

FIRST DOWN

the first in the Muslim triptych

by
SEVAN

for Mo and Colin

Commissioned and produced by Noor Theatre.

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by SEVAN

CHARACTERS:

GEORGE BERRI - 25, Lebanese-American, Shia Muslim, born and raised in Butte, Montana. Graduate of Notre Dame. Family from Sidon. A CEO-type quarterback. An academic. An athletic phenom. White-passing. Speaks Arabic.

COACH BILL FITZGERALD - 40s-50s, American. White. Head Coach for this team for the last 4 years. The personality love-child of the holy Bill trinity: Walsh, Parcells, and Belichick.

MARINA KHAWLY - 25, Lebanese-American, Maronite Christian. Family from Beirut. White-passing. George's college best friend and agent. They are as different as they are similar. Speaks a little Arabic.

HANA BERRI - 44, Lebanese, naturalised American, Shia Muslim. Born and raised in Sidon. Moved to America at 19 with her husband. Has never fully enculturated. George's mother. White-passing. Speaks Arabic.

TIME: Around 7PM. The night before the Super Bowl.

PLACE: A stadium locker room.

'Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.'
-- Colin Kaepernick

'I'll never forget where I came from. It's always on my mind.'
-- Mohamed Salah

SCRIPT-URES

- 1) / follow traditional interjection rules.
- 2) Any other marks (and there are many) come in pairs and occur simultaneously.
- 3) Read to the ends of a line regardless of marks.
- 4) Ellipses: It may feel easy to gloss over these. Don't. They are moments when a thought is forming, something difficult is trying to be spoken, or an emotional bomb has been dropped and is being dealt with. They are not just pauses. They are dialogue.
- 5) Translations: Sometimes the Arabic is not a direct translation of the English and vice versa due to incomparable idiomatic and colloquial expressions. The Arabic is often written to capture the idea of what is in the bracketed English. This is on purpose. Please don't try to correct them as literal translations would create illogical Arabic phrasing but do feel free to ad-lib reactive phrases and words.
- 6) To that end, please don't use subtitles for the Hana and George scene. Arabic is a gestural language, and coupled with intention and intonation a non-Arabic speaking audience will understand what is happening in their exchange. However, do feel free to use sub- or surtitles during Hana's monologue. It is core the audience understand what she is saying then, in the moment, for the rest of the play to land. Why? It is my attempt at de-terrorising the language. Getting Western ears used to hearing it without fear and concern as an immediate reflex.
- 7) The races/genders of the characters are a set thing. Please don't change them.
- 8) Please embrace the nudity in the show. There is a moment when George gets undressed and dressed onstage. Don't hide it. Don't make a big deal of it. It is a part of the natural order of this world and is my attempt to de-terrorise the Arab body.

The "Star Spangled Banner" blares in the darkness, hopefully silencing the audience's pre-show chatter.

At the start of the second verse, lights flicker/pop on. We are in a section of a stadium locker room. An opening leads to showers offstage.

Kneeling centre is GEORGE, wearing an unassuming sleeveless athletic shirt and sweatpants. A wireless over-ear headset aurally blocks him from the rest of the world, but bleeding through - though muffled - we hear the anthem (which switched to his headphones at lights up).

GEORGE is going through modified prayer movements. Any passerby would think he was meditating or yoga stretching.

Halfway through the anthem's bridge, COACH BILL FITZGERALD enters with a folding chair dolly loaded with chairs. He clocks GEORGE in surprise. He checks his watch. He watches GEORGE for a bit - confused and intrigued.

The anthem ends. GEORGE pulls his phone from another pocket, unlocks it with his face ID, flicks - flicks - flicks - he plays Scorpion's 'Rock You Like a Hurricane' - also muffled, but audible, through his headset.

He opens his Notes app and takes notes on the set of movements he was performing.

BILL grabs a chair from the dolly and slowly walks to behind GEORGE and slams the chair down.

	BILL		GEORGE
You're here late.			Fuck!
	BILL		
Why are you still here?			
	GEORGE		
	(taking the headset off)		
What?			
	BILL		
Why are you here so late?			

GEORGE
(pulling out a change of
clothes from and then
packing his duffel)

Is it late?

BILL

Did you go to the team dinner?

GEORGE

Yup.

BILL

And now you're here.

GEORGE

Yup yup.

BILL

And not in your hotel room sleeping.

GEORGE

I will be.

BILL

Nervous?

GEORGE

No.

BILL

Anxious?

GEORGE

No.

BILL

Coz you should be.

GEORGE

I'm not.

BILL

It's healthy if you / are.

GEORGE

I'm not.

BILL

Even a little.

GEORGE packs.

A little? **BILL**

A slight pause. GEORGE packs.

BILL
(with a shit-eating grin)
Don't worry - I won't tell the others. Now - hotel.

When I'm done. **GEORGE**

Which is when? **BILL**

I was wondering where all the chairs were. **GEORGE**

Had them cleared out. **BILL**

Why? **GEORGE**

What were you doing when I walked in? **BILL**

Good to try new things - like you always say. **GEORGE**

Oh you were listening? **BILL**

I always listen. **GEORGE**

Not always. **BILL**

Most of the time. **GEORGE**

Some / of the time. **BILL**

MOST of the time. **GEORGE**

Right. **BILL**

Standoff.

So - the chairs?
GEORGE

I wanted to set them up.
BILL

Aren't there people who do that?
GEORGE
(knowingly)

I like doing it. I always do it.
BILL

Since when?
GEORGE

Since long before you joined the team.
BILL

Wow - full service coach. Don't worry - I won't tell the others.
GEORGE

Uh huh.
BILL

So - why do you set up our chairs?
GEORGE

You're not gonna let this go are you?
BILL

Oh hell no. I've been waiting for a moment like this.
GEORGE

Gets me in the mood. Been doing it for every game since my first year coaching.
BILL

That long?
GEORGE

Hey hey.
BILL

And no one's ever found out?
GEORGE

If they're worrying about how the locker room gets set up then they're focused on the wrong thing.
BILL

You're full of surprises, Bill.
GEORGE

BILL
(nodding)
Surprises. So -

GEORGE
Separate Matthews and Fernandez.

BILL
What's her name?

GEORGE
Krystal. With a K..

BILL
Christ. They need to get their shit together.

GEORGE
They always do.

BILL
We don't need this right now.

GEORGE
They know.

BILL
It's a big game tomorrow.

GEORGE
We know.

BILL
Huge.

GEORGE
We know.

BILL
It's not like this comes along / all the time.

GEORGE
Come on - we know! The entire country knows! Don't put them together and it'll be fine.

BILL
I'll move one of them to the other side.

GEORGE
They need to be close to one another otherwise they'll brood and obsess. Put Williams in between them. He'll eventually say something stupid and they'll gang up on him, make a joke that'll make the room laugh, and hug it out.

BILL

Anything else I need to know?

GEORGE

If you really want to know. . . Jones' kid has chicken pox. Perez is nursing a sore shoulder but he'll muscle through. Podorowoski has been nervous shitting for the last two days so he might have an accident on the field which would make for some fun news bytes.

BILL

Right.

As BILL changes the nameplates around, GEORGE heads off reappearing with sports tape and bags of ice. BILL finishes and clocks the items.

BILL

You're icing now?

GEORGE

Gonna shower first.

BILL

You've already done all that.

GEORGE

Muscle insurance.

BILL

You know you shouldn't be doing that twice / in a day.

GEORGE

It works better for me / this way.

BILL

Tell that to Larry in / your next PT session.

GEORGE

He doesn't know / everything.

BILL

Always gotta do it your own / way.

GEORGE

If it works better for me / then yeah.

BILL

Better doesn't / mean right.

GEORGE

Mean right - yeah yeah. Right isn't always better. / My body responds better this way. // It's the science of George Berri. ///

BILL

Hey - hey. // You don't know better than Larry. /// George Berri needs to be a team player.

*GEORGE gets undressed - it takes as long as it's gonna take with all the natural pauses needed.
(Feel it out actor - feel it out.)*

GEORGE

I'm QB.

BILL

So?

GEORGE

By definition I'm a team player. A damned good one.

BILL

Hey hey hey don't get cocky.

GEORGE

Also a required skill for a QB. I push - you push. I push harder - you push harder. I do the work - I deliver - everyone wins.

BILL

Good. So get your ass back to the hotel.

GEORGE

Why are you obsessing about this?

BILL

Because you start doing new things, tonight of all nights, and I'm gonna find out what's going through your head and put it back on right.

GEORGE

Stop talking to me about having my head in the game. My head is in the game. You asking me whether it is, is putting doubt in me. I know the game plan. I know what I need to do. So let me do the work and just let it go, Bill.

BILL

Is this something I need to let go of, George?

GEORGE

Unbelievable. Fine. I was trying out something for a celebration.

BILL

You're the QB - you don't celebrate.

Changing shit up. **GEORGE**

Ok Tebow. **BILL**

He brought in the wins. **GEORGE**

Until he didn't. **BILL**

This is a special game and I'm going to celebrate it. **GEORGE**

How? **BILL**

Still working it out. **GEORGE**

How? **BILL**

Look it's not / a big - **GEORGE**

Hey! How? **BILL**

A moment.

I'm gonna pray. **GEORGE**

And into the shower he disappears. The shower turns on.

The first signs of steam.

BILL
(stepping into the shower entry)

What do you mean you're gonna pray?

No response.

BILL

George! What do you mean you're gonna pray?

Steam forces BILL out. He stands there computing.

*He sits. He thinks. His knee starts to bounce.
He might start or continue setting up the
chairs..*

*The shower eventually turns off. The knee stops
bouncing. GEORGE reappears.*

*(Over the following he goes to his cubby, wraps
a towel around himself, and begins taping ice
bags to his legs, arms, and back. When he is
finished he sets a timer on his phone.)*

*A moment as BILL waits for GEORGE to speak.
Then:*

What are you telling me? **BILL**

You know what I'm telling you. **GEORGE**

Your name is George Berri. **BILL**

Actually it's George Berri. **GEORGE**
(pronouncing it correctly)

BILL looks at him archly.

You're the American-born son of an American war hero who fought in Iraq. **BILL**

A Muslim-Refugee-American soldier who died in it. My mother still has the
medal of honour on her bedside table. You've held it. **GEORGE**

...Why are you doing this? **BILL**

Because it's time people know who I am. **GEORGE**

And who is that, George? **BILL**

... **GEORGE**

Who, George? **BILL**

GEORGE

A Muslim Lebanese football player from Montana. Yeehaw!

GEORGE ices. BILL thinks.

BILL

I'm not dealing with this right now. / You're going to score your touchdowns, be a professional, // and focus on doing the things that's made the entire - the ENTIRE - country fall in love with you. ///

GEORGE

You don't have to. // You asked. /// I always do.

BILL

You're not going to pull some crazy stunt.

GEORGE

My way of life is not / a stunt.

BILL

I don't care where you come from / George.

GEORGE

Well / thanks for that.

BILL

Hey - I don't. It's never been a big deal. Not to me. / I've told you that. Explicitly. I don't care because it doesn't define who you are. You're a great player. A great person. // Period. And we agreed - we AGREED - that we wouldn't make your being Arab or Muslim /// a public thing to give you every chance to succeed without all the bullshit. And you said 'yes'. You said it didn't matter. The game is what mattered. /\ The game.

GEORGE

But it is to me. // Thank you. /// I'm both. /\ Things change.

BILL

You and me: Mutual respect. Everything out on the table always - for years.

GEORGE

It's all on the table now.

BILL

Why didn't you tell me sooner?

GEORGE

I wasn't sure how you'd react.

BILL

Cut the shit yes you do. Why?

GEORGE

Honestly? It's none of your business.

BILL

Say that again.

GEORGE

Your job is to coach. My job is to play the game and win. And I do both. / Damn well.

BILL

My job is to make sure you focus only on what you can control. Anything else is just noise. Distractions. And if I see you distracted, my job is to protect you from that.

GEORGE

I don't need protecting.

BILL

You will if you do this.

GEORGE

Come on come on - when we win the game it won't matter.

BILL

I don't understand - I don't - why NOW??

GEORGE

It feels like the right time.

BILL

It feels - ?

