Culture Shock

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I felt stripped and naked. Sometimes, even unwanted, as I was interrogated.

“You don’t look from here. Hi! My name is Heather.”

No, ma’am. I’m not from America. I come from Eritrea.

“Ha! I never heard such a thing. Where is that?”

Perhaps, that is, because you are self-centered or indifferent.

“Sir, excuse my ignorance. My geography is off balance. How do you pronounce E...r...i. I’m sorry. I can’t say it right.”

E-R-I-T-R-E-A
Ma’am, Eritrea is in Africa.

“Great!”
(I roll my eyes
smiling and wondering,
what's
next.)

“Do you like it
here?”

I just got
here.
I can’t
give you the right
answer.
But everything feels funny so far.

“Will you stay
or go back?”

I may,
if I have some luck.

“Your English is great!
How come you don’t
have an accent?”

Thanks for the compliment,
but must I have an accent?

“You're also handsome
Could you come
to my home?”

Lady,
I think,
You’re crossing a
boundary.
What is to them
a way of making me feel at home
is an invasion of privacy
to me.

When I ask,
why do you want to know everything?

"Just curious."
They say, blushing.

And I say
quietly of course.
Lady,
you're not only curious,
but you're also nosy.

"But sir, that's the American
way.
For better or worse, you're stuck."

Yes ma'am. Perhaps you win,
but your American way
doesn't always work
with the Un-American.

I felt stripped and naked.
Sometimes, even unwanted,
When I was interrogated.

--Amanuel Malik Wolde