

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE.

Morning in Umm Al-Quwain, an emirate in the south of the United Arab Emirates. The MATAFOUK CONSTRUCTION trailer lies approximately five miles outside the city. . . smack dab in the middle of the desert. There is a door stage right leading outside and one stage left that leads to an inner office. We can assume there is a bathroom/porta-potty around the back of the trailer.

A picture of the Dubai skyline hangs on the upstage wall. Next to it, a black-and-white photo of Mahmoud Matafouk, a self-important Egyptian man wearing a fez.

Below that is a shelf with combination fax, scanner, copy machine. Next to that is a mini-fridge. There's a coffee pot and a microwave on the book shelf at the other end of the upstage wall. The shelf is empty save for a couple of white binders filled with three-holed papers attached.

Two desks occupy the middle of the room, spaced somewhat asymmetrically from each other. One desk is being used as a drafting table, with writing implements lying on it; the other looks more functional with papers sprawled upon it, post-it notes, coffee mugs, a screwdriver, some empty tape dispensers, a small novelty figurine of a man peeing into a toilet, and a stuffed parakeet on a wooden perch. It's like a kitchen's "junk draw."

TERESA, mid-30s, a pretty, but plain soft-spoken Filipino woman with a Tagalog accent, in functional, not fashionable glasses *ENTERS* from the office wearing a light spring dress, including flip flops and a thin sweater. A beaded necklace hangs down her neckline, an accoutrement of her Catholic religious beliefs. She has one hand on it moving from bead to bead as she repeats a prayer to herself while crossing the room, sheets of paper in her other hand.

She picks up a binder from the shelves and files the papers into it, then gives a valiant effort to organize the desk which includes taking a mug from the desk, pouring pistachios from it into the garbage, then wiping it with a tissue. Upon finishing her silent prayer, she goes to the coffee maker and takes the pot, turning it completely upside down. Nothing comes out. She shrugs and prepares another batch. Then she walks to the fax machine where a sheet of paper hangs tenuously in the tray. She picks it up.

SAMIR, mid-50s, *BURSTS IN* with the air of someone more important than he is. He adheres to an inability to see the reality of a situation, preferring instead to sit in his world of regal illusion. He speaks in a formal manner, without contractions, Middle Eastern-accented.

SAMIR

Such a beautiful day, Teresa!

TERESA

Yes, Mr. Samir.

SAMIR

I see you are walking around better today. Do you still have that thing with your back?

TERESA

No, thanks God.

SAMIR

Excellent.

TERESA

It has been replaced by a stomach pain I cannot describe.

Samir takes a mug from the desk, looks at it, then removes a sort of sticky goop from the lip with his hand, which he wipes into the garbage. He crosses to the coffee maker.

SAMIR

Why do you not see a doctor? I can get you the best in all the Emirates.

TERESA

God is my doctor.

SAMIR

I know you have been working every day, Teresa.

TERESA

I must.

SAMIR

I promise you will soon be rewarded for your efforts.

TERESA

My salary?

SAMIR

Yes. Yes, of course! Weeks. You have been very patient. And it is about to pay off. I have just come from a meeting at the palace and Aymen is getting good news from the ministry as we speak.

He takes the coffee pot to pour a cup before realizing it's still percolating. Coffee hits the hot plate and sizzles. He takes his eye off his cup to see the sizzle and spills some coffee on the floor.

SAMIR

Sorry about that.

TERESA

Let me clean that up.

She takes a roll of paper towels from the shelf and bends down.

SAMIR

No, leave it for now, Teresa. Here. Come look. I want you to see something.

(looks out the blinds of the front door)

Tell me what you see.

TERESA

(joins him, looks on)

I see nothing.

SAMIR

Nothing?

TERESA

Wait.

(she wipes her glasses with her sweater)

Ah, better.

(a beat)

I see nothing.

SAMIR

Exactly. To your eye, it is nothing but desert, but what I see is an adventure, a journey toward a new world, one filled with possibility, respect, and fame. Get a good look now because tomorrow, it will be a city filled with people. And each person brings with them the chance for greatness.

TERESA

(unimpressed, a PAUSE)

I will clean the floor.

(attends to the spill, then crawls along on her knees cleaning a trail of sand)

I have filed the e-mails, corrected the memos you gave me, and obtained pricing information on raw materials from companies as you requested. Also, er, the accounting. I was looking at the banking receipts and you have very little --

SAMIR

(interrupts)

I admire you, Teresa, working so hard. I am lucky to have found you. People in the Middle East are not always to be trusted, but I knew I could trust you when you said you were from Indonesia.

TERESA

I am from the Philippines, Mr. Samir.

SAMIR

Well, you get the idea. You are the glue that keeps this office together. My brothers and I owe you a great debt.

TERESA

It is my job.

SAMIR

Always so modest. That is the Asian culture. . . Once we get started, please let me know how I can take care of you as you take care of us.

TERESA

I only wish for my--?

SAMIR

Do not worry! This week, for sure.

TERESA

Not for me. I only think of my son.

SAMIR

Yes, *that* is most important! Family. It is why I brought my daughter here. She called and said she wanted to see me. It has been over a year. She's been busy with work and marriage. So I immediately sent her a ticket.

TERESA

That is Miss Suzanne?

SAMIR

Exactly. My brother Yasser is picking her up from the airport. He grew up in Mexico while she was raised with us in America so they've never met. I thought this would be a way for them to get to know each other better.

TERESA

Amen.

SAMIR

No, Yasser. Aymen is at the ministry. He'll be here shortly and we'll have some more paperwork for you to file.

TERESA

Yes, sir.

SAMIR

He's picking up my daughter.

TERESA

Amen.

SAMIR

He's at the ministry.

(TERESA looks quizzically at him)

You know, I have been lucky all my life. Everything has happened at the right time.

TERESA

When God sees what you do, he gives you what you need.

SAMIR

Exactly.

TERESA

(suddenly bitter)

...even if the thing HE gives you is a lying husband who leaves you for another woman.

(spits, now calmly)

This fax came through just now.

Teresa hands him the fax.

SAMIR

(reads it)

O-ho! This is great news. Great news! Hospitals, schools, government buildings. . . I told you we are moving forward. Very soon. Very soon indeed. . . Teresa, please make sure the contract numbers with my brothers are correct.

TERESA

Yes, sir.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

SAMIR

(yells after her)

He's picking up my daughter!

He goes to the shelf where he picks up the binder marked "Jobs" in bold, black lettering along the spine, and brings it to the desk where he adds the fax to it.

A huge wind whips up outside.

The door from outside opens. AYMEN, early 50s, ENTERS. His face is covered in his desert scarf. He stands in the doorway a moment, stunned. Then he pulls off his scarf and a pile of sand falls to the floor. Samir looks at him a moment.

SAMIR

Sand storm?

(AYMEN coughs out more sand.)

Must've just started. It was calm like a baby when I arrived.

AYMEN

An island off the coast of Morocco? A village near Champagne in France? A colony on Mars? No. You bring us to a desert in the middle of nowhere. You're the devil.

SAMIR

Tsk, you have become such a Westerner. This was nothing for you growing up. And Umm Al-Quwain is not the middle of nowhere. We are on the *edge* of nowhere, my brother. There's no sense in going where one has already built. We will be the first to build here. And then we will be in the middle of *somewhere*.

AYMEN

Eight billion people on the planet and we're the first to think of this?

SAMIR

Someone had to. We are at a new beginning.

(indicates picture on wall)

Soon, all that is around us will look like Abu Dhabi.

AYMEN

That's Dubai.

SAMIR

What?

AYMEN

The picture on the wall is a picture of Dubai.

SAMIR

It is not.

AYMEN

Dubai has the largest building in the world. It's right there in the middle of the picture.

SAMIR

You are wrong.

AYMEN

Ayayay, I'm with a man who doesn't even know the difference between cities he's trying to copy.

(goes to desk, opens a drawer, pulls out a pill
bottle, and pops a couple back)

So. . . any news from the palace?

SAMIR

All good news!

AYMEN

The prince is going to give us the money?

SAMIR

The prince is on his boat in the Gulf. I have not been able to reach him --

AYMEN

You said the prince was going to help! "He is such a big fan of our father." "He loves our family." "He would not let us down!" Blah blah blah.

SAMIR

But! . . . You must let me finish. . . *But* he has invited me to join him. And there, he will give us the money.

(holds up fax)

Look at this. The jobs list! From your friends at the Ministry. Schools, office buildings, hospitals. We will have our pick! And our choice of category. Category Six: any job up to sixty million dollars. And you get ten percent of my share of the net. *This* week!

AYMEN

You said "two more weeks" four weeks ago!

SAMIR

You do not understand. These things must be handled with delicacy.

AYMEN

Why not? He has all the money. If he was such a great friend and he wants the family to succeed, what is the problem?.

SAMIR

We must first show him we can do this on our own. He is not going to throw money at us.

AYMEN

But we *can't* do this on our own! Not the way you spend money.

SAMIR

(dismisses it with a wave)

I cannot talk to you.

AYMEN

How much money do we have left from the initial investment?

SAMIR

(sighs, yells off)

Teresa! Can you come in here please? And bring the ledger.

(to Aymen)

You will see. It will all work out.

Teresa ENTERS carrying a ledger. She hands it to Samir.

TERESA

Good morning, Mr. Aymen.

AYMEN

(softens)

Good morning, Teresa. It is good to see you this morning.

SAMIR

Is she not a wonderful assistant?

AYMEN

(directed at Teresa)

She's the best thing about this whole company.

TERESA

Thank you, Mr. Aymen.

AYMEN

I only say it because it's true.

Teresa EXITS to the office. Aymen crosses behind Samir and they browse through the book.

AYMEN

Why do we need so many binder clips? You never use them? You throw everything in the binders there. Everywhere is a half empty box of binder clips.

SAMIR

These are necessary for the office.

(reading)

A-ha. Here. Pistachios, sunflower seeds, honey packets. . . *these* are not needed.

AYMEN

They are to keep my blood sugar up.

(continues reading)

But those are all inexpensive. Here is where we are getting killed. Three cars. Why do we need three rental cars? Me, you, and Yasser are all staying at the hotel.

SAMIR

It does not matter. Gas is not very expensive.

AYMEN

But cars are. Tsk, you are just like our father. You two could burn through money like a camel through oats. We are almost to zero!

SAMIR

(looks to the office)

Shhhh!

AYMEN

You think she doesn't know? She does the books!

SAMIR

When we need money, money comes.

AYMEN

It never matters to you when it is someone else's money. You never learn.

SAMIR

It's the cost of business. How else can we pay rent, office supplies, permits, Teresa's salary. . . ?

AYMEN

I can't do this anymore. We won't have the money to operate and the weather is going to be unbearable in a few weeks.

SAMIR

We are moving, we are moving!

AYMEN

(mockingly)

"We are moving, we are moving." We are *not* moving! You say this all the time. Like a broken record.

SAMIR

I know it will happen.

AYMEN

You don't even know the difference between Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

(boldly)

Brother, I'm leaving.

SAMIR

You cannot. I need you. You have the connections with the Ministry of Labor. You have helped cut so much time on the paperwork. Imagine where we would be without you.

AYMEN

Same place. Broke.

SAMIR

We are right there!

AYMEN

We are *not* there.

SAMIR

You cannot leave this.

(points to the portrait)

Think of our father.

AYMEN

Here we go.

Aymen sits at the desk.

SAMIR

His dream was to continue his father's --

AYMEN

--grandfather's--

SAMIR

-our grandfather's --

AYMEN

--great-grandfather's--

SAMIR

--footsteps who built our village in Egypt to the city it is today. Twenty thousand people to two million. That is what we will do here in the Emirates.

AYMEN

They are just stories he would tell us.

SAMIR

We have seen it grow.

AYMEN

The city would have grown without him.

SAMIR

This was the project our father wanted to work on before he died.

(Aymen scoffs)

This is a chance for us to do as he wanted.

AYMEN

Meh. He was always running some game.

SAMIR

The prince loved him. Once he realizes that this dream of ours was our father's dream to follow in his father's --

AYMEN

--*grandfather's*--

SAMIR

-our grandfather's --

AYMEN

--*great-grandfather's*--

SAMIR

-- footsteps, he will gladly give us the money.

AYMEN

Our father was into a lot of things in his life. Many dreams. Not any that were about construction, as far as I can remember. Just like you.

SAMIR

I am into bringing people together. The oil refinery in Arabia needed machinery, I gave introduced them to a supplier. The Korean diplomat wanted to buy some commercial property in California, I passed him along to a realtor. My Canadian friend had a new procedure for back surgery, I got him into the biggest medical conventions. I have made them all a lot of money.

AYMEN

And none for yourself.

SAMIR

Building is in our blood.

AYMEN

With your Matafouk business sense, you may just end up like him. . . There's nothing more I can do for you. I'm heading home.

(*Teresa* ENTERS from office, with a check)

Send me a message by carrier pigeon when you get this city built.

