

ISAAC: Not the only people to have suffered in a desert for centuries, Amir. Don't know what it says about the *Jewish* psyche, if that's the word we're going to use.

AMIR: Desert pain. I can work with that.

Jews reacted to the situation differently.

They turned it over, and over, and over...

I mean, look at the Talmud. They're looking at things from a hundred different angles, trying to negotiate with it, make it easier, more livable...

JORY: Find new ways to complain about it...

Jory chuckles.

Isaac shoots her a look.

AMIR: Whatever they do, it's not what Muslims do.

Muslims *don't* think about it. They submit.

That's what Islam means, by the way. Submission.

ISAAC: I know what it means.

Look, the problem isn't Islam. It's *Islamofascism*.

EMILY: Guys? Salad?

AMIR: Martin Amis, right?

ISAAC: Hitchens, too. They're not wrong about that...

JORY (*Under*): I'm starving.

AMIR: You haven't read the Quran, but you've read a couple of sanctimonious British bullies and you think you know something about Islam?

Everyone is moving to the table...

EMILY: Amir...

AMIR: What? That's not fair game? If he's going to offer it as a counter, it's fair game.

ISAAC: He has a point. I need to read the Koran.

EMILY (*To Isaac*): Did you want fresh pepper?

JORY: I had to read some of it in college. All I remember is the anger.

AMIR: Thank you. It's like one very long hate-mail letter to humanity.

EMILY: That's not true!

(With the pepper)

Jory?

AMIR: It is *kind of*. Grant me *that* at least...

EMILY: I'll grant you that the Quran sees humanity as stubborn and self-interested—and it takes us to task for that. And I can't say it's wrong to do so—

ISAAC: All I was trying to say with Islamofascism is that there's a difference between the religion and the political use of it.

AMIR: Isaac. In Islam there's no difference. There's no distinction between church and state.

JORY: Don't you mean mosque and state?

AMIR: I do. Thank you.

I'm assuming we're all opposed to people who think the Bible is the Constitution?

Last person has been served. All begin to eat.

EMILY: *Bon appétit.*

ISAAC: *Bon appétit.*

JORY: Mmm. This is so good.

AMIR: Did I tell you, or did I tell you?

EMILY: It's so easy. You slice everything up...

ISAAC (*Looking at his plate*): Fennel, peppers, celery...

EMILY: ...carrots, radishes...

ISAAC: What are these?

EMILY: Baby artichokes...

JORY (*Coming in*): What gets me just as much as people who treat the Bible like the Constitution are the people who treat the Constitution like it's the Bible. I mean, trying to figure out what a text written more than two hundred years ago really meant? Like it's going to solve our problems today?

EMILY: Like all that bullshit about the right to bear arms. It was 1791, people.

AMIR: That's my point. That's exactly what I'm saying. Honey.

ISAAC: Mmm. This is delicious, Em. Really.

EMILY: I picked up the recipe when I was on a Fulbright in Seville.

ISAAC: I love Spain. I ran with the bulls in Pamplona.

JORY: You did not run with the bulls.

ISAAC: I watched people run with the bulls. It was thrilling.

AMIR: We went to Barcelona for our honeymoon.

The chorizo. The paella. The wine.

Spanish wines are so underrated.

ISAAC: See, this is the problem I'm having...

You're saying Muslims are so different. *You're* not that different.

You have the same idea of *the good life* as I do. I wouldn't have even known you were a Muslim if it wasn't for the article in the *Times*.

Pause.

AMIR: I'm not Muslim. I'm an *apostate*. Which means I've renounced my faith.

ISAAC (*Overlapping*): I know what the word *apostate* means.

JORY: Isaac?

AMIR: Do you also know that—according to the Quran—it makes me punishable by death?

EMILY: That's not true, Amir.

AMIR: Yes, it is.

EMILY: Have you even read that part?

Have you?

It condemns renouncing the faith, but it doesn't specify punishment. The tradition has *interpreted* it as punishable by death.

JORY: Impressive...

EMILY: He's repeated it enough, I checked. I have a vested interest, after all.

Women laugh.

AMIR: Fine.

So let's talk about something that *is* in the text.

