

WHAT YOU SEEK

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING

ELI sits at his desk and looks down at his phone to check the time. 2:57pm. He stands up and shakes out his legs and then sits back down. He looks at his phone again, it's been 1 minute. He puts his phone on "Do Not Disturb", sets it back down and then picks it back up and turns off "Do Not Disturb" again. He looks around and his shoulders slump. He connects to a zoom meeting.

ELI

(on zoom)

Hey, Zack. How's it going?

ZACK

Hi, uh, Eli. I'm doing well, how are you?

ELI

I dunno, I guess it depends on how this meeting goes.

Eli is an Arab-American man with shorter wavy brown hair and a tight, styled beard. He can easily pass for Spanish or Italian. He chuckles awkwardly at his own comment. ZACK has no reaction. He's a middle-aged white guy, the kind that may have been created as an AI-generated image for a middle-aged white guy.

ZACK

Right. Well, then I suppose we should get on with it. As you are aware, this is your formal review for last year's performance. We have previously discussed your self review, but today we'll review your actual rating and some performance feedback I have. We'll then go over your pay increase and bonus information.

ELI

Great. Sounds good.

ZACK

So as you are aware, your team performed excellently this past year. All of your direct and indirect reports had excellent year end ratings as agreed by you and I as well as the larger management team.

ELI

Yeah, it was a great year for the team. Thanks.

ZACK

Right. And from both a business and organizational perspective, it was an outstanding year for the whole department and company.

ELI

Agreed. We all really did well. A year we should feel proud of.

ZACK

With that said, your Goal-level rating is Satisfactory. The impact you and the team had was consistent throughout the year and met all expectations we had for you from a performance perspective.

Eli is clearly disappointed.

ELI

Okay... I guess that makes sense. I'm sure there were a few things we could've done better.

Zack is a robot and does not give any reaction at all.

ZACK

Regarding your Leadership-level rating, I have rated you as an Underachieved.

Zack pauses to let this settle in - this is clearly not positive and clearly unexpected by Eli, and you can see that Eli is trying to understand what is being said.

ZACK (CONT'D)

I feel that with the strength of your team, and the...

ELI

(interrupts)

Wait, what? Did you say Underachieved? You gave me an Underachieved?

ZACK

Uh, yes, if you just give me a moment... Um, where was I, oh yes.

(MORE)

ZACK (CONT'D)

We feel that while your team was incredibly strong, you relied too much on that strength and did not perform to a level satisfactory to your position. So...

ELI

What?!? Hold on. Did you say my team was too strong?

ELI's phone buzzes and he looks down at it. SAM is calling. He silences it.

ZACK

No, you're team wasn't too strong, this is about you, not about your team.

ELI

I mean, you said that I relied on my strong team, I built the team, I hired all of them.

ZACK

Yes, well we know that, but...

ELI

Why do you keep saying we? You decided on this rating, right?

ZACK

Yes, I decided it. I felt that your performance could have been better given the strength of your team.

ELI

My... leadership... could have been better... for the strong team... that I built. Why are you doing this?

ZACK

I'm not doing anything, this isn't about me.

ELI

You don't have to give out Underachieved ratings, right?

ZACK

No, but...

ELI
(interrupts)
But, then you chose to give this
rating to me?

ZACK
Like I said, we felt...

ELI
(interrupts)
We? Why do you keep saying we? Did
someone else make this decision?

Eli's phone rings again, and Sam's name appears a second
time. He silences it again.

ZACK
I, I felt that you were
inconsistent as a leader and that's
why I gave you the rating that I
gave you. If you'll allow me to
continue please.

Eli starts to say something and then shuts his mouth. He
nods annoyingly at Zack and gestures for him to continue.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Thank you. Um. Right. Based on this
rating, unfortunately, you will not
be receiving an increase in pay,
and your bonus will be paid out at
25% of the total expected.

Eli's phone rings a third time, again it's Sam.

ELI
I'm sorry, my brother is calling me
on repeat and this isn't really
normal, do you mind if I answer?

Zack looks relieved for the break in tension.

ZACK
Uh, well, no, of course, go ahead.

Eli picks up his phone and answers the call. The screen
splits to show Sam walking down the street. Sam is clean-
shaven with a tight haircut and overly stylized look. His
features are sharper than Eli's, but he presents less
foreign.

ELI
Hey man, what's going on, why are
you calling so many times?

SAM
It's about time you answered. It,
uh, finally happened, thought you
should know.

ELI
What happened?

SAM
He, uh, died.

ELI
He?
(pause)
Our dad?

SAM
Yeah.

ELI
Oh. Damn.

SAM
Yeah. Yaz just called me a few
minutes ago.

Eli is in his thoughts for a moment.

ELI
Is she okay? Yaz?

SAM
Yeah, I think so, you know her
though it's a crapshoot how she'll
react to anything.

ELI
Right. How'd it happen?

SAM
Heart attack.

ELI
Fits. Oh shit. Listen, I'm on a
zoom with my boss, let me call you
when I'm done.

SAM
Okay, yeah. Talk to you later.

ELI
You good?

SAM
Me? Sure, I mean, yeah.

ELI
Right, yeah, okay, I'll call you
back.

SAM
Okay.

ELI
Bye.

Eli hangs up the phone and puts it back on the desk. He looks at his computer and his boss is staring back blankly. He makes takes a deep breath and decides to get the rest of this shitty conversation over with.

ELI (CONT'D)
Hey Zack, I'm back.

ZACK
Is everything okay?

ELI
What do you care? Is there anything
else you need to tell me or can we
end this here?

ZACK
I, um, ca... Uh, no, just that
you'll get your written review in a
few days, and I'll send over your
pay and bonus statement in a few
minutes.

ELI
In a few days?! You don't even have
anything written down? Are you
kidding???

ZACK
Eli, please calm down. The year-end
review policy states that the
formal written review does not need
to be submitted until the 4th, so I
have nearly a week to complete it.

ELI
Wow. Right. Okay, I'm done if you
are.

ZACK
Yes, well, thanks...

Eli ends the zoom call abruptly, and sits there for a minute staring at his blank screen. Finally, he looks down at his phone again. He picks it up and starts to type when a message from Yasmine pops up.

SUPER: Yasmine; hey, in case sam didn't call yet, baba died, so let me know if you like want to know anything.

SUPER: Eli; Yeah, sam just called. I'm leaving work and I'll give you a call on my way home.

SUPER: Yasmine; leave work? it's barely 3

SUPER: Eli; I don't want to achieve too much in a day...

SUPER: Yasmine; ???

SUPER: Eli; Nothing, don't worry about it. Call you in a few.

Eli starts packing up his stuff and walks out of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Eli calls Yasmine with his car's handsfree speakers.

ELI
Hi.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Hey Eli.

ELI
You okay?

YASMINE (O.S.)
I think so, I mean I haven't really seen him in a few years.

ELI
Right.

YASMINE (O.S.)
What about you?

ELI
Me? I can't stop sobbing, but otherwise, I think I'll make it.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Really? I didn't think it would
really bother you that much.

ELI
No, not really. I was joking... But
apparently it wasn't funny. I mean
I haven't even seen him since...

YASMINE (O.S.)
Since his trip to Spain that
detoured in New York.

ELI
Yep, that's the one, so probably 8-
9 years ago? And I might have
spoken to him once since...

YASMINE (O.S.)
Right. I talked to him a few
months...

Yasmine trails off and there's a silent few moments.

ELI
You still there, Yaz?

YASMINE (O.S.)
Yeah, I'm here.

ELI
You okay for real?

YASMINE (O.S.)
Yeah... I... I just don't really
know what I feel.

ELI
I don't think there is a protocol
for dealing with a father's death
who you've barely seen.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Right... Think we should go to the
funeral?

ELI
Hah, yeah.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Really?

ELI
In Baghdad??

YASMINE (O.S.)

Yeah, I guess that's where it'll be.

ELI

Hah! No, I don't think we should fly on a whim to the middle east for a funeral of a man we've seen like 3 times in 20 years.

YASMINE (O.S.)

Okay, jeez, I get it, not a fan.

ELI

Even if things were different, we've never even been there.

YASMINE (O.S.)

Yeah, right, I guess this is a weird first time to visit.

ELI

Yeah. Anyway, how'd you find out?

YASMINE (O.S.)

Salaam texted me, and then I called Uncle Samir.

ELI

Oh, how are they - I haven't talked to either of them in...

YASMINE (O.S.)

8 or 9 years?

ELI

Yeah.

YASMINE (O.S.)

They're good I guess. We didn't really, uh, catch up.

Another moment of silence falls between them.

ELI

Alright, well I'm almost home, but I can give you a call in a little bit, okay?

YASMINE (O.S.)

Yeah, okay, bye.

ELI

Bye, Yaz.

ELI disconnects the call. He drives silently for a few moments and then dials Sam.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hey.

SAM (O.S.)

Hey, you talk to Yaz?

ELI

Yeah, just hung up.

SAM (O.S.)

She ask you to go?

ELI

Yeah, kinda. Crazy.

SAM (O.S.)

You know, she did talk to him sometimes. So I think she feels guilty or something.

ELI

Sure, but she won't leave her neighborhood on the weekend, let alone fly to Iraq.

SAM (O.S.)

Yeah, I dunno...
(trails off)

Sam goes quiet for a moment.

ELI

What?

SAM (O.S.)

I don't know...

ELI

Say it.

SAM (O.S.)

Maybe...

ELI

Maybe?

SAM (O.S.)

Maybe we should go.

ELI

Oh god. You too?

SAM (O.S.)
Yeah, I don't know, we should at least think about it.

ELI
Right - okay, well let's see if she actually brings it up again or if this is like the last time she wanted to go somewhere.

SAM (O.S.)
Don't be a dick. This is different.

ELI
I'm just saying, she often wants to do things and then doesn't do them.

SAM (O.S.)
Okay, I get it. Listen, all I'm saying is to think about it.

ELI
Okay... thinking. Hey, I just pulled in the driveway, so I'm gonna go inside. I'll talk to you later.

SAM (O.S.)
K, bye.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Eli pours himself a glass of wine. His wife, HANNAH, is preparing dinner. She is a tall, slender Italian woman in her early 30's. The couple together with their children look like a typical Italian American family.

HANNAH
Little early for a drink, no?

ELI
Well my day was a wine early kind of day. Zack is still a wretched boss. My dad died. I think I'm getting a cavity.

HANNAH
Oh god. Wait, what? Your dad died? Are you okay?

ELI

Well, no. No I am not. Zack gave me a sub-standard review, which means little bonus and no raise. And my dad is dead, which I guess is somewhat bad news. Oh, and now Yaz thinks we should all fly to Iraq to mourn him.

HANNAH

Hold on... Slow down... What's this about your review? What does that mean? And fly to Iraq?

ELI

Yeah... I literally got an Underachieved for LEADERSHIP while building and leading the highest performing team in the department.

HANNAH

So what's that mean?

ELI

I mean it's not good. Bonus is cut by 75% and no raise.

HANNAH

That's... are we gonna be okay?

Eli rolls his eyes and takes another sip of his wine.

ELI

Yes, dear. It's only my career to worry about.

HANNAH

Sorry, I mean, are you okay? And you dad? Damn, this is a lot. I think I need a glass of wine too. Are you... do you have any thoughts on that?

Eli shrugs and then gets a glass of wine for Hannah and hands it to her.

ELI

Not really - I mean no thoughts that can't be drowned out by wine. Honestly, I'm more pissed at the review than anything about my dad.

Hannah nods and takes a sip from her glass.

HANNAH
Are you going to go?

ELI
Go?

HANNAH
(hesitantly)
To the funeral...

ELI
In Iraq? No, I'm not sojourning to
the middle east to mourn my dead
father whom I've seen like 3 times
in the last 20 years.

HANNAH
Okay...
(pauses)
and what about the review?

ELI
What about it? Not much I can do
other than look for a new job.
Ahhh, why is this happening?!

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM

Eli and Hannah are sitting at the dining room table eating dinner with their 2 daughters, ELLE (10) and EVE (4), and a baby in a height chair. There's a noise at the door and Sam walks in.

ELLE
Uncle Sammy!

SAM
Hey bug. Whatcha eating?

EVE
She's not a bug! But we're eating
bugs for dinner!
(squeals with laughter)

Everyone laughs at Eve.

ELI
Hey Sam, what are you doing here?

SAM
Oh you know, just stopping by...
see the girls.

HANNAH

Are you hungry? I can get you a plate.

SAM

I can always eat, what's on the menu?

EVE

I told you, bugs!

SAM

Yummm. Why do those bugs look like pasta noodles?

EVE

They're worms! Duh.

SAM

Okay, worms for me then.

Hannah leaves to get a plate for Sam, as he sits down at the table.

ELI

No, but really why are you here?

SAM

(huffs audibly)

Yaz, man. She's not letting up.

Eli just shakes his head and takes a bite of his food.

SAM (CONT'D)

She made a good point though. We've never even gone there.

ELI

(with a mouthful)

Yeah, because he left us and went back there... when we were kids... Yaz was like 2?

ELLE

Daddy, who are you talking about?

Hannah walks back in and sets the plate and table setting down in front of Sam.

HANNAH

Daddy's talking about his Dad. Sam, wine?

