

My language

My niece is crying

"I can't say that Amerah"

"It's easy - Anni Hulwa"

I am googling how the Arabic language breaks syllables

"It hurts my throat"

I laugh "slow it down Baba say anni"

"Anni"

"Hul"

Wa

"Wa"

"Now altogether Anni Hulwa"

"I don't want to do this anymore"

She picks up her IPAD and starts playing the Arabic alphabet song

I laugh - "OK, OK, how beautiful are you 1-10?"

"10" she doesn't sound convinced

I am convinced if she learns to say 'I am beautiful' in Arabic eventually she will believe it.

Atkalam arabi wa engleeri

Mazabazth wa munnafsa hum

They mix together, like 5 year olds making cookies for the first time.

sometimes I stumble, my thoughts in one

Words in another

But I stumble over, get to the sentence

And I sense a pride in me that is overwhelming

We talk to our parents in a language that is only ours
from birth we stutter to make sounds
We take our city, our culture, our made up terms
And put them in a bowl together
It creates a language of our own

My little brother is crying,
He is asking if he can use Arabic and English to
create his own language.
He is 13, learning how to speak Arabic through
exchanges between us as a family
He speaks to his friends on playstation in English
Born in Handsworth
Raised in Sparkhill
Family from Balsall Heath or Yemen...

"Hatha Hagee"
We stare,
Wondering if words are failing him because we did
"Hatha Haq'ee" We say, correcting him
He says whatever and puts his headphones back on.

My mom is smiling,
We are crossing between Arabic and English as
if we own both languages unconditionally
"lesh tiblasumi ma?" we ask
Mom says we learnt Arabic here, but she never
learnt English
That she is proud of our grasp
That even though some words we stumble on
it's ok, we are trying our best.

We smile,
Kulana maSabath.
A family of mixing languages.
Together, all of us.

My sister is crying
she is holding her 6th child whilst praying to God
that he lets her keep this one
"That's not how it works Nedal" I laugh
"Sakta bass, khaleeli hali"
She has started to pray more recently
Everytime a doctor sighs - I hear her say
"Ya rab khaleeli ibny."

And we pray in English,
Taught in Arabic
write in poetry
speak in sparkular
Because this is what made me,
The postcodes, the street language, my mom
Birmingham and Yemen
And maybe this isn't two languages,
maybe it's a new one
The Amerah language.
Mine