

DUNIA

L - Each morning I wake up to this rumbling...

DUNIA

R - ..the sound of the underground.

DUNIA

R - You hear it, too, no?

ALIA

L - I hear it.

ALIA

L - The murmurs of the bedrock.

DUNIA

R - I only escape the reality of our entombment when they switch on the orchard lights, and I hear the birds, bees and butterflies.

DUNIA

R - How did you get here?

DUNIA

R - Did you travel above ground?

ALIA

L - No, it's still not safe.

ALIA

L - I came through the tunnels.

ALIA

L - But the weeds have been back for years, the waterways are restored.

ALIA

L - It shouldn't be long now.

ALIA

L - Even the worshippers have returned.

DUNIA

R - Many of them never left.

DUNIA

R - They didn't want to abandon their holy sites.

DUNIA

R - They sent us off with a blessing, days before they perished in the plagues.

ALIA

R - We all have our idiosyncrasies.

DUNIA

R - The last things we recovered were the cocoons and the beehives.

DUNIA

R - We released them into the orchard to ensure a natural cycle of pollination.

ALIA

R - Did you ever try to find out what happened elsewhere?

DUNIA

L - We heard nothing since going underground.

DUNIA

R - Others were beginning to experience what we had seen for years.

DUNIA

R - But it was clear no place would be spared.

DUNIA

L - Disasters evolve more rapidly here.

DUNIA

L - This place was always charged.

DUNIA

L - Similar things were happening in other places.

DUNIA

L - Elsewhere eventually caught up and had their own doomsday.

ALIA

R - I was raised on nostalgia...

ALIA

..the past spoon-fed to me...

ALIA

..my own memories replaced by those of others.

ALIA

R - They appear personal and intimate.

ALIA

R - They're not real, but seductive...

ALIA

R - ..like lavish illustrations in a children's book.

ALIA

R - Out of touch with life down here...

ALIA

R - ..like a bacteria planted in me.

DUNIA

L - We were all raised on someone else's nostalgia.

DUNIA

L – Our own experiences blending with the stories we are told.

DUNIA

R - Your memories are as real as mine.

ALIA

R - I disagree.

ALIA

R - The pain these stories cause are twofold...

ALIA

R - ..because the loss I feel was never mine.

DUNIA

L - I forget your age.

DUNIA

L - I know it is conflicting to be engineered from the remains of those we left behind.

DUNIA

L - You were born, but you are still trapped in the womb.

ALIA

R - I'm aware of the genetic replications.

ALIA

R - I'm not the first me.

DUNIA

R – You are the only one who made it this far.

DUNIA

R - Despite that, you have never known anything but absence.

ALIA

R - Everyone keeps reminding me of that.

ALIA

R - My congenital exile.

ALIA

R - I have come to resent that notion.

DUNIA

L - It won't be long before you return.

ALIA

R - This place is your exile, not mine.

ALIA

L - I despise the idea of the present as nothing but a void.

ALIA

L - A transition between what was and what's to come.

ALIA

L - A sentimental prelude to the afterlife.

ALIA

L - It rejects any sense of now...

ALIA

L - ..the fact of our existence.

DUNIA

L - This present barely exists.

DUNIA

L - You were born into purgatory.

DUNIA

L - Like past generations in this place.

DUNIA

L - They all tried to redeem their present...

DUNIA

L - ..lit it up with old stories

DUNIA

L - ..and decorated the void with promises of things to come.

DUNIA

R - But the void only grows.

DUNIA

R - Soon, it's so imposing and violent...

DUNIA

R - ..it devours everything in its way.

ALIA

L - Like a black hole.

DUNIA

L - Something like that.

DUNIA

L - This hole tries to return all light and matter...

DUNIA

L - ..to their place of origin...

DUNIA

L - ..but it fails...

DUNIA

L - ..and leaves nothing but a dense volume of emptiness.

DUNIA

L - My parents look alike to me now.

DUNIA

L - Once I started seeing bits of myself in them...

DUNIA

R - ..the reverse also became true.

