

Yasmina's Necklace

By Rohina Malik

Staged Reading at The Den May 2011

Produced by Esteban Andres Cruz

Directed by Coya Paz

Dana Dajani- Dramaturg

Dramturgical Note by Dana Dajani

“ In May of 2003, my family and I were swiftly evacuated out of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia when the compound on which we lived was bombed by Al Qaeda. The next place the four of us found ourselves was in the heart of America- Kansas.

Being an Arab-American post 9/11 was like tight-rope walking in combat boots. I prayed that the topic of the Middle Eastern occupation would remain dormant in my Midwestern, white-dominated school, for fear of having to defend my nationality against the ruthless Fox- fed generalization that Terrorism is an expressly Middle Eastern mentality. In the years to follow, I witnessed many Arabs and Muslims distance themselves from their heritage, so as not to be associated with a group of radicals that has no affiliation with the concept, or practice, of submission to the divine will of the creator, *Islam*. All of a sudden, by token of the same tragedy, Muslims became both the aggressors and the victims.

Imagine what it is like to hear these two headlines in the same newscast as an Arab in America, “*Al Qaeda claims responsibility for attack*” and “*Prisoners tortured in Abu Ghraib.*” How do you begin to express yourself when bound between those two realities? Scorned by people all over the world, Arabs and Muslims are actually jumping at the chance to express our humanity, to prove our ability and affinity for compassion and love, through art. After years of not stirring a scene that would land another Arabic name on the news, we are again actively taking a role in public discourse. The reputation of Arabs and Muslims around the world is finally being resurrected from a multitude of socially debilitating media massacres. Ready to take charge of our own reputation and opinions, we now pass from eager listeners back to story-tellers. ” *

Yasmina's Necklace invites us into the lives of a diverse group of Muslim- Americans who practice their religion through love (which surpasses tolerance), while examining the intention of traditions and religion, and their roles in our modern society. Rohina Malik offers genuine insight into the lives of those who, for the past decade, have been at receiving end of a war we have hardly felt the weight of here in America. While we cheer at planes on parade during the *Air and Water Show* in the coming weeks, we must not forget that these technologies which we celebrate are actually machines of war that leave Iraqis blistering, burning, and buried in their wake.

The terrors of war, destruction at this degree, cause a violent paradigm shift. Bombs tend to blast a hole in the fabric of your security blanket, leaving the thin thread of life exposed in a fraying fringe. What does it mean to move on from those experiences, to piece together a new life? What is the cost of creating from ruins?

My way of coping, of rebuilding, was to own my experience. We often use symbols to represent ideas and experiences, because symbols contain unique possibility. Many people tattoo their bodies to mark themselves forever changed. In *Yasmina's* case, she hung Iraq around her neck to hold her home close to her heart, determined to never forget, to always own her past, to wear her history. This is the resiliency of the human spirit- rooted strongly in heritage, always growing upwards towards the light, blooming and blossoming when nurtured by love, willing to share, longing for *salaam*, for peace.

* From Dana's recently published essay, “The Untold Tale: Responsibility, Ritual and Renaissance in the Arab World” which you can read at <http://danathescientist.blogspot.com>

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Key to the script:

- **Exact redundancy-** I feel there can be an OPPORTUNITY to add more Arabic phrases, or English poetic translations of Arabic metaphors. In the glossary, you will find I have **translated** phrases into Arabic, to give you the opportunity to incorporate them if you wish.
- All defined and translated terms are categorized by color and listed in chronological order.

GLOSSARY

Pronunciation key – I will practice these sounds with you!

3- an open ah from the back and bottom from your throat

7- a very harsh h

2- glottal

^- raised inflection

`- emphasis

Greetings

- **Ahlan wa sahan** (pg 4): *Arabic*, Welcome & be at ease. Similar to “sit back and relax”
Pronunciation: éh lan wâ sáh lan
- **Salaamu Alaykum** (pg 15): *Arabic*, Peace be upon you.
Pronunciation: sell-âamu 3aláykum
- **Wa alaykum Salaam** (pg 15): *Arabic*, (response) And on you may there be peace.
Pronunciation: wa 3aláykum ás-sell-âam
(Other responses: **Ahléin** and **yá hâla**, which are variations on the same thing)
- **Salaam alaika wa rahmatullahi wa barakto** (pg 19): *Arabic*, Peace be on you brother, and the grace of god and his blessings.
Pronunciation: sell-âamu 3aláyka wa ra7matulláhi wa barakáto
- **Ma Salaama** (pg 42): *Arabic*, Depart with peace.
Pronunciation: Ma3á sell-amah
- **Salamaat** (pg 44): *Arabic*, Peaceful blessings.
Pronunciation: Sell-ahmâat

