

# Beyond the Edges of a Broken World

By Salma Hussain

that old man with the limp  
the one who  
jumaa'h evenings pushed  
his grandkids on the metal swings

	<i>Higher! Higher! Jid-doo, hiiiiiiigher! All the way to Allah, jid-dooooooo!</i>
--	---

that same one who  
Saturday mornings handed out orange-colored candy

I had	(or so I thought)
-------	-------------------

stowed him into the tiniest box in my mind  
padlocked with the *khteer* biggest lock &  
flung the key into the sea  
I was so certain he would remain where I left him that

I played Fairuz on the drive home	(what a risky thing to do!)
-----------------------------------	-----------------------------

but it went as I planned  
that old man with the missing teeth  
stayed mute and away for a decade or two  
then that sneaky *kalb*  
paid me a visit when I was pregnant I had

crept downstairs for a glass of water & he was sitting in my statement armchair my curmudgeonly calico on his lap I was sure he	(an embarrassment of riches) (the one that cost a month's salary) (purring away like the cute kitty he was not) (jiddoo from the second floor, not the cat)
--	--

had returned to lecture me and my unborn child on our north american lives of excess &  
apathy but jiddoo uttered not a word, instead from his pockets retrieved a trio of nectarines  
unpeeled each one while the cranky calico snored  
the next morning  
not a trace of jiddoo anywhere  
just citrus scents on my beloved statement armchair

the next time I saw him was a decade later I was  
in a flimsy hospital gown;  
White Coats proclaimed the risky surgery a success  
I was certainly in no pain, I enthusiastically agreed  
a modern-day medical miracle! they boasted & patted each other on the back  
this second life was a Himalayan embarrassment of wealth, not merely for myself but  
particularly for

my minecraft-obsessed tween	(who has never even met a motherless child in his life!)
-----------------------------	---

later that afternoon  
 a splotch of sunshine appeared on my hospital wall

I started laughing mid-sentence	(guffawing like a hyena, more accurately)
---------------------------------	---

because I knew then that Jiddoo would not be long

& so when that weary but undefeated <i>fakir</i> arrived	(I know I know I know <i>fakir</i> is from another brown language but these foreign words with their belligerent خ and ق are one and the same Over Here so whatevs)
--	---

he mischievously told me to free myself of the feeding tube  
 cosplaying a magician pulling out yards of ribbon  
 from an upturned top hat

then he mimed flinging my mug against the hospital wall	(maybe there was a story in there about how he threw stones in his youth but I never asked nor tbh did I want to know)
---	--

after the mug I threw the tray the chair the phone because  
 Jidoo and I know that in the end all belliphonic systems desire shattering  
 a White Coat came rushing in & enveloped me in a bear hug

peered deeply into my eyes	(a bit ballsy for a white doc, I thought with a thrill and with a female muslim patient like me, no less! I thought with more thrilling and throbbing)
----------------------------	--

doctor ballsy patiently explained that my brain post-██████ for the next few months	(for a ██████! ██████! ██████! didn't I tell you, <i>Himalayan</i> embarrassment of riches!)
---	--

would be like a box of upturned puzzle pieces memories would be in transit relentless and petrifying journey towards their beginnings and endings and at any given moment I would not be able	(in <i>barzakh</i> )  to discern  which was witch
---	---

and furthermore these belliphonic memories Fairuz looping on spotify  
 hospital walls splintering childrens' laughter pealing flying tasting cloud citrus sky  
 peels around and a p a r t wood endlessly deafen detonate  
 deaden

you them

[u s]