

Student Work

---

8-1-2004

**A'idah.**

Gerhardus C. Van Wilgen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Van Wilgen, Gerhardus C., "A'idah." (2004). *Student Work*. 3512.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/3512>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).



A'IDAH

A Thesis-Equivalent Project

Presented to the

Department of Theatre

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Theatre

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By Gerhardus C. van Wilgen

August 2004

UMI Number: EP74709

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP74709

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code





ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

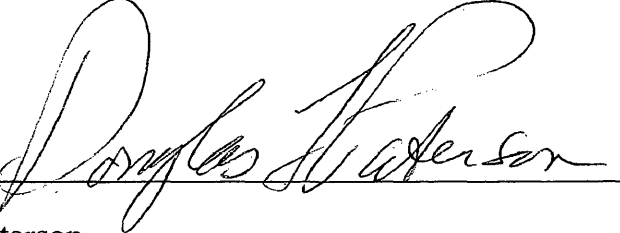
THESIS-EQUIVALENT PROJECT ACCEPTANCE

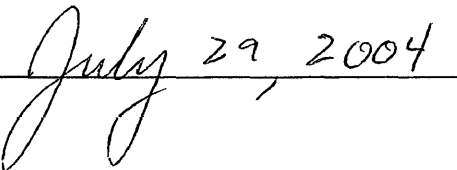
Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Theatre,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Cindy Melby Phaneuf

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Marion Boulby

Chairperson   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Doug Paterson

Date   
\_\_\_\_\_

*A'idah*

Gerhardus C. van Wilgen, MA.

University of Nebraska, 2004.

Advisor: Dr. Doug Paterson.

**Abstract.**

The comedy *A'idah* develops around four main characters: A'idah Mahmoudy, a Palestinian exchange student. Ahmed Mahmoudy, her father, proprietor of a souvenir shop in Bethlehem. Irma Weston, a career-politician running for congress, and Dr. Olaf Weston, a physics professor.

A'idah wants to turn her children's story about special and general relativity into a play. Dr. Weston is granted a sabbatical to direct A'idah's play. His ambition is to create a work of art that will make him stand out in his community. Irma Weston will win the election at any cost. Ahmed Mahmoudy's dream is to live in America.

A'idah quit school. This gives her father finally an excuse to come visit her. He wants to talk to A'idah's professor, Dr. Weston, but instead he finds Irma, who is in the middle of an interview for a TV show. The reporter uses Mr. Mahmoudy's naiveté not only to extract some facts about Arafat and the fight against Israel, but also to 'uncover' that Dr. Weston has had an affair with A'idah.

To Irma's horror public opinion turns against her. She loses more than 30 percent of her votes. In order to pare the disaster she incorporates Ahmed Mahmoudy in her campaign, who discovers his talent as a spokesperson.

But Ahmed's efforts come up short a few percentage points. The only way to save the campaign, according to focus groups and independent surveys, is to end her marriage. But Dr. Weston has to do the honorable: marry A'idah Mahmoudy.

**Table of Contents.**

Abstract.	ii
Introduction.	iv
<i>A'idah.</i>	1
Bibliography.	177

\

## **Introduction.**

Fighting prejudice and stereotyping is a constant battle. Because theatre has traditionally played an important role in this struggle, I decided to write a play that will help to gain more acceptance and tolerance for people from the Arab world, and, or from the Islamic faith. The main reason for my decision was that on September 11 2001 many innocent people from Middle Eastern descent suddenly became potential terrorists. Many of them were incarcerated without due process. The reason why Middle Eastern, predominantly Moslem people were so easily branded was not because most of the terrorists, who were involved in the 9-11 attack, were Arabic. The branding happened a long time ago. It seemed like a restriction was lifted. In order to put this 'branding' in a historical perspective I reviewed a selected list of literature. What follows is a review that will not only take us from Paradise to the end of the Cold war, but will also explain why the stereotypes of Islamic and or Arabic men and women seem to be crystalized in our perception.

