

FOOD AND FADWA
Ecklit il Hob

by

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and

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Abrams Artist Agency
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Food and Fadwa's Off-Broadway premiere was produced by
NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP,
Jim Nicola, Artistic Director, William Russo, Managing Director and
NOOR THEATRE,
Lameece Issaq, Artistic Director, Maha Chehlaoui, Executive Director, Nancy Vitale, Producing
Artistic Director, in 2012.
It was originally developed as part of the New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspects Program.
Food and Fadwa was additionally developed with Noor Theatre and Mizna.

Production and Development History:

May 2007: Parts of *Food and Fadwa* were first read as a part of the “*Aswat: Voices of Palestine*” reading series, produced by NIBRAS and New York Theatre Workshop.

Summer 2008/Summer 2009: The play was developed at New York Theatre Workshop’s artist summer residencies, both at Vassar College in 2008, and the following summer at Dartmouth College.

July 2011: Noor Theatre teams up with Mizna, an Arab-American Arts organization based in Minneapolis, to produce a workshop production of *Food and Fadwa* at Pangea World Theater.

Spring 2012: *Food and Fadwa* has its World Premiere at New York Theatre Workshop, co-produced with Noor Theatre. The play was a part of NYTW’s 2011-2012 mainstage season.

“Though the works of the human race disappear tracelessly by time or bomb,
the sun does not falter in its course;
the stars keep their invariable vigil.
Cosmic law cannot be stayed or changed,
and man would do well to put himself in harmony with it.
If the cosmos is against might,
if the sun wars not in the heavens
but retires at dueful time to give the stars their little sway,
what avails our mailed fist?
Shall any peace come out of it?
Not cruelty but goodwill upholds the universal sinews;
a humanity at peace will know the endless fruits of victory,
sweeter to the taste than any nurtured on the soil of blood.”

Pramahansa Yogananda

My Soul tonight loses itself in the silent heart of a tree, standing alone, among the whispers of
immensity.

Tagore

FOOD AND FADWA

CHARACTERS

FADWA FARANESH	30. Palestinian woman. Single, living in Bethlehem.
BABA	75. FADWA and DALAL's father. Olive farmer. Vibrant and well in FADWA's memories, but in reality suffering from Alzheimer's disease.
DALAL FARANESH	25. FADWA's younger sister. Engaged to Emir. Teaches music.
EMIR AZZAM	25. Engaged to DALAL. A mechanic in Jerusalem.
YOUSSEF AZZAM	30. Palestinian living in New York City. EMIR's older brother.
HAYAT JOHNSON	30. Palestinian-American living in New York City. FADWA and DALAL's first cousin. An ambitious chef and restaurateur.
AUNTIE SAMIA	65. She is sister to BABA; Aunt to HAYAT, DALAL and FADWA. Lives next door. Widowed, no children.

SETTING

FARANESH house in Bethlehem, West Bank.

TIME

A recent spring. Over a two week period.

SCENES

ACT 1

Scene 1	FARANESH home	Afternoon
Scene 2	FARENESH home	Later that evening
Scene 3	FARANESH home	Next morning
Scene 4	FARANESH home	Later that afternoon

ACT 2

Scene 1	FARANESH home	Five days later, evening
Scene 2	FARANESH home	Late at night
Scene 3	FARANESH home	Next day, evening
Scene 4	FARANESH home	About an hour later

ACT 3

Scene 1	FARANESH home	Three days later, morning
Scene 2	FARANESH home	Two days later

Note: Arabic is translated in the text in bold brackets with colloquial terms in italics. Use English when not comfortable with Arabic.

ACT I

SCENE I

(Lights up on FADWA, standing center stage behind a long marbled counter. She is in a housedress and bandana. To her right is an antiquated stove, circa 1960, behind her a fridge, sink, counter, and cabinets. Upstage center-left a hallway leads to the rest of the home. Stage left, a living area and the front door entrance/exit of the home. Upstage right a pantry and grape vines clinging to the old walls of the home. Stage right, a dining area, and the backdoor entrance/exit of the home, which leads to the neighborhood and fields beyond. FADWA addresses the audience.)

FADWA

Hello and welcome to another episode of *Food and Fadwa, Echlit'l Hob*. I am your host, Fadwa Faranesh! I am honored to have you in my little kitchen. Today we are kicking off our wedding week series! You all know my little sister Dalal is getting married next week. And we will be having lots of visitors, including my beloved Youssif, coming all the way from New York! Many of my American viewers are New Yorkers, so special “shout out” to you. And Youssif, if you’re watching, you better get here hungry, *wella*, I’m making all your favorites!

Ok. A crash course on Palestinian weddings: parties. A party three days before the wedding, a party two days before the wedding, a party to take a break from the parties before the wedding. And for every party, FOOD! No food, no respect. Bad food, bad reputation. You will be the laughing stock of Bethlehem. It is vicious. *Yallah*, let us start the *mezza*. Appetizers. Our first dish, my favorite. *Baba Ghanoush*.

(She puts on old battered oven mitts and reaches into the oven to retrieve a pan of roasted eggplant.)

Here we have pre roasted the eggplant. It should be totally charred on the outside, and totally cooked on the inside.

(She continues preparing the dish.)

After the eggplant cools, you will peel off the skin to reveal the tender tendrils of this fleshy vegetable. You will then scoop, scoop, scoop. And mash. Mash to a pulp. Do you know what it means, *Baba Ghanoush*? “Spoiled old daddy.” Because the creator of this dish would mash up eggplant to feed her to her father, who was old and toothless and could not chew. *Meskeen*. **[Poor Man.]** But he was picky. He did not like this boring, plain eggplant. Eat this? Are you crazy? *Arruf!* **[Gross!]** He wanted zest—life, in his food! And so began the culinary wizardry: A touch of *tahini* for a creamy robustness, a squeeze of zesty lemon, a clove of garlic for bite and spice, and *viola*! Transformed from this plain eggplant—into a smoky sensation that he loved. Spoiled old man!

(She finishes and tastes it.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

Let's add a dash of salt—

(Tasting it)

Mmm. Needs one more thing. What is it? Anyone? It is only the most important ingredient in an Arab kitchen.

(Holding up a bottle of olive oil.)

Zeit Zaytoun. Oil of olives. Extra virgin. Like me. Now, just a pour a little—

DALAL (O.S.)

Fadwa?

EMIR (O.S.)

Foo Foo! Smells good!

(FADWA stops cold. Enter DALAL wearing a lovely dress.)

DALAL

Hi *habibti*. Were you talking to someone?

FADWA

Eh, no no. Just cooking.

(Enter EMIR, in grease stained coveralls, carrying boxes filled with gifts.)

EMIR

Feed me, woman!

FADWA

Yes, your highness. What's in the boxes? Gifts from the kids?

EMIR

The kids, the whole school. *Willik*, half the West Bank!

FADWA

Look at all that.

EMIR

This isn't even everything! We had to leave most of it at the checkpoint.

FADWA

Checkpoint? In the neighborhood?

DALAL

Yes, the mobile one near the school. The army set it up last week.

EMIR

I feel more secure.

DALAL

They were searching everyone. Taking things. Like during the incursions.

EMIR

Even the box of pastries! I should have eaten it all.

DALAL

I got the cutest gift, a necklace with a garnet. The soldier took it and put it on his soldier girlfriend! Right in front of me!

EMIR

It was the right thing to do. I don't want you wearing jewelry from strange men.

DALAL

It was from my student! He's *twelve*!

EMIR

You fell in love with *me* when I was 12. It could happen again.

(Dalal smacks Emir.)

EMIR (CONT'D)

Hey, at least they let you keep the poem--

DALAL

Wellek, shut up Emir!

EMIR

Where is it? Ah. Ehem. "Dear Miss Dalal:
You fill up my heart
With the music you teach
Most beautiful lady in Bethlehem's reach.
I hope I can visit you in New York one day
And recite the sweet notes you taught me to play.
Love, Wissam." Aaawwww. DALAL
Give it to me!

(EMIR dodges DALAL'S grabs.)

EMIR (CONT'D)

Visit you in New York! Totally hot for teacher!

(DALAL still tries to grab the letter, EMIR holds it away.)

EMIR (CONT'D)

Oh oh oh! "PS I will never forget you. You're the only one for me." In love with her!

DALAL

Hmarr [jackass]!

EMIR

But not as much as I am. And on our wedding night, I'm gonna show you how much. Actually, can I show you right now?

(EMIR tries to grab her.)

DALAL

Hush!

(Enter BABA in his pajamas, a robe, and slippers.)

BABA

Fadwa?

DALAL

Hi Baba. How are you, *habibi*?

FADWA

Hungry?

EMIR

Starving.

FADWA

Not you.

BABA

(Patting his pockets.)

Where is my wallet?

FADWA

Did you lose it again Baba?

DALAL

It probably fell out of your pocket, *habibi*, we'll look around.

BABA

I need my wallet.

FADWA

What for Baba? There's nothing in it!

A man needs his wallet.

EMIR

It has pictures of Mama!

DALAL

I know—

FADWA

Check under his chair.

DALAL

I'll check the fridge.

EMIR

Emir! Help us look.

DALAL

I am!

EMIR

For the wallet!

DALAL

Ooh, are these leftovers? Ew, is this fresh?

EMIR

(A knock on the door as AUNTIE SAMIA enters carrying pots of food and produce.)

Alo!

SAMIA

Hi Auntie! Do you know where Baba put his wallet?

DALAL (CONT'D)

(SAMIA shakes her head “no” with a click of her tongue, starts patting down BABA who becomes annoyed. A silent fight ensues.)

Is there ice cream? Wait—That's weird—

EMIR

(Rummaging through the fridge)

(EMIR pulls the wallet out of the freezer and holds it up.)

In the freezer. Between the lamb and the...lamb. Uh, here, Ami. Nice and, eh. . .cold.

EMIR (CONT'D)

(BABA snatches the wallet from EMIR and shuffles
offstage.)

EMIR

He loves me. He really does.

DALAL

Auntie--

SAMIA

ZEIN!

BABA

Stop following me woman!

DALAL

I'll be there to help in a bit.

SAMIA

Ok. But tonight Arab Idol.

DALAL

Auntie—

FADWA

Oh! That girl from Kuwait was voted off last week. So sad.

EMIR

Thank GOD. She was the worst! Every time she opened her mouth, it's like a quail giving birth.

DALAL

Quails don't give birth.

EMIR

Exactly.

FADWA

I loved her—she's a wonderful singer.

EMIR

What? You can't hear!

DALAL

Can we talk about this later? Auntie, just go check on your brother, please.

(SAMIA Exits.)

DALAL

Fadwa, did you give Baba his pills yet?

FADWA

No, he has to eat something first.

DALAL

He needs to take them at the same time everyday, we've been through this.

EMIR

I'll get the rest of the stuff out of the car.

(Exit EMIR.)

DALAL

Fadwa.

FADWA

What is that medicine even doing for him, *yanni*? It's worthless.

DALAL

It keeps him from doing things like that.

FADWA

What, from misplacing his wallet sometimes?—

DALAL

That wasn't just misplacing, Fadwa—

FADWA

He needs something other than pills, pills, pills. I've been taking him out for long walks lately---

DALAL

He needs medication.

FADWA

He needs fresh air and exercise—

DALAL

That doesn't help with his confusion—

FADWA

Yes it does.

DALAL

And, why is he still in his pajamas? It's after noon.

FADWA

He hates being changed, Dalal, I don't want to agitate him—not when I have so much to do.

DALAL

He needs to stay on a routine, like the doctor said. It helps him.

FADWA

Don't tell me what helps-- I'm with him all day.

DALAL

I know you are, but these things have to be done properly. After I leave, you'll have to do them on your own.

FADWA

After you leave, I won't have a hundred wedding guests to cook for!

(Enter EMIR on his cell phone carrying a box of stuff and DALAL's oud hanging by the strap around his chest.)

EMIR

Wallay himmak, brother. [**Don't worry, brother.**] We'll see you tonight. Welcome home, Youssif!

(Hanging up.)

Hamdillah, he just landed in Jordan.

FADWA

Hamdillah, but I hope they don't hold him too long at the border.

EMIR

Eh, it's nothing. Another 7, 8 hours. Maybe 30. Big deal?

(EMIR goes to the stove and starts picking at the food.)

FADWA

Get away from the food. You're filthy!

EMIR

I was at the garage all morning under Abu Rami's farting Fiat, what do you want?

DALAL

I want you to go home and get cleaned up. We have our meeting with the priest tonite—

EMIR

It's lunchtime! I'm eating this.

FADWA

That's for the wedding!

EMIR

This *hashweh* isn't! And this chicken--

FADWA

That's for dinner. When Youssif gets here, then you can eat.

EMIR (CONT'D)

WHAT? I could die in the meantime!

FADWA

Don't touch anything. I want things to be nice for Youssif.

EMIR

My god, Youssif. Everything Youssif.

DALAL
(Warning)

Emir.

FADWA

The man hasn't had any decent cooking in over two years. Since before he left. *Haram*.

EMIR

The man runs one of the best restaurants in New York City. He eats better than any of us. Gourmet, *habibti*.

FADWA

Gourmet *wella mish* gourmet. This is home cooking. Nothing better. He knows that.

EMIR

Ooooh, trying to lure him back home with a pot of *hashweh*?

DALAL

Khalas Emir.

FADWA

It's time he came home. Long overdue.

EMIR

He's making money.

FADWA

That's not everything. He needs family. Friends.

EMIR

Over. Rated. Anyway, soon he'll have me and Dalal. And Foo Foo, soon you'll come too, *inshallah*.

DALAL

I wish.

FADWA

Maybe...we'll see...

EMIR

You can be my personal chef. I think you'll enjoy it very much.

FADWA

I'm already you're personal chef.

EMIR

I'm glad you know your place. Now do your duty.

(Emir holds out a plate.)

FADWA

I told you not yet.

EMIR

You sound just like Dalal. *Ya Allah* [**My God**], house full of prudes.