GEORGE

Like the right time.

BILL

Are you absolutely shitting me??

GEORGE

No.

BILL

You're gonna fuck up the game with this bullshit. / You can't pray after a touchdown. // You know that! You wanna get penalised? /// Fined? \You know the rules, George. You're gonna cost us the god damn Superbowl /\

GEORGE

Hey! This is my faith. // That's not when I'm - /// Bill - \ I won't be - /\ I never said it was for a touchdown!

What? **BILL**

I never said 'touchdown'. I know the rules. **GEORGE**

You said celebrate. **BILL**

Right. **GEORGE**

But not after a touchdown? **BILL**

No. **GEORGE**

Then what the hell are we arguing about? **BILL**

I'm doing it during the anthem. **GEORGE**

. . . During the anthem? **BILL**

I want the entire country to see it. **GEORGE**

. . . You've lost your mind. **BILL**

Look it's not even like I'm doing anything new. It's been done before. **GEORGE**

The hell it has. **BILL**

Google Husain Abdullah. **GEORGE**

Who? **BILL**

Just do it. You'll see what I mean. **GEORGE**

A quick moment. BILL takes out his phone.

What's his name? **BILL**

GEORGE

(says it over-
authentically)

Husain Abdullah.

*BILL types into his phone - not entirely sure
what he's typing. Deletes. Types. Deletes.
Types.*

BILL

One more / time.

GEORGE

Give it to me.

*BILL hands him the phone. GEORGE types it in
with no errors and hands the phone back. BILL
walks and reads. Then:*

BILL

This only proves my point. He scored a touchdown, knelt down to pray, and they penalised him.

GEORGE

Nope. The Kansas City Chiefs AND the NFL admitted they made a mistake and took it back.

BILL

For praying during a touchdown. Not the god damn national anthem!

GEORGE

It's just a prayer. Tim Tebowed himself to Jesus whenever he liked. If I decide to bow my head to the ground and do the same there is not one thing wrong with it.

A moment as BILL strategises.

BILL

Who else knows about this?

GEORGE

Marina.

BILL

Anyone else?

GEORGE

Nope.

BILL

Are you planning on telling the guys?

GEORGE

I wasn't planning on telling anyone.

BILL

...

GEORGE

...

BILL

You've got some fucking nerve.

GEORGE

My nerve won us the games that got us here. Nerves that YOU trained.

BILL

I didn't train you to be selfish. The team comes first. The game second. You third. That's what I trained. You haven't even stepped onto the field to start the game! You haven't won the kind of fame / that would -

GEORGE

The magazine covers / would beg to differ.

BILL

Yeah yeah so they put you in some fancy clothes and took your picture. I'm talking about here - this - now. You have an obligation to your teammates, / to me, to this sport, //

GEORGE

I know. // Yes, I know.

BILL

All the work that's gone into getting us here - all the work you've put into getting here. The time, the frustrations, the injuries. We've always talked about this. / We're here - we're finally here, George. Look around. You want to throw all that away? //

GEORGE

And nothing's changed. // We're going to win.

BILL

You're creating a distraction. / No one needs that.

GEORGE

It's one small moment in the span of the whole game.

BILL

That's what Kap thought, too.

GEORGE

And they won that game 31-21.

BILL

And where is he now?

GEORGE

Sponsorships, advertisements, his deal with Netflix. Respect. Admiration. And he's doing good by and for his people.

BILL

When's the last time he was on a field?

GEORGE

That's on the NFL / not on him.

BILL

They're protecting the game.

GEORGE

Oh come on come on you don't believe that I know you don't. The NFL forces us to keep 'difficult' / conversations behind closed doors. We're hired to run around, make tackles, score touchdowns, dance in the end zone, then shut up and go away. They want America to think we're just a bunch of dumb jocks with nothing to say. //

BILL

This is more than 'difficult'. // Politics don't belong in the game.

GEORGE

It's the god damn national religion! All those people watching - of course he was going to use the opportunity to make people see the truth.

BILL

And how many of those people do you think actually care about the truth?

GEORGE

And don't we have a responsibility to tell the truth? What's more important than / that?

BILL

Playing the game / is what is important. He should've used his popularity and dealt in politics outside of the field. //

GEORGE

The game isn't everything. // He had enough of watching his people suffer - watching his community get wiped out / and he couldn't - don't dismiss it - he couldn't stand and listen to the national anthem being sung when he knew how hypocritical it was. //

BILL

Don't exaggerate. // What's so hypocritical / about the god damned anthem?

GEORGE

The anthem - I'm trying to tell you - the anthem is a poem about war and destruction and a loss of faith and the prevailing, against all odds and an oppressor trying to take away freedoms. He's supposed to stand there, hand on his heart, when his country is murdering his people in cold blood?

BILL

The kneeling is disrespectful.

GEORGE

I guess if it's not kneeling on his neck it doesn't count.

BILL

...

GEORGE

The only reason you think kneeling is disrespectful is because it's been drilled into our heads that the flag means more than a human life. Correction: Than a human life that isn't White. Kap knew that - he saw what was coming - he had to do *something* before it was too late.

BILL

And the NFL did their part! Goodell gave everyone the permission to speak out and peacefully protest.

GEORGE

YEARS after the fact.

BILL

Well sorry the changes are not happening at the speed you like but these kinds of things take time.

GEORGE

Playing the Black National Anthem in Week 1 of the season and only week 1 is not change. It's lip service. The NFL is doing the least waiting for BLM to go away so they can be relieved of any obligation to choose a side. And in the meantime how many more black people have been murdered?

BILL

Ok - so - are you praying for Black America?

GEORGE

I understand where he was coming from. What he feared for his people, I now fear for mine.

BILL

You're an American. We're all Americans.

GEORGE

I'm an American who happens to be Arab AND Muslim. Hell of a combo wombo.

BILL

How do you not understand / - after all this time you don't get what we do // here - Hey let me finish! What we do here on the field - in every game - especially one this big - brings people together. No, it does, don't roll your fucking eyes. It's a great unifier. ///

GEORGE

/ Understand what? // But I do get it. /// As long as you believe Jesus was a white man with blue eyes and relaxed hair - from the Middle East.

BILL

It doesn't matter if you're black, brown, white, red, god damn purple - everyone comes together and sits out there in the stands - or in their backyards - or out in those lots - and they are together. As one. Rooting for their favourite team and having stupid arguments about favourite players and bonehead plays. But in that moment no one cares where you come from.

GEORGE

Thank you for proving my point! No one is going to care, so I'm good to pray. We done here?

BILL

You do this and you drive a wedge between everything. You and them. You and the team. You and me.

GEORGE

The truth is worth it. They'll face the fact that this great unifier is temporary.

BILL

You're trying to prove America is racist? NEWSFLASH! We already know that. We've known it for years .

GEORGE

I can feel it coming. / They hate my people. Fear them. And I have the responsibility and the opportunity to do // something about it.

BILL

What are you talking about? // You wanna wave a flag and get rah rah - fine - we can talk about it / but not here - and not today. HEY! It's the god damn Super Bowl! Our first Super Bowl - fuck it I'll be selfish - MINE. You're not doing this. Get that in your head right now. You are not going to screw this up are you listening to me you're going to get your ass on the field and do what we've trained and paid you - paid you VERY well to do or I * swear to god I will kick your -

GEORGE

Do NOT diminish this or me.

** The locker room door opens and MARINA strides in with purpose. The energy in the room screeches to an awkward and tense halt.*

Should I come back later? **MARINA**

Yes. **BILL** Nah we're done. **GEORGE**

We're good. Right, Bill? **GEORGE**

A stand off then BILL starts to exit.

MARINA
Coach, I just sent you an email but since you're here you might as well take a read now.

BILL
Not now Marina.

MARINA
Please? Need your expertise on this.
(putting the phone in his face)
Just a couple of seconds.

BILL grabs the phone and reads. GEORGE is relaxing, in his zen place. BILL looks up at MARINA - it's clear it wasn't what she announced.

MARINA
Is that alright?

BILL
Yeah.

MARINA
Not a problem is it?

BILL
I'll take care of it.

MARINA
Thanks, Coach. I really think it will help.

BILL walks outs. MARINA turns to GEORGE and waits for him to acknowledge her. Perhaps there is a long uncomfortable moment in this game of Chicken. But then:

MARINA
Ready?

GEORGE

Go for it.

MARINA

We got a call from the Tonight Show for an appearance. GQ wants to schedule another shoot with a feature article. SNL expressed interest in you hosting - depending on who wins, of course. And are you completely insane?

GEORGE

Is this about my email?

MARINA

What the fuck do you think? I had to get out of my comfy robe, wash my expensive Korean face mask off, and stop eating overpriced hotel food to come deal * with this horseshit.

** GEORGE's alarm goes off. He takes off the ice bags and gets dressed.*

GEORGE

What were you eating?

MARINA

What?

GEORGE

What did you order from room service?

MARINA

...

GEORGE

Just asking.

MARINA

You baited me and I'm here.

GEORGE

I wasn't baiting you - I was informing you.

MARINA

You 'inform' Bill, too? Considering what I think I interrupted I'm going to say 'yes'.

GEORGE

I had to tell him. He caught me.

MARINA

Caught you doing what?

GEORGE

Praying.

MARINA

(a deep sigh from the pits)

Explain.

GEORGE

We practiced. I went to dinner. I had an idea. Everyone went back to the hotel. I came here. How the hell was I supposed to know Bill would be here?

MARINA

You pray for the first time in a public space - in this locker room - and just hope no one is going to catch you?

GEORGE

I didn't think anyone was going to be in here.

MARINA

You are so not ready for this.

GEORGE

I work quickly. I'll be good.

MARINA

Please - PLEASE - talk me through this because I'm having a hard time understanding how you get to this neat little place of career suicide.

GEORGE

It's the Super Bowl - I wanted to do something big.

MARINA

Get a tattoo.

GEORGE

Something meaningful.

MARINA

A meaningful tattoo.

GEORGE

And I'm sitting at the team dinner and I thought about all the eyes that will be on me and it just clicked: I need to make a statement - an impact.

MARINA

So you're doing this for the headlines.

GEORGE

You know better than that.

MARINA

I thought I did.

GEORGE

This is the real thing. This is me being me.

Interesting . . . What did Bill say?
MARINA

It doesn't matter.
GEORGE

It does if I can better my odds. Is he going to let you do it?
MARINA

I don't need anyone's permission.
GEORGE

But you are looking for approval.
MARINA

Testing the waters.
GEORGE

Bullshit. And emailing me?
MARINA

Insurance.
GEORGE

Insurance?
MARINA

So you'd be prepared for the media coverage.
GEORGE

You mean in case the fans decide to jump the stands and lynch you?
MARINA

That's why I love keeping you around, Mar / flair for the dramatic.
GEORGE

Now is not the time for cute nicknames. And you know I fucking hate that one. You're going to destroy your career.
MARINA

A little prayer never hurt anyone.
GEORGE

This kind will.
MARINA

It's time.
GEORGE

Not now.
MARINA

GEORGE

I've already been through this / with Bill.

MARINA

The American public - the white people - love you.

GEORGE

That won't change because of this.

MARINA

Don't be an idiot. You know what this country is like.

GEORGE

It's good at handling change.

MARINA

(guffaws)

Where have you been the last few years? America almost broke its own back and still hasn't fully recovered.

GEORGE

I'm just praying.

MARINA

Like a Muslim.

GEORGE

Yes.

MARINA

To a crowd hyped on beer and corn dogs who are still pissed about stolen elections, vaccines, and gazpacho.

GEORGE

Bill didn't change my mind - neither will you.

MARINA

Well you let me know how it all works out when they pull their guns on you.

GEORGE

As long as I keep scoring touchdowns / they won't care what -

MARINA

You're going to shit all over their God with yours.

GEORGE

It's the same God, Marina. / You know that.

MARINA

Not to them.

GEORGE

Then they'll learn. And they'll understand. And maybe some of them will change and maybe some of them won't, but even if one person begins to understand then it will be worth it.

MARINA

You're a football player not mother shitting Ghandi.

GEORGE

I'm not going to be ashamed of who I am.

MARINA

You've always been ashamed of who you are.

GEORGE

You wanna explain that?

