

# PW Review

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## Ali Khan

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### **I've never been to Alabama**

I've never been to Alabama  
but I imagine the night and the nightmare  
intertwined at the heart of darkness  
dreaming for the morning prayer and  
waiting for the winter sunlight that  
brightens the day after the snow  
has freshly fallen and covered the dirt below.

I've never been to the Battlefield,  
but I've seen the trembling crosshairs  
aiming at ammunition depots and the missiles  
departing from the wings of an aircraft  
landing at daisies, farmers, and family homes  
armed with a deadly stare  
betraying the accuracy of warfare.

I've never been to the Reservation,  
but I am busted every time on the table  
I had a Queen and a King--  
Once cherished in the open winds  
now caged in triangles, circles, and ellipses  
I've lost nickels and quarters of memories  
in slots filled with deceptions and strawberries.

I've never been to the Paradise,  
but I've seen the apples, grapes and pomegranates  
gently hanging by the trees and the breeze  
opening the eyes of the martyrs of Alabama  
seeing for the first time the splendor of their eyes  
lost in the Earth below  
fighting the laws of Ham and Birmingham.

### **Cotton Deserts**

On the first night  
when the desert moonlight  
smiles and chatters with  
the dunes of sand

On the first night  
when the barren heartbeat  
staggers and quivers in  
the conquered land  
when the brave runaway  
clamors and hollers at  
the stretched hand

On the first night  
when mothers and fathers  
and infants are left behind  
when captains and oceans  
are brutish, cruel and unkind

On the first night  
when the desert moonlight  
cries and says goodbyes  
to the dunes of sand  
come, come  
descend into my soul

For now you and I  
are inseparable  
like never before  
in the cotton fields.

For now you and I  
are one as one should be  
in the fleeing arithmetic  
of intimacy.

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