

CHANGE THE WORD STORIES AROUND THE TABLE

The Script



Welcome to our Table

ABDALLAH

The Arabs used to say, when a stranger appears at your door, feed him for three days before asking who he is, where he's come from, where he's headed. That way, he'll have strength enough to answer.

Or,

by then you'll be such good friends you don't care.

Let's go back to that.

Rice? Pine nuts? Here, take the red brocade pillow. My child will serve water to your horse. No, I was not busy when you came! I was not preparing to be busy. That's the armor everyone put on to pretend they had a purpose in the world.

I refuse to be claimed.

Your plate is waiting.

We will snip fresh mint into your tea.

Infuse your mint tea bag in your hot water

and take a sip



ABDALLAH

That was a poem by the famous poet Naomi Shihab Nye called Red Brocade.

Tonight, we welcome you to our table. We welcome you to sit with us as we unravel the threads that make up our lives and weave them together to make something new.

Back to the Beginning

CAITLIN

Cream, brown, green, white, orange, blue, pink and yellow

MEHRAD

A frog we used to have in back garden, dog, squirrels, rats, birds in the sky,
the neighbour's cat

MYA

Lavender, sun hitting the flowers, chlorine from swimming baths

CHENAR

Fresh lemons, children playing in the park

ARTELA

It snowed the day I was born

It wasn't very common to snow in our town

But that day it did

BATUHAN

My mother gave birth to me on a silent, sleepy, mooney day.
 She placed me on her lap and called me her cutie doughnut.
 What a beautiful thing to give birth to, she said. My weeny toes and little feet. This is just the beginning she thought, the beginning of angels.

FARZANEH

Farzaneh - a name which means wise.

NECATI

Necati - a name which means liberty.

JANETTE

Janette - in French my name means gift from God which is appropriate as I was a baby they thought wasn't possible and the first and only girl.
 In Hebrew - Janette - God is Gracious

BATUHAN

In Turkish - Cennet - Paradise.

ABDALLAH

In Arabic - جنة - Heaven

Cooking with Memories

Batuhan's Grandmother's Recipe for Karniyarik Tarifi

Peel your aubergine in some way, after tearing one side with a knife, soak them in salt water for 15-20 minutes. Then fry in a pan with a little burn. Place the aubergine on a towel after frying them. In a large saucepan, cut the onions in cubes and fry them with the oil. Add the minced meat and mix it.

Then put all the minced meat in the aubergine and bake in the oven for twenty minutes.



BATUHAN

Into this dish, put your smile flavoured with salt.

Put your "good hopes" with a little oil.

Add your wishes for a "better tomorrow" with tomatoes and peppers.

Stir in love and respect, knowing this dish will return to you as "happiness".

ARTELA

There was a fig tree near my childhood bedroom.

I wish I could feel the rough leaves scratch my face.

My bare feet slip on the wet branches. The skip of my heart.

I wish I could still taste the sugary fruits melt in my mouth.

I wish I could still hear my big brother shout 'save one for me, daft!',
and how I would save them as gifts for my grandpa.

I wish to be as lavish and fearless and free as a shgiponj in the sky.

I stood by the tree when it rained and smelt fresh jam.

MYA

My mother tells me of the 70s, and we are playing in the rain and running on emerald grass in the countryside. We hear the birds singing in the trees along the flowing river. Both of us are back in time, tasting the stories of my mother's childhood.

EHSAN

There was a horse. The horse sought vengeance upon his enemy, a stag, but he could not kill the stag alone. The horse met a man, a hunter, and made a deal. He took the man's bit and bridle, and allowed him to ride on a saddle on his back. Together, they killed the stag and the horse tasted victory, but the hunter would not release the horse, and made a slave of him.

The past is a puzzle, like a broken mirror.

As you piece it together, you cut yourself, your image keeps shifting. And you change with it. It could destroy you, drive you mad, or set you free.

MOHAMED

The first storyteller was my mother. Before my brother and I started going to school and we had our first TV set, mother used to tell us stories. She used to tell us about her grandmother. And she used to tell us stories her grandmother used to tell her when she and her siblings were growing up. And then my parents bought their first TV set and the stories stopped.

