no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won’t let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
it’s not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn’t be going back.

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitted
no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
  body is left aching
  or prison,
because prison is safer
  than a city of fire
  and one prison guard
  in the night
  is better than a truckload
  of men who look like your father
  no one could take it
  no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

the
  go home blacks
  refugees
  dirty immigrants
  asylum seekers
  sucking our country dry
  niggers with their hands out
  they smell strange
  savage
messed up their country and now they want
  to mess ours up
  how do the words
  the dirty looks
  roll off your backs
maybe because the blow is softer
  than a limb torn off

or the words are more tender
  than fourteen men between
  your legs
or the insults are easier
  to swallow
  than rubble
  than bone
  than your child body
  in pieces.
i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
  unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
  saying-
    leave,
  run away from me now
i don't know what i’ve become
but i know that anywhere
  is safer than here

Warsan Shire is a world renowned Somali poet and writer in London.
Her poetry is translated in many different languages.
Warsan also has received numerous awards and accolades.