

THE OUTLIER

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I woke with blankets of cold air
And alarms in my ears
I tied my torn shoelaces
Let out a steamed breath outside
I walked slowly down an uninterrupted road When the street lights were
still on
And I avoided the potholes to my right My palm dug into my ironed jeans
It wasn't the cold that I minded
during the four years of walking down the unaltered road
I put up with the alphabetical rooms
and I made my way to a single desk in the back
I got to my seat to avoid everyone's glare
once I let go of the door handle
I tried not to be wrong
So I never spoke or raised my hand
When would they make me speak to a silent room?
Everyone spoke their mind
And few spoke to me
I didn't want them to hear I was wrong
I always thought the ones
with keys around their necks
Would mention my untuned voice
I don't think they could understand what I said I didn't know when they
would call
I didn't wait for anyone
Once the hours were done
I also didn't spend hours sending my name off To countries or states away
I didn't think I was qualified
Or joined everyone reaching for the envelope Accepted or Denied
I kept walking away
Finding my way back
Back to the towering palm trees
I wanted to be away from others' skin

Focused on my easy sleep
Hours to pass, then start my work
Sometimes my dad called me for translation help "I can't read these
Coupons
Or the rent bill."
Sometimes the words were too small for his sight He would wait in his
chair, with stained boots
He called from the black dinner table
Covered with broken peanut shells
"I want to know where you'll be in five years." Truth is: I don't know
"I asked you four years ago.
When it was clear you would have left like everyone. I wanted at least
three different responses."
I'll find something to do
"Do you think you'll last two years with that?" One day I'll figure it out. I
can.
When I walked away
I couldn't ignore his words
Maybe I should have listened
Sometimes I wouldn't leave a footprint in the dirt And I knew everyone I
saw
Walking down the same unchanged sidewalk Had a plan
Some people I knew got to leave
They went north and touched snow
For the first time
I still spent time unheard from my home And after four years had passed
I expected to leave miles away
Like everyone I met I used to sit at the red woven tables With friends
hearing me laugh everyday I knew some of them would leave
And I didn't mind too much
It seemed like I paid no attention
to anyone that wasn't at those tables They heard me in conversation
Said my name and remembered it
When I left the tables
I didn't hear my name outside of attendance I watched the clocks
Circling its three arms
in every room I entered
I thought too much
Of where I could place myself
But everyone else might be just as clueless They walk different ways
But I won't follow them around
No, I'll keep to my way