

No Home

I. Oklahoma and the Lines I Begin To Draw From It

My father snips out an article
from the *New York Times*; I read
of a farm in dusty Baghdad
forced to be shut down.
Families cannot afford
to buy fresh oranges and lemons.
He tells me that farm was once his, mine.

We are comfortable in our small
living room with the plaid couches
and the ottoman that has a tear,
fluff coming out the middle.
I don't know what the outside world looks like
if I sit here long enough, so I tell myself to leave,
to not come back. I say it all while knowing
it is where I will return.

II. The Middle East, The Places Starred on my Map

I almost board a plane to Syria
when I am fifteen. This is what my aunts,
uncles, cousins called their temporary home when
Baghdad was too dangerous. My guilt,
my inability to pronounce Hiba, Nethal, their
Arabic names, scares me from leaving Tulsa.
My father flies over on his own. He shares photos
when he returns. I dream of the time
I could have spent with the family
I still do not know.

Seven years later and I still dream
of what the land would feel like on my feet—
dirty, but clean enough. I was too small, too stupid.
Now it is too late. I dream of standing on top
of the tallest building, looking out so far I see Iraq.
There's the farm. I recognize its shape, the slopes, arches,
the date palm trees lining the farm, covering the oranges.

III. The Iraqis in London: I Force Myself To Fit

My aunt and four cousins live in a small
townhouse that suffocates them.
There are three bedrooms and one bathroom.
The kitchen always has something
on the stove. The table always with rice,
bread, grilled chicken, hummus, tabouli.
They try to feed me every hour of every day.
When I say I am a vegetarian, my aunt
says, *Yes, but you eat chicken, right?*

I feel okay in my silence, listening to the Arabic
roll off their tongues like a delicate dance.
I attempt to retrace all the places I am from.
I turn my body into a map of the world,
still find no home. I am too calm with
my ways, too patient for my impatience.
One cousin, my own age, sneaks off to tell me
in her British-Arabic accent that she cannot stand
being there sometimes. She wishes she could come to America.
I wish I could stay longer in that tiny townhouse.

IV. Where I End Up

I still search for somewhere to call mine,
but the puzzle already seems complete.
I thought there must be a missing piece.
I am no nomad, but I feel I am pulled
side to side, all around the world sometimes,
unsure of where I end up.

Tell me how the world stays round
after we carve into it, as if the missing piece may appear
below dirt. When I move from place to place,
I hope to walk into the newness with an answer,
with a feeling that suddenly makes sense—
I am home—but it doesn't come.
If you aren't from anywhere, you cannot ever be lost.