IMTIAZ DHARKER

“These Are The Times We Live In”

You hand over your passport. He

looks at your face and starts

reading you backwards from the last page.

You could be offended,

but in the end, you decide

it makes as much sense

as anything else,

given the times we live in.

You shrink to the size

of the book in his hand.

You can see his mind working:

Keep an eye on that name.

It contains a Z, and it just moved house.

The birthmark shifted recently

to another arm or leg.

Nothing is quite the same

as it should be.

But what do you expect?

It’s a sign of the times we live in.

In front of you,

he flicks to the photograph,

and looks at you suspiciously.

That’s when you really have to laugh.

While you were flying,

up in the air

they changed your chin

and redid your hair.

They scrubbed out your mouth

and rubbed out your eyes.

They made you over completely.

And all that’s left is his look of surprise,

because you don’t match your photograph.

Even that is coming apart.

The pieces are there

But they missed out your heart.

Half your face splits away,

drifts on to the page of a newspaper

that’s dated today.

It rustles as it lands.