Asked to tell you a story, I go blank. I try to remember stories that I've heard. The stories that come to mind are ones I read in the readers my parents used when they were in high school. Like the story of the man who set up a space programme in Zambia in the 50s or 60s. For several decades, I seemed to be the only one among my peers who knew the story. Last year, a friend on Twitter said, Yes. The memory is real. The man's name is Edward Makuka Nkoloso.



Going Elsewhere

JANETTE

I'm on the North Yorkshire Coast.
Cobalt, browns, white foam, yellow, teals.
The sky above us, the sky living in the sea.

CAITLIN

I walk along the ocean bed. The great blue whales make their nests.
The rain pours on the water above me.
I can feel how far away I am from grass.
I can see the sand filling with the sea. The rocks bouncing along.

NECATI

I eat jackfruit for the first time in my life.
Kampala is the city where green and blue meet,
endless rainforests stretching to the sky.
Mango was an old friend for years,
Here, I found my lost friend the lychee again.

MYA

I sleep close to the sky and wake with the noise of gossiping birds.
I open the curtain, the view of traffic, cars passing by as the sun rises
through my window.

MEHRZAD

I have left the city with its commotion

I have found peace in the desert

A mixture of *zozz* and stars and night

It tastes like the ice cream my mom made

The sun is slowly setting

The blue laughter of the sky

Turns to the silence of the red sun

The stars dance and come

Eyes, stars, sand in their magnificent dance

I and the moon are watching

I have hidden my loves under the soil of hope

I have hidden my loves under the soil of hope

Eating Alone

Pick up your spoon



Stir it around in your mug

Hear the clink, clink, clink



CAITLIN

Today, I sit alone at the restaurant with a beer or a vodka.
Eat BBQ ribs with an overload of sauce - my first meal after having gastroenteritis. Eat rib eye steak, cooked rare, with Rose wine.

EHSAN

I smoke, drink whiskey, hope for the sun to shine. I want to sleep, to forget, to change the past. I want my family back. Right then, more than anything I wanted to live.

BATUHAN

Today it is snowing hard in Ankara. It's a late afternoon in my narrow, damp and gloomy room. I'm not connected to you as before, Ankara.

ARTELA

And here I am today as another year went by. Still at the same street. Still at the same sky.

CHENAR

I was always on the other side of freedom. I did not want to be there. I did not want to be there.

SHUVAI

Run run home. Purple rain is coming. Hurry before dusk.

ARTELA

And I am here today.
Still fighting the loneliness.
Still fighting under the same sky.

ALMIGDAD

I see a young man, waiting for something, something long-awaited.

NECATI

Life is light, if you can be a bird, like my boy

CHENAR

Home the only thing we are fighting for
Because it is the basis of life support
You can live at home without a passport.

ARTELA

But here I am today, surrounded with friends.
I know it's not home,
but it feels like it could be.

Cooking with Dreams

You are welcome to take a spice from your kitchen.

Hold it under your nose and smell.

Almigdada's Recipe for الشية

Take your young beef and bread

Tear the النعناع leaves, sprinkle across

Add the الفلفل الحار and القرفة والثوم

Take your ginger, crunch in with the whole mixture

Put the meat for a good time in the fire

Until you feel like you are eating a biscuit

As a celebration make الكبسة

mix with rice and vegetables

My mum cooks this. I don't know how to.

I miss her food and its good smell

***Grill**

Mint leaves

Hot chilli, cinnamon and garlic

'Kabsa'

SHUVAI

I want stories that smell like mud and taste like our vegetables so green and plump sizzling in the African Calabash. The closed lane where we sat under the moonlight. The stars flickering in our bowls. Stories served by Mama, stories we weed from the garden. Stories that clatter their wheels back down the lane, to meet the pot of green soup and sing hallelujah again.

MOHAMED

I want a poem that tastes like a potato Soup.
 A poem that smells like fresh vegetables from the Amazon.
 A poem that makes you feel warm warm and loved.
 A poem that sounds like sticky, gloopy soft vegetables in your mouth.
 I want a poem that sits on a wooden table,
 by the window on a chilly evening in the winter season.

YASIN

I want a poem that tastes like apple, sweet and crisp and light.
 I want a poem that smells like a flower after rain in the middle of the night.
 I want a poem like the deep dark sea.
 I want a poem that sounds like a Woodpecker drumming on a tree.
 I want a poem that sits with family at a shining round table.

MEHRZAD

I want a poem that tastes like drinking coffee at high altitude.