Respect

- **“Praise Allah”** (pg 4): translated in Arabic is **“al hamdu lillah”**
Pronunciation: el 7âmdu lilláh

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- “God is Great” (pg 4): translated in Arabic is “Allahu akbar”
Pronunciation: *úlláhu ákbar*
- stage direction: “(He hands Musa a small Bonsai tree)” (pg 15): It is a sign of respect and gratitude to bring a gift for the host on the first occasion that you enter their home.
- “for Allah’s sake” (pg 15/6): translated in Arabic is “mshaan Allah”
Pronunciation: *im shaan úllah*
- “Pure” (pg 21): A woman must be a virgin before she is married; it is a sign of her chastity when she bleeds on the bed sheets on the night of the wedding. Those sheets are sometimes shown to the mother of the bride and groom so that they can vouch for the woman’s honor.
- Instead of “I’m so sorry” (pg 35): Customarily after a death, in Arabic you would say “allah yer7amha”: “God bless her”
Pronunciation: *alláh yer 7ám ha*
- or “il 3omor illak”: “the age is yours”
Pronunciation: *il 3ómar illak*
- battle cry (pg 42): At weddings and celebrations, Arabic women are known to give a trilling shriek. To listen to what this sounds like, listen to the first 30 seconds of “Summer of Saadi Mixtape” [here](#).
- “I am so grateful to God” (pg 43): translated n Arabic is “bashkur Allah”
Pronunciation: *béshkur úlláh*

Disrespect

- “Peter King hearings” (pg 8): try reading the FOX News report the [here](#) from the perspective of a Muslim. [Here](#) is an article on the Peter King hearings from Palestinian-American comedian Dean Obeidallah, who reports for Al Jazeera English and CNN.
- “Al keida” (pg 9): A “Fox News” pronunciation of [Al Qaeda](#), the terrorist organization that has claimed responsibility for bombings all around the world.
- “Picked up your shoes and threw them at me” (pg 9): The bottom of the shoe is thought to be a very dirty place, in fact, it is “against” Islam that a shoe should be

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laying sole-up facing God. Remember when the man in Iraq threw his shoe at George Bush?

- **“You humiliated us in front of the entire Muslim community!” (pg 10):** The Arab culture is a society that is very much dependant on “keeping up with the Smiths” much to the dismay and neglect of the younger generations, who would rather be accepted for who they are than passively play a role.
- **“It was that you never came to me. You never asked me for any advice.” (pg 10):** As in many cultures, it is sign of respect in the Arab world to seek advice and counsel on your path from the spiritual and community elders, who have more experience than you and can see a bigger picture.

Religion

- **Imam (pg 2):** *Arabic*, Leader of prayer at the mosque.
Pronunciation: **E mâam**
- **Barakah (pg 4):** *Arabic*, Blessing
Pronunciation: **bérr a kah**
- **Masjid (pg 6):** *Arabic*, Mosque
Pronunciation: **més jid**
- **Allah's will (pg 13):** The will of God translated in Arabic is **“En sha2 allah”**
Pronunciation: **en sha2ùllah**
- **Hijab (pg 14):** Hijab is the scarf that women wear to cover their hair. The act of wearing hijab is not explicitly commanded by the Quran. Instead, it is recommended that women dress modestly, so as not to attract attention. For a history of Hijab, read [here](#).
Pronunciation: **he jhab**
- **Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him (pg 20):** A phrase of reference said whenever one mentions the name of the prophet Mohammed, translated in Arabic is **“sulla allah 3aleihi wa salam”**
Pronunciation: **“sùlla allâh 3alei he wa sálam”**
- **Quran (pg 22):** In Islam it is believed that God had a message for humanity, and sent it down to Moses in the 10 commandments. When it was clear the message needed to be revised for clarification, it was sent down to Jesus in the Bible. As the message was rewritten so often the original text had been adulterated, it was sent it down to Mohammed in the Quran, with an explicit mandate that in any

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copy of the text, the original Arabic must be printed alongside every translation. One of the miracles of the Quran was that Mohammad was not a literate man. The Quran is meant to be heard, not read. What this great TED talk [here](#) for more info.

