

**Fairouz Bsharat**  
***The Hyphen between Palestinian-American***  
**Portfolio (Writing)**  
**Appomattox Reg Gov School**  
**Patricia Smith**  
**Grade 12**

*My name is*

I was born bare-necked. I took sharp breaths and cried. Too much light. Too much air. Too much everything and nothing all at once. I was born to be named by my father. He wasn't in the room but his shadow slept everywhere. His shadow clawed at sterile bedsheets and teary-eyes. It whispered pitch black stains to my mother. It whispered my name but it told me no meaning. It whispered my name. Fairouz.

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I am born Fairouz. I am born Fairouz with nothing to my name but lyrics. Nothing to my name but lullabies. Nothing to my name but the ghost of a woman still living. My subconscious calls out to her. Calls in untimed measures and beats. Before I speak I sing. I sing her songs and dance to her rhythm. Before I know metronome I know music. I know her music. I am born without shoes and my soft feet loved the calloused feeling of hard-wood floor.

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I am growing, still Fairouz. I am growing and so are my fingernails. I am growing and so is my hair. I am growing but still a child. I learn her soul. The shape of it in quarter notes and flutes. The shape of it in kitchen cleaning time. The shape of it in cheap blinds and plastic swing sets. I learn her soul in calligraphic song. I learn her soul in my mother's mother's mother tongue. I learn rolled R's and accented notes before I learn font.

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I am Fairouz. A formidable force in the kindergarten classroom. I am Fairouz and they are Hunter, James, and Emma. I am learning to count in two languages. One, two, three, four, five, sita, sabaa, thmenya, tisaa, aashra. Learning to connect blocks and being wary of the temptation to eat one. The temptation to eat one just like all the other kids even when I know it is wrong. The temptation to forget what I know.

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Fairouz. That's my name. My name with too many letters for my new school. My name with a rolled R and a secret hidden meaning. My name skipped on the roll and just called "First name starts with F, last name starts with B?". Born with a label. *Different*.

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Fay-rooz. That's how you pronounce my name. Fairouz like Fayruz, the famous Lebanese singer. Lebanese. Lebanese like Lebanon in the middle east. I brought lunch today. Lunch at my elementary school. Instead of Lunchable pizza I have rice. My mom made it. Her food is so good. No, the green stuff is *not* weed. It is called *imloqia*.

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I grow apart from Fairouz. Fairouz is war-torn by peaceful lands. She is war-torn apart from her home that she never knew. She is ripped apart by light. Light skin, light hair. Not her brow skin, her deep eyes, her dark *hair*. She has hair. Hair on her head. Hair on her arms and legs. Emma doesn't. Emma has beautiful blue. Emma has oceans and Fairouz has camels. Camel spit.

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Fairouz is tossed into a tombstone. She dies after the last bus ride in 5th grade. Fairouz died from difference. Fairouz is dead. Her namesake still breathing, but her soul gone. Her soul gone from her subconscious. Her soul gone and erased except for a hummed tune. Elevator background music in another part of the world.

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Fay is born. She smiles with her teeth. Fay is born to be different. She is Emma's shadow. She is empty lungs and happy. Surely, happy. She cuts off the substitutes during roll. She is Fay. She was born in America. She is American and nothing more. Fay brings sandwiches to school. Fay paints over flags in green, white, and black, to red, white, and blue. Fay is just like everyone else. No prayers in a mosque or God. Fay is the every-man.

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"Fay sounds like a stripper name." Fay was made to be someone else. Fay was made *for* someone else. Fay was built with bleeding wrists. Bleeding wrists with fifty stars. Surely one was hers. Fay was built as Emma's leftovers. Fay was never real. Fay died and was reborn.

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Reborn to be Fairouz. Rolled R's and accented words. Rice filled lunch boxes. Each grain a song. Each grain a memory. Each grain a lyric. Fairouz spelled Palestinian-American. Fairouz spelled with key signatures and out of tune vocal chords. Fairouz spelled I can be. And I am.