Sam nods. Hannah grabs a glass and slides the bottle towards him. He starts to pour it.

ELLE

Daddy, did we meet your dad? I don't remember him.

Eli looks at Sam and makes a "see, told ya" gesture with his head and eyes.

SAM

Yeah, I get it. I don't know if she's going to let go though.

Sam takes a bite of the pasta.

EVE

Uncle Sammy, are you enjoying your WORMS?!

SAM

(mouth full)
Mmmmm, best worms I've ever had!

The girls squeal.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Eli is laying in bed, reading, and Hannah walks over to her side.

HANNAH

Did you talk to your sister?

ELI

Yeah, I talked to her earlier today.

Hannah sits down on the edge of the bed, puts some lotion on her arms and legs from her bedside table. Not looking at Eli.

HANNAH

Are you going to talk to her again?

ELI

Yes, I imagine I'll talk to her at some point in my life.

HANNAH

You know what I mean.

Eli doesn't say anything. Hannah finishes rubbing in the lotion and slides into bed. Looking at Eli,

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Eli drops his book on his lap and looks at her.

ELI

Yes.

HANNAH

Are you sure?

ELI

Am I okay that a man I haven't seen in a decade died 5,000 miles away? I think I'll be fine.

HANNAH

It's a little more than that... but okay, if you say you're okay, then good.

ELI

I am. Thank you for worrying about me, but I'm fine.

HANNAH

And if you need to go, you should go.

ELI

Definitely not going. But thank you.

Hannah gives him a peck on the cheek and turns off her bedside light. Eli pick his book back up.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING

Eli is at his desk on a zoom call with Zack.

ZACK

Right, so then we're going to be ready to launch the new software at the end of the week?

ELI

End of this week?

ZACK

Uh, yeah, end of this week.

ELI

No, uh that launch is scheduled for next month.

ZACK

Eli, needs to go in next week. Jack from Compliance said it needs to be done this week or we are out of compliance.

Eli's phone starts buzzing - Yasmine is calling. Eli looks down and silences it.

ELI

We set this timeline 2 and a half months ago, it hasn't changed since then, and this is the first I'm hearing anything different.

ZACK

Right. can we get it done next week though?

Eli's phone buzzes again and he silences it again.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Is everything okay?

ELI

Sorry - my sister is calling.

ZACK

Do you need to take it?

ELI

No. It's fine. Listen, no we can't move the deadline, especially not to Friday, 3 and a half weeks early.

ZACK

But we'll be out of compliance.

ELI

Ok, well we can figure out what that means, but I've sent this information out to the entire stakeholder list every week since we made the decision to launch next month. This sounds like an Ivan mistake.

ZACK
Eli, we don't need...

Eli's phone buzzes again.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Are you sure you don't want to take that?

ELI
No, I'll call her back when we get off the call. Thanks.

ZACK
Listen, Eli, this is what I was saying in your review, you need to be a team player and less of an obstacle.

ELI
You didn't say that in my review. You said I was inconsistent.

ZACK
Right, but we think it's more than that and this is an example.

ELI
I don't know who this "we" is, but if anything, I'm the only one who's been consistent. I've said what the date is every week for 3 months. If that needed to be changed, then Ivan, who's job it is to tell us of these things, needs to communicate them, earlier than 3 days before the change needs to take place.

Eli's phone starts buzzing a fourth time.

ZACK
Please, just take the call.

Eli is annoyed, at Zack and Yasmine. After a pause he picks up the phone.

ELI
Fine. Hold on.

Eli mutes his zoom meeting and picks up his phone.

ELI (CONT'D)
What, Yaz? I'm at work.

YASMINE (O.S.)
I booked our flights. We're leaving tomorrow.

ELI
Are you serious about this? Hold on, give me a second.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Okay.

Eli sets his phone down.

ELI
Hey Zack, sorry about that, I need to take this.

ZACK
Okay, and what about the launch?

ELI
What about it?

ZACK
We can push it up to Friday?

ELI
Oh, yeah, sure. Friday.

Eli gives Zack an enthusiastic thumbs up.

ELI (CONT'D)
Gotta go. Bye Zack.

Eli ends the zoom call and brings his phone back to his ear.

ELI (CONT'D)
Yaz, you still there?

YASMINE (O.S.)
What's Friday?

ELI
What?

YASMINE (O.S.)
You told someone about a launch on Friday?

ELI
Oh, that's nothing. That was my boss, he probably forgot my name after he hung up the phone.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Sounds like a good boss.

ELI
Yeah, and dad was a good dad.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Okay... Point taken. So Sam and I
are going. I booked you a flight
too, you can do what you want, but
we're going with or without you.

ELI
Yaz, I can't just leave Hannah and
the kids and go across the world
to... to a war zone.

YASMINE (O.S.)
It's not a war zone. I don't think
it is... Is it? Anyway... I already
talked to Hannah before I booked
it. She's fine with it, thinks it
might be good for all of us
actually.

ELI
You talked to Hannah? Jeez Yaz.
Whatever. I still have work. So...

YASMINE (O.S.)
Based on what I've just heard, no
one will even notice that you're
gone.

ELI
That's rude. But probably not
entirely false.

Yasmine gives him a moment.

YASMINE (O.S.)
So you're going to come with us?

ELI
Where are we staying, have you
booked a place? Is it safe? I don't
actually know anything about
Baghdad.

YASMINE (O.S.)
Uncle Samir said he'll take care of
everything. He's going to meet us
at the airport.

ELI

Ok... but is it safe?

YASMINE (O.S.)

I don't know. Yes? No? I have no idea. Come on Eli, please, we need to go. I need to go and I need you and Sam to be there with me.

ELI

I just... I really don't want to.

YASMINE (O.S.)

Please, Eli. It doesn't have to be for him, or for you. Can you just be a big brother and support your little sister?

ELI

Yaz, we're not kids.

YASMINE (O.S.)

So? I am asking you for this. Please.

Eli is silent. He closes his eyes and takes in a deep breath and letting it out slowly.

ELI

Probably more than he deserves.

YASMINE (O.S.)

Is that a yes???

ELI

I get to say I told you so when this doesn't live up to your expectations...

YASMINE (O.S.)

Fine! Thank you ELI! Sam was wrong, you do care about us.

ELI

Don't push it. Last question, how are you going to go half way around the world while also not leaving your neighborhood?

Yasmine hangs up.

FADE OUT.

INT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT

Eli, Sam, and Yasmine are walking through the airport and are greeted by SAMIR. Samir is a small, slender man in his 60's with a crown of hair around his bald spot. He's got a dark complexion and a wide smile. Yasmine looks like she could be his daughter, although in comparison she has long, dark wavy hair and a tight smile.

SAMIR

Ahhh, Yasmine, Samuel, Elias,
salaam alaikam.

YASMINE

Alaikam salaam, Uncle Samir. How
are you? Thanks for coming to pick
us up.

They all take turns giving Samir an embrace, Eli is slightly uncomfortable by it, but tries his best to fake it.

SAMIR

Do you have any more bags?

ELI

No, this is it. We pack light.

SAMIR

Yes, yes, wonderful. Yella, let us
go, Safaa is preparing lunch for
you all, and we will be there,
inshallah, before it gets cold.

Samir takes Yasmine's bag.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Come, come, this way.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Samir is driving, Eli is sitting next to him and Sam and Yasmine are in back. They are stuck in traffic and Samir is yelling in arabic out the window while talking to them.

ELI

Is there always this much traffic?

SAMIR

(out the window)
Yella yella!

(MORE)

SAMIR (CONT'D)
 (to ELi)
 Oh, yes, these streets were never
 created for this many vehicles.

SAM
 Are we going far?

SAMIR
 No, not far. We should be there in
 10 or 15 minutes, inshallah.

They all stare out the window, while Yasmine takes
 photographs with her camera.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF TRAFFIC

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF SHOP OWNER

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF KIDS PLAYING SOCCER

FADE OUT.

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

Samir, Eli, Sam, and Yasmine walk down the hallway.

SAMIR
 Here, here, put your things down,
 we will get them later. Come,
 follow me.

They follow Samir through the house, and end in a larger
 living room with a few chairs, with a spread of food on a
 blanket on the floor. There are many people in the room of
 all ages.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
 This is your uncle Raheem.

They all say "salaam alaikum" to him, he responds in arabic.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
 Raheem does not speak English, but
 he said it is great for you to be
 here.

RAHEEM speaks to Samir in arabic.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
 He says, the last time he saw you
 Elias, you were just 3 or 4 years
 old. Do you remember that?

ELI
 (looking back and forth
 between the two)
 No, I'm afraid I don't.

SAMIR
 This is your aunt, Zahraa and her
 husband Ahmed.

They greet each other.

AHMED
 My english very not good, but I
 will try.

SAM
 If you think your english isn't
 good, you should hear Eli's arabic.

They all laugh, except Eli. AHMED looks at Samir who
 translates.

AHMED
 Ahh, yes, you will learn Elias
 inshallah.

Eli nods and then gives his brother a dirty look. Sam and
 Yasmine both smile.

SAMIR
 This is your cousin Ali.

ALI
 We met when we were kids, do you
 remember?

ELI
 (pensive)
 Umm... Uh... In Florida? At the
 beach?

ALI
 Yes, yes. That's right. You really
 wanted a coconut, so your father
 spent an hour tossing stones at a
 tree to get one to fall down. He
 finally got one, and we all
 cheered.

ELI

Yeah, he also spent 3 hours listening to a salesperson talk about timeshares to get that room for free, so I guess it's all relative.

ALI

I did not know that, but I do remember the coconut. How disappointed we were when we opened it up and it was dried out. Your mother laughed a lot at the two of you, your father and you trying to get it open.

ELI

Yeah, she did think it was funny. Yaz, I don't think you were born yet, but Sam, you were just starting to walk that week.

SAM

I remember it like it was yesterday.

(winks at Ali)

Uncle Samir, can you show me to a bathroom?

SAMIR

Ah, yes, this way, so sorry, you must want to freshen up. Let's get your bags and I'll show all of you your rooms.

Eli, Sam, and Yasmine follow Samir down a hallway.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Here is where you will be Yasmine. And across the hall is a bathroom. Feel free to meet us when you're ready. Samuel and Elias, you are down here, follow me.

Yasmine goes into her room and Eli and Sam follow Samir.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM SAMIR'S HOME - EVENING

Eli walks into the room having recently showered. Samir, Sam, Yasmine and a few others are sitting around the blanket where there is hot tea, and a few small plates of cookies and snacks.

SAMIR

Elias, did you have a nice shower?
Come, have some tea.

ELI

Yes, it was nice, thank you.

Eli sits down on the rug with the others.

YASMINE

Uncle Samir was just showing us
some of the old photographs that
they had of everyone. Look at this
one.

ELI

Who is that, she looks exactly
like...

YASMINE

(cuts him off)

Exactly like Elle? Right? It's
Baba's sister, Nazima.

ELI

Oh, did we meet her today?

YASMINE

No, Uncle Samir was just telling us
that she died when she was 12, a
few years after this picture was
taken.

ELI

Oh, how did she die?

Everyone looks at Samir who translates in arabic. Everyone
looks down solemnly.

SAMIR

It's hard for all of us to talk
about...

Samir is interrupted by another man sitting with them who
speaks to him in arabic.

ELI

I'm sorry, Uncle Samir, I don't
think I've met him.

SAMIR

Ah, sorry, yes, you were in the
shower. This is Hussein, he was
your father's very best friend.

HUSSEIN speaks to them in arabic. Samir listens and then starts to translate.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

He said, Nazima was your father's very favorite person in the world. He was always a very happy young man, but when Nazima was around, it was like there was no one else in the room. They had a special connection.

Hussein continues speaking in arabic and Samir continues to translate.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Do you know of the protests here in Baghdad, when Sadaam took power?

Eli, Sam, and Yasmine all shake their heads.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD CITY - DAY

Young Iraqi's fill the streets chanting in arabic. Some are marching peacefully, while others are scattering around. There are fires and general chaos. Hussein starts talking in arabic and Samir translates.

SAMIR (V.O.)

As you can imagine, there was a lot of unknowns at that time. Sadaam was taking over and there were riots and protests in the street almost every night.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGHDAD - PRESS CONFERENCE

Sadaam Hussein is talking inaudibly into microphones. Hussein continues and Samir continues to translate.

SAMIR (V.O.)

The protests and riots were for Sadaam, against him. It depended on what side you were on. We all know how it ended, but it started so very differently. For some, he was hope, for others, he was the end of freedom.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM SAMIR'S HOME - EVENING

SAMIR

We all mostly stayed inside and didn't participate. Your father, got restless though, and wanted to know more. He wanted to see for himself what was going on.

ELI

Of course he did.

Samir translates Eli's comment for Hussein who responds.

SAMIR

No, no, he wasn't trying to get involved, he just wanted to see if the news matched the outside. He was always curious. We were all just told to stay inside, and he wanted to see if that was really needed.

SAM

I've never seen him stay inside for an hour, let alone days at a time.

Samir translates. Hussein smiles.

SAMIR

Yes, yes, he always needed to go... So he went.

YASMINE

And what happened?

SAMIR

A few hours later he came back.

ELI

That's it? Just came back.

