

# Amina Speaks: Night

JANET RUHE-SCHOEN

Fair One, my most cherished and revered  
daughter, you wrote to me of meeting  
the young Shah: how he held a tiger-striped  
cat in his arms, stroked her as he tried luring you  
into the belladonna darkness of his eyes.

Strange, in my dream last night a tiger-striped kitten  
came to me as I lay before a huge window.

A million stars turned the black sky indigo  
and drenched my eyes in their brilliance,  
stars that glittered on my brow, wheeled and glistened  
on my hair, slid down my burning cheeks like tears,  
you and your final torment: buried alive,  
yet, at least, safe from violators' hands and eyes.

The burning of the tears became terrible.  
I tossed on my mat, tried to scream  
but loosed only strangled sounds. White hot flames  
licked back against my temples. I thought,  
"These flames are like the terror of angels' wings."

Then a tiger-striped kitten walked on silent paws  
across my breast. She was nearly weightless,  
yet her touch soothed me to the roots of my heart  
when she curled up in the crook of my neck  
and with one finger I caressed her silken head.  
She lay like a warm amber stone on my skin.

The stars lightened, receded, scattered.  
Still dreaming, I lay looking at the night,  
breathing softly as the kitten breathed.