MARINA

You don't want me to do that.

GEORGE

Oh but I do.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

...

MARINA

Notre Dame - who knew you were Muslim?
(GEORGE starts to answer.)

None - besides me. Let's work backwards. You went to Notre Dame. Offers from Ohio. Michigan. Penn State. And you chose Notre Dame.

GEORGE

Great academics.

MARINA

Great place to hide. Among the fighting Irish Catholics. Who would ever suspect anything, right?

(GEORGE tries to reply.)

How many games did you invite your mother to? How many people knew all the secret places you found on campus to sneak off to and pray? How many people thought you were fitness fasting during Ramadan? What about in high school - hell middle school, too. How many, George? How many?

GEORGE

...

MARINA

Oh now you have nothing to say? I thought you work quickly.

GEORGE

...

MARINA

(pulling out her phone)

Let me help you out- and I quote: 'Empathy and Compassion. They're the cornerstones of Islam. It's what we need now. We all want it from others, and yet we are stingy in giving it. I want to give it. I want to show them how much a Muslim can give no matter what they do to us.'

That's beautiful shit by the way.

'We want others to understand us, relate to our opinions and feel our pain.'

And this is my favourite part:

'We want others to put themselves in our shoes and view the world from our perspective.'

And you go on and on for another two pages. Professor Olson would have failed this on grounds of length alone.

GEORGE

There's nothing wrong with what I want to do.

MARINA

Except for one problem: They have no interest in putting themselves in our shoes.

GEORGE

Not 'our' - Muslim.

MARINA

Especially those shoes.

GEORGE

Tiny nudge is all they need.

MARINA

They have spent decades hating Muslims - though let's be honest anyone who looks like us because what the fuck do they know about Muslims and what they do and don't look like. So when you say 'our shoes' - whether you mean it - or like it or not - it includes all of us - even myself.

GEORGE

Because they don't know any better and I can help.

MARINA

George look in a fucking mirror - you're white my dude. Your skin is white. Your mannerisms are white. Even with a beard you belong more in a hipster Brooklyn cafe than a Mosque.

GEORGE

That doesn't make me any less Arab or Muslim.

MARINA

You think you, one person, beloved national hero or not, can fight what the media has spent decades constructing? TV, film, news - all of it - has it hardwired into their brains that we're dangerous savages.

GEORGE

Right! But I want them to know that we are people just like them. They just need someone to help them wake up.

MARINA

And you're it?

GEORGE

I'm the best one we got right now. No one else has ever come close.

MARINA

They think you're some sports phenom from the Midwest. You really wanna test their xenophobic limit?

GEORGE

Mo Salah did fine.

MARINA

That's the UK!

GEORGE

Soccer is for them what Football is for us. And they worship him - a Muslim player - an immigrant Muslim player.

MARINA

This is not the same situation.

GEORGE

Have you seen him during a match?

MARINA

I don't think I have / to watch it to -

GEORGE

(grabbing his phone and
finding a clip of Salah
playing and scoring)

You should. Might help. Here.

MARINA

I don't need to / watch this right now.

GEORGE

Come on come on come on watch it. Look - look how everyone is going crazy for him. He scores a goal and the entire stadium erupts - look at all the smiles. And he does the same thing each time: He runs to the fans closest to him and holds out his arms. He stands rock still, soaks in the adoration, he walks slowly back to the centre circle, and everything just - pauses. Then - watch - look at him - he raises his hands to the sky and kneels on the field and bows down. The crowd actually goes quiet, Marina. They give him the silence and time he needs to pray. Then he stands up and everyone roars and they celebrate him. Listen to them - listen to what they're saying.

We hear the crowd chanting (GEORGE might very well join in for emphasis):

*Mo Salah, la, la, la, la, La, la, la, la, la, la,
If he's good enough for you,
He's good enough for me,
If he scores another few then I'll be Muslim too,
If he's good enough for you,
He's good enough for me,
Then sitting in a mosque is where I wanna be.*

GEORGE

And because of him Muslim hate crimes dropped. Those white people are saying that Islam is compatible with British values.

MARINA

But this is America and our white people are desperately clinging to their bigotry because it's the only thing that makes them feel alive - like they have any say in their life. And you're going to ruin it for them.

GEORGE

I know these people. I grew up around them. I know how they think and feel and operate.

MARINA

So do I!

GEORGE

You grew up in an Arab-American community surrounded by Arabs 24/7.

MARINA

That didn't make me immune to racism.

GEORGE

You know Racist America through the news. I was a first-hand witness.

MARINA

As someone who passes as white.

GEORGE

You're making my argument for me.

MARINA

It's the one thing that's allowed you to get as far as you have.

GEORGE

So fuck my skills and my athleticism?

MARINA

None of that would have mattered if your skin was a darker shade. You spent your entire life perfecting this all-star athlete from the wilds of Montana persona so you could get to this moment. I've worked my ass off making sure there were no trails - no matter how much it pissed me off / and you - it doesn't matter // and you just - I said it doesn't matter. /// And you just want to -

GEORGE

Since when? // Yes it does since when? /// The fuck it doesn't! Khalas Marina!

[Enough, Marina!]

MARINA

Careful - the white people might hear you.

GEORGE

What do you mean it pissed you off?

MARINA

This is not the time to rehash the past.

GEORGE

You wanna open all these cans, Marina, we're gonna deal with what's inside.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

Well?

MARINA

Why weren't we a thing in college, braniac?

GEORGE

You didn't want to shit where you eat.

MARINA

Sophomore year. Corndance restaurant. As we were leaving my father called me. I have the conversation in Arabic and you pull away from me. / Shut up you did. You know you did. And then some asshole overhears me and makes some stupid racist joke - and you said nothing. I know you heard him because I saw you look at him and then look away. // You looked away. ///

GEORGE

I didn't do - // I don't remember if - /// Is that why we broke up?

MARINA

It was only the third date there was nothing to break up. But if we had kept dating - then what? Do you meet my parents and make them sign an NDA? What do we tell our friends? Do we never speak Arabic to one another? Do I hide in the closet with your mother? It made my skin crawl - watching you deny the core parts of who you are. I became an accomplice to your lie.

GEORGE

Then why did you ever start working with me?

MARINA

Because you're still my people. Because I can do this job for you better than anyone else. And because I believe in you. But this - this is career suicide.

GEORGE

If it ends - it ends.

MARINA

This sport is everything to you.

GEORGE

I made it everything to me. But it's a job - like any other.

MARINA

No one works this hard just for a job.

GEORGE

Yes, I love the money and the opportunity and the freedom it allows me to give my mother. But I started to look at myself after every game and felt sick that my only worth was on the field. What good is all of this if I can't help any of the people in my community? My allegiance here - to this - them - is a means to an end.

MARINA

Ok yeah maybe but no. I see how you are with the guys - with Bill - with the fans. How you shout like a caveman when you score a touchdown. You love it.

GEORGE

I drank the Kool-Aid, ok? And it felt good and it gave me what I needed. But it started not being enough. And then I saw what Kap did and I realised what I had done and what I should do.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

Please trust me. I know what I'm risking - what might happen to me. I know what I stand to lose. But it will be worth it.

MARINA

Please. Don't do this. Think of your mother.

GEORGE

I know you're only trying to protect me but don't bring her into this.

MARINA

I'm trying to save you.

GEORGE

I don't expect you to fully understand why I'm / doing this.

MARINA

I get it, believe me.

GEORGE

You can't get it. You won't ever / get it but that doesn't really -

MARINA

Time time time. Why? Why do you think that?

GEORGE

... You're Christian.

MARINA

Oh fuck you. I'm sick of you always dismissing my Arab-ness as being less than yours just because your religion is unpopular. Let's get one thing clear: My being Christian doesn't protect me. It never has. We all get lumped in together. You'll never understand the fear of telling someone your full name and wondering what they're thinking right after. YOU were blessed with a Western-sounding name. Not everyone can bypass being racially profiled or abused. You have NEVER in your life been stopped at an airport and questioned. No one - NO ONE - has ever known that you are Arab and Muslim. So what would you know about what I do or don't get - what I've been through.

GEORGE

Where you grew up you never had to hide.

MARINA

No one asked you to hide.

GEORGE

Dearborn is a far cry from Butte.

MARINA

There were plenty of our people in Butte when you were growing up don't give me that shit.

GEORGE

Nothing like the community you were raised in. You were protected by sheer numbers alone.

MARINA

Man you so have the wrong end of all the sticks. Let me give you a little enlightenment on what it means to be a Christian Arab living in a Muslim Arab city: It sucks. You are so close to your cultural brothers and sisters, but separated from them. We lived on the outskirts of Dearborn because Christians weren't completely welcome in the city. We're a minority within a minority. So not only am I getting shit from the White Folks, but also from my people on both sides. I'm growing up in a house with a family who want me to steer clear of 'those people' so that I don't get caught up in all the Muslim Maskhara. At the same time my Muslim friends keep reminding me that I could never truly understand them while my Christian friends are worrying I'll become a scapegoat for some Michigan Jihadist. And you had what? What did you experience, George?

GEORGE

...

MARINA

What George?

GEORGE

My parents refused to teach me Arabic. I did it all myself. I wanted to feel a deeper connection to them, but when they found out all my father said was: 'Don't make yourself unlucky. Be American.' After everything they went through in Lebanon they wanted to avoid any potential hate or prejudice or violence. And once the Iraqi refugees started pouring in they doubled down. My mother stopped wearing her hijab. I know you won't understand what that means for a Muslim woman / but she - fine - They wanted - they wanted people to see me as any other average American. My father joined the military so that our family would be seen as 'real patriots'. Then he gets killed in 'friendly fire' and my mother has to live off his death benefits while I'm in high school running around a football field avoiding an "unlucky" life. None of our people should have to live like my parents did - like you did - like I do. If this country can love even one of us and accept us - ME - then maybe - just MAYBE - they'll be * able to love all of us.

MARINA

I do! Don't treat me like a white person.

**Knocks at the door. Neither moves. Then:*

GEORGE

We're done, Bill. You can come in.

A moment. More knocking.

GEORGE

(going to door)

Yeah it's fine!

GEORGE opens the door and finds his mother, HANA, standing there.

Mama? **GEORGE** [Mom?]

Hi habibi. **HANA** [Hi sweetheart.]

Hi tante. **MARINA** [Hi Miss]

They hug. They Lebanese 3-kiss one another.

HANA
What tante? I tell you call me Hana.

MARINA
Sorry sorry bazraf [*I know*]. I say 'Hana' and I feel my mother's eyes on me.

HANA
Your mother here?

MARINA
No.

HANA
Then call me Hana.

MARINA
(laughing)
Tayyeb - ok. Hana. [*Ok.*]

HANA
See? Easy.

They share a laugh. MARINA catches GEORGE's eyes.

MARINA
I'll leave you two alone.

HANA
Stay. Talk.

MARINA
I have to do some work anyway.

HANA
It late.

The work never stops. **MARINA**

You spend all life work you miss life. **HANA**

My work is my life. **MARINA**

Life not work, habibté. **HANA**

7ader seedna. **MARINA**
(saluting her)

حاضر سيدنا.
[Yes, sir.]

I'll be outside if you need anything. **MARINA**

*MARINA exits. Mother and Son are left alone.
It's uncomfortable. HANA wanders around the
locker room examining it.*

Keefik, mama? **GEORGE**

كيفك ماما؟
[How are you, mom?]

Good, habibi. Good. You? **HANA**

Mneeh. **GEORGE**

منيح.
[Good.]

Speak English. **HANA**

Lesh? Shoo beh elzarabé. **GEORGE**

ليش؟ شو بي العَرَبِي؟
[Why? Arabic is fine.]

Don't argue. **HANA**

Okay - Mother. **GEORGE**

Thank you - Son

HANA

GEORGE busies himself with his cubby. HANA wanders. A moment.

Very clean here.

HANA

Eh.

GEORGE

[Yes.]

What here?

HANA
(looking through the
entrance to the showers)

Showers.

GEORGE

All open?

HANA

Yes.

GEORGE

Everyone together?

HANA

Yes.

GEORGE
(chuckles)

*This intrigues, amuses, maybe confuses,
HANA.*

*Wandering. Organising. Silence. HANA
approaches her son. Pokes him - eliciting a yelp.*

Ma!