TERESA

Mr. Aymen, here the check is for next installment of payment you asked for. Would you like me to mail it for you?

AYMEN

(stiffens)

Uh, no, I'll mail it myself, Teresa. Uh, thank you.

With a pleasant smile, she hands it to him then EXITS into the office. Aymen puts it in his pocket and begins to fidget with things on the desk. Samir watches him a moment.

SAMIR

Which payment is that? I thought you said we were paid up on everything.

AYMEN

What's that?

SAMIR

The payment. That Teresa just handed you.

AYMEN

Oh, that! It's just a recurring payment.

SAMIR

For what?

AYMEN

I told you.

SAMIR

When?

AYMEN

You remember.

SAMIR

If I remembered, I would remember, but I do not remember.

AYMEN

Oh.

(off Samir's look)

You are getting older, my brother. . . It's for membership.

SAMIR

Membership? I don't --

AYMEN

The Al-Halawi Commerce Group. They're like the Chamber of Commerce back in the U.S. If we're not in it, we would get run over by competitors. Access to jobs, benefits, fewer costs along the way. Well worth it. I'm surprised the prince doesn't tell you this.

SAMIR

Oh... of course, yes, the Commerce Group. I remember. You told me and one of the contractors I spoke with told me. He called it something else. You are right. We do need it.

AYMEN

Right. Don't worry. Would I approve of something we don't need?

(before Samir can answer)

Okay, fine. You talked me into it. I'll stay. I realize I need to make sure all payments are made. Very important. . . Besides, what kind of brother would I be to leave you?

SAMIR

Exactly. I am glad.

AYMEN

But I want twenty percent of your cut.

SAMIR

Twenty percent? We had agreed on ten percent.

AYMEN

Why not?

SAMIR

That money comes from my end. And I only get ten percent of the net.

AYMEN

Consider it payment due, for all those times --

SAMIR

Okay, okay. I will see if we can take it from Yasser's end. You will stay?

AYMEN

I will give it one more week. We're lucky my friend at the ministry sent us the list first. Do you know how many more companies we'll have to compete with once it's made public? We've got to jump on it *yesterday!* If not from the prince, get the money from one of your other connections. Your Saudi friends?

SAMIR

The Saudis are junky. Like everyone else in the Middle East, you cannot trust them.

AYMEN

You're from the Middle East.

SAMIR

Tsk. But I am your brother.

AYMEN

Big deal. . . What about your Korean business partner?

SAMIR

Mr. Daewoo is garbage.

AYMEN

Do you have anyone else who hasn't screwed you over? That guy, Thompson something, who you worked with in Canada?

SAMIR

A crook.

AYMEN

Who has a problem with Canadians??

SAMIR

(lowers his voice)

Do you have any money to put in the account?

AYMEN

Are you kidding? I still need to make up for all the money you've taken from me.

SAMIR

You know how it works here. We show the government that we have money in the bank and then once they see it, we can take it right out.

AYMEN

The plane ticket for your daughter was it.

SAMIR

Can't you tell your friends at the ministry they can trust us?

AYMEN

You'd better get to the prince.

SAMIR

Yes, yes. Where are we on your end?

AYMEN

All the filings have been expedited. We're waiting on certificates but I'll have those this week. We're just waiting on final approval.

(pointedly)

Like when they see that we are *well-funded*.

(SAMIR waves this off)

There is one problem though, as I mentioned.

SAMIR

Yasser?

AYMEN

Yes. They will not change their policy. They will not allow a Westerner to be lead engineer. *Assistant*, yes. Lead, no.

SAMIR

I was afraid of that. I spoke with Mr. Lubuan who said he could help.

AYMEN

The Yemeni?

SAMIR

Never! He is Algerian.

AYMEN

(patronizing)

Oooo, Algerian. You and your national prejudices.

SAMIR

He will be our engineer.

AYMEN

Yasser won't be happy.

SAMIR

He will be fine.

SAMIR

The prince will come through. And Mr. Labuan will be our lead engineer.

AYMEN

So go.

SAMIR

I'm going.

Samir EXITS into the office.

AYMEN

Oh, God, I don't ask for much. Let him go before me.

SUZY, mid 20s, white with olive features, ENTERS from outside. She carries her purse and a tote bag. A baby bump shows underneath her blouse. She is devoid of sand.

AYMEN

There is our little Suzy-moozy!

SUZY

(hugs him)

Uncle Aymen!

AYMEN

Let me look at you!

(studies her)

No sandstorm?

SUZY

No. It's beautiful out there.

AYMEN

No matter. My God! You're getting so big.

SUZY

(pats her stomach)

Well, it's kind of hard to avoid. . . But if it takes a trip around the globe to see you, that's fine with me.

YASSER, early 40s, ENTERS, a smile on his face as usual, carrying Suzy's suitcase. He leaves it by the door.

YASSER

Sorry again, Suzy.

SUZY

It's all right, I was buckled in.

YASSER

You'd think I would be better at it. Driving on the sand must not be in my genes. I rode a camel once, when my dad brought me here.

AYMEN

What happened?

SUZY

We spun out a little.

YASSER

It's certainly not like the roads back home in Mexico. I guess I let the wheel get away from me.

SUZY

I haven't done donuts in a car since high school.

YASSER

I feel awful. I just met you.

SUZY

Forget it, Uncle Yasser. It was fun.

YASSER

Hear that? "*Uncle*" Yasser. I'm officially an uncle.

AYMEN

You've been one about twenty five years now.

YASSER

I only saw pictures. It's not the same. Pictures don't talk.

SUZY

At least you *saw* pictures. Dad never told us he had another brother in North America. Heck, even Grandma would only talk to us on the phone once a year. Each time, it was the same five phrases.

(affects a Middle Eastern accent)

"Hello, Suzy" "I miss you." "When you come visit?" "I love you." "God bless you."

YASSER

That was their mother. Mine would have spoken to you in Spanish.

SUZY

That's right. Same father, different mother.

(holds up tote bag)

Can I put this down?

She pulls out a VASE, ornately designed of parchment-colored enamel dotted with stones of emerald and rubies along the sides throughout, and a copper wreath around the neck and the rim of the lid. It sits on a hand-carved wooden base.

YASSER

What is that?

SUZY

My dad sent it. It's a really pretty vase, but my mom didn't want it in the house. She's basically "un-Samired" the house, as she says.

(places it on the shelf under the portrait)

I'll just leave it here.

AYMEN

It's for the best. She is a good woman. I told him not to mess it up.

SUZY

It's fine. Everyone's fine. Anyway, instead of giving it to Goodwill, I thought I'd return it.

(plops down into a chair)

Oooof, I don't even know what time it is for me. It feels like I'm a week ahead.

AYMEN

Yasser, you should have seen her when she was little, running around screaming, "Princess Suz-ie wants her hors-ie! Bring me my hors-ie!" And I would get down on the ground and put her on my back and crawl around on the floor while she kicked me, yelling, "Faster! Go faster, horsie!"

SUZY

I'm sorry I kicked you.

AYMEN

Nah! It was fine. Here. . .

(gingerly gets down on all fours)

Let's go for a ride.

SUZY

Ha! No, Uncle Aymen. I'm too big now.

AYMEN

You sure?

SUZY

I'll hurt you.

AYMEN

Okay. Probably best because. . .

(leans against desk)

I don't think I can get up.

YASSER

You were so lucky.

AYMEN

She was always the fun one. Always bringing me lemonade. Alexis was much more serious. With her it was prunes to help my colon. She was really mature for six years old.

SUZY

When we were younger, and Dad was around, we'd all go to the park together. Uncle Aymen would fly in and join us, it seemed like all the time.

YASSER

So you got to visit them often?

AYMEN

Not often enough. There was a woman that I used to know who lived there.

YASSER

Nothing came of that.

Aymen shrugs, looks away.

SUZY

That's too bad, Uncle Aymen. I always thought you'd make a great dad. Did you ever want kids of your own?

AYMEN

Oh, sure.

SUZY

It's never too late to find someone, you know.

AYMEN

Perhaps. She must like me too.

SUZY

Ooooo, do you have your eye on someone?

AYMEN

No, no. I mean, any woman.

Suzy is about to reply, then reconsiders.

YASSER

(to Suzy)

I wish I had the chance to know your family sooner. The Cabron-Matafouk part of the family was all alone in Mexico. Not many Mexi-gyptians down there. Samir never invited me.

SUZY

Dad wasn't around enough... Actually, he was at first. He took some business trips. And he returned with gifts like towels from the Casablanca Hilton or the finest toiletries from Virgin Air. Then, he traveled for longer stretches. We never knew where he was and when he was coming back. Eventually he came out here and never returned. He missed Alex's college graduation.

AYMEN

That's just like our dad. He did not want to speak about his affairs.

YASSER

People would ask me what he did. I said international business, but could never elaborate.

AYMEN

Always traveling. Always having something going. I wanted to do the opposite. I wanted a regular paycheck, a good job. That's how I ended up at the Ministry. And now I'm stuck with your father.

SUZY

Speaking of which, where is my...

(a hint of contempt)
... “darling” father?

AYMEN
The office.

SUZY
(not surprised)
Still working? He promised me when I arrived he’d be done with work and we could have all our time together.

AYMEN
Ah, his Matafouk promise. He will be out soon. You can go to Ding Dung Doong in the city.

YASSER
Ooooo, sounds nice. . . What is that?

AYMEN
That’s how Suzy used to call McDoland.

SUZY
Between your accent and my father’s, it’s amazing I ever learned to say *McDonald’s* correctly. I’m not feeling too energized now anyway. I don’t even need much time with my father. To be honest, this was David’s idea.

AYMEN
Your husband.

SUZY
Don’t remind me. For the record, I’m here on protest. I’m still shocked Dad splurged for the ticket to Abu Dhabi.

(AYMEN clears his throat)
What’s that?

AYMEN
Nothing. Just a pistachio in my throat.

Suzy pauses to consider this a moment.

YASSER
Suzy, would you like to see my blueprints?

SUZY

(pushes herself up)

Sure, Uncle Yasser.

YASSER

Uncle Yasser! I love how that sounds.

(Grabs a tube that is leaning against the shelves and pulls blueprints from it; he unrolls it onto the drafting table)

I feel that I'm finally ready to oversee my own project after five years of my apprenticeship.

SUZY

(crosses next to him)

I think it's great you're following your passion.

YASSER

It took me a while to realize what I wanted to do. I used to think I was going to take over Dad's business, but the more I asked, the more secretive he was about it. It got to be like he was hiding information, always sounding so mysterious.

SUZY

I never really knew him. There's a picture of him holding me as a baby. Dad said he was in "farm receptacles??"

YASSER

Farm receptacles? Did he mean pharmaceuticals?

SUZY

That sounds like Dad. So close and yet. . .

AYMEN

He was importing and exporting raw materials as far as I know.

YASSER

I would always hear him on the phone speaking about quantities and materials or something like that. It just didn't appeal to me the more I thought about it. So I decided to get a degree in architecture up in the U.S.

SUZY

What happened to Grandpa Mamoud? Dad would never say.

YASSER

He died suddenly on one of his trips about one year ago.

SUZY

That's sad. Do you know how?

AYMEN

He's not dead. He just got tired of family life and disappeared.

YASSER

That's ridiculous.

AYMEN

Do you know for sure he's dead?

YASSER

Well, no... but my mother received some weird letter without a return address around the time he died.

SUZY

What did it say?

YASSER

"If you do not contact us, we will bury Mahmoud at sea."

AYMEN

You see?

SUZY

Did you contact the authorities?

YASSER

It had a Middle Eastern postmark. We thought it was a prank.

AYMEN

Uh huh. I bet he wrote that letter himself.

This hangs over the room for a moment.

SUZY

(sits)

Strange. That's some Matafouk conspiracy theory.

YASSER

(turns attention to blueprints)

This is a school design I'm really proud of. It got named a finalist for the Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship. I lost out to a museum, which in my opinion, was pretty unspectacular. . .

Aymen circles them slowly, studying his brother.

SUZY

But still, you got to the final round. That's incredible.

YASSER

Thank you.

AYMEN

I see it now.

YASSER

See what?

AYMEN

The resemblance. You have the Matafouk forehead.

YASSER

You mean hairline?

AYMEN

No. The *forehead*. It does this thing where it folds in on itself like a wave crashing onto the shore whenever you focus.

YASSER

Huh. I've never heard that before. I'll have to take a closer look. People always said I had "Mahmoud's chin" and everything else I owe to my mother.

AYMEN

Be thankful.

YASSER

I don't know. I always thought dad was pretty handsome.

AYMEN

"Pretty handsome." Pretty. Handsome. That is an American phrase. It's *pretty* rainy. That's *pretty* depressing. The dog is *pretty* ugly. Which is it?

YASSER

I never thought of it. I must have picked it up at school.

AYMEN

(re: blueprints)

You really like this, huh?

YASSER

Like it? I love it! It's exhausting, but fun for me, believe it or not.

AYMEN

I mean here.

