

MYM LITERATURE

Six Hours Away

by Najma Arfa

Where Muslims come home to reflect

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Co-written by [Najma Arfa](#) and [Nusra Khanam](#)

—Ugh, I lost my glasses again.

—Again? That's the third time this week.

—Bet they're downstairs on your dining table.

—I'm too comfy to move right now. I'll find'em later.

—Have you stocked up on your sparkling water yet?

—Yeppp. Watermelon and strawberry

—Don't forget to save me some

—Always

We speak like this— easy, familiar,
like neighbors trading borrowed sugar.

But we're six hours away

Yet we've never felt closer.

*—You still laugh first when I fall off my chair,
—the wobbly one you've told me a hundred times to fix.*

*—I pause the movie, wait while you stand,
—then pause it longer while you refill your snacks.*

Then we'll yell, together of course,
so loud the walls will shake,
so loud our moms will peek in, worried.

We're yelling at the screen, the villain, the scene,
until laughter overtakes the air again.

In these fleeting moments, small but bright,
we script a bond that feels
like you're never far from my side.

We'll never need sidewalks between our houses,
Or need to walk each other home.

We're already there—

where our conversations flow at their own pace,
unhurried by time or place.

—*You doing suhoor tomorrow?*

—*Yeah inshaAllah.*

—*Bet I'll wake up first.*

—*Not a chance.*

And so, at 4 a.m., we race—

not through streets,

but through the quiet glow of screens

Our midnight study sessions?

More like midnight talks.

We'll laugh our way through it,

take a five-minute break that spirals

into games,

into movies,

—*until you fall asleep first.*

—*At least we got something done.*

We'll try again tomorrow—

same time, same place.

We grow in our own corners of the world,

but always meet each other

back in the same space.

Some say it's sad.

“You'll never know their personal life.”

“You can’t be close to their family.”
—But I know you and your mom’s favorite recipe—
—spicy siomai dumplings.
—Still waiting for you to send me some.
—Your older sister told me her favorite jerky flavor—
—spicy, salty biltong from South Africa.
—Still waiting for you to send me some.
—I know your younger sibling’s latest school dramas,
—their laughter spilling through the phone,
—sharp and vivid, as if I were there.
—And your nephew: his newest words string together like treasure:
—“mama,” then almost my name,
—just a syllable away from making it his daily blabber.
—I track the badminton scores in your family rounds,
—play-by-play, point-by-point.
—And I see the scrapbook stickers your brother picks for you:
—tiny bursts of color for your quiet pages,
 Through calls we’ve shared and texts we’ve kept,
 we’ve mapped each other’s lives,
 charting the small and big moments,
 as if we’ve sat at each other’s dining tables,
 as if our families have been friends for years.

 If I could choose how we’d met,
 I wouldn’t change a thing.
 Distance means little when our hearts are so close—
 your company alone is enough.
 Though miles may divide, there’s nothing we cannot overcome.
 It may not be like most, but I wouldn’t have it any other way.
 Every day, we understand why
 Allah brought us together like this—

we connected through character and soul,
before looks,
before status.

We made Allah the center of our bond,
a bond that thrives on trust, love,
and duas.

—*I found my glasses, by the way,*
—*You were right. They were downstairs,*
—*on the dining table.*
—*Told you.*
—*Oh, and I tried this new raspberry flavor.*
—*Of sparkling water?*
—*Yeah. Tastes terrible.*
—*Don't worry,*
—*I'll save you some.*
—*LOL. Always.*

We speak like this—easy, familiar,
like neighbors trading borrowed sugar.
But we're six hours away
Yet we've never felt closer.