

When Maryam calls Sophie and tells her that she is thinking of leaving her husband, and no, she is not joking, not being silly, not saying things, not trying to ruin herself, ruin the name of a good man, a big man, a man who calls her ya habibi albi everywhere, at home, at the masjid, at the grocery stores, in his big speech on Eid, the same man who showed up that day at her workplace with flowers after returning home from a long trip and picked her up, twirled her around while her colleagues cooed and clapped and said, oh, what love, oh, what a man, yes, that man.

Sophie. I think I am going to leave Mustapha.

Sophie says okay. Sophie asks where she is, where her husband is, where her son is, asks if she is okay, if she has told her mother, if she has told anyone else, asks that she thinks deeply about all of this. asks what exactly has happened.

What is going on, Maryam? What has he done?

It is a Tuesday and Maryam should be at work, should be in her big corner office with the large windows that stand even taller than she is. The large windows where she looks over the city park and everyday, just before her lunch break ends, she watches an elderly woman walk towards the benches under the trees by the swings and sit, while the young woman that walks with her and holds her by the elbow, stands behind her to rub her shoulders, then her neck, then her back, before she sits with her and holds her hand.

They sit like this while the sun licks them and leaves a bit of itself on their hair so they shine like gold and silver quarters. They mostly sit in silence, but sometimes, Maryam can see them laughing, can see the young woman wipe her eyes while her body shakes with delight, can see the older woman's movement in her shoulders as though that is the only way joy can move through her.

Maryam has noticed that the young woman wears a lot of graphic shirts and that she likes purple. One day while she flips distractedly through a Notice of Appeal and misses the two women making their way to their spot, she notices, when she finally pushes the bound document to the edge of her desk and walks over to press her face to the window, that both women are wearing matching purple shorts.

When Sophie continues to ring off questions in her ear, Maryam holds her breath and says, I'll have to call you back, I need to watch Abdallah. In the moment where Maryam turns away from him to put her cell phone in her bag and look for a granola bar, her son has crawled away from the spot where he was seated by her feet and is now gesticulating excitedly to the butterfly that circles his head. The park feels so much larger than it looks from her office building, and louder too. There are two teenage boys behind one of the trees who keep leaning into each other until their noses touch and they start to giggle.

It is just a few minutes past 4pm and into the golden hour when she sees the two women appear and walk towards their spot. The elderly woman is wearing sunshades and her companion has purple ribbons in her hair which Maryam realizes now is more of strawberry than honey blonde. When they are a few feet away from Maryam and her son who are seated on a picnic blanket just a stone's throw from the bench, the older woman takes off her sunglasses and makes a funny face at Abdallah who wriggles in glee and starts to walk towards her. Maryam laughs and the younger woman who is also grinning widely says, your son? He's so friendly, and aren't we having the best weather today?

Yes, so beautiful.