

Collidescope

I want to spray-paint drones with a stenciled keffiyeh print
and henna-pattern handguns
and pixelate grenades
and calligraphy “Bismillah” onto bullets.

I want to tile rainbow Skittles onto black hoodies
and tattoo hijabi pin-up girls
and tie-dye a twisted turban
and sew old prayer rugs into superhero capes.

And when that shit explodes
it will be like glass bangles glitter-bombing the world—
life will whip through our mehndi-stained hair
as if we are ride-or-dying fast on skateboards spangled with desi truck art,
bull’s-eyes will be circled in the rings of light around the new moon,
pastel-colored chalk outlines on the ground will be abundant and in the shape
of faded shadows.

This world
so imploded
blood-stained chadors will be used as white flags
of surrender no more.

Holoud

It's when the sky is expansive
grandiose in that California desert way
and the setting sun reaches the flashpoint
staining the sky holoud
as if the jhool from her chicken thorkharee spilled
staining the sky a golden yellow —
with a little chili powder red,
streaked with eggplant violet,
a little watered.
“It's all gravy.”

These pre-Maghrib sunsets
are when I think I can feel her the most.
I think.
I think I can feel her tickling my bare ankles
or stroking my hair with the wind.
Was that her whispering?
I look over my shoulder and see nothing.

Or maybe those are the djinns,
swooping overhead,
snatching at my uncovered hair,
telling me that playtime is over,
that the streetlights just went on,
that it is almost Maghrib time — and time to go home and pray.

I pause when the sky is this golden
bewildered once again.
How does the wind know how to blow,
at this time, in that way?

The holoud stain is impossible to remove,
splatters having wrecked the white shirts of my childhood,
but this stain is only momentary,
and gone within a California second
shifting to the night darkness
and taking her with it.