

Unspoken:

Letters to  
Resident

lose lost  
lost lost  
lost lost  
love love  
love love  
love love

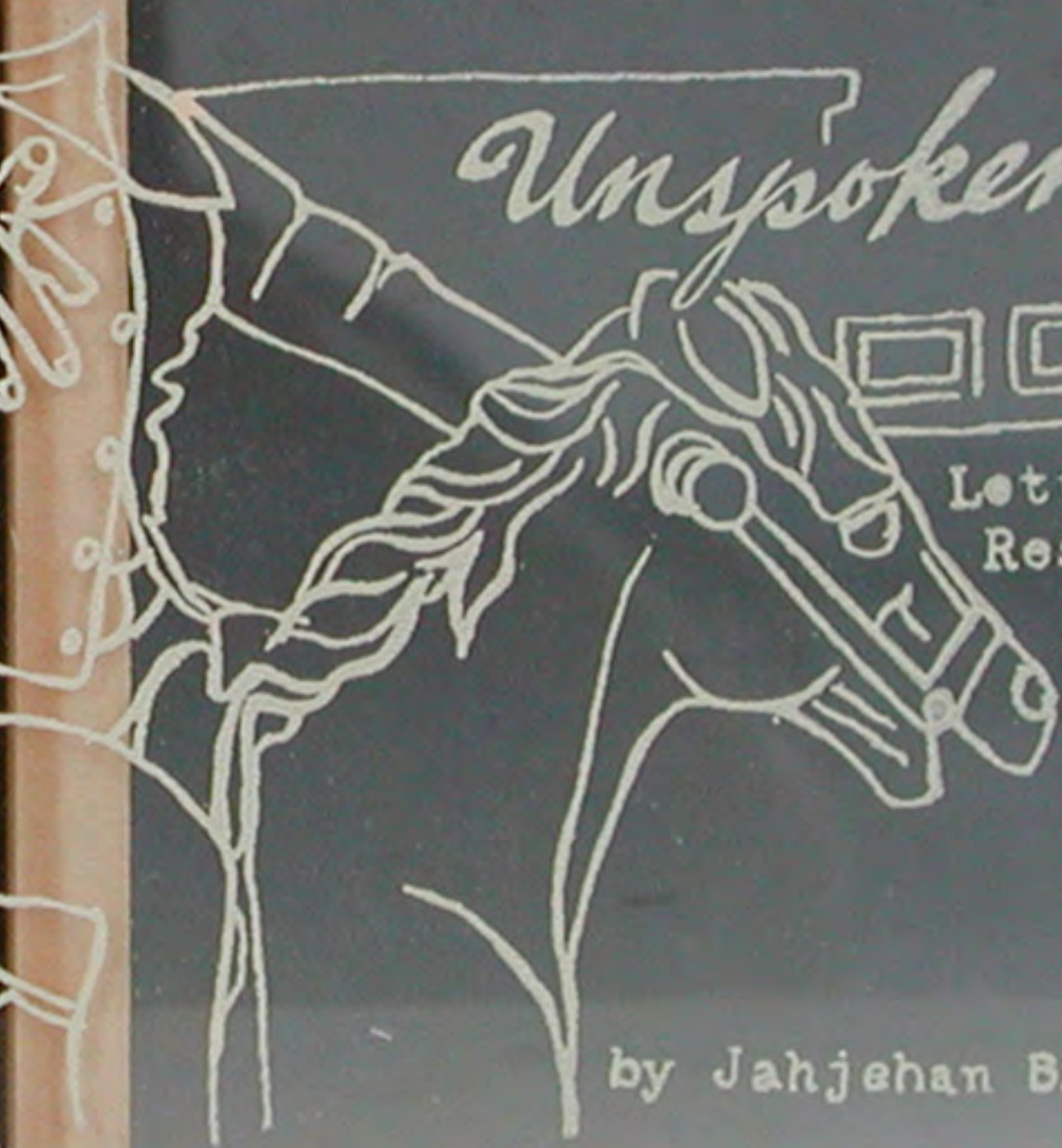
Jahjehan Bath Ives



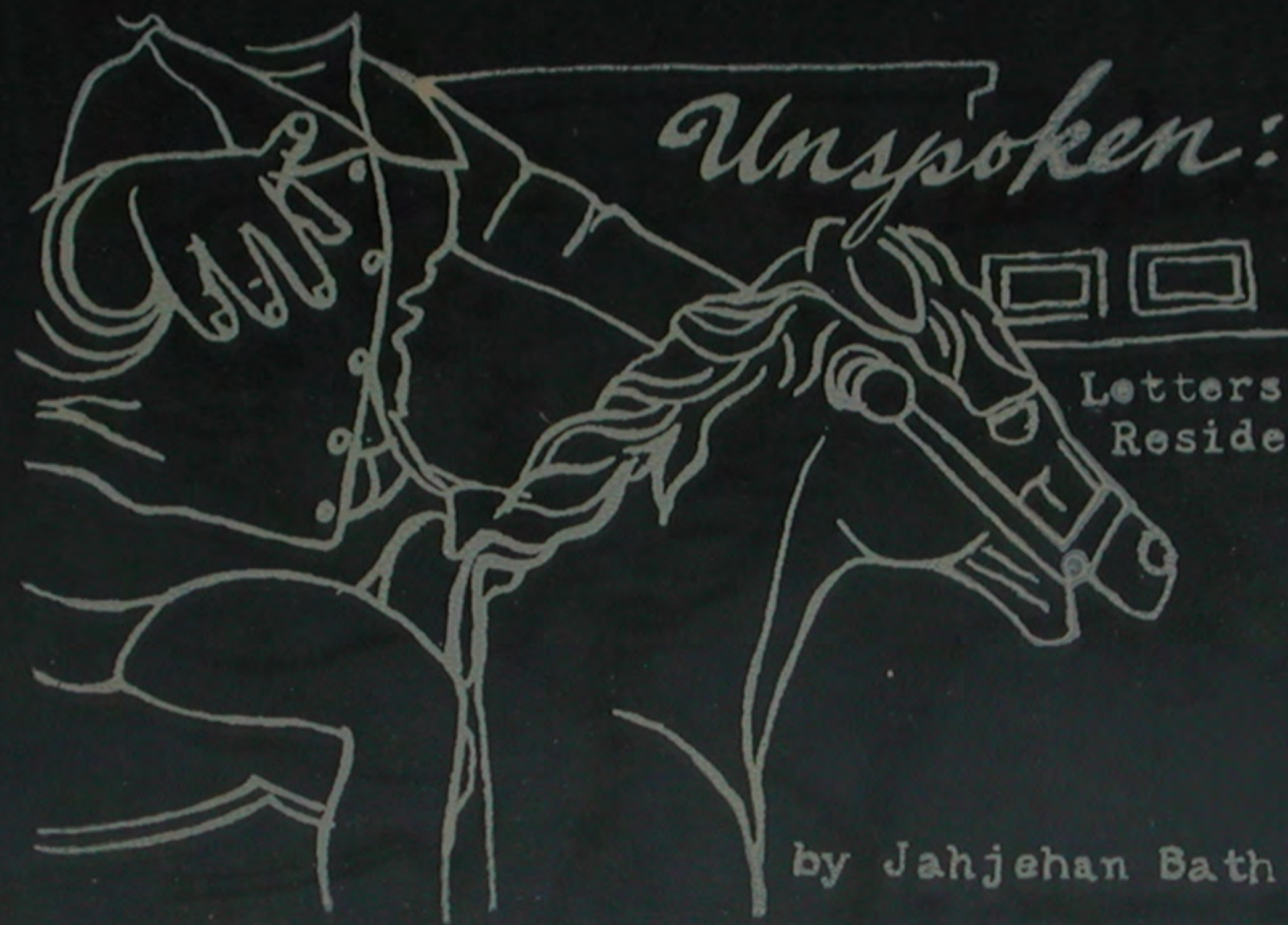
# Unspoken:



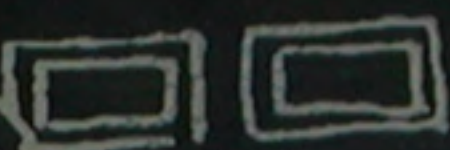
Letters to  
Resident



by Jahjehan Bath Ives



*Unspoken:*



Letters to  
Resident

by Jahjehan Bath Ives



I am not afraid of death. Now I realize it is simply the next step in waking. I will not miss this body, it has only plagued me with vanity and greed.