A poem that tastes like the fear of loneliness in the forest night.

A poem that sounds like chirping crickets and rustling leaves in the wind.

A poem that sits with the silent company of the moon and the stars.

MYA

I want a poem that tastes like chicken curry.

A poem that smells the different types of spices in mum's 'Masala Dabba'.

A poem that feels like back from school with a hungry stomach.

A poem that sounds like boiling chickens in hot curry gravy.

A poem that sits with my loved ones on the dining table.

And waits for my mum to serve us a plate together.

MOHAMED

I want a poem that says *Hello darling*, like the lady at Tesco.

The lady at Asda says to me *Hello sweetheart, how can I help*.

The sister at One Stop says to me *Hello love*.

The lady at the hotel says to me *Hello sweetie pie*.

The man at the store says to me *Hello young man*.

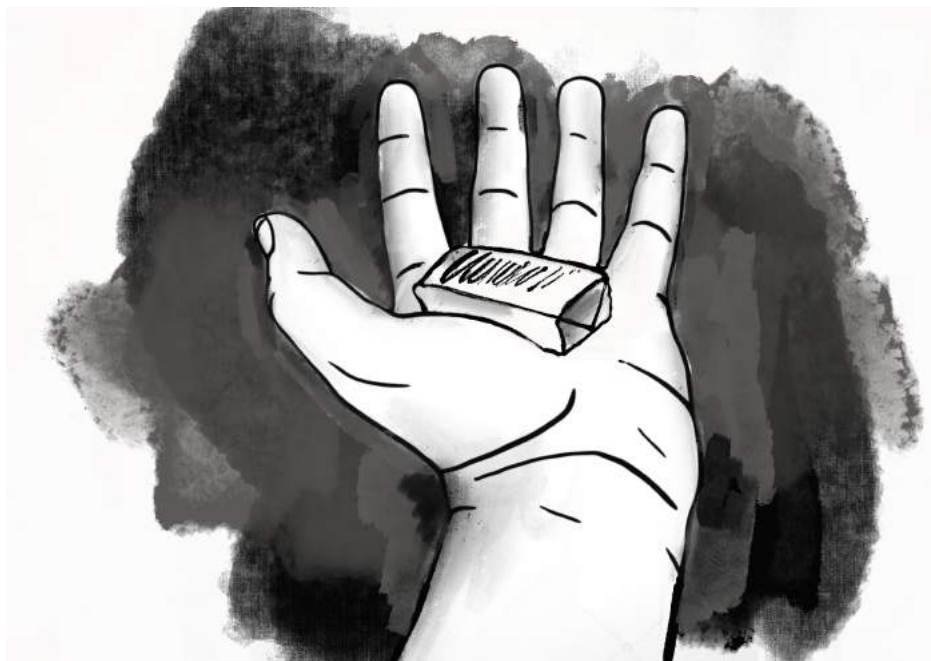
Saying simple words isn't hard, but it might make someone's day.

You never know, just say nice words and keep watching,

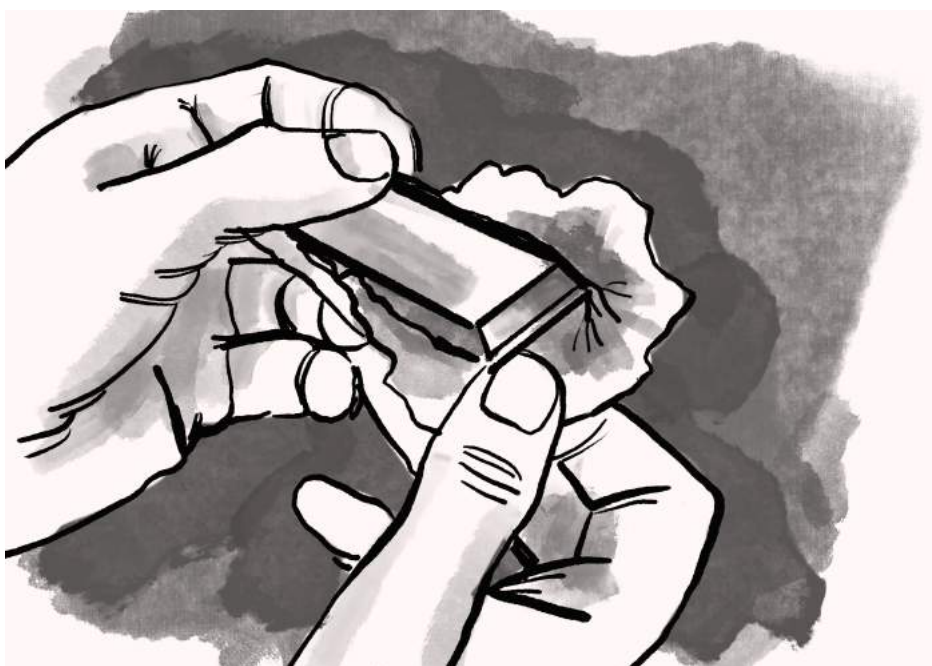
I promise you'll receive them always.