GEORGE

Too thin.

HANA

La2.

GEORGE

[I'm not.]

English. You need food. **HANA**

I need to be this way for the game. **GEORGE**

You don't need - eh - (reaching for the word) **HANA**

Ouliya bil zarabé. **GEORGE**

قوليا بالعربي.
[Say it in Arabic.]

No. I can say. You don't need - eh - yel3an - **HANA**

يلعن -
[dammit]

Ma3lé Mama. Ouliya bil zarabé. **GEORGE**

مغليه ماما. قوليا بالعربي.
[Mom. It's fine. Say it in Arabic.]

HANA looks around the room unsure. Looks at her son for a moment.

Ma badda 3adalat yammé el le3bé? **HANA**

ما بدّا عَضَلات يَمِّي اللُّعْبَةِ؟
[Don't you need muscles to play this game?]

Mish deyman. **GEORGE**

مِشْ دَائِمًا.
[Not always.]

Wa law. Ba3dak d3eef. Miskeen. **HANA**

وَلَوْ. بَعْدَكَ ضَعِيف. مِسْكِين.
[You're still too skinny.]

Wallah 3am bekol mnee7. **GEORGE**

والله عَمَّ بَاكُلْ مَنِحْ.
[I promise I'm eating and I'm healthy.]

HANA
(grabbing his face)

Ta3a lahon.

تَعْ لَهون.
[Come here.]

GEORGE

Mama khalas.

ماما خَلَص.
[Mom stop.]

HANA

Ta3a lahon ana emmak. A3adet bi batne / tese3 tesh-hor. Toul ma ana 3ayshé ana emmak w zele 7a2 ellak // eza sheftak kteer d3eef /// w 3am zellak kteer d3eef – skot wlé 3akrout.

تَعَا لَهون أنا إِمَّك. قَعِدْت ب بَطْنِي تِسْع / تِسْهَر. طول ما أنا عَائِشَة أنا إِمَّك وإِلي حَ قَلَّك // إِذَا شِفْتَك كَتِير
ضَعِيف /// و عَمَّ قَلَّك كَتِير ضَعِيف – سَكوت ولي عَكْرُوت
[Shush you. I'm your mother. I carried you in my stomach for nine months. / As long as I'm alive I'm your mother which means I have the right to tell you // if I think you're too skinny /// and I'm telling you you're too skinny - shush little brat.]

GEORGE

Ba3ref.// Eh, ba3ref. /// Tayyib, mama, Tayyib. Tayyib Méshe!

بَعْرِف. // إِي بَعْرِف. /// طَيِّب، ماما، طَيِّب. طَيِّب ماشي!
[I know. // Yes, I know. /// Ok mama ok. Ok!]

HANA

W wen 3abetté??

ووين عِبْطِي؟؟
[And where is my hug??]

GEORGE rolls his eyes and sighs.

HANA

Yi! Wallek, hek btazmil ma3 immak?

يه! ولك هيك بتعمل مع إِمَّك؟
[What? You do that to your mother?]

*GEORGE puts on a big smile and hugs her.
Then pulls away. HANA coughs with purpose
and he turns. She presents her cheek and taps
it. He kisses it and pulls away.*

*She clears her throat and looks at him sternly
then turns her other cheek to him*

*He rolls his eyes out of sight and kisses the
other cheek. He starts to pull away and she
yanks him back.*

HANA

Marina lateefé w 7ilwé. Leh ma btitjawaza.

مارينا لطيفة وجلوة. ليه ما يتتجوزا؟

[She's a nice girl. Beautiful. You should marry her.]

GEORGE

Mama!

ماما!

[Mom!]

HANA

Hayda illa eza kenet...(she performs the Arab this way-that way gesture)

هيدا إلا إزا كينت...

[Unless you're. . .]

GEORGE

Shoo?

شو؟

[What?]

HANA

Bet7eb el rjel?

بتحب الرجال؟

[You like the men?]

GEORGE

Mom I'm not gay!

HANA

Who care gay shmay! Sleep with whatever want. Sleep with women - men - ya 3amee sleep with chickens. But alone no good. La.

GEORGE

You're alone.

HANA

Not always. I had Baba. Who you have?

GEORGE

No one.

HANA

Eh ok. Eza 7a tdal nater 7a tmout la7alak. W ana 3ajbetné. Marina nice. She good. She have fire. Yallah roo7 marry!

إزا ح نضل ناظر ح نموت لحالك. وأنا عجبيني.

[You wait too long you'll die alone. I like her..... Come on go!]

GEORGE

Can we talk about something else?

HANA

Baddak te7ké zan shi tene? / tayyib mne7ke zan shi tene // yalla het la ne7ke ///
zan shi tene!!! \ Meshe.

بَدِّكْ تَحْكِي عَنْ شِي تَانِي؟ / طَيِّبْ مُنْحَكِي عَنْ شِي تَانِي. // يَلَا هَات لِنَحْكِي /// عَنْ شِي تَانِي!!! \ ماشي.
[You want to talk about something else / ok we'll talk about something else // let's
talk about /// something else. \ Ok.]

GEORGE

Eh please. // Good./// Meshé. //// Eh. \ Tayyib.

ايه بليز. // . ماشي. //// ايه. \ طَيِّبْ.
[Yes, please. //Good. /// Yes. \ Ok.]

HANA

zalitle Marina enno jeyeek nhar kteer mhem bi sheghlak.

قَالْتَلِي مارينا اِنُو جاييك نهاز كتير مهمم ب شِعْلَكْ.
[Marina says this is a very big day for you. The biggest in your career.]

GEORGE

Eh. [Yes.] It's a big game.

HANA

(giving him the all-
knowing don't-bullshit-
me mother look)

George.

GEORGE

Marina lezem tikhras.

مارينا لازيم تَحْرَسْ.
[Marina should keep her mouth shut.]

HANA

7terem 7alak

اِحْتِرْمْ حَالَكْ.
[Be respectful.]

GEORGE

Ma bade e7ke bel mawdoos.

ما بَدِّي اِحْكِي بِلْ مَوْضُوعْ.
[I don't want to talk about this.]

HANA

Abadan? Aw bas mazé?

أَبْدَا؟ أَوْ بَسْ مَعِي؟
[At all or with me?]

GEORGE

Litné.

الثنين.

[Both.]

HANA

Shoo baddak trabbé li7ié w tefta7 madersé w t3allim deen?

شو بَدَّكْ تُرِّي لِحِيَة و تَفْتَح مَدْرَسَة و تَعْلَم دِين؟
[What - are you going to grow a beard and open a religious school?]

GEORGE

La.

لَا.
[No.]

HANA

Halaz I call you Imam Berri?

هَلَّا...
[Should I now call you Imam Berri?]

GEORGE

Mama mish hek.

مَامَا مِشْن هِيَك.
[It's not that, mom.]

HANA

Tayyib lakan shoo zam ta3mel? Min wen jeyiblé hal khabriyé?

طَيِّب لَكْنُ شُو عَم تَعْمَل؟ مِّن وِين جَائِيْلِي هَلْ خَبْرِيَة؟
[Then what are you doing this for? Where did this come from?]

GEORGE

Our family is Muslim.

HANA

Mish hek. Mish metlak. Shoo baddak tseer maz ISIS hallaz?

مِشْن هِيَك. مِشْن مِثْلَك. شُو بَدَّكْ تَصِيْر مَع آيْسِيْس هَلَّا؟
[We weren't a radical like you. What you want to join ISIS now?]

GEORGE

ISIS? Seriously?

HANA

Baddak tkoun meslem, awwal shi t3allam keef tkoun rejjel Arabi mo7taram.

بَدَّكْ تُكُون مِسْلِم، أَوَّل شِي تَعْلَم كَيْف تُكُون رِجَال عَرَبِي مُخْتَارَم.
[You want to be a devout Muslim why don't you learn how to be a proper Arab man,
first?]

GEORGE

What do you mean proper?

Khalas. Leave it. HANA

خَلَّصْ.
[Never mind.]

La2, mama. Lesh hek 3am te7ké? GEORGE

لأَ ماما. ليش هيكَ عَمَ تَحكي؟
[No, mom. Why would you say that?]

HANA
'Lesh hek 3am be7ké?' Nhar halzad mhem elak. 'Big Game'. Ma bisma3 mennak.//
Ma bettalfin /// Ma betzoul shi./\

ليش هيكَ عَمَ بِحكي؟ نَهَارَ هَلَقَدَّ مَهَمَّ إِلِكْ. - ما بِسَمْعَ مَنِّكْ. // ما بِتَلْفِنُ /// ما بِتَقولُ شي. /\
[Why would I say that? This is a big day for you. 'Big Game'. I don't hear from you.
// You don't call. /// You say nothing. /\]

GEORGE
// Bazref mama. /// Sorry. /\ Kint Mashghoul.

بَعْرِفْ ماما. /// سوري. /\ كِنْتُ مَشْغولُ //
[// I know mom. /// I'm sorry. /\I've been busy.]

HANA
Ouff mashghoul mashghoul. Bishu mashghoul?
Bel super bowl muper bowl shoo bi zarrefne shoo ooper bowl?

اوووف مَشْغولُ مَشْغولُ. بِشُو مَشْغولُ؟
بِلْ سوبِرْ بول موبِرْ بول شو بَ عَرَفِي شو أوبِرْ بول؟
[Ooff busy busy busy. Busy with this Super Bowl Mooper Bowl who knows what
Ooper Bowl?]

GEORGE
I didn't think you'd care.

HANA
Shoo care? Ana emmak wlé 7mar. I proud of you.

أنا إِمَّكْ ولي خُماز.
[I'm your mother you idiot.]

GEORGE
Bazrif Mama. [I know, Mom.] But you didn't have to come all the way here.

بَعْرِفْ ماما.
[I know, Mom.]

HANA
Lesh? You ashame from me?

ليش؟
[Why?]

No, Mom, laz bass –

لَأَبَسَّ.
[no but -]

Ma teztal hamm ya albe.

HANA

I be quiet. Don't speak. Shh khalas.

ما تَعْتَالْ هَمَّ يَا قَلْبِي.
[Don't worry, son.]

خَالَصْ.
[Enough.]

Don't make me feel guilty.

GEORGE

Lesh guilty? I choose. Not you. Your baba and I want you be American.

HANA

ليش؟
[Why guilty?]

W shouf – Hayyek neji7. Ma3ak masaré. Kel hal amirken bi7ebbouk.

وشوف- هَيْك ناجح. معك مصاري. كل هالاميركان بيحبوك.
[Why guilty?.....And look - now you're successful. You have money. All these
Americans love you.]

Bess, you don't want me here I go. No problem.

She starts to go and he intercepts.

La' Mama. Khaleeké.

GEORGE

لَأُ ماما. خَلَيْي.
[No. It's fine. You can stay.]

Akeed?

HANA

أَكِيدُ؟
[Are you sure?]

Eh.

GEORGE

إِيه.
[Yes.]

Ma tkhaf. Bazrif kif ma bayyin ben hol el nes.

HANA

ما تُخَاف. بَعْرِفْ كَيْفَ مَا بَيِّنْ بَيْنَ هَوْلِ النَّاسِ.
[Don't worry. I know how to be invisible around these people.]

Mish daroore tazemle hek. **GEORGE**
 Mishn ṣarūri tēmlī hīk.
[You don't have to do that.]

Ma zande meshkle. Kermelak. **HANA**
 Ma ʿndī mīshkle. kīzmalak.
[I'm happy to do it. For you.]

Ana ma bade yeke tazemle hek. **GEORGE**
 Ana ma bādī yākī tēmlī hīk.
[I don't want you to do that.]

Ana el em w enta ebne. Ana li bazrif masle7tak. **HANA**
 Ana ilim w int ibni. Ana lli bērf mṣliḥtak.
[I'm the parent. You're the child. I still know what's good for you.]

Silencing yourself is not good for any of us. **GEORGE**

I do for long time, habibi. **HANA**

W min bazid bukra mish matloob minik baza hal shi. Tomorrow will change everything. **GEORGE**
 W min bēd bukra mish mṣlob minak baqī hā shi.
[And after tomorrow you won't have to anymore.]