In the Bible the serpent, Satan, appears, seemingly out of the blue, to convince Eve to eat from the tree. In Euripides' *The Bacchae*, Dionysus appears in a similar way, although he explains he is from Asia Minor. He, like Satan, is out to corrupt women. In our Christian Western minds we somehow envision Satan as Dionysus. I don't believe Dionysus was written as a demon. As a matter of fact, his original features have more in common with Jesus Christ than with Satan. He is the son of Zeus, there is a resurrection from the dead, and there are even images of him crucified, just like Jesus Christ. This is not the place to launch a conspiracy theory like in the *Da Vinci Code*, but it is remarkable that we often see images of the devil as half man half goat. This image has always been associated with Dionysus, as were lust and wine, which are also, according to many

Christians, tools of the devil. A satanic rite is often presented, in horror movies for instance, similar to a bacchanal or, fertility ritual during which women in trance have unprotected sex with masked men.

The existence of evil, Satan, or the Devil to me is a psychological construct. The imagery of this construct, developed in the Middle Ages, is still in use today. Evil was also associated with a specific color: black.

In the 16th century Richard Hakluyt wrote *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. In this work he explains how Noah told his sons not to copulate on the ark. But his “wicked” son, Cham, couldn’t restrain himself and did ‘it’. He thereby not only conceived the first child in the new world cleansed of sin, but also fathered the heir to “possese all the dominions of the earth.” The baby’s name was Chus. But God, according to Hakluyt, wasn’t pleased with Cham’s disobedience: “Not onely itselpe, but all his posteritie after him should bee so blacke and lothsome, that it might remaine a spectacle of disobedience to all the worlde. And of this blacke and cursed Chus came all these blacke Moores which are in Africa” (Vaughan, 53).

The most famous cursed "blacke" Moore is Othello. This play was written only a few generations after the battle of Lepanto (1571) -- the ‘last crusade.’ At the same time the Ottoman Empire was threatening Europe. In my opinion Othello was a character designed to be scorned and laughed at. Iago says to Brabantio: “you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans.” “Gennets,” by the way, are “barbary horsemen,” and “germans” are offspring, as in sperm. The fact that Othello is a Turkish traitor who defeats his own people will make him in the eyes of the Jacobean audiences even more despicable.



In 1742 Voltaire wrote the play *Le fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophete*. Instead of aiming at an Islamic character, Voltaire goes right to the heart of the religion: Mohammed. In this play, the theme was the rejection of religious intolerance. Mohammed was depicted as a “charismatic charlatan, a cult leader” (Allison, 44). He had brainwashed Zaphna and Palmira in order to overthrow Alcantor. In return, he would allow them to marry. But they don’t know they’re brother and sister, and they also don’t know Alcantor is their father. In their religious zeal they kill their father before they learn his true identity. After they discover the truth, Zaphna and Palmira kill themselves.

A translation, *Mahomet the Imposter*, was performed in New York in 1780 while the city was under siege by the American revolutionary armies. In 1795 it was performed in Philadelphia. At this time Mohammed had transformed from a character similar to Dionysos into a character that resembled Nero Caesar. Islam became, according to Robert Allison, synonymous with despotism and religious fanaticism. Allison: “The historical truth of this image is not the issue. Americans who used the Moslem world as a reference point for their own society were not concerned with historical truth or with an accurate description of Islam, but rather with this description’s political convenience” (Allison, 59).

America fought a war with the city-state of Tripoli, one of the so called Barbary States. The war lasted from 1800-1815, and was fought because Barbarian pirates attacked American ships. The rulers of these North African states were paid to do this by the English to protect interests in the Mediterranean and to keep the Americans from establishing new trade relations. An anonymous melodramatic play, *The Tripolitan Prize, or, American Tars on an English Shore*. was first performed in 1802 in New York. The only remaining evidence of this play is a review by Washington Irving, who hated it. But,

to his dismay, the audience was very involved. The final battle of the play between the Americans and the Tripolitans, takes place off the shores of the English coast.

Apparently the Americans are victorious because they're "true bleu" (Allison, 188).

The negative connotation the West had with the Islamic world was enforced by the Oil Crises in the early seventies, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the Lockerbie disaster in 1988. After the collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, the focus of America's might seemed to be searching for another destination. That target was found very quickly because Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait. A few years later a bomb exploded in the World Trade Center and a new enemy became a reality: the radical fundamentalist Moslem terrorist.

