

# War Widow

By Chris Abani

The telephone never rings. Still  
you pick it up, smile into the static,  
the breath of those you've loved; long dead.

The leaf you pick from the fall  
rises and dips away with every ridge.  
Fingers stiff from time, you trace.

Staring off into a distance limned  
by cataracts and other collected debris,  
you have forgotten none of the long-ago joy  
of an ice-cream truck and its summer song.

Between the paving stones;  
between tea, a cup, and the sound  
of you pouring;  
between the time you woke that morning  
and the time when the letter came,  
a tired sorrow: like an old flagellant  
able only to tease with a weak sting.

Riding the elevator all day,  
floor after floor after floor,  
each stop some small victory whittled  
from the hard stone of death, you smile.  
They used to write epics about moments like this.

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