

## Beast of Southern Canada

I have discovered a beast of a new type: a brown girl in southernmost Canada with the Detroit river at her feet and the soil of Pakistan in her womb. There is a ravage coming her way. There is snake oil chai boiling in her eyes. She is aware of the paki marrow of her bones but still she can't help but wrap her lips around english words. It starts off as consensual but unenthusiastic fellatio of the colonizer's language and slowly transforms into an abusively dependent relationship with western syntax and pragmatically perverted sounds.

On the second week of January, I wanted to tear the logic out from my soul. The perfect truth, the [hageeqat] of it all is that I am a grey curtain holding back an anxiously ugly tide on the inside. And not even all the wellbutrin and cipralex and weed and coke in the world can help me run away. There is no space where I can escape the shaking curse rattling unsettlingly in my bones.

Peanut butter droopy eyes watermelon killer smile my mouth is made of butterflies you creepy weepy clownstar.

I used to wait for my grand entrance into western adulthood because I thought that at least then I would be afforded some sort of societal control and that would help me order some of the mess on the inside. But when I finally crossed that devious precipice, I almost cried at the irony of it all. A brown girl with painted skin and a colonized tongue and an urdu mind with english throat veins pumped full of western cannaboids and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. I saw the truth and the truth saw me: there was no way that I would ever be able to wrangle myself out of my corporeal body's fucked up medicated reality.

So now I take 40mg of melatonin a la noche before bed so that I can lucid dream about how I will be reborn as a muslim Joan of arc and save my land from the [gora] terrorists. There is always a space-time continuum pressing down on me when I am awake and in my dreams, I can breath. Even the terror feels fresh and soulful when its screened through the reticular activating system of an overprotective mind.

My conclusions don't flow in chains in the outside world like they do in my mind. The premises sound demented and shaken and I am too scared to dig down for the roots of the necessary assumptions of my life.

The next month: rushing through the mall, I am exhumed with a consumerist haze. The next day, I am overwhelmed with shame when I look at the Frida quote above my mirror Her eyebrows wiggle in displeasure and I refrain from plucking the hair over my lips as penance to this goddess. The peanut butter sticks to my throat and drowns out the necessary english phonemes from my tongue and truth be told, it feels wonderful. I choke on my own dissatisfaction there in the musty basement of my parents' house and spend the rest of the day hablandoing español.

My parents are staunchly solid south asian persons spun from the sturdy cloth of muslim immigrant determinism. I have inherited none of their stubborn resilience but all of their propensities towards clinical psychological disorders embellishing the pages of the DSM V. I am their clinical masterpiece: a concoction of genetic time bombs waiting to be set off. I am a walking talking robotic prisoner of my own cultured DNA.

I have tried to leave western psychology behind but it refuses to leave me. I whisper fuck freud ten times a day and include that gentle bastard vygostky (peace be upon him) in my nightly prayers to allah. I diligently read the koran because I am convinced that mohammed was the first great social psychologist of his time. My nails are hanging on by threads of dead skin to my fingers but still I cannot let go of the holy pages. The tiny rhymes in every sound of every arabic word spring alive in my mind and I sway to music of the faraway desert land there in a foggy basement in the outskirts of Windsor Canada.

But sometimes even I have to let it go. I convince myself that it doesn't matter that trump is on tv and my brothers are scared to ride on airplanes and my sisters have to de-privatize their sexuality in order to placate western standards of womanly un-oppression. A white woman at work asks me where I'm from and I try my best to maneuver the conversation back onto a more comfortable path and she presses harder and wrinkles her brows and finally I contend and tell her about Pakistan and her ears turn red and she rushes off, leaving a trail of clozapine and paranoia behind her. I don't cry about incidents like these anymore. If anything, I welcome them with open arms and clenched teeth, because at least then I have something to fill my pages with other than self-consumed loathing. Fucking loco, I tell myself before I attempt to center myself again in the space and time I am occupying at that moment. Who's the real terrorist here, eh?

All my white friends cringe when I tell them these stories, so now I stick to talking about the weather and traffic and bernie sanders with them. I can see them all breath a sigh of relief afterwards, and there is a something rotten in my smile that they are born genetically blind to.

In my past years, I was an apt apostle of Salinger, but these lazy days I lay my loyalty down at Kafka's twisted, pale ankles. He grimaces with shyness as I prostate myself at his knees, and his bony elbows poke me as we start to fuck. I tell this awkward, anxiety-ridden man about the systematic hurdles and emotional bullet wounds of being brown in a white country. I tell him I'm a muslim, and somewhere in the distance, I can hear an angry white man in Iowa chant "all muslims must go!" right after he's done screaming "all mexicans are rapists!". The xenophobia is strong with the downtrodden poor whites and they latch onto colored scapegoats like babies to lactating breasts.

After we fuck, I ask Kafka for the secret to converting words into capitalistic goods that will afford me and my family enough economical security to shop without leaving behind a trail of coupons. Kafka smiles with his thin, beautiful lips, and whispers thickly luscious words in my ears. I don't speak german but I am struck by the honest sound of the syllables. I am comforted by our fantastical reunion. I am a muslim in the whiteland and Kafka is Jew in the Rhineland

and we have both tried to outrun the timebombs of our heritage by converting rage into understandable strings of meaningful phonemes. What more can anyone ask of us?

