

When You Don't Know What to Say
Shirin Teifouri

In Persian we have a better question than 'How are you?'
We rather ask, *Haaleh del'et chetoreh?*
(How is the feeling of your heart?)
And you can't just say, 'Fine, thanks, just busy'.

When you don't know what to say
when you shake like a bird
in the lobby of your vacation hotel
when you are lost in your fragile body
and your body is 'a bag of nerves' as your mum would say,
when you wear a mask on a mask on a mask
to disguise the melancholy that dwells in your mind
when you absent-mindedly drink your coffee
and I sink my sorrow in a chai latte in a crowded cafe

listen, my friend,
I know 'blues run the game'
but *del beh del rah dareh*
(heart speaks to heart)
if you want to know
haale del'eh man chetoreh,
(the true feeling of my heart)
it's not a church or synagogue or a mosque
in this moment that makes gods real to me
but the unfolding of beauty
in your heart that sets alight
any doubts about the presence of love in this breath.

Poetry

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