Ah? Lesh? Fikrak ilzalam ra7 yitghaiyar bukra? **HANA**
 Līsh? fīkrik alʿalm rā yitghayr bukra?
[Why? You think the world will change tomorrow?]

Not immediately - but eventually - yeah. **GEORGE**

Sorry, habibi. But it no matter what you do. Nothing change. **HANA**

We'll see. Bukra. Inshallah. **GEORGE**
 bukra. inshallah.
[Tomorrow. God willing.]

HANA

(chuckles)

Metel bayyak abadan.

مِثْلُ بَيْتِكَ أَبَدًا.

[Just like your father.]

GEORGE

Well if there's anything I got from him, I'm glad it was his stubbornness.

HANA

La2 - hayda minné. Bess you and Baba - blind.

لَا - هَيْدَا مِثِّي.

[No - you get that from me.]

GEORGE

Blind about what?

HANA

3an hal balad w el ness lli hon. 3an el Amirken. Ken mfakkaron kellon mne7.

عَنْ هَلْ بَلَدُ وَالنَّاسِ الَّتِي هُونَ. عَنِ الْأَمْرِكَانِ. كَانَ مُفَكِّرًا كُلُّ مَنْحٍ.

[About this country. About the people here. About Americans. He believed so much they were good people.]

GEORGE

Fi kteer mennon mné7!

فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنْ مَنْحٍ!

[Many of them are!]

HANA

Yimkin.

يُمْكِنُ.

[Maybe.]

GEORGE

Mama, el Islem bizool -

ماما، الإسلام يقول -

[Come on, mom. Islam tells us that -]

HANA

La la la no preaching. Sarle kel 7ayete besma3 hal 7ake. Ma jeet la hon la erja3 esmazon hinne zeton fa ma tballish.

لا لا لا. صَرَلِي كُلَّ حَيَاتِي بِسَمْعِ هَلْ حَكِي. مَا جِيتْ لَهُونِ لِأَرْجِعْ إِسْمَعُنْ هَيْتِي زَانُنْ. فَمَا تُبَلِّشُنْ.

[No no no - do not start preaching to me. I heard it all my life. I came here to get away from it so don't start.]

GEORGE

Lesh? Batalté Misilmé?

لِيش؟ بَطَلْتِي مُسِلْمَةً؟

[Why? Are you not Muslim anymore?]

HANA

Allah wa7do bya3rif shoo fi bi zalbe - bi 3alé.

الله وَحْدَهُ يُبْعِرِفْ شو في بَقْلِي و بَعْقِي.
[Allah knows what is in my heart - my head.]

GEORGE

Tayyib ya3ne ba3dik misilmé.

طَيِّبٌ يَعْنِي بَعْدِكَ مِسْلَمَةٌ.
[Ok so you are Muslim.]

HANA

Eh eza baddak.

ايه إِذَا بَدَّكَ.
[If you say so.]

GEORGE

Mama, ma tiztalé hamm, ok?

ماما، ما تَعْتَلِي هَمُّ، او كي؟
[Don't worry, Mom. Ok?]

HANA

Elli baddak tazemlo khoter.

اللي بَدَّكَ تَعْمَلُوا خُطْرًا.
[What you want to do is dangerous.]

GEORGE

Islam is not dangerous.

HANA

Enta btazref shoo tarakna la nije la hon. Ma ken badde yek tel7az el tazassob.

إِنْتِ بَتَعْرِفْ شو تَرَكَنا لِنَجِي لَهون. ما كان بَدِّي ياك تَلْحَقُ التَّعَصُّبُ.
[You know what we left behind. You know what we gave up here. I didn't want you growing up with all that religion.]

We don't want same for you.

GEORGE

I'm proud to be Muslim! It's my choice.

HANA

It worst choice!

Jeena 3a Amerka w ma 7ada ken baddo ye7ke mazna.

جينا عَامِيركا و ما حدا كان بَدُو يَحْكِي مَغْنَا.
[Then we come here and people don't want to talk to us.]

They afraid of us - me and your Baba.

Y2elulna keef lezim netsarraaf, keef nimshé, keef ni7ké, Kiss ekhton kellon.
Ghayyarna hawiiyetna! M7eena zétna! Ghayyarna kil shi! Kermel el zalam.

يَقُولُونَ كَيْفَ لَازِمٌ نَتَصَرَّفُ، كَيْفَ نَمْشِي، كَيْفَ نَحْكِي، كَيْفَ إِحْسُنُ كُنُّ. عَيَّرْنَا هَوَيْتِنَا! مُحِينَا ذَاتِنَا! عَيَّرْنَا كَلُّ
شي! كَرَمَالِ الْعَالَمِ

*[They're telling us how we should behave. How to walk. How to talk. Fuck them all
god damn it. We changed who we were! All of it! For everyone!]*

GEORGE

W bazid bukra killo hayda 7a yetghayar.

وَيَعِدُ بُكْرًا كَلُّ هَيْدَا حَيْتَغَيَّرُ.

[And after tomorrow it won't have to be like that anymore.]

HANA

Fikrak eza sallet eddemon ra7 tseer shi muzjizé?

فَكْرُكُ إِذَا صَلَّيْتَ قِدَامُنْ رَحْ تَصِيرُ شَيْ مُعْجِزَةٌ؟

[You think praying out there for them to see is going to be like some miracle?]

GEORGE

I will show them my heart.

HANA

You will show your neck.

GEORGE

Baba would do the same.

HANA

Walla?

والله؟

[Oh you think?]

GEORGE

Yes! To show he is like everyone else! That he belongs!

HANA

He join the khara army to show his heart - that he belong. He want show he loyal.
We all loyal! We all belong! Wa shoo saar?

...خَرَا... و شو صَا؟

[...god damned... And what happened?]

GEORGE

You could have stopped him!

HANA

zan jad? Shoo ken fi yazmil gher hek?

عَنْ جَدُّ؟ شو كان في يَعْمَلُ غَيْرُ هَيْكُ؟

[Really? What else was he going to do, son?]

We alone. We stuck. We poor. You baby. We scared, habibi.

GEORGE

You had a choice.

HANA

When fear grab your heart - there is no choice.

Law ma zimil hek, fikrak kint wsulet la hon enta? George Berri al zazeem!

لَو مَا عَمِلْ هَبِكْ، فِكْرَكْ كَيْتْ وَصَلْتْ لَهونِ اِنْتْ؟
*[If he hadn't done that you think you would be where you are now?
George Berri the great!]*

GEORGE

He could have done anything else - / ANYTHING else.

HANA

You think anyone let him? He know to fight. He know to fire gun. Khalas. They take him. They pay him.

GEORGE

He spoke damned good English.

HANA

Who care he speak English! You were baby. You don't know. You don't understand. Kefa7na w kefa7na w kefa7na!

كَافَحْنَا وَكَافَحْنَا وَكَافَحْنَا.
[We struggled and struggled and struggled!]

GEORGE

Struggling doesn't mean his only solution was to leave us and die for a country that wasn't his.

HANA

He love America!

GEORGE

He didn't need to go to war to prove that!

HANA

Our whole life war!

GEORGE

You ran away from the civil war and then he runs back into a different war that had nothing to do with him.

HANA

For us.

GEORGE

And for the neighbours.

HANA

Wlek kiss ikht el neighbors. He want make sure we safe!

ولك كِسَّ إِخْتْ...
[Screw the neighbors.]

GEORGE

Mom he went to kill people like us. He had to hold a gun and shoot Arabs and Muslims. Do you think he was ok with that? And after he got killed you gave him a Christian funeral. He couldn't even be himself in death.

HANA

Because he want this!

GEORGE

What?

HANA

He tell me if he die he want funeral like Christian.

GEORGE

That makes no sense. Why?

HANA

Khalas, George, bikaffé.

خَلَصْ، جورج، بِكَفِّي.
[Enough, George. Leave it.]

GEORGE

No you need to tell me.

HANA

Ma t2illé shoo 2a3mil! zeltellak bikaffé!

ما تُقَلِّي شو أَعْمَلْ. قَلِّتْكَ بِكَفِّي!
[Don't tell me what to do! And I said enough!]

GEORGE

You spent all your lives hiding one of the most important things about yourselves and you didn't need to. No one should have to live like that.

HANA

What you know? Huh? Shoob ta3rif? You born here. Inteh zay al-Amrikan. Enta ma bta3rif el 7areb. You don't know death. Ma bta3rif el ro3b - fear from here (she smacks his or her own chest). Prayer change nothing. It don't save you - it don't protect you. I spend years praying eh shoo saar? SHOO SAAR?

ها؟ شو بتعرف؟... انت زي الاميركان... انت ما بتعرف الحرب... ما بتعرف الرعب... ايه شو صار؟ شو صار؟
[What do you know?... You are just like the Americans...
You don't know war. . . You don't know fear.]

GEORGE

What I do will change things for the better. I know it will. It has to. / It will!

HANA

La2! It won't. Ya rabbée make him understand. Khalas - ok - you want be Muslim be Muslim in home. But please ya roo7é don't do this thing bukra. These people don't need know. Ma 7ada daruré ya3rif.

لأ! ... يا ربّي ... خَلَصْ ... يا روجي ... بُكْرا ...
ما حدا صُروري يَغْرِفْ.

[No...Please God...Enough...my heart...
No one needs to know.]

GEORGE

It's too important.

HANA

To you or them?

GEORGE

...

HANA

Meen George?

مِين، جورج؟
[Who George?]

GEORGE

... Why can't it be both, Mom?

HANA

Life not like this. We sacrifice too much - ma tday3o hek.

ما تَصْنَعُو هِيكْ.
[- don't throw it away.]

GEORGE

I'm not.

HANA

Your Baba and me want you have normal life.

GEORGE

Being Muslim is not abnormal!

HANA

Here it is!

GEORGE

That doesn't mean they can't change.

HANA

You think it so easy.

GEORGE
I'm not saying it will be easy but it is necessary.

HANA
No it not!

GEORGE
It is, ya mama, I swear it is!

يا ماما.
[Mom.]

HANA
You are being like a child who know nothing.

GEORGE
In this case I know more than you do.

HANA
Ma b3omrak ra7 tazrif aktar.

ما بُعْمَرُكَ رَحْ تَعْرِفْ أَكْثَرِ .
[You will never know more.]

GEORGE
Walla marra khallayteené jarrib.

ولا مرّة خَلَّيْتِنِي جَرِّبْ.
[You never gave me the chance to.]

HANA
3am tebzo2 3a zaber bayyak hek.

عَمَّ تَبْزُؤْ عَ قَبْرِ بَيْتِكَ هِيَكِ.
[You spit on your father's grave if you do this.]

GEORGE
He would understand.

HANA
He die for you and you do this. 3ayb 3lék, ya George.

عيب عليك يا جورج.
[Shame on your, George.]

GEORGE
Don't guilt me like that.

HANA
You do this to me? Immak?

إمّك؟
[Your mother?]

GEORGE
Enough mom - seriously!

You will throw this life away! **HANA**

Who cares! **GEORGE**

You will have nothing! **HANA**

I don't care! **GEORGE**

You will be no one! **HANA**

At least I won't be ashamed of who I am like you! **GEORGE**

The air drops out.

Sorry, Mama, I didn't - **GEORGE**

HANA puts her hand up to silence him.

A moment.

HANA
(There is a containment and control to how she tells her story - the gates always on the brink of exploding open - but not yet.)

