

PATTABI SESHADRI

Desert Grass

Every man is endowed by his Creator
With underground deposits of flammable fluid.
The ancient streets of Baghdad
Were paved with tar.

With a phosphorescent light stick, a guard
Sodomizes Mr. Waleed.

The Americans are drilling day and night
Through soil and rock, hoping to meet their Maker.
Now I will rise and return their love.

■
I hear voices at the tunnel's end:
"They flipped the switch.
It felt as if my eyes were being pushed out,"

As if they were extracting great quantities
Of pitch and tar out of a stone.

"What becomes of all the young and old men?"

From the heat and pressure
Of geological time, they emerge,
Naked, forced into a pyramid.

■
"I was tied to the radiator
And subjected to the continuous playing
Of 'By the Rivers of Babylon' by Boney M."

I want to stop thinking about this.
In the desert a body smells like dry grass.

"I gave you my body.
If you hadn't abused my love and trust

I never would have been photographed
Giving the thumbs-up."

■
A woman says to a satellite,
“Allah, this baby is yours.”

My apertures open and close in the dark,
Urge urge and urge, the procreant urge
Of photography.

“Take full advantage of my love and trust.
Step on my head while it lies in urine.”

These distances always terminate
In my receiver's previous location.

■
My servants ask me who I am.
I answer that I am an Iraqi Muslim.

Then they ask me, “What is the grass?”
But I do not know the answer.

Then they ask me,
“Where is Osama bin Laden?”
And I say, I know where *I* am. I am everywhere.

My thumb, my eye, my saliva
Surrounded by barbed wire.

■
I am the feeling of health, the full-noon trill,
The song of a mouth held open,
The warmth of an interrogator's hand.

I am the song of me
Rising from my bed of fumes.
I scan myself onto a magnetic disk

And fling it into space for the public good,
Like the “I sing” of poets,
Like the “I declare” of kings.