Samir translates Eli's question and Hussein starts talking. Samir translates for Hussein.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD NEIGHBORHOOD - 1979

A young girl, Nazima, runs out the door of a home onto the streets, calling out for her brother in arabic. The camera follows her down the street where she stops as the rioters are in the square all around.

SAMIR (O.S.)

Nazima, she followed him out the door when he left. No one really knew she was gone, until your father came back home and asked for her. We all just thought she was in her room, it was later in the evening, so no one was really paying much attention.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM SAMIR'S HOME - EVENING

Hussein and Samir trail off briefly. Eli, Sam, and Yasmine look around and see the solemn looks on everyone's faces, and even catch a few of the women wiping their eyes. Finally, Hussein starts talking again, and Samir translates.

SAMIR

Everyone went looking, but couldn't find her. Hours and hours had passed. The violence in the streets was terrible that night. The whole family, all the neighbors, everyone was worried. We were all so upset. She was so young and it was so terrifying.

Samir pauses as Hussein continues to talk. He too wipes his eyes and takes a breath.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Finally a policeman came to the house very early in the morning, most of us had been asleep, but not your father - he stayed up all night, going in and out regardless of everyone's protests for him to stay. The officer told my parents, she had been hurt when some of the police and rioters started fighting. By the time everything settled and they found her, she was already gone.

YASMINE

Oh my god, that's terrible. Was she shot?

SAMIR

No, no, there wasn't a lot of that kind of violence at the time. At least not in our neighborhood.

(MORE)

SAMIR (CONT'D)

The best guess they have was that she was trying to run away from all the people and got knocked to the ground. At least that's what we were told. I don't know who knows what actually happened. But they told us that she was most likely trampled.

SAM

Awful.

SAMIR

(speaking softly)

Yes, it was.

Hussein interrupts in arabic. And Samir nods.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Your father finally came home and everyone was distraught. He looked at us and pleaded that she was okay, but he knew, she wasn't.

Hussein says something that Samir responds to. Everyone looks at them until finally Samir translates for them.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Hussein says your grandfather wouldn't forgive your father. He was too sad and too angry and needed someone to blame. It was hard on the whole family. And of course your father wouldn't forgive himself.

There's a silence in the room.

ELI

That's why he left... to come to America?

Samir nods slowly.

SAMIR

Yes. That's why he left.

FADE OUT.

INT. SAMIR'S HOME - MORNING

Sam walks into the living room where Samir, Safaa, Eli, and Yasmine are all having breakfast.

SAMIR

Ah, Samuel. It's good that you are finally awake. Yella, come, have some breakfast.

SAM

Why are you all awake already? And why is Eli smiling?

ELI

I love smiling. Smiling's my favorite.

Sam and Yasmine roll their eyes. Samir looks at Eli, confused clearly missing the reference and the sarcasm. Then he looks at Sam.

SAMIR

Samuel, we were just remembering the first time you had this drink.

Samir points to a white beverage, it looks like milk.

SAM

What is it?

SAMIR

Ayran.

SAM

It looks like milk.

SAMIR

(smirking)

Try it.

Safaa pours a small glass and hands it to Sam.

SAM

(smelling it)

What? Is it? It smells sour.

ELI

Just try it.

Sam takes a sip and immediately makes a bad face.

ELI (CONT'D)

(laughing and trying to talk through the laughter)

That's it! That's the face he made. Same exact one.

SAM
That's truly awful.

YASMINE
It's only yogurt.

SAM
Then you drink it.

YASMINE
I did try it.

ELI
(still laughing)
And basically made the same face.
That's how I even remembered you
doing it. I saw her face!

SAMIR
(smiling)
Yella, eat, and we'll go, I want to
take you to a few places.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Samir is driving with Ali in the passenger seat and Sam and Yasmine in the back again. She is once again taking pictures out the open window.

ELI
Where are you taking us?

SAMIR
I will take you to our old
neighborhood, where you father and
I grew up.

YASMINE
You didn't always live in this
area?

SAMIR
No, no, after Nazima passed, and
your father left, no one wanted to
stay, it was too painful.

SAM
Does everyone live near you now?

SAMIR

No, we often talk about moving somewhere together, or moving back to our old home, inshallah. Hussein still lives there, he never left. And your Uncle Raad still lives there, we will stop to see him for lunch, his daughter, your cousin Zaha is excited to see you.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF MOSQUE

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF ALLEY MARKET

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF SOLDIER

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

ELI

Are these soldiers here for a reason?

SAMIR

Hah, I think they have been there since before I was born.

SAM

Is there still a lot of violence here?

SAMIR

At times. But I feel that many big cities have more violence now than before. Baghdad has almost as many people as Chicago or London.

ELI

It reminds me of Chicago.

SAMIR

Really?

ELI

No.

They all smile broadly as they stare out their windows, Yasmine continuing to snap photographs.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF YOUNG FAMILY WALKING

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF STREET VENDOR

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD NEIGHBORHOOD

Samir, Eli, Sam, and Yasmine are walking down the street.

SAMIR

These are the streets that your father and I spent all of our young days. On that corner there was a sweet shop, and the owner was friends with our father, so he would always let us pick one piece when we stopped in.

They continue walking.

YASMINE

Does it look the same now as it did when you were a kid?

SAMIR

I don't know. No it doesn't, but yes. There's been so much war in this region, and changes with the government, so nothing about the city feels the same. But walking here, I just see the old faces and families that lived here when I was young. It looks exactly the same and completely different. Yella, come this way.

Samir walks them over to a park. He starts to laugh a bit.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

When we were young, this park was always filled with stray dogs, especially at night time. Your father hated the dogs, he was so afraid of them when he was young, 6 or 7 years old.

(MORE)

SAMIR (CONT'D)

And our father smoked hookah every night after dinner.

Samir starts laughing a bit more. It makes them all smile, contagiously.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

So our father would ask us to go to the store for him when he was out of tobacco. I loved to go, because he would let us get something at the store, usually a treat of some kind, whatever we wanted. He would always ask your father - I think because I spent more of his money than your father did. But the quickest way to the store was through this park. And if it was dark or nearing dark, your father would beg him not to go and say please ask Samir, he likes go, I don't want to. Well our father didn't like to be spoken to like that. When he asked you to do something, he expected you to do it. So eventually our father would have enough of his talk and, your father would go or get beat and still have to go. But each time he left, he would come running home with father's tobacco, out of breath and yelling about the dogs. And we could all hear the dogs barking.

Samir is almost crying he is laughing so hard telling the story.

ELI

Is that why he wouldn't let us have a dog when we were young?

SAMIR

Have one, he wouldn't even go to friends' homes who had one. Yes, this was why. He was terrified of those dogs, and I think the dogs knew it too, because they would chase him every time, but never chased any of the rest of us!

Samir continues to laugh as the rest do too.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF STRAY DOG

CUT TO:

I/E. DOORWAY OF RAAD AND ZAHA'S HOME

Samir knocks on the door and opens it, speaking in arabic as he begins to walk in. ZAHA comes from inside to greet them.

ZAHA
(in a British accent)
Hello, hello, welcome. Come in
please.

ELi, Sam, and Yasmine look at each other briefly, puzzled by the accent. They follow her into a living room. An older RAAD sits on a chair in the corner.

SAMIR
This is your Uncle Raad.

SAM
Salaam alaikam.

RAAD
Alaikam salaam.

ELI AND YASMINE
Salaam alaikam, uncle.

Raad starts talking in arabic, and both Samir and Zaha speak back to him, while the others watch the conversation.

YASMINE
What is he saying?

ZAHA
He said to Uncle Samir that it's
about time you arrived, he's been
waiting for his lunch for an hour.

Zaha and Samir smile.

SAMIR
It's a joke between us, he's said
it since I was very little. He's
always waiting on me for something.

Raad speaks again in arabic. He's speaking sincerely, and Samir and Zaha listen intently as the others watch on. Raad wipes a tear away.

ELI
What's wrong?

ZAHA
(also tearing a bit)
He, uh, just said seeing the three
of you here makes him sad that your
father is gone, and sad for what
our life could have been with
everyone here. Yella, come, let's
eat.

CUT TO:

INT. RAAD AND ZAHA LIVING ROOM - LATER

Zaha walks into the room with a tea service on a tray with
some desserts.

ZAHA
Tea anyone?

YASMINE
I would like some.

SAM
None for me, but I will have a
piece of that cake.

ELI
(animated)
Is that - I don't know what it's
called, but it's like a pudding
right??

ZAHA
It's Sholeh Zard - saffron rice
pudding. Do you remember it?

ELI
I do! Yes!

YASMINE
Can't remember where he puts his
keys... but yellow pudding from 30
years ago... top of mind.

ELI
I wasn't ever sure this was real!
Just thought it was something I
made up. I remember how good it was
and like nothing I've ever had
since.

Sam is staring off, not paying attention. Yasmine huffs, quietly at first and then more audibly. She takes her tea and makes a distracted clinking noise with her spoon.

ELI (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah, you'd be surprised how much it bothered me that I never saw it anywhere and didn't know what it was.

Zaha laughs as she begins to serve the tea to the others.

ZAHA

Do you remember much, Yasmine?

Yasmine blows on her tea and carefully takes a sip. Sam and Eli look at the two women intently.

ELI

Yaz...

YASMINE

Sorry Zaha... No, not really. By the time my first memories were, uh, permanent, my life was none of this.

(hesitates)

But Baba would call me a lot, so I felt connected... a little.

Eli sighs at his father's nickname and Yasmine immediately looks uncomfortable, sheepish. Sam looks at Eli, then at Yasmine and cuts in.

SAM

So Zaha, what's the story with your, uh, accent?

ZAHA

(laughs)

You mean why does a woman born and living in Baghdad have a British accent?

Eli stands and walks to the window and looks out. Yasmine looks up at him and then stares off.

SAM

(smirking)

Uh, yeah, pretty much. How does that happen?

ZAHA

It's not that exciting. I don't know how much you know or remember from the news. The US invaded Iraq when I was 12, in 2003, and my family sent me and my brothers to England to go to school and stay out of the war.

SAM

So that's where you learned English.

ZAHA

Yes. That's where I learned to speak English. And because I was still young enough, I was able to speak without an Arabic accent - but now I have an English accent.

(she laughs)

The only one in the family though. My brothers were slightly older and didn't pick it up. But as you can imagine, people find it quite humorous. I guess you and me aren't quite so different Yasmine, living a different life than our brothers, mine just gifted me this silly accent.

She laughs and Yasmine has a weak smile in return.

ELI

When did you come back to Baghdad?

They all look up at him.

ZAHA

I ended up finishing secondary school and university in England, and came back not too long after. I did work in London for a bit, but I missed my family, I missed home.

SAM

And your brothers?

ZAHA

Hassan, my oldest brother is here, you will see him tomorrow. Ibrahim... is actually still in England.

SAM
(smirking)
He met a girl.

Zaha nods with a broad smile on her face.

ZAHA
Yes, yes, of course he met a girl.

YASMINE
What about you Zaha?

ZAHA
Me?

SAM
Yeah, did you come home with a tall
Englishman with a stiff upper lip?

ZAHA
I am married... But not to an
Englishman, Sam. I'm married to my
country. I studied law in
university, and now I work on
policy for the Iraqi government. I
travel a lot, a lot of research on
how others govern. But, no, no
husband as of yet. Who has the
time!

ELI
Is everyone okay with that?

ZAHA
Okay? Hmmmm...

Eli walks back over and sits down.

ZAHA (CONT'D)
Iraq has been at war almost my
whole life.

ELI
And?

ZAHA
And... Unfortunately that's a lot
of young men who've given their
lives. The last war with the United
States the estimates are between
half a million and a million people
died depending on your sources.

(MORE)

ZAHA (CONT'D)

It all put things into perspective,
and with that came some good
change.

YASMINE

Good change? Like what?

ZAHA

Not all change is voluntary, as you
can imagine. Our glass ceilings
still exist, but...

ELI

But they're easier to break when
there's no one is left...

Zaha nods solemnly.

ZAHA

Necessity is another catalyst for
change. And my female peers and I
are taking that to heart. While
many are not... okay with it as you
asked, Eli, most understand there's
little alternative. So as I said,
I'm married to my country, because
I feel like my country needs me.

Everyone is thoughtful

SAM

At least you don't have to yell at
your country leaving the toilet
seat up.

Zaha laughs out loud and Yasmine punches Sam in the arm. Sam
shrugs and Eli shakes his head.

ZAHA

You'd be surprised, Sam. You'd be
surprised. Are you all married?

YASMINE

I am, often happily, too! We met in
college and never really looked
back. Married a few years after
graduation.

ZAHA

Lovely. Kids?

YASMINE

Yes, one. A daughter, Maisie.

ZAHA
So sweet. How old is she?

YASMINE
3.

ZAHA
You must miss her dearly.

Yasmine nods and tears up, but catches it.

ZAHA (CONT'D)
And you Eli? Sam?

ELI
3 kids for me. Not even a pet for Sam.

SAM
(smirking)
Marriage feels like giving up.

Eli and Yasmine both give Sam a look, clearly knowing he was going to say something derogatory.

ZAHA
(smiling)
I guess not married?

ELI
Sam would have to date someone for longer than three days for that to happen.