Kent zgheer. Bayyak ken sar bel Iraq. Ken kteer mhem bel jesh lazanno ken ya3ref el iraqiyyé- w ye7ke lughitton. Kel el wazet ken yeshrab zahwe mazon w y3asher on bi Butte - w ysherekon 7ayeton w mashekelon - fa el jesh hon lezu 7adan kteer mmayaz. Ken ya3rif ye7ke ma3 meen ma ken. zeltello mallion marra yzee7 zannon, yetla3 mennon. Bas ken metlak yshuf el eshya el mushtarake ben el zalam, ma3 enna aslan mish mawjoodé. W shoo ijena mennon? Tarakna. Raja3ou za kel shi harabno menno - kel shi 7alafna ma nerja3 nzarrib 3lé. W meen baddo yse3edne hon? El iraqiyye zerfo enno bayyak ra7 y7areb dud sha3bon w ma zado baddon yzarbo minné. Be2é el zarab ma fahmenin ne7na za meen ma7soubin. Ana kent ba3d ma be7ke inglize mnee7 fa el amirken yja2ewruné kel ma efa7 timmé. Bas ana ken ekher hammé. Eza el 7areb ma khawaffitné ma fi 7ada yu2af bwijjé. Ne7na mneb2a samdeen. W ana hayda li ba3ref a3emlo. Fa menkammel. Fi layle kenet 3am tebke lezanno ken baddak haw el oreos. Ma kent twa22if beke. W ana rassé 7a yenfijir. Fa menrou7 za Buttrey. Enta bterkod 3al oreos, btekhidon w btughmoron kazannon hinné lli khallafook. Yi shoo kint t7ibbon. W ana w 3am bidfa3, 7adertak btirkod 3al siyyara w betballish tekol fiyon, wa7dé wara el tenyé. W ana 3am zoul la7alé, yi nishkor allah hal sabé wa22af biké. W sib bi bayyak keef terikné la7ale ma3ak. zoul yaret fi 7ada yse3idne walaw se3a! W faj2a b7ess fi ziden 3alyyé. Meskeenné. W 3am bi jarrbo yebe3dune 3an el siyyara. Enta ma

betshoof shi. Bas btekol bil oreos. Mabsout, mhayyas zam bitghanné la7alak. W el ziden bitballish tshidd bi 7jebe w bsha3re. Bala ma y2oulo shi. ziden zam todrob w tkhabbit brasé w wijje bala ma y2oulo shi. Rijjel, mara, wa7ad, tnen, tlete, ma ba3ref. Ana zam zellon ywa2fo w henne ma y2ulo shi. Jeet badde sarrikh, 7attule 7jebe bil zouwwe bi timmé. W ma b7iss illa shi mrawwas hon za razebte. Fa zatazet nafasé. Jmidét. W ba3don ma zam y2ulo shi. Bas nafason bidaynté. Bet 2oum enta betzammer bel siyyara w hinné bi kibbuné zal arid w byeherbo. Ma ba3ref eza keno amirken aw iraqiyye aw arab aw lli huwwe. Berja3 b7ott el 7jeb w bmassi7 wijjé. Bsou2 fina zal bet. B7ottak bel takhet w enta m3arbat bel oreos. Bitném w hinné ma3ak. Bas ana ma bnem. Enta btu3a el sobo7 w el di7ké ba3da za wijjak. W men wa2ta ba3da za wijjak. Lazannak ma betshoof hol el zalam - za 7a2izton. Arab. Islem. Amirken. Ma btazref. Bas mfakkar 7alak btazrif. Mfakkar el Amirken 7a yitabbalouk. Mfakkar el Arab 7a yeshekrouk. Mfakkar el Islem 7a y7ibbouk. Mfakkar el zossa kteer hayyné.

كُنْتُ صَغِير. بَيْتْكَ كان صَاغٌ بِالْعِرَاقِ. كان كَثِيرٌ مَهُمٌ بِالْجَيْشِ لَأَنَّهُ كان يَعْرفُ الْعِرَاقِيَّةَ - و يَحْكِي لِعُشْرِ. كُلُّ الْوَقْتِ كان يَشْرَبُ قَهْوَةَ مَعْنُ و يُعَاشِرُنْ ب بَوْت - و يشارِكُنْ حَيَاتُنْ و مَشاكلُنْ - فالجَيْشِ هون لاقوه حَداً كَثِيرَمَيَّةً. كان يَعْرفُ يَحْكِي مَع مِين ما كان. قَلْتَلُو مليون مَرَّاً يَزِيحُ عَنِّي، يَظْلَعُ مَنِّي. بَسْ كان مِثْلَكَ يُشوفُ الْأَشياءَ الْمُشْتَرَكَةَ بَيْنَ الْعَالَمِ، مَعِ إنا أَصْلاً مِثْهُنْ مَوْجُودَةٌ. و شو إجانا مِثْهُنْ؟ تَرَكَنا بَيْتَكَ. رَجَعُوا عِ كُلِّ شَيِّ هَرَبْنَا مِثْهُنْ، كُلِّ شَيِّ حَلَفْنَا ما نَزْجَعُ نَقَرَبُ عَلَيْهِ. و مِين بَدُو يَساعِدُنِي هون؟ الْعِرَاقِيَّةَ عَزَفُو إناو بَيْتَكَ رَاخُ يُحارِبُ صُدَّ شَعْبُنْ و ما عادُو بَدُنْ يُقَرَّبُو مَيَّ. باقِي الْعَرَبِ ما فُهَمَنا بِنِ خُنا عِ مِين مَحْسُوبِينَ. أنا كُنْتُ بَعْدَ ما يَحْكِي إِنْكَلِبْزِي مُنِيحُ فَالْأَمْرُكانُ يُجَاوِرُونِي كُلِّ ما إِفْتَحُ تَمِّي. بَسْ أنا كان أَجْزُ هَمِّي. إِذا الْحَرْبُ ما حَوَّفَتْني ما فِي حَدا يَوْفَقُ بُوْجِي. نَحْنا مُنَبِّئِي صامِدِينَ. و أنا هَبْدا اللَّيِّ بَعْرفُ أَعْمَلُو. فَمِنْكَمَلْ. فِي لَيْلَةٍ كُنْتُ عَمَّ تَبْكِي لَأَنَّهُ كان بَدَكَ هَاوُ الْأُورُيُورُ. ما كُنْتُ اتَوَقَّفُ بِي. و أنا رَاسِي حِ يَفْجَزُ. فَمِنْرواحِ عَبْتَرِي. إِنْتِ يَتَرَكَضُ عِلْ أُوْرِيوز، بِتاخِذِنْ و بِنُعْمَرُنْ كَأَنَّ هَيَّي اللَّيِّ حَلَفوكُ. بِي شو كُنْتُ تَحْبُنْ. و أنا و عَمَّ بَدْفَعُ، حَضِرْتِكَ يَتَرَكَضُ عَالِسيارةَ و بِنَبْلَشِنْ تَاكُلْ فِيئِنْ، وَحِدَةٍ ورا التَّانِيَّةِ. و أنا عَمَّ قول لِحالي، بِي نَشْكُرُ اللهَ هالْصَبِي وَقَفْ بِيكِي. و سَبُّ بَيْتِكَ كَيْفِ تَارِكِي لِحالي مَعَكَ. قول يارِبْتِ فِي حَدا يُساعِدُنِي وَلَوْ ساعَةٌ! و فَجأةً بَجِسْ فِي إِيدِينْ عَلَيَّ. ماسْكِينِي. و عَمَّ بَجْزِيو بِيْعِدُونِي عَنِ السَّيارةِ. إِنْتِ ما بِنَشُوفِ شَيِّ. بَسْ بِتاكُلْ بِالْأُوْرِيوزِ. مَبْسُوطٌ، مَهْيِصٌ عَمَّ بِنُعْمَتِي لِحالكِ. و إِلا إِيدِينْ بِنَبْلَشِنْ تَشَدُّ بِحِجَابِي و بِشَعْرِي. بلا ما يَقُولُو شَيِّ إِيدِينْ عَمَّ تَضْرِبُ و تَحْبِطُ بِرَاسِي وِوَجِي بلا ما يَقُولُو شَيِّ رِجالِ، مَرَّاً، واحِدٌ، اثنَيْنِ، ثَلاتَةٍ، ما بَعْرفُ. أنا عَمَّ فَلانْ يَوْفِقُو هَيَّي ما يَقُولُو شَيِّ. جِيْتِ بَدِي صَرِّحْ، حَطُولِي حِجَابِي بِالْقُوَّةِ بِنَيَّي. و ما بَجِسْ إِلا شَيِّ مَرَّوسٌ هون عِ رَقَبَتِي. فَقَطَعْتُ نَفْسِي. جَمِيْدَتْ. و بَعْدُنْ ما عَمَّ يَقُولُو شَيِّ. بَسْ نَفْسُنْ بَدَيْتِي. بِنُعْمُومِ إِنْتِ بِتَمَرُّ بِالسيارةِ وَهَيَّي بِكَبُونِي عَالارِضِ و بِيهْزِيو. ما بَعْرفُ إِذا كانو أَمْرُكانَ أَوْ عِرَاقِيَّةً أَوْ عَرَبَ أَوْ اللَّيِّ هُوِي. بِرَجْعِ بِحَطِّ الْحِجَابِ و بِمَسْحِ وَجِي. بَسُوقِ فِينا عَالِيَتِ. بِحَطِّكَ بِاللَّخِثِ و إِنْتِ مَعْرِيطُ بِالْأُوْرِيوزِ. بِتَنامِ وَهَيَّي مَعَكَ. بَسْ أنا ما بِنامِ. إِنْتِ بِتَوَعِي الصُّبْحِ وَالصَّحْكَ بَعْدًا عِ وَجِكَ. و مِثْ وَفْنا بَعْدًا عِ وَجِكَ. لَأَنَّكَ ما بِنَشُوفِ هون الْعالِمِ - عَحْقِيقَتُنْ. عَرَبِ. إِسلامِ. أَمْرُكانِ. ما بِنُعْمَرُفُ. بَسْ مَفْكَرُ حالكِ بِنُعْمَرُفُ. مَفْكَرُ الْأَمْرُكانِ حَيَّنْقَبَلوكِ. مَفْكَرُ الْعَرَبِ. حَبِشْكَروكِ. مَفْكَرُ الْإِسلامِ حَيَّنْجَبوكِ. مَفْكَرُ الْقِصَّةِ كَثِيرٌ هَيَّيَّةً.

[You were very young. Your father was already in Iraq. He was very important to the army because he knew the Iraqis - he could speak their language. All the time spent drinking coffee with them in Butte getting to know them - sharing their struggles - so the army thought he was special. I told him to stay away from them so many times but like you he sees these bridges between people that are never real. And our reward? He leaves us. They put him back into the things we ran from - that we swore we would never go near again. And who is going to help me here? The Iraqis find out your father left to fight and kill their people so they don't want anything to do with me. The other Arabs aren't sure what side we are on. I don't speak English good enough so the Americans just look at me out of the side of their eyes whenever I open my mouth. But I don't care. The war didn't stop me so these people won't. Surviving is what we do. I know it well. So we survive...

One night you were crying because you wanted those Oreos. You wouldn't stop crying and crying and crying. You gave me such a headache. So we go to Buttrey. You run to the Oreos and you grab them and hug them as if they gave birth to you. You loved those cookies so much. I pay and you run out to the car and jump in and start eating them. One after another you shove them into your mouth. I'm thinking thank god this boy finally stopped crying. I'm cursing your father for being gone and leaving me alone with you. I'm wishing I had anyone to help me, even for an hour. And then I feel hands on me. Holding me. Pulling me away from the car. You don't see anything. You're just eating your Oreos. You're happy. And smiling. And singing to yourself. And these hands they start pulling at my hijab and my hair. Whoever it is says nothing. They're slapping my head and my face. Man - woman - one, two, three people - I don't know. I am asking them to stop and they're not saying anything. I open my mouth to scream and they shove my hijab in my mouth. I feel something sharp here at my neck and I stop breathing. I stop moving. And still they don't say anything. I can only hear breaths. Breathing in and out. In and out. You honk the horn and they throw me down and run away. I don't know if they were American or Iraqi or Arab or whatever. I put my hijab back on. I wipe my face. I drive us home. I put you to bed and you don't let go of the Oreos. You go to sleep with them. But I don't sleep. You wake up still smiling. Every day you wake up smiling. And you haven't stopped smiling...

You never see these people - who they really are. Arabs. Muslims. Americans. You don't know. But you think you know. You think the Americans will accept you. You think all Arabs will thank you. You think the Muslims will love you. You think there will be no problems.]

(She takes her scarf and starts to position it over her head)

Ok. We see how they accept.

GEORGE

What are you doing?

HANA

(she arranges the scarf into a make-shift hijab)

There nothing wrong with Islam, eh? We belong, right? Let them see me like this and we see, Ok? We see!

GEORGE

Mom stop it.

