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untitled

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Untitled

Deema T. Hindawi

When the Muslim girl smiles at a stranger
The stranger looks over and performs an action from a variety of choices:

Interaction 1

Sometimes a simply sweet interaction;
It's quick and subtle
Where we both exchange a smile.

Interaction 2

Sometimes they look at me and look away as though they are not pleased
And my face is somehow distasteful.

Interaction 3

Sometimes they look at me with painful eyes
As though I have done something wrong for simply existing
And thus they turn away as soon as I return their bitter look
Before I smile to change their negativity.

Interaction 4

And sometimes it'll cause the stranger to almost walk into a tree—

Because sometimes they forget they're staring
Because sometimes they're lost in their thoughts about me
Compiling their prejudice about me
Because sometimes they're thinking:

“Where is she from?”

“Terrorist”

“Send her back”

“I hope she doesn't leave her backpack anywhere”

Because the backpack challenge is back

And

it never really was just about how high and fast you throw a bag

And
so they begin to write the play about my existence
And
Perform it in their mind
Just to realize they won't be performing at The Nutcracker,
Or the opera,
Or any venue where people dress in fancy suits to watch a
play
I'm sorry my life isn't *The Wizard of Oz*
My identity contains no yellow brick road
Or any dream—
Especially not one of hope and prosperity
Because the "American dream" wasn't made for me
And I'm living lost
And so is this person that's probably thinking of that "Ameri-
can dream"
That they didn't even realize
I see them
Frowning and looking like they're really focusing on some-
thing
But it couldn't be me
Cuz
I was smiling the whole time
And my smile started off quiet and small
But slowly evolved
Making me look like the joker and
Eventually I become photo ready with the teeth and every-
thing
Trying to get their attention because they didn't notice me
for me
Because I wanna cure them of this staring problem
I'm hoping their eyes are ok
From being left hella wide open for an almost impressive
amount of time
Because when we're young they tell us to not
do that or face is gonna get stuck like that

Because eventually they look up smile and away
they go
But only just before they walk into a tree or cement
And my smile becomes the one thing holding me from
laughter
Cuz we gotta live somehow
And laugh at the things
That may not seem all that funny in the moment.