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Amreeka

By Cherien Dabis

Sorry.

See you tomorrow.

She never told me.

Ihab Abdulla.

- I love you.

- I love you.

Citizenship?

We don't have.

You don't have citizenship?

As in, you don't

have a country.

That's right.

Where are you from?

- Israel?

- No, no.

It's the Palestinian territory.

Your occupation?

Yes.

It is occupied

for forty years.

No. What is your occupation?

What--What do you do

for a living, ma'am?

Oh yes, I was working

in banking.

Is this your son?

Yes. Fadi.

Your husband

travelling with you?

No. We have divorced.

My husband--

He's not a good man.

Ma'am?

Ma'am?

Yes?

Has anyone asked you to bring

anything into the country?

Only my mother.

Are you carrying

any firearms?

Repeat please.

Are you carrying

any firearms?

- Guns, weapons.

- No, no. No.
What's in this?
Cheese and...
I don't know.
Meat by-products are prohibited
from entry in the United States.
Oh... Mama?
Can you move it
a little bit?
Mama?
Fine.
Narcotics?
- Sorry?
- Heroin.
- Cocaine, marijuana.
- No! No, no, of course not!
Fadi!
- How are you?
- Good.
- Hi, Aunty.
- Hello.
- Welcome to America!
- Thank you.
It's a big country, Aunty.
Mum says everyone
in America is fat.
So maybe
you could fit in.
This is my present.
Michel Arona.
Zatar...
Fadi... Fadi!
Okay, get some sleep,
habib.
Fadi... Fadi!
So, is there anything else
you can do?
You can file a report,
but that's about it.
You can try back in
a few days if you want to.
Thanks.
Mom...
- It's my room, too.

- No, it's not. Go away.
You have to take
an appointment.
\$23.24
Thanks.
Thank you.
Kind of ugly,
but fine.
Oh my God!
Definitely not!
What you're doing?
She's telling me
what to wear.
Why? You don't know
what to wear?
No, Aunty, because
he can't wear things like this.
Why?
Just buy this for him.
Aunty, they're pleaded.
Do you know what will happen
if you wear this to school?
What?
He'll look like an FOB.
- A what?
- Fresh of the boat.
What's that mean?
What boat, habiti?
It means he won't have
any friends.
What friends have to do
with his clothes?
Only everything.
Arabic, English and French?
Well, my French
isn't that good, but--
Him parler francais trs bien.
(He speaks French very well)
Me too.
We speak three language
and a half.
Mom, I only know
the numbers in Hebrew.
This is what

I said I have.
Mr. Novatski, the boys are writing
on the bathroom walls again.
Yeah, I'll--
I'll be there in a minute.
Now, it says here
you went to private school.
- Yeah, I did. It was--
- Yeah, it was so expensive.
But I manage.
I work in a bank
for ten years.
Well, his record
is very impressive.
So you did something right.
- Thank you.
- I have to say that he has
more credits than
most of our graduates.
Now, I assume that you're
planning on going to college.
Yeah, I do.
I like arts
so I thought of going
to some art college or like--
No, no.
He will be a doctor.
Like my sister-husband.
He's too smart.
Right, well. Um...
I see no reason
why Fadi shouldn't be able to
enter his junior year here.
We're lucky to have him.
Thank you very much.
Thank you.
Thank you!
Habibi!
Come on, people.
Who read the assignment?
They targetted aliens
with ties--
C-- Come in.
Fatty Farrah?

It's Fadi.
Isn't that what I said?
I take it
that's your mom.
Dude, check it out.
Have a seat.
Welcome to Current World Issues.
I'm Mr. Jones.
Where you joining us from?
- Louis Bank.
- He's my cousin.
So what's your take
on what's going on over there?
Well, there needs to be an end to
the occupation first of all and--
We want to hear
what Fatty thinks.
Yeah... Fatty.
Well, I guess I agree
with Sanma.
- Muna Farrah.
- Yeah. I'm she.
- Hi. Hi.
- Hello. Right this way.
Thank you.
Please.
So what can I help you
with today?
I came here for a job.
- Excuse me?
- A job.
I would like a job.
I-I'm sorry. I thought
you wanted to open an account.
I came from Palestine.
You know her?
- Who?
- Palestine!
Is that
a Jewish-speaking country?
No. Arabic.
I'm an Arab.
Oh... don't blow the place up.
I'm just kidding.