## **2 Motivation**

European culture defined itself in opposition to many things, one of the primary "others" being what Edward Said called the Orient. Said goes back as far as the *Iliad* to illustrate how deep the animosity is between 'East' and 'West' (Vaughan, 13). When we see Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein firing guns on TV, we perceive a representation of Islam that is a needless fit with the image which has been constructed during the last millennium. But what happens when we look around on the internet to find the music of musician Rachid Taha, or read about movies by director Manijeh Hekmat, see pictures of paintings by Gouider Triki and Mohamed Kacimi, or read a verse by poet Taha Muhammad Ali? We see the human face of what we in the West consider the Islamic or Arabic culture. We don't generalize hundreds of millions of people; rather, we see individuals. That is why I started writing this play: to present individuals who are not threatening to us and who are not prone to use violence as a means of furthering their

religious ideology

### **3 Introduction to the play.**

I wrote *A'idah* for a TV audience because today's audience is more attuned to the visual language of the television than that of the theatre. The set therefore should be reminiscent of a sound stage like for instance the set of Saturday Night Live. I also use TV monitors to convey information essential to the development of the play.

The play is named after A'idah Mahmoudy (A'idah means 'coming back.' It is a popular name in Palestine because it refers to the Palestinian Diaspora). In the play she is not defined as a Moslem nor as a Middle Eastern woman. She is a studious girl with artistic ambitions.

Olaf Weston is A'idah's professor who has been committed to his wife's career for more than ten years. He is slipping into a mid-life crisis. The story begins when he tells his wife Irma that he is taking a semester long sabbatical leave to direct a children's play.

Irma Weston is Olaf's wife. She is an ideological politician who becomes ruthless when push comes to shove.

Ahmed Mahmoudy is A'idah's father. He is sent to the United States by Layla, his wife, to talk some sense into A'idah. Ahmed is not the stereotypical stone throwing fundamentalist. He is a common man, easily seduced by the sweet smell of power and money, but he stays true to his religion and his culture.

Layla Mahmoudy is the wife of Ahmed. She is an intelligent woman who is unable to hold on to her man.

The media in the play are represented by Serena Franks, Vulpo, Snake and news anchor Frank Mortson. Some of these characters we only see on a screen, others are only voices. Because of her eagerness to produce a news story Serena Franks turns an innocent

misunderstanding between Ahmed and his daughter A'idah into a nationally viewed media event. Franks manages to damage Irma Weston's reputation to such a degree that she is forced to divorce her husband of 14 years.

## **Characters**

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY -23, Palestinian student.

AHMED MAHMOUDY - 50's, opportunistic businessman, A'idah's father.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY - Late 40's, Ahmed's wife.

DR. OLAF WESTON - Late 40's, Physics professor, Irma's husband.

IRMA WESTON - Early 40's state representative, running for congress

SERENA FRANKS - 20's, journalist.

VULPO, SNAKE - Journalists, off stage.

STAGE MANAGER - Grumpy, off stage.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTON - Prerecorded.

TV PRODUCER - Off stage.

## **Monitors**

To show news clips, close ups, and the polls (new graph every scene).

## **Setting**

University town in a mid Atlantic state.

## **Time**

The present, an election year, the end of summer.

1 OLAF AND IRMA'S BACK YARD GRAPH: WESTON 67.2 WILEY 21.3

(OLAF WESTON is a distinguished but not well known physicist. He wears a short sleeve shirt and linen slacks. He sips beer from a can in a 'huggie.' On the table are large sheets of drawing paper. He is sketching with a charcoal pencil. IRMA enters, she is a pretty, sophisticated professional who wears her outfit like a uniform. She is tense.)

IRMA WESTON

Where were you?

OLAF WESTON

Here.

IRMA WESTON

Why?

OLAF WESTON

Why don't you get out of those clothes first? Then we'll talk.

IRMA WESTON

I asked you why!

OLAF WESTON

It's a long story. . . I'll tell you later. . . Why don't you put something else on while I mix you a drink.

(He gets up.)

IRMA WESTON

(Frustrated.)

You!

