

THE VISITOR

Written by

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INT. HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

WALTER VALE, sixty-two, is standing by the window of his modestly furnished Colonial house. He is holding a glass of wine and peering out through the drapes.

After a few moments an OLD CAR pulls up. A slightly overweight WOMAN gets out of the car. She starts to walk up to the house.

Walter steps back from the window and waits. The doorbell rings. Walter takes a last sip of wine and sets the glass down on the end table. And then he goes to the door and

opens

it.

WOMAN

Mr. Vale?

WALTER

Yes.

WOMAN

Hello. I'm Barbra Watson. Nice to meet you.

WALTER

Yes. Come in.

BARBARA

Thank you.

both

She steps into the house and Walter shuts the door. They

stand there awkwardly. Barbara is tightly wound and overcompensates with a forced pleasantness.

WALTER

Can I take your coat?

BARBARA

No, thank you.

WALTER

OK. Would you like anything to drink?

BARBARA

No.

(Beat)

Shall we get started?

WALTER

OK.

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INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, PIANO ROOM - LATER

Walter and Barbara sit side by side in a very close proximity.

BARBARA

Let's try it again.

WALTER

The same thing?

BARBARA

Yes. Remember, fingers curved. Like a tunnel.

WALTER

OK.

Walter starts to play the piano. It's a lesson in progress. They are sitting at a beautiful GRAND PIANO but Walter is only a beginner. And not a very good beginner.

BARBARA

Don't flatten.

Walter keeps playing.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Make room for the train.

Walter stops.

WALTER

What?

BARBARA

I said "make room for the train."
It's something that I tell my kids.
If you curve your fingers like
this...

(She demonstrates)

Then the train can pass through the
tunnel.

She passes her pencil through her curved fingers. Walter
looks at her for a long moment.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Walter walks Barbara to the front door. He opens it and then
hands Barbara some money.

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WALTER

Here.

BARBARA

Thank you. Next Tuesday at the same
time?

WALTER

No. I don't think I'm going to
continue with our lessons.

BARBARA

Oh, no. Are you giving up?

WALTER

No.

Barbara gets the point. He is stopping with her, not the
lessons.

BARBARA

Oh. OK. Goodbye.

WALTER

Goodbye.

Barbara walks out the door and then turns before Walter
shuts
it.

BARBARA

Mr. Vale? If I may ask, how many teachers have you had before me?

WALTER

Four.

BARBARA

Well, for what it's worth, it's difficult to learn an instrument at your age. Especially if you don't possess a natural gift for it. I'm not saying this to be mean. But if you do decide to give up then I would really like to buy your piano. It's a beautiful instrument.

Walter nods, not quite sure how to receive the comment.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Goodbye.

Barbara turns and leaves. Walter shuts the door.

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INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, LECTURE HALL - DAY

Walter stands before a half-empty class. He is wrapping up a lecture on economic theory. There is nothing inspiring about it.

WALTER

East Asia's experience is really the exception to the rule, because the conditions there that made trade liberalization for the Middle East successful weren't present in the developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and in Central and South America.

EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, CAMPUS - DAY

Walter walks across the campus.

INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Walter sits in a meeting with seven other COLLEAGUES.

INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, WALTER'S OFFICE - LATER

lived-

Walter is staring out the window in his simple but very in office. Classical music plays softly in the background. A knock at the door.

WALTER

Come in.

A STUDENT opens the door and enters.

STUDENT

Hi.

He sits down and sets a paper on the desk.

STUDENT (CONT'D)

Sorry it's late.

WALTER

Why is it late?

STUDENT

I had some personal things to deal with.

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Walter hands back the paper.

WALTER

I'm sorry. I can't accept it now.

STUDENT

But...

WALTER

I'm sorry.

Walter goes back to work. The Student sits stunned for a moment and then gets up and picks up his paper. He opens the door and then stops.

STUDENT

You know you still haven't given us
a syllabus.

WALTER

(Lying)

I know.

The Student shakes his head and leaves without another word.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Walter pulls into the driveway of his house. He gets out,
grabs his belongings out of the back seat and walks inside.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DUSK

other
Walter is making dinner. Classical music plays from the
room. He adjusts the flame and covers a sauce pot. He leans
against the counter and picks up a half empty bottle of wine
and pours some into his glass. He catches sight of A SMALL
FRAMED PICTURE of him and HIS WIFE, smiling.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter sits at the piano and practices. It is still going
badly. The wine glass sits on top of the piano. He lifts his
hand and inspects his "tunnel".

INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

it.
Walter is at his computer. He pulls up his YEAR SYLLABUS on
the computer and carefully changes 2005 to 2006. He saves

His work is done. There is a knock at the door.

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WALTER

Yes.

steps
The door opens and Walter's colleague, CHARLES VAN HORN
in.

CHARLES

Hello Walter.

WALTER

Charles.

CHARLES

I'm sorry to interrupt.

WALTER

That's OK.

CHARLES

Walter, Shelley can't make it down to the NYU conference to present your paper. I'm going to need you to cover for her.

WALTER

Why can't she go?

CHARLES

She's been put on bed rest until she has the baby.

Walter is caught off guard.

WALTER

When?

CHARLES

Next week. We'll cover your class and make the arrangements.

WALTER

I wish I could, but now is not a very good time, Charles.

CHARLES

I understand but you co-authored the paper and the Dean wants it presented. He wants to keep Shelley on track for tenure.

WALTER

I just don't think I can with the start of classes and my book.

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CHARLES

You're only teaching one class,
Walter.

WALTER

So I can stay focused on my
writing. I'd really rather not go
right now.

CHARLES

I'm sorry but there really isn't
another option at this point.

Walter is trapped. He comes clean.

WALTER

Charles, the truth is this is
really Shelley's paper. I just
agreed to co-author it because she
asked me to. I'm not really
prepared to present it.

CHARLES

That may be the case but you are
the co-author and she can't go.
Look Walter, you can take it up
with the Dean if you want, but, as
your friend, I wouldn't advise it.
Not with that argument.

Walter just stares him.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Good bye.

And Charles is gone, shutting the door behind him.

INT. NEW LONDON, THE BLIND TIGER BAR - NIGHT

reading
Walter sits at the end of a bar at a local pub. He is
the newspaper. KAREN, a 44-year-old bartender, is talking to
a BLONDE HAIREED WOMAN at other end of the bar.

The wall is covered with HAND DRAWN CARICATURES OF REGULAR
PATRONS. A WAITER hands a plate of food to Karen. She walks
down the bar and sets it in front of Walter.

KAREN

Here you go, cutey.

WALTER

Thanks.

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KAREN

So I thought you forgot about me.
Where've you been hiding?

Karen automatically refills his wine glass.

WALTER

Just busy with work.

KAREN

Well you're never gonna make it on
the wall with that excuse. I'm glad
your back. Give a holler if you
need anything. I'm just gabbing
with one of my girlfriends.

WALTER

OK.

She walks back down the bar. Walter starts to eat.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Two cars are parked in Walter's driveway.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - SAME

Walter is packing, laying out his shirts on the bed. After a
moment, Karen walks in, drying her hair with a towel.

KAREN

When are you going?

WALTER

Today after class.

She takes her earrings of the night stand and puts them in.

KAREN

Sounds like fun. I'm gonna go have
a cigarette. You want some coffee?

WALTER

Yeah. Thanks.

Karen leaves. Walter keeps packing.

EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, CAFFETERIA - DAY

Walter sits at a table and eats lunch alone.

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EXT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, PARKING LOT - LATER

Walter walks across the parking lot and gets into his car.

INT. WALTER'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Walter drives along the highway. He notices a SIGN which reads "Support Our Troops!"

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, F.D.R. DRIVE - SUNSET

Walter's car drives down the F.D.R Highway.

INT. WALTER'S CAR - DUSK.

Walter drives through the small busy streets of the East Village.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, EAST VILLAGE, PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Walter pulls into a parking garage. He gets out and takes a ticket from the attendant. He grabs his bag and briefcase from the back seat.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET, EAST VILLAGE - NIGHT

He walks down the street, taking in the sights and sounds of the city.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - LATER

Walter walks out of a liquor store with a SMALL BROWN BAG.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

at
Walter arrives at a classic tenement building. He looks up
the building as if inspecting it.

He takes out his keys. He opens the door and walks in.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME

MAN
Walter walks into the well-lit but dingy foyer. A YOUNG
brushes by him.

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INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

He arrives at the second floor and stops in front of a door.
He unlocks the door and walks in.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Walter steps into the apartment and drops his bags. He
immediately notices that the kitchen light is on. Something
is not right.

WALTER

Hello?

He turns on the living room light and crosses to the kitchen
table and sets the brown bag down. It's then that he notices
some fresh flowers on the kitchen table. He looks slightly
confused. He looks around the apartment. There is an UPRIGHT
PIANO along one wall.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Hello?

in
There is no answer. He walks down a LONG HALLWAY and looks
the kitchen. Nothing. He walks over to the FIRST BEDROOM and
looks inside. There are signs of someone living there. He
looks in the SECOND BEDROOM. He sees nothing.

Suddenly he hears the sound of running water from the

bathroom. He notices a light under the door. He walks to the bathroom and listens. A faucet is turned and the water stops running. He opens the door and looks in.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - SAME

A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN is soaking in the bath tub. She see's Walter and screams.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - SAME

Walter screams too and then slams the door, stepping back into the hallway.

YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

Stay away from me!

She has a West African accent.

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WALTER

It's OK. I'm not going...

AFRICAN WOMAN

Leave me alone! My boyfriend is coming home!

WALTER

I'm not going to hurt you.

AFRICAN WOMAN

Who are you? What are you doing in here!?

WALTER

This is my apartment.

AFRICAN WOMAN

What do you mean? This apartment does not belong to you. How did you get in?

WALTER

My name is Walter Vale. I have keys. It's my...

Suddenly Walter is pushed up against the wall. Hard.

MAN'S VOICE

What the fuck?!

A very angry, YOUNG MIDDLE EASTERN MAN is in Walter's face. He grabs Walter violently by the collar and shakes him.

YOUNG MIDDLE EASTERN MAN

Who are you?! Zainab?!

ZAINAB

I'm in here! He is crazy!

WALTER

Stop it! I am not...

The Young Middle Eastern Man slams him against the wall.

It's

more of a warning shot than a violent act. Walter is terrified.

YOUNG MIDDLE EASTERN MAN

Shut up!

WALTER

OK. OK.

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ZAINAB (O.S.)

(In French)

Tarek. What is happening?

TAREK

(In French)

Are you OK?

ZAINAB

(In French)

I'm fine.

TAREK

(In French)

Who is this?

ZAINAB

(In French)

I have no idea! I was in the bath and he was just standing there.

TAREK

(Shaking Walter)
Did you touch her?! Did you touch
her?!

WALTER

No! No!

Zainab opens the door.

ZAINAB

(In French)
He didn't touch me! But how did he
get in? He said he has keys.

TAREK

Do you have keys?

WALTER

Yes! Yes! I have keys. It's my
apartment.

Tarek stares at Walter, trying to make sense of it.

ZAINAB

(in French)
What does he mean it's his
apartment?

TAREK

I don't know! Show me your keys!

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Walter reaches into his pocket and holds up his keys.

WALTER

This is my apartment. I've owned it
for twenty-five years.

TAREK

So why haven't you been here!?

