

The city glitters
and in some dim light you, too, are sleeping.
From these heights
the moon's surface is closer.
But, no—
no one knows
whether the air is swift or cold here,
whether this is a floating smoke of clouds
or the dust of companionship.
Is this the quivering wave of the final call
or the unsteady vessel of flight
or the lurching earth below?

Who was it went to sleep holding sand in his fists
became distant even to imagination and dream
disappeared in the tangled hair of straying night?
Are the stars moving with me?
What regret is it that has not yet been soothed?
Heights, separations
even intimations of death have not eased it.
Fellow traveler of depths
of altitudes
tell me—
on earth
in the air
the path that never took shape
what came of it?

Tell me
what kind of sleep is it
that can cross the wall of night
and transform into morning?—

What kind of dream?
Tell me, what is this cry of pain in the air?
What is this restlessness?
The journey is coming to an end
and the noise is deafening.

Translated from Urdu by Waqas Khwaja