I will remain.

I realized this shortly after you died. I stood at your grave and tried to imagine you there, under the earth and stones but I couldn't. You weren't there. I could feel you smile at me from my heart so I turned my eyes away from the earth and embraced you.

We are closer in death than we ever were in life. The body is no longer an obstacle, and the soul contains infinite love. The grave is just a marker, it does not contain you, I do. The grave does not hold you. I do.



Raheem  
C/o Resident



I saw the scrim that covers the world pulled aside the night you died. I realized that this life was not the reality and now I look around me out of eyes blurred with understanding.

My eyes can't quite focus and I think maybe I am seeing true reality for the first time. The shimmer of this world has gone and the stark light of truth hurts my eyes. I can only squint into the truth and realize that the haze was a dream.

This world is just a dream and when I die I will simply wake to see the truth cutting through the fog, but for now I am enjoying the dream i am part of.



Raheem

c/o Resident

in creating a fiction in your mind  
will come home come home  
in his empty bed gather his forgotten  
possessions and simply exist.  
He will just be there filling  
that empty space we never got us

Every night people gather at our house  
to sing the Ya-Sin, the prayer that  
begs for those who have died to  
enter heaven. We sing for your  
release, for your place in heaven,  
for our pain to be swept away.

It's amazing.

We sing and the sound is beautiful.  
Love flows as voices fill the room.  
The energy vibrates through the house.  
Tonight there were so many people  
we could barely fit into the room.

It was luminous.



Raheem  
c/o Resident

is n see  
you smiling  
at me  
through my  
tears



People are visiting our house day and night. They come bearing food, open arms, and wounds. They look out of eyes overflowing with pity and glazed with pain. They greet us with arms intending to heal, but when thier hearts are torn how can they do anything but cry? They marvel at our strength as we welcome them into our embrace to share the secret.

You were their son, you were their brother, you are our strength. Mingled with god in a corner in our heart you support us and I can see you smile at me when I falter.



their son  
c/o resident



Handwritten text in a circular arrangement, likely a title or description, written in a stylized script. The text is partially obscured by the drawing and the green and purple patterned area on the right.



the night we buried your body I  
sensed you at the mosque. Your arms  
wrapped around my shoulders  
supporting your friends as they  
shook in my arms.

I looked into our father's eyes  
and smiled because we both knew  
that you weren't gone. You were  
standing there supporting us and  
it was just clay we were returning  
to the earth. We held you in our  
hearts and I can feel you more  
now than I ever did when you  
were robed in clay.



Raheem  
c/o resident



"i don't know what my question is  
i don't know —"  
... your name is more than enough



sur + ajri tim

haf illa 5

I can't ride behind an ambulance without crying. Each time I hear the siren I am transported back to a moment I never witnessed; your last time outside before you died.

As you rushed to the hospital in an ambulance, alone, how scared were you? Did you ride in that screaming box with knowledge of your death or with peaceful certainty of salvation?

I'll never know because I didn't call. I thought you'd recover, I thought you'd be home for dinner on Wednesday. I thought I'd be able to support you. I never thought I wouldn't get to say goodbye.



Raheem  
c/o resident



Somedays it's hard to crawl out of bed,  
to feel hope, to smile.

I still want to talk to you.

We had a great conversation the month  
before you died. We forgave each other.

Put away our  
childhood and  
started to know  
the adults we  
were becoming.

You were coming  
over for dinner,  
but you never

made it, you got stuck in a hospital bed  
where you laid silent as I whispered  
into your ear. I told you I would take  
care of you, quit my job, help you find  
you strength, live with you till you hated me again.  
But I never got to show you I would.