WALTER

I live in Connecticut. I haven't
used it in a long time.

Walter is starting to get through.

TAREK

Are you friends with Ivan?

WALTER

Ivan? Who is Ivan?

Tarek is getting nervous.

ZAINAB

(In French)

I knew this would happen! He probably called the police.

This catches Tarek's attention.

TAREK

(to Walter)

Did you call the police?

Walter hesitates.

WALTER

No.

TAREK

You didn't call the police?

WALTER

No.

Tarek looks like he might belt Walter. Instead, he lets him go and quickly backs up. He paces while trying to gather his thoughts. Walter doesn't move. Zainab runs into the bedroom.

TAREK

And you don't know Ivan?

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WALTER

I don't know Ivan. Who is he?

TAREK

He rented us this place. He said it belonged to his friend who was out of town.

WALTER

I don't know who he is but this is my apartment. I assure you.

he's

Tarek looks at Walter for a long moment. It's clear that
telling the truth.

TAREK

Shit!

ZAINAB (O.S.)

(In French)

I told you not to trust anyone. You
never saw a contract.

TAREK

Enough! OK. Look. We don't want any
trouble. We will get out of your
apartment. This is all a mistake.
I'm sorry.

WALTER

OK.

TAREK

We will leave, OK?

WALTER

Yes. OK.

Zainab emerges from the bedroom. She is dressed.

ZAINAB

(In French)

Where are we going to go?

TAREK

(In French)

I don't know but we have to go.

ZAINAB

(In French)

I know we have to go. I am not
stupid!

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TAREK

Are you OK?

WALTER

Yes. I'm just going to sit down.

TAREK

Of course. Please.

Walter nods and then slowly walks down the hallway and sits down. He is clearly shaken. Tarek shuts the front door.

TAREK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if I hurt you. Are you sure that you're OK?

WALTER

Yeah. I'm OK.

TAREK

OK. Well, we'll pack up and get out.

Tarek walks back toward the bedroom. Walter tries to catch his breath.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - LATER

Walter is sitting on the couch with a glass of wine. Tarek enters and sets down a bag. He picks up TWO AFRICAN DRUMS next to the piano and places them by the front door.

Zainab enters from the bedroom mumbling something in an African dialect. She drops a bag and crosses back to the bedroom.

TAREK

I know I'm in trouble when she starts speaking Wolof.

WALTER

How long have you lived here?

TAREK

Two months. We will pay you if you want.

Walter doesn't respond. Zainab emerges from the bedroom
again
with the last bag.

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TAREK (CONT'D)

(To Zainab)

Is that everything?

ZAINAB

I think so. Do you want to check!?

He hands her a SMALL PLASTIC BAG from a local grocery.

TAREK

Here is the coffee you wanted.

She snatches it without a word.

TAREK (CONT'D)

(To Walter)

OK. So we'll go. I am sorry again.

Thank you for your understanding.

Good bye.

WALTER

Good bye.

They turn and exit. Walter gets up and walks over to the front door and locks it.

He stands by the front door trying to process the events. Then something catches his attention.

WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walter walks to the window and picks up a handcrafted, decorative FRAME off of the sill. It is a PHOTOGRAPH of

Tarek

and Zainab. They are hugging each other and smiling. Walter looks down onto the street.

He sees Zainab and Tarek exit the building and cross the street. Zainab's cart tips on the curb and the contents

spill

out onto the sidewalk. Tarek quickly moves to help her. Zainab yells at him.

Walter watches as they finally collect their belongings and move down the street.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - LATER

Tarek has set his bags down in front of a closed store. He

is

talking in a very agitated tone on his cell phone. Zainab stands by silently.

TAREK

(In Arabic)

Look I know. Come on man, it'll just be for a night or two until we figure something out. OK.

ZAINAB

Tarek?

TAREK

(In Arabic)

Can you check and call me back?
OK. Thanks.

ZAINAB

Tarek?

TAREK

What!?

Zainab points. Walter is standing there holding the framed photograph.

WALTER

You left this at the apartment.

Tarek walks over and takes it.

TAREK

Thanks.

Walter nods.

WALTER

Do you know where you're going to stay tonight?

TAREK

Yeah.

The lie is obvious. They are stuck. Walter just nods again.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter takes some books out of his briefcase. He crosses to

of

the bookshelf and sets them down. He notices a small stack
CD's sitting on a shelf. He picks one of them up and stares
at the CD for a long moment.

TAREK

You like classical music, huh?

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WALTER

Yes.

Walter sets down the CD.

TAREK

Me too. Do you play piano?

WALTER

No.

(Beat)

Do you?

TAREK

Me? No. I play the djembe. Well,
thanks again for letting us stay.
You saved me a lot of trouble.

Walter nods.

TAREK (CONT'D)

See you in the morning.

WALTER

OK. Good night.

Tarek goes to bed. Walter resumes his work.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter is lying in bed, unable to sleep. He can hear Tarek
and Zainab whispering and laughing.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, TAREK AND ZAINAB'S ROOM - SAME

Tarek and Zainab are lying in bed together.

ZAINAB

Stop it, Tarek. He'll hear us.

TAREK

Trust me. He's asleep.

ZAINAB

You don't know that.

TAREK

So let him hear. The guy probably needs some excitement.

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ZAINAB

I think he's probably had enough for one night.

Tarek nuzzles her. Zainab laughs but pushes him away.

ZAINAB (CONT'D)

Tarek. No!

Zainab sits up in the bed. Tarek relents and rolls onto his back.

ZAINAB (CONT'D)

What are we going to do, Tarek?

TAREK

I don't know. We'll figure it out tomorrow. Who knows? Maybe he'll let us stay. He's not really using the place.

ZAINAB

I don't want to be his roommate!

TAREK

OK. OK. So we'll figure it out in the morning. I promise, habibti.

Zainab shakes her head.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Do you still love me?

Zainab looks at him.

ZAINAB

No.

TAREK

Really?

Zainab rolls over and straddles Tarek.

ZAINAB

No. I don't love you.

She kisses Tarek.

TAREK

Not even a little?

ZAINAB

No.

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She kisses him again.

TAREK

So what is this?

She gets very close to his face.

ZAINAB

It's your punishment.

TAREK

But what about our roommate?

ZAINAB

Shhh.

She kisses him long and hard. They start to make love.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Jacob walks outside with Sprinkles.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MORNING

Walter is tying his tie in the mirror.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - LATER

Walter walks out of his bedroom and runs into Zainab who is leaving her bedroom at the same time. It's obvious that she was trying to avoid Walter.

WALTER

Good morning.

ZAINAB

Morning.

WALTER

I made some coffee.

ZAINAB

Thank you.

WALTER

Have a good day.

ZAINAB

Goodbye.

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Walter leaves.

EXT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - DAY

The Kimmel Center towers over Washington Square Park.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - DAY

Walter is listening to the speaker.

SPEAKER

That will be on the last day of conference. I hope you can all attend. And now I'd like to welcome my distinguished colleague and the winner of John Bates Clark Award, Stephen Kriegman.

STEPHEN KRIEGMAN strides to the podium. He is a good deal younger than Walter.

STEPHEN KRIEGMAN

Thank you, Shiva. Good morning.

It's a pleasure to be here.

INT. NYU BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Walter mingles at a reception. He is listening to another COLLEAGUE tell a story.

COLLEAGUE #1

And so I just stood up and walked out!

The group laughs. Stephen Kriegman approaches and talks to the COLLEAGUE.

STEPHEN KRIEGMAN

Jamie!

JAMIE

Stephen, how are you?

Walter walks off.

INT. NYU BANQUET HALL - LATER

Walter eats dinner in a large, well appointed banquet room. Walter listens as a CHATTY MAN talks.

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INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Walter is walking up the stairs carrying a briefcase. He passes a MIDDLE-AGED MAN who is walking down the stairs with a SMALL DOG on a leash.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Walter stops and turns.

WALTER

Yes.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Are you Mr. Vale?

WALTER

Yes.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

I thought so. How are you? It's me, Jacob Konigsberg. Do you remember me?

Walter doesn't.

JACOB

I used to live here with my mother. Your wife used to give me piano lessons.

WALTER

Oh. Right.

JACOB

It has been a long time. I thought that maybe you sold the place. Oh. This is Sprinkles.

(To the dog)

Say "hi", Sprinkles. Is your wife here with you?

WALTER

No. She passed away.

JACOB

What?! No! I had no idea. I'm so sorry. She was such a nice lady. And I just loved listening to her play.

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WALTER

How's your mother?

JACOB

She moved to Florida. Now I live here. It's nice. There are a lot of new faces. I hardly know anyone anymore. But I have Sprinkles so...

WALTER

Nice to see you, Jacob.

JACOB

You too, Mr. Vale. Goodbye. Welcome

back.

Walter nods and keeps walking.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Walter walks into the apartment. No one else is there.

He sets down his case and walks toward his bedroom but stops at Tarek and Zainab's door, which is closed. He listens. Nothing.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

has
Walter is reading over and "rehearsing" the paper that he
to present.

WALTER

(Sotto)

It is important to distinguish
between both our current political
assessment and our...It is
important to distinguish between
our current political assessment...

He stops and crosses out the word "both". He continues reading.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter is practicing the piano. He continues to struggle. He sits back and takes a break. He notices the drum next to the piano. He looks at it for long moment and then continues playing.

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INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, WALTER'S BEDROOM - LATER

Walter is lying in bed awake. He listens as Tarek and Zainab come home.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - MORNING

Walter buys a newspaper.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter is back at the conference. He is listening to a presentation by a GERMAN ECONOMIST.

GERMAN ECONOMIST

However, we do find that financial globalization can be beneficial under the right circumstances. Empirically, good institutions and quality of governance are crucial in helping developing countries derive the benefits of globalization.

Walter checks his watch. He is obviously bored.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - LATER

Walter is sitting in the park and eating some Indian food from a local cart vendor. He finishes and drops it into the garbage can. He checks his watch and starts to head back toward the conference when a SOUND catches his attention.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - LATER

Walter watches two young AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN drumming on BUCKETS with reckless abandon.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

We should have them come play inside.

Walter turns. THREE COLLEAGUES from the conference are standing next to him.

COLLEAGUE #1

Coming in?

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WALTER

Yes. In a minute.
(Holding up his cell phone)

I have to make a call.

COLLEAGUE #1

See you inside.

Walter nods as the guys walk off. Walter watches them go. He turns and watches the drumming again.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Walter arrives on the top floor. He can hear the drum being played. He stops in front of his apartment. He listens for a moment and then slowly opens the door.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Tarek is playing his drum in his T-shirt and underwear. He sees Walter and finishes with a flourish.

TAREK

Hey Walter. Welcome home.

WALTER

Hi.

Tarek casually gets up and puts on his pants.

TAREK

You're home early.

WALTER

It was a half day.

TAREK

How was the conference?

WALTER

Fine.

Tarek buttons his pants.

TAREK

Sorry about the pants. I've been playing like this since I was a kid.

Walter nods.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Hey. I think I might have a lead on a place in Brooklyn.

WALTER

That's good.
You can keep practicing if you like.

TAREK

Really? It won't bother you?

WALTER

No. It's fine.

TAREK

Great. Thanks. I'll keep my pants on.

Tarek laughs. Walter smiles.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Hey, Zainab's going to make dinner if you want to eat with us later.

