ANGBEEN SALEEM

the multiverse looks like the inside of a mouth of a shark

In every timeline, my nails chip
the day after my manicure and
I can finish my meal, my friend’s,
and their sister’s,
if needed. In every timeline,
I am kneeling to make
room for impossibilities
and looking across the space time continuum
to see if there is a me that doesn’t raw the skin
around her nails, a world where justice
means everyone gets loved and
no one gets killed
and being productive means
smiling at least 20 times a day.

The paths I don’t take
linger on my tongue a millennia later.
I remain in cahoots
with timelines that could never be,
have been, are.
I reach out to the Angbeens
of the multiverse with my toes
so we could stand in prayer rows
that would make the masjid aunties proud
—no gaps,
except the ones in our teeth.

In this timeline,
I only pray at namaz
next to my mother
twice a year
at an old banquet hall in New Jersey.
She used to weep when we
hugged our eid mubarak
and now only I do.
In other timelines, I kneel
before god five times a day, sometimes more,
and in some I have forgotten al Fatiha.
But still my lips keep quivering into prayer.