

**1999****Written and Performed by Subika Anwar-Khan (page one of two)**

I'm the only one in my year at college with a mobile phone. The brand new Nokia 3210. Just released! It gets passed around class, admired for its design and craft, only to go straight to Snake. Not only that - I've just passed my driving test! Now everyone will want a lift to college.

I drive alone for the first time,  
amongst the stars,  
sat on my throne,  
all hands, mirrors, signal.  
No scenic route or coastal view,  
just the familiar grind and a drive-thru!

Roads wind around rows of bays,  
free bays upon free bays,  
but I can't choose.  
I can't stop!

I find myself at the other end of the lot,  
where the sun shifts the darkened morning to day,  
and the furthest walk away,  
that I could possibly find. From work.

The car park at work's probably too busy.  
And everyone will be queuing for breakfast already.  
I swing into a bay.  
I halt a stop, jolt forward and inhale.

'I did it. I got here safe! (Pause) No, no scratches either.  
(Pause) I'm in the outside bit. (Pause) No, not inside.  
(Pause) I know but... I dunno it just feels better this side.  
And I get to walk through the centre. When no one's  
around. Like it's mine. (Pause) Yes Mum, I'm ok. (Pause)  
Just... loads to do at work. It's the 25th anniversary so...  
(Pause) Yeah. Love you too.'

Mum's the only one I can call, as no one else has a phone!

I walk through an empty hall,  
my footsteps following me.  
I turn around.  
No one there.

A moment of silence.  
Peace in these halls,  
on these floors,  
like an empty stage.

A palace that's mine,  
before the chaos of  
burger flipping and  
'is that a large?' to hurried queues.

Handing out Pokémon cards,  
with every happy meal,  
supposedly celebrates  
our 25th anniversary.

But snatching hands,  
and snotty noses,  
biting into childhood dreams,  
beg to differ.

Shifts of laughter spilling over food trays,  
and handing out fries through window bays.  
Becomes bearable because...  
we meet. Here. Across the road.

We walk under neon aisles,  
Pass by a hum of stories,  
each shop a bright tale.

He takes my hand.  
I turn away,  
facing fluorescent skies,  
a world coming alive,  
glowing brighter than I've ever noticed before.

Comprehending that there. Over there, across the road.  
I'm a part of this.

**PTO**

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The glistening floors,  
reflect shadows,  
of our synced steps,  
all the way to the underpass,  
where he steals a kiss,  
and we fall in love.

This ritual lasts,  
for as long as the token of moments,  
in shop windows,  
tempting those who pass.

A once loved laughter,  
and our affection,  
that filled this dauntless dome,  
is replaced with dread.

Because the linger of his shadow,  
might be cast somewhere in the crowd.  
An endless horde now,  
amongst a sea of promotions,  
an ocean of offers.

It drowns me.  
This was my sanctuary.  
But now I can't move.  
I barge past a barrage,  
to catch my breath.  
I get in my car,  
and inhale.

Look at all these stars  
Look at all these stars  
I'm back to where I was  
Before we met.

I'm no longer working across the road,  
I drive home, after a long shift,  
and the centre lights glow like a city,  
amongst the stars,  
beckoning me to showcase,  
a weekend catwalk,  
down hollow hallways.

'Clothes in the supermarket!'  
So shopping, has become my favourite pastime.  
'Can you believe it?' I shriek!  
And it's open till late!

I convince Mum to do the same but she warns me to be careful! 'Things are changing' I tell her. (pause) She has this saying: 'As I am, one day you'll be'. And although it's not meant to, it reassures me. Tells me that... I'll get over the heartbreak. That everything will be ok.

Our laughter echoing,  
under those same neon aisles.  
Where he took my hand,  
on those same glistening floors,  
that led to the underpass.

We take turns to spin on the trolley.  
No one's around.  
An empty stage.  
A palace to call my own.

And quickly,  
the heartbreak begins to flicker,  
like the broken tube light,  
near the stairs,  
towards the outside bit.

The ache softens, like a sigh.  
A sigh of relief,  
where 'what's-his-name' no longer refrains me,  
from finding solace amongst these familiar halls.