FADWA

I'm hiding this.

(FADWA takes the pot of *hashweh* and exits.)

EMIR

(Yelling after her)

I hate you!

DALAL

(Glaring at Emir.)

Emir.

EMIR

What? I didn't touch anything.

DALAL

Don't tease her about Youssif.

EMIR

Oh come on, I was just playing with her.

DALAL

It's still sensitive.

EMIR

She's fine now.

DALAL

No she isn't. You know they haven't been talking.

EMIR

They'll work it out.

(Enter FADWA carrying a couple bottles of olive oil.)

FADWA

Still here?

EMIR

I'm waiting for lunch.

DALAL

Yallah, let's go. You still need to finish the student housing forms.

EMIR

My little soon-to-be PhD. I can't wait to call her doctor... *Wallah*, I can't wait to go. No more dirty garages—

FADWA

No, just dirty dishes—

EMIR

Washing dishes, bussing tables—I'll do it all, I don't care. And trust me, your cousin will move me up in no time.

DALAL

Don't expect Hayat to promote you before you've even started.

EMIR

She made Youssif general manager in less than two years.

FADWA

He earned that position. Give the man some credit.

EMIR

I give him credit for getting in good with Chef Hayat! Her cookbook is a bestseller!

FADWA

Oh please.

EMIR

She sent me a copy.

FADWA

She sent everyone a copy!

EMIR

She sent everyone a copy?

FADWA

Revising our family recipes and calling them authentic? *Yanni*, who is buying this crap?

DALAL

Foo Foo, she did go to one of the best culinary schools.

FADWA

Kus imm il one of the best culinary schools! She's selling lies, I can't stand it!

(FADWA gives the eggplant a beating.)

DALAL

Don't take it out on the wedding food. Please! I don't want to eat your fury!

EMIR

Me neither. But, I'll take what I can get.

DALAL

You, stop dilly-dallying. *Yallah*, I'll meet you at the church in a few hours.

EMIR

I am not wearing a tie.

DALAL

You have to make a good impression on the priest. You still haven't bothered to meet him. The wedding is less than a week away! Out.

EMIR

Yes, sergeant.

DALAL
(holding Emir at the door)

Look, soldiers.

EMIR

I'll catch a ride with them.

DALAL

Just go out the back.

EMIR

For you, anything.

(Kisses DALAL on the cheek. Begins exiting.)

Bye, Foo Foo. Thanks for "lunch."

DALAL

Be careful.

EMIR

Don't worry.

(EMIR exits. DALAL stares out the window.)

DALAL

Ya Allah, I'm so sick of them!

FADWA

Just worry about your wedding.

SAMIA (O.S.)

Dalal. *Yallah*.

FADWA

Go help Auntie Samia before she comes in here and starts yelling.

SAMIA (O.S.)
(Yelling)

Ya banat! Kaslaneen!

FADWA

Too late.

DALAL

Coming!

SAMIA

Dalal! Willik Dalal!

DALAL

Coming, coming! *Ya Allah*, coming!

(DALAL exits. FADWA starts to clean the mess she made, pauses, looks up at the audience.)

ACT I

SCENE II

(Same day, evening. Lights up on FADWA.)

FADWA

Good evening, and welcome back to *Food and Fadwa*! For those of you just joining in, we've been cooking up scrumptious appetizers for the wedding—I hope you're taking good notes! We were just adding some olive oil to a few of our dishes here. This is a kind of wonder condiment in my family. It isn't just used for cooking. It's used for sore muscles, ear aches, hair conditioner. My father, my Baba, says that olive oil could cure any illness except the illness of death. He tells a story about

(Lights rise on BABA of FADWA's memory. He faces the audience:)

FADWA

Adam--

BABA

Adam--

BABA

Adam, of Adam and Eve, was deeply distressed due to his recent fall from grace and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. He wasn't accustomed to the aches, and pains of his new physical form. And he was a whiner. He had the nerve, if you can imagine, to render up his complaints to God, begging for mercy. Our infinitely compassionate Creator pitied the poor, suffering Adam and so sent his messenger, the Archangel Gabriel, to his rescue. Gabriel, in his celestial splendor, descended from heaven with the most magnificent offering the earth had yet seen: an olive tree. He gifted the ailing Adam with the precious sapling, instructed him to plant it and harvest the fruits for oil, promising it to be the panacea for all afflictions. We are born of Adam, Fadwa. We have inherited his afflictions, and so must we take his cures. I drink everyday, half a glass-

FADWA/BABA

I will live long life!

(Lights down on BABA.)

FADWA

My Baba is obsessed with olive oil. You see this bottle?

(She holds up a bottle.)

Camera one, can I have a close up on the bottle? Thank you, Mike, you are so cute. You see, it says *Zeit Zaytoun't Zein*. Zein's Olive Oil. Zein, my father. My Baba Ghanoush. It is the only olive oil we are allowed to use. Straight from my grandmothers groves.

FADWA

BABA

My Tayta-

Your Tayta-

(Lights up on BABA)

BABA

--was very devoted to her olive trees—to a fault. Even pregnant, she stood in her groves for hours, picking olives until the moment her water broke! The closer her contractions became, the more she picked! And as a mother knows when to birth her child, a farmer knows the exact moment to harvest. Pick the olives too soon, and they are bitter. Pick them too late, and they are weak and useless. . . Tayta was devoted to the well being of all her children, human and fruit alike.

FADWA
My Baba-

BABA
Your Baba-

BABA

--Baba was born under a majestic, ancient olive tree-

FADWA

-Under which Tayta nursed him for 40 days straight.

BABA

I refused to suckle in any other location.

FADWA

There, under the shelter of that resplendent evergreen, my Baba found comfort—

BABA

--Experiencing the perfect symbiosis between man and nature, even as a tiny newborn.

FADWA

But my poor Tata was totally freezing her breasts off!

BABA

Every time she tried to move from that tree, I would scream.

FADWA

She tried everything to assuage her stubborn baby.

BABA

Toys, whistles, bells—

FADWA

Nomadic dancers, donkey rides-

BABA

Nothing!

FADWA

Finally she resorted to singing—

BABA

A risky idea, given her atrocious singing voice—

FADWA

-And was able to move his little heart with the sweetest of songs—*Ah Ya Zein*.

(BABA begins to play the oud.)

Slowly she moved from the tree to the house, singing these lyrics over and over again: *Ah Ya Zein* --

BABA/FADWA

AH YA ZEIN AH YA ZEIN IL-AABEE-DEEN, YA WARD, YA WARD IMM-FATAH-BAYN-IL-BA-SA-TEEN. AH YA ZEIN

FADWA

Oh you beautiful

BABA

AH YA ZEIN IL-AABEE-DEEN

FADWA

Oh you beautiful amongst the worshippers.

BABA

YA WARD

FADWA

You a rose

BABA

YA WARD IMM-FATAH-BAYN-IL-BA-SA-TEEN.

FADWA

You a rose that bloomed in the gardens.

FADWA

AH YA ZEIN, AH YA ZEIN

(Lights down on BABA. Enter YOUSSEF.)

YOUSSIF
Bravo, *willik*, bravo!

FADWA
Oh my god!

YOUSSIF
Are you giving a concert?

FADWA
Don't you knock?

(They kiss each other on the cheek and immediately
start talking over each other.)

FADWA
How was your flight-

YOUSSIF
How are you—

FADWA
Fine—You must be tired

YOUSSIF
Fine. How's your dad?

FADWA
He's ok—

YOUSSIF
I'm ok—

FADWA
It's good to see you.

YOUSSIF
It's good to see you.

FADWA
I'm glad you're home.

YOUSSIF
Me too.

(Beat.)
You're hair got long.

FADWA
Yeah. . .

BABA (O.S.)
Fadwa?

FADWA
Yes?

(BABA shuffles on stage holding a small plant.)

BABA

Olive oil, Fadwa. Please. For the plant.

(FADWA takes BABA a bottle of olive oil. He rubs some oil on the plant's leaves.)

BABA (CONT'D)

Because they are dry.

(He rubs a bit on his temples. Points to his head.)

Because it is lost. There. You are very sweet my little one. You will grow to be 20 feet tall and I will visit you in the field. You will not be in this. . .eh, this . . .eh. . . for much longer. Yes. You will grow to be 20 feet tall. Like my other trees. My trees. . .

(Spotting YOUSSEF.)

Hello.

YOUSSEF

Uh, Amo, it's me, Youssif. Youssif Azzam. Do you remember me?

BABA

Eh? Youssif?

(Recognizing)

Walek, habibi Youssif! [**Oh, my dear Youssif!**] *Shta 'tilak*, Amo! [**I missed you, Son!**] And Fadwa also misses you.

YOUSSEF

I miss her too, Amo.

BABA

You finally come back to marry her, eh? Okay! You have my permission! *Mabrook!* [**Congratulations!**] We'll make a party here for you. You will be a beautiful bride. Did you tell Mama? She'll be so happy. Now. *Weh 'it a zoor Il shajar*. [**It's time to go tend to the trees.**] I want to pick some olives. Special for the party. Youssif, you come also and pick, huh?

YOUSSEF

Ok, Amo...eh, sure.

BABA

Where is my. . .my. . .Bring me. . .the thing that holds the olives, *habibti*.

FADWA

Your bucket?

BABA

Yes, that.

(He stops and looks around.)

BABA (CONT'D)

Where am I?

FADWA

Baba, you're home.

BABA

No.

FADWA

Baba—

BABA

I must go home.

FADWA

Baba, you are home.

YOUSSIF

Come on, Amo, I'll take you.

BABA

Okay.

YOUSSIF

Wow, you're still strong!

(To FADWA as he walks Baba around the kitchen)

Come on, Fadwa. We're going home.

(They walk, slowly, finally stopping at Baba's chair.)

YOUSSIF

Ok, Amo. We're here.

BABA

(Looking around, nodding his head.)

Good. Good.

FADWA

Get some rest before dinner.

(BABA exits.)

FADWA

Wow. Thank you.

YOUSSIF

I've heard it helps to play along.

FADWA

Sometimes he's fine. Other times. . .I don't know.

YOUSSIF

Emir's been telling me. I always ask.

(Spots the TABLA)

Is that my tabla? The one your father gave me?

FADWA

He thinks it's a bucket for olive picking.

(She flips it over and hands it to him.)

YOUSSIF

Man, I miss playing—especially with him.

(Thumps on it.)

Such a great sound. Can't find them like this in New York.

FADWA

Then why did you leave it here?

YOUSSIF

I thought I would come back for it.

FADWA

I thought so too.

(They share a brief look.)

EMIR (O.S.)

Walak ya Kelb! [**Hey you bastard!**] Where's my brother?!

YOUSSIF

Yil 3an deenak, Emir! [**Damn, Emir!**]

(Enter EMIR and DALAL. EMIR is wearing a NECKTIE.)

EMIR

Well, well, well look who's back from *Amreeka*!

YOUSSIF

Still haven't grown into your big mouth, huh?

(YOUSSIF and DALAL kiss on the cheek.)

DALAL

Hamdillah 3al salaami! [**Thank God for your arrival.**]

YOUSSIF

Allah ey salmik, Dal Dal.

EMIR

(Splitting them apart)

Hey, hey, hey, easy! You never give me that many kisses!

DALAL

I don't want you to get too excited.

EMIR

You got here fast, man. How long did they keep you at the border?

YOUSSIF

Five hours. Nothing.

EMIR

Lucky bastard. All right, let's feed this man. Where's that *hashweh*? *Yallah*.

YOUSSIF

There's *hashweh*?

EMIR

She's been depriving me all day, this woman. No one could eat till you got here. No one.

YOUSSIF

I am the guest of honor. And I am older than you.

EMIR

Much older. Ancient. Prehistoric. Look at this leathery, withering face.

(He grabs YOUSSIF's face)

My brother is home. *Hamdillah*.

(ENTER SAMIA.)

SAMIA

(Seeing YOUSSIF, she runs to him.)

Youssif! Ya habibi! Ya habibi! Ya habibi!

(Samia kisses him about 50 times.)

YOUSSIF

Ehlan ya Samia! [**Hi dear Samia**]. How are you *Khalto*?

(SAMIA, practically in tears, grabs FADWA and YOUSSIF'S hands and connects them, looking back and forth at them, beaming. YOUSSIF is moved, but slightly uncomfortable.)

FADWA

Eh, Dalal, help me finish getting everything on the table.

YOUSSIF

I'll help.

DALAL

No, no. Emir, set the table.

EMIR

I'll just sit here so you know where to put the food.

DALAL

Emir.

YOUSSIF

Let me help you.

EMIR

No no no, you relax old man.

(EMIR jumps up to help. In the kitchen everyone bustles around to get dinner on the table. SAMIA sings cheerfully.)

FADWA

Hummus?

DALAL

Got it.

FADWA

Salad?

SAMIA

Yes.

FADWA

Wait! Salad needs salt. Mix that. Please.

EMIR

(Sniffing the air.)

For God's sake, what is that?

(Sniffing YOUSSIF.)

Stetson? Old Spice?

YOUSSIF

Armani.

EMIR

Walaw! Excuse me.

FADWA

It smells nice.

EMIR

Oof Please! For sissies. You know what I use, old man? Three drops of German motor oil, slice of lemon.

DALAL

Maybe you'll use soap someday.

EMIR

She can't keep her hands off me.

(He pinches her side.)

FADWA

Auntie, get the good silverware—

YOUSSEF

No please, don't trouble yourself.

FADWA

It's ok, it's ok--

EMIR

Forget it! Who cares? Let's eat!

(Everyone sits. EMIR fills his plate with food to begin eating.)

DALAL

(Smacking his head.)

Savage! Can you wait please? We still need to say grace.

EMIR

God knows how I feel about food. Amen.

(DALAL takes away his fork.)

DALAL

Dear heavenly Father. Thank you for this wonderful meal. Please bless those who provided it, those who made it and those who are about to eat it. Thank you for our home, our health and for Youssif's safe arrival--

FADWA

Hamdillah.