SAM
That's not fair, I've dated people for longer than that.

YASMINE
Sam has what we call "commitment issues". I guess Baba really messed him up.

Yasmine tries to laugh through a joke that landed poorly, but her comment changes the mood of the room. After a few moments, Samir interrupts.

SAMIR
It was a challenging time in our country.

Feeling the tension, Raad speaks to Samir and Zaha asking what was said and they both speak back to him.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Your Uncle Raad says that the war was hard on everyone. We all had to make decisions that we felt were the best for the family. Whether it was for our parents or our brothers and sisters, or for our children.

Raad continues to talk in arabic.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

(translating)

When I had to send my children away because of the war, and because of Sadaam, we all prayed for this to end. We wanted our home back, and we wanted to have a place where our grandchildren could grow up. Your father came back and left you in America, because he felt it was best for you. But we all told him that he should be there, or bring you here, not to stay separated.

ELI

Yeah, I'm sure he took that advice well.

Raad looks at Eli and then to Samir who translates for him. He continues to speak, but looks squarely at Eli.

SAMIR

(translating)

No, your father was a stubborn man, but he did love his family very much. Both us, and you. He talked about you, Elias, all the time.

Eli hears this, then abruptly shakes his head and stands up.

ELI

I doubt that. Zaha, may I use your bathroom?

ZAHA

Yes of course, this way.

Zaha leads Eli out of the room. Raad looks at the others and Samir. Sam notices.

SAM

Tell him that he's fine. He just, I think, buried a lot of this, and now it's in his face, and he's dealing with some of the unresolved stuff.

YASMINE

Woah, therapist Sam.

Sam shrugs. Zaha walks back into the room.

SAM

I know things.

YASMINE

I guess it's a blessing for me not to remember anything.

SAMIR

Yes, I believe it is harder to know 2 different lives as Elias has. As Raad said, your father was stubborn, and he could also be selfish. He was that way growing up too. We all saw it. But we choose to remember the good qualities as well.

Eli walks back into the room, and there is a slight awkwardness.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

I think we should continue on our journey. Are you all ready?

Sam and Yasmine nod their heads in affirmation. Samir speaks to Raad in arabic. Eli looks distracted.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Your uncle thanks you for spending some time with him. He says he's an old man and after all this activity he needs to go to sleep.

They all look at Raad who is smiling widely at his joke. Everyone except Eli laughs.

ZAHA

Thank you all for coming, this has been a wonderful reunion of sorts. I will see you all again tomorrow.

YASMINE

Thank you so much for having us,
the lunch was so tasty.

SAM

Yes, really nice.

ELI

(curtly)

Yes, thank you.

They all start to walk out of the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

ELI

What is happening tomorrow? Zaha
mentioned it twice.

SAMIR

A traditional funeral happens very
quickly after someone passes away
here. Usually within a day or two.
Of course because of your flights
and timing, you missed a lot of it.
We decided we would have another
gathering to mourn our loss of your
father with the three of you here
as well. Your Aunt Salwa is hosting
at her place, tomorrow.

FADE OUT.

INT. SAMIR'S HOME - EVENING

Samir, Safaa, Eli, Sam, and Yasmine are sitting in the
living room having some tea. Safaa speaks to Samir in
arabic.

SAMIR

Safaa and I must turn in now, we
are both old and tired.

They all smile.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Tomorrow we have nothing until
lunchtime, so feel free to sleep in
or enjoy your morning. At 11 we
will go to Salwa's home. Goodnight.

Safaa says "goodnight" in arabic and the two of them go to bed.

ELI

I gotta go clock in and check my emails, and then I'm also going to bed.

SAM

Clock in? You're working?

ELI

Yeah.

SAM

Why didn't you take PTO?

ELI

Waste PTO? On this? No way. Plus my boss thinks I'm working extra hard because I'm sending emails after 5pm and before 7am.

SAM

Maybe this is why you got the review that you got?

ELI

(mocking voice)

Maybe this is why you got the review that you got?

(regular tone)

I got the review I got because I'm the only one not saying "Yes" to my boss all the time.

SAM

Maybe... you should just say yes? And then.. you'll get good reviews?

ELI

Or... I could just deal with this guy for the next few weeks and get a new job with a boss who actually understands what he's doing?

SAM

Right. Or that... But, I think my way seems easier.

ELI

Ok, goodnight Yaz.

Eli leaves for the bedrooms, leaving only Sam and Yasmine.

SAM

Well he's in a good mood.

YASMINE

Yeah, I mean you also could just leave it alone instead of instigating.

SAM

I could, but that's not why I'm here.

They both smile, and Yasmine huffs audibly.

YASMINE

This is a lot.

SAM

Yeah, you okay with all of it?

YASMINE

I don't know. It's just weird, I feel like I was adopted or something and meeting my real family for the first time.

SAM

Yeah, it does feel like an out of body experience. And all those conversations about our dad are pretty heavy. I don't know what to make of all of it. Are you glad we came?

YASMINE

Yeah... I think yes. It's just a lot. And I feel like I didn't realize this was really here. I don't know that I, we belong, but it also feels like we do because everyone is so excited we're here. I don't know... are you glad we came?

SAM

Sure. I won't have any regrets.

YASMINE

Sam. That's not exactly answering the question though.

SAM

Am I glad to be in Baghdad surrounded by people who know me when I was 4 and I have never really seen or heard of before? I don't know if glad is a word that I'd use.

YASMINE

Yeah, it's... a lot.

SAM

Stop saying it's a lot.

YASMINE

It is though.

SAM

I mean sure... but let's be honest, you don't remember anyone, and no one met you, so you can kind of ignore most of it. It's like a movie for you.

YASMINE

That's not fair. He was my dad too, and this is also my family.

SAM

Yeah, of course, that's not what I mean... It's just... I was 6 when he left. Eli was 10. We have memories of before and after. We have memories of during. You only really remember after - that's... easier.

YASMINE

Easier for who? You and Eli talk about the before, and I hear bits and pieces of the during - especially mom's side comments from time to time. But I feel like an outsider there too! I don't have any of the memories you and Eli and mom have. So at least the 3 of you have that, you have those memories... I'm just the 4th wheel. I don't fit in with you and I don't fit in here either. It's...

Yasmine gets emotional and checks herself as Sam remains silent for a couple moments.

YASMINE (CONT'D)

It's lonely.

Sam contemplates that for a second, and his body language changes. He smiles.

SAM

I don't think 4th wheel is a thing... I think that if you have a 4th wheel it's supposed to be there.

Yasmine starts to laugh and hits Sam in the shoulder.

YASMINE

(through laughing/crying)

Shut up. You know what I mean.

SAM

Well if you weren't around, then I'd be alone... with Eli... just nagging me... about god knows what. At least with you around he nags us both.

YASMINE

Oh god, he really does nag everyone all the time.

SAM

Yes, he really, really does.

FADE OUT.

INT. SAMIR'S HOME - MORNING

Samir, Safaa, Eli and Yesmine are eating breakfast in the living room.

YASMINE

Uncle Samir - is there a market or something nearby. I'd like to get some things for my daughter, and maybe something to bring to Aunt Salwa's today.

SAMIR

Yes, yes of course. Elias, would you like to go too?

ELI

No, I'm going to get some work done before we leave.

SAMIR

Okay, very good. Yasmine, whenever you are ready, we can go.

Samir speaks to Safaa in arabic.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Safaa will go with us, she knows the markets the best.

(he winks at her)

Elias, you are sure?

Eli nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET

Samir, Safaa, and Yasmine are walking along with vendors on either side. The goods are brightly colored fabrics and spices, along with fruits and vegetables and lots of other items that look middle eastern. Samir is standing in the middle of the two women translating for them.

YASMINE

Is this where you come to shop for everything?

SAMIR

(translating)

No, Safaa comes here for special occasions. Most of what we need is nearby in the small little shops by our home. We can walk to them. Safaa doesn't drive, so unless we both go, she mostly stays in our neighborhood.

YASMINE

Ah, we need to get Safaa a Target.

Samir looks at her puzzled.

YASMINE (CONT'D)

It's a big department store, I feel like I live there. My husband says no matter what you go there for, you leave having spent a hundred dollars.

SAMIR

(translates and then
responds)

I remember we spent a lot of time
when I visited at K-Mart. Is the
quality at your store the same as
K-Mart?

YASMINE

I want to say it's better, but I
haven't been in a K-Mart since I
was a 5.

SAMIR

Safaa says that this is the best
sweet vendor in the market. She
thinks it's good to take some home
to your daughter, but you can also
bring some today.

YASMINE

Oh great. Can you ask her to pick
some out for me?

Safaa starts pointing to the different types of candy. She
offers pieces to Yasmine to taste.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF MARKET VENDOR

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF CANDY

CUT TO:

EXT. PHOTOGRAPH OF PEOPLE WATCHING THEM

BACK TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET

SAMIR

Safaa would like to buy you a tea
set from the coppersmith here.

YASMINE

Oh, no I couldn't.

SAMIR

It is our treat, we're just very
happy That you are here with us.

(MORE)

SAMIR (CONT'D)

She says that she will teach you to make the tea like she does before you leave.

YASMINE

That would be so lovely. Shukran.

SAMIR

Yes, of course. Inshallah you will be back and next time she can show you how to make some of your favorite meals as well.

YASMINE

(distantly)

That would be nice.

They walk up to a coppersmith and Safaa looks at the different sets. Finally she picks one up.

SAMIR

Safaa says this tea set is very nice, what do you think?

YASMINE

(comes back to)

Yes, it's wonderful. Are you sure?

Samir nods to Safaa who nods to the vendor. He starts to package up the set.

SAMIR

Yes, we are very certain. Yella, let's go, we should start getting back. Make sure the boys haven't gotten into trouble.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

Samir, Safaa, and Yasmine walk into the house. Eli urgently comes to them.

ELI

Where were you? What took so long?

SAMIR

(smiling)

Ah, yes, Safaa and Yasmine had to look at every vendor. You know how women can be when they're shopping.

ELI

Well, it felt like it was a really long time.

YASMINE

Calm down Eli. It was nice, don't ruin it.

ELI

Oh, good for you. Sam and I were worried something happened. We don't even know where we are.

They all walk to the living room where Sam is.

SAM

Uh, I wasn't worried.

Eli throws up his arms.

ELI

Of course not, you don't really worry about anything do you.

SAM

Woah...

YASMINE

Woah. What is happening?

ELI

Nothing. You should just communicate more.

YASMINE

Okay, relax. I was with Uncle Samir and Safaa, and we went to a market. I thought you and Sam were big boys and could be left alone at home for a few hours.

ELI

You know what I mean, stop that. It was a long time, and if something happened we wouldn't even know where to tell someone to look!

YASMINE

What's that even mean?

ELI

Yaz! None of us want to be here, and you're off shopping!

Silence fills the room. Samir looks dejected.

ELI (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that Uncle Samir.
It's just that this wasn't planned.
Being here...

YASMINE

Yeah, Eli, you don't want to be
here. Everyone knows. Maybe you
shouldn't be. You're being
ridiculous. And Rude. I'm going to
get ready for Aunt Salwa's.

Yasmine walks out of the room.

SAMIR

It's okay Elias, I know this is
hard. We are going to get ready
too.

Samir and Safaa walk out of the room.

SAM

That was... Unpleasant.
()

ELI

Shut up, Sam. You could've had my
back there.

SAM

No, no, that was all on you, man.

ELI

Fine, whatever. I'm the only one
who doesn't want to be paraded
around to celebrate our father's
life that we had no parts of.

SAM

I don't feel like I'm being paraded
around.

ELI

How can you not? We're going from
place to place memorializing our
father's legacy. The same one who
left 25 years ago... left us, left
mom. But sure, let's see where he
went to grade school.

Sam looks at his brother, both understanding and not wanting
to give him too much fuel.

SAM

Listen, no one is making you be here, so if you don't want to be, then don't be, Yaz and I are fine.

ELI

You know, that's the only smart thing you've said today.

SAM

Damn, man, what's wrong with you?

Eli storms off.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

Sam and Yasmine are in the living room, Samir walks in.

SAMIR

Are we ready to go? Where's Elias, is he ready?

Sam and Yasmine look at each other, then back to Samir.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

What is it?

YASMINE

Uncle Samir, Eli left for the airport. He's, um, going home.

Samire is clearly disappointed.

SAMIR

Oh, I see. It's a shame, this has been difficult on Elias. Yella, let's go then. Everyone is expecting us.

CUT TO:

I/E. SALWA'S HOME

Samir, Safaa, Sam, and Yasmine are greeted at the front door by Salwa.

SALWA

Salaam alaikam.

Salwa speaks to Samir in arabic.

SAMIR

Your aunt says she's so happy that you've come. There's plenty of food and many people inside.

Sam and Yasmine both hug Salwa. Salwa speaks to Samir in arabic, and he replies. She is clearly asking where Eli is.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Yella, let's go inside.

CUT TO:

INT. SALWA'S HOME

Samir, Safaa, Sam and Yasmine walk into a large living room connected to a courtyard. There are seating areas with food available, and anyone seated stands up to greet them. Samir walks over to Zaha while everyone greets Sam and Yasmine.

SAM

Salaam alaikum

YASMINE

Salaam alaikum

Samir and Zaha walk over to the crowd.