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## Grade 12

### ***Rifle Paper Co. + Venus Epilator with Shaver & Trimmer Attachments***

#### **About this item**

#### **Details:**

#### **Highlights**

- Braun Silk-epil epilator removes 4x shorter hair than wax
- Gently removes hair at the root, for long-lasting results
- There will only be a little blood the first time you use it
- Great for beginners, massage rollers minimize discomfort during epilation
- You'll only have two panic attacks before you learn that the sound isn't so scary
- Smartlight reveals the finest hairs for no-miss removal
- Your arms could be red after epilation is complete, regardless you'll still revel in the smoothness of your skin
- 3 extras; including shaver and trimmer for sensitive areas, + massage rollers
- Use every two weeks prevents of breakdowns due to arm hair
- You may gain a wish to remove your skin because you can't stand the sight of hair on it

#### **Description**

Braun Silk-epil 3 epilator gently removes hair at the root, for long-lasting results. With your genes, the results may vary. Being born with a healthy head of hair is a curse to you. When you're ten you may begin to notice your leg hair contrasting your pink shorts on the sticky summertime slide. You haven't seen it on the other girls. The boys may notice this. Braun Silk-epil 3 epilator removes the short hairs waxing cannot catch for smoothness that lasts up to 4 weeks. In your case, it may be great to try every two weeks. Great for beginners, massage rollers stimulate the skin for gentle epilation, but you'll still feel it until your use is excessive. Then, on your mother's bathroom floor, you'll ask yourself how young is too young to be a beginner. You are too old to be a novice. The epilator's Smartlight reveals the finest hairs for no miss hair removal. On picture day in fifth grade, you are wearing a short blue dress with a white lace collar. When they line up the whole grade against the wall to wait in line you may encounter or even stand next to a young boy. You are too young to notice he is sitting while you are standing in a short dress. Yet, you are too old to be walking around with your legs out and ugly. He'll tell you "You know razors are only, like, a dollar right? I could buy you one if you need it." and you won't know what to say. Suddenly your pair of pink shorts turns into pants and your dress gets hung up in your mom's closet. You won't be able to look at it for a while. Braun Silk-epil 3 epilator comes with 3 extras; including shaver and trimmer cap for sensitive areas like the bikini line. You are now sensitive to everyone's eyes when you wear short sleeves or when your maxi skirts barely graze your ankle. One day, you'll go into your moms closet and pull that dress off the rack. You'll hug it and envision your younger self playing tag in shorts with scraped knees. In that vision you won't

imagine the hair on your legs. Everytime you see the dress after that you'll smile sadly and rest it back with the other forgotten memories.

### **Specifications:**

**Number of Pieces:** 3 + chipped off pieces of childhood

**Power Source:** Your desperation to be beautiful in your own eyes

**Battery:** No Battery Used

**Care & Cleaning:** Clean With Brush + Carefully set in closet at eye-level so you are unable to forget

**Warranty:** 2 Year Limited Warranty. To obtain a copy of the manufacturer's or supplier's warranty for this item prior to purchasing the item, please call Target Guest Services, it isn't broken when you look in the mirror at your irritated skin and still feeling nothing grand

**TCIN:** 87252066

**UPC:** 069055137338

**Item Number (DPCI):** 049-10-0129

**Origin:** Made in the USA or Imported, you were born here too but they won't know that  
If the item details above aren't accurate or complete, we want to know about it. Tell us if we're wrong when you claw at your own skin, screaming at the sight of the hair. [Report incorrect product info here.](#)

### **Shipping & Returns:**

#### **Shipping details**

Estimated ship dimensions: 2.56 inches length x 7.09 inches width x 7.76 inches height

Estimated ship weight: 0.84 pounds

#### **Return details**

This item can be returned to any Target store or Target.com.