My little brother  
c/o resident



I am still here  
life goes on

I woke this morning and nothing mattered and everything mattered. I remembered everything and I can't shake the feeling that I've been cheated; that an easier life exists somewhere and I'm not allowed to have it.

I dreamed we were being flung through hills, catapulted without anything to hold onto and then I was in a maze of rooms, you were lying in a hospital bed, peacefully unable to move, and you had the bluest eyes.

I couldn't stop crying. A weight is on me. I can feel it crushing me into the couch, suppressing my words, stealing my levity and suddenly everything is meaningless. Suddenly I am mute with tears and I just want to lay down and shake with solitude.



Raheem  
c/o Resident



you smile at me from photographs  
decorating my walls.

I wonder if I will always surround  
myself with so many mementos. Will  
we always be comforted by snapshots  
of the past? A time where I can see  
myself clearly next to you. Now it's  
hard to see you although I often  
feel as if you are behind me,  
lingering in the room,  
waiting to speak.

But when I turn all that greets  
me is a photograph of a time with  
no future.



Raheem  
c/o resident

(here they are, ~~had~~ within)



Here I am.

It's been a while since you left, but I still ache. Sometimes I forget for a moment that you're gone. It's a momentary thing that happens rarely in a flurry of laughter. For a second, I think, "Raheem would enjoy this," and then it hits me.

Mom and Dad sold the house, they're moving to a place with fewer. But they're taking you with them, none of us can leave you behind now. I am moving to a place I never thought I'd go and I'm excited. Life moves, it flows so fast sometimes I feel I am simply struggling to breathe. Struggling to stay on course, to meet my goals, to find my secret. Stop. It will happen.



Raheem Bath  
c/o Resident



lost love  
never.

milat hu  
naal  
ludhi khala gul izwaja

ayabak  
lu hami  
stakhu  
nihu na hara

red to.

Four months after you passed away. I had a dream which seemed so real that when I woke I questioned whether I was waking into reality or into another dream.

I was walking along when I saw Dad and Aleema sitting in the seats of a car, your car. As I approached, I noticed that you were sitting in dad's lap. Then I realized that you weren't in his lap; you were in him. He was not aware of this, but accepted the fact that I was speaking to you. I smiled and asked how you were. I don't remember the answer I simply recall your brilliant smile. As we spoke you kept on flitting into Dad and Aleema, appearing within each of them. All the answers were held within your smile. It was so blissful the answers were easy to know, it was simply right.



my heart  
c/o resident



thing ~~this~~ is what doesn't fill over right  
wouldn't think it will but it does

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 actually enjoying  
moving forward. *flourish*  
forward.

hollow

9 matn

3 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, likely from a manuscript, is visible on the left side of the page. The text is written in a dark ink and is partially obscured by the orange background. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words being more legible than others. The script appears to be a form of cursive or shorthand.