Eating, messily together

You are welcome to join us for a chocolate



Roll it around your mouth and let it melt



BATUHAN

When you - the guests - arrive the rush begins. Especially if you come unexpectedly. I take the road to the nearest pastry shop, running off my stress. We lay out our teas and cookies. The scent floating down the hall.

SHUVAI

Invite them into the sitting room and bring snacks and tea
Listen to the chatter of multiple conversations, clinking of silverware
against plates and the sound of a glasses of tea being stirred.
We serve on a round metal plate.
Everyone dips into it with their bare hands.

JANETTE

You must eat the Fajitas with your hands, messily. Spoons clanging in the bowls, the knife on the chopping board, sticky hands and fingers. You must eat them with splats and plops. With a margarita, frozen with salt, with beers straight from the bottle with limes. You must remember who taught you who to eat them - the chefs at Cafe de Amis in Kent. Eat them when it's dark outside and the fairy lights are on inside. Eat to the tune of clay, metal and wood clattering. Sink into soft cushions and swim together in stories.

CAITLIN

I come from Sunday roasts on a Monday evening.

I come from hospital visits for my father.

I come from swimming in oceans.

I come from sleeping until sunrise.

I come from watching the snow fall and the rain pour after.

NECATI

I come from Istanbul.

The join of two continents.

I come from Turkey - a country that has four seasons at the same time.

I come from a country where people used to love each other like brothers.

I come from a dictator who will not stop.

FARZANEH

I come from the land of kind people

I come from the land of oil

I come from the land of Dr. Prof. Samiei¹

ABDALLAH

I come from pyramids, temples and drawings on the wall

I come from football pitches

I come from four seasons in a year

¹ Dr. Prof Samiei is an Iranian Neurosurgeon and Medical Scientist

ARTELA

I come from green, blue, rusty landscapes
I come from history, and I make history
I come from humans, and I make humans

JANETTE

I come from a name that means paradise
I come from steelwork furnaces, molten metal clinging to cloth
I come from griots and koras
From avocados and Mexican beer
I come from the wind in the trees, crashing like waves at sea
I come from cracking ice puddles
I come from fire smoke gathering friends together

MYA

I come from illusions, from talkative parrots

I come from the value of money, from the ocean blue of Santorini

I come from the Jack Russel waiting for its owner

I come from the Marvel series X men, from the joining team of Avengers

I come from queen of spices

I come from the sound of stepping in snow

I come from Malaysia

YASIN

I came from a warm city with a lot of mountains.

and I ended up with a cold city without any mountains.

I come from dust and finally I'll return to dust.

I come from a city with brutal police and I ended up with the home office.

I come from crossing a sea to find a place with peace.

The Meal as the Beginning

Look out of your window



You are welcome to go over and open it



ARTELA

Is it open?

Hold out your hand into the night air.

Notice the lights you can see, the sounds you can hear,
the expanse of the sky.

MYA

Feel the fullness of the world washing over your hands like heavy rain.
The possibilities in each splashing drop.

BATUHAN

When we weren't even beginnings, it had started to rain. For me, rain means
living without grief, living with blessing. Tomorrow, the April we have been
waiting for comes. Tomorrow, the daisies will smile. Tomorrow, your plate
will still be waiting.

I was trying to change, looking for myself as Winter looks for the Spring.
But I was always arriving, arriving with the rain.

This meeting with you all was a beginning. We refuse to be claimed.
Tomorrow, April still comes. Prepare the red brocade pillow. Prepare the
mint to snip into your neighbours tea.

You are invited to dance with us



And celebrate with confetti

Thank you for sitting around our table with us
and sharing in our stories

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