

## **Ruchini Abayakoon**

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### **what's mine is yours**

i like how your fingers trace the lines on my palms  
like they're little maps, like you're hunting for treasure  
in my open palms, my open arms, my open heart  
each little line leading you to new sources  
to observe, dig, mine, call mine.

i like how you smile as you draw stories on my skin  
every touch pleasing you, every gasp calming you  
lines, like roots, entwining, intertwining, rhyming  
pretending that you'd meet yours at the end of mine.  
like we'd have met seamlessly, historically, accidentally.

accidents like how you sat across from me that day  
like how you missed the bus so had to take the train  
accidents like how your "stop" was louder than my "no"  
like how you *saved* me, unknowingly  
as i struggled to borrow some respect

i like how we conflate accidents with deliberate acts  
like how i learnt english. a historical accident. colonialism. genocide.  
how we measure success through forgotten bodies  
i like how i constantly feel like i have to explain myself faster,  
sooner, clearer. like i'm answering for all of my bloodline

and the ones you thought were yours.

**she could inhale it in blue**

she could inhale it in blue  
-exhale it in greens and yellows  
and the sheesha place called her magic.  
they'd point her out and sell her  
but she'd love the attention  
she'd let each new stranger  
buy her a new coloured toy  
to smoke up her lungs for  
a temporary high.  
then she'd strap on her black heels  
pull up her skirt a little higher  
and walk away with a small sway  
playing around her hips and catching  
more eyes for all the tomorrows.  
she'd take a cab, and always go back  
to the one admirer who bought  
her the most. she'd let him devour her  
with his sordid wanting eyes and  
let him kiss her, inhaling the smoke  
in her lungs and then she'd cut off  
his oxygen and watch him writhe.  
he called it love.  
because sometimes, just sometimes,  
she let him get close enough  
to smoke up a bit of her, in exchange  
for a past. he had plenty.

**home, 2022**

a showstopping act, worthy of a standing ovation  
a magical country that is now both burning  
and drowning, at the same time  
an audience full of empty spectators  
claps as loud as the thunder above,  
as loud as the sobs erupting from hearts  
that have finally said adieu to hopes  
of a thousand splendid suns undone.  
the same suns that died in the north decades ago  
but hush. hush or you won't hear their  
cries no more.  
he takes the loudest voices and steals them-  
wears them in a seashell around his neck  
and laughs, knowing they'll never speak again.  
knowing that each lion in the skin of a saviour  
will only savour the blood of every victim  
a little more slowly than the one before.  
the saviours are the ones six feet under-  
too beautiful for this tainted world, too pure  
to satisfy his incessantly growing hunger.  
a country that is now both burning  
and drowning,  
hanging afloat by the threads of the thousands  
of hands linked together, in gas queues,  
petrol queues, graveyards.  
thousands of hands linked, coming undone,  
my feet are already burning wet.

**Ruchini Abayakoon** is a Sri Lankan writer resident in Canada. She is a PhD student at the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University, Canada, researching on the intersection of South Asian Studies, Environmental Humanities and De/Postcolonial Thought. She is also an earring-maker, painter and people-watcher.