

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Su'ad Abdul-Khabeer

3 a.m. Labbayka

My mind fumbles for words
So my soul may speak.

Labbayka Allahuma Labbayk

I surrender.

Labbayka Allahuma Labbayk

I submit.

Labbayka Allahuma Labbayk

I am captivated.

Like the first time,

Pray, like the next

I know

Labbayka Allahuma Labbayk

For you

Labbayka Allahuma Labbayk

I am here

Lord, I am here.

5 a.m. Prayers Clothes

Allahu Akbar. O Allah!

did my sleeve slip as I raised my hands to pray?

no. yes. Maybe . . .

"When in doubt, don't do," so I

don't start over or don't not start again?

This debate exhausts me, Satan trying to wear

me down to focus on the minute, like what I wear.

Thoughts of length eclipse attention to distance from *Allah*.

Pulling sleeves to knuckles, stretching the limits of cotton again,

So more than every inch is covered, in my struggle to pray.

Allahu Akbar. Damn! This scarf may unveil necklines as I

bend in *sujjud*. Start over? Yes? No! Breathe. No. but maybe

it would be easier if I wore that huge scarf; maybe.

Then I'd be covered from brow to thigh, able to wear

Anything I like (under it) except these pants I suppose I

Don't believe *Allah*

is that particular nor rigid is the Lord I pray

to. But then again

fallibility is humanity, I could be wrong or then again

created with *fitra*, inclination toward divine Will, maybe

I am right and if it consumes me as I pray,

circular monologues on what I wear,

could be that *Allah*

wants me to let it go. Wants that I

stop delving into intricacies of complexities that I
can never answer; where no human is sure because again
only Allah

knows and maybe

then I can shift focus from clothes I wear

to wearing humility when I pray.

Please pray

for me. That I

move beyond the wear

and tear of doubting again and again.

Transcend maybe

and know Allah.

That I pray as if I am with Him again.

No matter what I may be

Wearing on my body, my soul will be sincere before Allah.

9 a.m. Connotations of the Crown

some of my sisters

are in combat

with ideas newly born

and words older than the world;

yet, to cover or not to cover

Is not my battleground.

Because
among His signs is
watching your sista
hi-jab
the painstakingly smooth way
she pins, wraps, folds, tucks
her crown into place.
Because I wear it well,
this divine design.
whether wrapped high
or draped low and wide,
what better garment
for a Queen
than her crown?
And a beautiful person is a Godly thing.

To cover or not to cover
Is not my battleground

They'd like to paint me
unseen
with a veil gagging my intellect,
while in truth
the whole world is clocking
this invisible woman.

Young men in fitted caps
whisper
"Damn"
deep in sly glances,
Others offer courtesies in appreciation.
Women honor us openly or
with their arrogance,
And the press
can't get enough of us.

See, clothes do not hide the woman
They announce her.

To cover or not to cover
Is not my battleground.

This is no Grimm tale;
Covered women are not housed in storybooks
nor shielded by them.
When the cutest new skirts
Are mini
And mine
is scratching my ankles.
When Hakim
married the non-Muslim
with the perky breasts,
And Ali to the
Sister without a scarf
but great jeans/genes.
And I am branded
"religious."
When they only offer scarves
studded with restriction,
the rear masjid entrance,
and a stay home free card.
Then,
I don't feel beautiful
and I am.

Still whether the boys love me
the girls hate me
the Muslims castigate me,
To cover or not to cover
Is not my battleground.
For this scarf is
Simply, a blessing.

And which of the favours of your lord will ye deny? °

Not a one.

I am the world's most visible creature
and His most beautiful.

Mobile Muslimahs

What has
Southern legislators
and the heirs of Napoleon
cowering?

a woman.
a woman and her scarf.

Behold!
I stand
a woman and my scarf.
Now what's so scary
'bout little ole me?

Is it my brown skin
phenotype for criminality
cordoned off in
Banlieus of France
Ghettos of America;
that's got lawmakers
taking a nine to liberty?

Or is my crime
in the Color,
Faith,
of my scarf?

° Repeated verse in Chapter 55, Ar-Rahman of the Holy Qur'an

En le français et en l'anglais
liberté, égalité et fraternité
are trumped
by Sécurité.
"Security of the secular!"
is the rant of wing-tipped
white men
but democracy has been hostage,
at least,
since 1776—
so who's the barricade for?

And their mani-pedi
consorts
talk smack,
frontin'
like they kick it
with freedom on the regular
their angular
sentiments
under the guise
of liberty.
Free yourself!
they tell me,
patting my hand
tugging my scarf,
From the tyranny of Faith—
So . . .
I can be neatly chained
to a thong?

If you had asked me
I would have told you
I don't have any brothers,
My father rarely prays
and when he does
It is for my happiness
and my scarf
did not come with detachable weapons
nor dyed with subversive messages.
No.
My scarf
is about
Claiming space.
but you didn't ask.

★ ★ ★

Don't know why
they be fearing us.
Guess Mobile Muslimahs
be hazardous
to national security.
'Cause they can't see
the color of my hair,
when I strap a bomb to my Nike
and walk into a crowded mall—

Nobody wants to see another building fall.