WALTER

OK. Thank you.

Walter walks into his bedroom. Tarek watches him go and then starts playing again.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - LATER

Walter is lying down on his bed reading through his paper. His foot is tapping to the rhythm of the drum.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Walter and Zainab are sitting at the dinner table finishing their meal. Tarek is on the phone in the living room speaking in Arabic. He hangs up and rejoins the table.

TAREK

I'm sorry. That was my mother. If I don't call her every day she thinks something happened to me.

Walter pours himself some wine. He offers some to Tarek.

27

TAREK (CONT'D)

Yeah. I'll have a bit. Thanks.

Zainab shoots Tarek a glance. Walter misreads it.

WALTER

Are you sure that you wouldn't like some?

ZAINAB

I don't drink.

TAREK

(Jokingly)

She is a good Muslim. I'm a bad one.

Walter nods. Zainab gets up and starts to clear the table.

ZAINAB

Are you finished?

WALTER

Yes. Thank you. Here, let me...

ZAINAB

It's the least I can do.

Her comment is more of an indictment than a pleasantry.

WALTER

Well, thank you for the dinner. It was very good.

ZAINAB

You're welcome.

She leaves the room.

TAREK

So what's the conference about?

WALTER

Economic Growth in Developing Nations.

TAREK

That's us.
(Pointing)
Syria. Senegal.

28

TAREK (CONT'D)

So have you written some books?

WALTER

Three. I'm working on my fourth.

TAREK

Four books?! Great. My father was
a writer. A journalist.

WALTER

Is he still writing?

TAREK

No. He died. Before we left Syria.

WALTER

I'm sorry.

TAREK

So am I.

Zainab enters.

ZAINAB

Tarek. It's eight-thirty.

TAREK

Oh. We have to go.
(To Walter)
I have a gig tonight.

Zainab starts to put on her coat. Tarek picks up his drum.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Walter, you can come if you want.

Zainab shoots Tarek a glance.

WALTER

I have to get some work done but

thank you.

TAREK

OK. Well maybe another time

WALTER

OK.

TAREK

Bye.

29

looks Tarek and Zainab leave. Walter watches them go and then
around the empty apartment.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING, STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Tarek and Zainab are walking down the stairs.

ZAINAB

(In French)

Why did you invite him?

TAREK

(In French)

We're staying in his apartment.
What could I do?

ZAINAB

(In French)

Well I would have been the one
stuck sitting with him while you
played your drum.

Tarek turns and looks at her very seriously.

TAREK

You know you are very sexy when
you're mad at me.

Zainab can't help but smile. Tarek starts to wrap his arms
around her.

WALTER (O.S.)

Hello.

Tarek and Zainab stop in their tracks, already three flights

down
down. They both look up the stairwell. Walter is looking
on them.

WALTER (CONT'D)

If you don't mind, I think I will
come.

Tarek and Zainab share a quick look.

TAREK

Cool.

Walter disappears back into the apartment. Zainab looks at
Tarek. He shrugs.

30

INT. SMALL RESTAURANT - LATER.

Tarek's Jazz Trio is playing. Walter and Zainab sit at a
small table in the back. Walter is rapt. Zainab is
sketching.

She looks up from her pad and watches him before returning
to
her drawing.

EXT. SMALL RESTAURANT - LATER

Walter and Zainab are standing outside on the empty street.
There's an awkward silence.

WALTER

He's very good.

ZAINAB

Yes.

WALTER

The whole band is very good.

ZAINAB

Yes.

And then nothing. Finally Tarek emerges.

TAREK

Sorry guys. Let's go.

They walk down the street.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Walter is sitting in the park and eating PIZZA. This time he is sitting directly across from the two African American drummers.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Walter walks into the apartment and sets down his briefcase. He notices Tarek's drum sitting in the middle of the room.

WALTER

Tarek?

No one answers. Walter walks down the hallway a bit.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Tarek?

31

Walter walks back into the living room and takes off his coat. He removes some papers from his briefcase and then he notices the drum again.

He sits down in the chair next to Tarek's drum. He takes the drum between his legs and he hits it a few times.

Then he starts to play. He stops and then he plays again. This time he is slightly more successful at finding a rhythm.

He closes his eyes and bobs his head. He's really getting into it.

He opens his eye's open and Tarek is standing in front of him. He has headphones around his neck. Walter jumps.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Oh. Hi.

TAREK

It sounded good Walter.

Walter immediately stands.

WALTER

Yeah. Well. I was just...I'm sorry
if I...

Tarek walks over and grabs another chair from the kitchen
table.

TAREK

Don't be sorry. That's what it's
there for.

Tarek sets the chair down and grabs the other drum from
beside the piano.

TAREK (CONT'D)

I was lying on my bed listening to
my music and then I was like
"what's the crazy rhythm I'm
hearing?".

Tarek sits down with the other drum facing Walter.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Sit. Come on. I'll show you.

Walter hesitates and then sits down.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Just put your feet flat on the
ground.

32

Walter adjusts his feet.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Now take the drum between your
legs. Like this.

Tarek grabs the drums with his knees. Walter follows.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Now you want to lift the inside
edge off the ground with your
ankles. Like this.

Walter watches Tarek and follows suit.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Great. Feel OK?

WALTER

Yes.

TAREK

OK. Now Walter, I know you're a very smart man but with the drum you have to remember not to think. Thinking just screws it up. OK?

WALTER

OK.

TAREK

Now just give it a couple of bangs.

Walter gives it a couple of hard bangs.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Not so hard. You're not angry at it.

WALTER

Oh. Right. Sorry.

He bangs it a few more times.

TAREK

Better. Did you think?

WALTER

No.

33

TAREK

Good. Now one more thing, Walter. You listen to classical music so you think in fours. One. Two. Three. Four. Da. Da. Da. Da. This is an African drum. So we are gonna play in three's. Tat. Tat. Tat. You have to forget your classical. Leave it behind. Tat. Tat. Tat. One. Two. Three. Come on. Follow me.

Tarek bangs out a simple bass beat. Walter joins in.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Good. Good ear. Now keep going.

Walter loses the beat. Tarek keeps playing.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Start again.

Walter tries again. And again. And then finally he gets it.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Yeah! There it is. OK. Good. Now keep it going and I will do this.

Tarek riffs off of Walter's bass beat.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's it. Keep it going.

EXT. STREET FAIR - DAY

Zainab is closing up her booth. Another VENDOR walks by and says good bye. Zainab smiles and nods good bye.

EXT. NEW YORK - STREET

POLICE
Zainab is walking home with her supplies. Two NEW YORK OFFICERS are talking to THREE YOUNG HISPANIC KIDS. Zainab hesitates for the slightest moment before lowering her head and walking past.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Zainab enters the apartment and sees Walter drumming. His shirt is unbuttoned exposing his white undershirt. He stops. He is breathing very hard and sweating.

34

WALTER

Hello.

ZAINAB

Hello. Where is Tarek?

She places her items down on the kitchen table and takes off her coat. She looks around the apartment.

WALTER

He went out. To look at another apartment.

She just looks at him with the drum. Walter is still out of breath.

ZAINAB

Are you OK?

WALTER

Yeah. Tarek is teaching me the drum. I'm practicing. Don't worry, I'll keep my pants on.

Zainab looks shocked. Walter's attempt at levity has fallen short.

ZAINAB

What?

WALTER

Nothing. I was just...nothing.

Zainab nods and walks into the kitchen.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

Tarek is playing with his band. Walter is at the bar watching. He is unconsciously tapping along on the bar.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - SAME

Tarek, Walter, and Darren - the saxophone player - sit at a table by the window, eating.

TAREK

Hey Walter, what time are you done tomorrow?

35

WALTER

I have to present a paper at eleven. I should be done by twelve-thirty.

TAREK

Cool.

DARREN

(To the waiter)

Hey man, could we get another order of this?

(To Walter and Tarek)

I love this food.

TAREK

That's good. Because the Chinese are taking over the world.

DARREN

That's not gonna happen.

TAREK

It's already happening. One day our kids will be going to China for jobs. Ask Walter.

Darren and Tarek look at Walter.

DARREN

You think that's true?

Walter is put on the spot.

WALTER

Well...if China continues to threaten the wage earners in the first-world economies by keeping wages down, then it's really just a matter of time. What they buy they inflate. What they sell they deflate. But then you have to ask the question 'who's paying the cost?'. And the answer is the Chinese people.

Beat.

TAREK

You see?

Tarek continues eating.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter is presenting his paper.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - LATER

Walter is walks out of the building talking to a **FEMALE COLLEAGUE**.

TAREK (O.S.)

Hey, Walter!

Walter and the Female Colleague turn. Tarek is standing a few feet away holding both drums.

Walter nods and says good bye to the Colleague who looks a bit confused. Walter walks over to Tarek.

TAREK (CONT'D)

How did the presentation go?

WALTER

Fine. Thanks.

TAREK

Cool. Guess what? I found an apartment in Brooklyn. We can move in on Monday.

WALTER

That's good.

TAREK

Yeah. It's small but it's a nice building. I just hope Zainab likes it.

WALTER

I think she will as long as no else lives there.

Tarek laughs.

TAREK

I think you're right. Come on, let's go. You should take off the name tag.

WALTER

Oh. Yeah. Thanks.

37

Walter takes off his name tag and they start to walk.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Are you hungry?

TAREK

Yeah. I'm starving. Do you like shwarmas?

WALTER

Uh...yeah. I like sharmas.

TAREK

Shwarmas.

WALTER

Yeah.

They walk across the park.

INT. FALAFEL STAND - LATER

Walter and Tarek are finishing lunch. Tarek reaches into his bag and takes out a SMALL BAG.

TAREK

Here. This is for you. For letting us stay.

WALTER

Thank you.

Walter takes it and opens it. It's a CD.

TAREK

It's Fela Kuti. You know him?

WALTER

No.

TAREK

You don't know Fela? Oh, man! Walter, you are in for a treat. He started the whole Afro-Beat movement. And his drummer Tony

Allen was just scary, man. You want to play drums, you have to listen to this.

WALTER

OK. I will.

38

A HANDSOME ARAB MAN walks past with a PRETTY BLONDE WOMAN. Tarek sees him and waves.

OMAR

(In Arabic)

Hey Tarek. How's it going?

TAREK

(in Arabic)

Good, Omar. How are you?

OMAR

(In Arabic)

Not bad. It's fall in New York, you know? How's the band?

TAREK

(In Arabic)

Good. Playing a lot. New girlfriend?

OMAR

(In Arabic)

New friend.

TAREK

(In Arabic)

You have a lot friends

OMAR

(In Arabic)

I'm a very nice guy. Au revoir.

TAREK

Au revoir.

Omar walks off. Tarek shakes his head.

TAREK (CONT'D)

The Lebanese. Bunch of playboys. You ready?

WALTER

Yeah.

They pick up their drums and leave.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET FAIR - LATER

Zainab is talking to two UPPER EAST SIDE WOMEN who have stopped at her stall.

39

ZAINAB

Yes. I made it.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN

How much?

ZAINAB

Thirty-five dollars.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN

Will you take thirty?

ZAINAB

No. thirty-five.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN

OK. I know my daughter will think it's "cool". Here.

She hands her the money. Zainab takes it and drops it into a small pouch.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Where are you from?

ZAINAB

Senegal.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN

Oh. I was in Cape Town two winters ago. It was just beautiful.