DALAL

Please bless all of our family members, both here and living abroad--

HAYAT

Especially those living abroad.

(HAYAT, beautifully dressed, carrying two suitcases, leans against the doorway smiling. A beat. DALAL and HAYAT scream.)

DALAL

Oh my God!

FADWA

Oh my God.

DALAL

Hayat! *Willik*, Hayat!

HAYAT

Look at you! You're a woman!

(EMIR joins in the screams.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

Emir! Hi hi hi!!! My little Prince!

EMIR

Little Prince? A king! Come give me a hug!

DALAL

I can't believe you're here! I thought you couldn't come!

HAYAT

I just couldn't miss your wedding, sweetie. No way!

YOUSSEF

You weren't supposed to be here for a few more days.

DALAL

You knew she was coming?

HAYAT

I told him not to tell! I wanted to surprise everyone!

FADWA

Well you did! Wow.

HAYAT

Foofs! Give me a hug! You look . . . good. Nice doo-rag, girl!

EMIR

Who-rag?

HAYAT

Hi Auntie Samia! Oh my God, you haven't aged!

SAMIA

I know.

HAYAT

You and my mother have the same skin—ugh, Gorgeous.

SAMIA

Faranesh sisters-- very pretty! But your mother was the wild one. You come over, I tell you stories.

HAYAT

(Taking Samia's hands.)

Oh I will. I'm sorry about your husband—I know it's been some time since he passed—

(SAMIA smiles and gives her a big hug.)

SAMIA

It's ok, it's ok. Life.

HAYAT

Where's your dad? At the olive press?

EMIR

There's nothing left to press—

FADWA

No, he's in his room. He's--

HAYAT

Uncle Zein!

FADWA

He's ill, Hayat. Please greet him later.

HAYAT

I know he's ill, but...I just thought—

DALAL

It's ok, *habibti*, you can see him in a bit. He's just resting now. I'm sure he'll be happy to see you.

HAYAT

I just—I didn't realize--My mom made it sound like he was fine.

DALAL

She did?

FADWA

When was the last time you spoke to her?

HAYAT

Oh, God, when was the last time I spoke to Mama. You guys probably talk to her more than I do. And we live in the same city.

SAMIA

No. No good. *Tsk tsk tsk*.

DALAL

Well, people get busy. How was your flight? When did you get in?

HAYAT

About two hours ago. It was hectic. I flew direct to Tel Aviv and they held me for, like, 15 minutes while they checked my passport. Awful.

FADWA

15 minutes is awful?

HAYAT

I'm not used to being questioned like that.

DALAL

No, *habibti*, of course not. A lot has changed since you were here last. I cannot believe I am looking at my cousin right now!

HAYAT

I know!

DALAL

We'll share a room, like when we were kids!

HAYAT
Oh, sleepovers!

EMIR
I love sleepovers.

DALAL
Emir, take Hayat's suitcases into my room. Fadwa, do we have clean linens?

FADWA
Um, yes...

DALAL
Can you go put them on the extra bed in my room?

HAYAT
Oh you don't have to do that now, Foofs.

FADWA
It's ok.

(FADWA exits, followed by SAMIA. EMIR goes to pick up the suitcases.)

EMIR
My God, what the hell is in here, cement?

HAYAT
Presents, darling, wedding presents.

EMIR
Mind if I take a peek?

HAYAT
Don't you dare!

EMIR
Dalal!

(DALAL picks up HAYATs other bag and runs after him.)

YOUSSEF
So, what happened? I thought you couldn't come till Thursday.

HAYAT

Well, they moved my Food Network Event so I switched some things around to be here earlier! I wish we were staying together.

YOUSSIF

I know, but...I have to talk to Fadwa.

HAYAT

Right. You're adorable.

YOUSSIF
(Playfully)

Try to resist the urge to flirt with me.

HAYAT
(Winking at him.)

I'll try.

(Enter EMIR and DALAL.)

EMIR

Ok, folks let's eat! Fadwa! *Yallah!*

(SAMIA enters)

FADWA (O.S.)

I'll be there in one second.

DALAL

My God, Hayat, I love your outfit. When we get to New York, Bloomingdales!

HAYAT

Dalaly, when you get to New York, I will take you everywhere!

EMIR

Fadwa! Come *on!*

(Enter FADWA.)

FADWA
(serving spoon in hand)

Yallah, come sit everyone. Give me your plates.

DALAL

Hayat, sit and eat something.

HAYAT

What's for dinner there?

(Peeking into the pot.)

Oh, rice and meat? It's kind of a heavy meal—I mean it's like 11am my time!

DALAL

Foo Foo, make a plate for Hayat.

HAYAT

Well, ok, but not too much. Thank you, that's great.

(Pointedly sniffing the food.)

Hmm.

EMIR

Fadwa, this is MUMTAZ! **[FANTASTIC!]**

FADWA

Thank you, Emir. Youssif?

YOUSSEF

A little more. A little more.

HAYAT

(HAYAT looks at him and pats her belly.)

Take it easy. Gotta stay trim...

YOUSSEF

One more.

HAYAT

All right, we'll go for a run tomorrow.

EMIR

Shoo run? Run where? Run here and you'll get shot. Why not scale the separation wall while you're at it? Now *that's* circuit training. Run for your life! It's the West Bank Workout!

HAYAT

That wall is—I have no words. I mean, I always knew—but seeing it. It's shocking.

YOUSSEF

It's our national landmark!

EMIR

Yep. Our Great Wall of Palestine!

HAYAT

It's practically in your backyard.

DALAL

It's in everyone's backyard.

EMIR

Yes, we own at least a kilometer.

YOUSSEF

Let's have a drink. *Arak* anyone?

EMIR

I'll take a double!

(EMIR pours two drinks.)

HAYAT

I mean, that thing, that God forsaken monstrosity—Is that legal? I can't believe the UN let this happen.

(EMIR and YOUSSEF raise their glasses.)

YOUSSEF

To the Separation Wall!

EMIR

The Security Wall!

YOUSSEF

A Mere Fence!

EMIR

A Virtual Gate!

YOUSSEF

EMIR

To The Wall!

To The Wall!

(They drink. EMIR pours two more shots.)

HAYAT

I saw the protesters out there when I was coming in. Good for them.

YOUSSEF

(Raising his glass.)

307 miles longer than the Berlin Wall!

EMIR

14 feet taller!

EMIR

To The Wall!

YOUSSIF

To The Wall!

(They drink.)

HAYAT

Knock it off you two! This is serious. They've completely jailed us in...

EMIR

Brother.

YOUSSIF

Brother.

EMIR

Drink with me in honor of my Jerusalem permit.

(EMIR takes out an ID card. YOUSSIF grabs it.)

YOUSSIF

This expires tomorrow! 11:59 PM tomorrow night!

EMIR

Bravo, you still remember your Hebrew!

YOUSSIF

Ken. Ken! [Yes.] Permit, I will drink to you.

EMIR

Permit! For you, I drink!

YOUSSIF

Permit!

EMIR

Permit!

HAYAT

Expires? Can't you renew it?

DALAL

He tried. The military denied him.

HAYAT

Why did they deny you?

EMIR

Dalal...

DALAL

When he tried to renew it, the military started asking him questions, like about people in the neighborhood. There's this woman down the street who's an activist-- they wanted information on her. He told them he didn't know anything—

EMIR

I *didn't* know anything! I fixed her car once.

DALAL

They wanted him to find things out, act as an informant.

EMIR

Never.

DALAL

A few days later, his permit was denied.

HAYAT

Why do you even need a permit? Jerusalem is like, 15 miles away?

YOUSSEF

Five.

HAYAT

Five miles?

DALAL

It used to take 10-15 minutes to get there. Now, more like 5 hours, with the checkpoints and roadblocks. But that's only if you're lucky enough to have the permit.

HAYAT

But why do you need a permit?

(Everyone begins a historical explanation, talking over one another.)

EMIR

Enough! Let me explain to our American visitor here. Move your plates. Fadwa, Dalal hold these.

(He hands them the hummus and salad.)

DALAL

Eh, what are you doing?

EMIR

Okay. This table here is all of the West Bank. Let us say this hummus represents Area A—let's just put a few dollops here and there.

FADWA

Yee, what are you—

EMIR

And now these little piles of rice are Area B—

YOUSSEF

And these little pieces of napkin are Area C—

FADWA

Ya Allah, you're making a mess!

EMIR

Visual aids are very important. Now, Area A—the hummus—are areas run by the Palestinian Authority. Supposedly. Authority on what—God knows. The piles of rice, Area B, are areas that are Palestinian run but with Israeli *security*. Area C, the pieces of napkin, are areas that are Israeli controlled. And all of these little pieces of chicken are undetermined areas.

YOUSSEF

Yanni, areas that are up for negotiation—

EMIR

In other words, Israeli.

YOUSSEF

And these bits of salad are the Israeli settlements--

EMIR

And all of this salt—those are checkpoints. Hundreds of them sprinkled all over the place—

HAYAT

I think I'm getting it. . .

YOUSSEF

And don't forget the wall—these cups are the wall. We need more cups.

EMIR

This fork will be the permit.

YOUSSEF

Genius brother.

EMIR

Now Bethlehem is here, in Area A, in the hummus. If you want to get from hummus to hummus, you don't need a fork. You can just use bread.

HAYAT

What does the bread represent?

EMIR

Nothing. It's just the best way to eat hummus.

DALAL

It doesn't make sense!

FADWA

It's oversimplified!

EMIR

It's *Oslo*! So, if you want to go from hummus to rice, you still don't need a fork. And, Area C, what's Israeli controlled, doesn't need bread or a fork because no one wants to eat napkin.

YOUSSEF

Exactly.

FADWA

What?

DALAL

I'm confused.

HAYAT

It's making sense! So where is Jerusalem in relation to all this?

EMIR

Jerusalem is here, in the undetermined space, the chicken.

HAYAT

Which you need a fork for!

EMIR

Aywah! Exactly!

HAYAT

And no matter what, you always have to go through the salt—the checkpoints!

EMIR

That's right. Smart girl! See before, we didn't need forks. We just ate chicken with our hands. But they said, "You people are a bunch of animals! How can you eat chicken with your hands? You must use forks!"

HAYAT

And tomorrow your fork expires.

EMIR

Yep.

(His smile fades.)

Tomorrow is the last day I will be permitted to enter the Old City. . .If you need me, I can be found at the Wailing Wall, wailing.

(YOUSSIF pours two more drinks.)

YOUSSIF

Al Quds!

EMIR

Al Quds!

EMIR
Al Quds!

YOUSSIF
Al Quds!

DALAL

Emir, that's it for you. Time to clean up this. . . map.

EMIR

Yes, my Goddess.

HAYAT

Oh, wait, what about Gaza?

EMIR

Gaza? Different menu. Fadwa, dinner was magnificent.

YOUSSIF

Delicious as usual.

HAYAT

It was, thank you, Foof. What's in the *hashweh*? Nutmeg, I'm guessing?

(FADWA nods. HAYAT is not too impressed.)

It's good.

(SAMIA rises to start cleaning.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

So, Auntie, are you still next door? I want to come hear those stories--

(SAMIA shakes her head “yes.” Her cell phone rings.)

SAMIA

(On Phone)

‘Alo? No Miriam, I can’t go. Arab Idol is on in half hour.

(SAMIA fishes a cigarette out of her pocket and goes to light it.)

DALAL

—Auntie, don’t you dare smoke that in here—

SAMIA

Aren’t you watching? You better vote!

(SAMIA gives an irritated “*tsk*,” and exits shaking her head.)

EMIR

Hayat, tell us about your award!

HAYAT

Oh, it’s no big deal, really.

EMIR

She’s so humble!

YOUSSIF

It is a big deal. Show them the feature in Oprah Magazine. Did you bring a copy?

HAYAT

I did!

(She goes to her oversized designer bag, pulls out the magazine and hands it to EMIR.

Um, page 56, I think.

(SAMIA slips back into the house.)

EMIR

“Ethnic Authentics We Love and Admire: Chef Hayat Faranesh.”

FADWA

Faranesh?

HAYAT

Yeah, I'm using my moms name now. Better for PR. My dad's kinda ticked off about it, but his name is way too Anglo! I mean, Johnson? Chef Hayat Johnson? I don't think so!

EMIR

"The James Beard Award-winning chef shares a few of her favorite recipes with *O* this month." Amazing! Look at this picture of you—very nice!

HAYAT

Oh, thanks sweetie. The award is a great thing, it really is, I mean, some people say it's like an Oscar for chefs, but the important thing is—well, it's big news, actually—Youssif, I'm telling them now—

YOUSSEIF

Just give it a day—

EMIR

No, tell us now!

HAYAT

Well, the award generated a lot of buzz and interest, and thankfully, investors who want to put up the money for a new place!

DALAL

That's great, Hayat.

HAYAT

Yes, and I've asked this guy—
(Pointing to YOUSSEIF.)
--to be my business partner.

FADWA

Really?

HAYAT

But I need a third man. Guess who I'm thinking of?

EMIR

Bono!

HAYAT

You!

EMIR

What?

HAYAT

Yeah.

EMIR

You're kidding? Ours?

YOUSSEF

Well, we still have a lot of details to take care of—

EMIR

But our own restaurant again, Youssif?

YOUSSEF

Inshallah, it will work out this time.

EMIR

You know what would bring in a lot of people? If we call it Emir's Palace.

(Enter BABA.)

DALAL

Baba, look who's here! Hayat! From America! Your sister Jamila's daughter.

HAYAT

Hi Khalo! Habibi, I've missed you!

(HAYAT goes to hug him.)

The last time you saw me I was still a teenager. Do you recognize me?

BABA

(Staring at her blankly.)

I don't think so....

FADWA

Yallah, it's time to eat something, Baba.

EMIR

Here, Amo. Whatever you don't eat, I will.

