

Whoever Loves Me

My country of solitude has no capital.
Loneliness is a suspect, once present
requires interrogation. But no officers
in my country, only black whisky.
The land sways like a drunken zealot.
When I was fourteen, I moved to this country.
At school spent lunch hour sitting
outside the career center: dipped fries
in ketchup, whispered secrets into a paper bag.
Often I'd read a novel, laugh vicariously through.
I drank characters like shots of company.
They stamped the passport of my thoughts.
Every lunch I daydreamed the same borders. Groups
of students twittered by on islands of plot twists.
My exposition depended on courier font.
Moving left to right, my eyes invented seasons.
Whoever loves me would have to be a fugitive,
would think about the shelves in a library,
their uncharted symmetry, spend moons
breathing lines, drunk on the whisky of spines.

Born in Pakistan and raised in Southern California, **Mehnaz Turner** is a 2009 PEN USA Emerging Voices Fellow in poetry. She holds degrees from the University of Arizona, The University of Texas at Austin, and UC Santa Barbara. Her poems have appeared in *The Journal of Pakistan Studies*, *Cahoots Magazine*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *Desilit Magazine*, and *An Anthology of California Poets*.
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