

Home, New Home!

From the mountains of Pakistan to the plains of Texas. I am currently in my twelfth house on my third continent. With each move, came a new lesson, new beginning. I was able to learn how to make chai in Pakistan and how to ride the Tram in England. Each place allowed me to learn something new. To be something new. Did you know that sidewalks are pavements and strollers are prams in almost every other country but America? My travels as a child made me envy those who got to stay and build lifelong friendships and have a place they could grow up to call home. But that was as a child. Now, I find a certain beauty in moving around. Learning new things, meeting new people. You get to hit the reset button and relearn everything from where the closest store is to how to turn the heat up in your new house. After years of living a nomad life, I have discovered that home doesn't have to be a place or person or even thing. Home is wherever you are. Home is what you make of where you are. I made my home the way my mouth waters eating loaded fries from downtown Austin. The way my heart flutters hearing thunderstorms in Pakistan. The way my childhood rushes back smelling Disney churros.

Naan Bread

I speak my colonizer's tongue
better than my mother's.
They call me a coconut,
brown on the outside but
white on the inside.
I can read and write in English,
but in Urdu, even my tongue fumbles.
I still remember the day when a kid
said "I like your accent."
I was so confused.
Was he talking about my Americanized
Urdu or my Spicy English?
My cousins mock me for acting like a
gorra, but I have seen more Bollywood
movies and know more songs than them.
I linger between cultures.

AHS

"Do you speak Islam?"

As if it mattered if I told them it wasn't a language,
For I was an outsider, a black sheep
who could never paint her wool white.

The broken piece of the puzzle known as Academy High School.

"What church do you go to?"

Not knowing how to answer the question,
I would add a reminder in my calendar
to go memorize Bible verses so I could make friends.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son" (John 3:16)

"Was Bin Laden your uncle?"

No, "he was my cousin," I would jokingly say.

Masking my pain with humor,
was the only way I could cope.

I prayed to be white, but my skin was still always the color of shit.

"Why can't you just pick the pepperoni off?"

How do you explain that you were

"born a muzi, so no oink oink for you"

to people who still carry flags of the losing side of a war
like it's an accomplishment to display that you are openly racist.

Deep in the heart of Texas,
my school broke my heart day in and day out.

But I was still its bitch.

I would just remind myself,
racism is temporary, but GPA is forever.