You cannot bring your problems back with it.

This item must be returned within 90 days of the date it was purchased in store, shipped, delivered by a Shipt shopper, or made ready for pickup.

When you first get it you are too scared to carry the box, Target is not responsible for any anxious feelings or terrible habits.

See the return policy for complete information.

### **Q&A (1):**

#### **Q: Will this heal me?**

submitted by

Anonymous - Now, and 6 years ago

- **A:** No, but with smooth skin you'll be able to forget for a while.
- submitted by
- Truth - today, tomorrow, and wistfully forgotten yesterday
- Helpful (10)Not helpful (16)Report
- Brand expert

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*Apologies in the essence of self*

**Apology to the short girl in first grade**

I'm sorry for making fun of you. All I could see was the top of your head and it was too tempting not to poke fun. I thought we were friends. I did that to everyone I cared about. The best way to show my affection was to insult you. Years later, I'll see you in the mosque and you'll give me a mean look. When I confront you you'll tell me I bullied you in elementary school. I'm sorry for any hurt I caused you.

**Apology to my bird for making fun of him**

You came to us in a time of need. Your eyes are empty and reflect only what we need to see back at us. I'm sorry that the circumstance of your arrival wasn't as a childhood pet or memory. I am sorry that I heard you flying in circles around the room and listened from the other side of the door as you crashed into it and slid down. I had to laugh. I couldn't help myself.

**Apology to my dad for never having a consistent feeling about him**

Before I even knew consciousness I knew you. When I was a baby I would wait for you to come home and fall asleep in your arms. The house was full of mice and I was afraid work would make you late. My only solace was your hearty laughs at your own jokes. You still do great impressions of people. Only now, I can't find it in myself to actually laugh. You are an immigrant caught in a cycle of belonging nowhere. Your abandoned house has only one inhabitant and the ghostly afterthought of your dad. Your house here has us, but to you we are hollowed beings. We are your downfall and you name all your troubles "America." I think you've long forgotten what home feels like. Ever since you deserted your homeland in favor of life, you could never find it again. Your family that you've created is the antagonist in every story. As your first child, I was the beginning of your limits. I am sorry for expecting you to always love me and I am sorry I could never make you feel at home.

**Apology to my great-grandfather for being too young**

I've never met you in flesh. You've only been memories tracing along words and a newspaper article that I couldn't read. Mama loves you. Not loved, because you live on with her even if she can't see you anymore. You are the logic by which she seeks faith. She once told me the only reason she married my dad was the hope of seeing you again. You died 3 months before she came back home to you.

I've begun to love you as my own grandfather. Ever since I was young you were with me in wild stories and solemn car rides home. I don't know where your grave is and I hope that you were real. You are real because Mama tells me about you too much for you to be really gone. I've seen your face only twice and knew it was you only once.

You were phantasmic and blue and everything but scary. You were the only thing illuminating that room. It was dark and I just needed to grab something from my Mama's closet. Instead, I was frozen in the doorway watching you. You were doing the same at the opposite doorway. I started to cry and I don't know why. I am sorry I didn't stay with you. I am sorry I've never allowed myself to know you. I am sorry for digging in my Mama's closet later, with the lights on, finding your obituary, recognizing your face, and holding you to cry.

I am sorry I never met you.

#### **Apology to my fifth-grade bully that rides my bus**

I didn't mean to stare at you as you got in your mom's car. I was just wondering what had changed with you. I know your hair is longer and you had to bend down to get into the car. I hope you remember me and didn't think I was some stranger watching you from the bus. I am sorry for making fun of you at my new school and never considering that we both grew, well only you in height, since then.

#### **Apology to my Mama for everything the future brings our way**

Crying on your floor is a healing experience. I am sorry that sometimes I can only tell you half-truths. Every time you hug me I feel the burden of a future I haven't seen. I am sorry for being the failure you always feared I'd become.