SAMIR

Samuel, Yasmine. Zaha will help translate for you, I'm going to leave for a few minutes and will be back soon.

Yasmine is slightly disappointed and shows it on her face immediately.

YASMINE

Uncle Samir, you won't change his mind.

SAMIR

Yes, maybe. But Elias is very much like your father, and I always had a way of convincing him. So I'll give it a try all the same.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT

Eli is sitting in the main terminal area talking with Zack on a zoom call on his laptop.

ZACK

Hi Eli, thanks for getting on the phone really quickly. I received a few emails this morning and I'm afraid your computer has been hacked.

ELI

Hacked? How?

ZACK

Well it's showing that you're logged in from, um, Baghdad, Iraq.

ELI

I'm in Baghdad.

ZACK

Right, funny. But we're gonna have you take it down to the tech center and get it swapped for a new one.

ELI

Listen Zack, I really am in Baghdad.

There's a long pause.

ZACK

When you said you're in Baghdad just now, do you mean your in the actual city of Baghdad?

ELI

Yes

ZACK

In Iraq?

ELI

Yes

ZACK

The one in the Middle East?

ELI

That's the only one I know of.

Another long pause.

ZACK

Are you okay? I mean are you there on purpose?

Eli has a look of confusion on his face.

ELI
(dismissively)
Yes, of course.

Another long pause.

ZACK
Did I know you were going to
Baghdad?

ELI
I'm not sure. It doesn't seem like
you did.

Another long pause.

ZACK
Did YOU know you were going to
Baghdad?

Eli snorts unexpectedly at Zack's question.

ELI
Yes. My father died about a week
ago, so my brother and sister and I
came here... for his funeral and
stuff.

Another long pause. Zack doesn't really understand the
information he's processing - there's no policy for arab
funerals.

ELI (CONT'D)
Listen, I'm at the airport now, and
I'll be home in the next day or so,
depending on how the flights go.

ZACK
I understand. Well, no, I don't
understand, but we are sorry for
your loss. If you need to take some
more time off, we understand.

ELI
No, we're fine.

ZACK
Who's we?

Samir walks up to Eli and sits down next to him. Eli nods at
hims and continues talking to Zack.

ELI

Yeah, who's we? Listen, Zack, I have to go now, but I've checked in with the team and there's nothing outstanding needed before I get back. I'll check in with you after I land on Friday morning.

Eli closes his laptop and looks at Samir.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hi Uncle Samir...

SAMIR

(smiles sweetly)

Elias.

ELI

I'm sorry that I didn't say goodbye before leaving, I knew you would try to talk me out of it.

SAMIR

Yes, well, that was disappointing, but that's not why I'm here. Your father was a difficult man, I know, he was my brother.

Eli looks away from Samir and the two are silent for a moment.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

I loved him, but he was difficult. He was as selfish as he was giving. He was as judging as he was kind. Maybe more than he was kind. He was...

ELI

(cutting him off)

Well I wouldn't really know, would I?

Samir thinks on what Eli says, another silent moment between them. Finally, he puts a hand on Eli patting him kindly.

SAMIR

No, I suppose not. He was fun, though! Everyone wanted to be around him. And before he left you, you did too.

ELI

Yeah. I remember.

SAMIR

Yes, I imagine that was terribly difficult. You know why he left for America?

ELI

Yes, you said it was after Nazima died.

SAMIR

Yes, of course it was. But that wasn't the only reason.

Eli is disinterested, but Samir keeps going.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

As a young boy, your father always talked about all the adventures he was going to have. He loved the wild west. We used to go to see the movies a lot, he and I. Before Sadaam. There was a theater down the street from us. And we would go every Thursday after school. They often showed the same movies over and over again. But this one time, they showed a movie about the wild west. It had an actor named Wayne John.

ELI

John Wayne.

SAMIR

Yes, you know him?

ELI

Yeah, of course, everyone does.

SAMIR

Well we went back week after week after week hoping to see that movie again, and they never showed it. Your father thought that movie was so wonderful. We would play cowboys in the park near our house that I showed you, the one with the stray dogs. And your father would talk about going to American and seeing the Wild West.

ELI

Did he? I don't ever remember him talking about it.

SAMIR

I asked him once, after he came back. He said he planned a trip to go. He was going to take you and Samuel, just the three of you boys. He planned on going to Arizona and dressing up like cowboys and riding horses through the desert.

ELI

I don't remember that trip. Did we go?

SAMIR

(stares for a moment)

No, he didn't. Just before you were supposed to go, our father passed away, and he came here instead. And then never tried to go again.

Neither of them say anything for a few moments.

ELI

(coming back to)

Well, that's a sad story about a sad man, but it doesn't make me want to stay.

SAMIR

Yes, I suppose not. When is your flight?

ELI

It's not until late this evening.

SAMIR

I'd like to take you somewhere if you don't mind. We can be back long before your flight, and you can go home to your family. I think you should see something before you go.

ELI

I don't know.

SAMIR

Please, Elias. If you never come back to Iraq, I think it's important that you visit this one last place.

ELI

And we'll be back in time for my flight?

SAMIR
Yes, of course.

ELI
Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. SALWA'S HOME

Zaha, Hassan, Sam, Yasmine and a few others are gathered together having tea.

YASMINE
I don't think I can eat or drink anything more ever again.

ZAHA
Yes, it's always nice to have people around to cook and entertain for, but if we acted like this every day we'd all be twice the size.

YASMINE
This isn't how things are all the time?

ZAHA
Oh goodness no! It's probably not much different than your every day.

YASMINE
Well I have a daughter at home who I miss terribly, so I imagine your day to day is slightly less... sticky.

ZAHA
Haha, yes, well you'd think so, but my father can be quite messy.

Yasmine laughs, while Hassan rolls his eyes and Sam smiles at the brother/sister interaction.

HASSAN
What have you thought of Baghdad in your time here?

Yasmine and Sam start talking over each other.

YASMINE
Go ahead, Sam.

SAM

I don't think I really had expectations. I mean obviously I expected the family to be welcoming, but to be honest, most of what we've seen of Iraq is on TV and in the news. And it... Uh... It isn't good. It's deserts and burning oil fields and people with AK's shooting into the air. So I think my expectations were really, unfortunately, very low.

YASMINE

Yeah, I think you think of Baghdad as this war-battered city of a few million. And I think you think it's going to be highly conservative. As a woman, I'm lying if I didn't worry how I would be treated. But honestly, it's not really like that at all. I felt very welcome, and comfortable, and safe.

HASSAN

Yes, it is very hard to get past those images you see. But a lot of them were from 20 or 30 or 40 years ago. Even those are not the Iraq, not the Baghdad that I grew up in.

ZAHA

Leaving London, at least for me was difficult in a few ways. For one, I miss the food, terribly. Well, no, not the food exactly, but the variety of food. Places like London just have so many people and cultures that you can try a little of everything.

HASSAN

That actually made me miss home more. Because in London, there's the British and then there's everyone else.

SAM

Actually that is something that surprised me. I thought I was going to feel out of place here.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But walking around, aside from the language barrier, there was something comforting to see people that looked like me.

YASMINE

What else was difficult about leaving London, Zaha?

ZAHA

You know, Baghdad will forever be my home, and I do love being from here, but to go somewhere that feels like it's a hundred years in the future, it is hard to come home and not lose some of the excitement that exists in places like that. We're just always so worried about Iran, and Syria, and Israel, and whose going to start what conflict. No one thinks about that in England. They think about Mick Jagger, and movie stars, money or technology or medicine or new exciting things. We're straddling the world of progress with the world of pending conflict.

SAM

But you also have this tea, so maybe not so bad.

They all laugh again.

ZAHA

Yes, Samuel, we do have splendid tea.

They are all quiet for a few moments, sipping their tea.

HASSAN

May I ask you something?

SAM

Why did Eli leave?

HASSAN

No, well yes, I guess why did he leave?

SAM

What were you going to ask?

HASSAN

I was going to ask why you think Eli is less accepting of this than the two of you are.

SAM

Oy, can I just answer why I think he left?

Hassan laughs politely.

YASMINE

Eli left because he doesn't want to be here.

SAM

(snaps back)

I don't think that's fair, Yaz.

YASMINE

Why not? He's said it I don't know how many times.

SAM

Yes, he has. But about 10-11 years ago, when his wife Hannah was first pregnant, he talked about the two of us coming here to visit. He said he wanted to see the family, to see where we came from. He wanted to be able to share with his kids both sides of his family - even if our father wasn't really part of it.

YASMINE

I didn't know that. But, still, he didn't come then.

SAM

No, he didn't. At the time, I wasn't interested, and I don't think he wanted to go alone.

YASMINE

You can't blame yourself for Eli being Eli.

SAM

No, I'm not blaming anyone, I just didn't really have interest. I think I didn't help him make the decision to go, so he didn't.

HASSAN
He was 10 when you father came back here, right?

SAM
Yeah.

HASSAN
His oldest daughter is 10 now, no?

YASMINE
(quietly)
Yea...

HASSAN
I imagine it's hard to be that age and lose a parent, and harder to know that they just left.

YASMINE
Sure. Yes. Yeah, I think it probably is hard, but also, he doesn't have to always be so harsh.

SAM
If he wasn't, what would you have to complain about then? Clearly no one's complaining about me...

Yasmine rolls her eyes.

YASMINE
He's just not always the best at things I guess. At least not with feelings and that sort of thing.

HASSAN
Yes, it's true. I do try to empathize with people, and his situation is one that I don't know many can understand or know how to empathize with.

Yasmine looks at Hassan and then at Sam. Sam shrugs and she sips her tea.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Samir and Eli are driving silently. Eli is watching the city go by from his window, while Samir looks on, occasionally glancing over. After a few minutes, they pull into a parking spot on the street.

ELI

Did you bring me to a museum?

Samir turns off the car and looks at Eli.

SAMIR

Yes, but this one is not just any museum. This is the National Museum of Iraq. This is our story. I think before you go, you should see it, and you'll get something from this trip - even if that's just knowing who you are and where you came from.

CUT TO:

INT. NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRAQ

Samir and Ali are walking through the museum. Eli is hesitant. He looks at some of the things as they pass through a great hall, but doesn't really engage in any of the artifacts. Samir is watching him.

SAMIR

What do you know about who you are, Elias?

Eli stops, surprised by the significance of the question. He looks at his uncle.

ELI

I guess, on this side of the family, not a lot.

SAMIR

Yes, I would think it's hard to know, when no one is around telling you. But we are not here to talk about your father, I want to show you your ancestors. Your people. Our people.

ELI starts walking again, slowly. Samir does the same.

ELI

Why do you all celebrate him? Forgive me for being so bitter towards you and anyone else, but the reality is that he left us, and never came back. He never cared.

SAMIR

Yes, I can see why you think that way. But also, think for a moment about your brother, Samuel. Has he ever done something you've disagreed with?

ELI snorts.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Yes, I would assume so. And yet, here you are with him, supporting him, loving him. Most of us did not agree with your father's decisions. In fact, many of them were outright disapproved of. But your father was my brother, he was of our family, and he came back home. And when you come back home, you are always welcomed, no matter how much you disagree.

ELI

Feels like this wasn't something that should've easily been forgiven.

SAMIR

Hah! You think it was easy? Of course not. Your father argued with almost all of us constantly about that decision. We were all sad we never got to know you and your brother and sister, your families. And we all loved your mother, we couldn't get over what he did to her, to all of you. But if I'm being honest with myself and with you right now, time can dissolve your resistance. It can make you forget who isn't around and focus on who is. But we never agreed with him. And we are all so very happy you have come to visit us. While our hearts are sad that it is this occasion that has brought you here, we are delighted that you've come.

ELI

Well the 30-year-old in me can understand that to some extent, but I don't think the 10-year-old can see past being alone for all those years, trying to figure out why it happened and why no one cared.

SAMIR

Well, if you talk to him, tell him we did care, do, do care. Deeply, and regret not making more of an effort a long time ago. But please, I want to show you this.

Samir and Eli walk over to a small artifact that appears to have writing on it.

ELI

(reading the plaque)
The Gilgamesh Dream Tablet.

SAMIR

Do you know the story of Gilgamesh?

ELI

Um, no, not really. I think I've heard of Gilgamesh. But, that's about it.

SAMIR

The story of Gilgamesh is one of the oldest tales in history. They say the first written epic poem. It was written in ancient Mesopotamia. You know of Mesopotamia?

ELI

Yeah, fertile crescent and all?

SAMIR

That's right. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers, here in Iraq. The birthplace of civilization.

Sami and Ali start walking again.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

The story is about a legendary king named Gilgamesh who ruled in the ancient city of Uruk. Gilgamesh was not only strong and courageous but also arrogant and not very kind to his people.

(MORE)

SAMIR (CONT'D)

The people in his kingdom started to complain to the gods. To teach him a lesson, the gods created a wild man named Enkidu.

After the gods created Enkidu, he lived in the wild, running with the animals and being one with nature. Eventually, word got to Gilgamesh about Enkidu, and he lured him out of the woods with a woman, a harlot, a, um, whore. When Gilgamesh and Enkidu finally met, they had a great battle, which Gilgamesh won, but more important, the two became best friends. Their adventures together are at the heart of the story.

