

A Hospital Visit

By Aneesa Hussain

They come in to
Look at me
A spectacle on a
Petri dish,
Yellowed
Bony
Silent.
Their faces
Straight,
Eyes quizzical
White coats
Fluttering back
And forth
Like wings.

I sit and stare,
IV pulsating through
My veins, sweat
Trickling down my back
I feel the shame,
The shame of the
Visible hair on my
Legs,
The shame of being
Kept prisoner for a
Week,
The shame of being
Caught sick.

I have memories of bloody IVs,
Of kosher jello,
Of the girl next to me
Who had an operation.
Memories of my mother staying with
Me day and night,
Resting only a few hours
On a chair within my sight.

The white coats come again.
How old is she? One of them
Whispers to the other.
12, I think, another says.
I wonder if she speaks English,
The other says.

Perhaps Said had got it right.
I'm the exotic oriental,
The eastern other.
"Fucking Indians" the
nurse says to us later
as we close the curtains for
privacy and comfort.

A few white coats
walk by again and peep in.
Oh no, she's Arab, I think.
Her name is Muslim, they say.
I've lost my sense of self.
I'm an Indian and an Arab.
The best place to be racially
Profiled is when you're in
The hospital
And sick.
They think it heals your wounds
When they assume
Who you are.
They can only assume
Because you're 12 and

Sick and do not talk back
That you are what they think
You are.

This is when you take back
Your words,
Of singing so loud
That even you were frightened
That you are not fine,
And wonder if you will be okay
although it is another
Fine day.
Your mother and the white coats
Didn't think twice.
They took you in
And treated you.
You were their belonging
For a week.
An object to be tampered with,
A rat in a cage,
A spectacle on a petri dish.
You were treated in silence
Until you could be taken home
To yourself
with medicine
To heal the loss of your integrity,
Your memory of yourself
Before the loss of your identity.