

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 7 | Issue 2

Article 20

December 2008

Alabama Pastoral

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Recommended Citation

Faizullah, Tarfia (2008) "Alabama Pastoral," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 20.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol7/iss2/20>

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Faizullah: Alabama Pastoral

ALABAMA PASTORAL

Tarfia Faizullah

She forgives dusk, but not its descent.

All day she sells shoes,

watches hours burn into windows,

a taste in her mouth

like hyacinths. *For the last time,*

he had said, *if you reclaim*

Allah, you can be my daughter.

Now, she lives in a borrowed

house, where a spine of cockroaches lights

the floor and waits in stitched corners

for nightfall. This is the bent and broken

version: her nicotine-blue throat

choked quiet, a suitcase propped eastward.

She is a shadow box

in this new country, a pulled gather

of ginger root, wet-dirt ribbons.

Each day she waits: for her heart to curl, for night

to be emptied of dreams

of a West Texas sky shriven with thorns,

a father's uplifted hand—

for her face to turn away at last.