#### **Apology to my guitar teacher for taking his guitar picks**

It started off as a joke. One year, 14 guitar picks, all yours. I couldn't buy any of my own and I loved the clack they made against each other in groups. Maybe I thought the more I had the better I'd get. The closer the sound to your star students. The more music I surrounded myself with the less I heard the crack of my wrists and the buzzing of the strings. I am sorry for never giving them back and taking more.

#### **Apology to my youngest brother for being afraid of the man he will become**

You are still smaller than me. You don't have a beard growing in. You can barely do ten push-ups. I think you need to start taking better care of your curls and get off those video games. I feel like so many other people know you better than I do. I am sorry for snapping at you when you come to talk to me.

I consider myself your second mom and you consider me a nuisance. I can't help it, the mere thought of *my* brother running around in Axe deodorant disgusted me. Old Spice was the better option I assure you. You are growing and you need to put it on every day. I don't like that I'm not



looking down at you anymore. Go back to being a boy, wear neon green shorts, and jump on the trampoline.

I am sorry for being scared when you yell at me. You look just like him when you do and I just want you to be loved when you're older. I want you to have a big family and I want them all to adore you. I am sorry for being too scared to tell you that I love you, and that you're the best little brother any mean older sister could ask for.

### **Apology to my dead grandfather for not crying over him when it mattered**

I was ten when my aunt told me you had passed away. I remember the peeling leather from the couches sticking to my phone and the black flecks from it covering my YouTube videos. I think I was more worried about whether any of it was on my face when she told me your news. She watched me from the kitchen while I just stared at the couch. I felt nothing. All I could remember was you taking out your dentures and pinching my arms with them. She watched me from the kitchen and made a silent remark about how I hadn't cried. I am sorry for making her think I never loved you.

I saw your picture hanging in my grandmother's house in Palestine. You were smiling. I forgot what it was like to see you. I saw the blankets you folded and saved for me lining the stone shelves. I slept near those pink off-brand princesses. I am sorry it took me so long to realize you were really gone.

### **Apology to my now-dead uncle, who was too frail for me to see him as man and not ghost**

You were hooked up to a machine that dragged behind you. Your eyes were always looking, but never watching. I could feel your bones when I gave you a slight side hug. I was scared to knock them right out of you. I am sorry I never gave you a real hug while I could.

### **Apology to my cousin, who is a prisoner of war in Palestine**

You are currently in prison with no crimes to bear. One social media post and you were dragged across the sand, beaten by unmasked monsters, and put in some stone set of bars surrounded by innocent people. For three months no one knew where you were. Your mother would waver by the phone instead of cleaning her house. Maybe she hoped the desert dust would pile up and miraculously make your form. I tried not to think of you. It was likely that you were beaten in and dead in some mucked up cell corner to remind the other prisoners what an advocate looks like.

Three months after your arrest and we hear news from the village. A boy has been released and with him comes stories. You are there in the center of some jail cell teaching young boys some quran to recite. Memorization will stow away all of your worries I'm sure. I am told your news over terrible cell service and I couldn't tell if my aunt's voice was cracking or if it was static. I was reminded of you then, and the number you would've added to the death toll is taken away.

I am sorry I used you as a joke. When people asked me if it was truly mad, you were the only example close to me.

*My cousin is in jail and we don't know where he is.*

I am sorry that I tried to push you out of my mind. I was scared that your bloodied body would line my Instagram feed and that martyr would then mean family.

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*My American Dreamhouse*

My Barbie Dreamhouse collects dust as it pays the sun its dues. The vibrant pinks have begun to fade to peach. The stickers curl up at the ends. My Barbies sit far from their home in a box in my brother's closet next to his abandoned Nerf Guns.