(EMIR tries to hand him a bowl of food, but Baba
knocks it out of his hand.)

BABA

No! I will not take food from this thief!

DALAL

Baba? It's Emir, my fiancé.

BABA

I know Emir! Emir the thief! You stole money from me! I saw you!

FADWA

Baba, no. /Of course he didn't.

BABA

Get out! /Get out or I will show you! Out!

(BABA wields his slipper.)

EMIR

Amo, I got your wallet from the freezer. I would never—

BABA

Out I said!

YOUSSIF

(Dramatically)

Emir, how dare you steal from the family! Get out! Don't come back!

HAYAT

Oh God! You guys are drunk!

EMIR

No, really. Deniro, please continue.

YOUSSIF

Out! But first, apologize.

DALAL

He didn't do anything.

YOUSSIF

Just to ease his mind, *habibti*. Emir! Apologize!

EMIR

Eh, sorry.

YOUSSIF

You're not very sincere.

BABA

No, he's not. That is why I hate him.

EMIR
(Melodramatically)

Amo, I am so sorry from the bottom of my unusually brave heart. Please accept my apology and forgive me, beloved Elder!

DALAL

Ok, you see Baba? He didn't mean it—

EMIR

--I am the most despicable thief alive. I must to REPENT!

DALAL

EMIR!

YOUSSEF

That's better! Right, Amo? Better?

BABA

Give me my money back!

(Everyone looks to EMIR.)

EMIR

Eh, how much did I take?

BABA

You know how much!

EMIR
(Pulls some change out of his pocket.)

Right. Here are two shekels and an American nickel.

BABA

50 shekel!

EMIR

Sorry, I steal from so many people, I can't keep track.

YOUSSEF

Give this to him.

BABA

Wait till I tell your mother what a thief you're marrying!

EMIR

Amo. This is 50 shekel and I'm very sorry.

(BABA looks at the money. He takes it and shuffles away.)

BABA

Fadwa. I want to go to bed.

FADWA

Ok, Baba. I'm so sorry Emir.

BABA (O.S.)

Fadwa! Where is my pajama?

FADWA

Coming.

(FADWA exits after BABA.)

HAYAT

Oh my God. I had no idea. I feel so stupid.

EMIR

You feel stupid? I'm a criminal!

HAYAT

Dalal, if there's anything you need, anything I can do—please, let me.

DALAL

You're doing enough just by being with us.

HAYAT

I'm so happy to be here. *Yallah*, let's get this place cleaned up.

(Lights down as EMIR, YOUSSEF, DALAL, and HAYAT clean up.)

ACT I

SCENE III

(Next day, early morning. FADWA speaks to the audience:)

FADWA

Good Morning, Gentle Viewers and welcome to another episode of *Food and Fadwa*. It is 9am Holy Land Standard time and we are up very early to do some necessary wedding prep. But first we need to have breakfast. We don't want the bride getting cranky or the cameraman passing out from the low blood sugar. Right Mike? Now. This is a little breakfast treat we call *mana'eesh*. *Mana'eesh* is like a warm bath and a fireplace and a hug all rolled into one savory, delicious bite. First, we roll out the pita dough and spread on it a mixture of olive oil and *za'tar*. *Za'tar* is a seasoning made of dried ground thyme, sumac and sesame seeds.

(She spreads the oil and *za'tar* mix onto the dough.)

Now we bake. My Youssif goes crazy for *mana'eesh*, crazy!

HAYAT (O.S.)

I mean it's just an option. One of many.

(Enter DALAL and HAYAT.)

HAYAT
(In bad Arabic)

Sabah il Care! Morning Foof!

DALAL
Hi!

FADWA
Hello. You're up early.

HAYAT
I'm still jet-lagged. Thought I would take advantage of it!

FADWA
There's *mana'eesh*.

DALAL
Thank you.

FADWA
Take some to Emir before he goes to work.

DALAL

He left already. He went at 4 this morning to get in line at the checkpoint.

FADWA

He never leaves that early.

DALAL

It's his last day in Jerusalem. He wants enough time to say goodbye to everyone.

FADWA

Is Youssif up?

HAYAT

Oh, he's exhausted, sweetie, he's still asleep. But, I'm sure he'll be by later if he can. He's got a lot of people to catch up with. I've got something for you, Fadwa.

(HAYAT exits.)

FADWA

Uh, so how was your walk with Baba?

DALAL

It was good.

FADWA

See?

DALAL

We didn't go far, just around the neighborhood. But Baba did well.

FADWA

Good!

DALAL

He's on the front porch with Auntie Samia, trying to play his oud...I hope it comes back to him.

FADWA

Inshallah.

DALAL

He has to play at my wedding.

FADWA

Inshallah.

(Enter SAMIA chatting away on her cell, heading for the kitchen.)

SAMIA

(On Phone)

Miriam, this kid from Tunisia is the best singer in the competition. *Wallah*, I will kill someone if they vote him off!

FADWA

Auntie--

(SAMIA gives a slight wave and continues babbling.)

SAMIA

(On Phone)

Uh huh. Uh huh. Exactly.

FADWA

Auntie, I need you to—

(SAMIA nods violently and waves her hand to shut FADWA up. She retrieves a bowl and a few bunches of parsley from the kitchen, and heads back to the front porch.)

SAMIA

(On Phone)

Yee, the Saudi boy? He gets the most votes every week because he's from the biggest country. They don't care if he can sing or not! Makes me sick.

(SAMIA exits.)

DALAL

Obsessed.

FADWA

What time is your dress fitting? I just need to get some things done before we go—

DALAL

Oh, don't worry about it. Hayat's coming with me. You have enough to do.

(Hayat returns with a pile of very colorful dresses, and goes to dump them into FADWA's food covered hands.)

HAYAT

Fadwa, for you! Ooh, are your hands clean? That one's Chanel.

DALAL

Chanel?

HAYAT

I never wear them. I thought Foofs might want a few. You, I'll take shopping once we get to the city.

FADWA

I don't need these, Hayat, I—

DALAL

You still need a dress for the wedding.

FADWA

I have one.

DALAL

The black one? It's 15 years old.

FADWA

What? It's timeless.

HAYAT

(Picking a dress from the pile)

This one would look great on you.

FADWA

What is that, a headband?

DALAL

Try it on!

FADWA

No! I don't like it!

HAYAT

(Picking out a very colorful, puffy sleeved frock.)

What about this?

FADWA

I don't understand it.

HAYAT

Come on girl, just try it.

DALAL

Don't be silly, go try them. *Yallah*, go!

(FADWA exits.)

HAYAT

Girl needs a make-over. I mean that in a good way. She's pretty. She needs some fixing up is all.

DALAL

She works very hard. And with my father...

HAYAT

I'm serious about taking him with us. It's totally doable. There are special clinics, drug trials, music therapy—

(DALAL looks hesitant)

Of course, talk to Fadwa. See what she thinks.

DALAL

I will.

FADWA (O.S.)

Ugly!

DALAL

Show us!

(to Hayat)

Wouldn't those treatments be expensive?

HAYAT

My money is your money. What good is it sitting in a bank when my uncle is suffering? Please, please.

(Enter FADWA in the puffy sleeved frock.)

FADWA

I feel weird.

DALAL

It's pretty!

HAYAT

It's a few seasons old, but who would know here?

FADWA

It's too short.

DALAL

Try the other ones.

HAYAT

No pressure, Foo Foo. Ease into it. Keep them for now and see if there's one you like.

FADWA

I like my dress better.

(FADWA shuffles off.)

HAYAT

Stubborn, as always.

DALAL

Very. But what about a visa? It took 6 months to get Emir's and mine.

HAYAT

Medical visas are faster. And I know a congressman who'd do anything for a good meal. We'll get him a visa.

(FADWA re-enters.)

FADWA

Get who a visa?

DALAL
Nobody.

HAYAT
Your dad.

FADWA

What does he need a visa for?

HAYAT

To come to the States.

FADWA

He's sick in case you haven't noticed. He can't travel.

DALAL

No, for medical treatment. . .

HAYAT

Just to see what else can be done about his dementia.

(Off Stage we hear some strained plucking of the
Oud.)

DALAL

Did you hear that?

HAYAT

Sounds a bit...off...

DALAL

It's something! That's it, Baba. Keep going.

(DALAL hurries offstage. FADWA resumes cooking. HAYAT walks about, inhaling deeply.)

HAYAT

God, I miss this house. Mmmm. . .smell is the same as always. . .that combination of sweat and *za'tar* takes me back. Must be in the walls.

(Taking inventory of the kitchen.)

Same pots, same pans! I don't know how you manage with this stuff. The cookware that is available now is astounding, Foof.

FADWA

I don't need those things.

HAYAT

The furniture! Same. These chairs have to be more than three decades old. There is this picture over at Youssif and Emir's mom's place—totally framed and everything—of you and Youssif, you're about five, I think, sitting together on the same chair—this very one-- with your arms around each other. It is *the* perfect picture of puppy love.

(The sound of an actual song being played is heard offstage.)

HAYAT

Is that your dad playing?

FADWA

It's Dalal.

HAYAT

I feel terrible that I haven't seen you guys in so long. God, since your mom's...funeral. Fifteen years...it just goes by. I always want to get back here-- but I don't have time to do anything! Ask Youssif, I'm always swamped! And my latest book has kept me *so* busy. Rewrites and contracts and editing. My editor *forbade* me from leaving the city, *habibi*. For. Bade.

(Fadwa is silent, her attention on the food.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

Your mom was the reason I started cooking. I still make the date cookies she taught us how to make when we were kids. My favorites. I put the recipe in my cookbook—Auntie Lena's Date Delights.

FADWA

But you changed the recipe.

HAYAT

Oh, just a smidge. A few things here and there, but basically the same. I do it all the time! I love to play. You know, I'm happy to show you a few new tricks for the wedding. I created this amazing recipe for *tabbouli* with currants and white truffle oil. It's brilliant.

FADWA

Sounds delicious, Hayat.

HAYAT

Youssif *loves* it. Best tabbouli he's ever had.

FADWA

He said that?

HAYAT

I can tell. . .

FADWA

Can you?

(Hayat starts to leave.)

HAYAT

Well, I promised Youssif and Emir's mom I would help with the wedding favors. Candied almonds in a white mesh sack. When will that tradition die?

FADWA

It's the sentiment. Hard bitterness shelled in sweetness. Like marriage.

HAYAT

Romantic. I'll see you later, then? When I come back we're gonna make some new eats, Fadwa. It'll be fun.

FADWA

Yes, fun.

HAYAT

Unlike when we were kids. . .

FADWA

Uh huh.

(HAYAT exits.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

Today's episode of Food and Fadwa was brought to you by: Hayat! A self-absorbed toxic agent designed to choke, irritate and manipulate! Hayat! Good for spoiling any and all joyful moments of merriment from birthdays to anniversaries! Now fully equipped with a worthless collection of cookbooks, Hayat is the perfect spoiler for all your celebratory needs. Order your Hayat today and get free shipping and handling and a free fat ass! Offer available in Palestine only.

Hello and welcome back. Our next dish, *Tabbouli*! Auntie! Parsley!

(AUNTIE SAMIA enters with a bowl of chopped parsley.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

Here comes my Aunt with the pre-chopped parsley! Thank you, Amto Samia, for this beautifully de-stemmed and chopped parsley. You can go home now. *Yallah, kishi*. **[Come on, move it.]**

(AUNTIE SAMIA shuffles off muttering under her breath and shaking her head.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

She wants to be on the show, but....she's very moody. Next on the menu: *tabbouli*. This traditional Arabic salad made of parsley and bulgur wheat sounds deceptively simple. But do not be fooled. This dish is a test in tediousness. It requires patience.

(Grabbing a bunch of parsley and begins to pick it off the stem as she speaks.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

First, we de-stem. Please, de-stem. Do not put stems in the *tabbouli*. I will kill you. We are not farm animals. Now we can chop. Chop finely. Slowly. Don't be lazy. Do not betray the parsley with your own agenda. And don't rush! When you rush, the food suffers. Or you will, when you cut off a finger! You deserve it! No one wants to eat hastily made food! Recipe for indigestions! Look, now, how fine it is, how soft and loveable. Same with the bulgur. It starts dry, hard, lacking edibility. But after it has soaked in the warm womb of water, it softens. Now, the two may unite.

Parsley is so strong that it can grow in the bitter cold, and then sprouts in the early spring, when everything else is still asleep. Because of this, it is thought to be a symbol of new beginnings. Parsley is an amazing gift from nature.

Tabbouli is a perfect dish to serve at a wedding. It does not need adornments or updating. It is authentic and true to the culture from which it comes.

(She mixes the bulgur with the parsley.)

Now we can add some chopped tomatoes and cucumbers and green onions—of course mint. Beautiful! Look at those colors!

(Lights shift. BABA, in real time, enters trying to sing Fairuz's *Habaytak Tenseet Alnowm*. He can't remember the words, but is doing pretty well.)

BABA

(Singing)

Anna habaytak, habaytak. Breakfast, *ya* Fadwa?

(Continuing singing)

Habaytak...tenseet...tenseet... **[I loved you until I forgot...I forgot...]**

FADWA

Al nowm...anna habaytak habaytak **[the sleep...I loved you, I loved you]**

BABA & FADWA

(Remembering)

Anna habaytak, habaytak! **[I loved you, I loved you!]**

(BABA and FADWA sing along softly. BABA peeks into the counter, shakes his head and smiles, retrieves two plates, sets them on the table and sits. FADWA brings a spread to the table—all the while the two sing. They are well synchronized: she stands at the table cutting cucumbers into discs; he puts a few on his plate, and a few on hers. She cuts up the *manaeesh*; he places them on his plates and hers. She pours tea; he puts sugar in both mugs. And on and on... It's a quiet, little ritual just between the two of them. On harder days, BABA can't always swing it, but it's a good day so far.)

BABA

Sit, sit.

FADWA

Yes, Baba.

(FADWA sits and they eat.)