YASSER

Are you kidding? I am finally ready to be *lead* engineer. There's nothing more left to learn. This is something I've dreamed of. And to do it with my brothers is incredible. I'll make you proud.

AYMEN

Of course, you will! You're a Matafouk.

(under his breath)

For better or worse.

Yasser looks at him, curiously.

Samir ENTERS from the office.

SAMIR

He is in!

YASSER

Who's in?

Samir sees Yasser, stops short.

SAMIR

Yasser!

YASSER

You said someone is in?

SAMIR

Did I?

AYMEN

You did.

SAMIR

Ah, yes, I did.

YASSER

Is someone in?

SAMIR

You did not let me finish. I was saying, "He's in. . . trouble if he doesn't give his big brother a hug when he enters the office.

YASSER

I was out here getting to know my niece.

(stands, gives Samir a hug)

Good morning, Samir!

SAMIR

Half brother does not mean half greeting.

(sees Suzy standing there)

And there is my first-born daughter.

SUZY

(stands, crosses to Samir)

Hi, Dad.

SAMIR

Hi, honey. I see that Yasser got you here safely.

Suzy and Samir share a hug that is polite, but unaffectionate. Suzy stands upright as Samir goes for a kiss on the cheek, coming about two inches short.

YASSER

Outside of that little scare in the jeep. We did a few donuts.

SAMIR

(crosses to the window)

Have your fun in the sand now, my brother. Pretty soon, there will be no more desert to do donuts in. Our grandfather --

AYMEN

-- *Great-grandfather* --

SAMIR

-- saw our village in Egypt of no more than twenty thousand as an opportunity. Today, it has grown to millions.

(to Suzy)

And your grandfather had plans to do the same here before he passed away.

SUZY

(nods to Aymen)

Or didn't.

TERESA

(gestures toward the vase)

Mr. Mahmoud is here.

SAMIR

Yes. His spirit is watching over us.

(aside to others)

She's very religious.

(then)

Oh! Suzy, this is Teresa. My father spoke very highly of her from the work she did with the prince. When I began this venture last year, I was lucky she was available and willing to help us.

SUZY

Hi, Teresa.

TERESA

Mr. Mahmoud comes to the boat many times. He was a funny man. Always with a joke and interesting stories.

The brothers nod in agreement.

YASSER

Yes, he had his stories.

AYMEN

He certainly did.

YASSER

Did he always do that thing where he would go up to the host at a restaurant and find out where they were from and talk about the time he visited some random spot in their city?

SAMIR

“You are from Dusseldorf? Do they still have that jazz club that burned down but was rebuilt using timber from the oak trees just outside the castle?”

They laugh together.

AYMEN

And the host would move us to the head of the list.

SAMIR

Any restaurant.

AYMEN

Not seafood.

YASSER

That’s true. He would not eat shellfish.

SAMIR

He was religious.

AYMEN

He ate pork though.

YASSER

I never knew him to celebrate any holidays or do any praying.

SAMIR

He prayed secretly. Always asking which way was East, wherever he was.

YASSER

Yeah. He had his own rules of religion, I guess.

SAMIR

Yes.

(then)

Well, here we are, his three Matafouk sons to carry on for him.

SUZY

(crosses back to the chair)

I was hoping to have some time alone with you, dad, but if we're gonna hang out here on Memory Lane, I'm gonna take the load off my swollen feet.

SAMIR

We can go right now.

Suzy remains standing.

YASSER

Oh, Samir! Before I forget. . . I got it!

(takes a letter from his back pocket)

The clerk was sweet. A little bit of a language barrier -- I think she offered herself to me as a concubine of some kind -- but I got it.

SAMIR

(taking it from him)

What is this?

YASSER

My paperwork from the US Secretary of State. Aymen said this was the last document he needed to allow me to work. Took a while. They faxed it to the wrong number. I don't know how anyone dials into other countries. Somewhere in the world, there's a pile of faxes that went to wrong countries. And why they couldn't just email it. Did they confuse the Middle East for the Middle Ages? Well, anyway, I got it.

SAMIR

That's excellent! Aymen will file it for you.

Samir hands it to Aymen, who doesn't look too thrilled to have it. He hands it to Teresa.

AYMEN

Teresa, would it be too much trouble for you to file this for me?

TERESA

Yes, Mr. Aymen.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

AYMEN

Such a nice woman.

SUZY

(sits)

And we're not moving.

SAMIR

We are, we are.

Yasser pulls a business card out from his pocket.

YASSER

I also ran into a guy at the fax office, Aymen, and we started talking. He owns a company that handles raw materials: Zadji Brothers Construction Supplies. I checked them out and they seem reputable. It's a small operation, but I figured so are we. He said if we have multiple jobs and decide to use them, he would give us a deal.

(hands card to Aymen)

Did you want to set up a time when you can talk to him, make sure he's got what we need?

AYMEN

(takes card)

Sure, why not?

Yasser returns to his drafting table. As he does, Aymen and Samir cross upstage and argue silently, making broad, angry gestures in disagreement unseen by Yasser. Suzy looks on curiously.

YASSER

(returns to his blueprint)

Great! Great. Well, I'm ready to go! I was just showing Suzy the school I designed. I think a school might be the best project to start with.

On the other hand, rental office spaces are becoming big for those who don't want a long-term lease when they only need a home base for the occasional conference or meeting, to make it feel like they're a big company. There's usually food and drink shops on-site. We could even move our office there. Or, oooo. . .

(picks up another tube, pulls out blueprint)
live/work lofts are popular too. Even away from the sea, there would be a pool, community area, and so on. Samir, . . .

(turns to Aymen and Samir who stop arguing
long enough to smile innocently)
I can't thank you enough for thinking of me. I was beginning to worry I would never get my own project. But don't worry. You won't be sorry.

SUZY

(to Samir and Aymen)
Are you two all right?

Fine.
SAMIR/AYMEN

Teresa ENTERS, holding a collection of receipts. She starts filing them into an accordion folder and jots notes into the ledger.

SAMIR
Why should I be? Such talent. And you're a Matafouk, even if it's only half of one. The half that matters. Aymen will submit the documents right away and we are ready to go.

SUZY
Okay, so now that that's settled, Dad, can we go to lunch -- or whatever meal it is for me? I've got something to discuss with you.

SAMIR
Absolutely! But honey, I need to do one errand first.

SUZY
Can't it wait? I'm really tired and craving something a lemon custard and smoked sausage if there's anywhere to get some around here.

SAMIR
I wish it could. . . Teresa, please get me some money from petty cash.

TERESA

Ah, but Mr. Samir, we are running low --

SAMIR

I will take what we have.

AYMEN

You can't keep taking money from the business.

SAMIR

I have to shop for the prince.

SUZY

We'll get something on the way to lunch.

AYMEN

Why do you need to buy him anything? He has all the money in the world which is why you're asking him to invest and not the other way around.

SAMIR

I cannot walk onto his boat without something for him. He will see it as a slap in the face. Teresa, the cash, please.

TERESA

Yes, Mr. Samir.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

AYMEN

I never understood this.

SUZY

I have to say, I'm with Uncle Aymen. If you're *looking* for money, then why spend money to bring him something?

Samir looks to Aymen for help.

AYMEN

Go ahead. Explain it to her.

Teresa ENTERS with an envelope which she hands to Samir. She continues with her filing.

SAMIR

Thank you, Teresa.

AYMEN

(crosses to Teresa)

Let me help you.

He takes the receipts from her. Teresa takes them back. He pulls them back. They fall. She bends down to pick them up. He backs away, fidgets with stuff on the desk. Suzy notices this, but keeps her focus on Samir.

SAMIR

See, the prince must see we are successful before he invests in us. And we must show how grateful we are that he is taking the time to meet with us.

SUZY

But won't he want to see that you have experience and a good business plan before throwing his money at you?

SAMIR

Of course.

SUZY

And you have zero experience in construction.

SAMIR

It is in my blood. He was a great friend of our father.

SUZY

So why won't he just give you the money?

SAMIR

He needs to see we have money already.

SUZY

But you don't have the money.

SAMIR

We have the money.

SUZY

You don't need the money?

SAMIR

We don't need the money.

SUZY

So why are you going to the prince for money?

SAMIR

Er, it's all a game. We take his money and deposit it into our account for one day so the government sees we have a lot *more* money. And then they permit us to do the jobs.

Aymen watches them banter, amused.

SUZY

But you don't have the money.

SAMIR

We *will* have the money.

SUZY

But you don't now.

SAMIR

Not yet.

SUZY

So you *need* the money.

SAMIR

We will get it.

SUZY

But only for a moment, until they see you have it.

SAMIR

Then we take it out.

SUZY

And then when it's out, how do you pay for anything?

AYMEN

That's my question.

SAMIR

Honey, you do not understand how this works. It is a different country.

SUZY

I understand how *buying* works.

SAMIR

Once they know we *have* the money --

SUZY

-- which you'll give back --

SAMIR

-- we can get the jobs and when they see we have the jobs, we will get the money. The government pays us to do the work.

Suzy looks to Aymen for help. He holds out his bottle of pills. She shakes them off.

SUZY

Go. We'll talk later.

SAMIR

We won't take long. One hour. Yasser, come.

(Yasser springs to his side, to Suzy)

Remember how I used to teach you Arabic before you went to bed.

SUZY

I never really picked any of it up.

SAMIR

Ah-CHE-bik.

SUZY

Do I have to?

SAMIR

(with an extra phlghmy "ch")

Yes, how do you expect to learn Arabic? *Ah-CHE-bik.*

SUZY

(repeats it reluctantly, poorly)

Abak.

SAMIR

No. *Ah--CHE-bik.*

SUZY

Ach-back.

SAMIR

(really hocking something up now)

From the back of the throat. *Ah-CHE. . . CHE.. . CHE.*

SUZY

Ahhhhhhh bak.

SAMIR

Look at me. *Ah-CHE-bik.*

SUZY

I can't get the phlegm thing.

Samir starts warbling from the back of the throat, she tries to copy. It sounds like a couple of sick geese trying to clear food from their windpipes.

AYMEN

(to Yasser)

Why pay hundreds of dollars for a concert when you can get this for free?

SUZY

(says it the same way)

Ahhhhhhhhh bak.

SAMIR

That's it!

SUZY

I feel like I was saying that the whole time.

SAMIR

Great! Keep working on that.

He opens the door to exit.

SUZY

Wait, what does it mean?

SAMIR

Your uncle can tell you. We will be back soon, I promise.

YASSER

How cool is this? I have a niece.

SAMIR

Two nieces.

Samir and Yasser EXIT out the front door. Suzy is deflated. Yasser RE-ENTERS.

YASSER

Forgot the key.

SUZY

He always does that, tells me a phrase, then just leaves. What does whatever he said even mean?

Yasser grabs the key off the desk, crosses past Aymen toward the door.

AYMEN

“I love you.”

YASSER

Aw, I love you too, big brother.

Yasser hugs a nonplussed Aymen, then EXITS.

SUZY

I love you, huh? Ironic. He leaves his family to run some kind of scam with the Emirati government, not to mention the crap he’s pulled on me before and to him, that’s love. I think it’s a mistake. He’s never going to agree to my proposal.

AYMEN

Growing up in Egypt, there was a saying, “A camel with a flat hump is one who will no longer go where you want.”

SUZY

(not understanding)

Uh huh.

AYMEN

It is because the camel has been ridden so many times that he does not want to be told where to go anymore.

SUZY

Oh! Like you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

AYMEN

You really can't teach camels tricks. They will spit at you.

SUZY

I mean, about dad. He's the flat-humped camel.

AYMEN

He is and always has been stubborn, like our father.

Aymen indicates the pic on the wall, then sits and pulls a bag of pistachios from the bottom desk drawer, puts it on the desk and starts eating them, dropping shells into a mug on the table.

SUZY

Uncle Aymen, why do you continue to stay with him.

AYMEN

I have unfinished business.

SUZY

Unfinished business?

AYMEN

With this business.

SUZY

What business is that?

AYMEN

(with a smile)

That's none of your business, little Suzy.

SUZY

So have you met the prince? Dad said he was a friend of Grandpa Mahmoud's.

AYMEN

My father took me to visit the palace when I was out of school. I stayed in the car.

SUZY

You didn't want to meet him?

AYMEN

Don't be fooled. Princes are not like you see them in the fairy tales. There are princes who will kill you for not bowing to them correctly or deep enough. They all have money, a harem of women, but that's not enough. They get bored. My father made the prince laugh, I guess. So he kept him around.

SUZY

You think the prince might have something to do with Grandpa's disappearance or death, whatever?

AYMEN

(shrugs)

Who knows?

(then)

He's must shorter than you think.

SUZY

Grandpa?

AYMEN

The Prince.

Teresa, who has been filing behind Aymen, picks up Aymen's mug and dumps the contents into the waste basket. As she does, Aymen empties a handful of shells into where the mug was spilling pistachios onto the table and floor.