Actually, we're not really
hiring at this time.
I have a long experience.
You can see from my resume.
Here. Please.
Great, we'll certainly
keep this on file.
And also I came here
because my sister--
She had account
with you.
I promise if you give me a job,
I will open my account also here.
We'll keep that in mind.
Thank you.
Thank you for calling...
How can I help you?
Hi. You look for, uh...
a book-keeper?
You're looking for who?
I'm interested
in a book-keeper job.
It's written here
in the newspaper.
That position's been filled.
Hmm... Thank you.
No fair. Your parts are
much bigger than mine.
I'm older, so live with it.
Aunty, Lamis won't let me
leave this part of the room.
I can't even get to the door!
Is it true, Lamis?
- No, I was just kidding. God!
- No, she's not.
She's gonna put the tape
back there when you leave.
No, she won't.
She's a good girl.
Tattle-tail.
Mama...
Mom!
Can I have
lunch money, please?

Lunch money?
American marines have dragged
the iconic statue of Saddam Hussein
- off its pedestal...
- So what does this mean? Is it over?
Are you kidding?
It's just the beginning.
The Americans
are going to get in there
and destabilize
the whole region.
Mom, this is disgusting.
Mom, I love it!
Just push the cauliflower aside.
That's what I do.
It all tastes so good.
You're too thin.
Where's my mom,
by the way?
So what-- Are the Iraqis happy
that Saddam is gone?
I'll give you some particular advice
if you don't like the way it was done.
Can I get up?
I can't hear!
I got a job.
- Where, Aunty?
- In the United Alliance Bank.
What will you be doing?
Working in office.
Administration.
When do you start, Mom?
When you start--
- Then bye.
- Bye.
Hi. Can I help you?
I wish.
Good morning.
It's my first day.
- Wait-- You work here?
- Yes.
I'm Muna.
Matt.
Matt?

Your name is Matt?
Do you know
what it means in Arabic?
I know it's not "God is great"
but it's what I am.
It means dead.
You are dead.
Cool.
Imagine that someone
invaded America, alright?
And then
the people resisted...
Would we be terrorists?
No. See that's completely
different, though.
- No, it's not.
- It is because
we wouldn't blow ourselves up
killing innocent people.
Because you wouldn't have to.
Alright, because you have
fighter jets in your backyard.
We didn't invade them.
We were over there trying to help them.
How?
By starving them?
By killing them?
My brother is over there
trying to give them a chance
- at freedom.
- If you believe that,
I seriously feel sorry
for you.
- You seriously feel--
- Okay. Okay.
Let's open this up.
What do the rest of you think?
What are the reasons
behind terrorism?
Political injustice
and resistance to occupation.
Just give someone else
a chance, okay?
Fadi.

- You would ask him.

- I'm sorry.

What? What was that?

It seems Salma would rather
I refrain from questioning Fadi.
Probably cause he's got
something to hide.

Yeah, well, maybe he's planning
to blow the school up.

- Hey, that's enough.

- That's so racist.

What, so you think they taught him
to build bombs in the second grade?

Yeah, you people
are clueless.

- Really?

- Okay, okay, that's enough.

Let's get back on track.

Somebody else.

Come on.

Welcome to the White Castle.

Would you like
a case of graving?

No, it's... "Would you like
to try our crave case?"

This what I say.

- You're such a fat pig!

- Fuck off!

Why they aren't at school?

Let's just stick with
"Welcome to White Castle."

I'm sorry, there's no one
here named Muna.

- Are you sure?

- Yeah.

I mean, if you want,
I can ask.

- But I'm pretty positive.

- Yes, please.

- What's your name?

- Raghda.

- I beg your pardon.

- Ra-ghda.

Rag-dha?