Wife beating.

ISAAC: Wife beating?

JORY: Great. Could you pass the bread?

EMILY: Amir, really?

AMIR (*Passing the bread*): So the angel Gabriel comes to Muhammad...

ISAAC: Angel Gabriel?

AMIR (*Mocking*): Yeah. That's how Muslims believe the Quran came to humanity. The angel Gabriel supposedly dictated it to Muhammad word for word.

ISAAC: Like Joseph Smith. Mormonism.

An angel named Marami came down in upstate New York and talked to Joseph Smith—

JORY: Moroni, honey. Not Marami.

ISAAC: You sure?

JORY: It was on *South Park*.

Beat.

AMIR: So like I was saying...

The angel Gabriel shows up and teaches Muhammad this verse. You know the one, honey.

I'm paraphrasing...

Men are in charge of women...

EMILY: Amir?

AMIR (*Continuing*):

If they don't obey...

Talk to them.

If that doesn't work...

Don't sleep with them.

And if that doesn't work...

(*Turning to Emily*)

Em?

EMILY: I'm not doing this.

AMIR: *Beat them.*

JORY: I don't remember that being in the Koran.

AMIR: Oh, it's there all right.

EMILY: The usual translation is debatable.

AMIR: Only for people who are trying to make Islam look all warm and fuzzy.

DISGRACED

EMILY: The root verb can mean beat. But it can also mean leave. So it could be saying, if your wife doesn't listen, leave her. Not beat her.

ISAAC: Sounds like a pretty big difference.

AMIR: That's not how it's been interpreted for hundreds of years.

JORY (*Suddenly impassioned*): No. See. Sometimes you just have to say no.

I don't blame the French.

ISAAC: The French?

JORY: For their problem with Islam.

ISAAC: You're okay with them banning the veil?

JORY: You do have to draw the line *somewhere*.

ISAAC: Okay, Mrs. Kissinger.

EMILY: Endearing.

ISAAC: I'm married to a woman who has a Kissinger quote above her desk in the den...

JORY: "*If faced with choosing justice or order, I'll always choose order.*"

EMILY: Why do you have that above your desk?

JORY: To remind me. Not to get lost in the feeling that I need to get *justice*.

You pull yourself out of the ghetto, you realize *real soon* order is where it's at...

EMILY: Me. Justice. Always.

JORY: You know what they say? If you're young and not a liberal, you've got no heart. And if you're old and not a conservative...

AMIR AND JORY (*Together*): ...you've got no brain.

ISAAC: I happen to know a few very brilliant Muslim women who *choose* to wear the veil.

AMIR: You really enjoy playing the contrarian, don't you?

ISAAC: I'm not playing the contrarian.

JORY (*To Isaac, over*): Who do you know that wears the veil?

ISAAC: You wouldn't know them.

JORY: I think you're making it up.

ISAAC: I'm not.

JORY: So who?

ISAAC: Khalid's sister.

JORY: Khalid?

ISAAC: She's a professor of philosophy at Cornell.

She wears the veil.

JORY: Khalid? Your trainer?

AMIR: You train at Equinox?

ISAAC: Yeah.

AMIR: I know Khalid. Balding? With the guns?

ISAAC: That's him. I didn't know you trained at Equinox.

JORY: What's your point?

ISAAC: Khalid may be a trainer, but he comes from a ridiculously educated Jordanian background. All the women in his family wear the veil. By choice.

EMILY: It's not always what people think. It's a source of pride for a lot of Muslim women.

AMIR: First of all, they're probably wearing headscarves. Not the veil. It's not the same thing—

JORY (*Cutting in*): The veil is evil.

You erase a face, you erase individuality.

Nobody's making men erase their individuality.

Why's it always come down to making the woman pay?

Uh-uh. There is a point at which you just have to say no.

AMIR: Just say no.

That is exactly what Muhammad *didn't* do. Here's the irony:

Before becoming a prophet? He was adamant about his followers *not* abusing women.

And then he starts talking to an angel.

I mean, *really*?

ISAAC: I still can't believe I've never seen the parallel with Mormonism before.

AMIR: You keep saying *that* like it means something.