TERESA

I am sorry, Mr. Aymen. Let me clean those up.

She begins collecting the shells by hand.

AYMEN

Teresa, what are you doing for lunch?

TERESA

I have crackers, Mr. Aymen.

AYMEN

Tsk. That is not a lunch.

TERESA

It is all I need.

AYMEN

C'mon, I'll take you to lunch. I am craving McDoland. But we can go to a restaurant of your choice.

TERESA

Oh, thank you, Mr. Aymen, but I have work to do.

AYMEN

Like what?

TERESA

I have to clean up these pistachio shells.

AYMEN

Leave them.

(Teresa pauses, unsure)

Please, you work so hard. I am grateful that you keep up with that payment for me and for. . . not mentioning it to Samir. Uh, because he has so much to worry about already, I mean. . . I insist.

TERESA

It is my pleasure. I like the chance to work for you.

AYMEN

Why don't you have more of a lunch?

TERESA

I do not want to waste money on food. Until Mr. Samir can pay me, I have to buy food for my son. It is more important.

AYMEN

Yes, I know he's a little delayed until he can get the money. It's a shame you do not have a husband to support you.

TERESA

He left.

She spits on the floor in front of her.

AYMEN

(looks at the floor, a beat)

That's terrible.

TERESA

But it is God's will.

AYMEN

No, you can't leave it to God.

TERESA

God will take care of me.

AYMEN

Was it God who put you in this position?

TERESA

(a beat, thinks)

No, that was my husband.

She spits again.

AYMEN

God would want you to eat more, for you and your son to eat abundantly, for your husband to be punished for his crimes.

Teresa spits again.

AYMEN

(takes her by the arm, moves her several
steps away)

Come, let's move over. Any more water here and ships are going to think it's a port.

TERESA

But God decides.

AYMEN

God does not always want to help.

TERESA

He does. . . When I was very young, we have a housekeeper and one night, she took me out of our house. She believed that if I was put in danger and survived that I would be protected all my life.

AYMEN

She kidnapped you?

TERESA

My family look everywhere and they find me with our housekeeper down by the river, safe. My parents are so happy.

AYMEN

Well, that's good.

(thinks, a beat)

And they weren't angry with your housekeeper?

TERESA

She was hanged the next week. But she was right. God has been with me ever since.

AYMEN

What I mean is, sometimes God does not help because he wants you to help yourself.

TERESA

That is why I left the Prince, so I could be near my son and not at sea many nights.

SUZY

Teresa, you worked for the Prince. Do you think he did something to Mahmoud?

TERESA

(points toward vase)

Oh, yes.

SUZY

Really? Uncle Aymen, did you hear that? Maybe dad shouldn't be in business with him.

TERESA

That is not for me to say. After I leave the prince, Mr. Samir called me and offered me a job here. I take it because Mr. Mahmoud always says he loves his sons. And I have no other options at the time.

AYMEN

I'm glad you did. But still, one thing you can do is to protect yourself. Make it so no one can do anything to you because you've stopped them before they've tried.

TERESA

Protect myself.

AYMEN

Sure. I've spent too much time trusting. I find myself in the desert choking on sand, but no more. I am putting myself ahead. I worry about Number One only.

TERESA

Number one?

AYMEN

Yes.

(Teresa shows no signs of recognition)

Myself.

TERESA

(confused)

Ah.

AYMEN

And you. You should look out for number one.

TERESA

Look out for you?

AYMEN

No, yourself. I am *my* number one. You are your *own* number one.

TERESA

(happier)

Ah!

AYMEN

So if someone puts you in a position they can take advantage of your kindness, you will show them that you are a step ahead. You can do to them first what they were going to do to you.

TERESA

That is protecting myself.

AYMEN

And your son. The most important. The *biggest* number one!

(holds up one finger)

Number one!

TERESA

Number one. But how do I protect myself?

AYMEN

Just be on the alert. Stay away from anyone who can disappoint you. Maybe find someone who can help you protect number one... like another husband.

Teresa spits.

TERESA

Sorry.

AYMEN

No, no, it's okay.

TERESA

God bless you, Mr. Aymen. I will.

AYMEN

God bless *you*, Teresa. Now please join me for lunch.

TERESA

I will go with you. I get my sweater.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

AYMEN

Suzy? Want to come? I'm buying!

SUZY

Why not? Waiting for my father to make time is like waiting for rain in the desert.

(crosses to Aymen)

Hey, so what do you think about Teresa?

AYMEN

She is very nice.

SUZY

I mean, about you and her, maybe...

AYMEN

Oh, no, no. She is our assistant. Working hard here. I appreciate that.

SUZY

(not buying it)

Okay.

Teresa ENTERS from office in her sweater.

TERESA

I am ready.

AYMEN

Great! Let's go get some lunch!

Aymen opens the front door and is immediately hit with a gust of sand.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO.

Yasser and Samir ENTER. Yasser carries shopping bags.

YASSER

Those dunes are really tough to manage. I'll get better at it.

SAMIR

It will come to you.

(re: bags)

You can put those in the corner by Suzy's suitcase.

(yells off)

Suzy?

YASSER

(puts bags down; looks outside)

They must have gone out. Aymen's car is gone.

Yasser spends an extra moment looking outside.

YASSER

Looking outside, I'm thinking it may add something to my school design to add a few turrets, to keep the charm of the Middle East along with a Western practicality.

SAMIR

Very good. I like it. That will be our first project!

YASSER

(returns to drafting table)

I'm glad you said that. I'm really proud of this one.

SAMIR

I admire your drive and your good attitude. That is why I brought you in, because you have vision and work to see it through.

YASSER

Thank you.

SAMIR

Our father once told me the same thing. He said, "Yasser, he will be someone the world remembers, through his buildings."

YASSER

Yeah? That's nice. But I never really showed him my designs. I know he saw me as the last in line to continue his work, but when I thought when I decided to study architecture, that he lost interest.

SAMIR

He always said nice things.

YASSER

You talked to him a lot?

SAMIR

Yes, yes. He would call for my advice, ideas. I received a package from him shortly before he died with some money.

(delicately)

Did he . . . send you anything?

YASSER

No. Nothing. Definitely not money.

SAMIR

No matter. We are still right on track. . . Ah, but these regulations. The people in the Middle East, Yasser, you don't understand. Everything is different. The government needs to see we have the money in the account first to accept our bid. Then the money -- whoosh! -- can go right back to the investor. That's why I thought if our father had left you--

YASSER

Sorry.

SAMIR

No, no. We will have the prince's money soon. I was just curious. These rules are so random. With money, and permits -- this person can work for you, this person can't.

YASSER

I'm thankful that I got all my documents in then. No more worries about that.

SAMIR

They change these rules, it seems daily, so yes, I am thankful too. . .

(cautiously)

Which reminds me. . .

Teresa ENTERS from outside carrying a McDonald's bag.

TERESA

The Value Meal. I choose the McFishy sandwich. So much food.

SAMIR

Teresa! I am glad you are back.

TERESA

(puts bag in fridge)

Oh, Mr. Samir. I am sorry. Mr. Aymen took me to lunch.

SAMIR

We have a lot of work to do.

TERESA

I will get right to it.

(pause)

Like what?

SAMIR

Uh, well, can you bring me Yasser's contract details? Maybe we can give him a little more as reward for the work he is doing.

TERESA

Very good.

Teresa EXITS into the office. Yasser attends to his blueprints.

YASSER

Thank you, Samir. That's very generous of you.

SAMIR

We are lucky to have you. . . in any capacity.

Before Yasser can reply, Aymen and Suzy ENTER.

SUZY

I must have been craving McDonald's. It was really good.

AYMEN

I have never seen anyone eat so many french fries.

Suzy smiles proudly, then stops short.

SUZY

Dad. You're back. Hi, Uncle Yasser.

Yasser waves.

SAMIR

Yes, honey. We are done with what we needed to do and now I have time for you.

SUZY

(plops down into chair)

Give me a moment. I'm just gonna shut my eyes for a minute.

She puts her head back and shuts her eyes.

AYMEN

What were you two Matafouks talking about? Anything interesting?

SAMIR

No, no. Just brotherly talk.

Teresa ENTERS, holding manila folder out to Samir.

Here is the folder for--
TERESA

Thank you, Teresa!
SAMIR

Samir grabs the folder forcibly causing Teresa to spin back towards the office, like a do-si-do.

We were just discussing what our first project would be. Samir liked this one for a multipurpose facility.
YASSER

He did. That's good.
AYMEN

Teresa pauses at the office doorway, then crosses to the fridge to restock the bottles of water. Aymen crosses upstage, behind Yasser and meets Samir behind their brother. Aymen and Samir have another silent argument with broad and angry gestures. Suzy opens her eyes to see this.

Again with the pantomime?
SUZY

Everyone stops and looks at Aymen and Samir who smile.

Just having a business discussion.
SAMIR

Yes. All business.
AYMEN

Come, Aymen, let us not disturb Yasser.
SAMIR

Samir leads Aymen who reluctantly follows toward the office. They EXIT.

Yasser takes his focus off the blueprint. He walks over to the window and gazes outside.

SUZY

What are you doing, Uncle Yasser?

YASSER

I like to visualize an area and how my designs will affect it, what it will look like after it's completed and how people will interact with it.

SUZY

That's a good idea.

YASSER

Teresa, do you ever just look out at the desert?

TERESA

No, Mr. Yasser.

YASSER

It's like I can see the whole world.

TERESA

You have good eyesight.

SUZY

(standing wearily)

Maybe I should have some coffee.

Teresa closes the fridge and crosses to join Yasser at the window.

YASSER

You must have traveled all over the world, Teresa.

TERESA

(laughs)

Me?

YASSER

You haven't?

As they talk, Suzy uses the coffee maker. She presses "start," then pulls out the filter. It's empty. She looks around for a bag of grounds, and struggles to open them.

She pulls and pulls and pulls. Meanwhile hot water is spilling on the hot plate.

TERESA

I have been many countries when I work for the Prince, but I always stay on the boat. I never see them.

YASSER

That's terrible. I have not traveled much either. My father took me on a couple of trips back when he was grooming me to take over.

TERESA

(points toward vase)

Mr. Mahmoud.

YASSER

Yes. Mr. Mahmoud. . . Oh, hey! Let me show you this.

(retrieves atlas from shelf, sets it on desk;

Teresa joins him)

This was my father's atlas. He gave it to me and told me to travel the world. Once we are successful here, I will go to all these places I've picked out.

(flips pages, reads)

Iceland. The Nordic island country is volcanically and geographically active. Its interior consists of fields of lava and sand, mountains and glacier rivers that flow to the sea... You pick a country.

(*Teresa* looks at him)

Go ahead.

Suzy gets the bag open. It spills grounds everywhere. She looks around for paper towels.

TERESA

The Philippines.

YASSER

(flips pages, reads)

The Philippines is a group of islands bordered by the China Sea, the Philippine Sea, and the Celebes Sea. Its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire make it prone to earthquakes and typhoons.

TERESA

Yes, typhoon.

She blows forcefully.

Suzy finds an empty paper towel roll. She gives up and crosses back to the chair and sits down.

YASSER

(he steps aside)

You find one.

TERESA

(flips through)

Ecuador. In Northwest South America. It has the second lowest homicide rate in South America.

YASSER

That's good!

TERESA

And is home to the Gapalal. . . The Galalla. . .

YASSER

(leaning closer to read)

Gal-a-pa-gos Islands. Look at the size of that turtle!

TERESA

(joy turns to disappointment)

I'm afraid I cannot travel. I have my son.

YASSER

Take him. A family trip!

TERESA

Family trip?

YASSER

Just get up and go.

TERESA

Get up and go?

YASSER

From place to place. This isn't a job you can only do here, right? You could work here for a year, then get a job somewhere else.

TERESA

But my son is still in school here.

YASSER

Imagine putting him in a different school each year, in a different culture where he can make new friends all over the world.

(excitement building, moves toward the window)

There's an English school in almost every country. You can wake up on the Thames River in England one year, then live in Peru the next so you can discover the once lost city of the Incans. Become an expert skier when you live on the base of the Swiss alps while eating Swiss chocolate at noon according to your Swiss timepiece. Eat chicken Kiev *in* Kiev! Or just go to Las Vegas where each casino brings you to a different country: the Luxor, the Venetian, Paris, New York New York, Caesar's Palace. . . All on the same street! We can only do so much outside this window. For everything else, we have to get up and go.

TERESA

I want to see it all!

YASSER

You will, Teresa, you will.

TERESA

God bless you, Mr. Yasser.

Teresa looks down at the mess on the floor.

SUZY

Sorry, Teresa. I made a mess.

Teresa retrieves a towel to clean it up.

Samir and Aymen ENTER.

SAMIR

Aymen, why don't you and Yasser go out and survey the area?

AYMEN

Outside?

SAMIR

Yes.

AYMEN

It's a desert. What are we going to see?

SAMIR

Opportunity.