ZAINAB

(Handing her the bag)
Thank you very much.

UPPER EAST SIDE WOMAN

Thank you.

The Woman walks away. A young Israeli man, ZEV is sitting at a nearby stall selling T-shirts.

ZEV

How far is Senegal from Cape Town?

ZAINAB

Far.

ZEV

I told a guy I was from Israel yesterday and he asked if I had ever visited the Holy Land.

40

Zainab smiles. Zev sees someone over Zainab's shoulder.

ZEV (CONT'D)

Hey, look who it is. What's up Tarek?

Tarek and Walter are approaching.

TAREK

Zev! How are you?

ZEV

Good man.

TAREK

Hey honey.

He kisses Zainab.

ZAINAB

Hello. Hi, Walter.

WALTER

Hi.

TAREK

How's business?

ZEV

Ahh. You know.

Walter looks at the Zainab's jewelry.

TAREK

Her stuff is great, right? She made me this?

Tarek holds up his wrist, revealing a bracelet.

TAREK (CONT'D)

You should make one for Walter.

Zainab nods noncommittally.

TAREK (CONT'D)

So Walter and I are going up to the park to play for a little bit. OK?

ZAINAB

Tarek, I told you we have to pick up my new table today. He said he would only hold it for today.

41

TAREK

I know. I know. No problem.

ZAINAB

Tarek. You always say "no problem" and then you are late or you forget.

Tarek smiles.

TAREK

I know. I will not be long. We'll go up and play and then we'll come back to help you. I promise, habibti.

He kisses her and starts to walk away.

ZAINAB

Yes. It's always "habibti" when you want your way. It closes at five p.m. Not Arab time, Tarek.

TAREK

No. Not Arab time. Real time, habibti.

ZAINAB

Don't "habibti" me.

They turn and start to leave.

WALTER

What does habibti mean?

TAREK

Habibti? It means "beloved one".

WALTER

Does she know that?

Tarek laughs.

INT. SUBWAY - LATER

Tarek and Walter are waiting for the subway. A CHINESE MUSICIAN is playing on the opposite platform.

TAREK

He's been playing here for a long time.

42

WALTER

Is he good?

TAREK

I have no idea but it's cool.
I always wanted to play down here.
It's supposed to be good money.

WALTER

So why haven't you?

Tarek shrugs.

TAREK

Maybe some day we can do it together. Split the profits.

Walter watches the Chinese Musician.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER.

Walter and Tarek stand in front of the DRUM CIRCLE in Central Park.

TAREK

What do you think?

Walter sizes it up and makes his assessment.

WALTER

I think I'll just watch.

TAREK

Come on, Walter.

TAREK (CONT'D)

It's easy. You just wait until you feel it. Let's go.

Tarek joins the drum circle. Walter lingers.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER.

Walter is on the edge of the Drum Circle, waiting to "feel it". Tarek is next to him playing away.

Tarek looks at Walter and nods. Finally Walter starts to play. Slowly at first, but then he starts to really commit. Tarek encourages him with a smile.

43

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER

Tarek and Walter are leaving the park. Tarek checks his watch.

TAREK

Shit, we have to get home. Zainab is gonna kill me. I'm on Arab time again.

WALTER

What is Arab time?

TAREK

It means I'm late by an hour. All Arabs are late by an hour. It's

genetic. We can't help it.

EXT. 72ND STREET SUBWAY STATION - LATER

Tarek and Walter hurry down the stairs of the subway station.

INT. 72ND STREET SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS

Walter and Tarek approach the turnstile. They can hear the train arriving.

TAREK

That's our train!

They pick up the pace. Walter puts down his drum to take out his METROCARD. Tarek quickly picks it up.

TAREK (CONT'D)

I got your drum. My card is empty.
Can you swipe me?

Walter swipes his card for Tarek to pass through and then he swipes his own turnstile.

Walter passes through. Tarek struggles a bit with both drums. He gets halfway through when the turnstile bar locks. He's stuck.

TAREK (CONT'D)

(Laughing)
Hey. You paid for the drum and not me. Here take this.

44

Walter takes Tarek's drum and Tarek quickly ducks under the turn style that Walter just paid for.

TAREK (CONT'D)

(Re: the train)
I think we missed it. Zainab is not going to be happy if...

Suddenly a MAN takes Tarek by the arm.

MAN

Excuse me, sir. Could you please
step over here.

Tarek reacts by pulling his arm away.

TAREK

What are you doing?

MAN

NYPD. Could you please step over
here?

He reaches for Tarek again who instinctively moves his arm
again which agitates the Cop. Another COP enters into the
action.

COP #2

Just step over here, pal.

TAREK

Please, what do you want...

COP #1

You jumped the turnstile.

TAREK

I did not jump it! I paid. I paid!
It just didn't work.

Walter steps up.

WALTER

Sir, I did pay his fare.

COP #2

Could you step back please?

WALTER

But I paid this man's...

COP #2

Sir, stand over there.

45

COP #1

(To Tarek)

Can I see some ID.

Tarek takes out his wallet. He shows them an ID CARD. Walter

out

steps back to the wall and sets the two drums down. Cop #2 stands between him and the action. Walter can barely make what is being said.

COP #1 (CONT'D)

You got anything else, Tarek.

TAREK

No.

COP #1

Where are you from?

TAREK

Syria. Why?

Tarek is starting to panic. The two Cops share a look. Another train passes. Cop #1 asks Tarek a few more questions which Walter cannot hear.

Suddenly Cop #1 starts to handcuff Tarek.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Why? I'm sorry. What did I do?

Walter steps forward to intervene.

WALTER

I don't think that's necessary.

COP #2

Well we do. You can come down to the station and make a statement.

WALTER

But he didn't mean...

COP #2

Sir, that's all I'm saying. Now step back or we are gonna take you in too.

WALTER

Where are you taking him?

COP #2

Ninth Precinct.

TAREK

Walter take the drum. Tell Zainab what happened but don't let her come for me. I will call you.

The two Cops lead Tarek away. Walter watches helplessly.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Don't let her come! I will call her!

Walter watches him go.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Walter enters and shuts the door and Zainab is sitting on the couch working on her jewelry.

She stops when she sees Walter standing alone, holding the two drums.

ZAINAB

Where is Tarek?

WALTER

He was arrested.

ZAINAB

What?!

WALTER

Yes. In the subway.

Zainab immediately starts to panic.

ZAINAB

Arrested?!

WALTER

Yes. It was just a misunderstanding. They said he would be released later tonight.

Zainab really starts to lose it. Her reaction is more than Walter was prepared for.

ZAINAB

How could this happen? He knows better! He would not do anything wrong.

WALTER

He didn't. I'm sure we it will be OK.

She begins to pack up her work.

ZAINAB

No. It won't be OK.

WALTER

Yes it will. I went down to the precinct and made a statement.

ZAINAB

(Snapping at Walter)

That doesn't matter! He is illegal! As am I! We are not citizens. Do you know what that means? Do you?! Of course you don't. How could you?

She picks up her things and walks down the hall to her room. Walter sits, stunned.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter is talking on his cell phone and pacing.

WALTER

Yes. His name is Tarek Khalil. Khalil. K. H. A. L. I. L. That's right. Yes. I came down and made a statement. They said he would be released. That was six hours ago. Well when should we know? Tomorrow? Why? But he...OK. OK. Thank you.

Walter hangs up.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Walter walks out of the police station. He crosses the street. Zainab is standing there.

ZAINAB

Well?

48

WALTER

They've moved him.

ZAINAB

To where?

WALTER

To a detention center in Queens. He was turned over to immigration. They said we can see him during visiting hours tomorrow night from five to ten.

Zainab shakes her head.

ZAINAB

I can't visit him or I will end up in that place too.

Zainab fights to restrain her emotions. She turns and walks away. Walter watches her go.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Zainab's bedroom light is on.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, TAREK'S & ZAINAB'S ROOM - SAME

Zainab is sitting on her bed and talking on her phone.

ZAINAB

Yes. We are going tomorrow. The appointment is at eleven. I don't know, he found him. What? No. I don't want to. I just don't, Tarek. Yes. I've already called him. I know. I know. I just want you to be here with me, Tarek.

EXT. NEW YORK, DOWNTOWN - DAY

A sea of skyscrapers near One Center Street.

INT. DOWNTOWN OFFICE BUILDING, ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

Zainab and Walter exit an elevator and walk down the hall.

49

INT. LAW OFFICE - LATER

Walter and Zainab talk to an, MR. SHAH, an INDIAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYER who is jotting down notes. He is clinical, almost
cold
in his approach.

MR. SHAH

Zainab, you're also undocumented,
right?

ZAINAB

Yes.

MR. SHAH

You know you can't visit Tarek at
the detention center, right?

ZAINAB

Yes. I know.

MR. SHAH

How long have you known Tarek?

ZAINAB

Almost a year.

MR. SHAH

Mr. Vale?

WALTER

A week.

MR. SHAH

A week?

Walter nods.

MR. SHAH (CONT'D)

Does Tarek have any family living here?

Walter looks to Zainab.

ZAINAB

His mother lives in Michigan.

This is news to Walter.

MR. SHAH

She's also undocumented, correct?

Zainab hesitates.

50

MR. SHAH (CONT'D)

It's OK. This is all confidential.

ZAINAB

Yes, she is.

MR. SHAH

Does she know that Tarek is in custody?

ZAINAB

No. Tarek told me not to tell her. He doesn't want to worry her.

MR. SHAH

Has he ever been convicted of a crime?

ZAINAB

No. He has had no trouble. He is a good person.

MR. SHAH

Do you know if they ever applied for asylum?

Walter looks at Zainab. She is very uncomfortable.

ZAINAB

Yes. When he first arrived from Syria. But he didn't get it.

MR. SHAH

When was that?

ZAINAB

Seven years ago.

MR. SHAH

And did they appeal it?

ZAINAB

I don't know.

Mr. Shah jots something down.

WALTER

Why wouldn't they appeal it?

51

MR. SHAH

Fear of being deported. It used to be that when your asylum case was denied, they let you go until your appeal. A lot of people didn't bother with it. Getting denied once was enough to spook them.

WALTER

So what happens if that's the case?

MR. SHAH

Then there may be a final order of deportation on him which means he won't even go before a judge this time. He'll just be deported.

ZAINAB

They had to leave Syria! They had no choice!

This is also news to Walter.

MR. SHAH

Look, one step at a time. Let me talk to him then we'll have a better idea of his status and what our options are.

WALTER

Is there anything I can do?

MR. SHAH

Visit him.

The lawyer slides a card across the table. Walter takes it.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Walter rides the subway. He looks down at the lawyer's card.

EXT. QUEENS - LATER

Walter emerges from the subway into a very industrial neighborhood. Factories and fences. He checks his piece of paper and starts walking.

52

EXT. QUEENS - LATER

Walter is still walking. The area is very deserted. He stops and tries to locate a street address amongst the anonymous factories. He checks his sheet of paper and continues walking.

EXT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER - LATER

looks
a
Walter is standing in front of the DETENTION CENTER. It
like most of the other factories around it but perhaps with
bit more barbed wire.

He presses a button and the automated door slowly opens. He walks inside.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER

Walter walks into a small brightly lit waiting room. A few SODA MACHINES and TWELVE BLUE PLASTIC CHAIRS. In one corner is a guard booth with THREE GUARDS. One FEMALE GUARD is wearing a Muslim headdress. Walter approaches the window and waits in line. The other people waiting comprise a mix of nationalities: African, Latin American, Chinese, Indian.