(She produces an ugly grunting noise, kicks off her shoes.

Olaf exits and returns with a shaker, a glass and another beer. He pours her drink.)

OLAF WESTON

Here.

IRMA WESTON

(Drinks.)

All right. What's going on? I've called you, you weren't there, I was worried. You always answer your phone.

OLAF WESTON

I'm taking the semester off.

IRMA WESTON

(Stares at him, then suddenly joyful.)

But that's wonderful! I knew you would, I knew you would do it! Let's drink to that! I knew you'd come aboard!

OLAF WESTON

(Uncomfortable.)

I'm not going to be part of your campaign.

IRMA WESTON

What?

OLAF WESTON

I'm directing a play for the Children's Theatre.

IRMA WESTON

(Pause.)

Yeah right. What do you know about theatre?

OLAF WESTON

How hard can it be?

IRMA WESTON

You quit your job to write a children's play?



OLAF WESTON

No, I didn't quit. It's an interesting story. We received a generous grant from the American Science Foundation, they'll be paying my salary until January.

IRMA WESTON

We?

OLAF WESTON

Huh?

IRMA WESTON

You said 'we', who's 'we'?

OLAF WESTON

I have a partner. She's a grad student.

IRMA WESTON

(Cynical.)

So what is this play about? Special or general relativity?

OLAF WESTON

(Smiles.)

Actually. . . .

IRMA WESTON

You must be kidding, how on earth are you going to write a children's play about relativity?

OLAF WESTON

(Looks at her in disbelief.)

Why would that be impossible?

IRMA WESTON

Have you seen the statistics lately? Three out of four kids are not able to tell you the last five presidents, how are they going to understand relativity?

OLAF WESTON

Well, A'idah. . .

IRMA WESTON

A'idah?

OLAF WESTON

That's her name, my partner, A'idah Mahmoudy.

IRMA WESTON

How old is she?

OLAF WESTON

Twenty something. I think.

(Pause.)

She's an educator.

(Pause.)

She wrote a children's story about this creature that incidentally dropped out of his time fold, but this little girl catches him thereby creating an interesting discontinuity in space-time. . .

IRMA WESTON

Twenty? Twenty five? Twenty nine?

OLAF WESTON

Why? Is that important?

IRMA WESTON

Are you forgetting that I'm running a campaign here?

OLAF WESTON

O, that . . . .

IRMA WESTON

Is she good looking?

OLAF WESTON

You mean . . . .

IRMA WESTON

Cute! Is she cute!

OLAF WESTON

(Self confident.)

There is no way this project, or her presence in my professional life will interfere in your or campaign, or our marriage -- let me say this very clearly.

IRMA WESTON

I'm not going to lose this race.

OLAF WESTON

You won't.

IRMA WESTON

I'm serious. There's too much at stake right now.

OLAF WESTON

You're ahead in the polls, there's no reason to be concerned.

(On the monitors we see an image made by a security camera. A'IDAH is at the front door, leaves, comes back, leaves. She is wearing an abaya.)

IRMA WESTON

(Pause.)

I guess you're right.

OLAF WESTON

(Pause.)

Of course I am.

(Pause.)

IRMA WESTON

No kid is going to understand that play of yours.

OLAF WESTON

(Pause.)

I'm tempted to get slightly upset, but I won't. Let me say just this: if you would have the same amount of belief in me as I had in you, when you ran your first election . . . .

(Pause, thinks.)

I think I deserve that.

(IRMA looks at him, smiles, shakes her head in disbelief.

The doorbell rings.)

IRMA WESTON

I'll get it.

OLAF WESTON

No, no! I'll get it.

(He exits. On the monitor we see him opening the front door. They talk. He tries to convince her to come in. After a few beats they exit the picture to enter the stage.)

OLAF WESTON (CONT'D)

This is my wife Irma.

(A'IDAH nods and smiles politely, IRMA just stares-- probably calculating how this picture will affect her public image.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You don't think it's a problem?

OLAF WESTON

No, why? Do you think it's a problem?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I haven't seen him for a long time, and we never got along very well. I just don't know what to do with him, where to put him . . . .

(Whispers.)

Is she OK?

