

Your death has changed me.

It changes us all, takes away the frivolity of life, deprives us of the ability to detach ourselves from the hollow your presence left. I feel so many things pushed aside, my smile hides behind my tears.

Mom is healing, she helps others change their lives and I see her finding the control she lost that night. Aleema went to find you at Duke where we watched you die and I think she found her life again (she left it with you in the hospital room). Dad still searches through his dreams for you, but he smiles more and the sadness doesn't seem to weigh on him as much. He stands attentive and his eyes are dark with secret conversations.



Raheem
C/o Resident

at time something new happens you are
surprised that your life could continue
but it doesn't know that you may
it simply moves and you
follow so you do unwillingly
swept along but then you start
appreciate the pace and then
treading factually enjoy
moving forward faster
forward.

hottel
a mata
a wa hum 1

Do you ever feel like there's something inside that you could reach if you strained long enough?

You push and stretch and reach until you feel sick from effort, but it's still not enough. The whisper is too soft.

I focus inward and probe for the sound. The voice I want to hear is too far, down a hall, in a corner, in our room where we were wild beasts in a blue shag forest.

Snarling, untamed, alive.



Raheem
c/o resident



silencio

Handwritten text in a script, possibly Finnish, including words like "illat", "saatava", "yksi", "kaksi", "kolme", "neljä", "viisi", "kuusi", "seitsemän", "kahdeksan", "yhdeksän", "kymmenen".

Is heaven merging with god again?
When we die do we go back into the
pool from which we came? Or do we
remain separate from the wellspring
after death, retaining the stigma of
personality we collected while we were
alive.

We put up walls to claim God.
We create these boxes. He is not
confined within me. God is infinite and
spans this earth, this consciousness,
this knowledge.

He stretches across everyone.
He is not containable. There are no
boundaries.

(heaven is within)



my heart
c/o resident





La ilaha il Allah

La ilaha il Allah
in go within

La ilaha il Allah

La ilaha il Allah

La ilaha il Allah

M. L. 1914

I had a dream of you last night.

It woke me out of sleep in the middle of the night. We were in the backyard of our childhood and you were sitting under the knotty dogwood tree talking to me; telling me things about where you were and how you were. You sat before me and told me all these wonderful things. Words I wanted to remember and explanations I craved. You talked about why you had to leave, what you needed to do now, and what was in store for me.

When I woke in the middle of the night and realized I was in my bed at 3:30 in the morning, I was too tired to get my notebook and write it down. So it's lost. All those explanations you gave me; the ones I had asked for and the ones I didn't know I needed. They're gone. Wisps of memory in a mist on a hazy summer day. Like you and me in the backyard of our old house. A moment that will never happen again. You woke up and now I can only see you in my dreams or those photos I keep on the fridge. Memories frozen at twenty.



Raheem
c/o resident

you were lucid in those last moments
You saw the mask of the world, you
saw the truth, saw the shadows burn
away and you were calm. You died
with grace and peace. It was beautiful,
painful, god. We were the ones who
screamed, who howled like animals
when god embraced you. I held our
sister and shrieked with tears. I
screamed my realization echoing
through the corridors. I screamed
as I shook, screamed as I convulsed
with a flood, a torrent of knowledge.
I screamed holding tight to you.