The Guard talks to a MAN in front of Walter. The Man has a Slavic accent.

GUARD

That detainee has been moved.

SLAVIC MAN

To where?

GUARD

I don't know.

SLAVIC MAN

He was here yesterday.

GUARD

But now he's not. That's all I know. You can call ICE. The number is on the wall. Next. Sir, step aside please.

of The Slavic Man reluctantly steps aside, staring at a piece of paper. Walter steps up to the window. He sets a piece of paper on the window sill.

53

WALTER

Hi. I'm here to see Tarek Khalil.

The Guard takes it.

GUARD

You been here before?

WALTER

No.

GUARD

Can I see your license please?

Walter takes out his wallet.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Walter is let through a large metal door. There is an X-RAY MACHINE immediately in front of him.

Walter empties his pockets and steps through.

Walter waits for the sliding metal door to open. It does and he steps into a small room. The door slides shut and he is alone in the small white room until a door on the other side slides open.

He steps through and walks down a small hallway. On the left side of the hallway are small, glassed in, meeting rooms for lawyer consultations.

Walter enters into a large bright room. It resembles a
prison
visitation room. Along the perimeter of the room is a clear
fiberglass wall with twenty-five small cubicles. Each
cubicle
has one seat and a phone. On the other side of the
fiberglass
is another seat and a phone.

Walter looks around the room at the VISITORS and DETAINEES.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER, VISITING ROOM - LATER

Walter is still waiting. After a moment a door opens and Tarek walks out wearing a blue jump suit. He sees Walter and smiles.

They each move toward the other and settle into a vacant seat. They both pick up the phone as they sit down.

TAREK

Walter. Thank you for coming.

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WALTER

Of course.

TAREK

How is Zainab?

WALTER

She's upset. I have a letter from her.

TAREK

You can't give it to me. It has to

be sent to me by mail. But you can put it up to the glass.

Walter hesitates.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Open it and place it up to the glass so I can read it. It's OK. It's allowed.

Walter complies. He sets down the phone so that he can press the letter up against the glass. Tarek reads the letter.

Walter looks around the room, trying to give Tarek some privacy. He watches the various immigrant families speaking to one another. Tarek taps the glass and points to Walter's phone. Walter picks it up.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Thank you, Walter.

Walter nods as he folds up the envelope and places it back into his coat.

WALTER

How are they treating you?

TAREK

OK. The place is very depressing. There is no privacy. The lights are always on.

WALTER

Do you need anything?

TAREK

No. I just want to get out of here.

WALTER

Zainab and I met with a lawyer today.

55

TAREK

Yes. What did he say?

WALTER

He is going to stop by to see you tomorrow.

They both sit for a moment. Unsure what to say next. Finally Walter's curiosity gets the best of him.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Tarek, Zainab said you were denied asylum.

TAREK

You mean when we came here? Yeah.

WALTER

Did you go to your deportation hearing?

TAREK

Yeah.

WALTER

You did?

TAREK

Yeah. We did everything they told us to.

Walter can only nod, unsure of what else to say.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Hey, could you tell Darren? I didn't call him.

A GUARD walks past and taps Tarek on the shoulder and speaks to him. We can't hear what is being said.

TAREK (CONT'D)

(To Walter)

I have to go. They have to do a bed count. Usually, I can visit for one hour. Can you come tomorrow?

WALTER

Yes.

TAREK

Good. And tell Zainab I will call her as soon as I can.

56

Walter nods. Tarek gets up.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Goodbye, my friend.

WALTER

Goodbye.

Tarek walks away. Walter watches him go.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM/ KITCHEN

Walter and Zainab are sitting at the kitchen table. Zainab
is holding her letter.

ZAINAB

Did you ask him if he went to his hearing?

WALTER

Yes. He said that he did.

Zainab stands up.

ZAINAB

Walter, I'm going to leave now. I have a cousin in the Bronx. I will stay with him for now.

WALTER

You don't have to leave. You can stay here.

ZAINAB

I think it's best if I leave. When Tarek calls me then I will tell him. You know how to reach me if you need to. Is it OK if I leave Tarek's things here for now? My cousin's place is not very big.

WALTER

Yes.

EXT. WALTER'S BUILDING - LATER

Zainab walks away from the apartment.

INT. SMALL BAR - NIGHT

Walter drinks at the bar and watches Tarek's band play without Tarek.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Walter practices the drum.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Jacob walks Sprinkles in front of the apartment building. Walter walks outside and waves hello as he walks past.

INT. QUEEN'S DETENTION CENTER, VISITORS ROOM - LATER

Darren and Tarek are talking. Walter sits and listens.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Walter eats alone.

EXT. STREET CORNER - MORNING

Walter buys the morning paper from a kiosk. He walks to the corner and waits to cross the street. A large group of CHINESE TOURISTS led by a TOUR GUIDE step up next to him. He is surrounded by them.

INT. QUEEN'S DETENTION CENTER, VISITOR'S ROOM - SAME

Tarek talks to Mr. Shah.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter is playing the drum. He finishes with an "end beat". He looks around the quiet apartment.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER, VISITING ROOM - DAY

Walter is waiting for Tarek. The visiting room is empty.

and

Suddenly the door opens on the detainee side of the glass
a VERY YOUNG LATIN WOMAN walks out tentatively. She almost
looks absurd in the oversized blue jumpsuit.

58

is

She looks at Walter, unsure if she is supposed to approach
the glass and talk to him. Walter just stares back, also
unsure of what to do. They are caught in awkward moment.
Finally Walter manages a nod. She nods back and smiles. It
the innocent smile of a child.

Suddenly a female guard appears in the doorway and beckons
the Young Girl back inside. The Young Girl looks at Walter
one last moment before disappearing behind the door.

INT. QUEEN'S DETENTION CENTER, VISITING ROOM - LATER

Walter is talking to Tarek.

WALTER

But I thought you said you went to
the hearing.

TAREK

We did. I remember it.

WALTER

So why is there a final order on
you? Did he say?

TAREK

No. He didn't know yet. He just
said that unless he can find a way
to reopen the case quickly they're
going to deport me.

WALTER

Maybe you should call your mother.
She might have...

TAREK

No. I don't want her to worry. I
can handle this.

Tarek shakes his head.

WALTER

Did he say anything else?

TAREK

Yeah. Three years ago I was working for some guy who said he was going to sponsor me for my green card but then he turned out to be jerk. But the lawyer said that might allow us to reopen the case. I don't even understand it.

59

Walter nods.

TAREK (CONT'D)

Walter, there are guys who have been in here for years! I can't do that Walter. I'll go crazy.

WALTER

He's trying to deal with the case as quickly as possible.

Tarek goes silent.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Tarek. I have to go back to Connecticut. I'll be reachable by phone if you need me for anything.

Tarek's mind is racing. He shakes his head.

TAREK

OK. Just please...don't forget about me in here.

WALTER

I won't.

TAREK

Are you still practicing?

WALTER

Yes.

TAREK

You should go back to the drum circle.

WALTER

(Quickly)

No.

Tarek laughs.

TAREK

OK. But listen to that Fela CD.
That will help you, I promise.

WALTER

I will.

TAREK

So show me what you've been working
on.

60

WALTER

What?

TAREK

Show me. On that. Come on. I need
some music, man.

Tarek points to the shelf in front of Walter.

WALTER

Now?

TAREK

Don't worry. They can't arrest you.
At least not yet.

WALTER

OK.

Walter looks around and then cradles the phone in his
shoulder and starts to bang a simple beat on his counter

top.

Tarek watches and listens for a moment.

TAREK

Ah. There it is. Good. Good. You
are getting better.

And then he joins in. The two men continue to play together.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MORNING

Walter is packing his suitcase. Suddenly there is a knock at his door. He exits the room.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walter opens the door. Standing there is a strikingly attractive forty-five year-old ARAB WOMAN. She seems startled to see Walter.

WALTER

Hello.

ARAB WOMAN

I'm sorry. I must have the wrong apartment.

She starts to walk down the hall.

WALTER

Can I help you?

61

ARAB WOMAN

I'm looking for my son.

WALTER

Are you Tarek's mother?

ARAB WOMAN

Yes.

WALTER

Oh. This is Tarek's apartment.
I...share the apartment with him.

The Arab Woman is cautious.

ARAB WOMAN

He did not mention that he lived with someone.

WALTER

I'm not here very often. I live in Connecticut.

ARAB WOMAN

Is Tarek here?

WALTER

No. He's...uh...he's not here. But please come in.

Mouna hesitates.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Please.

ARAB WOMAN

Thank you.

Mouna walks into the apartment. She stands by the door.

WALTER

I'm Walter. Walter Vale.

ARAB WOMAN

I'm Mouna Khalil. I'm sorry to show up unannounced but my son calls me everyday. He has not called me now for five days. I have tried his cell phone but he does not answer.

WALTER

Would you like to sit down?

62

MOUNA

Thank you.

Mouna sits.

WALTER

Would you like something to drink? Coffee or water?

MOUNA

No. Is my son alright, Mr. Vale?

WALTER

Tarek was arrested. He's being held in a detention center in Queens. They are trying to deport him.

MOUNA

Where is Queens?

WALTER

It's not far from here. Twenty minutes.

MOUNA

You have been there?

WALTER

Yes. I saw him yesterday. He's OK.

MOUNA

How did this happen?

WALTER

He was stopped in the subway station. He didn't do anything wrong.

MOUNA

I would like to go there. To Queens.

WALTER

OK. But Mrs. Khalil. The lawyer mentioned that...I don't think that you can...

MOUNA

I know I can't visit Tarek, Mr. Vale. I just want to see where they are holding him.

63

WALTER

OK. I can take you if you'd like.

MOUNA

Thank you.

WALTER

Let me get my coat.

Mouna nods. Walter leaves. Mouna breathes deeply in an attempt to control her emotions. She looks around the apartment and spots Tarek's drum. The sight of it is almost

enough to push her over the edge.

INT. SUBWAY - LATER

The Chinese Musician is playing on the platform. Mouna and Walter are watching him.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - LATER

Walter and Mouna are sitting side by side on the subway.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION, QUEENS - LATER

Walter and Mouna exit the subway station and walk down the empty street.

WALTER

Have you been to New York before,
Mrs. Khalil?

MOUNA

No. Tarek wanted to come to New
York to play music. I did not want
him to go but...do you have
children, Mr. Vale?

WALTER

I have a son. He lives in London.

MOUNA

And your wife?

WALTER

My wife passed away.

MOUNA

I'm sorry.

64

EXT. QUEENS STREET - LATER

Walter and Mouna stop across the street from the detention
Center.

WALTER

That's it.

MOUNA

This is where the prison is?

WALTER

Yes. That's it.

Walter points to the Detention Center.

MOUNA

It does not look like a prison.

WALTER

I think that's the point.

MOUNA

How many people are in there?

WALTER

Tarek said about three hundred.

WALTER (CONT'D)

There is a coffee shop on that corner. It's not very nice but...

MOUNA

I'll wait there. Here.

She takes a letter out of her bag and hands it to Walter.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Walter turns and walks into the facility. Mouna lingers, taking in the building.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER, VISITATION ROOM - LATER

Walter is waiting for Tarek. He is watching as a LATIN WOMAN holds her BABY up to the glass as her HUSBAND taps on it
from
the other side.

