The Horizon Somayya Upal

Weighted eyelashes, dangling in front of her. They sink and rise, bobbing on the Horizon until they finally fade out of her sight. She doesn't know how she got in this bed (she never does). The automated physical routine begins: breathe in deeply, push her chest up, and rise. The Horizon moves with her head, that imaginary line which gives context to her mind's eye. The eyelashes mockingly shut and open again. They dance in and out of frame, taunting their fleeting character in her life. In ten minutes, she'll forget all about them, until she cautiously watches them bob before sleep.

Azra has made sure to have no thoughts thus far, only observations. She can hear the breathing of a man beside her and can't risk waking him. She leans over to try and see his face, but it's obscured by the patchwork blanket.

"I'll see who it is later," she says to herself as she moves off the bed. She clasps her hands over her mouth suddenly, surprised by her own thinking. Azra listens to see if the man heard, but he doesn't seem to move.

She begins to pull on her underwear as she thinks, "Thank you, thank you Allah." She squeezes the eyes shut, feeling the wrinkles form. As she pulls on the rest of her clothes, she keeps pulling the skin around the eyes close, scrunching up her nose, but not quite obscuring her vision. She's mesmerized by the way the objects blur, the horizontal bars of gray descending and ascending. It keeps thoughts at bay.

Azra flees out the various doors (only getting lost at one turn) to the street. The cobblestone below is comforting. "I'm tempted to touch it. No, that'd be bizarre. It looks so textured." she rambles to herself, until she suddenly kneels down and brushes it with her long fingers. A stone catches her nail and creates such an unappetizing feeling that Azra recoils.

"That's what happens! It was worth it. No, it wasn't!"

A woman standing on some steps nearby glances worriedly at Azra. Azra smiles and waves.

"Thoughts appear to be flooding out; let's continue observing, shall we?" Azra nods to herself and joyfully begins to walk down the street.

"Thank you for the stones. Thank you for the smell of leaves. Thank you for my ability to feel nauseous when I see a couple holding hands. That police siren is loud. My ears allow me to hear it. That baby is crying because of the dog. He and I are feeling the same fear, Allah."

Azra switches to the other side of the sidewalk, as the large gray dog barks at a baby in a stroller. It is leashed, but the owner is on the phone, picking at her acrylics. Azra wishes to have long nails. Hers would be a maroon red.

The days Azra gets her period are her favorite. Not just a reminder that time has passed, but proof that her body, her lazy body, traveled through the variable as well. When she is not real, she remembers the blood stains and exclaims, "But I bled! Another month has passed. I am really here." And like that, she becomes real again. Her skin is soft, her eyelashes heavy, her fears heard. She is real. Rejoice!

NOTES: concept was that when she thinks, she cannot tell if it is in her mind or said out loud, thus she avoids it. Except when she speaks to her God, then it is entirely personal and caged in the subjective experience. Thus, any "personal" thoughts must either be observations of physical reality or be addressed to their God, otherwise they risk speaking them out loud. Could expand on the power struggle involving that- as her thoughts must acknowledge this abstract entity she may barely or not even believe in, yet relies on for a reflective structure of Self. Can only think privately to her "self" with the approval of this larger existential abstract. A feigned privacy. The impermanence of her experiences (appearing in places and not knowing how) is akin to being born and one day being conscious, not knowing how one got here.