OLAF WESTON

No. You see, my wife is a politician, every person she meets is either a threat or an opportunity.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What am I?

OLAF WESTON

Well, at first glance you'd probably be categorized as a threat.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Because of my clothes?

OLAF WESTON

Among others.

IRMA WESTON

Are you a Moslem?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes, I'm a Moslem.

OLAF WESTON

And a Palestinian.

IRMA WESTON

(To herself.)

Yes, but who can tell?

OLAF WESTON

(To A'idah.)

She gets paranoid sometimes.

IRMA WESTON

What's the problem?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I told my parents that I stopped school to do the project. They were upset.

IRMA WESTON

Maybe because they also don't believe in a children's play about relativity?



A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Trying to comprehend what Irma just said.)

Uhm . . . .

(To Olaf.)

What does she mean by that?

OLAF WESTON

Don't mind her.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

For a long time my dad has been looking for an excuse to come visit me. My mom was always able to stop him. She doesn't want him to go because he needs to be in the store. But now they both feel he needs to come over to see how I'm doing.

They're paying a lot of money for my classes you see.

IRMA WESTON

Did you tell your parents you're working with Olaf?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes.

IRMA WESTON

Hmmm. Do you think they suspect something?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You mean . . . between him and me?

IRMA WESTON

You're a woman, he's a man . . . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No!

IRMA WESTON

Do you want him?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Flabbergasted.)

No!

IRMA WESTON

Good. You know how the country responds to sexual affairs of--

OLAF WESTON

(Interrupts after a brief visual exchange with A'idah.)

Do you really think . . . .

IRMA WESTON

(Sees their interaction, irritated.)

Listen! I am not in a position right now to take any risks, do you understand that?

OLAF WESTON

Yes, but . . . .

IRMA WESTON

No! No 'buts'!

OLAF WESTON

Why are you so upset?

IRMA WESTON

I'm upset because you are waking up the dragon--

OLAF WESTON

Oh, come on!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

The dragon?

OLAF WESTON

That's what she calls public opinion.

IRMA WESTON

Public opinion is a huge fire-breathing dragon. Right now the dragon is sleeping, but one tiny little “wink” will wake it. You are throwing sticks at it right now.

A’IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don’t understand.

OLAF WESTON

The media, the people, hunger for stories. What she is saying that even the suggestion of us being ‘together’ would be a news item.

A’IDAH MAHMOUDY

But we are not.

OLAF WESTON

I know. But the problem here is that Irma is a good looking woman. No, that’s not right. That is not the problem. The problem is that people in general -- men and women -- like to watch programs about pretty people like movie stars. That is why she enjoys a significant amount of media attention. This aspect of her qualities is an asset to her campaign. But, and this is the sad truth, people like to watch pretty and successful people, but what they like to watch more is seeing pretty and successful people fall on their face.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Ah.

OLAF WESTON

It's the fuel of the entertainment industry.

IRMA WESTON

It's gossip.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I understand.

IRMA WESTON

It can be lethal. It's not like you're at the hair salon. In this country it's a political weapon. I hope you understand that.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But we can tell them we just work together.

IRMA WESTON

That is, in their terms, as good as a confession.

OLAF WESTON

The bottom line is that we have to be very careful.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But our play is bound to receive some sort of publicity?.

IRMA WESTON

But you have to be careful.

OLAF WESTON

I don't think it's going to stir a controversy.

IRMA WESTON

Let's hope so. In the mean time you two should stay separate when you're in public, understood? It's not a big favor I'm asking.

OLAF WESTON

But it's not the first one either.

IRMA WESTON

I know.

(She kisses him on his fore head, to A'IDAH.)

Why don't you come inside. I'm sure you must be thirsty.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes, I am, thank you.

IRMA WESTON

Do you want to take off your . . . .

(She points at A'IDAH'S abaya)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I would love to.

IRMA WESTON

What do you wear underneath?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Not much.

(They exit. Olaf looks at them, goes back to his sketches. )

**END OF SCENE.**

2 OLAF AND IRMA'S BACK YARD -A FEW DAYS LATER. GRAPHS:

WESTON 68.3 WILEY 29.4

(Cameras set up for an interview. The monitors show what the cameras register.)