Finally a door opens and Tarek walks out. He waves and smiles. Walter picks up his phone. Tarek picks up his.

TAREK

Walter, I thought you were leaving.

WALTER

I was. Tarek, your mother is here.

This stops Tarek cold.

TAREK

What? My mother?! Where?

WALTER

She is waiting outside.

TAREK

When did she arrive?

WALTER

Today.

TAREK

Oh man. Why did she come? She can do nothing for me.

WALTER

She said she hadn't heard from you.

TAREK

Walter. Listen to me. She can not stay here. She doesn't know anyone in New York. I'm sorry but you must get her to go back to Michigan.

WALTER

OK. OK. Here. I have a letter from her.

Walter takes it out and puts it up to the glass.

INT. QUEENS, DINER - LATER

It's a dingy place occupied by truck drivers and factory workers. Mouna sitting in a booth clutching a cup of tea.

She

looks very out of place.

Two DETENTION CENTER GUARDS enter and sit down in a booth. Mouna watches them. An Arab Waiter is cleaning the counter. He keeps looking at Mouna.

WAITER

Do you need anything else?

66

MOUNA

No.

WAITER

(In Arabic)

Where are you from?

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

I am Palestinian from Damascus.

WAITER

(In Arabic)

Ah. I knew it. I am from Egypt.
Alexandria. I'm Nasim. Why are you
here?

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

I am visiting my son.

NASIM

(In Arabic)

He is in detention.

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

Yes.

The Waiter shakes his head.

NASIM

(In Arabic)

It's a bad place. I'm lucky. I have
a green card.

He nods to the Guards.

NASIM (CONT'D)

(In Arabic)

They're the ones taking care of
your son. They come here everyday.
They don't tip.

Mouna is uncomfortable.

NASIM (CONT'D)

(In Arab)

Don't worry. They can't understand us.

Walter enters and walks over to Mouna's booth.

67

NASIM (CONT'D)

Hello, sir.

Walter nods and sits down. He hands Mouna her letter.

MOUNA

How is he?

WALTER

He's good but he's concerned about you being here.

MOUNA

I will not leave.

WALTER

Mrs. Khalil, I'm not sure that your being in New York will do any good. We have a very good lawyer working on Tarek's case...

MOUNA

(Politely but forceful)

Mr. Vale, I cannot go back to Michigan knowing that my son is in that building. Even if I can't see him, I will stay.

She stands up, ready to leave.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Shall we go?

Walter stands. Mouna digs in her purse.

NASIM

(In Arabic)

The tea is on me.

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

Thank you.

NASIM

(In Arabic)

Is that your lawyer? Or your husband?

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

Goodbye.

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NASIM

(In Arabic)

See you next time.

Walter follows Mouna out.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER.

Walter and Mouna arrive back at Walter's apartment building. Jacob emerges from the front door with Sprinkles.

JACOB

Oh. Hello, Mr. Vale.

WALTER

Hello, Jacob.

He sees Mouna.

JACOB

Oh, hello again. Did you find your son?

MOUNA

Yes. Thank you.

JACOB

(To Walter)

I let her in earlier.

(To Mouna)

I'm Jacob, by the way. I live on the third floor. And this is Sprinkles.

MOUNA

Nice to meet you, Jacob. I'm Mouna.

JACOB

So you two know each other?

There is an awkward pause.

MOUNA

Yes. Mr. Vale knows my son.

JACOB

Oh. Who is that?

MOUNA

Tarek.

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JACOB

Oh. Tarek. He is very nice. And so is his girlfriend. They are both so polite.

MOUNA

Thank you.

JACOB

My mother and I are planning a trip to go to Israel next summer. She's always wanted to go.

MOUNA

I hope you enjoy it. Now if you'll excuse me.

Mouna nods and heads into the building.

JACOB

Oh sure. We need to go on our walk and do our business. Very nice to meet you, Mouna.

MOUNA

You too, Jacob.

Mouna continues up the stairs. Walter follows her.

JACOB

Goodbye, Mr. Vale.

WALTER

Goodbye.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - LATER

Walter and Mouna enter the apartment. Mouna picks up her suitcase.

MOUNA

Thank you, Mr. Vale.

Walter turns.

WALTER

Where are you going?

MOUNA

I will find a hotel.

70

WALTER

You can stay here. You can use Tarek's room.

MOUNA

Thank you for your offer but I cannot accept this. I don't want to impose on you.

WALTER

You're not imposing. Please. I would like you to stay.

MOUNA

Again, thank you. But I will manage. Goodbye.

Walter finally steps aside and opens the door.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Goodbye.

She leaves.

EXT. WALTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mouna walks down the stairs.

WALTER

Mrs. Khalil?

She turns. Walter is standing at the top of the stairway.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Please. I was with Tarek when he was arrested. He was in the subway in the first place because of me. Please. Stay. Even if it's just for the night.

Walter's plea is heartfelt. Mouna looks at him and then she looks down the stairs for a long moment, considering her options.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, TAREK'S ROOM - LATER

Walter enters the room and sets down Mouna's suitcase. She follows him into the cramped bedroom.

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WALTER

The bathroom is just across the hall.

MOUNA

Thank you, Mr. Vale.

WALTER

You can call me Walter.

MOUNA

And I am Mouna.

Walter nods.

WALTER

Do you need anything else?

MOUNA

No. Thank you. Good night.

WALTER

Good night.

Walter leaves, shutting the door behind him. Mouna sits on the bed and looks around the room.

EXT. DETENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Desolate streets. The sound of an airplane taking off breaks the night quiet.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - MORNING

Walter walks out of his bedroom. He hears talking from the living room. He walks down the hall and sees Mouna sitting

on

the couch in the living room, talking on her cell phone in Arabic. He turns and walks back down the hallway.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN

Walter pours a cup of coffee. He notices two newspaper's on the counter. One is the Financial Times and the other is Al Hayat, an Arabic newspaper. He picks up the Financial Times and reads the front page. Mouna enters.

MOUNA

Good morning.

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WALTER

Good morning.

MOUNA

Tarek said hello.

WALTER

How is he?

MOUNA

I can't really tell. He wants me to leave. But I am not leaving.

WALTER

Well, you can stay here as long as you need to.

MOUNA

Thank you. That is very generous of you.

WALTER

Thank you for the newspaper.

Mouna nods and pours some more coffee for herself.

MOUNA

Walter? Did Tarek and his girlfriend, Zainab, live here together?

WALTER

Uhm...Yes. They did.

MOUNA

And where is she now?

WALTER

She's staying with her cousin in the Bronx.

MOUNA

I would like to meet her.

WALTER

We can go by her stall.

MOUNA

Her what?

WALTER

Her stall. She sells jewelry in a stall.

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MOUNA

Oh. OK.

EXT. DOWNTOWN OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

A large office building in downtown Manhattan.

INT. ELEVATOR - SAME

Walter and Mouna are standing in silence.

MOUNA

Do you spend a lot of time in the city?

WALTER

No. Not really. I just came down to present a paper at a conference.

MOUNA

You wrote it?

WALTER

Yes. Well I coauthored it.

MOUNA

Congratulations.

Walter shrugs.

INT. MR. SHAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Walter and Mouna are talking to the Mr. Shah.

MR. SHAH

And what happened after the hearing?

MOUNA

We appealed. It took two years.

MR. SHAH

And your appeal was denied?

MOUNA

Yes.

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MR. SHAH

Then they should have sent you a bag-and-baggage letter which basically tells you where to show up and be deported.

Mouna nods.

MR. SHAH (CONT'D)

But you didn't receive it?

MOUNA

No.

MR. SHAH

You sure?

MOUNA

Yes. I would remember this.

MR. SHAH

Did you move?

MOUNA

Yes. Eventually we had to. But we had our mail advanced.

Mr. Shah is satisfied.

MR. SHAH

Well, it wouldn't be the first time that happened. And pre 9/11 it wasn't much of a priority tracking people down.

Mouna bristles at the implied connection.

WALTER

So if they didn't get the letter then does this help us?

MR. SHAH

It keeps our chances alive. If they got it and just ignored it then we couldn't push to reopen the case.

MOUNA

So you can help him?

MR. SHAH

It's still a long shot. Like I said, the Government's approach has changed radically.

(MORE)

75

MR. SHAH (CONT'D)

It's very black and white now. Either you belong or you don't. Which means a lot of people who have been living here for years are suddenly being swept up and thrown

into detention.

(He starts writing)

Tarek's lucky. Most of them don't even have lawyers.

Mouna blanches.

MOUNA

Lucky?

MR. SHAH

(Without looking up)

Relatively speaking. We just have to move quickly to get an emergency stay from the board of immigration. Then, we'll stick with the motion to reopen pending his green card application.

Mouna and Walter share a look. They're lost.

MOUNA

Can you explain what that means?

MR. SHAH

Actually, I don't have the time right now. I have to be in court very shortly

MOUNA

How long will he be in detention?

MR. SHAH

(Without looking up)

I can't predict that. I'm sorry but I am gonna have to wrap this up.

Walter looks at Mouna. Mouna stares at the Mr. Shah.

MOUNA

Do you have children, Mr. Shah?

MR. SHAH

Yeah. Two kids. And for what it's worth my uncle was deported after raising a family here for twenty-three years. If I can get Tarek out, I will.

Mouna softens.

MOUNA

Thank you. Where are you from?

MR. SHAH

Queens.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET FAIR - LATER

Walter and Mouna are standing at the fair.

MOUNA

Which one is she?

WALTER

There. In the middle.

MOUNA

(surprised)

The black woman? That is Zainab?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

She is very black.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET FAIR - LATER

Zainab

Zainab is sitting at her table when Walter approaches.
smiles. She is genuinely surprised and happy to see him.

ZAINAB

Walter?

WALTER

Hi Zainab. This is Mouna Khalil.
Tarek's mother.

Zainab blanches.

ZAINAB

Oh.

She quickly stands up.

MOUNA

Hello, Zainab.

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ZAINAB

It is a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Khalil.

MOUNA

Please. Call me Mouna.

ZAINAB

OK. I'm sorry. I did not know you were coming.

MOUNA

Neither did I.

Mouna looks at her for a long moment. Then she inspects her jewelry. Zainab is uncharacteristically nervous.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Your jewelry is very beautiful.

ZAINAB

Thank you.

MOUNA

Do you have time for coffee or a walk?

Zainab looks around at her table.

ZAINAB

Yes. I would like that. But I have to watch my table.

Mouna and Zainab both turn to look at Walter.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET FAIR, - LATER

Walter is sitting behind Zainab's table in the fair. It's a long way from the classroom. A FEW YOUNG WOMEN walk past and browse Zainab's jewelry. They look at Walter who just nods.

INT. CAFE - SAME

Mouna and Zainab sit and talk.

ZAINAB

I'm living with my cousin. He has two kids. And his mother. I mean his wife...I'm sorry, I am very nervous.

78

MOUNA

Why?

ZAINAB

I don't know. Have you spoken with Tarek?

MOUNA

Yes. He called me this morning. He is doing all right.

ZAINAB

I wish that I could see him. Just for a minute.

MOUNA

Me too. How long have you been here?

ZAINAB

Two years. I was in detention when I first arrived. Three months. It was horrible. I would probably still be there but they closed the facility for poor conditions. They released some of the women on parole because we were...low risk. I met Tarek one year later.

