

Minor Feelings

Where do we come from?

Don't lie to me—
Not on a map, Baba
Show me

We wait on a mini bus for twenty million hours
Counting bottles of beer on the wall like they tell me to,
I want to pee, but I keep it inside deep.
A little pee equalled a treacherous path to wee.

Outside the window sit big blobs of chipped concrete,
Some painted with stars
Others with giant words scrolled in cursive
Stories I cannot read or speak.

It is summer-time
Birthday time
For Geminis like me
Summer-time is A/C O'clock.

But the driver switched it off
Too much A/C eats the bus intestines
And then we,
We all end up cartoons.

Baba's clenched palms leave mine
He flings himself out of a back window

Bellowing words to the air in *Arabish*
I can only understand half
Because I was only taught how to speak the -ish

In-between the tiny pebbles on the ground
A parade materialises—
Or is it a stampede?
Bugs in multi-colour—from Pixar movies
Disney+

A rotund high-school kid has his eye on me
He is wearing a No-Fear t-shirt:
Classic Ramallah EMO.

Plumes of smoke unspool from his mouth
He belches, a cough.
Reprise

The boy's chest emits clotted cream, the yellow kind.

His arms stretch out
 Grab hold of me from behind
 Pinching my bony butt-cheeks

I flutter out into the clammiest air that I had ever breathed

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Baba's greasy hands linger away from mine.

We line up, a gazillion blind mice—
 I feel like we are about to leave the Bank for-ever.

Overhead is a hawkish creature with a rifle—
 Airborne, but still—a cyborg drone.

Veiled women straddle me
 Clambering and clamouring
 On top of each-other,
 Wearisome wild geese—fleeing.

I grab onto my peep
 Burrowing through the stink of body odour—
 The kind that sticks to polyester *abayaas*.

A turnstile
 Like in The Terminal

Are we going to fly now?

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A taxi driver with a name like Eyad meets us on the other side.
 He listens to really old Rock like Rage Against the Machine
 His car tastes of farts and cigarettes.

Baba's eyes are droopy
 Not limp sleepy—
 He is somewhere else now.

Sunset approaching—
 A winding path
 Scorched earth greets us before a bay of red roses, and
 Manicured green grass
 On the sloped hills of Mount Carmel

I can smell the sea!

Eyad turns to me.
Baba gestures, 'straight-on'!

We roll up past baroque manses
The House of...?
Justice
A court?
No, a temple, Baba corrects me.

Temples are only in Spielberg movies
Or so, I saw.

SeaDream does not come to be.
But the fragrance of briny marine life—
Congests my fear of being-in landlock,
And hides-up the stink of my dried-up wee.

We are ejected at the Shrine of Bab:
North-West Entrance.

Baba thrusts his hands through his salt and pepper:
Halts, and starts pulling it,
HARD

Are we too late?

As the sun goes to bed
We walk down the squillions and zillions of stairs,
Down a high peak.

We are in a big-screen TV
Picture-perfect
I wish Baba had a camera phone
This is where I want to learn to selfie.

I wave goodbye to the palm trees—
Enter a Falafel shop

Baba knows the man making the balls in the humus-y bread:
They both speak *Arabish*

We are in our spiritual home

Spirits are ghosts
But not the type that haunt people,
We all have spirits, actually—
Some call it a soul

Mine is an exceptional one that is Baha'i.

I am wrong again.
 We *were* Baha'i
 Baba says we can't be anymore.
 He tells me of a magnificent temple-mosque somewhere north, in Yazd.

Now it is a pile of rubble,
 Ashen trees soaked in pasty pulp and mucky grime—
 Dirt-stained bricks act as memorial.

If we win a green-card lottery we can be Baha'i again.
 But not in Haifa,
 We would live in Chicago
 Where there is a humungous temple where all the Baha'i hug and kiss.

The only person I ever did kiss except for my Sito is my pillow.
 Sometimes it gets very soggy
 After I practice the tongue-squiggles

Baba practices his with an American who sports a rat-tail
 They have a beard and everything
 They do it outside, even when its sweltering
 More than one-thousand degrees.

Where do we go from here?

Raised hands
 Clamp and grasp onto the shaky table top
 The Baba shudders, the oblong of his body outstretched:

Do you want to cry?

I wished hard that the Gemini in me could make another person
 A grown-up one
 Tall enough to grab him from behind
 Drip water on his forehead
 Hold him like a baby Jesus
 Kiss his scruffy cheeks
 Pat the belly
 Like a drum-beat
 Till the fear goes away.

In the morning, Baba was going to Law and Order
 He was joining the 'tribunal for everyday life'
 He said it was Nuremberg times one-hundred!
 I nod as if I knew
 But I did not know
 And I did not want to.

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Fences ring around the roses,
Not barbed, but pointy, like BBQ skewers
The kind *Gido* uses when he is young Han Solo.

A thud—
Is someone dropping bags of flour
Onto my head?

The voice in my inner cranium
Sings sounds I have not heard before—
Underwater racket: Whale clatter, shrill dolphins?

Rubber Coated Steel
Pierces through weathered clothes
Causalities of curiosity

Rare is our truth any better than the lies they tell us.

Omar Kholeif