AYMEN

(mumbles something under his breath, sighs)

Let's go, Yasser. We can get ideas for. . . "opportunity."

YASSER

Sure. I could use a creative break.

Yasser goes to the door, opens it, then EXITS. Aymen follows, stops at the door, turns back to Samir.

AYMEN

I hate you.

Aymen turns back and gets hit by a gust of sand. He EXITS. Samir crosses to the shelf and pulls out the binder.

SUZY

Hello! I'm still here, Dad.

SAMIR

(puts binder away)

Ah, yes, honey.

SUZY

You're spending all our time working. Uncle Aymen took me to lunch.

SAMIR

I was going to take you.

SUZY

When? Something always comes up.

SAMIR

Now, I am done with everything.

SUZY

All done? Because the jet lag is really hitting me. I want to take a nap, but want to stay up until it's dark here to adjust faster. But I *am* hungry again.

SAMIR

But first I want to show you how the company operates. When we are up and running, all of Matafouk Construction will be yours.

SUZY

Why would I want this?

SAMIR

You and your sister.

SUZY

She wants it even less than I do.

SAMIR

The money will be yours.

SUZY

There is no money.

SAMIR

There will be.

(picks up jobs binder, shows her)

These jobs are in the millions -- schools, government buildings, hospitals. So many.

SUZY

I'm saying you don't know if you'll get them.

SAMIR

We will.

SUZY

And if you don't?

SAMIR

I will.

SUZY

And if . . . you . . . don't?

SAMIR

We will.

SUZY

Our conversations remind me of the times you took us on the Merry-Go-Round at the park.

SAMIR

Whatever money the government gives us to do the job, I get ten percent *off the top*. That is before any money is used. Then I have a deal with each brother for whatever is not spent on the project. Aymen, gets ten percent of the net, or fifteen percent now. From his cut, he will pay Yasser and Yasser will give me fifteen percent of that. And I get the remainder of that net.

SUZY

How did you get them all to agree to give you a share of their shares?

SAMIR

They signed the contracts. We are taking in the millions.

SUZY

You can't even take care of your brothers. How can I expect you to take care of us?

SAMIR

With the money.

SUZY

It's *not* the money. It's about being able to spend time with family. That's what my damn husband thinks, at least -- the time spent with those you love is more important than anything. But you can lose that if you're not careful.

SAMIR

You're right, it's not about the money.

SUZY

Exactly!

SAMIR

Exactly. But just to make sure we can keep going, do you happen to have any you can lend --

SUZY

Oh, my God! You're asking *me* for money?!

SAMIR

Just to put in the account and then take out.

SUZY

No!

SAMIR

It is an investment for all the money later.

SUZY

I'm the last person you should ask. Have you forgotten when you used my social security number to open an American Express account. It was in the name "S. Matafouk." Clever.

SAMIR

That was a mistake.

SUZY

And maxing it out and not paying it off?

SAMIR

Forget it! I do not need it.

SUZY

You do! You just asked for it.

(frustrated)

I'm getting some fresh air.

SAMIR

It's like an oven out there.

SUZY

It's still better than the hot air in here.

Suzy opens the door and EXITS, passing Yasser as he ENTERS.

YASSER

Suzy? Oh, I --

(to Samir)

Why is she so upset?

SAMIR

She is tired.

YASSER

Oh. Aymen is waiting in the car for the wind to stop. I don't see any wind, but he swears it's out to get him.

SAMIR

Good, good. Let him wait. . . So, you had a good conversation with our brother?

YASSER

Yeah. He's a good guy.

SAMIR

Did he tell you anything interesting?

YASSER

About?

SAMIR

Oh, nothing in particular. The company, our projects. . . your paperwork.

YASSER

Nope. Why do you ask?

SAMIR

Well, he is our brother, but sometimes, he can be a bit negative. Pessimistic. He is worried that it will not work out. I want you to be confident whatever happens, it will work out.

YASSER

I am. I'm pretty optimistic. It's going to work out.

SAMIR

So regarding your deal, I would like you to have more.

YASSER

Fifteen percent of the net with you getting ten percent of that seems fair. You brought me in. I look at it as a finder's fee.

SAMIR

Yes. A finder's fee. That seems fair, but as I do not need much, you should have a little more.

(picks up the manila folder, yells off)

Teresa!

(to Yasser)

Just do not tell Aymen about our deal. He will get jealous. He is getting a smaller percentage, but without you, we will have no construction. You deserve it.

Teresa ENTERS from the office.

YASSER

Samir, thank you. That is very generous.

SAMIR

Of course.

(hands her the manila folder)

Teresa, please make sure the deal with Yasser is revised. Make it *twenty* percent.

TERESA

Yes, Mr. Samir. Twenty percent.

SAMIR

Thank you, Teresa.

(he indicates she return to the office)

Isn't she wonderful? I am lucky I brought her in. Such a good employee.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

SAMIR

This will be your salary *whatever* role you play in the company.

YASSER

Well, lead engineer, of course.

SAMIR

Of course! I mean, even if it changes like if you get promoted. I do not know. Just so we can keep you on our team.

(picks up a stack of post-it notes from the desk and rips one off)

What's this?

YASSER

(without looking up)

What?

SAMIR

This note. It's from Aymen.

(reads it to himself)

Oh, no. This is no good. No good, indeed.

YASSER

What's it say?

SAMIR

Well, apparently, it's about your status. It says that in order to be a lead engineer on the project, you must be an Emirati national.

YASSER

What?

SAMIR

Oh, that Aymen. I asked him weeks ago to make sure you were good.

YASSER

I came here to be a lead engineer. I mean, all the plans and designs I've worked on. I can be an assistant anywhere, but this was my big break.

SAMIR

I know and I am so angry. These friggart rules. If I had have known. . .

YASSER

Well, is there anything you can do?

SAMIR

Do? You are damn right! I will talk to the top! I will go to the Prince and tell him to make an exception. We are about to begin here, and they think we can lose our lead engineer. Friggart ministries. No, this is unacceptable.

The PHONE rings, one ring, then a shortened second ring, picked up in the other room.

YASSER

I'm sure there's a way around it, right? You're always talking about how this country has everyone taking a bribe.

Teresa ENTERS.

SAMIR

That is correct. We will do whatever it takes. Yes, Teresa?

TERESA

Mr. Samir, that is Mr. Lubuan on the phone. He say that he is your engineer for the company.

SAMIR

(puts post-it on the desk, but it falls to the floor)

Oh, Teresa! Take a message, won't you? Probably one of those robot calls, looking for work. Tell him we'll keep his resume on file.

He hurries her back into the office.

TERESA

I will take a message for you.

Teresa EXITS into the office; Samir tries to play it off as Yasser looks at him.

SAMIR

Crazy country. Everyone trying to get work.

YASSER

She said he was the engineer.

SAMIR

No, no. She said he wants to *be* the engineer.

YASSER

(picks up the piece of notebook paper)

This paper is blank. It's not a message from Aymen at all.

SAMIR

It's not?

YASSER

Wait a minute! You *knew* I could not be the lead engineer and you didn't tell me.

SAMIR

I--

YASSER

How long did you know?

SAMIR

(busted)

Earlier today. Aymen told me.

YASSER

I busted my ass to get here and all the paperwork I needed to fill out. You couldn't find out for sure beforehand?

SAMIR

That is Aymen's fault. I asked him to--

YASSER

But you're the boss, right? And Teresa, she does such good work for you. You gotta have this stuff squared away. Now I'm sitting here, thousands of miles from home, with nothing to do.

SAMIR

You can be the assistant.

YASSER

I didn't come here to be an assistant. I could do that back home. . . For a solid company, not a start-up. That's why I was working so hard, because we're family. . . This is unbelievable. To hell with it. I gotta get outta here. *Hijo de puta! No puedo creerlo. El hermano mio.*

Yasser STORMS OUT.

SAMIR

(yells after)

Yasser! How about twenty-five percent?!

He sighs, then picks up the phone. Suzy ENTERS. Samir replaces the phone.

SUZY

What happened to Uncle Yasser? He seemed so upset. He was mumbling something like “Matafouk. Matafouk” and some words my Spanish teacher used to say when we glued his seat to the chair.

SAMIR

He just received word they rejected his application.

SUZY

Oh, no! So what does that mean?

Aymen ENTERS, brushes sand from his hair.

SAMIR

Apparently, he cannot be our lead engineer as he wanted.

AYMEN

He just found out, did he? Let me try to talk to him.

SAMIR

Good.

(an afterthought)

And have him return the car if he’s not staying.

Aymen sighs, then covers up his face and opens the door.
He EXITS.

SUZY

Have you ever noticed how those close to you end up leaving?

SAMIR

He will be back. He can still be assistant engineer.

SUZY

Well, Mom --. . . Oh, that reminds me. I brought back the vase you sent her. It was a nice gesture, but she is not ready to consider letting you back.

SAMIR

What vase?

SUZY

(indicates vase under portrait)

That one.

SAMIR

Oh.

(confused)

Yes, the vase. Well, I am working hard here and will return to you when we start construction.

SUZY

Alexis doesn't really want you around either.

SAMIR

I am doing all this for you and your sister. Matafouk Construction --

SUZY

You missed Alex's college graduation.

SAMIR

I wanted to get back, but I had so much to do here.

SUZY

You have to make a choice -- this company or your family. You have to make a choice -- this company or your family. When our family expands, there may be others who depend on you. David, oh, he believes a child should be surrounded by as much family as possible. To grow, and y'know. . . It takes a village.

SAMIR

I agree. I was just saying this to Teresa -- family is the most important.

SUZY

You say that, but you never really showed it.

SAMIR

I would take you to the park.

SUZY

You also rented out Alex's car on that car-sharing website without her permission.

SAMIR

I was trying to make her some money.

SUZY

You can't do that stuff anymore!

SAMIR

I will not.

SUZY

No one is going to give you access to any private information.

SAMIR

Once we get money from the Prince --

SUZY

Again, it's not about the money. It's about being able to spend time with family. The time spent with those you love is more important than anything, but you'll lose that forever if you're not careful.

SAMIR

Of course.

SUZY

David and I want our kids to have all their grandparents there. Not necessarily forever, but maybe the first couple of birthdays to give the feeling of being loved. Do you understand?

SAMIR

I understand.

SUZY

You'll put this business aside for a couple years and move back to be near us?

SAMIR

I will be there.

SUZY

Really?

SAMIR

Nothing else is important.

SUZY

(caught off guard)

Oh. Okay. . . Well, good.

(lets out a sigh of relief)

So David will be happy. I mean, I'm happy too, but he was really pushing for this. Look. I'm really tired. And hungry again. Now, can we finally spend some time catching up?

Put the job away for a bit. I'm in the mood for some ice cream and kimchi. Is there a good place around here for that?

SAMIR

I know the best place. You will love it.

(beat, SUZY stands by)

Let me just make one phone call first, to our new engineer.

Suzy's smile turns to a muffled scream. Samir EXITS into the office as Teresa ENTERS from the office.

Suzy paces back and forth, taking deep breaths. Teresa places a RECEIPT on the desk. Then she takes a RAG and SPRAY BOTTLE and sprays it over the computer and desk.

SUZY

Teresa, how do you do it?

TERESA

It is easy. I use a little water and some lemon juice and --

SUZY

No, no, I mean how do you live in the Middle East?

TERESA

I move here and do not leave.

SUZY

I'll start over. This is a culture of selfish men treating women poorly, like we are second class citizens. They always expect *us* to fall in line. They never make any sacrifices themselves. Doesn't that drive you crazy?

TERESA

I'm sorry, Miss Suzanne?

SUZY

Suzy is fine.

TERESA

That's good. Teresa is fine too.

SUZY

I'm just asking if you ever get really frustrated being a woman in a man's world?

TERESA

I am treated very good here. I do my job, they pay me or they will pay me when they have the money. Even my husband write me a nice note when he leave me.

SUZY

That's terrible! Even after they do stuff like that, do you feel like you still rely on them? We don't do anything because we don't want to seem out of line. We just smile and shrug like good little women.

TERESA

(smiles and shrugs)

I dunno.

SUZY

That's what I'm saying. We need to be able to want something and then get it. You need to throw down the gauntlet!

Teresa throws the mug to the floor. It shatters.

SUZY

It's a figure of speech.

TERESA

I clean it up.

SUZY

Leave it! Let someone else clean it up.

TERESA

They will not.

SUZY

They should.

TERESA

It is my job.

SUZY

That's just why they can take advantage of you, because they know they can.

Teresa stares at Suzy, then at the mug. A long beat.

TERESA

It will make a stain.

SUZY

Okay, fine, clean it up.

Teresa attends to a broom and dust pan behind the door and begins to sweep up the mug.

SUZY

We need to be stronger. Strong women. That way, we are not beholden to anyone. I feel a need to give my father a million chances and he keeps disappointing me. Why? Because he knows I'll always come back to him. I'm the "good" one. Took my mother a long time to learn someone is not going to change no matter how much they say they will. And then my sister realized it was pointless, but I listen to my husband because *he* thinks it's important and I think "*this* time." . . . I have to put my foot down and say, "enough!" We have to move on.