- Yes, Ragdha, yes.
- I'm sorry I'm late.
- Muna.
- I was in the store
to buy some medicine.
I have a headache.
Maybe too much thinking.
- You were here this morning.
- Yes. Muna, my name is Muna.
See you tomorrow.
Thank you.
I don't care.
But you don't listen.
You know that.
Nabeel. Nabeel!
- Hello?
- Momma?
Muna!
Nice!
They couldn't even
spell it right.
Nelson...
I make more than this.
Taxes, Muna.
That much for taxes?
I see hungry people.
One minute, please.
Listen, it's a big problem
for me.
I need the money now!
Maybe I can take
an advance.
Nelson...
We should really teach
the guy a lesson, then.
We should kick his ass.
Being anti-warrior,
you're kinda violent.
But yeah,
we should definitely kick his ass.
- What do you say?
- No.
It only make
Mike more pissed off.

I think we should give him
a dose of his own medicine, you know?
Yeah, man.
You gotta stop being so nice.
Toughen up, you know.
Show those guys
who's boss.
How?
You okay?
You were good enough.
First learn
how to smoke a joint.
I smoked one...
one before. Sort of.
Okay, not really.
But I thought about it.
Dude, you need
some major help.
Take off that jacket.
- Why?
- Just take it off.
You look horrible.
Just take it off.
Untuck your shirt.
Yeah.
Oh, I got something!
I got something.
You gotta wear your shit
loose, you know?
Okay.
Like you don't
give a shit.
Okay. Try this one.
I like that.
- Yeah.
- It's nice?
It's alright.
Try that, though.
- Nice!
- That's perfect.
It's perfect.
- Yeah? Hardcore, like this.
- Yeah.
Yeah, like you know shit.

- Go, Fadi. Go, Fadi.
- Go, Fadi. Oh, yeah.
I'm keeping one
beside the door.
And one beside my bed.
Who plays baseball?
Mom...
Does Dad live
in the basement now?
Well, please stop laughing.
- I'm not the one laughing.
- You're the one laughing!
She steals
all the covers in bed.
She's like Godzilla in the...
in the bedroom.
Moms-- they have
some love in their...
- Yeah.
- ...their hearts.
Dude, man,
I'm messed up.
You say "dude" too much, man.
You're all American and shit.
Dude, you sleep
with your mom?
Yeah, I've been...
- It's not cool.
- Cause that shit will mess you up.
- Seriously. Dude, I'm just saying.
- Why do you always care about sex?
- It will mess you up.
- What do you think about in your head?
Or what
do you care about?
Number one, sex,
number one...
Cheeseburgers,
number two.
Double with bacon...
Hey! You came from sex.
Dude, I don't wanna have it in me.
I don't wanna have it.
Yo, guys.

Check who's here?

- Who's here?

- Mike.

Oh, shit.

Are you serious?

- Okay.

- I hate that guy.

- Seriously.

- Yeah, me too.

Do you guys

wanna have some fun?

I feel I don't think

it's a good idea.

What if someone

sees us?

Who cares?

Hurry up,

someone's coming.

Run!

Go, go, go, go, go!

You're dead now.

You're dead now, you fuck.

"Opportunity"...

"Click here to show"...

Work from home.

Achieve your dreams!

Lose weight... earn a living.

The herbalist respect.

Oh so um...

my mom heard me

talking to James on the phone

and she like, totally fucked up.

So don't even mention

his name, alright?

Where have you been?

Oh my God. Jesus!

Mom, what are you doing?

Where have you been, Aunty?

We're so worried.

Oh, we just went

to a movie.

Who went with you?

No one.

It was just us two.

With James.
He wasn't there?
You are grounded one month.
What?!
This is ridiculous!
Aunty, Jim is
a friend of mine.
Drinking with drugs,
or God knows what.
God, is that all you think
that people do here?
- Yes.
- Well, here's a shocker, Mom.
We live in America.
We're American!
As long as you live in this house,
you live in Palestine!
You're delusional!
Fadi...
Then don't.
Because you snore.
Then go sleep
and get out of my grill.
Since now.
I'm homeless.
- It's your home.
- It's Mum and Dad's home.
I have no control
over it.
Lamis doesn't want me
in her room
and I'm sick of living with someone
who doesn't want me.
- She wishes I was never born.
- No, no, it's not true.
Why don't you come back
with me to your room?
It's your room now.
We can share it.
Fadi's just sleeping
at the couch.
Come on.
Welcome to White Castle.
How can I help you?