Raheem Bath
c/o Resident

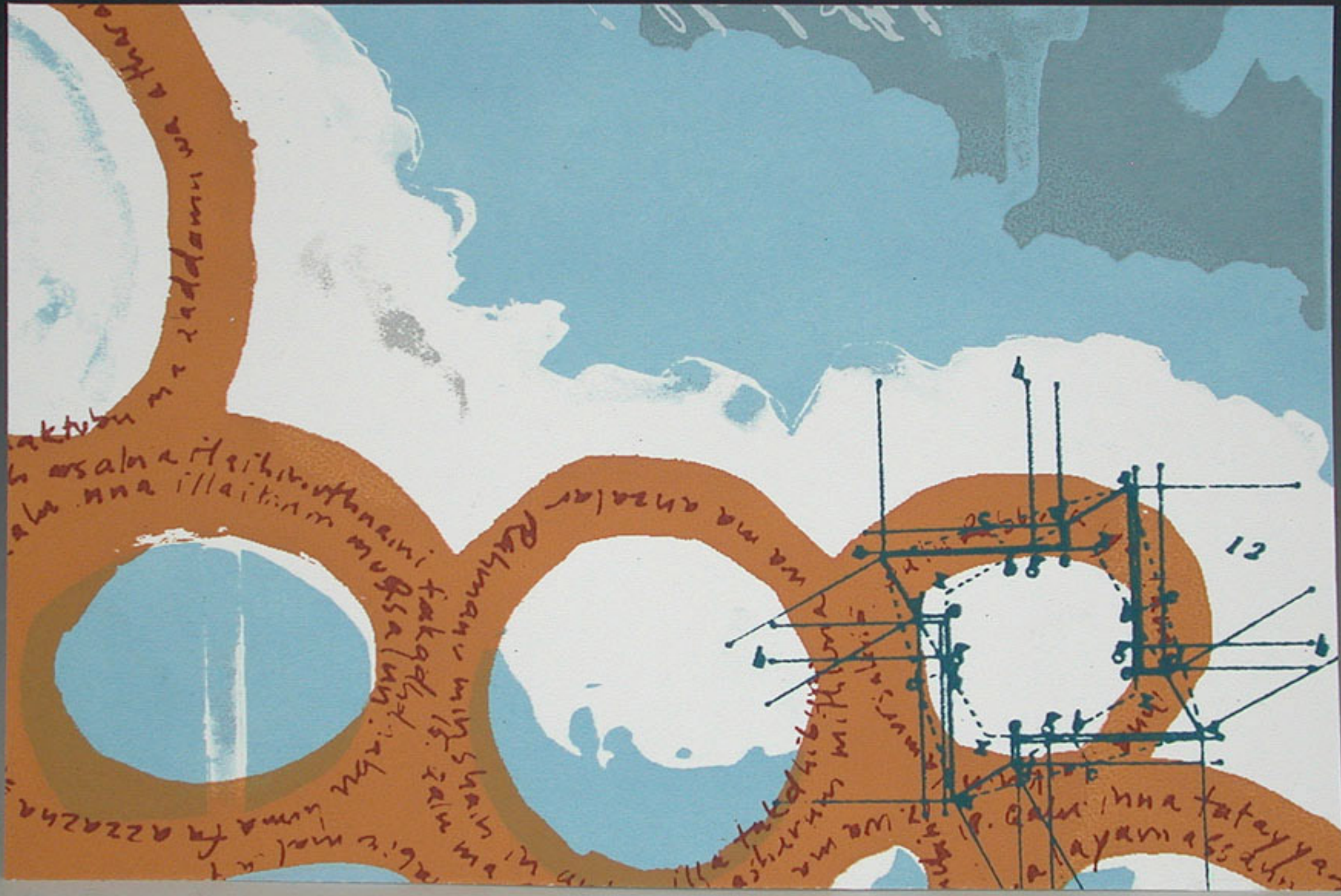
I remember how I used to crawl into your crib and lay there with you.

"My baby," I would say, although I was barely a child myself. You had dark curly hair and everyone would coo over how you looked like a little Dad, then gradually over the first year your hair transitioned to mom's platinum. I don't remember how it happened and the pictures don't record it. It was as if you simply changed.

I think of that a lot now. Of how people change without notice. It's a gradual process that occurs without us, but then one day we look and sense that something has changed. Is their hair shorter, did they gain weight, did they find themselves, did they find the secret? And we don't know, we can ask, and sense, and pry but our only confirmation may the smile hidden in their eyes.



my baby brother
C. O. Resident



...a thara
...saddamu
...papur
...aktubu

...sala
...illaitim
...mami
...fakqad
...salam
...rahmanu
...waly
...sham
...abie mal
...fazzaha

Rahmanu
...waly
...sham
...abie mal
...fazzaha

...waly
...sham
...abie mal
...fazzaha



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The night you died I was trying so hard
to keep you here. All I would say
for hours was the zikr,

"La illaha il Allahu"

I wouldn't rest, I wouldn't drink, I
licked my parched lips and grasped my
faith. I was trying to keep you here
and I think you did stay for a while to
help me find my faith, find my determination,
find the voice within myself. I circled
the hospital for hours praying for your
embrace. Praying for strength, praying
for breath, praying for the answer.

And then you were gone,
but I could still hear you.



Raheem
c/o Resident

So many people have drifted in and out of my life that I'm accustomed to losing people. Losing their daily presence, but there is a certain hope attached to those people. The hope that you'll hear about them, bump into them on the street, see them years down the road and be able to re-enter their life in a ten minute chat. I think that's why it's easy to accept when people flow in and out of your life, because you can always wonder about their present situation.

When you lose someone to the finality of death there is no opportunity for a chance encounter. There is no looking forward to the future because you will proceed through life and the only moments you can share are all held in the past. You look forward to memories, to photos, and to dreams because that's where you can see them again.



Raheem Bath

c/o Resident

It's funny, now that you're gone I see how similar we were. The same blue eyes, the same deep dimples, the same determination. Twins two years apart, too similar to stay on the same path.

You chose the American dream and I chose spiritual reality. Pursuing each with common ambition, it wasn't until you left that I found reality.

You have taken the path we said was mine and left the dream. Now I am striving to wake.