(CONT'D)

Gilgamesh and Enkidu faced many challenges, including defeating the fearsome Humbaba, the guardian of the Cedar Forest. Their bravery and teamwork showed everyone in Uruk the power of true friendship.

(CONT'D)

But then the story takes a sad turn when Enkidu falls seriously ill and, despite all efforts, Enkidu dies. Gilgamesh is terribly sad, and it affects him greatly, making him realize how fragile and delicate life is. Gilgamesh begins a quest for immortality.

(CONT'D)

So Gilgamesh embarks on a journey to find a way to live forever. His travels take him to faraway lands, where he encounters mythical beings and he faces many trials. Along the way, he meets Utnapishtim, a man who survived a great flood and was granted immortality by the gods. Unfortunately, Gilgamesh discovers that immortality is not for humans - it's a gift only the gods possess.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

The reading, the quote directly from the story, the tablets, says, "what you seek, you shall never find."

(CONT'D)

Gilgamesh learns that while we can't live forever, he can leave a lasting legacy through his actions and how he treat others. The impact we have on people's lives, the good deeds we do, and the friendships we build can make us immortal in the memories of those we leave behind.

(CONT'D)

Returning to Uruk with new found wisdom, Gilgamesh becomes a better king. He understands the importance of empathy, kindness, and taking care of his people.

Samir stops walking.

SAMIR

It is the greatest story, no?

ELI

Yeah, sure, great story, but I hope you're not trying to say that my father is Gilgamesh.

SAMIR

Hah, no. I loved your father, as I've said. But he was no Gilgamesh. I tell you this story for many reasons. The first reason is of course that this story is in us, in our people, this is our history and I thought you should know it. But I do think there's something you can take from this. See Gilgamesh was so obsessed with finding a way to live forever that he ignored his family and friends, and his people. Don't let your father, or your anger toward him, let you forget about the rest of your family, your brother and sister and mother, and of course the family you still have here.

Eli had softened during the story that Samir was telling, but abruptly hardens his demeanor.

ELI

I haven't forgotten. We were alone. No one came to my door. No one called me. At least I don't remember anyone being around. Were you around?

Samir looked down.

ELI (CONT'D)

He left us, and with him went all of this family, all of this history. I was 10. And I was alone. I had a fatherless brother and sister who didn't understand what was happening, and a distraught mother who... It doesn't matter, no one care to our rescue.

SAMIR

I am sorry, Elias. I am very sorry for that. And I don't know how to make that up to you, to Samuel, to Yasmine. Or your mother. But, I do know that it doesn't start with you getting on a plane right now.

ELI

I appreciate that, but also, I don't really want to be here. I want to be home. Home with my wife. My children. I want to be with MY family.

SAMIR

Elias, we are your family. And we do want you here. And I understand why you would feel angered or sad, or all of it. But don't leave just yet. See this through. And then you can go home, and never come back if you don't want to. But don't let your father's legacy of leaving be yours too.

Eli's face doesn't change. Samir drops his head.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Yella, let's go, I will get you back to the airport.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Samir is driving and Eli is staring out the window. Both are silent. Samir pulls up to the airport terminal and stops the car.

SAMIR

Elias...

ELI

You're a very frustrating man Uncle Samir. I don't know how I feel about all this, but you are right, it doesn't get better with me leaving at this moment. I came with Sam and Yaz, and the least I can do is go back home with them.

Samir nods.

ELI (CONT'D)

So, I guess what I'm saying is I'll stay.

SAMIR

Elias, I understand that this is hard. It's hard for us too. But I think this is the right decision, even if it doesn't feel that way right now.

ELI

Sure doesn't. Can you do me a favor though?

SAMIR

Of course Elias, anything.

ELI

If anyone asks why I came back, can we just tell them there wasn't any food at the airport?

Samir looks at him questioningly and Eli smiles back. Samir smiles in response.

SAMIR

Yes, of course Elias.

CUT TO:

INT. SALWA'S HOME

Samir walks into the living room where Zaha, Hassan, Sam, Yasmine and a few others are still gathered.

YASMINE
Did he go?

ELI (O.S.)
No, he didn't.

Eli walks in.

ELI (CONT'D)
What? I was still hungry.

YASMINE
You sound like Sam.

They laugh, Eli shrugs. Sam makes an indignant face.

ZAHA
We're all very glad you came back.

ELI
Yes, well, Uncle Samir is very...

Eli is interrupted by a knock at the door. Salwa looks around and says something in arabic. Samir responds in arabic, but everyone looks confused.

YASMINE
What is it?

ZAHA
Salwa was asking if anyone knew who it was.

Salwa speaks in arabic and Zaha responds. Salwa leaves the room.

ZAHA (CONT'D)
Pay no mind, Salwa is going to check. Eli, you said you were hungry, what can we get you?

There's a commotion down the hallway and everyone looks. After a moment, Salwa comes into the room frantic, speaking arabic to anyone who will listen. She is followed by a YOUNG MAN and a YOUNG GIRL. They slow as they walk in, staring at Eli, Sam, and Yasmine and everyone stares and goes silent.

ELI

What's going on? Who are they?
Uncle Samir? Zaha?

Samir says something in arabic to Salwa.

YOUNG MAN

Hello, I'm Yousef, this is Fatima.

Eli, Sam, and Yasmine stare at Yousef and Fatima, having no idea who they are or why it's a big commotion. Everyone in the room stares at the 5 of them, saying nothing, but waiting.

SAM

Hi there Yousef. I'm sorry, are you cousins? I don't think I remember you.

Yousef looks surprised.

YOUSEF

Is it Elias?

SAM

No, he's Eli, I'm Sam.

YOUSEF

Ah, Sam. Right, of course. Baba has told us a lot about you.

YASMINE

Baba?

YOUSEF

Uh, yes, Baba, our father.

ELI

Your father told you a lot about us?

YOUSEF

Yes, no, not my father, our father. Yours and mine.

ELI

Mine?

And then the realization comes to each of them one by one.

SAMIR

Elias. They are... they are your brother and sister.

Silence fills the room. It's uncomfortable and the tension is building. Then Eli erupts.

ELI
ARE YOU KIDDING ME? He had a whole
other family??

SAMIR
Please Elias, please stay calm.

ELI
Calm? You stay calm! This was
hidden from us! Our whole lives and
this is how we found out that he
had another family?

Salwa speaks in arabic and Samir speaks back to her.

ELI (CONT'D)
What did she say?

SAMIR
She said we knew this would be
difficult. We didn't know what to
do.

SAM
(almost under his breath)
How old are you?

YOUSEF
I will be 22 years old in a few
weeks. Fatima has just had her 20th
birthday.

SAM
Damn.

ELI
Why are you here?

YASMINE
Eli.

ELI
What?

YASMINE
You don't have to be...

ELI

Be what? Be curious why our brother and sister whom none of us knew about are here without any warning or... Anything?

SAMIR

Elias, I understand that you are upset, but inshallah you will be okay. And they are your family.

YOUSEF

No, Uncle, we will go. I would not have come if I knew they, ELias, if I know you didn't know.

Fatima gives Yousef a look.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

Hah, my sister thinks I would have come anyway. But it is okay. We will meet soon, inshallah.

Salwa says something to Yousef and Fatima in arabic.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

I am sorry Elias, for meeting this way. I hope the next time can be different.

Yousef says something to Salwa and Samir in arabic and then he and Fatima leave.

YASMINE

Eli, you can be really terrible sometimes.

ELI

Why, because I say what we're all thinking?

YASMINE

No, I wasn't thinking that, and Sam wasn't either. I would have wanted to...

ELI

Neither Sam or I had any interest in talking to them.

SAM

Uh, both of you can stop. I think I can speak for myself, thanks. And I don't know what...

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

To think of this. Don't put me in the middle of your issues.

ELI

Fine, you don't know what you want, shocking. Yaz, do what you want. I'm not interested in all of this. Uncle Samir - can you please take me back to your house?

SAMIR

Yes, Elias, of course. Let me get my things. Yasmine, Samuel, would you like to come too?

Sam and Yasmine look at each other.

YASMINE

I think I'd like to stay for a little bit longer if that's okay.

SAM

I, uh, will stay with Yaz.

Eli gives Sam a dirty look and then breaths out heavily, shaking his head.

SAMIR

Yes, of course. Elias, I will take you back and then come back for you both. Yella, Elias, let's go.

ELI

God, I can't believe I came here.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

SAMIR

Elias, do you need anything before I leave?

ELI

No, thanks. I have some work to do.

SAMIR

Yes, of course. Elias?

ELI

Yeah?

SAMIR
I am sorry.

ELI
Yea.

Samir leaves. Eli opens his laptop. He starts to type something and then closes it. He pulls out his phone and calls Hannah.

HANNAH
Hi hun, how are you doing?

ELI
Oh god. What a terrible decision to come here.

HANNAH
I'm sorry. It's been rough?

ELI
Rough would've been nice.

HANNAH
Why? What happened?

ELI
Oh not much, just typical Yaz stuff wanting everything to be different. Oh, and I have a baby brother and sister?

HANNAH
(very puzzled)
Your father had a baby.

ELI
Well not an actual baby - he's 22 and she's 20.

Hannah is quiet for a moment, comprehending what Eli just said.

HANNAH
Wow, so he had...

ELI
Another family? Yep, looks like it.

HANNAH
I'm sorry, Eli. That's got to be... a lot... to take in. Were they nice?

ELI
(biting)
Nice?

HANNAH
Okay, calm down Eli. I'm only asking. When you met them, did they seem nice?

ELI
Who cares? I pretty much just left after. I just can't deal with this and Sam is no help, and Yaz wants to act like this is all normal.

HANNAH
Right.

ELI
Right what?

HANNAH
Well, it's her normal? Right?

ELI
Hannah, please, don't empowerment podcast me right now, I'm not interested.

HANNAH
(quiet)
Okay...

Eli knows that was rude, but isn't in the right frame of mind to apologize, so he just moves on.

ELI
How are the girls? Have you all missed me?

HANNAH
Oh you know, they're fine. They've been asking about you. Well Elle is asking about you. Eve just keeps asking about a camel?

ELI
Haha! I told her I'd bring her home a camel if I saw one.

HANNAH

Well, then you better find a camel, because otherwise you'll have a disappointed 4 year old when you get home.

ELI

We wouldn't want that, would we? How's the baby?

HANNAH

No. Definitely not. She's good, I feel like she lives in her height chair at the moment. Are you sure you're okay?

ELI

Yeah. I'm fine.

HANNAH

You just... I don't know, I feel like I wouldn't be.

ELI

Sure. This is a lot. But also, it just feels like I'm in another universe and kind of watching another life. So it's fine. The movie credits are coming soon, right?

HANNAH

Sure they are. Well if you want to talk about it, I will promise to try to listen and not give you podcast advice.

ELI

When have you ever not given podcast advice.

HANNAH

I said try.

ELI

Thanks, I'll let you know if I need a good cry, but right now, I'm just ready to come home.

HANNAH

Good, we're ready to have you back. When is that by the way?

ELI

I don't know. I changed my flight to today, but I had to cancel that when I decided to stay. So I have to see what Sam and Yaz want to do. I hope tomorrow, but I'll let you know as soon as we make a decision.

There's a sound at the front door. Eli looks over and sees Samir, Safaa, Sam, and Yasmine walk in.

ELI (CONT'D)

Everyone just got back, I'm gonna go.

HANNAH

Okay, tell everyone I say hello. I love you. Can't wait for you to be home.

ELI

Love you too, bye.

ELI hangs up the phone. Yasmine looks at Eli and leaves the room.

ELI (CONT'D)

She's still mad?

SAM

Well, you were kind of a dick.

ELI

Not you too.

SAM

I don't have to pick sides to call a spade a spade.

SAMIR

Who would like some tea?

Samir speaks to Safaa in arabic, she walks out of the room.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

This was a very difficult day. Let's have some tea and take a break from all this.

SAM

That sounds nice.

ELI

I think I'm going to shower and go to bed.

Samir nods as Eli walks out of the room. He looks at Sam who shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

Samir and Sam are eating breakfast and Eli walks into the room.

SAMIR

Ah, good morning, Elias. Yella, come have some tea and breakfast.

ELI

Good morning. Thanks, any chance you have some coffee? I think I'm going through withdrawal.

SAMIR

Uh, oh. Yes, I believe we do.

Samir walks out of the room.

ELI

So, uh, what are you thinking about flights home?

SAM

What do you mean what are we thinking? Our flights are Sunday.

ELI

You still want to stay until Sunday? Really?

SAM

I haven't given it a thought. We have flights on Sunday, so why wouldn't we stay until Sunday?

ELI

(huffs)

I need to get home. I am leaving today. I booked mine for 6.

SAM

Ok, so leave today.

ELI

Are you coming with me?

SAM

No... I'm leaving on Sunday.

Samir walks back in the room with a tray.

SAMIR

Here you are Elias. We only have instant coffee here, but I think it's still pretty good. Not as good as Starbucks of course.

Sam laughs, breaking the tension slightly.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

So if you would like, this afternoon I am going to your cousin Hassan's son's Handball match. He is in secondary school and his team is quite good. They believe that maybe some, including him, could make it to the national team.