Pronunciation: *qur ahn*

- **Islam (pg 22):** The practice of peaceful submission to the will of the divine creator. For facts on the demographic and mandates of the religion, click [here](#).
Pronunciation: *iss lam*
- **Sunni (pg 28):** Before passing on to the afterlife, Mohammad said, “ May the man closest to me continue spreading the message of Allah.” From the discrepancy of this phrase two sects of Islam were born. The Sunni follow the sunnah (see below), and believed that Mohammad was referring to Abu Baker—the man physically closest to Mohammed when he passed away—his best friend and right hand man. The Sunni do not believe that Abu Baker was a prophet, as they believe Mohammed to be the last prophet of God.
Pronunciation: *suhn nee*
- **Shia (pg 28):** The Shia believe that Mohammed was referring to the man closest to him in kin, which was his cousin, Ali. The Shia follow the teachings of the 12 Imams following Mohammed. There is no difference in practice between the religions except for whom they chose to lead them. The difference in prayer is but a mere lifting of a single finger in the ritual. Find out more on prayers in the “additional information” section.
Pronunciation: *she 3a*
- **Sufi (pg 28):** An Abrahamic Arabic religion, commonly known for it’s whirling dervishes, and most preserved by works of poets such as Rumi, read more [here](#).
Pronunciation: *soo fi*
- **“To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return.” (pg 36):** translated in Arabic, “**inna lillahi wa ina illaihi raji3oon**” a phrase offered as condolence.
Pronunciation: *innana lilla’he wa innana e lay-he raji 3oon*
- **Fatiha (pg 39):** The opening verse of the Quran, click [here](#) to see the English translation of the Fatiha.
Pronunciation: *Fá ti 7a*
- **Ketbal Kitab (pg 45):** *Arabic*, literally translated to “writing the book.” Signing the marriage vows, similar to getting a marriage license.
Pronunciation: *Kehtb il ktab*

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- *Bismillah Ir Rahman Nir Raheem* (pg 45) : “In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind” (pg 48) The evocation of Gods name to bless prayer.
Pronunciation: *Biss millah ir ra7man irra7im*

- *Sadaqah* (pg 46): *Arabic*, Charity.
Pronunciation: *Sa da qah*

- *Sunnah* (pg 53): *Arabic*, “Habit” or “custom,” referring to the living practice of Mohammed, such as "Obey God and His messenger". The Sunnah has a central role in providing a moral example and ethical guidance to Muslims.

Pronunciation: *son ah*

Names

- *Baghdad* (pg 4): Capital of Iraq, one of the oldest cities in the world and cradle of civilization and innovation. Read all about the origins of one of the oldest cities in civilization in my recently published essay [here](#).

Pronunciation: *bagh dád.*

- *Iraq* (pg 4): Middle Eastern country, home to Arabs, Christians and Kurds. For more information read about Iraq [here](#).

Pronunciation: *3i rahk*

- *Malcriado* (pg 5): *Spanish*, Spoiled.

Pronunciation: *Mál criado*

- *Baba* (pg 5): *Arabic*, Papa, Dad.

Pronunciation: *bába*

- *Mentiroso* (pg 6): *Spanish*, Liar.

Pronunciation: *Mèntirôso*

- *Sadat Hussain* (pg 6): Arabic male's name that sounds like former Iraqi dictator's name, Saddam Hussein.

Pronunciation: *Sa daht who sein*

- *Habibi* (pg 8): *Arabic*, Darling (for a boy)

Pronunciation: *7abee bee*

- *Habibti* (pg 45) *Arabic*, Darling (for a girl)

Pronunciation: *7a beeb ti*

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- *Gringa* (pg 9): *Spanish*, white girl.
Pronunciation: *green ga*
- *Jamal* (pg 9): Arabic male's name, meaning "beauty".
Pronunciation: *ja maal*
- *Waseem* (pg 12): Arabic Male's name, meaning "graceful".
Pronunciation: *wah seam*
- *Majnoona* (pg 14): *Arabic*, Crazy (for a girl), *Majoon* (for a boy)
Pronunciation: *maj noon ah*
- *Abu* (pg 54): *Arabic*, Father of.
Pronunciation: *uh boo*

Phrases

- *Perdon, mama, pero dejame explicar!* (pg 5): *Spanish*, Sorry Mom, but let me explain.
Pronunciation: *Perdòn, màma, pero déjame explicár!*
- *No me importa!* (pg 5): *Spanish*, I don't care.
Pronunciation: *Nó me impórta!*
- *Shukran* (pg 15): *Arabic*, Thank you.
Pronunciation: *Shùkran*
- *Taffaddalu* (pg 15): *Arabic*, Come, sit down.
Pronunciation: *Taffâddalù*
- *Ay, Dios mio!* (pg 15): *Spanish*, Oh, my God.
Pronunciation: *Ay, Dios mìo!*
- *Masha allah* (pg 16): *Arabic*, Praise to what god has willed, similar to "knock on wood."
Pronunciation: *Ma sha2 Àllah*
- *Gracias* (pg 17): *Spanish*, Thank you.
Pronunciation: *Gràcias*
- *Lesh?* (pg 18): *Arabic*, Why?
Pronunciation: *Laish*