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For a long time my parents and I had our own American dreams. They wanted monetary success from big companies and fancy titles. I was young and loved rich shades of pink. The Barbie Dreamhouse ads lulled me into hoping. I would be in a big pretty pink mansion eating French Toast with my family on a Saturday morning. There would be cartoons waiting on the giant flatscreen many rooms away. My dad would be with us at the table, no longer forced to work extremely early hours. Maybe I'd sit at the head of the table. I'd be homeowner and dreamcatcher that pulled my family from poverty into prosperity.

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So many of my birthdays were spent building up my Barbie Dreamhouse fund. I had even reluctantly allowed my sister to split the cost with me. The dream would have to be shared or it would've taken me double the time to get it. I'd been dreaming of it every time we went to Walmart. I'd beg my mom to walk with me down the toy aisle just so I could see the box, which was nearly my height. The girls playing pool party with their Barbies on the box began to morph into me and my sister.

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I'd outgrown my plastic preschool princess bed. My dad would lay out piles of various old blankets, smelling deeply of age, for my sister and I to sleep on. We called the empty room 'the playroom' like our cousins did. They had mountains of toy sets. Buckets reserved for Barbie cars and clothes. Ours was humble. The hospital stuffed animals from our births sat in the closet and kept each other warm. We kept the moving boxes for years after we had already settled into the tiny home. I would take them and make them into castles. My sister and I would use our hands as dolls before we had any. Stubby fingers sticking to the cheap carpet of the room. I imagined plush pink velvet ones lining a grand staircase instead. I fell asleep dreaming every night. Always outstretched hands and French Toast family breakfast.

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Eventually, my sister and I scraped together our Dreamhouse funds. I was bragging in class to a popular girl that I'd recently bought a Barbie Dreamhouse. It had a pool that could be filled with water! There was even a slide from the bedroom that every doll could go down. The elevator had a button that could take everyone to every floor. There were special utensils that could fit in Barbie's hands. That's when she stated the obvious. At eleven, new to the "big-girl life" of middle school, wasn't I too old for Barbies? Every other cool girl had crop tops from Justice and Snapchat on their fancy iPhones. I was wearing Children's Place clothes from the coupons my aunt lent us, still covered in unicorns instead of sophisticated neon logos.

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Years of waiting for money meant nothing. I played with my sister in secret until I couldn't bring myself to do it anymore. The Dreamhouse became desolate. I woke up to the reality that faced me. I'm sure it hurt for my mom to walk up and down the Walmart toy aisles with me, but I was angry. Circumstance had proven itself my greatest foe. While my friends got to visit their doting grandparents and get hoverboards for Christmas, I watched my Dreamhouse collect dust. The vivid mental image of a pink mansion with plush carpet and strawberry slathered on French Toast faded into monochrome.

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My parents gradually gave up on their personal dreams too. Focusing on our family and placing their hopes in their children. I began to rebuild the mental mansion as I grew up. There was less pink, but every room was home. I searched for something that could fulfill my desire to matter to me and my family. I started hoping again. My American Dreamhouse could still be mine. I'd just have to build it up myself.

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I threw myself further into my studies. Searching for a future that would provide me with enough money to spend. To finally make one hundred dollars feel only like one. Eventually we moved, and so did the Dreamhouse. My dad hates it.

However, I still see myself crouched in front of it, crying and begging my Barbies to tell me it's ok for a big girl to play. I'm saving it for my daughter, so she will never know circumstance. Or maybe so that my younger self can see her playing with it and finally join in.

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*The cosmic difference between our night skies*

The Virginia night sky is disappointing at best

The stars in my backyard are distant. Covered in smoky gray hazes from Marlboro cigarette companies and family fire pits. The moon sulks over the horizon. Then dashes at the opportunity to return to the opposite side of the world. The sun clammers its way through the day. It radiates joy. It brings warm tones to undrying paint. Golden hour glazes the lake in my front yard. I am lucky enough to watch it some days. Geese ducking under the murky green, a chorus of frogs chirping a tune, and the reflection of the sun glittering everywhere. It sprays crystals that hide on grass blades until the morning dew washes them away.