BABA

Excellent. Very, very good.

FADWA

Thanks, Baba. More?

(BABA shakes his head “no” with a *tsk* and continues eating. FADWA stops and watches him for a moment. BABA eats serenely, then catches FADWA watching him. He smiles, sweetly pinches her cheek and goes back to his food.)

BABA

It's ok, my Fadwa. Everything is ok...

(Enter DALAL)

DALAL

You did really well, Baba.

FADWA

Come eat.

(DALAL goes to the table and nibbles off of the plates.)

BABA

Get your mother, she should be here too. Why doesn't she eat with us anymore? Is she angry with me?

FADWA

No, she's not angry with you, *Yaba*.

BABA

I should go see.

FADWA

Baba, just finish your food—

BABA

I'm finished. It was very good.

DALAL

Baba, here. It's time to take your pills.

(BABA takes down his pills and exits. FADWA starts clearing the plates.)

DALAL

He's been doing that more and more. Asking for Mama...

FADWA

Well—

DALAL

I can't watch it. He needs help.

FADWA

I'll call his doctor.

DALAL

I don't mean here, I mean in the States. He needs better care. We could take him together.

FADWA

I don't think it will help.

DALAL

Listen, Hayat spoke to some doctors and she thinks—

FADWA

—And what we're a bunch of idiot *falaHeen* from the village? We don't know better, *yanni*?

DALAL

We don't know better!

FADWA

I do. I know his rhythms, his moods, more than anyone.

DALAL

But Hayat said-

FADWA

Hayat said. She hasn't talked to her own mother in God knows how long and now she's telling me what's best for my father?

DALAL

He's my father too. We need to make decisions about his life together, Fadwa.

FADWA

Baba's life is here, Dalal, he will be lost anywhere else.

DALAL

(Quietly.)

Soon he won't know the difference.

FADWA

Yes he will.

BABA (O.S)

Fadwa? *Willik*, Fadwa! She's not here.

FADWA

I'll be right there, Baba.

DALAL

This conversation isn't over.

FADWA

Go to your fitting. Don't forget Hayat.

BABA (O.S)

Fadwa?

FADWA

Coming!

(FADWA exits. DALAL sighs. Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE IV

(Same day, late afternoon. YOUSSEF enters and goes directly to the pot to taste the food as nobody is around. Enter FADWA.)

YOUSSEF

(Embarrassed)

I followed the smell from my house. Oh, *mloukiyi*. My favorite.

FADWA

I know. Probably still needs something.

YOUSSEF

No, nothing. It's perfect.

(He savors the taste.)

Always, perfect.

(YOUSSEF goes to the counter and grabs a handful of fresh herbs.)

YOUSSEF

I love the smell.

FADWA

Shoo, you don't have mint in New York?

YOUSSEF

Not like this. From the garden?

FADWA

What's left of it.

(YOUSSEF picks up a bottle of olive oil.)

YOUSSEF

"Zeit Zaytoon't Zein."

FADWA

We have about a dozen bottles left.

YOUSSEF

You should preserve them.

FADWA

They're meant to be used.

YOUSSIF

Not by my family. Remember when your dad refused to sell to our restaurant?

FADWA

Well, no, he wanted your dad to pay double because of what we did, remember?

YOUSSIF

That's right! Your father went straight to my father and told him "If Youssif is going to waste my olives, you will pay double for the oil!" I got in so much trouble.

FADWA

So did I. Worst summer of my life.

YOUSSIF

But it wasn't our fault. We didn't even start it! It was that annoying neighbor kid who used to follow us around everywhere—that total pain in the ass. And we tried to hide from her in your dad's trees, but she found us so we had to pelt her with unripe olives. She just stood there, crying and getting a stoning! What a *heblah*!

FADWA

That wasn't a neighbor. That was Hayat.

YOUSSIF

Really? Are you sure?

FADWA

Yes, I'm sure! She and my Aunt Jamila were visiting from the States and she wouldn't leave us alone for one second!

YOUSSIF

Oh God, that's right!

(Laughing)

I can't believe it was Hayat! Wow. Well she's changed a lot since then.

FADWA

Not that much. Remember how she tried to blame everything on me? She didn't want to get you in trouble, so she told my father that you were trying to defend her—

YOUSSIF

But he didn't believe her—

FADWA

No, because he saw us in the tree and she was on the ground, crying her head off! And there were olives everywhere! Remember how they got stuck in her hair, sort of hanging off like beads?

(YOUSSEF and FADWA laugh.)

FADWA (CONT'D)

That was funny.

YOUSSEF

What were we, 12?

FADWA

Yeah.

BABA (O.S.)

Get away from me, Samia. Get away!

FADWA

Baba, what's going on in there?

BABA (O.S.)

Get away I said!

YOUSSEF

I'll go check on him.

(YOUSSEF exits. FADWA looks up at the audience, a twinkle in her eye.)

FADWA

Mloukiyi was once thought to be a sexual stimulant and was even banned by an Egyptian ruler in the 10th century for its passion inducing effects! This little, leafy vegetable? Better be careful to whom you serve it.

(She stirs the pot, smelling and tasting.)

Mmm. Food is very impressionable. It will take on the qualities of whatever mood the preparer is in. So, here's a tip. Try talking to your food. Say to it, "You are beautiful! You are healthy and I love you and have always loved you—

(Talking into her pot. LIGHTS Shift.)

You taste good and you smell good—

(YOUSSEF re-enters.)

YOUSSEF

Flattering the food? Is that your secret?

FADWA

It helps.

YOUSSIF

Maybe I should have another bite, just to make sure it's working.

FADWA

3ala 3yani, habibi. [literally means "on my eye", figuratively "anything for you"]

(She hands him a spoonful.)

YOUSSIF

Oh, yeah. It's definitely working. Fadwa, there's something—

(HAYAT enters.)

HAYAT

Oh, hi. I thought you'd be here. I was just at your mom's to see where you were.

FADWA

Where's Dalal?

HAYAT

Still getting fitted, it took forever. There were three other women in front of us, so we left to get mani/pedis from the dressmaker's cousin? We get back to the fitting and everyone's sitting around drinking coffee! Hello? How 'bout some time management folks?

YOUSSIF

They have their own system.

HAYAT

Dalal sent me home. I walked past an army jeep at the end of the block.

YOUSSIF

I saw that earlier.

HAYAT

It's creepy.

(Peering into FADWA's pot.)

Ooh, *mlkoukiyi*. Your favorite.

YOUSSIF

No one makes it better.

HAYAT

You know, it's best when you sauté the chicken with a bit of ginger first, gives it a little Asian flare—

FADWA

Keep your flares to yourself. This is pure Arabic.

HAYAT

Habibi, don't be closed! In my cookbooks, I do all kinds of fusions.

FADWA

(Under her breath)

How about fusing your lips together?

(FADWA exits.)

HAYAT

Youssif.

YOUSSIF

I—I just need to find the right moment.

HAYAT

Honey, come on just tell her.

YOUSSIF

I am...I will. It's harder than I thought.

HAYAT

Sweetie, we have a life together. Whatever feelings you have—it's nostalgia!

(Putting her arms around him.)

We're building something amazing together.

(Peering into him.)

My sweet, sweet, sensitive man. Look, I'm here for you and I support you. But she deserves to know. If you care about her, you'll tell her.

YOUSSIF

I have to tell her in my own way.

HAYAT

I know, baby. I love you.

(Enter FADWA. She stops cold at what she sees:
HAYAT and YOUSSIF standing very closely, her
hand on his face.)

FADWA

Youssif?

HAYAT

I'll leave you two alone.

(HAYAT exits.)

YOUSSIF

Fadwa.

FADWA

I don't understand—I

YOUSSIF

Fadwa, I—

FADWA

Are you serious? Is that serious?

YOUSSIF

I'm sorry, but please hear me out—

FADWA

Don't come near me. Do not come near me.

(Enter HAYAT)

HAYAT

There are soldiers all over the place- they're telling people to get inside.

(The sound of rapid gunfire and sirens.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

--Oh my God!

(An announcement over a loudspeaker repeats the following in Arabic and English in an Israeli accent.)

ISRAELI MILITARY ANNOUNCEMENT

MAMNOU'A AL-TAJAWOOL! MAMNOU'A AL-TAJAWOOL! THERE IS A 24-HOUR CURFEW EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. CLEAR THE STREETS! YOU ARE UNDER A 24-HOUR CURFEW UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. ANYONE LEFT ON THE STREET WILL BE ARRESTED.

(Sound of rapid gunfire. SAMIA runs in.)

YOUSSIF

God damn it.

(Enter DALAL in her wedding dress.)

DALAL

Is Emir home yet?

FADWA

No, Emir's not back. Are you ok?

DALAL

(Out of breath)

There are tanks and soldiers everywhere.

HAYAT

Oh my God. We have to go. We have to get out of here.

DALAL

You can't go anywhere. They are arresting anyone who is caught outside.

(YOUSSIF shakes his head no.)

HAYAT

We can't leave? Not even to go two blocks?

YOUSSIF

Not until they lift the curfew.

HAYAT

(Getting hysterical)

When will they lift the curfew?

YOUSSIF

Nobody knows. When I was here last they shut down the whole city for months.

HAYAT

This is bullshit! I'm an American citizen, I will not be told to stay inside! I'm going!

FADWA

Bye Hayat! See you later.

(More sounds of gunfire. The Loudspeaker blares.)

ISRAELI MILITARY ANNOUNCEMENT

RETURN TO YOUR HOMES! ANYONE CAUGHT IN PUBLIC WILL BE ARRESTED!

(Enter BABA)

BABA

Fadwa?

(Lights down as FADWA, HAYAT, YOUSSEF,
SAMIA, and DALAL, in her wedding dress, look
toward BABA.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

SCENE I

(It is early evening. Day 5 of curfew. Lights up on FADWA.)

FADWA

Good evening and thank you for tuning in to *Food and Fadwa*. It is the fifth day of our special curfew series. The topic today: Rationing! This is a very valuable skill.

Let's say, for example, you are being forced to stay in a house, with some of your most annoying relatives. Some talk on the phone all day, others don't shower, others flirts with your boyfriend. You cannot get away from them. And worse, they are eating all of the food! But you cannot go out to buy more-you are under house arrest! What will you do? You must be prepared!

How to cook when facing starvation due to military incursion: A three-step guide. One: storing and canning food for future use. Two: finding creative ways to serve less food with the magic that is food presentation! And three: rationing.

You see here, I have portioned food for each family member according to their needs.

(She holds up a little container that says "Hayat")

This one for example, doesn't need too much.

You must know the art of food rationing. And you will learn it right here, live from Bethlehem. Do you know what it means, Bethlehem? *Beit LaHem*, we call it in Arabic. It means, "House of Meat." Yep. In Aramaic and Hebrew, it means, "House of Bread." So you see, it really makes no sense that someone should go hungry here. We are the house of bread and meat. We are living inside a sandwich!

(Enter DALAL, still in her wedding dress.)

DALAL

(On her cellphone)

No, no, no.

(She puts her hand over the receiver and speaks to FADWA.)

Emir's mom wants to postpone the wedding!

(FADWA motions at her as if to say "what are you talking about?" and DALAL waves her off.)

DALAL (CONT'D)

I know, but they could lift the curfew tonight and—just tell them we'll let them know tomorrow morning. No, not yet... I'm sure Emir's fine. .he'll find his way back. Yes, I'll let you know. Ok. *Yallah, bye.*

FADWA
(Firmly.)

Take the dress off.

DALAL

No.

FADWA

It's been five days.

DALAL
(Simply.)

I am sending a message to God.

FADWA
I hope He gets it soon. Your message is beginning to smell.

DALAL
I am getting married, Fadwa. Tomorrow is my wedding day and I am getting married.
(Shaking her fists at the sky)
Sam3een? [Do you hear?] Married! I am *not* postponing.
(FADWA gives DALAL a look.)

What? We postpone and what? We find ourselves broke and Emir runs off to America and I am stuck here alone forever?

FADWA
What are you talking about?

DALAL
I cannot end up like you!

(Catching herself)
I'm sorry, Foo Foo. I didn't mean it. I'm just worried about Emir and—I'm so sorry. I don't even know what to say to them. I can hardly look Youssif in the eye.

FADWA
Khalas, forget it.

DALAL
Where is everyone?

FADWA
Auntie wanted to bathe Baba, but he thought she was a soldier trying to strip search him, so Youssif pretended to arrest her. She's sitting on the bathroom floor, her hands tied up in toilet paper. Youssif is bathing him now and Hayat just walked in. She's singing to them in Arabic.

DALAL

Yee.

FADWA

I know. I had to leave.

(Enter HAYAT rubbing a sore spot on her arm.)

HAYAT

Your father threw a bar of soap at me. A fresh bar. With edges! Christ!

DALAL

Are you okay?

HAYAT

It's fine. It just shocked me a little. How's Emir? Have you heard from him?

DALAL

Not since the day before yesterday. He couldn't tell me where he is. They're hiding somewhere, him and two guys. I'm so worried. I've been calling him all day. No answer.

HAYAT

Maybe his phone died.

DALAL

Maybe they found him. God, what if they found him and took him jail?

FADWA

Nobody took him, *habibti*. This is Emir we're talking about. He's wily.

HAYAT

This is ridiculous. We're not fucking animals! They have to let us out eventually. For food at least, my God.

(HAYAT goes to the counter.)

What are these containers with everyone's name on them? What happened to all the wedding food?

DALAL

Fadwa?

FADWA

Inside the containers.

DALAL

What?

FADWA

Sorry, Dal Dal.

DALAL

What about all the stuff in the freezer? We couldn't eat that?

FADWA

We have to eat what will spoil first. The frozen stuff I'm saving.

DALAL

What if they lift the curfew in time for the wedding? What will everyone eat, Fadwa?

FADWA

Habibti, I can always make more. Right now we have to eat what we have. There are six of us here.

HAYAT

Oh, sweetie. Don't worry. I can make a banquet out of nothing. I'll take care of everything.