ISAAC: Both religions where you can have multiple wives, too.

Though I think Mormons are okay with dogs.

AMIR: You still don't get it.

ISAAC: Get what? That you're full of self-loathing?

Jory shoots Isaac a look to kill.

AMIR: The Quran is about tribal life in a seventh-century desert, Isaac.

The point isn't just academic.

There's a result to believing that a book written about life in a specific society fifteen hundred years ago is the word of God:

You start wanting to *re-create* that society.

After all, it's the only one in which the Quran makes any literal sense.

That's why you have people like the Taliban. They're trying to re-create the world in the image of the one that's in the Quran.

Amir has since gotten up from the table and is now pouring himself another drink.

EMILY: Honey, I think we get it.

AMIR (To Emily): Actually. I'm pretty sure you don't.

(Continuing, to the others)

Here's the kicker. And this is the real problem:

It goes way deeper than the Taliban.

To be Muslim—*truly*—means not only that you *believe* all this. It means you *fight* for it, too.

Politics follows faith?

No distinction between mosque and state?

Remember all that?

So if the point is that the world in the Quran was a better place than this world, well, then let's go back.

Let's stone adulterers.

Let's cut off the hands of thieves.

Let's kill the unbelievers.

And so, even if you're one of those lapsed Muslims sipping your after-dinner scotch alongside your beautiful white American wife—and watching the news and seeing folks in the Middle East dying for values you were taught were purer—and stricter—and truer...you can't help but feel just a little a bit of pride.

ISAAC: Pride?

AMIR: Yes. Pride.

Beat.

ISAAC: Did you feel pride on September Eleventh?

AMIR (*With hesitation*): If I'm honest, yes.

EMILY: You don't really mean that, Amir.

AMIR: I was horrified by it, okay? Absolutely horrified.

JORY: Pride about what?

About the towers coming down?

About people getting killed?

AMIR: That we were finally winning.

JORY: We?

AMIR: Yeah...I guess I forgot...which *we* I was.

JORY: You're an American...

AMIR: It's tribal, Jor. It is in the bones.

You have no idea how I was brought up.

You have to work *real* hard to root that shit out.

JORY: Well, you need to keep working.

AMIR: I am.

Emily has gotten up to go to Amir.

AMIR (CONT'D): What?

EMILY: That's enough.

(Taking his glass)

I'm gonna make you some coffee.

Emily exits to the kitchen.

Long awkward pause.

AMIR: What?

(To Isaac, conciliatory)

Look...

I'm sure it's not all that different than how you feel about

Israel sometimes...

ISAAC: Excuse me?

AMIR: You're going to tell me you've never felt anything like that—an unexpected *blush* of pride, say...

ISAAC: Blush? I don't feel anything like a blush.

AMIR: When you hear about Israel throwing its military weight around?

ISAAC: I'm critical of Israel. A lot of Jews are.

AMIR: And when you hear Ahmadinejad talk about wiping Israel into the Mediterranean, how do you feel then?

ISAAC: Outraged. Like anybody else.

AMIR: Not everybody's outraged. A lot of folks *like* hearing that.

ISAAC: *You* like hearing that?

AMIR: I said a lot of folks...

Emily appears in the kitchen doorway.

ISAAC: I asked you if *you* like hearing it. Do you like hearing about Israel getting wiped into the ocean?

JORY: Isaac...

ISAAC: No. I want to know...

AMIR: Sometimes? Yes...

EMILY (*With hints of despair*): Amir. We're supposed to be celebrating.

AMIR (*Ignoring, over*): And I'm saying it's wrong.

And it comes from somewhere.

And that somewhere is Islam.

ISAAC: No shit it's wrong.

But it doesn't come from Islam.

It comes from *you*.

Islam has no monopoly on fundamentalism. It doesn't come from a text.

AMIR: You don't need to patronize me—

ISAAC: You've been patronizing me this whole conversation. You don't like organized religion? Fine.

You have a particular antipathy for the one you were born into? Fine.

Maybe you feel a little more strongly about it than most of us because... whatever? Fine.

JORY: Isaac.

ISAAC: But I'm not interested in your *absurd*—and frankly, more than a little terrifying—generalizations...