SAM

Handball?

SAMIR

Yes, have you ever played it?

SAM

I don't think I've ever heard of it.

SAMIR

It is a lovely game. It's like basketball and football, uh soccer, were combined into one game. There are small nets at either end of a court, and you can dribble or pass like basketball.

SAM

Sounds interesting, I'll go.

SAMIR

Great, Elias? What about you?

ELI

Uh, no, I don't think so, I'm flying home today, but what time is the match?

SAMIR
4 o'clock.

ELI
Okay, well my flight is at 6, so maybe you can drop me off at the airport before you go?

SAMIR
Yes... Yes, of course. Very well. Samuel, I am excited for you to see the game. Do you think Yasmine will want to go?

Yasmine walks into the room.

YASMINE
Will I want to go where?

SAM
Handball.

YASMINE
Hand... ball?

SAM
Yeah, interested?

YASMINE
I... uh...

SAMIR
We are going to your cousin Hassan's son's handball match.

YASMINE
So like a sport?

SAMIR
Yes, of course a sport, what else would it be?

SAM
Yeah, Yaz, what else would it be?

YASMINE
Yeah, handball... what else would it be. Are you guys going?

SAM
I am - Eli is going home.

YASMINE
You're going home, Eli?

ELI

Yeah. I, uh, I need to get home to the girls.

YASMINE

Is everything okay?

ELI

Yes, yeah of course. I just - we've been, I've been gone long enough, I need to get home.

YASMINE

Right. Sure.

SAMIR

Yasmine, can I get you something, tea, or Elias has coffee?

YASMINE

I'll just have some tea, thank you.

Samir starts to pour some tea.

SAMIR

This has gone cold, let me make some more.

Samir leaves the room.

SAM

(sensing the tension)

Right, so, I'm going to go shower.

Sam leaves the room. Both Eli and Yasmine watch him go and then look at each other. Yasmine starts to tear up.

YASMINE

Why can't you just stay with us?

ELI

Yaz, I'm not interested in this conversation. I need to get home. To my family.

YASMINE

We're your family too. And you don't think I don't want to go home to my family?

ELI

Then let's go. Why do we have to stay any longer? We did this thing, now let's go back.

Yasmine hesitates, starts to say something and stops.

YASMINE

I don't know. We said we're staying until Sunday. I don't know what Uncle Samir or anyone else has planned.

Eli sighs.

ELI

I'm not doing this.

YASMINE

Doing what, Eli? Spending time with me and Sam?

Eli rolls his eyes.

ELI

We can spend time together at home. Anytime you want.

YASMINE

Except that you don't. And now we're here and you're leaving early. It feels... selfish.

ELI

Selfish? How are you possibly calling me selfish? He had another family! And none of us knew anything about it!

YASMINE

That's not what this is about. You can't tell me you didn't think that was a possibility. He wasn't 60 when he left.

ELI

Open your eyes, Yaz. We're the circus. We're coming through town and people are waiving and smiling. But when we leave, everyone will go back to their normal lives. No one here cares. They didn't care for the last 25 years and they won't care for the next 25 years.

YASMINE

I don't believe that.

ELI

Dad left, started a new family, and we heard or saw from how many of these people? How many times? Most of their memories of us were from before you were born, so why do you even care?

YASMINE

Why do I care? Because I don't have those memories. I don't have ANY memories of this world. I just have the anger and resentment that you and mom have had my whole life about it.

ELI

Oh here we go... poor Yaz, didn't know her daddy. I knew him before, and I knew him after. And guess what, not a great guy - not a great father as history shows. At least not to us. So forgive me, forgive mom, if we're not dying to share the warm and fuzzies with you.

YASMINE

(crying)

You can be such an asshole sometimes.

SAM walks in and looks at Yasmine crying and ELI, who throws his arms up in the air.

SAM

Uh, what's going on in here?

ELI

Nothing... Yaz is...

YASMINE

I'm what, Eli? Sad? Disappointed? Emotional? Have feelings? I'm not a robot like you?

ELI

I'm not a robot!

SAM

I don't know what you said or why she's crying, but... you are kind of a robot. Especially with this stuff.

ELI

Since when do you have an opinion on things?

SAM

Woah. Why are you attacking me?

ELI

I'm not attacking anyone. I just want to get the hell home and be done with all of this.

YASMINE

What is so bad about being here that you are dying to get home?

ELI

Umm, I don't know - maybe because we're in the middle of a war zone where soldiers patrol the streets? Maybe because we're surrounded by people we can barely communicate with, who we've never met before, acting like we're all ready to sit around and sing Kumbaya like a big happy family?

SAM

I don't think Muslims sing Kumbaya.

ELI

Shut up Sam, you know what I mean.

Sam smiles and it makes Yasmine snicker through her tears. She hits him in the shoulder.

ELI (CONT'D)

Whatever - you two enjoy your last few nights here, go play family and drink your tea and enjoy yourself. I'm going home - where I actually have family who actually cares if I'm home.

Eli walks out of the room.

SAM

Where did that come from?

YASMINE

I don't know... I asked him to stay with us until we leave, and that's what happened.

SAM
Well why'd you do that?

Sam smirks. Yasmine drops her head in her hands and leans into Sam, who gives her a hug.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT

Samir get's out of the car and gets Eli's bag for him.

ELI
Thank you, I got it.

SAMIR
Elias, thank you for visiting. I hope we can see each other again, inshallah.

ELI
Yes, thanks for hosting us. Tell Safaa that I really enjoyed her cooking as well.

SAMIR
I will. Be safe. I hope to hear from you very soon.

ELI
Thanks, okay, sounds good.

Eli walks into the airport. Samir stands there watching him leave, disappointed, sad, both.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT

Eli is sitting in the waiting area talking on his phone.

ELI
Yeah, I'm at the airport now. Yeah, I know, me too.

Eli looks down at his phone.

ELI (CONT'D)
Hey, Zack is calling me. Let me take it. Yeah, love you too. Bye.

Eli hangs up and accepts the new call.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hey Zack, good morning.

ZACK

Are you still in, uh, Baghdad?

ELI

Yeah, but I'm at the airport now.

ZACK

Oh, I thought you were at the airport yesterday.

ELI

I was, plans changed. But I'll be on a plan in about 2 hours and land in the morning.

ZACK

Right, well safe travels.

ELI

Thanks. So what's up?

ZACK

Yes, right. So I was just on the phone with Ivan, he said that the fix didn't get updated last night. And we didn't launch today.

ELI

Right - it's launching in two and a half weeks, 3 weeks. I'm so confused what day it is right now.

ZACK

Uh, okay, but I thought we talked about the Compliance issue.

ELI

Yeah, and I think I said that we weren't aware of that when we created this launch plan, and that we couldn't launch three and a half weeks early with 3 days notice.

ZACK

Eli, this is very disappointing. I thought we were clear when we last spoke that this is a compliance issue and that we had to push this through.

ELI

Yeah, and I believe I said it couldn't be done.

ZACK

Yes, but now we're out of compliance. This is a huge issue. Ivan is getting messages nonstop about it.

ELI

Well maybe Ivan should have read my emails for the last three months. Whatever, it doesn't matter. What is the effect of being out of Compliance?

ZACK

Ivan said we're going to have to raise a compliance ticket.

ELI

A compliance ticket?

ZACK

Yes, it's like a formal complaint stating that we're out of compliance.

ELI

Like regulatory compliance? Like we're breaking the law or something?

ZACK

More or less, yeah.

ELI

Okay, when do we have to submit the ticket? Today?

ZACK

Well he said we have 3 weeks to raise the ticket to the Compliance team.

ELI

You're joking, right?

ZACK

What?

ELI

We have 3 weeks to create a compliance ticket?

ZACK

Yes. And then once the ticket is submitted, we have to complete the work so that we're in compliance with the laws within a 180 day window.

ELI

I feel like I'm being punked. You're not serious, right?

There appears to be some commotion ahead.

ZACK

Eli, this is very serious. We take Compliance Regulations seriously, and I expect you to do the same.

ELI

Zack - I'm not not taking this seriously. It's just that Ivan's an idiot.

ZACK

Eli that's not appropriate.

ELI

Damnit, Zack. What's not appropriate is you and Ivan making me have this insane conversation.

ZACK

Excuse me?

ELI

Let me make this perfectly clear. This issue is not an issue. We are out of compliance today. We have 3 weeks to report that we are out of compliance. We are launching in 3 weeks which puts us in compliance. So we will be IN compliance give or take the same day that we have to report NOT being in compliance. Can't you see that this is NOT an issue, unless we don't launch in 3 weeks?

The commotion ahead is growing.

ZACK

I don't appreciate your tone, Eli.
And this is exactly why we gave you
the feedback last week that we did.

ELI

Who THE HELL IS WE??? I can't do
this right now. Something is going
on here at the airport, and I don't
need to waste my time trying to
convince you and Ivan that 3 weeks
is the same as 3 weeks. Goodbye.

Eli hangs up the phone and walks towards the group ahead of
him.

ELI (CONT'D)

Hi, does anyone speak English? Can
anyone tell me what is going on?

PERSON

Flights are canceled.

ELI

Flights? Which flights?

PERSON

All flights

ELI

What?? Why??

PERSON

You're in Baghdad.

ELI

No, but actually what is the
reason?

PERSON

But actually. This happens. Another
march, another sit-in, another
something. When tensions are high
in Baghdad, no one wants to fly
here.

ELI

Every flight?

PERSON

Every flight.

ELI

For how long?

PERSON

They are saying 48 hours, but who knows.

ELI

This is... unreal.

ELI's phone buzzes. It's an email from Zack.

SUPER: Eli - I'm scheduling a meeting for Monday morning, I don't think it is working out for you here. We will discuss next steps and options.

ELI (CONT'D)

(shouts)

GOD DAMNIT!

FADE OUT.

INT. CAR

Samir and Eli are in the car.

SAMIR

I am very sorry, Elias. This has not happened in at least a year, maybe longer.

ELI

Yeah.

SAMIR

But you will get home very soon, inshallah.

ELI

The guy in there said 48 hrs, is that true?

SAMIR

Sometimes sooner, it all depends on the people and how this ends. But I do feel that it will be okay this time, what I am reading is this is just a small group of people who are angry.

ELI

Right.

SAMIR

Samuel and Yasmine are at the Handball match, shall we go?

ELI

If you don't mind, I'd rather just go back to your house.

SAMIR

Yes, of course.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMIR'S HOME

Eli is on the phone with Hannah.

HANNAH

So is it definitely going to reopen?

ELI

Is what going to reopen?

HANNAH

The airport?

ELI

The airport isn't closed. It's just that no one is flying here. Like no companies or pilots or both want to fly into Baghdad. So then there's no planes - it's the weirdest thing to see actually. An airport without any planes.

HANNAH

None?

ELI

Well a few, local ones, or ones that were here before they made the announcement. But otherwise, no, not really.

HANNAH

Wow. That is crazy. Be careful.

ELI

Haha, careful? I'm in my Uncle Samir's house, currently by myself.

HANNAH

Oh, well I don't know what it's like there. Why are you by yourself?

ELI

(huffs)

I was just done being paraded around. And I'm sure Yaz and Sam don't really want me around anyway.

HANNAH

Why?

ELI

Yaz and I got into it a little this morning. And then Sam tried to settle things down, and, well it didn't help.

HANNAH

Yeah, you don't really, um, sound yourself.

ELI

Yeah, I don't know. It's a lot.

There's a knock at the door.

ELI (CONT'D)

Someone's at the door, I'm gonna go, but I'll try to call a little later when the girls are home from school.

HANNAH

At the door? Who's at the door?

ELI

I have no idea. Love you.

HANNAH

Eli, be careful, please.

ELI

Haha, be careful? What are you worried about?

HANNAH

I don't know, an uprising? Or whatever you said shut down the airport? Terrorists?

ELI

Haha, I don't think terrorists knock on the door. But I'll be extra careful.

HANNAH

I don't know these things! Okay,
bye, I love you.

ELI

Haha, love you too. Bye.

Eli walks to the door. He looks out and sees Yousef standing there. His shoulders sink and he opens the door.

ELI (CONT'D)

Uh, yeah, Uncle Samir isn't home.

YOUSEF

Hi Elias, yes I know, they are all
at Zaha and Uncle Raad's
celebrating Akeem's win in the
handball match.

ELI

Okay, well I'm not sure who sent
you here, but I'm not really
interested in going.

YOUSEF

Please, no one sent me. I asked
where you were and they told me. I
came on my own.

ELI

Why?

YOUSEF

I, just, I don't know. I felt like
I just needed to come here.

ELI

Well, I'm sorry, but I'd rather be
alone.

YOUSEF

Yes, I do understand, but please,
I'd just like to talk for a few
minutes, and then I will leave. I
just feel terrible about how you,
uh, found out about Fatima and me.
I didn't know.

Eli stares at him, and then takes a deep breath.

ELI

Yeah, um, okay. I guess we can talk
for a few minutes. Do you want some
tea?

YOUSEF

Sure, that would be lovely.

ELI and Yousef walk to the kitchen. Eli starts opening the cupboards and drawers. After a few moments of watching him Yousef finally speaks.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

Do you... know what you're looking for?

ELI

Yeah. Tea.