SERENA FRANKS

As you know, this story is going to be part of a series of profiles of newcomers in Washington.

IRMA WESTON

I'm not there yet, Ms. Franks.

SERENA FRANKS

We all know that your popularity is very high in this state, and that your integrity and forthrightness are widely admired.

IRMA WESTON

Thank you, that is very kind, but, although I am ahead in the polls, I'm sure there are many people who'd come out to vote just to help the other guy win.

SERENA FRANKS

You only need one more endorsement?



IRMA WESTON

You did your homework, very good. You're right. As you know the Jewish Organizations have been traditionally on our side, and as far as I can see, there are no reasons why this should change.

SERENA FRANKS

Is there a reason why they haven't endorsed you?

IRMA WESTON

The election is too far away. Most endorsements are announced in the weeks leading up to the elections. And, as I said, I see no reason why people who voted for me previously shouldn't vote for me this time.

SERENA FRANKS

Do you think Mr. Weston is able to live with a congress woman?

IRMA WESTON

(Suddenly abash.)

Ms. Franks. I do not wish to discuss my private life with you or any of your esteemed colleagues . . . .

(Mr. MAHMOUDY appears on the security camera monitor. He carries a cheap suitcase and wears shabby clothes. On his face a three day old beard. After a few beats he walks away to the yard entrance.)

SERENA FRANKS

I just . . . .

IRMA WESTON

Wait . . . I wasn't finished. I made a deal with the local press people that I would be open and frank about my private life, off the record.

SERENA FRANKS

OK. Seems reasonable.

IRMA WESTON

I don't think it's anyone's business how I live my private life.

SERENA FRANKS

Yes, but in your responsibility as congresswoman . . . .

IRMA WESTON

No, I have to be elected first, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

(Enter AHMED MAHMOUDY.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Hello? The fence was open I thought . . . .

IRMA WESTON

Can I help you? Excuse me.

(She gets up.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Dr. Weston please.

IRMA WESTON

He is not here right now, do you think you can come back later?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I need to speak with him.

IRMA WESTON

Is it about the lawn?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

IRMA WESTON

Are you from the delivery service?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No. I need to see Mr. Weston.

IRMA WESTON

You're the father of the girl.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, my daughter A'idah, and Dr. Weston.

IRMA WESTON

Sssh! Not right now. Do you think you can come back in an hour or two. Around seven?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I need to talk to him.

IRMA WESTON

Yes, that can be, but we're in the middle of . . . .

(She sees his face on the monitors.)

Hey, don't put him on!

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Freezes, grins a broad smile.)

Am I on television?

IRMA WESTON

(Sighs. Pushes him away from the cameras and the reporter.)

Why don't you sit down over there? I'll see if I can call Mr. Weston.

(To the camera.) This is private!

(She exits.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Sits, friendly. Loud voice.)

How do you do!

SERENA FRANKS

(Waves at him.)

Good. Serena Franks, pleased to meet you.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Ahmed Mahmoudy.

SERENA FRANKS

Where are you from?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Palestine. I'm so tired. I arrived this morning, I didn't sleep since I left home.

SERENA FRANKS

Are you a friend of the Westons?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

SERENA FRANKS

A colleague?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

SERENA FRANKS

Are you a student?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

O, my daughter, A'idah! She is his student.

SERENA FRANKS

You're here for a parent-teacher meeting?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Something like that.

SERENA FRANKS

(Pause.)

Is she a good student?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

SERENA FRANKS

Are you a Moslem.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

SERENA FRANKS

(Points at a crucifix around her neck.)

I'm Catholic.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Pause.)

We have many Catholics in our store, to buy souvenirs.

SERENA FRANKS

Where's your store?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Bethlehem.

SERENA FRANKS

So, you're selling little baby Jesuses?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, many Christmas ornaments.

(Enter Irma listening to her phone.)

IRMA WESTON

One moment. I have to take this call, do you mind if I take it? Two minutes.

SERENA FRANKS

No problem.

IRMA WESTON

Thanks.

(Irma exits.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Are you a reporter?

SERENA FRANKS

Yes.



AHMED MAHMOUDY

That must be a very exiting job.