JORY (*Firm*): Isaac.

ISAAC: What?

JORY: Stop it.

ISAAC: Okay.

Another tense pause.

AMIR: You're naive.

EMILY: Amir. Could you join me in the kitchen?

Emily exits.

AMIR (*Following her out*): Naive and well-meaning. And you're on a collision course with history.

Amir crosses to the kitchen and exits.

ISAAC: I'm naive? What a fucking asshole.

JORY: He's the asshole?

ISAAC: Did you hear him?

JORY: What's gotten into you?

ISAAC: Fucking closet jihadist.

JORY: Will you shut up?

ISAAC: I will never understand what you see in this guy.

JORY: Something's off tonight.
I think maybe he knows.
(Off Isaac's look)

About me.

ISAAC: How would he?

JORY: He's mentioned Steven a few times...

I don't know? Maybe Mort told him?

ISAAC: Well. He's going to find out sooner or later.

JORY: I wanted to be the one to tell him.

I owe him that much.

ISAAC: Then you should have told him when it happened.

JORY: I'm under confidentiality.

ISAAC: Well...

JORY: I think I need to tell him.

The kitchen door flies open, and Amir comes bounding back, heading for the coats.

Emily appears behind him.

AMIR (Clearly intoxicated): You came over here with good news.
We should be celebrating. It's Emily's night. I'm gonna go get us some champagne.

(Off Emily's reaction)

And then we're gonna have a wonderful dinner.

Jory and Isaac share a look.

JORY: I'm gonna come with you. Is that okay?

AMIR: Of course.

Amir puts on his coat.

Jory throws on her coat.

Amir looks at Emily.

AMIR (CONT'D): What?

EMILY: Nothing.

Amir pulls open the door.

Both exit.

Emily turns to Isaac.

EMILY (CONT'D): You think I don't know what you're doing?

ISAAC: What am I doing?

EMILY: Isaac, please.

ISAAC: He's a big boy. He can't handle a little push-back?

Emily heads for the side table to pour herself another drink.

ISAAC (CONT'D): You guys get into an argument before we showed up?

EMILY: Why would we get into an argument?

ISAAC: You're married.

EMILY: I don't have the marriage you do.

(Beat)

You could have told me about the show over the phone.

ISAAC: I wanted to tell you face-to-face.

EMILY: This is my home.

Isaac...

London...

Was a mistake...

ISAAC: I don't think you really believe that.

Isaac touches her. She pulls away.

ISAAC (CONT'D): You're in the show now, so that's it?

EMILY: If that's why you're putting me in the show...

ISAAC: Of course not. God.

The whole idea for the show came from you.

Isaac makes another move toward Emily.

Which she doesn't resist at first. Until she pulls away again.

ISAAC (CONT'D): I had no idea your husband was such a mess.

And a fucking alcoholic to boot.

EMILY: He's not an alcoholic. He had a bad day at the office.

ISAAC: Oh. So he knows.

EMILY: Knows?

ISAAC: About Jory?

EMILY: What about Jory?

ISAAC: They're making her partner.

EMILY: Wait, what?

ISAAC: They offered her a partnership. Name on the firm.

Their counter to the offer she got from Credit Suisse.

EMILY: When did this happen?

ISAAC: Last week.

EMILY: Nobody told Amir.

ISAAC: Well, Jory's telling him right now.

EMILY: I don't understand.

ISAAC: There is not a lot to understand. They like her. They don't like him.

EMILY: Mort's like his father.

ISAAC: Mort doesn't wear the pants. Steven does.

EMILY: Amir's been there twice as long as she has.

ISAAC: Well...

EMILY: What?

ISAAC: The whole thing with the imam?

That Amir represented?

EMILY: He didn't *represent* him.

ISAAC: That's not what the *Times* said.

EMILY: He went to a hearing.

ISAAC: The paper mentioned the firm and they mentioned Amir and it looked like he was representing a man who was raising money for terrorists.

EMILY: That's absurd.

ISAAC: That's not what Steven thought. He went ballistic.

EMILY: He did?

ISAAC: Don't you know this?