TERESA

I grow up in big family. I am number eight of eight children, seven brothers. My brothers always use me to do things for them. My mother tells me it is my destiny to work for others. At first, I ask my father why this worry. He would take me in his arms, kiss me a kiss on the forehead and say, "Do not worry, do not fear, go get my dinner, bring it here." I have always go where others want. My father and brothers would drive me where they want to go. Then I move here because that was the wish of my husband.

(spits on the floor, then sweeps it up)

I do not know how to "move on."

SUZY

I guess you just do it and don't look back. Make them apologize to us. We do not apologize.

TERESA

What if we make mistake?

SUZY

I know. That's what always worries me too. Well . . . Forget it! It'll be *their* mistake! You've never gone hungry, you've never been unloved. Women always survive. You're already a strong women, but you don't know it.

TERESA

Yes.

SUZY

We are allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia now. No longer do we have to sit back in the passenger seat.

TERESA

I never learn to drive.

SUZY

You can!

TERESA

I would like to.

SUZY

Let's be stronger together.

TERESA

God bless you, Miss Suz-- ee.

Samir ENTERS from the office.

SAMIR

Okay, honey, I am ready.

SUZY

Where are your car keys?

SAMIR

On the desk.

SUZY

Great! *Teresa*, let's go!

Suzy takes the keys off the desk and then goes to the front door.

SAMIR

Where are you going?

SUZY

Out!

SAMIR

I need Teresa to help me.

SUZY

She can't right now. She's about to become a modern woman.

SAMIR

Will that take long?

SUZY

(opens the door)

Come on Teresa.

(TERESA does not move)

Teresa, it'll be fine.

(TERESA thinks a moment, then crosses toward the door, looks back to Samir, then lowers her head and EXITS; Suzy grabs the car keys off the desk)

Woman power!

Suzy EXITS leaving Samir scratching his head.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

A little later. Samir is at the desk on the phone.

SAMIR

Oh, that is very good! . . . Which wharf takes me there?

(searches for a pencil, opens the desk drawer, pulls out a handful of pistachios, dumps them into the trash then produces a pencil and jots it onto a Post It)

Okay, I have it. Please tell him I will come right away.

He hangs up. Aymen ENTERS. He stands in the doorway a moment, covered in sand.

AYMEN

(re: sand)

This would be funny if it wasn't so sad.

SAMIR

Did you reach Yasser?

AYMEN

He wants no part of us. It's just us now.

SAMIR

No matter. We have Mr. Lubuan and I just received work that the Prince has summoned me to his boat.

AYMEN

To his boat? When?

SAMIR

(stands)

I must leave right away.

AYMEN

When you talk to him, don't blow it. Get right on your knees and beg him for the money.

SAMIR

Do not worry, my brother. Let us put together a quick pitch packet to show him we mean business.

AYMEN

Probably something we should have had ready months ago, but okay.

SAMIR

A few of our documents, definitely the Jobs List.

(crosses toward the office, but Samir stops in front of the vase)

SAMIR

Oh, did you send this vase to my wife?

AYMEN

(a beat)

You guessed it. I have been having an affair with your wife since you've been here.

SAMIR

But you've been here with me.

AYMEN

Makes it tough.

(a beat)

Of course I didn't send it. Suzy said you sent it.

SAMIR

I did not.

(AYMEN shrugs)

Forget it. Let us take care of this.

AYMEN

Is Teresa here?

SAMIR

Out with Suzy doing woman things.

They EXIT into the office.

After a moment, Yasser pops his head in from outside. Is the coast clear? He ENTERS on tip toes and crosses to the book shelf. He finds the BINDER and removes the JOB LIST. He puts it onto the printer and makes a copy, then returns the original to the binder and replaces it to the shelf.

The door to the outside OPENS. Yasser dives behind the desk.

SUZY

(off)

"D" does not mean done! You have to put it in park.

Suzy and Teresa ENTER. Teresa shows an energy we haven't seen before. Suzy looks shaken.

TERESA

That was very, very great! I never feel so much-- what is the word?

SUZY

Now I know why women weren't allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia.

TERESA

Rush! I feel a rush.

SUZY

I suppose stick shift was not the best way to start.

TERESA

When we fly over the sand. . .

SUZY

It's my fault for not telling you to start in first gear, not fifth.

TERESA

I want to do everything else I never did before.

SUZY

And I'm pretty much fine with never leaving the house again.

Yasser bumps into the shelf knocking the vase off the shelf, which he catches. Teresa and Suzy turn. He jumps up, caught.

TERESA

Mr. Mahmoud!

SUZY

No, that's Mr. Yasser. Although, apparently, they have the same forehead. Uncle Yasser, what are you doing back? I heard you were replaced as lead engineer.

Yasser replaces the vase on the shelf, then looks back toward the office.

YASSER

No. Well, yes. I was. But why should that keep me from being involved? After all, we're family. These things happen. It's not the first time I've been disappointed, it won't be the last. Such is life and all that. Where were you two?

As they answer, Yasser slowly moves toward the door, still holding the copy.

SUZY
We went for a ride.

TERESA
It was a true miracle.

SUZY
A miracle we're still alive.

TERESA
God was with us.

SUZY
I kept screaming for HIM.

The door to the office OPENS.

YASSER
Great. Gotta run!

Yasser hurries for the exit. Aymen ENTERS.

AYMEN

(yells behind him)

The fact you don't know how many Emirates there are will not give any prince confidence.

(turns, sees Yasser)
Yasser!

YASSER

(freezes with one foot out the door)
Hello, Aymen.

AYMEN
And Teresa. I'm glad you're back. Could you come into the office? I want to ask you--

Samir ENTERS.

SAMIR
The Almanac is old. It probably doesn't have the right number. . . Yasser. You have returned. . . Honey! I have great news, everyone! The Prince has invited me onto his boat.

SUZY

I don't care. That's your business stuff. It has nothing to do with me.

SAMIR

But once I talk to the prince, we will be moving --

AYMEN

Always moving.

SAMIR

-- and then I am happy to do as you want.

SUZY

I'll believe it when I see it.

AYMEN

So, Yasser, why did you come back?

SUZY

(holds stomach)

All that motion, I think I've got to sit down.

She sits, trying to stem the nausea.

YASSER

(shifts uncomfortably)

Uh, I may have been a little hasty.

SAMIR

Wonderful. See, Aymen, we can't break up the family.

AYMEN

Why did you reconsider?

Teresa attends to Suzy, holding her head, patting her head.

YASSER

I found out I could not be a lead engineer here.

AYMEN

(looks to Samir)

I didn't --

YASSER

(cuts him off)

No. I don't blame you. . . I have no experience as a lead. And I'm a Mexican national. I'd be best continuing as an assistant anyway. I suppose it was too cocky of me to think I could just jump into a lead job. I need to learn as I go.

Suzy indicates Teresa bring her something.

SAMIR

Yes, yes! But if you work as an assistant here, they will see you are able to take on the next job. And then, we will make you the lead. We will have so many jobs.

AYMEN

(in a mocking tone)

So, so many.

Teresa EXITS into the office.

YASSER

The only thing I ask, Samir, is that if my salary is reduced, then I give you less of a percentage, maybe a point or two, since I won't be making as much.

AYMEN

(reacts to this)

What percentage?

SAMIR

Uh- it is nothing to worry about.

YASSER

He agreed to giving me a little extra and then I would give him a finder's fee.

AYMEN

Oh? And then something from me. All the time. . .

(as Samir)

"I am making very little." Well, you can keep your twenty percent because I'm leaving.

YASSER

Twenty percent? He only offered me fifteen.

(to Samir)

You said I was getting *more* than Aymen!

AYMEN

I deserve more. I've been paying for him for years.

Teresa ENTERS with a towel. She hands it to Suzy who puts it against her face. She flinches. She shakes out the towel to let sand pour from it.

YASSER

(shakes his finger at Samir)

You are just a piece of work. This whole thing was a mistake. And here I was going to take whatever savings set aside for my student loans to help cover the money you need to cross the finish line, because I am a team player, because I thought I could trust you. But that's not gonna happen now. Aymen was right about you.

Teresa crosses to the office, but Suzy waves her off. Suzy stands unsteadily. Teresa crosses back to her.

SAMIR

Wait, we can work this out.

YASSER

Forget it. I'm gonna use it for the next flight back to Mexico.

(backs toward the door looking down as he does)

Shame on you, Samir. Shame.

(approaching the door, he bends to down to pick up the piece of paper that fell from his pocket before, then bounces right back up)

Don't bother calling to see if I make it home all right. I'd rather forget all of this ever happened.

Teresa helps Suzy walk around. Suzy breathes deeply as she walks.

AYMEN

(stepping toward him)

Hold it, hold it. What's that paper?

YASSER

What paper?

AYMEN

That you just picked up.

YASSER

I dropped it before and I'm not a litterbug so I'll just take it to Mexico with me where I know we have recycling.

AYMEN

(holds out his hand)

Let's see it.

(*Yasser* reluctantly hands it over; *Aymen* reads it)

This is the Jobs List. You were going to give this away.

SAMIR

You ungrateful Matafouk.

YASSER

That's right! I was going to sell it to the highest bidder. He was skimming off the top from everybody. I just wanted to get in on the action.

AYMEN

Look at this guy, thinks he's a real Matafouk.

They start calling each other "Matafouk!" derisively.

With Teresa helping her, Suzy regains her balance and walk more steadily. The brothers stop when they see what's happening.

SAMIR

(to Suzy)

What's going on over here?

TERESA

Ms. Suzy does not feel well.

SUZY

I'm fine. It's just the heat. And the jet lag. Coupled with the fact of me being pregnant.

SAMIR

Who is pregnant?

SUZY

I am!

Aymen and Yasser react.

SAMIR

I had no idea.

AYMEN

You're kidding!

SUZY

(to Samir)

We had this conversation a half hour ago!... None of you realized there was a baby inside of me?

AYMEN

I thought you were eating a lot of Ding Dung Doong.

YASSER

I never met you. I thought that was how you looked.

SUZY

What is with this family? No wonder no one sees they're being screwed over.

YASSER

An uncle for the first time earlier, and now a *great* uncle.

AYMEN

Boy or girl?

SUZY

It's going to be a boy.

SAMIR

A-ha! He will be a Matafouk to carry on the name!

SUZY

No. He's not going to be a Matafouk. He'll be a Zherkov like my husband.

SAMIR

Still, I'm going to be a grandfather.

SUZY

Not if you don't come back to stay, as we discussed.

SAMIR

I will. . . once we get our first few buildings completed.

SUZY

(throws her hands up)

That's not what we --

The phone rings. Teresa crosses to it. Samir steps in front of her.

SAMIR

I will get it, Teresa.

(picks it up, into phone)

SAMIR

Matafouk Construction? . . . Aymen? . . . He is busy. I will take a message. . . Oh? . . . OH! A deposit . . . Are you sure? . . . Thank you. I will tell him.

(hangs up, sneers at Aymen)

Brother, that was the bank on the phone.

AYMEN

(stiffens slightly)

Oh?

SAMIR

Yes, they were calling about the Al-Halawi Group.

AYMEN

Did I forget to sign the check? I'm glad they called the bank so I could fix it. They could've tried to deposit it. That would've been a bit of a problem. Well, crisis avoided.

SAMIR

You did forget to sign it, but not on the front. You forgot to *endorse* the back. They said that the Al-Halawi Group is -- YOU!

AYMEN

Now, Samir.

SAMIR

You have been sending our checks into a fake account that you own.

YASSER

This is unbelievable.

AYMEN

Samir! Not in front of the others.

SAMIR

Stealing from the company, Aymen. This is tax fraud!

AYMEN

In the United States, maybe.

SAMIR

It's not tax fraud in the Emirates?

AYMEN

No.

SAMIR

Are you sure?

AYMEN

Yes. I checked first.

SAMIR

Who told you that?

AYMEN

My friend in the embassy.

SAMIR

Which friend?

AYMEN

Sahil. The one from Oman.

SAMIR

Oman? He is a crook.

AYMEN

He is a good man who knows the law.

SAMIR

I will check on that.

AYMEN

Go right ahead.

SAMIR

You used a fake company's name.

AYMEN

I bought the company name and filed the paperwork.

SAMIR

It is illegal.

AYMEN

It is not.

SAMIR

(stumped)

Junkie! I am your brother. After all I've done for you. I take you traveling with me.

AYMEN

All the money you've taken from me over the years.

SAMIR

I bring you in here.

AYMEN

You sign a credit card out in my name. You know how much it cost me to fix my credit?

SUZY

He did that to me too!

AYMEN

Tell me, where did you get the money to start up this business anyway?

SAMIR

That is not your business.

The brothers return to shouting “Matafouk!” at each other.

SUZY

Dad! Uncle Aymen! Uncle Yasser! Stop it.