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  
in go within

M. L. 1913

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

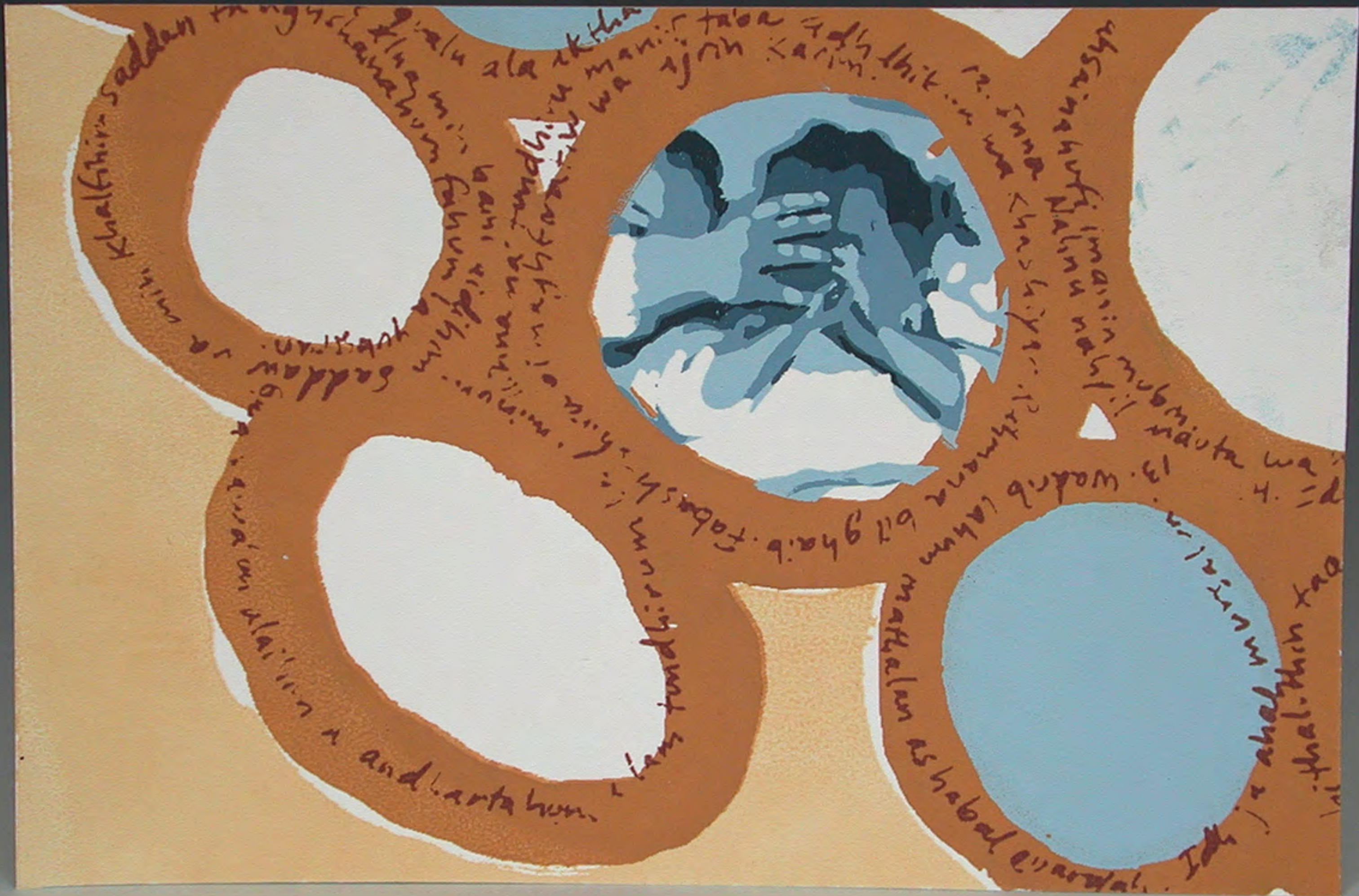
1. Ya. Sin.



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,  
~~perfect~~ 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 alot 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



aktabu ma zaidan  
in asala ila ilahina  
ala nna illaitim ma  
Rahmanu min shay  
fakqad is. zaim  
a big mal  
ma ma anzar  
illa takdibin  
ashirun  
um am  
p. Gali inna tafayy  
alayami asay

12

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 awhile 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.

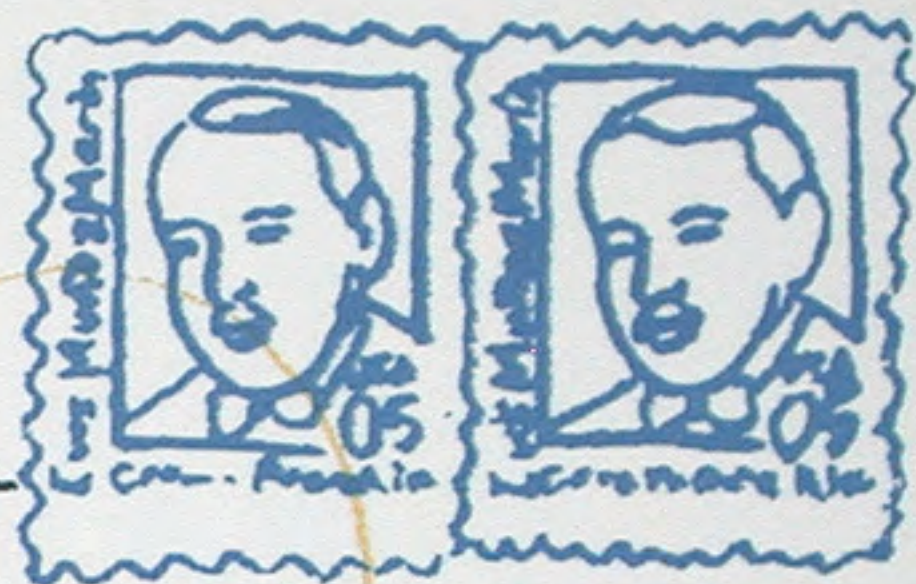
When you lose someone to the finality of death there is no opportunity for a chance encounter. There is no looking forward to the future because you will proceed through life and the only moments you can share are all held in the past. You look forward to memories, to photos, and to dreams because that's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



Raheem Bath

c/o Resident





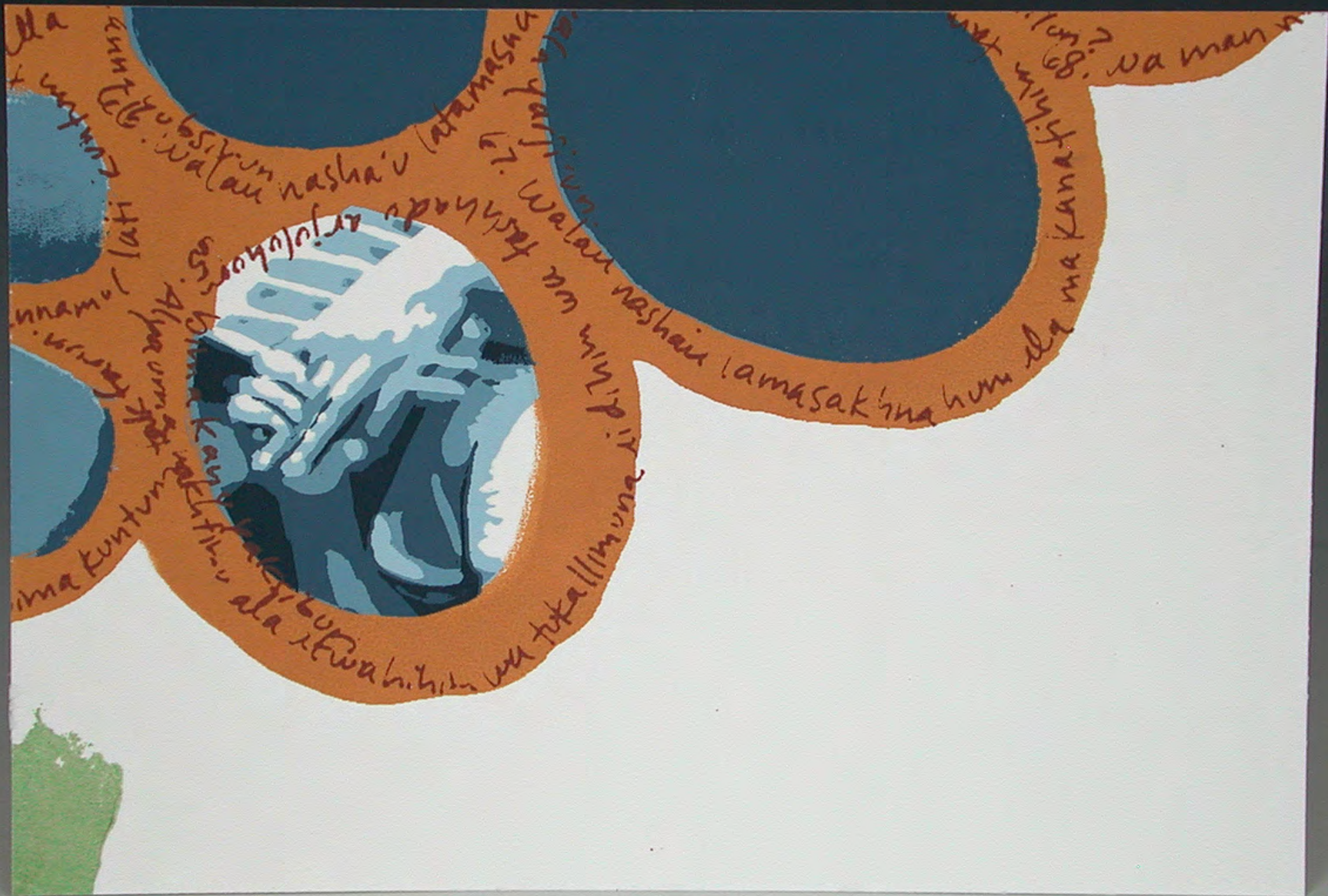
It's funny, now that you're gone I see how similar we were. The same blue eyes, the same deep dimples, the same determination. Twins two years apart, too similar to stay on the same path.

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 screen 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



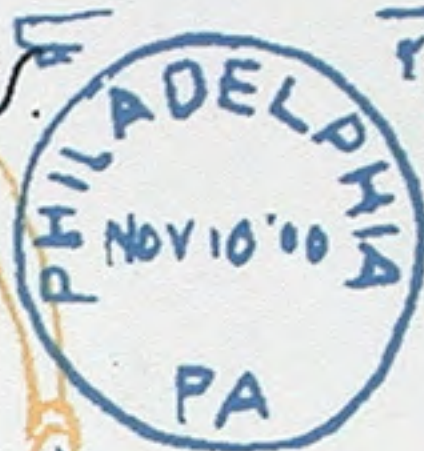
You never speak to me in my dreams.  
Everyone else hears your voice, but  
you're silent in my dreams.

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

a surprise  
 no the reader  
 must  
 at first  
 rt to  
 you're  
 ing

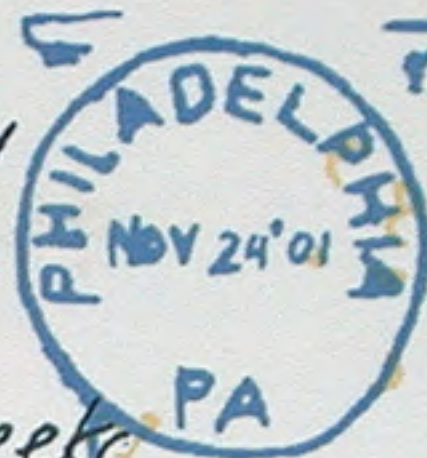


The image shows a close-up of a piece of paper with two large, hand-drawn orange circles. Inside the circles, there is handwritten text in Tamil script. The text is written in a cursive style and appears to be a mix of Tamil and English words. The background of the paper is white, and there are some blue and green markings at the top edge.

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?



Raheem  
C/o resident



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  
fulfilling, 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

40

*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).

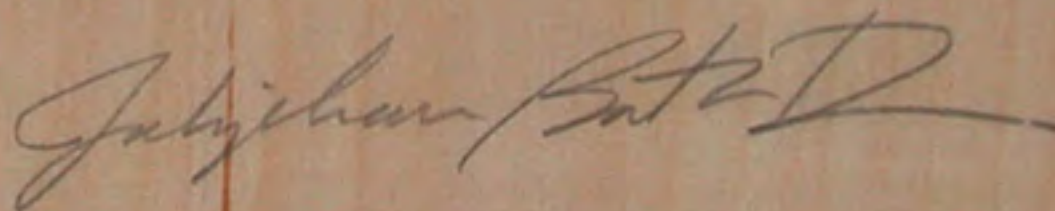
Special thanks goes to the staff at WSW for their assistance and friendship, my family for their love and faith, my husband for his late night consultations and support, and my brother for opening my eyes.

*Unspoken: Letters to Resident* was designed, printed, and bound during an artist residency at the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY in the spring of 2003. The residency was made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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



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