The stars in my village in Palestine from my uncle's backyard glow

He holds a barbecue for us in his backyard. We have one table, and some fold up chairs. A cliff cuts the yard short. Donkeys, goats, and sheep wander the area in search of food, or a good time. The desert sun licks the sand and sends heat to condense around us. Freer than Virginia humidity, but the *sahra* spares no one. It lingers on midday. Hanging by some universal thread until it plummets out of sight. The moon arrives perfectly centered. It brings a glimmering breeze with it. It kisses our cheeks with cool and sprinkles stardust across the rocks. At night our brown shines. We are no longer one shade against the sand. The desert welcomes us home and we cradle it. Hoping that each grain remembers the shape of our sandals.

The universe showed me supernovas at birth

The sun rose with my first breath and we both cried. Oxygen spiked its way down my throat and I mourned the comfort of motherly blood. Heavenly bodies had constantly watched the creation of life. They watched souls float down. I am sure that even then, my soul was sparked with the spirit of Palestine. Maybe I would ask Pluto what it thought of freedom and Saturn what it thought of imprisonment, trapped in rocks and dust. I look at them now and feel a distant connection with the red speckles. Spectacles to behold. I wonder if the cosmos ever had a favorite and how they picked one. I wonder if the same stars that occasionally dot my sky in Virginia ever cross paths with the galaxies of Palestine. Or maybe the Blue Ridge mountains encapsulate them before they get there.

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*Cultural Synonymity*

### **عودة - He hopes to return to something he's never known**

My maternal grandfather is still somehow young and fatherless. Orphan turned father to his younger siblings, then father again to his children. Only a child until thirteen. My mother is his first-born daughter. Generations will tell you: Arabic first-born daughter is full of burden. She is born to be servant and child all at once. She starts her Saturday mornings on the veranda, scrubbing it so she can see her own reflection in the pool of soap suds. Watching the fragments of her being in the bubbles. Years spent in pieces between home, ocean, and then home again.

Today, my mother's father is visiting from America. His usual paycheck is accompanied by his person. He brings the Israeli pudding from beyond the wall. A sign of goodwill to his kids who he has yet to know. The increment of time between each visit extends beyond the last. My mom loves the pudding. It is almost as if she has yet to know what the wall means, its vast poetry engraved in graffiti, the drawings of the lonesome Handala. Hands laced behind his back as he faces everything from the rivers to the sea. Patch on his clothes baring both poverty and Palestine. My mom waits for her dad behind the door in this same manner.

### **فاطمة Abstaining from feeling**

My maternal grandmother cried only twice in her lifetime. Both times, when her parents died. I was yet a concept among God. My mother was engaged. She's told over the phone by her dad that her grandfather is gone. My mother was choking on her own misery, her one shot of home as a person taken from her. On that phone call her dad tells her not to cry. Her job is to hold her mother and make sure she is alright. A mother's job is always that. Make sure everyone else is alright. But my mom was still first-born daughter; culture will tell you they are synonymous.

Her mother is out on that veranda. The desert sands are already collecting in corners from the lack of this morning's routine. She says nothing when my mom comes to her with comfort as a shield from her own tragedy. She shoos her off and maybe my mom spent the rest of the day trying to clean, only to find her heart trying to hop borders and swim seas to hold her grandfather one more time.

Decades later I am sitting at the kitchen table trying to write something meaningful, bouncing ideas of country and self as baseball against my brain. I forgot to turn on the light before sitting down, and the ideas beg me to sit still. My grandmother comes in and turns the lights on. I thank her, and she makes a comment about not working in the dark. The silence that falls afterward is comfortable. She's never really one to communicate. I am fine wearing her stoic demeanor as a shield from myself. So many daughters in that house, and each of us bears our burdens in silence the way she taught us to.

### **محمود Praise be to those who mean more after death**

My paternal grandfather came to America angry, but he was angry everywhere he went. The feeling of his dwindling farm animals, the audacity of the existence of makloubas, his horde of grandchildren that messed up his house every week that he wasn't there to supervise. In front of me, he was different. Taking out his dentures to chase me around and scare me. I think there was anger there too. Teeth misplaced beyond his skull and smooth tongue finding only gums.

I am ten years old when he dies. Barefoot in a coma. My dad rushing over the sea to see him one last time and choosing to forget the debt bought on by his plane ticket. He gets there in time to watch him flatline. Older sister by his bedside. Other siblings milling around the room and hospital hallways, phantasmic in their grief. Miles away, I am on a cheap peeling leather couch watching YouTube videos. Pretending to cry only after I am ridiculed for my indifference.

I wait for my dad to come home and he brings with him two pieces of his own father. His prayer beads and anger. Not that my dad was ever the calm type, but there was that reassurance of youth in him before then. The kind only an Arabic son can have. Orbited by his family and his only fight for success with himself. After his dad died, there was always something wrong with America. With his family. As his first-born daughter I was the first disappointment. Never caring enough or caring too much. I stood there waiting for him to become what he was when I was too little to be conscious. When I would only fall asleep in his arms. And maybe when I stood in his room he was reminded of his oldest sister by that bedside. Prayer beads shoved under pillows or strewn across bedposts collecting dust. A click of blue-green plastic beads against themselves for every moment since the flatline.

### **نزيهة Prosperous is she who overcomes**

My paternal grandmother welcomes me into our village for a second time, but now there are expectations. Before, I was too young to matter. I could go spend my uncle's shekels at the local convenience store and play with my cousins. Now, I am taller. All of my clothes hang loosely around me and I try to keep up an air of youth. I could be a prize plane ticket away from Palestine if only I was a little older. The blue passport brands me as something to want, but nothing else about me did.

My grandfather's final message to me comes through a wall of off-brand princess blankets in my grandmother's room. Nearly a decade after my first visit, they were still there. The same summer colors that helped me brave the cold desert night the first time. He never let anyone throw them away. His picture hung up in the hallway right beyond that bedroom door. I felt loved for the first time in a while then. In the same way I did when my grandma swatted away my sticky cousin's hands from our bottled water. A queen of the household she holds together.

I watch her entrust my mom with the wedding gold. Knowing that our hands will not linger over the shimmer longer than need be. She tells me she cannot wait for my wedding. That is what everyone says. It is always a wedding, never a graduation. I think of my cousin who graduated that same summer, and how she dreamed of a husband instead of a future. Relentless in her joyous pursuit of a household. She is an eldest daughter, mother to her younger siblings in spirit. A child always hanging in her arms and a broom by her side.

### **سهي Constellations as generations of daughters**

When I am born my mom tells the hospital staff it is impossible for me to be her daughter. I am too beautiful, she says. She whispered that with reverence and galaxies shed off her skin to stick to me in that moment. A thin veil of sparkling space and the stars that were embroidered within it. Every stitch an ancestor watching me wail with the freshness of breath. Nebulas poured into my ears as each relative came to visit, piling prayers in my favor. I am a first-born daughter. I tore through my mother in birth and came out with a crooked neck. But I was beautiful in the way every daughter is when they live, hungry for the future and tasting speckles of space on their tongues. Every shimmer around them are women of the past with gentle hands caressing them and holding them up to the world.

Behold first born daughter and weep, world. Watch as she perseveres.

Translations:

عودة (Odeh) to return, the name of my maternal grandfather

فاطمة (Fatima) to abstain, the name of my maternal grandmother

محمود (Mahmoud) praiseworthy, the name of my paternal grandfather

نزيهة (Nazeeha) prosperity/prosperous, the name of my paternal grandmother

سهي (Suha) A certain star that's invisible, or a star that came from heaven, the name of my mother