(Beat)

I am sorry for what happened with Tarek. I hope you do not blame me.

MOUNA

Blame you? No. I do not blame you.

Zainab starts to break.

ZAINAB

Tarek was doing nothing wrong. I miss him so much. I don't know what I am going to do without him.

MOUNA

He said the same thing about you.

ZAINAB

He did?

MOUNA

Yes.

Zainab smiles.

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MOUNA (CONT'D)

Zainab, I would like you to do something for me.

ZAINAB

What?

MOUNA

I would like you to show me something that you and Tarek liked to do. Some place that you like to go.

ZAINAB

Like what?

MOUNA

Anything. Whatever you want.

ZAINAB

OK. But maybe we should get Walter first.

They both smile at the thought of Walter still at Zainab's table.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - LATER

who

Walter and Mouna walk down the street listening to Zainab is wheeling her jewelry supplies behind her.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - LATER

Walter, Mouna and Zainab are standing at the railing of the Ferry which is making its way across the harbor.

The STATUE OF LIBERTY looms large; the ferry route providing a perfect vantage point.

MOUNA

So what is in Staten Island?

ZAINAB

I don't know. We never got off. We just would go to the other side and then come back.

WALTER

Why?

80

ZAINAB

It's free. And it felt like we were going somewhere.

Mouna smiles.

ZAINAB (CONT'D)

That is where the towers were. I never saw them but Tarek did.

Zainab crosses to the other railing and points.

ZAINAB (CONT'D)

And over there is the Statue. And behind that is Ellis Island.

Zainab smiles.

ZAINAB (CONT'D)

Sometimes Tarek would point at the statue and jump up and down like we were arriving to New York for the first time. It was very funny.

MOUNA

Can you go up in the Statue?

WALTER

Yes. I think so.

MOUNA

You haven't been?

WALTER

No.

MOUNA

Oh.

Walter's cell phone rings. He looks at it.

WALTER

Excuse me.

(Into the phone)

Hello? Oh. Hi Charles.

He walks away from the Mouna and Zainab.

WALTER (CONT'D)

What's that? Yes. I'm still in New York actually. I stayed down here to do some research. What's that? Oh. I'm on a boat. Yes, a boat.

(MORE)

81

WALTER (CONT'D)

Listen Charles, I'll explain when I see you but I have to go right now. I'll call you back. Goodbye.

Walter hangs up the phone and rejoins Mouna and Zainab.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Walter is visiting with Tarek. Another detainee walks behind Tarek and taps him on the shoulder. Tarek nods hello and

then

keeps talking to Walter.

TAREK

You went on the ferry?

WALTER

Yes.

TAREK

My mother too?

WALTER

Yes. She liked it.

TAREK

Did Zainab tell you how we used pretend we arriving in New York for the first time?

WALTER

Yeah. She told us.

TAREK

You know they don't even let us outside here. They just cut a hole in the roof in one place.

WALTER

Really?

TAREK

Yeah. It's crazy stuff.

Tarek looks around the room.

TAREK (CONT'D)

And they seemed to get along?
Zainab and my mother?

WALTER

Yes. I think your mother likes her very much.

82

Tarek smiles. Then it fades.

TAREK

My mother's not going home, is she?

WALTER

I don't think so.

TAREK

I know she's thinking about my father. He spent seven years in jail in Syria for something he wrote in the newspaper. By the time they released him he was very sick. He died two months later. That's when we came here.

WALTER

I'm sorry.

TAREK

She thinks the same thing is gonna happen to me.

Tarek thinks for a long moment. He shakes his head.

TAREK (CONT'D)

You know I have never seen them together. Zainab and my mother.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET, NIGHT

Walter and Mouna are walking home.

WALTER

Are you hungry, Mouna? We can stop for dinner.

MOUNA

I would prefer to cook if you don't mind?

WALTER

OK.

MOUNA

Should we stop at a market?

WALTER

Yeah. That's probably a good idea.

83

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - LATER

Mouna is preparing dinner. Walter comes in and takes a bottle of wine out of the refrigerator.

WALTER

Would you like a glass of wine?

MOUNA

No thank you.

Walter pours his glass.

WALTER

Mouna? I need to go back to Connecticut tomorrow. For work. I told Tarek.

MOUNA

How long will you be gone?

WALTER

I don't know yet. I'll try to make it back to visit Tarek as soon as I can.

MOUNA

You don't have keep visiting him, Walter. I'm sure you are busy.

WALTER

I'll see what I can do.

MOUNA

OK. Dinner will be ready soon.

Walter walks out of the kitchen.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mouna and Walter are eating in silence.

MOUNA

Do you go to Broadway, Walter?

WALTER

Broadway? Uhm. No. I haven't been in a long time.

84

MOUNA

Tarek sent me the CD for "Phantom of the Opera" for my birthday. The music is lovely. Have you seen it?

WALTER

No. I haven't.

MOUNA

I haven't either but I think I know every word.

Walter smiles. Silence.

WALTER

Tarek is teaching me the drum.

MOUNA

Really? How is it going?

WALTER

Well, I sound a lot better when he's playing with me.

Mouna laughs.

MOUNA

How is your teaching going, Walter?

Walter seems caught off guard by the question.

WALTER

My teaching?

MOUNA

Yes.

WALTER

Well...I have a lighter schedule so I can work on my book.

MOUNA

Your book? What is it about?

WALTER

Well, it covers quite a bit, so it's hard to explain.

Walter drinks his glass of wine.

MOUNA

Are you almost finished?

85

WALTER

I'm close.

MOUNA

You don't like to talk about your work?

WALTER

No. It's just a bit complicated.

MOUNA

Why is that?

Walter is agitated.

WALTER

It just is. It's just not a process that's easy to talk about with someone who's not a writer.

Walter's cheap shot lands. Mouna is stung.

MOUNA

I didn't mean to pry.

There is an awkward silence.

WALTER

I shouldn't have spoken to you like that.

MOUNA

It's OK.

Walter picks up the wine bottle and fills his glass.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter is sitting on the edge of his bed and takes off his shoes. He pauses.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MORNING

An empty New York street. Mouna and Walter round the corner walking together. She is holding his briefcase. Walter is carrying the drum and his duffle bag.

They arrive at the Parking Garage. Walter hands a ticket to the GARAGE ATTENDANT. He takes his briefcase from Mouna.

WALTER

Thank you. You have my number if you need anything.

MOUNA

I'll be fine. Thank you. Have a safe trip.

WALTER

Well good bye.

MOUNA

Goodbye.

Mouna turns and walks down the street. Walter's car arrives.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - LATER

Walter pulls into his driveway. He gets out of the car. He opens the trunk and takes out his bag and then his drum.

INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, CLASSROOM - LATER

Walter walks into the lecture hall. He sets his briefcase down.

WALTER

Good afternoon.

He takes out some papers and opens them.

EXT. NEW LONDON - LATER

Walter is stopped at a traffic light in town.

INT. WALTER'S CAR - SAME

Walter sees Karen walking toward him. She is talking on her cell phone and does not notice him. Walter just watches her pass without saying a word.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, OFFICE - NIGHT

Walter sits in his office working. He stops and listens to the silence.

INT. WALTER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter pours himself a drink and wanders around the empty house.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Walter opens the front door and walks outside.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Walter walks onto the front lawn and looks around the sleepy neighborhood. He listens to the quiet. It's a stark contrast from New York.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter roots through his briefcase and pulls out the FELA KUTI CD. He slips the CD into the stereo. He presses play. FELA KUTI's, "DON'T GAG ME" blares over the speakers.

INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, PIANO ROOM - LATER

Walter is sitting in a chair and playing the drum along with the Fela song. He is only wearing a T-shirt and boxers.

INT. CONNECTICUT COLLEGE, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Charles talks to Walter. They stand up and shake hands.

EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Three MOVERS are carefully removing the piano from Walter's house as Walter and Barbara Watson look on.

INT. WALTER'S CAR - DAY

Walter drives back down the highway. The Fela Kuti music is playing. He is tapping on the steering wheel.

INT. WALTER'S BUILDING, STAIRWELL - LATER

Walter walks quickly up the stairs to the fourth floor. He seems to be moving with a little more pep.

88

As he approaches his door, he hears music emanating from his apartment. It's a PIANO SONATA. The music stops him in his tracks. He listens for a couple of moments. Finally he walks inside.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Walter enters to find Mouna mopping the floor. Fresh flowers are on the table. She sees Walter and smiles.

MOUNA

Walter.

She turns down the music.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

I did not expect you so soon. I was just cleaning a bit. I hope you don't mind.

WALTER

No. Thank you.

MOUNA

I like this CD very much. The music is lovely.

She picks up the CD.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Is it your wife?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

She was beautiful.

WALTER

Thank you.

Mouna sets down the CD. She notices Walter's glasses.

MOUNA

These are different glasses?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

Are they new?

89

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

They're nice.

WALTER

Thank you.

MOUNA

I was going to make some lunch. Are you hungry?

WALTER

Yes. Thank you.

Walter leaves. Then he returns.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Mouna?

MOUNA

Yes.

WALTER

I was wondering if...Thursday night
... Do you have plans?

Mouna laughs.

MOUNA

No, Walter, I have no plans.

WALTER

Well, I thought that...we might do something.

MOUNA

OK.

WALTER

OK.

Walter nods and walks toward his room. Mouna watches him go and smiles.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER, VISITATION ROOM - LATER

Walter and Tarek are talking. Tarek is very anxious.

90

TAREK

They keep moving people.

WALTER

To where?

TAREK

I don't know. I think to other detention centers. Two Moroccan guys were just moved. They had no idea. Suddenly they were just gone.

WALTER

Has anyone said anything to you?

TAREK

No one in here knows anything. I'm not a criminal. I have committed no crime. What do they think? I'm a terrorist? There are no terrorists in here. The terrorists have money. They have support. This is not fair!

WALTER

I know.

TAREK

(Angrily)

How do you know?! You're out there!

Tarek's question stops Walter in his tracks. Tarek tries to regain his composure.

WALTER

I'm sorry.

TAREK

It's just... I'm starting to wonder if I'm ever going to get out of here. I sit in here at night and I keep thinking about Zainab.

TAREK (CONT'D)

I just want to play my music and live my life. What's so wrong about that?

EXT. NEW YORK CAFE - DAY

Walter, Mouna and Zainab are sitting at a cafe. Walter is on his cell phone.

91

WALTER

(Into the phone)

OK. OK. Please do. Thank you. Bye.

He hangs up.

MOUNA

What did he say?

WALTER

He would make some calls but they can move him to another facility at their discretion.

ZAINAB

What facility? Where?

WALTER

He said it could be anywhere. Upstate. Pennsylvania. There is even one in Louisiana.

ZAINAB

Louisiana? Where they had the floods?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

That's so far.

WALTER

Yeah.

MOUNA

Did the lawyer say anything else?

WALTER

No. No he didn't know anything else.

MOUNA

No one seems to know anything. It feels like Syria.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Darren and the Bass player are playing. They have a new drummer. Mouna and Zainab sit at a back table talking.