Jory said your husband broke down. Was crying at a staff meeting. And apparently shouted something about how if the imam had been a *rabbi*, Steven wouldn't have cared.

Steven thought the comment was anti-Semitic.

EMILY: I'm sorry, but sometimes you people have a problem.

ISAAC: We people?

EMILY: Jews. You see anti-Semitism everywhere.

ISAAC: You're married to a man who feels a blush when Ahmadinejad talks about wiping Jews into the ocean. Steven is a huge fund-raiser for Netanyahu. I have no idea why Amir would go anywhere near a guy like that imam.

EMILY (*Crushed*): For me. He did it for me.

Oh, God.

Pause.

ISAAC: He doesn't understand you. He can't understand you.

He puts you on a pedestal.

It's in your painting.

Study After Velázquez.

He's looking out at the viewer—that viewer is you. You painted it. He's looking at you.

The expression on that face?

Shame. Anger. Pride.

Yeah. The pride he was talking about.

The slave finally has the master's wife.

EMILY: You're disgusting—

ISAAC: It's the truth, Em. And you know it. You painted it.

Silence.

ISAAC (CONT'D): If what happened that night in London was a mistake, Em, it's not the last time you're going to make it.

A man like that...

You *will* cheat on him again. Maybe not with me, but you will.

EMILY: Isaac.

ISAAC: And then one day you'll leave him.

Em. I'm in love with you.

Isaac leans in to kiss her.

Emily doesn't move. In or out.

Just as the front door opens—

Jory enters. In a huff. Returning for Isaac and her things. Ready to leave for the evening—

JORY: Isaac, we need to get out of here—

—but stopped in place by the moment of intimacy between her husband and Emily.

ISAAC: Honey?

JORY: What the fuck is going on here?

Amir enters, inflamed.

AMIR: You wait a week to tell me this? And the second I say something you don't like hearing, you walk away from me in mid-fucking sentence?

Who *are* you?!

Jory just stares at her husband...

AMIR (CONT'D): What?

(Looking around)

What?

JORY (*To Emily*): Are you having an affair with my husband?

AMIR: Excuse me?

ISAAC (*To Jory*): Nobody's having an affair.

JORY: I walked in here and they were kissing.

EMILY: That is not true! Amir, it's not true.

JORY: They were kissing.

(Pointing)

There.

EMILY: That's not what was happening.

JORY: I know what I saw.

EMILY: Isaac told me about them making you partner. I know how much longer Amir has been there than you. I was upset. I was crying.

ISAAC: I was consoling her.

JORY: By kissing her?

EMILY (*Incredulous*): We weren't kissing! Why do you keep saying that?!

JORY (To Isaac): Are you having an affair with her? Tell me the truth.

ISAAC: Honey. I already said. We're not having an affair.

JORY: So *what the fuck* were you doing when I walked in here?

ISAAC (Going to his wife): I was hugging her because she was crying.

JORY: Get off me!

EMILY: I was upset they made you partner.

I know how much longer Amir has been there.

I was crying.

Amir turns to Jory. Vicious.

AMIR: First you steal my job and now you try to destroy my marriage? You're fucking evil. After everything I've done for you?

Jory goes over to get her purse. As if to leave.

JORY: I know what I saw.

AMIR (Exploding): You have any idea how much of myself I've poured into that place? That closet at the end of the hall? Where they keep the cleaning supplies? That was my first office!

Yours had a view of the fucking park!

Your first three years? Were you ever at work before anyone else in the morning?

Were you ever the last one to leave?

Cause if you were, I didn't see it.

I *still* leave the office after you do!

You think you're the nigger here?

I'm the nigger!! Me!!

ISAAC (Going to his wife): You don't need to listen to any more out of this asshole.

JORY (To Isaac): Don't touch me.

AMIR (To Isaac): You're the asshole.

ISAAC: You better shut your mouth, buddy!

AMIR (To Isaac): Or what?!

ISAAC: Or I'll knock you on your *fucking* ass!

AMIR: Try me!

JORY (To Isaac): GET OFF ME!!

Inflamed, Isaac finally releases his wife, facing off with Amir.

When suddenly—

Amir spits in Isaac's face.