YOUSEF

Right, well it's, uh, right there and you opened that door 3 times. (pauses) Maybe I can make the tea.

Eli stops and looks at Yousef.

ELI

Fine. Sure. Go ahead.

Yousef walks over and picks up the tea and starts preparing it. Without a word, Eli stands to the side.

YOUSEF

Do you drink tea at home?

ELI

Me? No, not really. I've always just drank coffee. Occasionally I'll have tea if I'm not feeling well.

YOUSEF

Yes, I do love coffee as well. It is much more expensive than tea though, so it is usually a treat for us.

ELI

That's a shame.

YOUSEF

I can make coffee instead.

ELI

No, tea is fine. Thanks though.

YOUSEF

So I heard that you have 2 daughters?

ELI

Three. What is it that you want from me?

YOUSEF

I don't want anything from you.

ELI

Why are you here then?

YOUSEF

I, uh, I don't know. I - you are my brother, and I don't really know who you are. Don't you think that's strange?

ELI

Well, yes. But I've never known who you are, so I don't really know what to think.

YOUSEF

Baba used to talk about you and Samuel a lot, especially when I was young.

ELI

I don't really want to talk about him. I'm sure you have a nice image of who he is, or was, but I don't. He left our family, and came here and started a new one.

Both are silent for a few moments. Yousef finishes making the tea and sets everything on a tray.

YOUSEF

Uh, the tea is, ready. Should we... go sit down?

ELI

Sure.

Yousef and Eli walk to the living room and sit down.

YOUSEF

Do you take sugar?

ELI

Yes, thanks.

Yousef hands him the tea.

YOUSEF
I understand why you're angry.

ELI
I'm not angry.

YOUSEF
Of course.

There's another moment of silence.

ELI
Listen, I'm not angry. I've come to terms with this a long time ago. I am happy that you had a father who was around...

YOUSEF
(snorts while sipping his tea)
Around?

Eli stares at him, unsure why he reacted that way.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)
He was... Around. And then he wasn't. And he was. And then he wasn't. I don't want you to think I had this wonderful relationship with Baba like you imagine.

ELI
What do you mean?

YOUSEF
I have good memories. And when he wanted to be with us, it was mostly very nice. But he would leave, for weeks at a time, and come back with stories of his travels all over the world, with his friends. This friend in Japan, and this friend in New Zealand. He sometimes brought us along, but mostly he went on his own. He would come home and no sooner would he be planning his next trip. I don't even know what he did for work or how he had money?

ELI

Hah, I always thought the same... he had a good job here, and then just quit one day, and I feel like he never had another job again. When anyone would ask he would give vague answers.

YOUSEF

Yes, well we were never hungry. But also I don't know where our food came from.

ELI

Yeah, I do remember that a little from when I was young. It always seems chaotic.

YOUSEF

Yes, that is a good word to describe him.

They are both quiet for a moment.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

Do you remember when he visited you a few years ago?

ELI

Almost 10 years ago you mean?

YOUSEF

Yes.

ELI

Yeah, I remember it... I mean it was only a day or 2.

YOUSEF

He was gone for almost 4 months that time. I was, we were all very sad and very worried, the whole time. Especially my mother.

ELI

Why?

YOUSEF

We thought...

(takes a sip of tea)

We thought he was leaving us, like he did to you. Going back to the family he left. We always did, really.

(MORE)

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

Every time he left, we just felt that it was the last time we'd see him. But he always came back. When he left for America, though, we all thought it was forever this time. He wasn't coming back - he had gone to be with you.

ELI

Yeah, I think we only saw him for 3 hours while he was there.

YOUSEF

I see. Well, we didn't really know where he was or what he was doing the whole time. He would call, frequently, and always said he was in a new place. My mother, she just thought he was lying to us.

ELI

I, didn't know that. Well of course I didn't, I didn't know about any of this. Did he ever talk about leaving us?

YOUSEF

No, I don't think so. Not really. We would hear things now and then, but it was always made to seem like it was a mutual decision between Baba and your mother.

ELI

(snorts)

Yeah, I'm sure he did make it seem that way. Easy from thousands of miles away to tell whatever story you want.

YOUSEF

Well as we got older, I think we started to think differently. But if I'm being honest, except for that trip and a few mentions here and there, we didn't really talk about it or think about it.

ELI

Not surprising I guess. It was pretty black and white for us - one day he's here and we're fine and then the next day - poof.

YOUSEF

Yes, well I don't know if it makes it easier or harder?

ELI

What's that?

YOUSEF

For you, when he left, he was gone, and I imagine it was hard, but after time, you moved on. For me, for Fatima, he was here our whole lives, but never really was here. So, like a ghost. But one that disrupts, blowing like the wind. Here today and life is one way, then gone for a month or two or more and life is another. I am lucky that I always had a positive outlook, even when I was a baby, my mother said I always looked happy. But Fatima really had a difficult time. She wanted him home when he was gone, and told him to leave when we was home. She never really knew what she wanted. I guess neither of us did.

Yousef and Eli both sip their tea and stare for a moment.

ELI

I imagine that was difficult. I don't know which is worse. I don't know if it even matters, both are terrible.

YOUSEF

Yes, well, he is gone now, for both of us.

Another long pause.

ELI

I'm sorry.

YOUSEF

For what? For who? Don't be sorry for me or Fatima, we are happy, we did not have a bad life. I may be making it seem like it was more than what it was. For us his coming and going was life. We got used to it.

(MORE)

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

As we got older, we barely noticed except at dinner time if his chair was empty or not.

ELI

Yeah, I mean it was very much the same for us. Yaz only ever had the life after him, so she only felt it through us. And Sam is like you, always positive, always making jokes to make people laugh. I get upset when I think about it, but truly after a few years, it became a story - like retelling a movie you haven't seen in a long time. And we just had regular fights - Yaz in the bathroom too long, or Sam finishing all the food.

YOUSEF

Yes, hah, Sam and Yasmine do seem to be happy as well. So no one has to be sorry.

ELI

I guess I am sorry for him then, but... I'm also sorry for how I treated you when we met.

YOUSEF

It is quite okay. You reacted the way your heart felt, and that is okay.

ELI

It's not, but I do appreciate you saying that to me. And also, I feel like I'm the oldest and should be the mature one and you are supposed to be the one who needs to be helped. And here we are, you supporting me and my bad behavior.

YOUSEF

Ah, yes, well you are American, and we all know how poorly you react to things being unfair.

ELI

I think that's supposed to be an insult...

YOUSEF

(grinning)

No, of course not, we all love America.

(sound tough)

We love big trucks, and the wild west, and a large cup of coffee, black.

ELI

(smiling)

Is that what you think America is? And I don't drink my coffee black.

YOUSEF

Uh, well, I've never been, so yes?

ELI shakes his head.

ELI

I guess that needs to change, then.

YOUSEF

Fatima and I would really love to come and meet your family.

ELI

Okay, well, let's see what we can do. And thank you.

YOUSEF

For what?

ELI

For coming over here... but, also for confirming that it wasn't me.

YOUSEF

What wasn't you?

ELI

Why he left.

YOUSEF

Oh dear, no. Definitely not. He left because he didn't want to be anywhere. He was selfish. And he could be great fun when he was around, but... he wasn't. Around.

Yousef looks solemn.

YOUSEF (CONT'D)

Yella, do you want to come with me back to Zaha's - there is plenty of food and tea much better than what I made.

ELI

Uh... I don't know.

YOUSEF

Come, everyone was asking for you.

Eli contemplates what he wants to do. Finally he's resigned to his fate here.

ELI

Sure. Can we make a stop before we go - if it's not too far out of the way?

YOUSEF

Yes, of course, where?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

YOUSEF

It's right there on the end.

Eli gets out of the car and walks to the grave site. It looks recently dug and the headstone is just a wooden plaque, quickly put together. Eli stares back at Yousef who is looking him intently. He looks at the grave again and his face tightens.

ELI

I, uh, finally made it here, to Iraq. No thanks to you I suppose. Actually, I guess it is thanks to you, all you had to do was leave again, this time, you know, forever. I am glad though that you weren't here to be apart of it. It feels better this way. Thanks for telling us about Yousef and Fatima, too. That was a nice surprise after 25 years to find out I had another brother and sister. What is the chance that I'll meet more brothers and sisters some day?

I'm not angry by the way. I used to be, but I'm not.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)

I am happy with my life. I am happy with who I am. I wish... I wish I was sad. I wish I was sad that you're gone. But you've been gone most of my life. So what's there to be sad about?

I really do though, I wish this was a sad moment for me, I wish I could cry and mourn my father's death. But it's not a sad moment for me. I mourned your death when you walked out on us, and then with time, that sadness turned to anger, and then acceptance, and then... nothing.

Actually, that's not true, I am sad. I am sad for you. I'm sad that you never stayed long enough anywhere to enjoy the contentment of being at home, being with family. I'm sad that you were never fulfilled by your family, by either of your families.

I'm sad that you had children who wondered why they weren't good enough for you to stay. I wondered that. I wondered that for 24 years. Actually I wondered that for what, 24 years, 3 months, and, um, 8 days? Today, I stopped wondering.

Yousef told me what you were like for him as a father. When I heard that, it finally came to me. I wondered why I wasn't good enough for you my whole life, and today I found out that no one was - it wasn't me who wasn't good enough, or Sam, or Yaz, or my mom, or Yousef, or Fatima, or their mom. No one has ever been enough for you to stay. Anyway, I just wanted to come here... and say... that I hope you find what you're looking for wherever you are now. Because I have.

And it's not you.

Eli stares for another moment, reaches down and takes a handful of dirt and tosses it on the grave.

FADE OUT.

INT. SALWA'S HOME

Eli and Yousef walk into the living room, everyone makes a cheery noise. Eli walks over to Yasmine.

ELI
Can we talk for a second?

YASMINE
Yeah, I guess.

Eli and Yasmine walk into the hallway.

YASMINE (CONT'D)
What?

ELI
I'm... sorry.

YASMINE
You're what??

ELI
I, was struggling with all of this,
and it came to a head, and I took
it out on you, and so, well I'm
sorry.

YASMINE
I... I...

Yasmine covers her mouth not to expose the slight smirk starting to appear.

ELI
What? Just say it.

YASMINE
I just... didn't think you knew
that those two words could be put
together in the same sentence.
(smirks broadly)
Elias saying he's sorry. Big day
for me. Any chance you could do it
again so I can take a video, Sam
won't believe me.

Eli walks away.

YASMINE (CONT'D)
 (yelling after him)
 Come on Eli! Just real quick. Just
 a picture mouthing the words?!

Eli walks up to Sam.

ELI
 We good?

SAM
 Yeah.

Yasmine walks up behind Eli and hugs him.

YASMINE
 Did he say he was sorry to you
 too??

SAM
 What?? No? He said he... you said
 you were sorry to Yaz?

YASMINE
 He sure did! With a pouty face and
 everything.

SAM
 And I just got a "We good?" What
 the hell?

ELI
 I like her more.

YASMINE
 (squeals)
 He admitted it! Ah haha!

ELI
 I'm gonna get some food now... so
 you two have fun.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAGHDAD AIRPORT

YASMINE
 Thank you so much Uncle Samir.
 Please tell Safaa that her home is
 lovely and she made us feel very
 welcome.

SAMIR

Yes, I will. And we will have you all come again, inshallah.

SAM

Thank you Uncle Samir.

SAMIR

Yes, Samuel, it was so very nice to have you here. And Elias, please continue to send pictures of those beautiful young girls you are raising at home. And please give my best to your wife.

ELI

Thank you Uncle Samir. For everything. This was really good for me, for all of us.

SAMIR

Of course, Elias. Yella, go, before you miss another flight.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - ELI'S HOME

Eli is sitting at the counter beside his daughters, while Hannah prepares dinner.

HANNAH

We're all so happy daddy is back, aren't we girls?

EVE

Yes I am!

ELI

You are? Why is that?

EVE

I'm happy daddy's back because mommy doesn't let us watch as much tv.

ELI

Oh nice. And what about you Elle?

ELLE

I'm happy because now mom will stop making me do all of your chores.

HANNAH

I didn't make you do any extra chores.

ELLE

Oh yeah, who took the trash out the whole week?

HANNAH

Well... that's just not something mothers do, so...

ELI

Trash and TV, that's what I'm good for?

HANNAH

No, honey, of course not! You also charge our electronics, and put our shoes away!

ELI

Well, there may be more of daddy around now!

HANNAH

Oh yeah? Why is that?

ELI

In my deep emotional distress of my dad dying I may have called Zack and Ivan idiots and so they let me go today...

HANNAH

Wait, what, you got fired?

ELI

Technically, I got laid off.

HANNAH

What does that mean?

ELI

It means that Zack would rather pay me to stay home for the next 6 months than pay me to come to work.

HANNAH

Eli! Why did you call him an idiot?

ELI

I don't know if I did. I called someone an idiot.

(MORE)

ELI (CONT'D)
Listen, it was a whole thing, and
they are in fact idiots. So?

HANNAH
Are we gonna be okay?

There's a knock at the door.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Now who's that?

SAM walks in.

SAM
Just an angry mob, politely
knocking on your door.

Hannah rolls her eyes.

EVE
Uncle Sammy!

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END