92

Mouna notices Zainab's necklace. Zainab takes it off and gives it to her.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET, KIOSK - DAY

Walter buys two newspapers. One in English and one in Arabic.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mouna walks along the street. She stops at a small CLOTHING STORE and looks into the window. She walks into the store.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mouna is sitting on her bed, speaking in Arabic. Walter, dressed in a jacket and tie, is sitting in his bedroom. Suddenly Mouna appears in the doorway.

MOUNA

Sorry to keep you waiting.

WALTER

That's alright. How is he?

MOUNA

He says hello. He wants to make sure that you are practicing your drum.

Walter smiles.

WALTER

I am. You look very nice.

MOUNA

You too. Should we go?

WALTER

Yes.

They leave.

INT. NEW YORK CAB - LATER

Walter and Mouna ride in the cab. Mouna looks out the window.

MOUNA

This city is just so huge! It never ends.

93

The cab pulls over. Walter and Mouna climb out.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Walter pays the Cab Driver and turns to Mouna.

WALTER

Ready?

MOUNA

For what?

Walter points to the "Phantom of the Opera" marquee behind

her.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Really? The Phantom? Are we seeing it?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

Now?

WALTER

Yes. Is that OK?

MOUNA

That's wonderful. Thank you. I am so excited.

Walter smiles as he and Mouna walk toward the theatre.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

The lights and sounds of Times Square. Walter and Mouna walk through the throngs of tourists after the play. Walter hails a cab and they jump in.

INT. NEW YORK RESTAURANT - LATER

Walter and Mouna both sit in a French restaurant finishing their salad.

MOUNA

I have to say that show was really kind of scary.

94

WALTER

Yeah. It was kind of scary.

The both smile. A WAITER approaches and picks up their plates.

WAITER

Are you finished?

MOUNA

Yes.

WAITER

How is everything?

MOUNA

Very good. But I think I would like a glass of wine.

WALTER

I'm sorry. I didn't even think to ask.

MOUNA

It's OK. It's not every night that you see The Phantom.

(To the Waiter)

I'll have a cabernet.

WALTER

Two please.

WAITER

Certainly.

The Waiter leaves.

WALTER

I haven't been to theatre in a long time.

MOUNA

Me neither. There is a place in Syria called Maaloula. It is a huge outdoor theater. It's beautiful. We used to take Tarek there to see concerts.

The Waiter sets down the two GLASSES of wine.

WALTER

Cheers.

95

MOUNA

(In Arabic)

Cheers.

They clink glasses and drink.

WALTER

Mouna, I've taken a leave of absence for the rest of the semester.

MOUNA

Really? Why?

Walter is suddenly self-conscious.

Walter is suddenly self-conscious.

WALTER

I just thought I might spend some more time in New York.

MOUNA

Walter, you do not have to do this for Tarek.

WALTER

I want to.

MOUNA

But you have to be in Connecticut. You have your teaching. And your book.

WALTER

It's fine really.

MOUNA

This is not your problem, Walter. It's OK that you are busy.

Her simple words strike a chord with Walter.

WALTER

I'm not busy. Not at all.

(Beat)

Mouna, the truth is I haven't been doing any work for a long time.

MOUNA

You just presented your paper at the conference.

He is beginning to unravel.

WALTER

I didn't even write it. I just read it. I've been teaching the same course for twenty years. It doesn't mean anything to me. None of it does. I pretend. I pretend that I'm busy. That I'm writing. Working. But I'm not doing anything.

Walter trails off.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

MOUNA

Don't be. I appreciate you telling me this.

The Waiter returns and pours some more water.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Walter, what would you do if you didn't teach?

WALTER

I don't know.

MOUNA

I think that is exciting. Not to know.

Walter considers this as if for the first time. He smiles.

WALTER

Mouna, what do you do?

MOUNA

Do you mean for work?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

I work in a car dealership. I take care of the accounting.

WALTER

Really?

MOUNA

Yes. It's very exciting.

97

Walter smiles.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

her Mouna and Walter walk into the apartment. Mouna takes off coat.

MOUNA

What time is it?

WALTER.

Twelve thirty.

MOUNA

No?! Is it?

WALTER

Yes.

MOUNA

My God. Twelve-thirty! I have not been up this late in a long time.

WALTER

I think that happens a lot in New York.

MOUNA

Thank you, Walter. That was a very nice evening. It's the most fun I've had in a long time.

WALTER

I told Tarek I was going to take you. He was very happy about it.

Mouna is touched by the comment. Her mood shifts.

MOUNA

Good night, Walter.

WALTER

Good night.

And with that she turns and walks into her bedroom.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Walter wakes up. He checks his watch. He notices that his phone is blinking. A message. He picks it up and listens to it.

98

WALTER

Damn it!

He throws open the door and hurries into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mouna is sitting at the table.

WALTER

There's a message from Tarek.
Something's wrong.

MOUNA

What did he say?

WALTER

Just that they were moving him. He
didn't know what it meant.

Without another word, Mouna is up and putting on her coat.

INT. NEW YORK TAXI - LATER

Walter and Mouna ride in the cab. Walter is on the phone.

WALTER

Well when do you expect him back?
Can you have him call me the minute
he is? It's an emergency. Thank
you.

(He hangs up.)

He's still in court.

(To the CAB DRIVER)

Can you hurry please?

MOUNA

I hate this feeling.

EXT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Walter and Mouna get out of the cab. Walter rushes in. Mouna waits outside.

INT. QUEENS DETENTION CENTER - LATER

Walter walks up to the guard booth.

99

WALTER

Hello. I'm here for bed 38. Tarek Khalil.

The MALE GUARD checks the computer screen. Walter waits.

MALE GUARD

He is no longer with us.

WALTER

What does that mean?

MALE GUARD

I'm not sure.

WALTER

You're not sure? Was he moved to another facility? Another state? What?

MALE GUARD

I don't know. I just know that this detainee is no longer in the facility.

WALTER

Well can you ask someone who does know?!

MALE GUARD

Hold on.

The Guard picks up the phone and dials. He has a long

conversation that Walter cannot hear.

There are a few other visitors in the waiting room. They watch Walter.

MALE GUARD (CONT'D)

Sir?

WALTER

Yes. Did you find him?

GUARD

He's been removed.

WALTER

Removed? To where?

GUARD

Deported.

100

WALTER

What? When?

GUARD

He was deported this morning.

WALTER

He...how can that be? Is there any way to contact him?

GUARD

I don't know. I don't think so.

WALTER

You don't think so? What kind of answer is that?!

GUARD

I'm sorry, sir. That's all the information that I have. Now please step away from the window. You can call the ICE if you have any further questions. The number is on the wall.

around
Walter's wheels are spinning. He is helpless. He looks
the room at all of the other immigrants visiting friends and

family members. They are watching him with blank faces.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Sir. Please step away from my window.

Walter doesn't move. He checks his watch.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Sir. For the last time, step away from my window.

Finally, Walter turns and starts to walk out of the detention center.

He reaches the exit and then spins around and storms back toward the guard booth. He completely loses control.

WALTER

(Angrily shouting)

You can't just take people away like that! Do you hear me?! He was a good man. A good person! He had a life here! You can't just take away whoever you want!

(MORE)

101

WALTER (CONT'D)

It's not fair! We are not just helpless children! Do you hear me?!

The Guard just stares back blankly. The other visitors watch in disbelief. They are unaccustomed to this type of outburst as is Walter who now stands trembling in the middle of the room.

It's as if something inside him snapped. Something that he has been holding on to for a long time. He is suddenly adrift. Unsure of what to do next.

MOUNA (O.S.)

(Gently)

Walter.

Walter turns. Mouna is standing there. He looks at her. Helpless.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Walter. Let's go. There is nothing

we can do. Let's go.

Walter looks a bit lost. He looks back at the Guard who just stares back at him.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Come on, Walter.

She reaches out and takes Walter's hand. And then she leads him out.

INT. NEW YORK TAXI - LATER

Walter and Mouna ride in a taxi. They are both depleted. Mouna shakes her head.

MOUNA

He did nothing wrong.

She is overwhelmed by the events. She breaks down and starts to cry. Walter puts his arm around her.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET FAIR - DAY

hugs

Walter watches as Mouna tells Zainab. Zainab buckles and Mouna.

102

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter is looking out the window. Mouna walks out of the kitchen and turns out the light. She walks over and stands next to Walter.

MOUNA

Walter, I need to go back to Syria.
I should to be there for Tarek.

WALTER

When are you going to leave?

MOUNA

Tomorrow. I already bought a ticket. It's best for me to be there as soon as possible.

Walter just looks at her. The news is piercing.

WALTER

You won't be able to come back here.

MOUNA

I know.

Beat.

WALTER

Mouna. I'm sorry.

Mouna smiles warmly.

MOUNA

Good night, Walter.

Mouna leans in and kisses him gently on the cheek. She turns and walks toward her room. Walter watches her go and then looks back onto the street.

INT. WALTER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - LATER

Walter is lying awake in bed. There is a knock at the door. He sits up.

WALTER

Yes.

The door opens and a shaft of light cuts across the room. Mouna stands in the doorway.

103

bed

Walter stares at her for a moment and then turns down the sheets. Mouna walks over and lies down next time. Walter pulls the sheets back over her.

They sit in silence for a long moment holding each other.

MOUNA

It's my fault. What happened to Tarek. I did receive the letter telling us to leave. I threw it away. I never told him.

Walter can only listen.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

We were here for three years by the time the letter arrived. I had found a job. Tarek was in school. Everyone told me not to worry. That the government did not care. And it appeared to be true. And then, after time, you forget. You think that you really belong.

Walter gently touches her.

WALTER

It's not your fault.

He puts his arm around her and she collapses into him.

WALTER (CONT'D)

It's not your fault.

They lie together.

INT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

Mouna and Walter are sitting in the airport.

MOUNA

Have you visited your son in London?

WALTER

No. Not yet.

MOUNA

You should visit him.

Mouna takes a small decorative pouch out of her purse.

104

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Here.

Walter takes it and opens it. It's a WRIST BAND from Zainab's collection.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

Zainab and I picked it out especially for you.

WALTER

Thank you. It's very nice.

MOUNA

Let me see.

Mouna puts it on Walter's wrist.

WALTER

I like it.

MOUNA

So do I. You look cool.

WALTER

Cool?

MOUNA

Yes. You are very cool, Walter.

Walter smiles. Mouna checks her watch.

MOUNA (CONT'D)

I should go.

The both stand up.

INT. KENNEDY AIRPORT, SECURITY CHECKPOINT - LATER

Walter and Mouna arrive at the security check point. Mouna sets down her bag.

MOUNA

Thank you, Walter. For everything.

She leans in and they hug long and hard.

WALTER

I don't want you to go.

Mouna kisses him.

MOUNA

(She whispers)

I don't want to go, habibi.

Then she picks up her bag and walks off. Walter watches her go. She turns and waves. Walter waves back and then she disappears into the security check point.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Walter walks quickly along the street with his drum.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Walter approaches the subway and enters.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS

Walter swipes his card and walks down into the subway.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

midway

Walter walks along the subway platform. He stops about and sits down on a bench.

The uptown subway train enters and obscures our view of him.

now

Finally the train pulls away. Walter is still sitting but he is playing his drum.

He is fully committed.

Another train wipes frame.

EXT. STREET FAIR - DAY

hold

Zainab sits behind her table, staring straight ahead. We on her for a long moment and then...

CUT TO BLACK

Black Card:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp

beside the golden door!"

Emma

Lazarus

Printed on the pedestal of the Statue of

Liberty