But now it is time to leave and now the sun is setting on the austrian landscape and I begin to disappear from the bed. Kafka pushes his lips closer and melts into my neck and once again I am tortured by the question of my questionable attraction to this dead, austere gentle lawyer with bones made from words.

2.

It is too quiet here. When I am not sleeping, it is harder to breathe. I cannot integrate my body fully into spaces taken up by other bodies in close proximity. My voice breaks and my lungs crack and I am afraid that everyone can see the cortisol flooding my veins. And no amount of illicit Russian powders and periwinkle plant alkaloids can distract me from the reality of my own failures. I write down the people that I cannot escape and I escape the people that I should be writing about. There is no end to the irony and I watch youtube makeup tutorials on smoky eyes for a night out at 3am to take my mind off the hollow feeling inside the corners of ankles and the soles of my feet.

I'll never be like them I'll never be like you I'll never be like me can't you see?

Children make me want to cry. The urban city landscape of south canada is eroding through my soul one rainstorm at a time. It is February and there is no snow and the sun burns everybody's eyes: where is that bone shattering teeth clattering southern Canadian winter that layers the seasonal affective sadness over my brown skin? Are we hurtling towards the sun? Have the orbits become demagnetized by the rippling inbred black holes of carbon dioxide rage?

You understand what I'm saying right?

Failure to thrive: crush me back up into a womb please until I am ready to face the world. It is too much for me right now, it feels too real all the time. I'm on a self-imposed hiatus from cannaboid receptor antagonists and I think Marley is there in an afterlife somewhere waiting for me with a frown and a wrinkled smile.

Left alone oh my god I can't shake the dirt and curry and engine dust off my shoulder. I can't go but that doesn't mean that you have to wrap yourself away.

And now there is nothing left for me to do. I pour out my heart to a blue eyes monster and you laugh. Never trust the blue eyed ones, nani told me before I left Karachi for Toronto. She communicated the intricate corruption of the white man there in the two seconds before I left Pakistan forever. I never forgot that moment and it has been 16 years and since then I have come to understand the implications of her parting wisdom.

After 9/11 I realized the burden of inherited culture and genetically transferred religious idealizations. Someone slammed a cracked baseball bat into my uncle's skull while he was walking down yonge street in retaliation for his absolute brown existence. The subdural hematoma took his breath away and I wanted to scrub the melanin encrusted skin off my skin my body that year.

Cameras stealing my throat and all I want to be is left alone. Aesthetic: I'm alone on a roof in Lahore and I am smoking a beautifully rolled joint and there is no one watching me. I am left alone and I have all that I ever wanted.

If it doesn't hurt then it doesn't exist.

It's a messy business being muslim these days. San Bernardino still gives me nightmare but I don't qualify for student counselling on campus. That's reserved for detangling cleaner messes and I can't offer them any pieces that aren't covered in blood and shit and culturally relativistic piss.

Hai me marjawa (refrain from translating and just let the phonemic sounds penetrate your brain please).

There is not enough blood in my soul. If you suppress enough emotion you become a black hole.

There is a turmeric cloud following me and it congratulates me on the oxidation of my brain. Everything I write is shit. I will never string words together as acceptably as a white boy with a fucking masters and a blanket of departmental post-secondary approval covering his back.

I feel a storm rolling my way. I am trigger happy in Pakistan and moving past the speed of water. I know where the sound is but please don't tell me how to listen to it. A sitar guitar riff flows in before the motorbike surges across Kashmir and swirls down into the edge of neelum valley. I am so soft I am pink and so ripe with forgiveness lying in the lush waterlogged greenness of a place that hasn't been droned or fucked up by the [goras] yet (and I know obama is not a gora, but his actions carry the unmistakable aroma of a colonizer's persona).

One of us not here anymore: is it you or me? There is not enough time to unravel the premises of such an illogically necessary claim. But sir, the feeling it produces justifies its logical inconsistencies.

Does everyone think I'm a freak?

Am I unfuckable?

Shall I drink the water in Flint and sleep my life away in Detroit's mexican corridor?

Kafka come back and answer me.

3.

Ottawa was five maybe six years ago. I had a shaved head and watery eyes during that period. I had not yet discovered altered states of chemically constructed consciousness. I listened to joy division and dreamt about a Bollywood funeral for Ian. Laverne street drove me wild when it was swallowed by the snow. I had everything I needed but the [tanhai] was unbearable back then.

It is now five years after the Ottawa year. I still sit on the floor of the left side of my room after arguing with baba about his paranoid parables of immigrant pessimism. This week he wants me to become a pharmacy technician because Peter Mansbridge from the CBC told him that it's a recession proof career. Fuck your masters, fuck that clinical white devil hocus pocus psych, you need to arm yourself against the economy my jaan, he tells me. These white men will take you alive and skin the hope off your back, he warns me when I exhibit my western anti-collectivist occupational notions of freedom. His voice is heavy with his own lived truth and I want to tell him that maybe my truth can be different from his truth but it all gets lost in the formal Urdu translation of a tired English tirade. And then we pull back because always, we find it impossible to coexist with each other's anxiety driven alternate versions of diaspora reality. He retreats back to Fox News and I crawl back to Kafka and the bliss of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali's voice layered over lush urban synth beats.

