

# PRIME

2	3	5	7	11	13	17
19	23	29	31	37	41	43
47	53	59	61	67	71	73
79	83	89	97	101	103	107
109	113	127	131	137	139	149
151	157	163	167	173	179	181
191	193	197	199	211	223	227
229	233	239	241	251	257	263
269	271	277	281	283	293	307
311	313	317	331	337	347	349
353	359	367	373	379	383	389
397	401	409	419	421	431	433
439	443	449	457	461	463	467
479	487	491	499	503	509	521
523	541	547	557	563	569	571
577	587	593	599	601	607	613
617	619	631	641	643	647	653
659	661	673	677	683	691	701
709	719	727	733	739	743	751
757	761	769	773	787	797	809
811	821	823	827	829	839	853
857	859	863	877	881	883	887
907	911	919	929	937	941	947
953	967	971	977	983	991	997
1,009	1,013	1,019	1,021	1,031	1,033	1,039
1,049	1,051	1,061	1,063	1,069	1,087	1,091
1,093	1,097	1,103	1,109	1,117	1,123	1,129
1,151	1,153	1,163	...	...	...	...

I forgot I knew the back alleys of this  
neighbourhood, where beggars made their  
beds, whose cats stole their food, which  
doorways provided for or grabbed the fragile  
into a clench of cruelty.

I forgot why lovers destroy children to parse  
the philosophy of separation.

I forgot how quickly civilization can  
disappear, as swiftly as the shoreline from  
an oil spill birthed from a twist of the wrist by  
a drunk vomiting over the helm.

I forgot the horizon is far, is near, is what you  
wish but always in front of you.

I forgot how your eyes always reached for me when I passed the threshold into the home we carefully shared.

I forgot grabbing at my fading dreams only to recall a vision of skyscrapers crumbling from the slaps of iron balls.

I forgot there are no guarantees, not even in math where “1 + 1” may not be “2” but, as a visual artist insisted, “11” or, as a philosopher insisted, “a turning towards the other.”

I forgot memory’s fragments which deserve to be the ones in the forefront of my attention.

I forgot how, like a cabdriver with his first  
ride after hours of scouring emptied streets,  
he needed to speak.

I forgot how his grin pushed away the gloom  
of a spent lightbulb hovering in the dimness  
we shared.

I forgot my hope he would speak of me to his  
friend who became a stranger after so many  
neighbourly greetings in elevator rides from a  
past we shared before a certain diagnosis:  
“HIV-Positive.”

I forgot missing teeth and gums full of potholes.

I forgot my mistake. The radically old and the radically young are the same in their difference from me—they do not need much, they need too much. They do not ask, they must often plead. I forgot how, unlike them, I knew what it took to survive.

I forgot that to return bore no relationship to survival, which instead related to you whose path crossed mine in a new land.

I forgot the mud in monsoon season always sucked at the ankles, non-discriminating, a placid surface but camouflaging sharply-edged stones, gooooy, gooooy, gooooy and brown as the hide on rotten bananas.

I forgot how my mother vainly searched for mangos when she would visit during the wrong season.

I forgot the grandfather who willingly faced a fire, fist trembling at the indifferent sky.

I forgot the elders, shoulders sagged to ruin,  
dropping gazes like debris and treasuring  
trees for their shade that exacts no price.

I forgot abandoning misery until it became  
mere concept, then poem.

I forgot the mud like the skin of my  
grandmother, her gum-teethed cronies and  
other wiry residents of a patient village  
beaten by the sun.

I forgot mangoes, eaten before they  
ripened – they were savoured with much salt  
and first soaked in vinegar.

I forgot a neighbour who stole my pet pig and  
ate the evidence.

I forgot it need not take more than one  
person to bring the world to ruin – for my  
mother, that person was me.

I forgot entrancement with the layered auras  
of decay.

I forgot I began drowning in air.

I forgot the night was unanimous.

I forgot how one begins marking time from a  
lover's utterance of Farewell.

I forgot one can use colour to prevent  
encounters from degenerating into lies.

I forgot I was not an immigrant; I was simply myself who lacked control at how the world formed outside the “Other” of me.



I forgot admiring women who refuse to paint their lips.

I forgot the liberating anonymity conferred by travel: *Mindanao, Berlin, Melbourne, Amsterdam, Istanbul* became hours requiring no count.

I forgot obviating memory for what I believed was a higher purpose.

I forgot feeling you in the air against my cheek.

I forgot longing for a sky without horizon, but  
acceding instead to the eye's clamour against  
the opposite of claustrophobia.

I forgot you thought of me as you paced the  
streets of a city whose sidewalks memorised  
the music of my footsteps dancing away  
from youth into courage.

I forgot I lit alleys by leaving scarlet roses  
whose perfume, I hoped, you would discern.

I forgot you saw each virgin moon as a ruby  
you wanted for adorning my body.

I forgot you startled the girl whose poetry  
elicits dragon scales from empathetic  
muscles.