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- *Ya Allah!* (pg 20): *Arabic*, Oh my god.
Pronunciation: *Yah 2ullâh!*
- *Por favor sacame de aqui* (pg 21): *Spanish*, Please get me out of here.
Pronunciation: *Por favôr sâcame de aqui*
- *Callate la boca* (pg 21): *Spanish*, Shut your mouth.
Pronunciation: *Caya te la bóca*
- *Shu?* (pg 28): *Arabic*, What?
Pronunciation: *Shoo*
- *La, Shukran* (pg 29): *Arabic*, No, thank you.
Pronunciation: *La2 Shukran*
- *Mama una vez me preguntó que si las pruebas y tribulaciones de la vida me despedaban en miles de pedazos, volvería a sentirme completo en los brazos de Tracy. Sabía que la respuesta era no. Y sin embargo, en tus brazos sé, sé que volvería a serlo.* (pg 40): *Spanish*, Mother once asked me, when the questions and tribulations of my life leave me in a million pieces, if I return to feeling complete in the arms of Tracy. I know that the answer is no. And without holding you I know that in your arms is where I will feel complete.
Pronunciation: *Mama úna véz me preguntó que si las pruébas y tribulaciónes de la vida me despedában en miles de pedázos, volvería a sentirme complèto en los brázos de Tracy. Sabía que la respùesta era no. Y sin embárgo, en tus brázos sé, sé que volvería a sérlo*
- *if God wills it* (pg 42): *Arabic*, *in sha'allah* (pg 56) , If god wills it.
Pronunciation: *in sha2 allâh*
- *La* (pg 45): *Arabic*, No.
Pronunciation: *La2*
- *Haraam* (pg 45): *Arabic*, In a religious context, meaning “forbidden.” Also used to say “pity.”
Pronunciation: *7a rahm*
- *Bruja loca!* (pg 46): *Spanish*, Crazy witch.
Pronunciation: *Brùja lòca!*
- *Min fadlik* (pg 54): *Arabic*, If you please.

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Pronunciation: *Min fud lick*

- *Kafe!* (pg 58): *Arabic*, Enough.
Pronunciation: *Kafee*
- *Yallah, Ta'aal!* (pg 61): *Arabic*, Hurry up and come here.
Pronunciation: *Yall uh ta'3aal*

Other words

- *Naseeha* (pg 39): *Arabic*, Advice.
Pronunciation: **nah see 7a**
- *Tele Novellas* (pg 22): *Spanish*, Soap operas.
Pronunciation: **telleh no vellas**
- *Nakhla* (pg 53): *Arabic*, Date fruit/ tree.
Pronunciation: **nakh lah**
- *Naseeb* (pg 59): *Arabic*, Fate, destiny, literally meaning “share” or one’s “share in life”. The word is used also in Turkish, Urdu, Hindi and Persian.
Pronunciation: **na seeb**
- *Oud* (pg 59): *Arabic*, Arabic guitar like instrument, to listen to Oud music click [here](#).
Pronunciation: **3ood**
- *Sook* (pg 60): *Arabic*, Market.
Pronunciation: **sou2**

On names

- The word ‘YasminA’ “changes meaning” by adding the “a” because it becomes *singular*
- The Arabic word for “to name” is “samee”, which sounds like Sam, and Samee3

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[Other topics to check out online:](#)

- **Names and numerology:** read [what is in a name change](#) here
- **The Nation of Islam vs. Islam:** The Nation of Islam is another sect of Islam that has chosen to follow the teachings of [The Honorable Elijah Mohammed](#). It was founded in the United States and its practitioners are predominantly African American.
- **Terrorism and Islamophobia:** Watch a short video [here](#) from the 1700% project
- **Post traumatic stress syndrome:** read about symptoms of PTSS [here](#)
- **The Nine Parts of Desire:** A play written by Iraq-American playwright, Heather Raffo. Listen to a [monologue](#) from her performance here for testimonial on living in war-torn Iraq.
- **Islamic Greeting Etiquette:** Greeting is the very first step to spreading the love of Islam, read the guidelines to greeting Muslim brothers and sisters [here](#)
- **Painters from war-torn countries:** check out this [list](#) of war artists.
- **Prayer in Islam:** Muslims pray 5 times a day, a practice that includes ablution. Watch this video [here](#) from 2:05 onwards
- **Iraq and the Abassid Empire:** Read my [essay](#) on the history of Iraq for a sense of the rich culture and society that was lost.