FADWA

I've taken care of it.

DALAL

I might as well eat, I haven't had anything all day.

HAYAT

Me neither.

(DALAL takes a long, bright orange, chef-style apron out of a drawer and puts it on over her wedding dress. She grabs two clean forks from another drawer and hands one to HAYAT. They sit at the table and nibble from DALALs container.)

FADWA

You look ridiculous.

DALAL

I don't want to stain the dress.

YOUSSEF (O.S.)

Yes! We will leave her there until she rots!

(Enter YOUSSEF with BABA.)

DALAL
Na3eeman!

HAYAT
Nice and clean! Looking good, uncle.

FADWA
Yallah, Baba, come sit.

(BABA shakes his head “no” and heads for the recliner.)

YOUSSIF
Someone needs to check on Samia.

FADWA
Dalal, make sure Baba eats something.

(FADWA exits.)

YOUSSIF
Your father is wearing me out. I’m starving. Is there anything left?

HAYAT
Here, Baby, have some of this. Come.

(Youssif sits and eats. BABA picks up DALAL’s oud, and plucks a few strings.)

DALAL
Yallah, Baba, play! Let’s try this again, you can do it! Aywah! [That’s right!]
(singing)
Da da dee dee dee da da da da da.

(BABA puts the oud down, agitated, stands up and begins nervously pacing back and forth near the window.)

DALAL
Baba?

HAYAT
Is he okay?

DALAL
Yallah, let’s sing something, habibi.

(DALAL snaps her fingers and dances her way to Baba. BABA slows down his pacing and stares out the window, rocking back and forth while DALAL sings.)

DALAL

(Singing)

Sana tayn, Sana tayn, Santayn ooh enna estenak, 3ala ay, 3ala ay tooh-journni, mish moumkin ansak. Yallah, Baba!

(FADWA enters and watches.)

HAYAT

I've never heard that verse before—

DALAL

Sanatayn, Sanatayn--,

HAYAT

Honey, translate.

DALAL

Sanatayn ooh enna estenak—

YOUSSIF

Um...“Two years, two years that I've been waiting for you”--

DALAL

3ala ay, 3ala ay tooh-journi, mish moumkin ansak—

YOUSSIF

“Why did you abandon me? It is impossible to forget you.” Um. . .something like that.

(DALAL ends the song. BABA smiles wistfully as he looks out the window. YOUSSIF and FADWA glimpse at each other.)

HAYAT

That is so sad. Arabic songs are depressing.

FADWA

Come, Yaba, have some dinner.

(BABA turns and looks at all of them, shakes his head violently, and looks back out the window. He straightens himself up and walks briskly out of the room.)

FADWA

Baba you have to eat!

DALAL

I'll take him something. Hayat, come help me.

HAYAT

I'm coming.

(DALAL grabs a container of food and exits with HAYAT. FADWA and YOUSSEF are alone.)

YOUSSEF

Fadwa can we talk about this now? You can't keep giving me the silent treatment. I'm sorry.

FADWA

I thought you still wanted to make it work between us.

YOUSSEF

I did, but...I couldn't do it anymore. You made your decision, Fadwa.

FADWA

I didn't make a decision! You told me America would be temporary. Temporary—

YOUSSEF

Things changed—

FADWA

Things changed for me too—

YOUSSEF

I know, I tried to accommodate you in every way I could—

FADWA

You abandoned me.

YOUSSEF

I didn't abandon you. I left to make us a life—

FADWA

You could have done that here.

YOUSSIF

Fadwa, I had nothing. *Nothing*. Everything my family had was gone. My father's restaurant, all his years of work and sacrifice, lost.

FADWA

Youssif—

YOUSSIF

It was my responsibility.

FADWA

There was nothing you could have done to save it—there was a war!

YOUSSIF

War, occupation, it doesn't matter. I failed. I had to leave, you know that—

FADWA

But you promised you would come back—

YOUSSIF

Don't put this all on me. You promised you would visit me, and you didn't. You wouldn't.

FADWA

I *couldn't*. All I wanted to do was get on a plane and leave this shit behind, but I couldn't leave him. He needed me!

YOUSSIF

I needed you! My God someone else could have looked after him for a change! I would have given anything to just be with you for a day, an hour—

FADWA

Then you could have come home!

YOUSSIF

Ya Allah I am so sick of hearing that! I am so sick of it!

FADWA

Do you understand? I am his caretaker, not Dalal or Samia—me. He relies on me for everything—

YOUSSIF

I never meant for you to take care of him on your own! Why else do you think I stayed in the States? So I could work, and save and provide a home for you—a place where you could bring him, and we could take care of him together.

FADWA

Youssif, I can hardly convince the man to change his clothes. How did you expect me to convince him to change his entire life! I can't just take a deluded man to a place that is completely foreign to him and just start over.

YOUSSIF

Foo Foo—

FADWA

Don't call me that.

YOUSSIF

Everything I was doing was for you. Every shit job, every minute of overtime—the only thing that kept me going was you. It was all for you—for us—

FADWA

Then why didn't you wait for me?

YOUSSIF

How long was I supposed to wait??

FADWA

I didn't know we had a time limit—

YOUSSIF

I sent money, I bought you plane tickets, I spoke to doctors, I called and called and called. Like an idiot. And sometimes, I wouldn't hear from you for days or weeks—

FADWA

Because I had my hands full, day and night. I thought you understood—

YOUSSIF

I did, but—

FADWA

You were supposed stand by me, even if it was hard, even when I couldn't call back sometimes or come visit. Because that is what people do when they love each other. I needed you to be there for me and be strong, not make me choose between you and my father.

YOUSSIF

That's what you think?

(FADWA doesn't answer.)

I'm sorry, Fadwa. I can't do this. Nothing I could do was enough. I had to move on, you were killing me.

FADWA

Your life is so easy there.

YOUSSIF

You don't know what it was like for me. I had no one. Hayat was there for me.

FADWA

You went to her because it was easy!

YOUSSIF

It is easy, Fadwa. Not everything has to be so difficult.

(BABA wanders onstage toward the door with the tabla in his hands, flipped over like a bucket. He is wearing a straw hat, pajamas, a robe and worker boots. He opens the door and stares outside. A SHOT is fired toward the house. Everyone freezes. BABA stands there.)

BABA

Kus imko! Klab! Sharamet! **[Fuck you! Dogs! Sons of whores!]** Goddamn animals!

(Another GUNSHOT.)

FADWA

Baba! Get inside!

BABA

It's time to harvest! /Everything will rot!

FADWA

Get away from there, Yaba—

BABA

(To the outside:)

This is our land! Go to hell! You hear me? Hell!

(YOUSSIF runs to the door and shuts it reaching for BABA's arm.)

YOUSSIF

Amo, it's too dangerous to go now.

BABA

Who are you? Don't touch me! Fadwa, bring me my gun!

FADWA

Baba, you don't have a gun.

(Enter DALAL and HAYAT)

BABA

My gun, *binti!* **[daughter!]** They want my trees!

YOUSSEF

Amo! Amo, eh, I have your gun.

BABA

You? Give me!

DALAL

What's going on?

YOUSSEF

It's in the other room. Let's take a look at it.

BABA

Yes. I will show them.

DALAL

Wait, wait. Give him his medicine.

FADWA

We ran out this morning.

DALAL

What?

YOUSSEF

I'll keep an eye on him for now. We'll figure something out.

(To BABA)

Yallah Amo.

BABA

Yallah, ya binit. Fadwa!

FADWA

Yes, Baba.

(YOUSSEF, FADWA and BABA exit. HAYAT goes to the window.)

DALAL
Be careful.

HAYAT
Soldiers shooting at the house?

DALAL
It was probably settlers.

HAYAT
You're kidding?

DALAL
They're much worse. I think I'll sleep out here tonight. I can't sleep next to Auntie Samia anymore. Her snoring...

(DALAL checks her cell phone.)

HAYAT
Anything from Emir?

(DALAL sighs and shakes her head "no".)

HAYAT (CONT'D)
I'm sure he's fine, sweetie.

(DALAL takes off the apron and lies on the couch.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)
Aren't you uncomfortable in that dress?

DALAL
It's the only thing that's *giving* me comfort. It was my mom's. I wish she were here.

HAYAT
Me too. She always made me feel so welcome. She was an angel.

DALAL
Yeah. . .

HAYAT
Auntie Lena. She was so good to us. The only one who was actually kind to my mother. Your dad too, but the women around here. God. But Lena. . .no judgment. You're so much like her.

DALAL

I know. It's the cheeks!

HAYAT

No. It's the kindness.

(Crying.)

I'm sorry.

DALAL

We're all under a lot of stress, *habibti*. Go get some sleep.

(They hug.)

If you can stand Samia's snoring symphony.

HAYAT

I can sleep through anything. I live in Manhattan. Goodnight, *habibti*.

DALAL

Goodnight.

HAYAT

And thank you.

(HAYAT exits. Lights dim.)

ACT II

SCENE II

(A few hours have passed, it is just before dawn. DALAL is sleeping on the couch in her wedding dress. BABA shuffles into the kitchen, but stops when he notices DALAL sleeping. He gingerly approaches her. He stares at her. He begins to touch her face, her lips, and hair.)

BABA

Lena. . .*habibti* Lena. . .

(He kneels down and gently kisses her on the lips, caressing her body and hair. DALAL wakes.)

DALAL

Hmm? Emir?

(BABA looks at her. She opens her eyes.)

BABA

Lena. *Elbi*, Lena. [**My beloved Lena.**] Lena.

(He leans down again to kiss her. DALAL pushes him and jumps up.)

DALAL

No no no. No, Baba. It's me. It's Dalal.

BABA

You look so beautiful, *habibti*.

(He grabs her and brings her close to him like a lover and begins to kiss her on the neck.)

My beautiful wife. . .come to bed. . .

(She manages to push him away.)

DALAL

No, Baba. Stop that. Look at me. I'm Dalal. Dalal, your daughter, remember?

BABA

(Gripping her tightly)

Stop playing with me, Lena.

DALAL

No. *No*. Fadwa! Stop it! STOP IT! BABA! Let GO! Fadwa! Youssif!

(FADWA runs in, followed by YOUSSEF.)

BABA

Don't be afraid. My wife! My beautiful wife!

(DALAL breaks free. YOUSSEF blocks Baba from her.)

DALAL

I am your *child*.

(FADWA holds DALAL. BABA stands there staring. SAMIA and HAYAT enter.)

BABA

Habibti. Habibti, don't cry. I'm sorry.

(To FADWA)

Why does she cry?

DALAL

I can't take it.

(A loud CRASH is heard offstage. Everyone freezes.)

HAYAT

What was that? Oh my God, is someone in the house?

(The loud sound of something falling to the ground and breaking.)

EMIR (O.S.)

Goddamnit! Stupid plant.

(EMIR appears in the doorway holding the plant he knocked over.)

EMIR (CONT'D)

Good morning!

DALAL

Emir! Oh, Emir!

(DALAL runs to him and hugs him. The following overlaps:)

Oh thank God/
HAYAT

Where the hell were you/
YOUSSEF

Habibi, thank God/
SAMIA

Emir/
FADWA

I'm fine, *habibti*, I'm fine.
EMIR
(Pulling her out of the hug to look at her.)
What is this? Did I miss the wedding?

Oh no! He's not supposed to see her in that! Bad luck.
HAYAT

Yee! Not bad luck! We don't need anymore of that! Ok, I close my eyes. Here. Now I don't see you.
EMIR

(Sniffing)
But I smell you. My God you stink!

She's been wearing that for almost a week!
FADWA

Willy, *felaHah!* [**Little peasant girl!**] You smell like a Bedouin gypsy.
EMIR

Stop it! This is a symbol. You see? It brought you back to me. On our wedding day!
DALAL
(Laughing)

It did. Is this your mating scent?
EMIR

(DALAL hits him and tries to hug him.)

No, no, please! I can't take it!
EMIR (CONT'D)

YOUSSIF

Where were you? What happened?

EMIR

I was coming through the checkpoint from Jerusalem when they called curfew. But I couldn't get back here, so I snuck up into the hills, which is a real party with all the crazy settlers, but the Bedouins showed us where to hide. Anyway, we kept hearing rumors that they were going to lift the curfew, but they didn't. *Khalas*, I couldn't take it anymore. I waited until nightfall and snuck back in. Lured and protected by your magical stench.

DALAL

(Hitting him on the arm.)

You could have been shot.

EMIR

I'm like a silent cheetah. At night, no one can see me.

BABA

I don't believe it.

EMIR

Hi Ami! Did you miss me?

BABA

(Very calmly observing EMIR.)

I know you.

EMIR

Nuskur Allah! [**Thank God!**] He remembers! Come, let me hug you.

BABA

First my money, now my Lena.

EMIR

Lena?

BABA

Thieving collaborator!

FADWA

Go change. Now. Go change, go change, go change—

HAYAT

Come on, sweetie.

(DALAL, SAMIA, HAYAT exit.)

EMIR

(Cautiously approaching Baba.)

Amo. It's me, Emir. And that woman, that smelly woman, is your daughter. My fiancé. I know this is hard for you. We are going to do everything we can to make you happy and comfortable. Okay? You are like a father to me and I love you.

(EMIR grabs BABA by the shoulders firmly and looks into his eyes.)

BABA

It's hard; it's very hard. Please take care of my Lena.

EMIR

I will.

BABA

My Lena, my Lena, my Lena. . .

(BABA shuffles over to the window and stares out.)

YOUSSIF

Emir, go clean yourself and get some rest. We're throwing you a shaving party tomorrow.

FADWA

Party?

YOUSSIF

We can't have the wedding, but we can still celebrate.

FADWA

There isn't much, but we can pull something together. We still have *knafi*!

EMIR

My favorite! I haven't eaten in three days.

FADWA

There's a bit of *hashweh* left. From last week.

EMIR

Finally, she offers me *hashweh*. I had to be half dead, but *yallah*, I got my wish.