I'll have the... number four
with chicken wings.
And diet coke.
You like to lose weight?
Excuse me?
You like me...
We're fat in the middle.
You need this...
Herbal Lose.
You know, we need help
at the grill.
You gotta pay
for what you did, bro.
I don't need this.
- Man, I don't want to fight with you, okay?
- You want to fight with me?
Well, you should have thought of it
before you messed with my truck!
I didn't mess
with your truck!
Hey, Muna.
There's someone here for you.
I'm sorry to bother you.
Your sister's at the bank.
- Yes?
- I told here you were out to lunch.
I hope that's okay.
She said your son got into
some trouble at school.
One minute, okay?
What happened?
Well, he got into a fight.
There's some... bruising
but I don't think it's too bad.
Some asshole.
Why did
they beat you in?
Up, Mom, up!
Up, in...
Just... don't worry about it.
It's my problem.
And you are
my problem.
I don't want to be

your fucking problem.
Fadi, have some respect.
Nothing. Just...
don't want to be here.
Home.
Just somewhere where people
aren't stupid enough to think
I'll blow myself up.
Who said that?
Can I go to class now?
Yeah, sure.
You're alright?
You need a ride?
No, thank you.
I'm looking for my sister.
She said she have
to pick up the dry-cleaning.
And I'm too late for work.
Well, my car is right here.
No, no. Thank you, no.
Why don't you let me
drive you?
- It's no trouble.
- No, no. I'll wait...
Please. Come on,
I'd be happy to. Come on.
Thank you.
Got a whole mess in there.
Don't worry.
You know... I think
you're seeing the worst of it,
Mrs. Farrah, I really do.
Kids just don't know
any better.
You know, they hear about
one Muslim extremist...
Suddenly, all Muslims
are extremists.
- But they are not.
- Of course, they're not.
We are not Muslim even.
I'm sorry.
I-- I just assumed.
It doesn't matter.

We are a minority here
and a minority there.

I can relate.

Not many Polish-Jews
around here.

You are a Jewish?

- You came from Poland?

- Well, not me.

My grandparents.

I was born here.

So... you play chess?

Yeah.

Every now and then.

I was on the chess team
in college.

You know

we invent the chess?

- "We?" Who's "we?"

- The Arab.

- Really?

- Yeah.

No, I had no idea.

Yes, Oni said, "Checkmate--

It comes from the Arabic."

Sheikh matt.

Which means the king is dead.

- Is that right?

- Yes.

I never heard that before.

Sheikh matt.

- Sheikh matt.

- Sheikh matt.

So you speak the Arabic
without knowing that.

Thank you so much.

Oh, you tell Fadi
to hang in there.

He will.

He's lucky to have you,
you know.

You tell him this
before God this day.

Thank you.

They make

a good hamburger here.
You know why?
They cook it on
top of the onion.
- It's delicious.
- I can bring you more!
Oh, no, no, no.
Thanks. This is plenty.
No, no, it's okay.
You can take it for your family.
No. I live alone.
I'm divorced.
Yeah, me too.
I was married for eleven years.
And my husband--
All what he brings me is a headache.
Would you like some?
No, no, no. No, it's okay.
I just started my diet today.
I take Herbal Loss.
It's good!
- Do you like it?
- Yeah, it's-- It's good.
You can have more.
- I sell it.
- I'd love to buy some.
- Really?
- Yeah!
I mean, I could stand
to lose a few pounds.
You can buy it all!
So... what happened
to your marriage?
Well, he just
found another woman.
I am gone.
He look like this.
She made me look
so fat.
You're not at all fat.
Thank you.
L-- Listen.
I wish you don't say
anything to my family