HANA

La la la - you want to be proud Muslim. Ok! Me too! I'm Muslim!

لا لا لا -

[No no no -]

GEORGE

(trying to pull it away)

You don't have to do that!

HANA
(shoving him away)
This what you want! All in open eh? Yallah!

يا!
[Come on then!]

GEORGE
(trying again)
Stop please!

HANA

(stronger shove - redoes hijab)

I am not ashamed! Bayyak met huwwe
w 3am yi7meek. / Ana khtafét zashen
i7mik. Bas enta hek // baddak sa7?
Skot! Baddak kel el nes tazrif ne7na ///
meen! Yalla khalleena nfarjiyon. You
like this, right? /\ Misilme miltizme w
mutiza. //\\ Khalliyon yshufo shoo
bazmil kermel ibne. Shoo baddak
//^\\ bazid minné hah? Baddak
damme? Hah?

بَيْتِكَ بِبِمَاتِ هُوِي و عَمَّ يَحْمِيكَ. / أَنَا اخْتَفَيْتِ
عِشَانُ إِحْمِيكَ. // بَسْ إِنَّتِ هِيكَ بَدَّكَ صَحُّ؟
سَكُوت! بَدَّكَ كَلِّ النَّاسِ تَعْرِفْ نِيحَنَ /// مِين! يَلَا
\\// خَلِينَا نَقْرَجِينِي بِبِ مِسْلَمَةَ مِلْتِزْمَةَ و مُطِيعَةَ
\\//\\ خَلِينِ بِشُوفُو شُو بَعْمَلِ كِرْمَالِ إِيْنِي. شُو بَدَّكَ
بَعْدُ مِيِّي هَا؟ بَدَّكَ دَيِّي؟ هَا؟

[Your father died protecting you and I
went invisible to keep you safe. But you
want this no? Shut up. You want to
have this in the open so let's do it. A
nice obedient Muslim woman. Let them
see what I will do for my son. What
more do you want huh? You want my
blood? Do you?]

(*she hits herself)

Here. Take. **

(hits herself again)

Khod damme. Khido.

خود دَيِّي. خِدُو.

[Take my blood. Take it.]

(hit)

Anything for you ya habib albé.

يَا حَبِيبِ قَلْبِي.

[My life.]

(hit)

See everyone? I good Muslim!

(hit)

I best Muslim!

(hit)

No one better! Trikeené, Marina. He
want my blood. Khod!

خود.. اتركيني، مارينا ...

[Let me go, Marina.]

(hit)

Khod! Khod! Khod!

خود! خود! خود!

[Take it! Take it! Take it!]

GEORGE

/ Mom!

//Mom listen to me.

/// Stop it! Don't do that.

^ Stop it please!

//^ Please!

///^ Marina!

* MARINA!

** I'm begging you to stop, mama.

(MARINA runs in)

Khalas!

MARINA: What the hell is / going on?

GEORGE: Get her out of here Marina!

MARINA: What is -

GEORGE: GET HER THE FUCK OUT!

MARINA: Ok ok! Come on Hana!

Come with me please!

Please tante!

MARINA drags HANA out. GEORGE paces like a caged animal trying to calm himself. Eventually MARINA comes back in.

MARINA

What the hell happened / in here?

GEORGE

You had no right. No fucking / right!

MARINA

Can you calm down / and talk to me?

GEORGE

No I will not fucking calm down. What were you thinking?

MARINA

I didn't think / that it would -

GEORGE

Fucking right you didn't / think.

MARINA

It's the biggest game of your career / I thought she should be here. // She's never seen you play. ///

GEORGE

Not that. // You know what I mean. /// And how long have you / been talking to her?

MARINA

Calm down and let's / talk about this.

GEORGE

How long have you kept this / from me?

MARINA

I need you to calm / the hell down.

GEORGE

You fucking set me up. / God damn it, Mar!

MARINA

Time, George! Time! TIME!!!

They both take a moment to chill the fuck out. This takes as long as is needed.

MARINA

Ready?

... Yup.

GEORGE

I'm sorry.

MARINA

Marina -

GEORGE

I am saying I'm sorry and I mean it so please hear it. I'm sorry.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

I am sorry, George.

MARINA

Fine.

GEORGE

No - don't 'fine' me.

MARINA

Why would you do this to me?

GEORGE

I didn't want you to regret her not being here to experience probably the biggest moment of your career. I had everything in place to make sure she would be safe and unnoticed.

MARINA

Bringing her in here.

GEORGE

I didn't think that - Look, I just - she was already in town and - well - I didn't think things would explode.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

I didn't. I am trying to protect you. You don't always listen to me, but I knew you would listen to her. So - that's where I'm coming from.

MARINA

...

GEORGE

Alright?

MARINA

GEORGE

. . .Let me go check on my mother.

MARINA

She's fine - she's with Bill.

GEORGE

I should say sorry to her.

MARINA

As an Arab woman, I'm telling you to give her a minute.

GEORGE

. . .

MARINA

Do you want to talk about what happened?

He gives her a sharp look.

MARINA

Heard. Alright. . . So - Bill and I had a chat outside - that shouldn't surprise you - you've managed to fluster that man. Neither of us are fans of your decision, but you're committed to this, so my agent hat is firmly on and let's figure out a gameplan. Can we do that?

GEORGE

I don't need a -

MARINA

Yes you do. The press - the public - they're going to have a field day with this no matter what you think. Time is ticking and I'd like us both to go into the game tomorrow confident, prepared, and ready. So - are you in a good enough place to do this right now?

GEORGE

Take the lead.

She sets up two chairs to hot seat him.

MARINA

Sit.

(he does)

So are you 100% sure you want to pray on the field during the anthem thereby letting the entire country know that you are Muslim and, in your case, also an Arab?

GEORGE

Am I on trial?

MARINA

You better hope not. Are you 100% sure?

GEORGE

Yes.

MARINA

Alright. Let's look at how we can position and strategise for maximum effect with minimum blowback - and there will be plenty o' blowback. Bill knows so that's one thing ticked off the list, but there's not much he can do and I told him he needs to play dumb.

GEORGE

Why?

MARINA

Because he doesn't deserve to deal with any of the fallout. It's not his responsibility. They'll probably go back into your past to talk to people. I doubt your mom will say anything. She never has before. Any high school friends I need to get a hold of?

GEORGE

We've talked about this: No one knew.

MARINA

Neighbourhood kids?

GEORGE

No one knew.

MARINA

Any teachers, / counselors, pee wee coaches, babysitters or any -

GEORGE

No one knew no one knew no one knew!

MARINA

You're going to have to keep that under control. Don't want to come off as the angry Muslim on TV.

(He gives her a steely-jawed look.)

So the game has ended - press room time - and here we go!

'Do you have any affiliations to mosques or religious organisations?'

GEORGE

No.

MARINA

'Do you worship in a mosque?'

GEORGE

No.

MARINA

'Have you ever worshipped in a mosque?'

GEORGE

What does this have to do with building a strategy?

MARINA

You're gonna get asked all kinds of shit and we need to have an airtight narrative.

GEORGE

I'm not a terror suspect.

MARINA

Put yourself in their shoes and think about everything they're going to think about. / I'm actually going pretty easy on you. //

GEORGE

Like what? // Like what things?

MARINA

Alright. . .

'Are you from Iraq? Afghanistan? Did any of your relatives fight against Americans? Are you in ISIS? Is anyone you know in ISIS? Who did your dad fight for in Iraq? Are you an illegal immigrant? Does your mother cover her head? Do you have multiple wives? 72 virgins? How do you feel being a part of a violent religion? Were you forced into Islam? Do you think Allah is better than God? Do you think Americans are infidels? Are you a sleeper cell agent? Why do you hate America?'

GEORGE

...

MARINA

'Why do you hate America, George?'

GEORGE

...

MARINA

And that's just off the top of my head with no preparation. You did the right thing, though. You didn't lose your shit. But you didn't answer the questions.

GEORGE

Because they're ridiculous.

MARINA

But they're real to the people out there, so don't avoid them because that'll come off as a yes. Don't make a joke because you'll piss off the conservatives and neo-liberals. Keep the responses short and simple. Don't try to lecture. Don't try to educate.

Then why even do this? **GEORGE**

Good question. 'Why did you decide to do this, George?' **MARINA**

Because it's time. **GEORGE**

'Time for what?' **MARINA**

For people to know who I am. **GEORGE**

'Is being a Muslim who you are?' **MARINA**

Not who-who but it is a part of what I am. **GEORGE**

'So what are you?' **MARINA**

I'm an American who happens to be Muslim. **GEORGE**

Good. Good! Lead with the nationalism. **MARINA**

I'm proud of being an American. **GEORGE**

Great! **MARINA**

It doesn't mean I don't think there are problems / in the country that need - **GEORGE**

No no nope TIME. Do not - under any circumstances - start criticising the country. **MARINA**

But that informs my decision. **GEORGE**

You can hold a separate press conference that isn't under the auspices of the NFL. **MARINA**

They've given us permission to protest. **GEORGE**

That's not what you're doing. **MARINA**

Yes I am. **GEORGE**

MARINA
You're praying on the field during the anthem and the optics of this kind of prayer in this context is unprecedented. We don't know how they're going to react. You can tell them you're being honest about who you are but do NOT bring politics into it.

But that also informs my decision. **GEORGE**

MARINA
(firmly)
Leave it for another time. You're trying to do it all at once and you're only going to confuse people. This is my area of expertise please just fucking trust me.

Fine. **GEORGE**

MARINA
Thank you. 'Why now? Why not when you were a rising star at Notre Dame? Or in any of your previous games leading up to the Super Bowl?'

I didn't want it to get in the way of the game. **GEORGE**

'But won't it get in the way now?' **MARINA**

I need as many people as possible to know. **GEORGE**

'So this is just for exposure.' **MARINA**

This is for the truth. **GEORGE**

Careful. 'What truth?' **MARINA**

My truth. **GEORGE**

Good. 'How do you think the NFL will respond to this?' **MARINA**

GEORGE

If Kap is any indication / then -

MARINA

Time! Do not bring up Kap. It's a sore spot.

GEORGE

I support him.

MARINA

He has nothing to do with this.

GEORGE

I'll be put in the same category.

MARINA

They'll take it out on you and Bill and maybe the team. They've been taking it out on anyone who happens to even mention his name.

GEORGE

I have rights.

MARINA

As a citizen. As an NFL player they own you. That doesn't mean you're trapped. You can still do whatever you want as long as you're ready to deal with the consequences. They used the game as a band-aid for the last racial shit show and for the most part it worked. You fuck with that balance and they'll blame whatever unrest happens all on you. American football is the American consciousness. Don't forget that.

GEORGE

So they suspend me for a few games. Think they'll really do that to their superstar after winning the Super Bowl?

MARINA

They suspended Tom Brady. And you ain't no Tom Brady.

GEORGE

What I want to do is no different than what a Christian player has done.

MARINA

You're not praying to God.

GEORGE

Actually, I am.

MARINA

You know what I mean. I know what you mean. They don't know what we mean - and they don't care. They hear 'Allah' and it's a trigger. So stick to saying 'God'.

GEORGE

It's the same damn thing, Marina. "Allah" is "God" in Arabic. It's the same!

MARINA

To US - not to THEM. I'm Christian - I say 'Allah'. But you think these people can make sense of that? No.

GEORGE

This whole us-them is one of the reasons I'm doing this. We're all an 'us' - there IS no difference.

MARINA

You're being idealistic.

GEORGE

I'm being hopeful.

MARINA

Maybe if 9/11 hadn't / happened then -

GEORGE

Come on come on don't bring up 9/11.

MARINA

Are you shitting me?

GEORGE

It's not relevant.

MARINA

We're children of a 9/11 America of COURSE it's relevant. The NFL weaponised a national tragedy and took America's hatred of all things Muslim, and by extension Arab, and turned it into cold hard cash with fireworks, beer koozies, and choruses of singing kids.

GEORGE

I'm not letting any of our people grow up afraid anymore.

MARINA

So you wanna climb up on a cross for them?

GEORGE

That's more your area of expertise no?

MARINA

(chuckles)

You want to bring Americans together and you can't even stop drawing lines between you and me. Our own people draw lines between themselves and you think - what - you praying on the field will unite us as one strong Arab community?