(stands in the center of them as they continue to argue over her, a cacophony of childish bickering; screams over them)

HEY!!!

(the bickering settles down)

Why does everything between you all end up in arguing?

AYMEN

Your Matafouk father cannot be trusted.

SAMIR

This Matafouk over here stabs me in the back. The other one in the front.

YASSER

None of you Matafouks are trustworthy.

AYMEN

As trustworthy as the Cabron you are.

SUZY

Stop it! All of you are Matafouks! You all come from shifty stock. You only care about stealing from others and don’t care who it affects. It’s in your genes. Oh, God! Is it in my genes too??

(shakes this off)

The only one who isn’t actively running some kind of scam here is Teresa.

TERESA

I am not a Matafouk. I am a Cogsyuco by marriage.

SUZY

Sorry, Teresa, but as long as you’re here, you’re family. It rubs off on you, like poison oak. Dad, you should be working together. Not doing everything you can to screw each other. One day, you’ll wake up and you’ll have no one. You’re gonna lose your entire family. Over what? A couple shekels?

SAMIR

It is the Dirham here.

SUZY

Whatever! You've got to get your priorities back in whack. You've already lost your wife and one daughter. And when the one daughter that still acknowledges you flies across the globe to see you, you do everything *except* spend time with her.

AYMEN

You need to listen to your daughter. They are your family.

SAMIR

What do you know about family? I am not the one who created the phony Al-Hawadi Group just to take money from all of us.

AYMEN

Without me, you will be doomed.

(turns to Teresa)

Over the years, I gave him money for his home, a plane ticket for his daughter to come here, and even his wedding ring for his wife. I bought that.

SUZY

Wait, whoa! Uncle Aymen, *you* bought my plane ticket?

AYMEN

Of course I did.

SUZY

Dad, you said *you* did!

SAMIR

I--

SUZY

Even that was a lie. You know what, I don't care what my husband wants. I don't want you around my kid teaching him all your Matafouk habits. I'm done. Thanks for the trip to the desert, Uncle Aymen.

(glares at Samir)

I'm changing my flight home to an earlier time. Have a nice life, Matafouks! I don't want any part of you. I'm proud to be a Zherkov. You deserve each other. Yasser, can I have a ride out of here?

YASSER

With pleasure.

Yasser follows her toward the door.

SAMIR

You're not taking my daughter away.

YASSER

No. I'm taking my niece.

AYMEN

Let them go.

(to Yasser)

You're a real Matafouk.

YASSER

Too late. You said I was a Cabron.

SAMIR

Oh, no, you *are* a Matafouk!

AYMEN/YASSER

(to Samir)

You're the biggest Matafouk!

Suzy and Yasser EXIT. After we HEAR the car start, Aymen crosses to the door.

AYMEN

Good bye, brother. . . Teresa, I am sorry you had to see this.

(opens the door and cringes, expecting the sand, but this time. . . nothing)

Ha! Things are looking up.

Sand hits him. He EXITS leaving Teresa and Samir alone, stunned. A long beat.

SAMIR

Everything will be fixed once I meet with the Prince. I am sure of it.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

Teresa is all alone. As earlier in the day, she organizes the files and papers on the desk, and straightens the binders on the shelf. She rolls up Yasser's blueprints but has trouble putting it into the tubes as it keeps unrolling so it's too wide. She tries again and fails. Then he gives up and puts it back onto the drafting table.

Aymen ENTERS.

AYMEN

Teresa! You're still here.

TERESA

I have a job to do, Mr. Aymen.

AYMEN

Yes, well. . .

(crosses to desk, begins packing up the
drawers into a loose box)

I'm not sure we're even a company anymore to give you a job.

(shakes head)

My brother. Always trying to swim upstream when there is a boat.

TERESA

When the boat flip over, you have to swim anyway.

AYMEN

(considers this)

I'll have to use that one.

TERESA

God will provide.

AYMEN

I wish I had your optimism. And all this after your husband. . .

(a beat, spits on the floor)

. . . that cogsyuco, left you alone with a kid.

TERESA

(kneels by the spit, with rag)

I'll get that for you.

AYMEN

No, no. I was just -- because you. . .

TERESA

(a moment of understanding)

Ah. Ah ha ha!

She laughs. Aymen laughs along.

AYMEN

So you may need another job.

TERESA

Take care of number one.

AYMEN

I came back to pack up my things, but also. . . I'm not sure when I'll see you again, but Miss Teresa, I was wondering if maybe, if you had time, you might --

Suzy ENTERS, looking frantic. Aymen jumps around, startled.

SUZY

I can't find my passport! I can't leave this Godforsaken place without my passport.

(searches underneath desk, around shelves)

How could I have lost it? It was in my bag. I didn't take it out.

AYMEN

You think you left it here?

SUZY

It must be. It wasn't in the car, and I ripped my bag apart.

Yasser ENTERS.

YASSER

I looked all around the trailer. I can't find it.

SUZY

Great! So I'm stuck here in the desert.

Aymen stiffens when he sees Yasser.

AYMEN

Brother.

YASSER

Aymen. What are you doing back here?

Suzy gets down on her knees and searches under furniture.

SUZY

Can I get a little help here?

Everyone else gets down on their knees and starts crawling around.

AYMEN

I'm only here to pick up my things.

YASSER

So that's the end then?

AYMEN

(looks underneath the vase)

It's how most of our dad's business dealings ended.

TERESA

(reacts to Aymen)

Mr. Mahmoud!

YASSER

That's true. He wasn't very successful.

SUZY

What a trip! I come halfway around the world to connect with my father and don't even make it to my hotel. Oh, my dear Zherkov, you're going to owe me big time for this one.

AYMEN

(to Yasser)

That's why he was always trying new things.

YASSER

To find something that worked.

AYMEN

Right.

Yasser pauses to consider this. He chuckles.

YASSER

How did he find two women to marry him?

AYMEN

He always told a good story.

SUZY

(peeks her head up)

Don't get me wrong, it was nice to see you again, Uncle Aymen, and to meet you, Uncle Yasser, but my father ruined it as usual.

AYMEN

I understand, Suzy-moozy.

YASSER

(to Aymen)

So what are you going to do now?

AYMEN

(pulls out business card)

I looked up your friend at Zadji Brothers. His resume is pretty impressive. Ha! *Pretty* impressive. *Now* I'm American. So I called him and told him about my connections. He offered me a deal. For every job I get him, we split the profit fifty-fifty.

SUZY

(still looking)

If anyone would have said I'd get burned in the desert, I would have assumed it would be by the sun.

YASSER

I'm happy for you.

AYMEN

You know, he asked about you.

(YASSER looks up)

I told him you were a great architect who just needed a break as an engineer. With the Jobs List, he saw the need for someone behind the scenes to work on multiple projects at once.

YASSER

Behind the scenes?

AYMEN

Not officially as a lead engineer, but you'll be in charge of your own projects.

(YASSER considers this)

While I can maybe work things out with the government regulations.

SUZY

(leans against desk, gives up)

What am I going to do? I'm going to be trapped here. My baby will be begging outside in bazaars like a bedouin.

YASSER

We'll be working for Hadji?

AYMEN

I can set it up where we're subcontractors, as our own company -- Cabron and Matafouk.

YASSER

The Matafouk Brothers! Deal.

They shake hands.

AYMEN

Where is Samir anyway?

TERESA

He say he needs to do something before he go to meet the Prince.

AYMEN

(in thought)

It's funny. Last time I spoke to our father, he said he had to do an errand before he was to visit the Prince on the boat. The coconut does not fall from the tree.

YASSER

That was about a year ago?

AYMEN

Yes.

YASSER

About the time we received that letter.

SUZY

And dad got the money.

AYMEN

What money?

SUZY

From Mahmoud. He said that's how he started the company.

AYMEN

That Mata-- and he still asks me for help.

Samir ENTERS. He carries a collection of papers and a crisp new document folder. He stops, surprised, surveys the scene.

SUZY

You!

SAMIR

You're all here. I am glad.

AYMEN

Don't be glad. We're all leaving.

SAMIR

Suzy, you too?

SUZY

I can't go by plane so I'm going as far as the sea, then I've got to hitchhike home. Hopefully I'll find some kindly pirates to bring me.

SAMIR

You can't leave yet.

No one moves, as Samir stands in front of the door.

AYMEN

We'll wait until you fall asleep and then we'll leave.

SAMIR

No. You have to look at what I have done.

He hands each brother a packet of documents which they flip through.

AYMEN

(reads)

Dawali, Sheetum and Haou? Legal documents.

SAMIR

Look at the principals.

YASSER

Me and Aymen. And Suzy and Alexis.

SAMIR

This is your company. I am done.

YASSER

Thank you, Samir. It's a nice offer, but Aymen and I are going to work together, consulting. We have our first client in Haledji Brothers.

SAMIR

No! You cannot. You must finish what we started here for our father. I created the company with the money he sent me.

AYMEN

Suzy just told us where the seed money came from.

SAMIR

(to Suzy)

I had to use it for something he would be proud of. And he always talked about his grandfather.

ALL

Great-grandfather.

SAMIR

I only ask that you make sure Suzy and Alexis get their share.

SUZY

You don't listen. They don't want any part of this. And I only asked for one thing: to return home to be a part of your grandson's future. You only want to keep the past alive.

(SAMIR pulls a ticket from the folder, holds it up to her.)

What's that?

SAMIR

A ticket back.

SUZY

To America?

SAMIR

Yes. I'll find a place near you. I'm finished here.

SUZY

(studies ticket, stunned)

Wow! Just . . . okay. . . this. . . I guess you did come through. Eventually. You'll plan to stay through his first birthday, at least?

SAMIR

As long as you want.

SUZY

David, and I guess I, will be happy. . . Ha! Too bad me and the baby will be stuck here. I can't find my passport.

(SAMIR crosses to the desk, opens the top drawer, pulls out the passport and hands it to her)

My passport! How did you know it was -- Oh, my God! You took it, didn't you?

SAMIR

I wanted to make sure you didn't leave before we had a chance to spend time.

SUZY

So you stop working for one second! You don't go around stealing stuff. You can't just communicate like a normal person? You know what? I was right. Just stay here. My baby will be just fine without you. I withdraw my apology. That's right! I'm going back on my word. I'm a Matafouk too.

(moves toward the exit)

I can't believe I thought you might actually be concerned about someone else. And if you still think this business has a chance, you're never going to get it.

SAMIR

No! Of this, I am sure. The prince will give us the money, just as he did give my father the money.

SUZY

Well, good luck with that. Uncle Yasser, let's try this again.

Suzy EXITS. They all stand there a beat looking at Samir. He opens his mouth to speak when Suzy comes back in, looking pale.

SUZY

(to Samir)

What did you just say?

SAMIR

I wanted you to stay so we could talk.

SUZY

After that! About the money.

SAMIR

My father got it from the prince.

Suzy lets out a squeak.

AYMEN

Is that the baby?

SUZY

No. I know what happened to Mahmoud!

TERESA

It was fishy.

SUZY

Yes! Yes, Teresa, it was *very* fishy. Uncle Aymen you said that grandpa called you to say he was visiting the prince. Then, he died. . . Or disappeared. Uncle Yasser, you and your mom received some cryptic letter about burying him at sea around the same time Dad gets all this money "from the prince." Grandpa was at different times an importer/exporter, in pharmaceuticals, or

(to Samir)

--"farm recepticals" as you thought. Put it together.

Mahmoud was a drug dealer who stole money from the prince, got caught, and the prince had him killed. Maybe this is all because I've gotten two hours of sleep in the past two days and am really jonesing a sriracha milk shake, but. . . This makes sense, right?

A long pause as everyone considers.

AYMEN

It does, actually.

YASSER

Oh, my God!

TERESA

It was fishy.

SUZY

I know, right?

SAMIR

No. No, I refuse to believe it. I know the prince. He would not do that. There must be a good explanation. I will ask him when I get there. And I am late. We will talk about this later.

Samir grabs a packet of documents from the desk.

SUZY

You can't go!

SAMIR

Why not?

SUZY

(to others)

Was I talking out loud or was that all in my head?

(to Samir)

Have you been paying attention? The Prince is going to kill you for the drug money Mahmoud stole from him.

AYMEN

And if you don't have it. . .

YASSER

That's why he invited you on the boat.

SUZY

So you can't go out there. Stay here until we can figure out how to handle this.

SAMIR

I appreciate your concern, but --

SUZY

You may not be high on my list right now, but you're still my father and I'd feel somewhat responsible if something happened to you.

AYMEN

Suzy's right. You'll be safe here.

Outside, the SOUND of a car.

SUZY

(on edge)

What's that?

AYMEN

(to Samir)

Did you schedule a meeting with Mr. Lubuan?

YASSER

(looks out window)

It's a Mercedes limousine.

SAMIR

The prince.

SUZY

The prince?! He's come here?

TERESA

I must make lemonade for him.

SAMIR

Teresa, wait!

YASSER

He's got two large men with him.