Your dimpled smile exists beyond this scrim and I miss it.



my competitor
c/o Resident

It's been so many years, but it seems like a moment ago you were laying in a pristine bed dependant on the rise and fall of machines for survival. The night we lost you lives with me, tucked away in a corner of my heart where I struggle to push it into the darkness so I can continue through my days smiling blissfully unaware,

Blissfully unaware, I haven't visited that state in years. I don't think it even exists anymore; actually I really don't want it. I want to be continually aware that you are still part of life in the memories that have followed me. I am aware that death is not final now. It is a transition. A time of unspoken words within ourselves.

Until next time.



Raheem
c/o resident

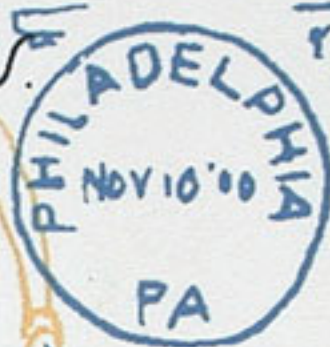
You never speak to me in my dreams.
Everyone else hears your voice, but
you're silent in my dreams.

I understand but
you whisper silence.

Are you silent
because I didn't
say goodbye or is it
peace that holds your
tongue? Content,

that's how you feel,
brimming, full of love,
but I wish I could hear your voice
again, even if it is only a dream. Or
is this your new self? Is your voice
too beautiful for me to hear, would it
destroy me instead of healing?

Is this the real you?



Speak, please?

Raheem
C/o Resident

I don't regret your life you lived
your life laying out stones and leaping to
reach them, regardless of the stretch.
You taught us all something about life.
We must live for the reality of our
lives, not the reality of the world.
It's the small interactions that matter.
Love is our strength.

Now it's not hard to imagine how one
event can change your whole world. My
world has been changed and it is not this
pale reflection I wake to daily. This is
the dream, to die is the reality, to
pass through the scrim. To die before
death,

to disappear entirely into the flow
of life and into the ebb of heaven
within.

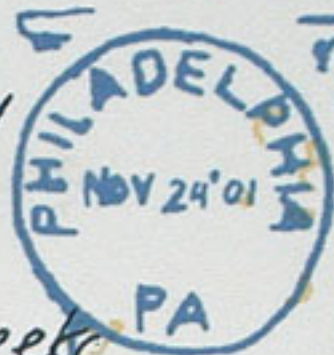


Raheem
c/o Resident

We are all actors in this play. If you step back at times, you can see the stage, the roles, the script.

I have found in the past few weeks something happens when I am talking. I pull back into myself, retreat into the darkened theater, become aware of the stage, and from this perspective I can see our roles for what they are, they change with our decisions but each person has a distinct script they draw from. I think you can break out of the play if you want to; go inside to walk around the world outside the playhouse.

It all exists within you,
doesn't it?





Hada ha ni waad'o
mabaana aidikum
hastika
idha tum miral

Hada ha ni waad'o
mihu mara adna
Faiyau ni ka
tuja'anna illa ma
akura ta dilun iratu

moving
moving
moving
moving
budin
akura ta dilun iratu

The truth is you had to die in order
to wake us from the sleep of every day.
You were a sacrifice.

I look around at the ridiculousness of the
world, all the people who scamper around,
little worker bees who just want to make their
life more comfortable, more stable, more
fufilling, more. We all want so much that
we throw away what we do have while in
pursuit.

What is this all about? What do I want?
Right after you died I let go, I divided
up my possessions, gave away my embraces,
and smiled. But now I lay in bed many nights
and plan for my day, for my week, for my life.
I find in the dark the dirt is starting to
accumulate under my nails as I dig through
life trying to unearth the meaning. I can feel
it creeping in again, feel the self
consciousness come back into my life.
I'm not sure I really want enlightenment.
I'm not sure what I want. And I hate myself
for not being strong enough to let go.



Raheem
c/o Resident

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*These are the words that will never be exchanged.
Here are the letters that will never be sent.*

My brother Raheem died of aspiration pneumonia in November of 1999. He was sick for less than a week and slipped into a coma before I could reach him. When I arrived he greeted me with silence but I was told he could hear me so I spoke to him, wrote to him, and finally let him go.

After his death I continued to write letters to Raheem, recording what was happening, delving into the absence, and striving to heal. Separately the letters contained here are the fragments of my experience, united they are the understanding I was given.

Unspoken: Letters to Resident is dedicated to the memories of my brother, Raheem Bath (1977-1999), and my teacher, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (1900?-1986).

Special thanks goes to the staff at WSW for their assistance and friendship, my family for their love and faith, my husband for his late night consultations and support, and my brother for opening my eyes.

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This book is letterpressed and silkscreened on Arches 88, bound in a box constructed of pine, birch, and plexiglass, and uses fonts acquired from a Royal Quiet typewriter c. 1920 and my own handwriting.

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This is book 40 of 52