GEORGE

Yes! If we don't come together we are going to get picked off until there's no one left. And WE have to be the ones to do it because no one else cares about us.

MARINA

I can't argue with that.

GEORGE

Thank you.

MARINA

But let me ask you something, George: What are you going to say to the Christian Arabs who refuse to side with you because technically you're not speaking for them.

GEORGE

They've been sleeping with the enemy for years / without being found out so - come on it's just a saying //- fine I won't - /// You're right, I'm sorry, but what I'm trying to say is that they've always had it easier. They can hide in plain sight. But that doesn't give them the right to turn their backs on Muslims or throw us under the bus. We are the same people and it's time they acknowledge that. /\

MARINA

Whoa time! That is COMPLETELY inappropriate. // Don't ever say it again. /// Don't. /\ I understand, I do, but don't forget: You can pass, too. You hid in plain sight. You're the same as any average White American.

GEORGE

Don't oversimplify it.

MARINA

Don't be overshadow it.

GEORGE

Skin colour or not we are all open to the same kind of attacks. We speak Arabic in public and we're fucked. We tell them our Un-American names and we're fucked. So if White America accepts me then MAYBE they'll think twice before they open their mouth to say something to someone who might look Arab or Muslim or whatever. / They'll think before they write something racist on a car // or garage door. They will fucking think /// let me finish /\ they will think /\ let me -

MARINA

Calm down. // Keep it calm, George. /// Time. /\ Time! /\ TIME!

GEORGE

No fuck your time they will think before they ever lift another finger to harm one of us again because they'll think of Super Bowl superstar super athlete George Berri who represents everything All-American and they'll never touch us again!

MARINA

You need to help me out here, George, because you're all over the place. Is this about being true to yourself? About helping Arabs? Muslims? Protesting? Unifying the community? Sending a message? What?

GEORGE

It's all of it! 9/11 wasn't our event, Marina. It was theirs. We had to deal with the aftermath of it but it doesn't belong to us. Deah, Yusor, and Razan. THEY are our 9/11.

MARINA

(taking a moment to
register the names)

Jesus - George, the Chapel Hill Shooting was over a parking space by a sick, mentally deranged man.

GEORGE

Who hated our people.

MARINA

They never proved it.

GEORGE

Come on, Marina! Come on! The only reason you're saying that is because it hits so close to home for both of us!

MARINA

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

(pulling out his phone
and searching - not for
long because he knows
exactly what he needs
and where it is)

You think fair-fucking George Berri is spared because he's not dark-featured, right? Look at them.

MARINA

Get that out of my face.

GEORGE

Look at them! They look like you and me. / No you look! Deah looks EXACTLY like I did in high school. Other than the hijab how are you different from Razan? That maniac hated our people and he fired off the first gun and that sound hasn't stopped. It keeps getting louder and louder // and louder.

MARINA

Put it away! // Ok enough.

GEORGE

It took them four years to even sentence him! And what happened that same year, Marina? What happened?

MARINA

Stop it, George!

GEORGE

What happened?!

MARINA

KHALAS GEORGE!

[STOP GEORGE!]

GEORGE

Some other maniac half a world away walks into a mosque and opens fire and kills 51 Muslims.

MARINA

New Zealand doesn't have the history America does.

GEORGE

Please stop always using that as an excuse - it doesn't matter!

MARINA

It does!

GEORGE

It doesn't because America sees what happens everywhere else and follows suit. We get killed halfway across the world and they think: Get the dirty Muslims!

They don't care that Yemen was wiped off a map. 'Goodbye savages!'

They don't care that Uyghur Muslims were imprisoned, castrated, sterilised, mutilated, and put into slavery. And that poor Canadian family who weren't even Muslim but looked it? No one cared because they think: That's what you do with dirty Muslims.

What American cares what happens to our people? None! They didn't care when Deah, Yusor, and Razan were murdered. They didn't care when Beirut was bombed and demolished. When Palestinians were gunned down and evicted. When Afghanis were abandoned. They didn't even care when those 51 Muslims in New Zealand were gunned down while they were praying because all they thought was: 'They deserved it. They deserved it because they're - not - human.' At their most vulnerable on their hands and knees worshipping and they're not human. They're animals! They're all animals!

Atta Elayyan, 33 - animal.

Lilik Abdul Hamid, 57 - animal. /

Areeb Ahmed, 27, Tariq Omar, 24, // Muhammad Suhail Shahid, 35 - All animals.

///

MARINA

Stop, George. // Please stop it. /// Stop it!

GEORGE

Syed Jahandad Ali, 34

Haroon Mahmood, 40

Farhaj Ahsan, 30

Maheboob Khokhar, 65
 Muhammad Haziq Mohd-Tarmizi, 17
 Ansi Alibava, 25
 Ozair Kadir, 25
 Haji Daoud al-Nabi, 71
 Ali Elmadani, 65
 Husna Ahmad, 47
 Naeem Rashid, in his 40s
 Talha Naeem, 21
 Amjad Hamid, 57
 Kamel Darwish, 38
 Linda Armstrong, 64
 Mohammed Imran Khan, 47
 Mohamad Moosid Mohamedhosen, 54
 Junaid Ismail, 36
 Abdelfattah Qasem, 60
 Ashraf Ali, 61
 Ashraf Ali Razat, 58
 Mathullah Safi, 55
 Hussein Al-Umari, 35
 Musa Vali Suleman Patel, 60
 Ashraf al-Marsi Reghab, 54
 Hussein Moustafa, 70
 Mounir Soliman, 68
 Zeeshan Raza, 38
 Ghulam Hussain, 66
 Karam Bibi, 63
 Abdukadir Elmi, 78
 Mohsin Al Harbi, 63
 Osama Adnan Youssef Abukwaik, 37
 Mojammel Hoq, 30
 Mohammed Omar Faruk, 36
 Muhammed Abdusi Samad, 66
 Muse Nur Awale, 77
 Ahmed Gamal Eldin Mohamed Abdel Ghany, 68
 Ashraf al-Masri, 54
 Zakaria Bhuiya, 33
 Khalid Mustafa, 44
 Hamza Mustafa, 16
 Sayyad Milne, 14
 Ramiz Vora, 28
 Arif Vora, 58
 Mucad Ibrahim, THREE - three-years-old - and he was an animal. . .

. . . And I didn't do or say anything because I couldn't risk people finding out about me - and for what? For what? I chose this place - and these people - over them. This game made me feel like I belonged somewhere - that I was important and necessary. I watch my people get eradicated all over the world and I can't do anything about it because I don't belong to them. They don't know I am one of them. But I am - I AM. They don't know how much I want to help them - to protect them but all I do is watch.

And those people that everyone thinks I owe my allegiance to? They can't help hating. They can't stop themselves because they're addicted to it. They don't care how many of us die. They believe we deserve to die because they need to feel free. All Muslims deserve to die! All Arabs deserve to die! They won't stop until my mother is dead because she deserves to die! They won't stop until you are dead, Marina, because you deserve to die. You deserve to die! * You! We all deserve it!! I deserve it!!! I DESERVE IT!!!

** MARINA runs out.*

GEORGE destroys the room (within reason).

And then the silence. . .

This goes on for a long uncomfortable while.

Eventually, the door opens and BILL walks in. GEORGE senses someone is there but doesn't look. BILL surveys the room. He looks at GEORGE. He starts to say something then stops himself. He takes a moment then walks to GEORGE and pulls him into a hug. At first, the latter isn't leaning into the moment, but then he puts his arms around BILL and hugs back - breaking in a different way.

BILL eventually releases the hug and grabs the back of GEORGE's neck in that way only fathers can.

BILL

(lifting his chin up)

Hey hey hey - head up.

GEORGE gives the briefest of nods.

BILL

Cold water. Face. Go.

GEORGE heads into the bathroom to wash his face. BILL starts to put the room back together.

GEORGE eventually returns, grabs his towel and dries his face. If BILL is still re-ordering, GEORGE helps. If not, GEORGE awkwardly resumes packing his duffel bag.

BILL

This game is a real bitch. Not for the weak. Old man used to say you need heart, soul, and an unbreakable back. He was a fanatic for the sport. Was never good enough to make it professionally, but he had an unwavering love for it. Saw it be there for America through all its worst and best times.

He never got tired of telling me how the colonies tried to bring over rugby and soccer. But we weren't having any of it. A new country wants things of its own. Things that represent who they truly are. First few decades were a mess. A complete shit show. But then World War 2 happened and the country was almost brought to its knees. There was this frustration that got under everyone's skins. This hopelessness. And the cure ended up being the game.

It helped people feel a sense of belonging. And the NFL was smart - they supported the war effort with bonds. They made themselves a servant to Americans. Anything to distract them from sons and fathers dying and jobs drying up and rationing. I don't think the country would have recovered without the game. 'Football saved America, kid' he'd say to me - every game. 'Football saved America'.

The old man even thought it saved civil rights. The marches and I-have-a-dreams frustrated him because 'People don't understand politics, kid. And you can't force 'em to. They understand action.'

Kenny Washington. If everyone hadn't gone off to war, Washington would never have gotten to step out onto the field. Yeah there were black players before him. Doubt anyone remembers their names. Hell, I don't. But he got on the field and the game was better for it. America saw that it could be better. 'It's time, kid. It's just the taking of time that's needed. And the right time to take it. It's gotta be the right time, kid.'

No agendas. Just patience. Makes the payoff so much greater. The country gently pushed into the right moment. A beautiful pass into progress.

I experienced it myself. 9/11 shook me to the very foundation. I've never seen so many people stuck. Unsure. Wondering whether America was still America. One day Peyton Manning is giving the performance of a lifetime on the field and the next day we're watching shit on fire crumbling to the ground. But we rallied - we ALL rallied. Nothing else mattered but our humanity. And it was the game that did that.

The crack of helmets. The shouts of the crowd. The incredible catches and bonehead fumbles. We needed it. I needed it. I needed to get back onto that field and think about plays and strategies. I needed to believe in something again. To see how we could push forward - how we progress yard by yard - foot by foot - until we slam that ball into the end zone. How we fight the odds to win win win.

I'm standing on the field calling plays and the stadium is drowning in red, white and blue - on fans, on ads, on banners. The fireman's boot being passed around for collections just like they did when my father sat in the stadium in the 40s. He would have loved the symbolism of the Patriots winning that first game back. And that's when I really understood the old man - understood his love for everything the game does. I'm not saying that game fixed everything, but it helped.

Out there - they don't know what it takes. They don't have a clue. They think they do - they think they know us - the sport - the way it all works - but they

don't. What we really do - who we really are - the time we take moving the pieces in the right way at the right time. We make that field a place where millions of people can feel safe and protected. Where they can forget politics - even for a moment. We give them relief - remind them that we are all one. And that is beautiful. It's beautiful. . .

GEORGE

. . .

BILL

Think about that. Really think about it. . .

He starts to leave.

GEORGE

You're wrong.

BILL

. . . Ok.

GEORGE

All that red, white, and blue - it reminds each of us where we belong. And people like me - we're obstacles. We are a threat to everything 'normal' and 'American'. And what does the game tell us to do with obstacles? Run them down. Do whatever you have to, to win win win and be the greatest. And Arabs and Muslims are expected to wait until someone decides it's our turn to be accepted. Tell me, Bill: How many of my people should die before that happens? . . . All this - all that out there - it's all built on a lie. Everything you believe in is a lie. And I don't know how to be a part of it anymore. Because America is a lie.

BILL

. . . Maybe. . . Time will tell us. If it's the right time. . . If it's the right time. Otherwise. . .

BILL exits. GEORGE takes a moment then packs up the rest of his things. He grabs his duffel bag and turns to leave.

The sound of a stadium crowd starts to creep in - forcing GEORGE to the centre of the room. He looks out. The crowd gets louder. Are they cheering? Is he hearing the screams of the dead? Jets flying overhead? Fireworks? It's confusing and getting louder - almost deafening. We start to hear the opening drum roll of the national anthem but it's stuck and doesn't move past the roll. Inexplicably, we start to hear GEORGE breathing through the din. The sound cuts out and all we hear are his breaths. Then - the lights cut out.

THE END.