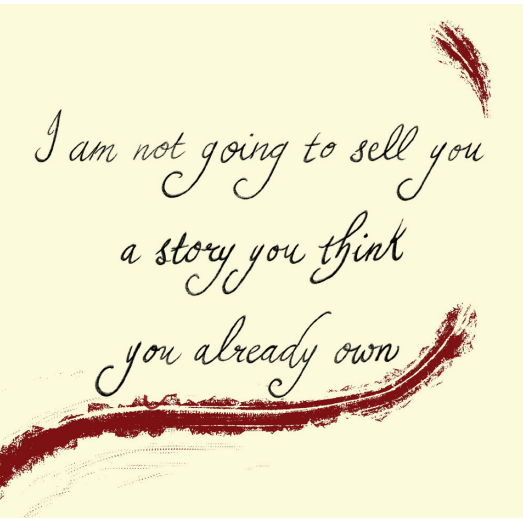
and fiddle with the bead, imagine you're also reaching for yours

until one day sometime- maybe mid-year  
i'd let my knife slip- deeper than usual

and i'd decide in the second it takes for the  
string to snap  
that life was far too long  
to stay;

so our birthdays would pass  
but by then  
i, too, wouldn't know that they did.

*Exotic Poetry* by Richa Daiya



*I am not going to sell you  
a story you think  
you already own*