Beat.

Isaac wipes the spit from his face.

ISAAC: There's a reason they call you people animals.

Isaac turns to his wife.

Then turns to Emily.

Then walks out.

AMIR (To Jory): Get out.

JORY (Collecting her things): There's something you should know.

Your dear friend Mort is retiring.

And guess who's taking over his caseload? Not you. Me.

I asked him, *Why not Amir?*

He said something about you being duplicitous.

That it's why you're such a good litigator. But that it's impossible to trust you.

(At the door)

Don't believe me?

Call Mort. Ask him yourself.

Let me guess.

He hasn't been taking your calls?

Jory walks out.

Pause.

EMILY: Have you lost your fucking mind?!

Amir turns away, withdrawing into himself. Pacing. The inward spiral deepening.

EMILY (CONT'D): Amir!

AMIR: She's right. He hasn't been taking my calls.

EMILY: I'm gonna get you that coffee.

Emily heads for the kitchen...

Leaving Amir onstage by himself for a moment. As he watches the swinging door sway. Back and forth.

Emily returns. A mug in hand.

AMIR: Em.

Something in Amir's tone—vulnerable, intense—stops her in place.

AMIR (CONT'D): Are you sleeping with him?

Pause.

Emily puts the mug down on the table.

Beat. Finally shakes her head.

EMILY: It was in London. When I was at Frieze.

We were drinking. It's not an excuse...

It's just...

We'd just been to the Victoria and Albert. He was talking about my work.

And...

Emily—seeing how her words are landing on her husband—makes her way to him.

EMILY (CONT'D) (*Approaching*): Amir, I'm so disgusted with myself. If I could take it back.

All at once, Amir hits Emily in the face. A vicious blow.

The first blow unleashes a torrent of rage, overtaking him. He hits her twice more. Maybe a third. In rapid succession. Uncontrolled violence as brutal as it needs to be in order to convey the discharge of a lifetime of discreetly building resentment.

(In order for the stage violence to seem as real as possible, obscuring it from direct view of the audience might be necessary. For it to unfold with Emily hidden by a couch, for example.)

After the last blow, Amir suddenly comes to his senses, realizing what he's done.

AMIR: Oh, my God...

Just as...

There's a KNOCKING at the door.

Beat.

And then more KNOCKING.

Finally, the door gently opens. To show:

Abe.

Abe looks over and sees—as we do—Emily emerge into full view, on the ground, her face bloodied.

Abe looks up at Amir.

Lights Out.

Scene Four

Six months later.

The dining table, a couple of chairs.

Much of the furniture gone. The rest of the room covered with the detritus of moving. Boxes, etc.

The painting above the mantel is gone.

Along one wall leans a smaller, partially wrapped canvas. It is turned away from the audience.

As the lights come up, Amir is on stage. Quietly going about the process of packing. There should be something muted about his movement/presence. As if a man chastened by life, perhaps even crippled inwardly.

He has a thought and heads for the kitchen. Just as he exits, there is a KNOCKING at the front door...

He reemerges. Crossing and going to the door. He opens to find:

Emily. And, to one side, Abe. Abe is wearing a Muslim skullcap. And his wardrobe is muted. Unlike the vibrant colors of the first scene.

AMIR: Em?

AYAD AKHTAR

EMILY: Can we come in?

AMIR: Of course.

They enter.

Abe appears reluctant. Not meeting Amir's gaze.

AMIR (CONT'D): What's going on here? Everything all right?

EMILY: Not really.

AMIR: What?

Emily looks at Abe, but Abe doesn't respond.

AMIR (CONT'D): Huss?

No response.

Amir turns to Emily, making a gesture toward her, not even realizing it...

AMIR (CONT'D): Em?

EMILY (Recoiling): No, please.

(Beat)

He's been coming to me. You need to hear this.

(To Abe)

Tell him.

ABE: He's not going to understand.

EMILY: He got stopped by the FBI.

AMIR: What?

ABE: I didn't get stopped.

AMIR: What happened?

EMILY: Just sit down and tell him.

AMIR: What happened?

DISGRACED
ABE: I didn't get stopped. All I was doing was sitting in Starbucks...

