

The Weight of Jewels and Promises

“Did you stay at Amina’s house again last night? She is such a kind friend to you.” When I arrive home in the cold morning, my mother is busily stating one truth and one untruth, a knowing and a not.

I lie.

Amina has a dark silken rope of hair, longer than mine. She smells of another place. We sleep warmly, curled like winter animals and wake with the light, faces creased and pale as the sheets. In a cave of bedding we are our secret selves. Afterwards, when we rise and dress, I reach out to tuck escaping threads softly beneath her hijab.

“Goodbye,” I say. Our fingertips touch lightly in a moth murmur, whilst our eyes speak of the love we cannot live.

We do not make plans to meet again, although we will. We will be the same in late summer after the shining reds and golds of my marriage, after the solemn jewelled promises and the many relatives with their gifts of weighty expectation.

My mother strokes the hair from my eyes.

“You will make a good wife, child,” she says, sadly. “Remember this.”