A TRUE STORY

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Cast

ABAL:

a buxom bulky woman who is secure in her person

and remarkably light on her feet. She has had four children

SAMEH is her last child and only daughter. Born in Syria.

Her husband works for an engineering firm. It was not an

arranged marriage.

SAMEH:

even lighter on her feet than her mother, her sense of freedom

has been encouraged by her father’s love and her mother’s

generosity of spirit. She has long hair and carefully applied

make-up. She has been working since High School as a waitress.

Time: September 2014

Place: Springfield, Mass.

*NB Austria, September 2014*

AT RISE: Living room/kitchen of a modest suburban split level ranch. Through the window a mass of tall fir trees. Arabic writing from the Koran on the walls and also an Arabic proverb, ‘heaven lies under the feet of mothers’. Heavy winter coats and boots are near the door. ABAL is putting clean clothes in a suitcase, showing some impatience as she does so. When finished she hovers near the laptop on the desk and slowly lifts lid. SAMEH enters dragging a heavy looking suitcase.

SAMEH(No Arabic accent)

What are you doing?

ABAL(thick Arabic accent)

I’m going to take lessons.

SAMEH  
Not on my laptop. I’m taking that.

ABAL  
Why? You don’t need a laptop on the beach!

SAMEH

Yes I will, Samra’s not taking hers.

ABAL (slowly stroking keys)  
You don’t need. Samra don’t need. All night you do the Net here, so go there and have a break.

SAMEH(slamming laptop shut)

I do need the laptop in case we can’t find the place when we get to Turkey. I need to be able to go on the Net to make sure of everything.

ABAL

They have the Net in Turkey?

SAMEH  
Oh Mum! You’re priceless!

(SAMEH inspects suitcase ABAL has packed and

throws out a bathing suit.)

ABAL  
You not taking? You need it on the beach! You can swim.

SAMEH  
I’m not going to expose myself to foreigners on the beach.

ABAL

Foreigners? Oh la! In Turkey people are like us.

SAMEH  
You know what I mean?

ABAL  
I do? You like to swim. You win a medal! Where is that medal?

SAMEH  
I’m not interested in their stupid medals.

ABAL  
You cried when they gave it to you.

SAMEH  
I was an air-head then, a teenager!

ABAL  
I see. Now you’re twenty!

SAMEH  
I’m a grown up! You know what that means.

ABAL

And why so far away for vacation? So far away?

SAMEH  
Quit worrying! And pack me some halva, the best stuff, the stuff you’ve got in the freezer.

(ABAL exits)

SAMEH (dials on her phone)

I’m ready. I’ve said goodbye. Well, I will. No, I’m coming. I believe in you. Alukakkbar, I believe!

(ABAL enters, shocked)

ABAL

I SAW IT! In the fridge, I saw a man’s head. There’s a man’s head in my freezer!

SAMEH  
What are you talking about?

(SHE rushes out)

ABAL(kneels to pray)

I am going mad, it can’t be true. I am seeing things.

(SAMEH)

SAMEH  
You are seeing things!

ABAL  
Yes, you are right! But they said in newspaper, yes? They cut off man’s head and put it in fridge. I saw the picture.

SAMEH  
Not in OUR fridge!

ABAL  
No, no, of course not. But I saw it….

SAMEH  
You are hallucinating!

ABAL  
Something…

SAMEH  
Anyway, I don’t believe any of those newspaper reports. They make things up to make us look bad.

ABAL

Yes, yes.

SAMEH  
Dad knows, it’s all propaganda to get us out the country.

ABAL  
Who knows?

SAMEH  
I know! They hate us!

(SAMEH puts boots from hall in suitcase)

ABAL  
You don’t need boots on the beach.

SAMEH  
There are mountains there! I’m not going to Florida! And besides, I have friends in Turkey. Friends I’ve made on the Net.

ABAL  
That’s good! Yes, that’s good! Boys?

SAMEH  
No! You know I’m through with boys!

ABAL  
You *are* going with Samra? You are telling me the truth!

SAMEH  
Yes, if you don’t believe me, call her. Call her mother if you don’t

believe her. Go on…(handing remote house phone to ABAL) Go on,

call her mother.

ABAL (taking phone and putting it down)

I do believe you! She is your shadow, Samra. What’s the other case for?

SAMEH

So many questions! Samra needs room in my suitcase.

ABAL  
I see. Your Ba happy you’re going to Turkey and not Florida. He wants to come with you.

SAMEH  
You’re not serious!

ABAL  
He needs vacation too, but no time off work.

SAMEH  
 He’s *my* shadow, he is, and he doesn’t understand me. Not like his precious sons.

ABAL  
Don’t say things about your father. Respect!

SAMEH  
He doesn’t respect me!

ABAL  
I see!

SAMEH  
Don’t laugh at me mum! Don’t ever laugh at me! That was Jason’s mistake.

ABAL  
Why he laugh at you?

SAMEH  
If you knew…

ABAL  
Tell me!

SAMEH  
Because….no, I don’t want to….because I have hairy arms! His family doesn’t have hair on their arms.

ABAL  
Ah, that’s why you shave them. But Jason, he’s young. Young as you.

SAMEH (Putting her cd/radio player in suitcase)  
I am not! And you don’t know the half of it, what went on in school! No more! I’m done!

ABAL  
Why you want radio?

SAMEH  
It’s a cheap hotel. They won’t have music or radio!

ABAL  
I have a bad feeling about this. Are are coming back?

Where are you really going? You tell me nothing!

SAMEH  
Oh Mum! I love you!

(SAMEH hugs her mother, a shade too long)

ABAL  
Why are you crying?

SAMEH  
I’m not crying! I’m not! I’m not! I’m going to get my wash stuff!

ABAL  
Okay!

(SAMEH exits. ABAL opens big suitcase.

She unpacks books and another laptop, winter

clothes. She stands up quickly. Looks like she

is about to pray, changes her mind and grabs phone. She hesitates, but then dials)

ABAL  
Is that the Police? Can you come to my house? I have something to report. My daughter has to be questioned about her journey to Turkey.

End of play

**A TRUE STORY**

**by**

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