

One day, in a land far, far away, called Bhutan...

Stillness.

The heat basks among us, the sunlight dances in the doorway of our mud and wood house. The scent of dust in the air. Somewhere high above the towering mountains blue skies stretched, scattered with white cloud. A motionlessness penetrating the forest from above the house etching all around us down to the river below.

Who were we then? Somewhere, elsewhere, she not there in that moment, a woman with whom I was then living. Herself now a memory. My son, who tonight as I write this sleeps in my bed with his books spilled around him. My daughter, also with me tonight, fast asleep in her own room, who then upon this memory was in utero, to join us in time to come.

And Pema.

I sat in the doorway of our house, my feet on the landing, my back leaning against the hinges, absorbing warmth, listening to the buzzing of flies, sipping my sweet tea, watching the serfs' ragged children, yes serfs, for this was Bhutan, play in the yard and whose home was on the same plot of land as our's and with whom we shared a landlord, and listening to their laughter dance in the listlessness that hung heavily in the valley.

Pema came up silently behind me, from somewhere inside the house, and since Pema lived with us and took watch over Ben from time to time it must have been that Ben was sleeping, and she stopped just there, quiet, still, then sitting beside me and resting her hand on my shoulder.

We silent, listening, watching.

Stillness.

