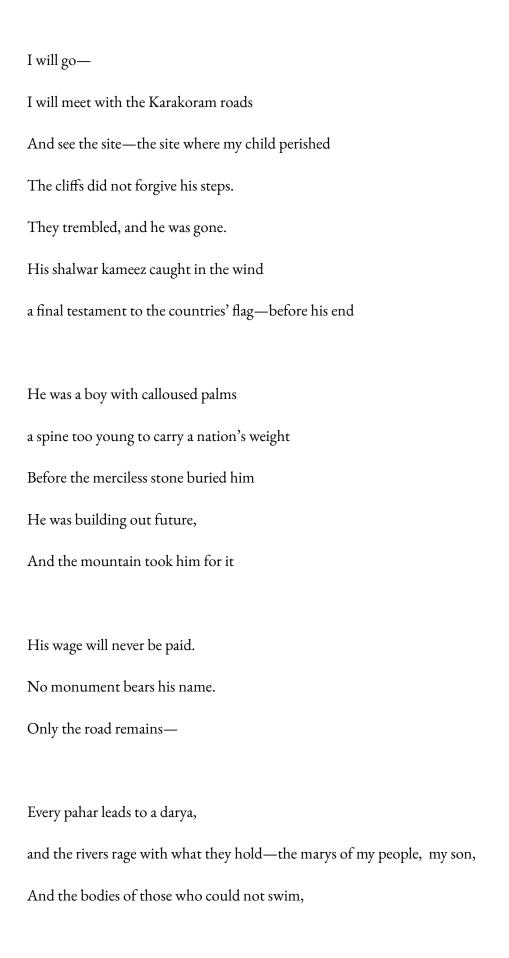
Karakoram Road

Take me to the Karakoram road, I beg— Where the mountains meet the rivers, Entwined with the pathways of cracked cement thread through cliffs like stitches on torn skin. Each a symbol to the workers' death My countries pride lies in these ranges K2 is our beauty—a beauty yet not destroyed Our landscape sings the nationalism—filling our hearts with pride but that anthem grows fainter as the terrain crumbles under drills, As the region broadens with its demolition The terrain massacres into ruble—all because of the war of our neighbors Progress comes at the cost of silence. The elite lies in seclusion, watching from afar, While the death of the poor builds their vision. Evolution in this land—came from the death of my children



Many fear the wraths of the waters More than they feared hunger at home. Now the bodies are all lost in numbers, I pray for my people My people have never learned to swim. They learn to endure. They learn to work. And they learn to grieve. Every tourist will ride a jingle truck Enwrapped in golds and reds Music playing, Children laughing from the back— All on top of the dead They won't see the boy who once prayed before each climb, or the way the wind carried his laughter before it carried his breath.

We have no crosses to mark our dead.

We look to the land for remembrance—

But how long until even the land forgets?

The Karakoram Road was never made for us.

It was made for the stories told in brochures,
for the ones who arrive by plane,
not the ones who arrive by foot.

The earth here is dammed—
not only by rivers,
but by grief that overflows
and silence that never recedes.

Take me to the Karakoram Road—
so I may kneel upon the stone
and speak my son's name
until the mountain remembers.

This road was never built for us—but over us.

And still, we are the ones who hold it.
Still, we are the ones who bleed beneath it.
Still, we are the reason it stands.
It stands—
but only because we fell,

and the dead still lie beneath it.