FADWA

(Handing him a plate.)

Here, *habibi*. Sorry, it isn't much.

EMIR

Are you kidding? This is a feast! Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to eat this while I sleep and shower. Goodnight Brother! Goodnight Sister! The prince has returned! Goodnight!

(Exit EMIR)

YOUSSIF

I'll stay with him. Get some sleep.

(FADWA exits. BABA is still staring out of the window.)

BABA

Lena...Lena...

YOUSSIF

Amo? Come help me with this, eh? *Yallah*.

(YOUSSIF brings the pot and plant that EMIR knocked over and sits next to Baba on the ground.)

YOUSSIF (CONT'D)

Here, put some soil on the bottom of this pot—*aywah*, that's it. You're a pro, Ami. I remember how much you used to work—plowing, pruning, picking. Everyday, up before sunrise, spending hours and hours in the groves. Just keep working and working and working.

BABA

Lena. . .

YOUSSIF

It's good to keep busy. Keeps the mind quiet. *Ya Allah*, I wish I could take you to New York with me. It feels good there. We could go to a baseball game and sit really high up in the stands and just feel the openness, the freedom. I never understood the game but in the summer, it's the best. Sit in the sun, drink beer--sometimes I bring hookah and we pass it around the stands. Everyone smoking *argili* and watching the Mets lose. It's glorious! You would love it.

(*Watching Baba's hands.*)

You're doing a beautiful job, *habibi*. Beautiful. There, finished.

(BABA stares at the plant, he touches a leaf, and then hangs his head and cries. YOUSSIF holds him.)

It's ok, Ami, it's ok.

(Lights down.)

ACT II

SCENE III

(Same day, early evening. The place is tidy and looks as if an effort has been made to make things pretty. FADWA is preparing sweets and coffee, while laughing to herself and pretending to speak to people in front of her. She holds up food and models it. Enter HAYAT. She stops and watches FADWA.)

FADWA

And, *this*, Gentle Viewers, is *knafi*.

HAYAT

Uh, did I interrupt something?

(FADWA says nothing, but chuckles to herself in reference to the comment. She rolls her eyes and connects back to the audience as if to say “Isn’t she annoying?”)

FADWA

Delicious, crispy and sweet on the outside. Oozing with cheese on the inside. . .

(HAYAT goes to the fridge and retrieves a pitcher of water to pour herself a glass.)

HAYAT

Do you need help with anything?

(FADWA doesn’t answer.)

Fadwa?

FADWA

A poet once said, “To eat the pastries of Arabs is to make a person’s life serene and happy and keep away evil.”

HAYAT

Okay, whatever.

(HAYAT starts to exit, but then turns around and observes. YOUSSEF enters, heading toward the fridge. HAYAT stops him, and points to FADWA. They both watch.)

FADWA

Never will you walk into an Arab home and not find pastries. Never! Absolute dishonor. We always have something in the freezer ready for baking. This pan, for example, was made eight months ago. Perfectly preserved and ready for consumption.

(SAMIA enters to see HAYAT and YOUSSEF watching FADWA. She reprimands them silently.)

DALAL

Foo Foo? Have you seen my silver heels?

(Enter DALAL in a beautiful purple dress.)
(Looking back and forth between YOUSSEF and HAYAT and FADWA.)

What's everyone doing?

(FADWA turns around to everyone.)

HAYAT

You look amazing. I thought Emir was getting a shave and we were all supposed to stand around and watch.

YOUSSEF

It's more than that—we're celebrating his last days as a single man— we're cleaning him up, so to speak.

DALAL

Now go change! You too, Foo Foo. *Yallah*. Party starts in ten!

(DALAL grabs FADWA and they exit. SAMIA looks at HAYAT and YOUSSEF reproachfully and exits.)

HAYAT

See? Fadwa does that all day, and everyone ignores it like it's totally normal!

YOUSSEF

It's just what she does, it's endearing.

HAYAT

It's borderline psychotic! It freaks me out.

YOUSSEF

She's just imaginative.

HAYAT
Artists are imaginative! She's nuts!

YOUSSIF
Fadwa is kind of an artist.

HAYAT
In what way?

YOUSSIF
In the food-way.

HAYAT
Oh, come on.

YOUSSIF
No one can do what she does.

HAYAT
I resent that. What because she can roll a few fucking grape leaves?

YOUSSIF
Hayat, please.

HAYAT
No, what is so earth shattering about her food? There's no creativity, it's the same old boring shit!

YOUSSIF
It's just got something. . .

HAYAT
You know, if you want her so badly, just stay here! Stay in this backwards, war-torn den of depravity—I don't care! I can't stand this anymore.

YOUSSIF
I'm not saying that—

HAYAT
Well what are you saying?

YOUSSIF
Hayat, come on. Look at what these people are going through. And despite all of it, they are doing the impossible to make sure you're comfortable—

HAYAT

I know that, Youssif, and I'm doing my best to be helpful and stay out of the way!

YOUSSIF

(Gently)

Of course you are, *habibti*, you've been very gracious. . . but just have a *little* patience. Come here. . . Come on, come here.

(He holds her.)

HAYAT

I'm sorry, sweetie. I'm just...

YOUSSIF

Khalas. I know this is hard for you; we'll get out of here soon, I promise.

(YOUSSIF kisses her forehead and holds her a moment. Enter FADWA in a red dress looking beautiful. YOUSSIF, rather startled, stares at her.)

YOUSSIF (CONT'D)

Wow.

HAYAT

Make up your mind.

(HAYAT exits.)

YOUSSIF

Hayat!

(FADWA goes to the counter and starts cutting up the dessert. YOUSSIF continues to look at her. Enter EMIR, DALAL, AUNTIE SAMIA and BABA. AUNTIE SAMIA gently leads BABA to his chair where she covers him with a blanket.)

EMIR

Alright, let's do this! Well, well who's that pretty woman?

DALAL

Doesn't she look beautiful?

EMIR

What happened to Fadwa? Hey, lady, can you cook?

DALAL

I've never seen that dress! Have you been hiding it?

FADWA

No. I just...I bought it a long time ago.

DALAL

When? For what?

FADWA

Nothing. It doesn't matter.

(YOUSSIF pulls a chair into the center of the stage.
Enter HAYAT.)

YOUSSIF

Yallah, yallah. Let's start!

(SAMIA begins a traditional Arabic incantation, which is a call to the groom, preparing him for a life of marriage. SAMIA does an ululation. EMIR is placed on a chair. YOUSSIF dresses him in a long bib, the kind used in a barber shop.)

YOUSSIF

Ready brother?

EMIR

If you cut me, I kill you.

YOUSSIF

Then you better not move or speak!

(YOUSSIF covers EMIR's face with shaving cream. Everyone starts to clap hands and sings EHLIK YA HALAK, the groom's shaving song. BABA, still sitting in his chair, gives notice to the dancing and singing. He begins to smile. He slowly starts to stand and clap his hands along. No one has noticed quite yet. YOUSSIF finishes shaving EMIR, and pulls him up onto the chair.)

BABA

Now you look like a man! Dalal, my oud! Youssif, get the tabla! Emir, *habibi*, dance with your fiancé!

(BABA picks up his oud and begins to play. As the clapping dies down, Baba's version of *Ah Ya Zein* begins and he too starts incantations. He walks over to the speechless group as he plays, looking utterly joyful. EMIR hops off the chair and seats Baba in it.

BABA plays oud while YOUSSEF plays tabla. EMIR takes DALAL's hand and dances with her, as everyone claps along. BABA starts singing *Ah Ya Zein*. SAMIA balances a liquor bottle on her head and dances between the bride and groom. FADWA and HAYAT stand away from each other and clap along. SAMIA takes the liquor bottle off her head and pours shots of "Arak" into tiny glasses, and starts handing them out. Everyone lifts glasses into the air as BABA continues to sing and YOUSSEF continues to play. As they take down their shots, BABA's singing begins to stumble, followed by his playing. Finally, he stops.)

YOUSSEF

Amo? What happened?

BABA

I don't know.

(BABA stares at the oud a while longer,:)

FADWA

Baba?

BABA

My name is Zein. You must call me Zein.

(BABA puts down the oud, grabs the tabla and shuffles off stage, followed by FADWA and SAMIA. HAYAT, YOUSSEF, DALAL and EMIR are silent. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE IV

(About an hour later. HAYAT, YOUSSEF, DALAL and EMIR sit around the table, eating *knafi*, and drinking Arabic coffee. EMIR is comforting DALAL.)

EMIR

His playing was a blessing, *habibti*.

HAYAT

It was! It was beautiful.

DALAL

But he can't stay in the house like this. And he needs medicine.

HAYAT

We're gonna get him out of here. This is no place for a man that sick.

EMIR

What is she talking about?

HAYAT

We're taking him with us. To New York.

EMIR

Inshallah he's gonna live with us?

(DALAL hits him.)

What? The man wants to kill me.

HAYAT

We'll figure something out. My mom can help. She needs to get to know him again.

DALAL

She won't recognize him.

EMIR

She won't recognize *him*? He'll probably think she's Ariel Sharon.

(YOUSSEF laughs, HAYAT hits him. DALAL hits EMIR.)

DALAL
That's not funny!

HAYAT
So not funny!

YOUSSIF
Well, she is a little bloated looking--

HAYAT
Rude!

(EMIR and YOUSSIF laugh. Enter SAMIA.)

SAMIA
(On Phone.)
I know *habibti*, this is very stressful.

(SAMIA gets herself a coffee and lights up.)

DALAL
Auntie, not in the house!

EMIR
Where is she supposed to go? Give the lady a break.

SAMIA
(On Phone)
No, it's not fair. Our cable isn't working either. Call your cousin in Jordan and find out who was voted off the show. *Wallah*, I'm suffering from this.

DALAL
Unbelievable.

HAYAT
I thought American Idol was a bad idea.

(Enter FADWA.)

EMIR
You're missing all the fun, Foo Foo!

DALAL
How's Baba?

FADWA
He's ok. He's sleeping on the floor of his bedroom.

DALAL

On the floor?

EMIR

The floor is like a feather bed. I slept on a hill of stones for days. This is what we learn when you're we're in hiding. Skills, people. Skills. Speaking of which, flip your cups.

DALAL

Oh no.

HAYAT

What?

YOUSSIF

My brother has the "gift" of clairvoyance.

EMIR

Sadly, Youssif did not inherit this talent.

YOUSSIF

I got the good looks and charm.

EMIR

These things fade, my child. When you can determine the destiny of another human being simply by glancing at their used up coffee grounds—*that* is an immortal skill. You see, friends, I received a holy transmission from my Great Aunt Soraya at the tender age of 7. She possessed the—how do you call it—the Divine Fire. Something only I was fit to inherit.

DALAL

Bella zanakha, Emir! **[Stop being silly, Emir!]**

EMIR

Shhhhh. Do not disturb the flow.

(Closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.)

Dalal, you shall be first, my lady.

(EMIR takes DALAL's cup, makes
chanting/humming sounds as he cradles it
dramatically in his hands.)

EMIR

Mmm. Yes, yes, yes. Your marriage to a handsome man will be rudely interrupted through no fault of your own. You will have children. Eight of them. All named Emir. Foo Foo. I don't even need to see your cup. You will make me a cake. It will be delicious. Samia, your cup.

(SAMIA's phone rings, and she waves EMIR off violently while she answers it.)

SAMIA

(On phone.)

Ah, Mariam? Anything? No! No! The Tunisian? Oh no. Oh no. Life is very unfair.

(SAMIA cries and exits. Everyone reacts to the news of the Tunisian.)

EMIR

Your turn, brother, hand it over.

(EMIR takes YOUSSEF's cup.)

Oooh, too bad, too bad. Baldness, nose hairs, halitosis. Tough break. Good luck, brother.

HAYAT

Come on, be serious.

FADWA

Yeah, Emir, be serious. Isn't there something in there about settling?

EMIR

Eh, no, no. My vision cannot be spoken out loud.

HAYAT

I'll start cleaning up.

DALAL

I'll help.

EMIR

Is there any more *knaft*?

FADWA

(Peering into YOUSSEF'S cup.)

Oh, look at that. I'm right.

YOUSSEF

(Warning)

Fadwa.

HAYAT

Ok, I think this is ready to be washed now.

(HAYAT grabs the cup from FADWA.)

FADWA

Does he love you?

EMIR

You know, maybe I'll sleep outside. I miss the dirt.

FADWA

Ask him. Youssif, do you love her?

HAYAT

Are you totally delusional? I am in a *relationship* with this man!

FADWA

You ought to have higher standards, Hayat. No woman should have a relationship with a man who doesn't love her.

YOUSSEF

Fadwa, watch yourself.

HAYAT

Excuse me?

DALAL

(Trying to calm things down:)

Ok, ok—

FADWA

Excuse you? No, I don't excuse you. Funny how you cannot seem to find your own man. You're just like your mother.

DALAL

Fadwa! Shut up!

FADWA

Thank God she took her filthy ways and left. Are you sure you know who your father is?

(Everyone starts talking over each other—do not wait for the characters to finish their dialogue—)

DALAL

Khalas, Foo Foo!

HAYAT

You little village bitch!

YOUSSIF

Hayat!

HAYAT

Exactly the reason my mother left!

FADWA

Why? Because she ran out of married men to seduce?

HAYAT

YOU are the reason people leave this hellhole! You don't allow people to breathe! You're worse than any wall, any curfew, or any occupation! No wonder Youssif left you.

(FADWA goes to attack HAYAT. EMIR grabs her and holds her back. YOUSSIF is standing in the middle of them, holding HAYAT at bay. SAMIA enters with BABA standing behind her watching the fight.)

FADWA

He left me? He left me, *ya kelbi*?

HAYAT

Deal with it!

FADWA

How long have you been /planning this?

HAYAT

/Oh planning? Really—

FADWA

You think you are so/much better than everyone!

HAYAT

Fucking grow up Fadwa/, grow the fuck up!