EMILY: With your friend...

AMIR: Don't tell me... Tariq?

ABE: Yeah.

AMIR: Hasn't everybody been telling you—

EMILY (Coming in): Let him speak.

ABE: My parents are wrong about him.

AMIR: Okay.

ABE: We were at Starbucks. Just drinking coffee. Tariq starts talking to this barista who's on break. I can tell she's not into him. He's not getting the message... She starts asking about our kufi hats and are we Muslims. And then she asks us how we feel about Al-Qaeda. So Tariq tells her. Americans are the ones who created Al-Qaeda.

(Off Amir's look)

You don't believe me?

AMIR: That's not really the—

ABE: The CIA trained the mujahideen in Afghanistan. Those are the guys that became Al-Qaeda.

AMIR: I mean, it's a little more complicated than that—

ABE: Actually, it's not, Uncle. Not really.

AMIR: Okay. What happened?

ABE: So she got snippy. And Tariq got pissed. He told her this country deserved what it got and what it was going to get.

(Pause)

She goes back to work, and before we know it, the police are there. She called them. They cuff us. Take us in. Two guys from the FBI are at the station, waiting.

(Beat)

We sit through this ridiculous interrogation.

AMIR: What did they ask you?

ABE: Do we believe in jihad? Do we want to blow stuff up? How often did I read the *Koran*?

AMIR: Okay...

ABE: Do we have girlfriends? Had I ever had sex? Do I watch porn? Do I hate America?

(Beat)

They knew a lot about me. Where I'd gone to school. About Mom and Dad, where they were born. Like they already had a file.

They brought up my immigration status.

AMIR: What about it?

EMILY: It's up for renewal.

ABE: When they said that...

(Hesitating)

...I laughed.

AMIR: You laughed?

ABE: I didn't mean to. It just happened.

AMIR: Were you trying to antagonize them?

ABE: No.

I mean...

(Pause)

Look. I know what they're doing.

AMIR: What are they doing?

ABE: They're going into our community and looking for people whose immigration status is vulnerable. Then they push us to start doing stuff for them.

AMIR: Okay...

ABE: So what? You don't believe that either?

AMIR: I didn't say that.

Pause.

EMILY *(Suddenly moving off)*: I'm gonna go. He needed to talk to you...

AMIR: Where are you going?

ABE *(Standing)*: Aunt Emily. Stay. Please.

She stops.

Beat.

Finally nods, still reluctant.

EMILY: I'm gonna get some...water.

Emily crosses to the kitchen. Exits.

Beat.

AMIR: Is she okay?

ABE: I don't want to talk about that.

Amir starts dialing on his phone.

ABE *(CONT'D)*: Who are you calling? You can't call Mom. She's gonna freak out.

AMIR: I'm calling Ken.

ABE: Ken?

AMIR: The lawyer on Imam Fareed's case...

(Into the phone)

Hi, Ken, it's Amir. Please call me back when you get this. It's urgent. Thanks.

(Pause, then to Abe)

When you step out of your parents' house, you need to understand that it's not a neutral world out there. Not right

now. Not for you. You have to be mindful about sending a different message.

ABE: Than what?

AMIR: Than the one that landed you in an interrogation with the FBI.

Pause.

ABE: So now what?

AMIR: Let's hear what Ken has to say. I mean, it's not good. But at least they let you go.

ABE: If he tells me that I have to go into our mosque and pretend I'm planning some bullshit attack just to stay in this country—

AMIR: You don't know that's what's going to happen.

ABE: If you spent any time with your own people...

AMIR: Excuse me?

Beat.

ABE: What would you do? If the FBI asked you to work for them? Hmm?

AMIR: We're not there yet...

ABE (*Cutting him off*): What would you do?

AMIR (*Considering*): There are ways...to let the authorities know that...you're on their side...

ABE: But I'm not on their side.

AMIR: You might want to rethink that. Because they make the rules.

ABE: I knew this was a mistake.

AMIR: It's not a mistake. If you're not smarter about this, you are going to get deported.

Beat.

ABE: Yeah, well, maybe that wouldn't be the worst thing.

AMIR: To a country you haven't known since you were eight years old.