SERENA FRANKS

Yes, it is very fulfilling.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I was on TV once, when the pope visited us.

SERENA FRANKS

Did you meet him?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

The pope?

SERENA FRANKS

Yes.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We shook hands and I gave him a souvenir from Bethlehem. He really liked it.

SERENA FRANKS

Well, good for you. You met the pope.

(Awkward moment of silence.)

SERENA FRANKS (CONT'D)

I hope to meet him one day.

(Pause.)

So what about Mr. Weston?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I can't tell you, it's between Mr. Weston and me.

SERENA FRANKS

(Takes a moment, signals discreetly "roll tape.")

Are you angry with her? Or with Mr. Weston?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Angry?

SERENA FRANKS

Do you have any reason to believe that the both of them . . . have some sort of relationship?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(He doesn't know what to say.)

SERENA FRANKS

(Interprets his silence as an admission.)

They do . . . interesting. For how long?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(He shakes his head.)

SERENA FRANKS

(Thinks.)

But why are you here?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Stares at her.)

SERENA FRANKS

It's not a vacation is it?

(Enter Irma)

Do you know why he's here?

IRMA WESTON

Yes, he's A'idah's father.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You know?

IRMA WESTON

Mr. Mahmoudy, your daughter told me everything, it's all a big misunderstanding. My husband and your daughter are doing a project together. Actually they are adapting your daughter's children's story into a play.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

They are?

SERENA FRANKS

But, what happened?

IRMA WESTON

Nothing happened.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

She stopped going to school.

IRMA WESTON

Yes, so did Olaf.

SERENA FRANKS

They quit school . . . together?

IRMA WESTON

Yes, Olaf received a grant from the prestigious American Science Foundation to develop this play.

SERENA FRANKS

(Disappointed.)

That's all?

IRMA WESTON

I'm afraid so.

(Phone rings, Irma picks it up, Serena makes the "cut" sign.)

Olaf? . . . oh, good evening Mr. Dumbton . . . yes, but is it going to take long? . . .

Fine.

(To Serena.)

I'm really sorry; things are crazy right now, he wants me to listen in to a committee meeting.

(Irma exits.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

She is a busy woman.

SERENA FRANKS

Yes she is. Tell me something, you're Moslem, right?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

SERENA FRANKS

What's the deal with the polygamy?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Polygamy? Uh, o, well . . . .

SERENA FRANKS

How many wives do you have?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

One, of course . . . .

SERENA FRANKS

(Pause.)

You're Palestinian, you said?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, from Bethlehem.

(Quoting.)

The holy city of Bethlehem.

SERENA FRANKS

What do you do?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm a businessman.

SERENA FRANKS

Yes, of course, you told me.

Are you politically involved?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No. I'm a businessman.

SERENA FRANKS

But you're a Palestinian.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

And that means I should be politically involved?

SERENA FRANKS

No, but . . .

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm not.

SERENA FRANKS

But you're Palestinian.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

That's a people, not a party. I was born into it, I didn't join the Palestinians.

SERENA FRANKS

Aren't you opposed to the Israelis?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Am I?

SERENA FRANKS

They're the enemy, aren't they?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

If you say so.

SERENA FRANKS

Don't you hate them?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No. I told you, I'm a business man, hate is bad for business.



SERENA FRANKS

(Pause.)

Were you ever in the army?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We don't have an army.

SERENA FRANKS

You had one in 1967. I just read an article about it. It said that the PLO had about 5.000 People under arms.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

That's a long time ago.

SERENA FRANKS

How old were you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

19.

SERENA FRANKS

(Flashes the roll tape signal.)

Were you a PLO soldier?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(He sees himself on the monitor and is overwhelmed by a sense of gratification, but at the same time he also feels that Ms. Franks is behaving inappropriate.)

I was 19. I was a different person then. It was war, what do you expect? Everybody was involved.

SERENA FRANKS

You wanted to destroy Israel.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I wanted to destroy Israel. But we didn't stand a chance against them.

(On monitor a freeze of a close up of MAHMOUDY with caption: I want to destroy Israel)

SERENA FRANKS

Do you still want to destroy Israel?

(Enter Irma Weston.)