My mind is stuck for the third time now and it doesn't give a shit about its current misuse of attentional cognitive resources. I am convinced there is a specific enzyme in my body that is working feverishly to convert the alcohol in my bloodstream to pure guilt. Anger I can sit with fear I can manage hate I can relish but guilt and shame fuck me up for days. My mind is stuck in a certain hole in time and no solid body is large enough to pull me away from the gravitational force of my own self-pity.

Ustad Ali said that our prophet was a fakir, a beggar, and he also lost his mind and got his mind stuck in some radically heavy verses. He didn't try to fight it and this is the simplest lesson of all religions.

The Sufis have a way of unabashedly accepting the twirling ecstasy of an unhinged mind and I want to spin in circles to the sound of devotional qawallis during my funeral ceremony. Listen please: I want to be buried in Kashmir. But first, I want them to cut off my fingers and bury one in Palestine, one in Damascus, one in Jordan, and one in Ferguson (Missouri). I am selfish that way. I use other people's struggle to distract myself from my own messiness.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh but the Sufis wouldn't give a fuck about that.

After the funeral, I will ride on a donkey as soft as bones and tough like steel cotton down the streets of Palestine. I will feed him oranges and dates and figs dipped in blood orange honey.

We will dance along the fence lining the west bank, my donkey and I. We will gather all the pobre beggar ninos and dance them away into the sunset of the chosen land of spinning dervishes and unending acres of olive trees.

This bitch is loco, he said to me on the car ride back. It's not actually possible. Death by procrastination is just another college urban legend, like a helpful loan advisor or an intersectional white feminist. And who the fuck asks for a smuggled Cuban cigar as a token valentine offering?

I do, I say. I wanna feel high class on my half birthday this year my dear fuckboi.

Lurch lurch my mind lurches and hunches and lurches without a care in the world.

I get lost in my own words. No one else can ever read them the way you do. No one else can wrap their tongues around my words like you do. I don't care about your voice I don't care about your name I don't care about the layers of anxiety holding me back. I want you to lick me in the white spaces between each paragraph. And that is the closest I will ever come to praising you so please don't ever expect more from me.

I have very little to give away I like to sequester my emotional organs in case there is another 9/11 type event that needs my immediate analytical appraisal.

Mind operator deaf verb conjugator. No time for the bones to wake and now I hardly ever sleep my soul speaks volumes and my presence curdles every pimp's blood. I roar like the lion's struggle and there are suns bursting through the clouds behind my eyes and I see the universal perils of existence in the whiteman's land. A persian boy grabs me and I trust his differences by embracing his back with my red claws and we are on another planet and the Iraqi r&b glides over the eid celebrations in intergalactic Baghdad. What was it again? I ask him and we fall into a place that we all know doesn't exist. I know what it is but do you?

I am a deaf non-believer rocking the stillness that comes from smiling in the streets when the mind is weary. Sometimes my flow levels on the mountaintop next to onika's proverbs. A cradle behind me is full off words and in front me is the wasteland of the millennial job market. I fight bare knuckled with two other biology majors and one English lit maverick from yale for a cashier job at the Devonshire bath and body works. But this necessary distrust of my sisters does not still well with my evening shower smokes. I increase my sentiment for humanhood, I reevaluate my perspective of brown sisterhood and analyze my views on living my life according to the spirit of marley and tagore. At the end of the week, I decide to respectfully bow out of February's blood-fueled job hunt and spend my hours testing shwarma restaurants on the west side and making toddlers laugh at the downtown preschool ESL center. The peace filters through me, my mind heals back to spongy sultry honesty. I feel my presence inside myself and steel myself for the next jump into the capitalistic labyrinth of post-but-almost-pre-recession Windsor Canada. But you know you how it goes here, my sister.

Cut my brain out my tongue is connected to my hands. I can't focus inside liquor stores and the red wine made me weep last night. Finally gave up to the rattling in my brain and boy is there a dance going on under my salwar kameez right now. My lust is so fucking portable these days, I could weep.

But enough of all stuttering muttering non-sense rhyming wordmess. Look there: the train is leaving now. The valley is slipping away and it's already time to cue the Bollywood dance sequence on top of the moving train. Chal chaiya chaiya chaiya. What did Gibran say? There is a sound that can only be sensed through the vibrations induced by Urdu poetry sung in the voice of AR Rahman. Also, the train conductor would like you to know that a tabeez is an amulet meant to ward off the devil. When the devil wears a tabeez he turns into a pillar of words.

That is enough word flood for now, get on the train now please. The beast must return to her mental homeland for tonight's indica tinted sleep. Quick, don't look back or your story might turn into a pillar of drones.

Bitch, this was never a story.