I wasn't on that plane
I am not guilty.
Will not apologize for
someone else's insanity,
their pain.

Not a criminal
by virtue of my scarf.
Not a criminal
by virtue of my religion.
Not a criminal
by virtue of the color of my skin.

Will not modify my faith
to make you more comfortable.

If you had asked me
I would have told you
I am a woman
and this is my scarf.
I believe in God
and freedom
and work for a world
where that is possible,
Invincible.
And if that frightens you

Be Afraid.

Perfect shoes
Perfect bag
Perfect jeans
Perfect jacket
Perfect frame

in a world perfectly made for them.

illusion is what I cling to
b/c
reality
takes
too
much
energy,
and I am tired
of fighting
for space in this world
for recognition
the ability to exist
in my own skin
on my own terms.
I am drained
drowning
In false desires.

5 p.m. Hijab Story 2

Got up this morning
soooo excited!
Yesterday,
I bought
the most,
Perfect pair
of jeans.
Finally!
my thighs are held
in a loose embrace.
Perfect sandblast
to my purple sweater-tunic
and lavender-purple-plum scarf.

Perfect jeans fit perfectly
but the sweater was a
casualty of the monthly.
Yet I remained
modesty in motion
(as they say)
and thus
my lavender-purple-plum sandblast day began.

At breakfast
my mother's eyes
read
"that shirt could be a little longer."
I smiled
and went to the car.

Reaching the annual community expo
where speakers rant to periodically filled auditoriums,
merchants sell out of Hamza Yusuf tapes
and 5 dollar scarves
Sister “so and so” greeted me
whispering between cheek kisses
“pin (kiss)
your scarf tighter (kiss)
a turn of your head (kiss)
a glimpse of your neck. (smile)”
I smiled broadly
and responded to the *adhan*.

After prayer
Sister “I don’t know you from adam”
said

“Sister,
you can’t pray in pants.”
I began to smile but was interrupted with
“pants never conceal.”
I completed my smile
and went to the bazaar.

As I entered
the *Imam’s* wife
pulled me to the side
“Don’t forget to stop by the *masjid’s* table,
and sign up for the sisters’ class
about motherhood, marriage and *proper* modesty.”
she wasn’t finished—
pensively,
“And my husband noticed you and asked me to remind you . . .
We are selling MODESTLY COLORED JILBABS AND KHIMARS
Because frankly dear,
Purple is a bit Provocative.”
I grinned
and calmly
took off
my lavender-purple-plum scarf
my purple sweater tunic
my perfect sandblast jeans
placed them neatly in her hands
and said . . .
“you know, you’re right.”

You see I figured
if they were going to treat me like a whore,
I might as well dress the part.

7 p.m. I ain’t no crooked rib

I am here.
not for your leisure or your pleasure,
nor the sole source of your poor measure in the Eyes of God.
no, I ain’t no crooked rib.

not for your leisure or your pleasure
despite Islamization of a biblical fable.
no, I ain't no crooked rib,
so set your own dinner table.

despite Islamization of a biblical fable,
I am the coolness of his eye
so set your own dinner table,
place cooked morsels between my lips.

I am the coolness of his eye
creation, the product of divine Imagination.
place cooked morsels between my lips
as the Prophet's finger tips caressed Aisha's cheek.

I am simply creation, the product of divine Imagination
with my own divine directions,
the Prophet's finger tips caress Aisha's cheek
and a mind with no deficiencies, a faith that knows no bounds.

with my own divine directions
(not a *fitna* best kept locked under *khimar* and key)
and a mind with no deficiencies, a faith that knows no bounds,
I am not contingent on your existence.

not a *fitna*, best kept locked under *khimar* and key
nor the sole source of your poor measure in the Eyes of God.
I am not contingent on your existence,
I am here.

10 p.m. Sonnet # 2

Syrupy, sappy poetry
the only way I've found to describe
dreams of this man and me
our harmony, in symphony, we vibe.

The only way I can understand
his gentleness
with the world. With my heart in hand
I rest my head on his tenderness.

The only way to illustrate
his voice—a liquid wash of sincerity
The jazzphatsmoothness of his gait
His war between intellect and humility

My heart is full of longing cries
But hope, not tears, falls from my eyes.

11:45 p.m. God-Like

A lot of people
wanna be
God-like
but i'd settle
for just knowing
God liked
me.
I know—
He loves me
but that's in the family way;
you love your sister
cause y'all come from the same womb
or home
and all that jazz
but that don't mean
you like her,
at least
not when you're 16
and she's 12.

I wanna know I
make Him happy
make Him proud;
that He speaks of me
in crowds of angels.

problem is
lately
i've forgotten that He and i
can be happy
at the same time
i've forgotten how to make that happen

i guess you could say
i've lost my way.

no.
you couldn't say that.
i know the way.
i can see it.
i was on it.

i just stopped moving.
just
 stopped
moving

i feel as though
i am
in a deep hole
with marble walls,
i can see
the world,
the way it ought to be
the way it used to,
up there.

but how do you climb marble?

i guess
you just
hafta
try.