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Lessons from Iftar

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Lessons from Iftar // Emily Blevins

Peace, understanding, respect--
the feeling is mutual.
She with hair scarved and I, unconcerned.
How will I tell her that my father hates
her, and her father, and her father's father?

We dine together
and speak of change, peace, respect.
The feeling is mutual. And yet,
I cannot help but hear
the taunts ringing in my ears,
racist jokes my father has shared with his friends:
"They want to get blown up. It's in their religion."

While we discuss treaties and peacemaking,
my mind wanders.
She is me, born in a different place.
Would my father hate
me too if I covered my hair
and called another book holy?

Peace, understanding, love--
the feeling is mutual,
between she and I.
I feel I must specify,
the feeling is mutual between she and I
because my father and my father's father
grew up in different times, in a different world
where intolerance, fear, lack of understanding
were mutual.

Blacks and Whites, Jews and Muslims, Christians
and gays,
they did not stop to see themselves in one
another's eyes.

They did not know that these categories--
race, religion, sexuality--
were never part of the Golden Rule.
Do unto others as you would have them do unto
you.

Tonight, she is me and I am her
as our eyes mirror one another's souls. And I
will make no mention of my father,
for that would cast a stone
into the black pools where we hold a piece of
one another.

And our rejection of the mistakes of our fathers' pasts
will be mutual.