ABE: Maybe that's the problem. Maybe we never should've left. Maybe we never should have come to this one.

AMIR: There's a reason your father came here. Same reason my father did. They wanted to make a better life for themselves and their families—

ABE (*Over*): A better life?!?

AMIR (*Continuing*): —and to do it honestly. Which isn't an option in Pakistan.

ABE (*Exploding*): You don't have a better life!

AMIR: What are you talking about?

ABE: I know you were fired!

AMIR: I don't know what you think you know—

ABE (*Quiet, intense*): I know what you did to her. How could you?

Beat.

AMIR: I don't know.

Beat.

ABE: You want something from these people you will never get.

AMIR: I'm still your elder. You need to show me a little respect.

ABE: Just because I'm telling you the truth doesn't mean I'm not showing you respect.

(*Beat*)

You forgot who you are.

AMIR (*Triggered*): Really? *Abe Jensen?*!

ABE: I changed it back!

AMIR: So now you think running around with a kufi on your head, shooting your mouth off in Starbucks, or sitting in a mosque and bemoaning the plight of Muslims around the world is going to—

ABE (*Interrupting*): It's disgusting. The one thing I can be sure about with you? You'll always turn on your own people. You think it makes these people like you more when you do that? They don't. They just think you hate yourself. And they're right! You do!

I looked up to you. You have no idea—

AMIR: No. I know.

ABE: No! You have no idea what it did to me!

(*Beat*)

I mean, if you can't make it with them...?

(*Having a dawning thought*)

The Prophet wouldn't be trying to be like one of them. He didn't conquer the world by copying other people. He made the world copy him.

AMIR: Conquer the world?

ABE: That's what *they've* done.

They've conquered the world.

We're gonna get it back.

That's our destiny. It's in the Quran.

We see Emily appear at the swinging door, listening.

Abe doesn't notice her.

ABE (CONT'D): For three hundred years they've been taking our land, drawing new borders, replacing our laws, making us want be like them. Look like them. Marry their women.

They disgraced us.

They disgraced us.

And then they pretend they don't understand the rage we've got?

Emily emerges.

Abe realizing she has heard him.

Abe moves to the door. Stops. Looks back at Emily.

ABE (CONT'D): I'm sorry.

AMIR: Hussein...

ABE: I'll handle it myself, Uncle.

Abe exits.

Leaving Amir and Emily.

Silence.

AMIR: My sister's been telling me about him...I didn't realize...

(*More silence*)

Are you reading my letters?

EMILY: Amir...

AMIR: I got the painting.

EMILY: I didn't want to throw it out.

AMIR: There was no note...

(*Beat*)

Look, I told your lawyer I wanted you to have the apartment. I mean, I wrote you that, but I have no idea if—

EMILY: The apartment's not mine.

Beat.

AMIR: If you hate me so much, why did you drop charges?

EMILY: I don't hate you, Amir.

Pause.

AMIR: I saw the write-up in *The New Yorker*. I was so proud of you.

EMILY: Oh.

Pause.

AMIR: I don't know if you've read any of my letters... There's a lot you were right about me.

I'm finally seeing what you were seeing.

I'm finally understanding your work.

EMILY: My work was naive.

AMIR: No, it wasn't. Why are you saying that?

EMILY: Because it's true.

AMIR: God. If you had any idea how sorry I am.

EMILY: I know.

Emily crosses. Stopping when she gets to the door.

EMILY (CONT'D): I had a part in what happened.

AMIR: Em. No.

EMILY: It's true.

(Beat)

I was selfish.

My work...

It made me blind.

AMIR: I just...

(Long pause, Amir emotional)

I just want you to be proud of me.

I want you to be proud you were with me.

Beat.

EMILY: Good-bye, Amir.

Please. Don't write me anymore.

She exits.

Long beat.

As Amir walks over to return to packing, he notices...

The partially wrapped canvas against the wall.

He walks over to it, picks it up. Then tears the rest of the wrapping off. From his position on stage, we will only see enough of the painting to realize:

It is Emily's portrait of him. Study After Velázquez's Moor.

He takes a searching long look.

Lights Out.