you see me here.
I won't say a word.
They will not like it.
I don't like it too.
I have two degrees
in ten years experience
and in this country,
all this get me is...
a hamburger.
Everything okay
with your son?
Oh, yeah. Okay.
They gave him a black eye.
I'm sorry to hear that.
I wanted to let you know
I looked into a credit card for you,
- like you asked.
- You did?
I found one that you qualify for,
but the APR is kind of high.
- It's okay.
- Well, great!
Come on back and we'll see
if we can get you approved.
Thank you.
Please...
I don't speak much
these days.
Please don't...
Accidental bombing...
We have to live our life.
I start to believe
Raghda was right.
To go where?
It was successful.
Yani, don't worry.
I will help you with that.
But I need you
to do something for me.
Sorry.
Okay...
- We put a little bit tahini.
- Come on!
Next time, I will make it

with Arabic salad.

- Okay.

- Tomato... cucumber...

Yeah, yeah.

- This is good stuff.

- I told you.

Seriously though,

you can add something here.

Must be like...

White Castle's

New Falafel Burger!

- Oh yeah.

- Yeah.

- For vegetarian, why not?

- Yeah.

So, how you say 'delicious'
in Arabic?

- Zaki.

- Zaaki?

Well, that is so zaaki.

Cheers!

Why you do like this?

Why, you don't like it?

No, I like it.

I don't know. I guess

I think it's cool.

Makes me different.

You like to be different?

Well, yeah. Like why would I want to be
just like everybody else, you know?

It's what I hated

about high school.

It's that... you're punished

if you don't fit in. It's stupid.

It's why I dropped out.

You dropped from school?

Yeah, it's not

a big deal though, like,

I'm still gonna

get my GED.

It's-- I don't want

to go to high school.

It's too much of bullshit.

Don't-- Don't fuck me like that.

I can't go to my uncle--
Two cheeseburgers...
Hey. Hey, um...
How's your son?
You know my son?
Yeah, I know-- Yeah, I know
everybody knows Osama.
- Nice one!
- \$8.99.
Tell your son
that I said hi.
Take your food and go away.
This is a free country.
I don't have to go anywhere.
- Why don't you get out of here?
- Go back where you came from, okay?
You guys just go.
You shut the hell up, faggot.
Shame on you.
Have some respect.
Go away from here.
I will call the police now.
Go away! Go!
Go!
I said go!
Jesus! Are you okay?
Muna?
Okay, I see a van.
Does he drive a van?
- Yeah.
- Okay. Yeah, here, here.
Why didn't you call
the ambulance?
I tried.
She wouldn't let me.
It's okay.
I don't have any...
No, no, no, no!
Just relax and stay where you are.
I'm going to check
a few things.
Okay.
They said
they know my son.

- You have any tingling?

- No.

- How about now?

- No.

Wallahi,

it's not a big deal.

I don't know.

I'm stupid, tayyib.

Mama, you're not stupid!

Don't say that.

Tayib, it doesn't sound like
you have anything to do with this.

- Can you turn on your side?

- Yeah, okay.

Okay.

Does this hurt?

This might hurt.

The muscles on the side
of your spine
are in spasm...

Where should we take her
to the hospital?

It's okay.

If it's not better
in the morning,
I'll take you to the hospital
for an X-ray.

Okay.

Muna, let's get you
out of here.

Nice and slow.

Okay.

Yallah.

- Okay.

- Thank you.

- Yeah.

- Thank you, Matt.

No problem.

Matt.

- Good night, Muna.

- Bye!

You feel better.

Thank you.

Easy, easy.

Don't worry,
you'll be okay.
Keep the ice full.
Ten minutes, tayyib?
Okay.
- Good night.
- Good night.
Aunty, do you really work
at White Castle?
Could have at least
chosen Wendy's.
- Night.
- Good night.
Can you take me somewhere?
Hey, hey, hey.
Hey, what are you gonna do?
I don't know.
Is Mike here?
Mike.
Why did you hit
my mom?
I don't know
what you're talking about.
What did I ever
do to you?
- Fadi! Fadi!
- My mom can't walk because of you.
My brother could've died
because of you, you stupid...
You're an idiot! You know that?
You're dumb.
What the hell
are you talking about?
Whose a terrorist?
You're the one
who barged in...
Get off him!
- You're an idiot!
- I'm calling cops.
Asshole!
Aunty...
Aunty, Aunty, Aunty,
Aunty, Aunty...
Aunty, Fadi was arrested.