DUNIA

R - I am what makes them partially identical.

DUNIA

L - At any given point, the present imposes its language...

DUNIA

L - ..and projects the meaning of this very moment back onto the past.

DUNIA

R - The past never was, it only is.

DUNIA

R - These moments will disappear, too.

DUNIA

L - When our time comes, that time will no longer be ours.

DUNIA

L - We will be archives for someone else to make sense of.

ALIA

R - The artificial premise of my existence makes it no less real than yours.

ALIA

R - People tend to forget that.

ALIA

R - They nurse us on memories formed before us...

ALIA

R - ..and raise us only for times to come.

ALIA

R - The grief we carry is different.

ALIA

R - Loss fails when it's an abstraction.

ALIA

R - I have never seen any of these places.

DUNIA

L - You soon will.

ALIA

R - All I will see is a ghost town.

DUNIA

L - Bethlehem was always a ghost town...

DUNIA

L - ..the present upstaged by the past.

ALIA

R - I don't believe in ghosts.

ALIA

R - What we are doing here will not restore the past.

DUNIA

L - There's no need to.

DUNIA

L - The past is still there, as intact as ever.

ALIA

R - Maybe your past is.

ALIA

R - The only past I know is here.

ALIA

R - Everything else is just fairy tales.

DUNIA

L - Entire nations are built on fairy tales.

DUNIA

L - Facts alone are too sterile for a cohesive understanding.

DUNIA

L - Soon, what we have achieved here will create a myth of its own.

DUNIA

L - You will be part of it.

ALIA

R - I don't care about your nations, their stories, their rituals, their repetition of imagery.

ALIA

R - This struggle, this land, these seasons. Memory channelled by a handful of tropes.

ALIA

R - These scents, this fabric, this history reduced to symbols and iconography.

ALIA

R - A liturgy chronicling our losses.

ALIA

R - These plagues...

ALIA

R - ..these disasters.

ALIA

R - This exodus.

DUNIA

L - And every exodus before that.

ALIA

L - The problem with nostalgia is that it keeps you entertained...

ALIA

L - ..while everything you cherish washes away.

ALIA

L - It makes you cling to the comfort of what you have

ALIA

L - ..even if it decimates day by day.

DUNIA

R - We lost an entire generation.

ALIA

L - Your original stock of heirloom children.

ALIA

L - The matter I came from.

ALIA

L - Recreated in their image.

DUNIA

R – That’s right.

DUNIA

R - And their memories. We couldn’t afford to lose those, too.

ALIA

L - Perhaps a loss of memories is essential to starting over?

DUNIA

L - Forgetting makes you vulnerable to mistakes you already made once.

ALIA

L - Maybe next time they won’t be mistakes.

DUNIA

R - Maybe not.

DUNIA

R - But you will have the information to make that decision.

DUNIA

L - Memories don’t distinguish between fact and fiction.

DUNIA

L - We spent too long registering, recording and archiving.

DUNIA

L - We failed to see that the only non-negotiable part of any argument is pathos.

ALIA

R - What terrifies me the most are the memories I know to be alien...

ALIA

R - ..yet too vivid to dismiss as somebody else’s.

ALIA



R - I recognise the stories I'm told.

ALIA

R - I know how they end before they're completed...

ALIA

R - ..as if I have witnessed them myself.

ALIA

R - I have never seen the sun rise or set.

ALIA

R - Yet I remember dusk and dawn.

R - I remember walking through the rain feeling my shirt sticking to my skin.

ALIA

R - The flames of a bonfire heating up my face.

ALIA

R - I dream of the olive harvests.

DUNIA

L - Me, too.

DUNIA

L - We need you to guard these images.

ALIA

R - Memories.

DUNIA

L - I'm no longer sure what they are.

DUNIA

L - You remember seeing things even if the person who saw them wasn't you.

ALIA

R - Some scenes are more grainy and faded than others.

DUNIA

R - It's your mind's way of maintaining a chronology.

ALIA

R - Down here, all transitions are abrupt.

ALIA

R - A single switch turns day into night.