

2024

Blinds

Jafar Sunga Ali

Follow this and additional works at: https://touro scholar.touro.edu/quill_and_scope



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sunga Ali, J. (2024). Blinds. *Quill & Scope*, 16 (1). Retrieved from

This Poetry and Creative Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Students at Touro Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quill & Scope by an authorized editor of Touro Scholar. . For more information, please contact touro.scholar@touro.edu.

Jafar Sunga Ali
New York Medical College
School of Medicine
Class of 2027
Title: “Blinds”

Have you ever considered being afraid of blinds before? I didn't either—not before medical school, at least. It's funny. I've spent what already feels like most of my life obsessively cycling through Anki cards of as many phenomena—that can make the lives of both me and the people I love a living nightmare—as I can pound into my brain until my eyes combust from the inside. But one thing there isn't an Anki card for is the fear I'm supposed to feel regarding those phenomena. Not really something I can squeeze into the “Lecture Notes” section or get from that 89-slide behemoth of a PowerPoint lecture I went through not long before writing this.

I guess I can't help but think to myself, “You know, you beat an anomalous coronary artery before. So what if I reheat that second chicken-over rice I got from that two-for-one deal on UberEats? You got your chest cut open once, it can't be worse than that, right?” I feel like we're not really human unless we go through a bout of optimism bias at least once. Don't let the EBM lecturers know I said that, though. Yet, when I use some of my five-minute-long Pomodoro breaks to stare outside my Grasslands apartment window, through those blinds, somehow, some way, that fear sets in.

When I started this whole thing, looking out the window comforted me. In the daytime, this place feels a little bit more alive—I see students out there commiserating and laughing with their friends—even in the winter. I think I've seen more snowmen built here than I ever did living 25 years in Queens. I might even be treated to a short ditty by the birds flying around here—my dad would've loved this place. At night, it's arguably even better. I can't help but feel like the lights coming from the main school building look a little bit like stars. I have imagined them making a constellation, shaped like an endothermic free energy graph, no less. You don't get those in the city. I fancy the streetlights too; they almost feel like small suns illuminating what would otherwise be a pitch-black space. Younger me adored space stuff. That kid who wanted to be an astronaut was me. Until I found out you pretty much had to be a Navy Seal to even qualify. When I open the window, the nightly breeze I hear sounds a lot like the soft white noise I sometimes use to help me sleep. Some nights, I'd even see the rainbow lights coming from the common room of the building across from mine, and the students inside jamming out some karaoke.

But now, looking out there, and looking past the blinds, all I feel is the same haphazard gunk of feelings I've had about this whole medical school experience. Push and pull, push and pull. Wonder at the intricate mechanisms my body utilizes to force itself to work every day. Disappointment at all that wonder being sucked away while quarter-heartedly listening to someone drizzle on about physiology in a video recording for what feels like centuries. Pride that I am present among the best of the best. Anxiety that I made it to medical school to be among the best of the best. Eagerness that I have the privilege to be working towards the only career that combines both meaningfulness and security. Wistfulness at the life I need to largely give up to get there.

Those commiserating students? They're discussing a lecture I haven't even got to yet since I'm three days behind because I had a bout of crippling inattentiveness and decision paralysis. It took me all of yesterday to snap out of it.

Those birds? They remind me of those little green birds with yellow beaks that used to land on the small green metal strip my dad laid out to give them food back home. I used to only have to worry about doing two problem sheets for homework, or, after I graduated undergrad, showing up for work as a lecturer in chemistry. I still think about my students from that job sometimes. Being a medical student is like an office job—the very job I yearned to avoid most by coming here.

Those building lights that look like stars? The reason they're still on is because there are still students in that building working hard where I already conked out two hours earlier.

The streetlights? I can still see outside and walk around—shouldn't I do something productive? The laundry? The gym that's down the street? Instead, I'm just sitting here trying to muster up the energy to even leave my room.

The breeze that sounds like comforting white noise? That same white noise I needed to blast at 80% volume to blot out my wandering thoughts so I could slog through those 623 cards I had due?

The rainbow lights and the students doing karaoke? They're so much better than me. I was never the best student, even back in college. They likely studied just as hard, most likely even harder than me today, yet they still have the energy to have fun with others while I'm retracting back into my shell for what feels like the two hundredth time.

Push and pull, push and pull.

And those blinds? They are that shell. If I close them, they'll protect me. I don't have to see everyone else doing just fine while I feel like I'm three seconds away from going catatonic at all the things I'm not doing at any given moment. If I close them, I don't have to think about the outside world and the freedom I largely must give up just to even survive alongside my esteemed classmates. If I close them, I don't have to think about how fourth-year students are soon going to begin working while I spend those same years trying to get my work ethic and mental health halfway together. If I close them, I don't have to think about the future. My parents are getting older and I am an only child. At some point, I'll be alone. How will I even survive?

If I close those blinds, I don't have to think. I can just exist and feel like I'm pausing time for even a little bit. I don't have to fear. I don't have to feel.

And that's what makes me fear those blinds the most.