FADWA

You're nothing! You're a liar/*kus ocht illi khala'ik!* [essentially, **“fuck the sister of the woman who bore you”**].

HAYAT

I am so SICK of your bullshit!/I mean pretending you're on a goddamn cooking show!/You're out of your fucking mind!

FADWA

The man doesn't love you!/He will never love you!/ Let go of me!

HAYAT

You're not enough for him.

FADWA

I'll kill you!

(FADWA, trying to get EMIR to release her, kicks him in the knee.)

EMIR

Ouch! Animals!

YOUSSIF

(At the top of his lungs)

STOP THIS NOW!

(The electricity SHUTS OFF, leaving them in the dark.)

YOUSSIF

Shit.

DALAL

Ya Allah, not again.

EMIR

This is romantic.

DALAL

There are candles around here somewhere.

FADWA

Khariyi. **[Shithead.]**

HAYAT

I understood that.

FADWA

Good.

DALAL

Enough. Emir, come help me look. Emir! Where are you?

EMIR

I'm coming—goddammit, I'm limping. You two should join the army. Maniacs.

(Sounds of rummaging.)

What the hell is this? A drill? Where's the flashlight?

DALAL

There's one in the pantry—

EMIR

Here's one!

HAYAT

What the hell is going on?

EMIR

Listen, the Israelis are just helping us go green.

(EMIR turns it on. The flashlight begins darting around. It's hard to tell in all of the commotion and cacophony, but BABA gently walks out the back door of the home.)

SAMIA

Here, here. Candles.

(She lights two.)

Ok, everyone to bed.

EMIR

Dalal and I will share a bed out of consideration for the guests.

DALAL

Emir, take the couch.

EMIR

Yes, sergeant.

SAMIA

Fadwa, Hayat-- Shame on you both. To your rooms.

(HAYAT, DALAL, SAMIA and FADWA exit.)

EMIR

Some match!

YOUSSEF

Unbelievable.

EMIR

Yanni, Fadwa is an ox, my God. I think she dislocated my knee!

(YOUSSIF goes to the window.)

YOUSSIF

The neighbor has his generator on, but no electricity on the rest of the block. I should call Mama.

EMIR

I talked to her earlier, she's fine. At least her sisters are with her, thank God.

YOUSSIF

I'm glad our father isn't alive to see this.

EMIR

He would have turned on the gas generator and sold shawarma to the whole neighborhood, shit, he probably would have sold them to the soldiers. I miss him.

(They share a laugh. EMIR sits on the chair. Youssif on the couch.)

YOUSSIF

Me too. I'm a *hmarr*. A complete jackass.

EMIR

Not a complete jackass.

YOUSSIF

I should have told Fadwa sooner.

EMIR

Yeah, what were you thinking?

YOUSSIF

I wanted to tell her face-to-face.

EMIR

That is very noble of you.

YOUSSIF

I just. . . I thought Fadwa and I could have some time to. . . I don't know... resolve things. This is my fault.

EMIR

You did your best. And so did Fadwa.

(YOUSSIF pours them each a drink from the bottle of ARAK and they toast.)

YOUSSIF

It was a good night.

EMIR

It really was. Except for the part where Fadwa tried to rip Hayat's face off. But the rest, very nice.

YOUSSIF

Congratulations, Emir. *Mabrook, elf mabrook*. [a thousand congrats.]

(They toast, drink, and try to rest.)

FADWA (O.S.)

No, he's not in his room.

DALAL (O.S.)

Did you check the other room?

FADWA (O.S.)

He's not there.

EMIR

What now?

(DALAL and FADWA Enter.)

DALAL

Is Baba out here?

EMIR

I don't think so.

FADWA

Baba!

(HAYAT and SAMIA enter.)

SAMIA

Zein!

DALAL

Baba!

EMIR

Amo!

YOUSSEF

Amo! Where is his tabla?

HAYAT (O.S)

It's not in his room.

(HAYAT enters. DALAL notices the back door open.)

DALAL

Why is the door open?

(FADWA goes straight for the door. EMIR chases her to hold her from going out.)

FADWA

Baba! Where are you? Baba! Are you out here?

EMIR

Foo Foo, get inside—

FADWA

We have to go look for him.

(FADWA tries to go back out, but EMIR grabs her. They struggle, but EMIR gets her back in the house.)

EMIR

Fadwa, no!

FADWA

What if they arrest him and he gets agitated, he won't understand—

EMIR

Maybe he went to my mothers?

YOUSSEF

I'll call her.

HAYAT

Just start calling everyone you know. Get the word out.

(EMIR AND YOUSSEF dial their phones.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

We'll know more in the morning.

(YOUSSIF goes to the radio, turns it on to hear ongoing news in Arabic. Everyone listens with rapt attention. FADWA sits at the dining room table and stares toward the back door. The Characters blow out their candles and clear the stage as the Radio stays on continually, to indicate the passing of a few days as the lights rise into day. FADWA blows out her candle.)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

SCENE I

(Lights rise. Morning on the tenth day of curfew.
FADWA stands at the counter.)

FADWA

(Whispering to her Audience.)

Good morning. Today is the tenth day of our ongoing curfew series and our topic this morning is fasting. Yes, today, you have tuned into *NO Food and Fadwa!* Fasting is a sacred practice. Baba says-

(She looks to the back door.)

-that sometimes we are too spoiled—we forget how much we’ve been given. We must fast to remember to be grateful...

(Enter YOUSSEF carrying a crate of olive oil.)

YOUSSEF

Foo Foo, are you ok?

(Enter EMIR, DALAL, HAYAT, and SAMIA.)

EMIR

I’m dying of thirst—

YOUSSEF

They turned off the water.

EMIR

Terrific.

HAYAT

There’s a bottle in the pantry. I filled a couple. I thought this might happen.

DALAL

I’m starving.

YOUSSEF

There’s this.

DALAL

Olive oil?

HAYAT

Come on, everyone. It's nourishment.

(Pouring oil into several cups.)

Here. Take sips.

EMIR

Mmm. Buttery yet fruity, with notes of almond and strife. Dalal, *yallah*.

DALAL

I can't. I feel sick.

EMIR

You need strength.

(DALAL's cell phone rings.)

DALAL

Emir, get it.

EMIR

Hello? Hi Mama.

DALAL

Again? The woman is draining my battery.

EMIR

(On Phone)

No we haven't heard much—there were reports that maybe someone spotted him, but—yeah. Any word about the curfew? Really? Maybe in a few hours? Okay, call as soon as you hear. Bye, love you.

YOUSSEF

Just have to keep waiting.

HAYAT

We've called everyone we know here and back home for help. The word is out.

(HAYAT goes to Fadwa with a cup of olive oil.)

Foo Foo? How about just a bit?

(FADWA doesn't answer.)

Youssef, you have to do something.

YOUSSEF

Fadwa, drink this.

(FADWA stares off toward the window.)

YOUSSEF (CONT'D)

Come on, just a little bit.

(FADWA continues to stare off.)

DALAL

Just leave her.

EMIR

Shoo leave her?

YOUSSEF

Fadwa.

DALAL

Leave her, just leave her!

EMIR

Why are you yelling?

DALAL

Maybe she doesn't want to talk to him!

EMIR

We can't just let her sit there and waste away!

HAYAT

Ok, everyone, just. Let's try to get along.

DALAL

I don't want to get along. I don't want get along.

(The phone rings.)

EMIR

(On Phone)

Mama, good news? Excuse me? Oh, Shalom. I'm sorry sir, what did you say—

(Lights shift. On one corner of the stage, BABA of FADWA's memory emerges, as EMIR speaks on the phone. Characters are still, except BABA.)

BABA

To appreciate God's great bounty, simply look, Fadwa, at the blessed olive tree. It's very branches a symbol for peace, its fruit a holy gift.

(Illustrating with his hands.)

BABA (CONT'D)

You see, there is a wide sort of tube that runs down the length of the trunk; it contracts and expands, pumping sap through the trunk and the branches, giving the tree life. Do you understand, Foo Foo? The tree has a heart. That tube serves as its heart. What is a heart but the center of a man's compassion and capacity for love? A tree loves. It has compassion for man. It gives us its breath so that we may live; teaches us to be rooted and steadfast and gives shelter to all who seek it. . .

EMIR

Where?/I see. Thank you very much, sir, for the call.

(EMIR hangs up.)

BABA

To seize an ancient olive tree is like a confiscation of memory. . .

(BABA of FADWA's memory exits and the lights fade.)

EMIR

They found your father. I'm so sorry.

(DALAL runs into the back bedroom.)

EMIR (CONT'D)

Dalal!

(EMIR exits. HAYAT exits. YOUSSEF kneels next to FADWA.)

YOUSSEF

Fadwa.

FADWA

He went to find his trees. . .so he could remember. . .

YOUSSEF

What do you mean? Fadwa?

(SAMIA approaches gently.)

FADWA

He went to his trees...

AUNTIE SAMIA

That's right, *habibti*, he did.

(To Youssef)

AUNTIE SAMIA (CONT'D)

You can't imagine what it was like. Tanks and bulldozers surrounded his groves. It was harvest time—we were all there. It's a celebration—you know how we've done this for generations. We stood and watched as the army uprooted every tree. There was no reason, or warning. Just...waste. The soldiers told us to go, but my brother wouldn't move. He is very stubborn...very strong. But when he came home, he just sat in this chair...just staring. He didn't speak. When he finally did, weeks later, it was to ask where he was...He left to try to remember.

(SAMIA shakes her head sadly and exits. FADWA starts to cry.)

YOUSSIF

I'm sorry, I wish I was here. . .*ya Allah*. . .I'm so sorry. . .

(YOUSSIF holds FADWA and slowly aides her off-stage into the dark hallway. The electricity returns bringing the home out of darkness. The lights shift as the stage-left front door opens, indicating that the family is coming from BABA's funeral. DALAL and EMIR carry olive tree saplings and place them around the house, then quietly exit through the stage-right back door. SAMIA and HAYAT enter with flowers, setting them down. HAYAT clears a few things and exits through the pantry. SAMIA quietly exits through the stage-right backdoor.)

ACT III

SCENE II

(Lights up as FADWA enters, carrying trays of food. Enter HAYAT.)

HAYAT

You know, I cook to feel better too sometimes.

FADWA

I'm just arranging. This is all from Youssif's family, and some other neighbors.

HAYAT

I don't know how they managed it. Just two days ago no one had anything. Can I help?

(FADWA nods and the two silently arrange food together.)

HAYAT (CONT'D)

My mom was so happy to hear he passed peacefully.

FADWA

It was good to talk to her.

HAYAT

It made her feel like she was with us.

(Enter DALAL in black.)

DALAL

I think I packed everything I own. Hayat, you're sure about the flight?

HAYAT

Everything's taken care of sweetie—the airline rebooked our flights no problem.

DALAL

I wish we had more time. . .tomorrow feels too fast. . .

HAYAT

I'll help you finish packing.

(HAYAT exits.)

FADWA

Dalal?

DALAL

It's just so many things at once.

FADWA

In six months, you'll come back and we'll have the wedding and I'll make you the most beautiful feast. . .

DALAL

Maybe we should stay—Emir can figure something out, we can live here with you—

FADWA

Oh, please, you two will drive me crazy! No, you have to go.

(Re-enter HAYAT carrying three packages of maxi-pads.)

HAYAT

Sweetie, are you serious? Are you opening a drug store? There are ten more in her suitcase!

(DALAL, FADWA and HAYAT begin laughing)

DALAL

Stop it! What if they don't have them?

HAYAT

What do you think, that we all sit around on towels in a red tent?

DALAL

No, I mean that's my brand!

(EMIR and YOUSSEF enter. YOUSSEF carries a paper bag.)

EMIR

Bonjour lovely ladies.

YOUSSEF

Marhaba.

DALAL

Ok, put them away, *willy!*

YOUSSEF

Put what away?

EMIR

Oh you won't be needing those for much longer. I plan on keeping you pregnant for at least ten years.

DALAL

Oh hush!

HAYAT

I am not letting you pack these!

EMIR

See? She's on my side.

DALAL

You still can't touch me for another 6 months!

EMIR

Oh, no, no, no. In America, we don't need the marriage part! That's why we're going!

(EMIR, HAYAT and DALAL exit.)

YOUSSIF

These are some of your father's things.

(Out of the paper bag he removes BABA's tabla.)

He was holding it, beside the tree, where they found him. That's what they said.

FADWA

Keep it.

YOUSSIF

No, no.

FADWA

It was yours to begin with.

(YOUSSIF takes the tabla.)

YOUSSIF

I looked up to your father... I loved him very much.

FADWA

He loved you too.

YOUSSIF

What's holding you here, Fadwa? You're free to go anywhere now. . .

FADWA

This is home. And someone has to find a home for these little trees.

(They look at the plants and trees.)

YOUSSIF

Yes. Someone does. Well, we leave early so...

(YOUSSIF opens his arms and FADWA goes to him.)

YOUSSIF (CONT'D)

You're my best friend.

FADWA

You're mine too.

YOUSSIF

Habibit elbe, inti. [You are the love of my life.]

(She releases him from the embrace, and touches his face. YOUSSIF exits. FADWA turns to the audience.)

FADWA

Thank you for tuning in to the final episode of *Food and Fadwa, Ecklit il Hob*. We have had quite the gastronomic journey! Right Mike? Don't be upset, you'll find another job! If you cannot say goodbye, you cannot have a new hello.

My father used to say that for a new tree to grow, it must be planted in a clean, fertile field, free from rotting roots, trunks or weeds. Once it grows and takes full root, you'll have served it well. When its leaves fall and its trunk begins to rot...let it die with dignity. Say goodbye with grace, and then, begin again.

So long, sweet friends, and may you have a safe and blessed journey. Remember, no matter what you eat, the most important food of all is *ecklit'il hob*. The food of love.

(Lights down on FADWA as she takes a plant, unwraps it, and plants it in the earth.)

END OF PLAY.