AYMEN

(looks)

Those are his bodyguards. Everybody hide!

Everyone, but Teresa scatters -- behind the desk, under the welcome mat, holding the fax machine in front of their face, draping the blueprint over them -- into obviously visible places.

YASSER

Wait, wait! He won't do anything to Samir with us here. You can't do anything in front of witnesses. He'd have to --

(dawns on him)

Oh, right. *Mierda*.

SAMIR

Everybody, you must be calm! I will handle this.

AYMEN

We're doomed.

Everyone freezes. A long beat. Then a KNOCK on the door. Everyone jumps. No one moves toward the door. Another KNOCK. After a beat, the door opens and the PRINCE, 60s, short, bald, and bearded in typical sheik garb ENTERS with a flourish.

THE PRINCE

Hello, my Matafouk friends! Samir, come. Let me look at you.

SAMIR

Prince Shehahdam! Such a great honor.

Samir moves toward him, but is blocked by Suzy. He manages to side-step her, but she drops down and clutches his leg. He continues toward the prince dragging Suzy behind him.

THE PRINCE

The honor is mine!

He kisses Samir on both cheeks.

AYMEN

(to Yasser)

The kiss of death. Good bye, brother.

YASSER

Half-brother. I barely know you people.

THE PRINCE

(wags finger)

Samir, you have been very naughty. Very, very naughty indeed.

SAMIR

Oh. . . I did not realize.

THE PRINCE

I invite you to my yacht and you do not come.

SAMIR

Yes, about that. I can explain.

THE PRINCE

You make me leave my yacht and come for you instead.

(laughs)

Why not?

SAMIR

(nervous laugh)

Why not?

Suzy jumps in front of her father.

SUZY

Please, Mr. Prince!

THE PRINCE

Just “Your Highness” is fine. No reason to be so formal.

(to Samir)

Are you going to introduce us?

SAMIR

This is my first daughter Suzy.

Suzy bows furiously, not quite sure how to do it.

THE PRINCE

How nice! She make a dance for me.

SAMIR

Of course you know Teresa.

Teresa smiles.

THE PRINCE

Teresa, yes. So wonderful. You are lucky to have her. She - how is the phrase? - knowing where all the bodies are buried.

Suzy gasps.

SAMIR

And my brothers. I believe you know Aymen.

Aymen jumps.

THE PRINCE

Yes, many, many years ago. You stayed in the car, I remember.

AYMEN

(high-pitched)

That's right, er. . .

(clears throat)

Hello, Your Highness.

Aymen bows very deeply. The Prince pulls on his collars to bring Aymen back to his level, then gives a petrified Aymen a kiss on both cheeks.

SAMIR

My other brother, Yasser.

THE PRINCE

Ah, Yasser!

(approaches Yasser and puts his arms on Yasser's shoulders, but before he can kiss him, YASSER kisses him on both cheeks catching him off guard. A moment of tension before The Prince lets out a joyful laugh. EVERYONE ELSE joins in laughter)

Your father would speak very highly of you, how you were just like him.

YASSER

Me? No. Total opposite. Two more unlike people in the world do not exist.

THE PRINCE

Fabrigash! You have the Matafouk forehead.

(then)

You did not get my letter?

YASSER

Your letter?

THE PRINCE

I send it to your mother, I believe, after your father died. It was about the burial.

YASSER

That was you?

THE PRINCE

Did I not sign my name? I can be so forgetful. Which reminds me why I have come.

(turns to Samir)

To settle old debts.

SUZY

Please, Your Highness, my father may be lacking in the skills of fatherhood. Lord knows he's a flawed human being, but he doesn't deserve this.

THE PRINCE

Silence!

(EVERYONE jumps)

For what Mahmoud has done, Samir will get what he deserves.

Everyone except Teresa cowers to the floor. The Prince opens the door and pulls inside a briefcase.

He stops when he sees everyone on the floor. He looks to Teresa who shrugs.

THE PRINCE

I appreciate a deep bow, but please, this is too much.

(opens briefcase)

Will this cover you?

Everyone looks up cautiously. They see the briefcase of money. Samir is the first to stand.

SAMIR

Oh, Your Highness. Your generosity is too great.

SUZY

(rises slowly)

You're *giving* him money?

The other brothers rise.

THE PRINCE

It is the least I can do.

SUZY

You're not here to -- ?

AYMEN

Just what did Mahmoud do?

The Prince sees the vase on the shelf.

THE PRINCE

I see you have received the urn.

SUZY

Urn?!

THE PRINCE

Teresa, please bring Mahmoud to me.

Teresa goes to the shelf and takes the urn and hands it carefully to The Prince. He, in turn, hands her the briefcase.

THE PRINCE

Hello, dear friend.

SAMIR

That is our father??

SUZY

I traveled across the globe with my dead grandfather?

THE PRINCE

That is his remains, yes.

The brothers gather around the Prince. The Prince opens the top and they peer inside.

Teresa drops the briefcase on the desk and EXITS into the office.

AYMEN

That is him.

YASSER

How do you know?

AYMEN

You can see the Matafouk forehead.

YASSER

Where?

AYMEN

(indicates the ashes inside)

Right there.

YASSER

(studies it a moment)

Oh, yeah! I see it now.

SUZY

Wait a minute! Wait a Matafouk minute! So what actually happened to Mahmoud then?

Teresa ENTERS carrying the ledger. She sits at the desk and begins portioning the stacks of cash from the briefcase into a pile on the desk as she makes notations in the ledger.

The Prince crosses downstage. As he does, the brothers and Suzy cross upstage, in a choreographed circle, keeping an eye on him.

THE PRINCE

You do not know? Ah, so I will tell you. . . I make my money in oil, well, my father, the King, did. And I live a good life. Too good. Many parties. I did not know what day it was. And I was not very nice. I would treat everyone like my servants. Would you believe I used to have people beaten if they did not bow to my liking?

AYMEN

(laughs too loudly)

You?! No!

THE PRINCE

It is true. But I was bored with life. One day, I run away. I did not want to be Prince anymore. At the train station, near my villa in Lake Como, I meet Mahmoud. We talk and he convinced me how much good I could do as Prince. I realize he is right. From that day on, Mahmoud always help me with business opportunities. When I wanted to open a school in Morocco, he found me teachers. He helped me with a chain of Jewish delis in Iran.

YASSER

In Iran?

THE PRINCE

Surprisingly popular.

(AYMEN reacts)

When I wanted to be a Hollywood movie producer, he was the one who put me together with the right people. Have you ever seen “The Avengers?”

SUZY

That was yours?

THE PRINCE

I was offered a share, but I chose to produce “Myron, the Talking Mule” instead. I laugh every time I think of it. Pat Sajak was a terrible choice for the lead.

I heard he was very big. Oh, well. . . It wasn't until I read about something that I say to myself, "Prince! This is what you must do." And I contact Mahmoud to work with me. He was perfect for this.

SAMIR

What did you read?

THE PRINCE

It says Americans love their drugs.

SUZY

A-ha!

THE PRINCE

Not drugs. But, how do you say. . . ?

The Prince mimes popping a pill, then running in place with high knees, jumping jacks, and flexing his muscles.

YASSER

Do you mean vitamins?

THE PRINCE

Yes, *vitamins!*

SUZY

(let down)

Ah.

THE PRINCE

And we put together the best group of people. We get all the permits and start selling and we make a lot of money. Which he tells me to keep liquid instead of reinvesting it.

SUZY

A-ha!

THE PRINCE

So I lock it in my safe.

SUZY

(let down)

Ah.

THE PRINCE

And I decide we need a meeting on my boat with buyers and distributors, to discuss what to do next. I invite Mahmoud.

SUZY

A-ha!

THE PRINCE

I have my chef prepare a wonderful breakfast featuring his famous Eggs bin-hadic.

AYMEN

Eggs Benedict?

THE PRINCE

No. My personal chef Ahmad Wil Safardi bin-hadic. He is the best. . . As we eat, Mahmoud says he wants out.

SUZY

A-ha!!!

THE PRINCE

He wants to spend time with his family.

THE PRINCE

He becomes very emotional, with heavy breath. . .

(the Prince imitates shortness of breath)

Eyes of water, sweat on his head. He says he is being “selfish” and asks to go back to his room. And when I go to find him, a few minutes later, I see him in the hall on the ground with my chef stabbing him --

SUZY

A-HA!

THE PRINCE

--with the, the--?

The Prince struggles for the word.

AYMEN

Sword?

SAMIR

Knife?

YASSER

Epi-pen?!

THE PRINCE

That is it! Epi-pen!

SUZY

A-HA!!

(lets this sink in)

Wait, an epi-pen? What was in the eggs?

THE PRINCE

Oh, it is very delicious. There are eggs, and feta cheese, and eggplant, and minced crab, onions, with a light hollandaise sauce.

SUZY

(bends over the waste basket, nauseous)

Even pregnant, that sounds disgusting.

(it hits her)

The crab! He was not saying he was “selfish.” He was saying he had eaten *shellfish*. He must have been allergic.

SAMIR/AYMEN

Ahhhhh!/That explains a lot./He was not religious at all.

YASSER

But if he was not religious, why did he have to face East every morning?

THE PRINCE

He loved to watch the sunrise.

SUZY

Teresa, why didn't you tell us that Mahmoud was in the urn?

TERESA

(looks up from the stacks of money)

I tell you many times.

SUZY

And you knew how he died?

TERESA

I tell you. *It . . . was . . . the . . . fishy.*

THE PRINCE

And that is why I want to give you the money, Samir. I see Mahmoud's life with a family that I always wanted. It is lonely to be the Prince sometimes. When I hear you are doing construction project. That was a dream of Mahmoud's, you know.

SAMIR

Well, thank you, Prince Shehahdam, but I am going to be busy the next few months. I must be grandfather to my daughter's first born child.

THE PRINCE

Surely, one of you other Matafouks can do this.

SAMIR

Aymen?

AYMEN

(crosses to Teresa)

The prince has taught me that I should find a nice girl and settle down.

SAMIR

Think of our father.

AYMEN

I think he would understand.

SAMIR

Well, there it is.

SUZY

Dad, I'm not due for another five months. . . though I think today has certainly accelerated delivery. Stay until you finish what you started.

YASSER

I would take over if it wasn't for the rule.

THE PRINCE

What rule?

YASSER

A non-Emirati national cannot be lead engineer.

THE PRINCE

(with flair)

Tsk. I will fix it for you.

YASSER

You can do that?

THE PRINCE

I am the Prince!

SUZY

So long as this is settled, if I don't get some sleep soon, you're going to need to bury *me* at sea.

Suzy picks up the urn and puts it back under Mahmoud's picture.

YASSER

(studies the portrait)

Looks like I ended up following in dad's footsteps after all.

AYMEN

For better or for worse.

THE PRINCE

It is better. He loved people. And people loved him. All he wanted to do was help. Maybe he want to do too much, but that is better than those who want to do too little. He left that quality with all of you. We all should have a little Matafouk in us.

All pause to consider the deepest thoughts of the day.

AYMEN

(holds up mug from his desk)

To our father, Mahmoud Matafouk!

Aymen pours pistachios from the mug into the garbage.

Teresa stands, with the briefcase. She hands it back to Samir. There are still stacks of bills on the table.

SAMIR

Oh, uh, Teresa, you left some on the table.

TERESA

(picks it up)

Mr. Samir, I have taken my salary. Thank you for all you have done for me. When I started working for you, I was a simple woman with only a need to provide for my son, but from you, I learn so much. From Mr. Yasser, I discover need for travel. From Mr. Aymen, I know to take action first to protect number one, me. And from Miss Suzy, I develop confidence. I am a strong woman now! Most of all, I thank you to Mr. Samir, From you, I learn how important family is and to spend as much time with my son as possible. And for giving me the opportunity to work for you, and the kindness to bring me into his family. And for your car. I feel like a real Matafouk now. You teach me that God will take care of me when the time is right. And that is exactly when the money appears. Because of all of you, and thanks to God, I am now able to be with my son all the time as we travel around the world to live a good life. May God bless you, Matafouks, and give such a good life too.

SAMIR

We need that money. I need you to keep track of all the documents. You are the engine that makes this company run. Right now, we are very close. I promise you, when we get the first job, you will have your salary, plus a great bonus for your patience and hard work.

AYMEN

Samir, let her go. Yasser can do what is needed.

(approaches Teresa)

Teresa, I wanted to ask you. I have been thinking a great deal about this. If you need someone to care for you and help you take care of your son, I would like to travel with you.

TERESA

(considers this)

Amen. . . Aymen.

Aymen offers Teresa his hand and she puts hers in his.

THE PRINCE

Come, my friends, let us celebrate on the boat!

There is a cheer. Everyone gathers up their things and crosses to the door, happily patting each other on the back. The Prince EXITS, followed by Samir and Suzy, Yasser, then Teresa and Aymen.

Aymen flinches before the door, awaiting sand, but not finding it, straightens up and exits proudly.

END OF MATAFOUK PLAY