

*A Lover in the Labyrinth — To Faiz, In Memory and Love*

*february 13  
the first dawn of love*

i might have buried the art of playing with words and writing letters but the thought of writing one to you tugs right at my heartstrings. it's the thirteenth of february, lahore is lying in a field of wild daisies under the evening sun, humming to your verse;

رات یوں دل میں تیری کھوئی ہوئی یاد آئی  
جیسے ویرانے میں چکے سے بہار آجائے

draped in colors of scarlet silk and marigold, the sun is almost there but nowhere near you yet it is warm on my heart; your verse begins with a lump in my throat, splits me open, builds a home of its own and kisses the golden hands of grief only to feel whole again.

with you, i am entirely smitten with love as your words bring a declaration of love and everything starts to fall back in place. a love, so tender—that pours out a little too much but dies all yours.

if i have no one, i have the swollen rivers of your name where the gardens of Jinnah dance to *hum dekhein ge* while the winds of lahore mourn another river for you, like love which comes, flows in and wraps you entirely and then leaves only for something greater to come again.

جیسے صحراؤں میں ہولے سے چلے بادِ نسیم  
جیسے بیمار کو بے وجہ قرار آجائے

hand on my heart as your sweet verses roll off my tongue; the buds of melancholy unbutton themselves on the mustard fields of lahore and bloom with the coming of dawn. the heart of lahore runs for joy and sinks into the depths of your kalam like one yearns in his mother's arms.

carried by your memory, lahore jiggles to the beloved scent of gulaab drenched in pearl-white gajray with ruby roses tucked in her hair, while shadows of deep-gold leaves swirl gently over her face, curled in the warmth of your verse. the trial of waiting persists in your absence.

the city and your name;

*the two rivers that run side by side but never meet*

perhaps, this labyrinth of love seems *almost* endless—like the uninterrupted strands of a kite, stretching endlessly, pulling the strings of my heart, only to bloom and return—to *you*.

pyaray faiz, i wonder how much of lahore lives in you and how much of you lives in lahore?  
*anything else, would be too bitter.*

a heart of **your** homeland,  
alishba



*In the Labyrinth of Your Verse, Faiz*