No, no, he's okay.
He went to...
He went to Mike's house.
And, um, they called the cops.
It wasn't his vehicle.
He was the guy
who was at White House earlier.
Look, Aunty, okay...
You can't tell
Mom and Dad, okay?
Cause if they find out I snuck out,
they're gonna kill me.
What do you want
me to do?
Careful, Aunty.
- Allah.
- You okay?
So I've got some news.
They decided to drop
the charges against your son.
Where is he?
We can't
release him yet.
We still need to hold him
for questioning.
- Why?
- It's procedure.
Can I see him?
No, not right now.
Well, how long
is he gonna be?
I really couldn't say.
Maybe you can try back again
in the morning.
- In the--
- In the morning?!
I'm sorry.
It's out of my hands.
Ya Allah!
We have to call
your parents.
What? No, no, no.
Okay, listen...
They're not listening

to us, alright?

There's no way that they're gonna listen to Mom and Dad.

We have to get some help here, Aunty, okay?

I can't leave my son here.

- I'm sorry if I bothered you.

- No, no.

No, no bother.

Don't worry, we'll--

We'll get this straightened out.

- You alright?

- Yeah, thank you.

Okay.

Mr. Novatski.

What's going on?

This woman's son was brought in a few hours ago on assault charges.

Right, and the charges were dropped.

Not exactly.

Because of the nature of the complaint,

- we have to investigate further.

- So investigate,

but why my son

have to stay here?

Look, I know

these boys very well.

- I'm sure you do, Mr. Novatski.

- Just they're having a hard time getting along with each other, but that's it.

It's nothing that requires any further investigation.

We're dealing with some serious accusations, sir.

No, they're not accusations.

They're just-- They're silly rumours started by kids who have no idea what they're saying.

We'd love to take your word for it,

but we take this sort of thing
extremely seriously.
I mean, I don't have to tell you
what's going on in the world.
I understand that,
but you're making
a big mistake here.
This is a 16-year old boy.
I mean, he's harmless.
Like I said, this is
a special circumstance.
Cut the crap!
This is no special circumstance.
This is a boy trying
to defend his mother.
He presents no threat
to anybody.
If I'm--
If I'm wrong,
you... you can hold me
personally responsible.
Salma.
This-- This just sucks.
Sorry, Mom.
Hello.
Welcome to the White Castle.
What are you craving?
Don't look at me.
I don't want any of this.
I just want a cheeseburger.
- Me too!
- I'll have one too, Mom.
- Not before dinner!
- Yeah, Raghda, you are so strict.
They are not.
You will see.
- Hi!
- Hi.
You work today.
Thank you.
Ah, very good!
You are getting better.
- Hello.
- Oh, Mr. Novatski.

Please, call me Stan.
I just, uh... I'm just here
to pick up some food.
Stan, it's too bad
I can't sit with you.
- We are going to eat.
- Oh, well.
- Have a good time.
- Thank you!
Why don't you
come with us?
No, no,
I-- I couldn't.
It's better than the White Castle.
Come on!
Oh, you will like it.
Come on!
It's very kind of you.
I'm just gonna come
and say hello.
- No, it's okay.
- That's fine.
- Hi, I'm Mr. Novatski.
- Hi! Hi.
- Nice to see you.
- Yeah. Nice to see you.
Please come and eat with us.
Arabic food--
- It's the best in the world.
- No, I can't.
- I-- The best in the world.
- Yalla, yalla.
- You sure there's room?
- Yes, yes. Welcome.
All right.
But why are they
all eating cheeseburgers?
Do you like Arabic music?
I like this.
If you like it,
you have a good taste.
Okay.
What happened
to your diet, Aunty?

You gotta stay strong.

- No, no, eat it.

- I will. I will.

How is it?

See... Herbal here.

Um, just inhale.

Yes, yes, yes.

Keep it, keep it, keep it...

Where did it go?

Revision: