

DUNYA MIKHAIL

Plastic Death

In my childhood
in Baghdad
we played dead:
we killed each other
with plastic weapons.
We lay on the floor,
still as corpses,
for a minute
or two.
Then one of us laughed,
exposing our plastic death,
we held each other
as the dying might
life itself, but rose
to play another game.
The years turn over like lotto numbers,
and Baghdad recedes
with our childhoods
into exile.
From afar, we see children
who look like we did.

They kill each other,
lie motionless
on the floor.
But none of them laugh
or hold life
and rise.

DUNYA MIKHAIL is an Iraqi-American poet. Her books include *The Beekeeper: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq*, *The Iraqi Nights*, *Diary of A Wave Outside the Sea*, and *The War Works Hard*. Her honors include the Kresge Fellowship, Arab American Book Award, and UN Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. She currently works as an Arabic special lecturer at Oakland University in Michigan. She has a BA from the University of Baghdad and an MA from Wayne State University. Mikhail is the co-founder of Mesopotamian Forum for Art and Culture in Michigan.