

## TEXTE

I was flipping through a worn copy of a Mike Hammer mystery when I heard screaming and glass breaking. I dropped the book and hurried across the street. I found the Nguyens behind the counter, all the way against the wall, faces ashen, Mr. Nguyen's arms wrapped around his wife. On the floor: oranges, an overturned magazine rack, a broken jar of beef jerky, and shards of glass at Baba's feet.

It turned out that Baba had had no cash on him for the oranges. He'd written Mr. Nguyen a check and Mr. Nguyen had asked for an ID. "He wants to see my license," Baba bellowed in Farsi. "Almost two years we've bought his damn fruits and put money in his pocket and the son of a dog wants to see my license!"

"Baba, it's not personal," I said, smiling at the Nguyens. "They're supposed to ask for an ID."

"I don't want you here," Mr. Nguyen said, stepping in front of his wife. He was pointing at Baba with his cane. He turned to me.

"You're nice young man but your father, he's crazy. Not welcome anymore."

"Does he think I'm a thief?" Baba said, his voice rising. People had gathered outside. They were staring.

"What kind of a country is this? No one trusts anybody!"

"I call police," Mrs. Nguyen said, poking out her face. "You get out or I call police."

"Please, Mrs. Nguyen, don't call the police. I'll take him home. Just don't call the police, okay? Please?"

"Yes, you take him home. Good idea," Mr. Nguyen said. His eyes, behind his wire-rimmed bifocals, never left Baba. I led Baba through the doors. He kicked a magazine on his way out. After I'd made him promise he wouldn't go back in, I returned to the store and apologized to the Nguyens. Told them my father was going through a difficult time. I gave Mrs. Nguyen our telephone number and address, and told her to get an estimate for the damages. "Please call me as soon as you know. I'll pay for everything, Mrs. Nguyen. I'm so sorry." Mrs. Nguyen took the sheet of paper from me and nodded. I saw her hands were shaking more than usual, and that made me angry at Baba, his causing an old woman to shake like that.

"My father is still adjusting to life in America," I said, by way of explanation.

I wanted to tell them that, in Kabul, we snapped a tree branch and used it as a credit card. Hassan and I would take the wooden stick to the bread maker. He'd



# IDENTITIES AND EXCHANGES

35 carve notches on our stick with his knife, one notch for each loaf of 'naan' he'd pull for us from the tandoor's roaring flames. At the end of the month, my father paid him for the number of notches on the stick. That was it. No questions. No ID.

But I didn't tell them. I thanked Mr. Nguyen for not calling the cops. Took Baba home. He sulked and smoked on the balcony while I made rice with chicken neck stew. A year and a half since we'd stepped off the Boeing from Peshawar, and Baba was still adjusting.

We ate in silence that night. After two bites, Baba pushed away his plate.

Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*, Bloomsbury, 2003, pp 111-112

## COMPRÉHENSION DE L'ÉCRIT

Answer the following questions in English, using your own words:

a) Explain the reaction of the narrator's father when asked for his ID.

Why would that document be a potential trigger for Baba's anger?

He felt that there was a lack of trust between him and the Nguyen's. In Babas country, he only needed a stick, to pay for food, which the baker notched and at the end

of the month his father would pay the backer the due fee.

b) In what ways can we say that the narrator plays the role of a diplomat?

He plays the role of a diplomate by trying to calm down the fight and asking to pay for the repair the damage made by his father.

c) Describe how the theme of American identity/-ies is present in this extract.

The theme of American Identity is present in this extract by the fact that in baba's country, there was trust, everybody new each other. In America, The identity is blurred and so there is no trust. Baba experiences a los of identity and roots which does that when he wants to by some oranges with a check, Mr Nguyens asked for an identity to make sure the check was valid. It is also the law that installed that.