IRMA WESTON

Destroy Israel? What's he talking about?

SERENA FRANKS

It seems your husband's Palestinian friend here fought the Israelis in '67. He said he wanted to destroy Israel, and then I asked him if he still thinks Israel should be destroyed.

IRMA WESTON

Ms. Franks, this is not the interview you were supposed to do.

SERENA FRANKS

(To Mahmoudy.)

Did you ever meet Arafat?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Oh, great story. You know, Arafat, he --

IRMA WESTON

I don't think we want to know this.

SERENA FRANKS

O, yes we do.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

He came to my store one day to --

SERENA FRANKS

Is he your friend?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Arafat? Yes, of course Arafat is my friend, he is a friend of the Palestinians.

(On the monitor close up of MAHMOUDY with caption:

Arafat is my friend.)

SERENA FRANKS

Sir, you state Arafat is your friend?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Sure, he is a good man.

IRMA WESTON

I think you should wrap Miss Franks. This has been going on far too long.

SERENA FRANKS

He is a friend of Arafat! Arafat is a terrorist, you know that, don't you?

IRMA WESTON

It's hearsay, speculation. Shouldn't you check Mr. Mahmoudy's credentials? Check his story? And what if it is true? It doesn't mean he is guilty of anything.

SERENA FRANKS

Guilty? Who cares? People love this stuff.

IRMA WESTON

I'm sure they will, but you are going to be responsible for alienating a huge amount of my voters.

SERENA FRANKS

I have to call this in.

(Dials her cell phone.)

IRMA WESTON

It would probably cost me my election.

SERENA FRANKS

(Starts laughing.)

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Is Mr. Weston coming?

IRMA WESTON

I couldn't get to him.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I will wait for him.

(Walks over to the camera to look at it.)

IRMA WESTON

Is there any way we keep this off the air? He is our guest, you didn't ask for approval.

SERENA FRANKS

(Gestures IRMA to be quiet.)

I'm sorry.

IRMA WESTON

(Agitated.)

That's a shitty thing to do. You took advantage of this man.

SERENA FRANKS

Sorry. Now, if you would excuse me.

(Turns to the camera, talks to newscaster in the studio.)

Hi Frank. I am here at the house of IRMA WESTON. She is -- was -- running a successful campaign. But that is about to change. We ran into a potential terrorist, right here at the Weston's family estate. Ahmed Mahmoudy is the father of a young woman Dr. Weston allegedly had an affair with. Roll tape.

IRMA WESTON

WHAT!?

MONITOR

(Close Up Mahmoudy.)

I am a friend of Arafat. Destroy Israel.

SERENA FRANKS

We're waiting for a reaction from Mrs. Weston who's campaign is now badly damaged.

(Listens.)

Sure Frank.

(Waves at IRMA WESTON to come over.)

I'll ask her.

(IRMA WESTON approaches)

Mrs. Weston, your husband allegedly had an affair with the daughter of a terrorist, your response.

IRMA WESTON

(Close Up IRMA WESTON. She is upset, but manages to keep her composure.)

I have just a brief statement.

I don't know this man here, I also know that my husband does not have anything to do with another woman. Thank you.

(She exits.)

**END OF SCENE.**

**3 OLAF AND IRMA'S BACK YARD, A DAY LATER. GRAPH: WESTON**

**31.3 WILEY 55.4**

(IRMA in her work clothes, OLAF dressed casually.)

IRMA WESTON

(Furious.)

Now what?

OLAF WESTON

I always believed you'd enjoy these kinds of affairs.

IRMA WESTON

Normally I would, yes, but this, this, touches upon tectonic elements of nature I'm not able to control. I don't know how I'm going to get this one straight.

OLAF WESTON

Just continue to do what you have always done: be straight forward, be yourself, lie responsibly.



IRMA WESTON

This is my life.

(Gets up, emphasizes her whole body.)

Ever since I was a little girl I knew how to behave. I never drank, never stole anything, never had a car accident, never more than one boy friend at the time. Because, I knew that any smudge on my unblemished eternal record would diminish my chances of one day becoming president of the United States.

OLAF WESTON

The truth always prevails.

IRMA WESTON

The truth? Ha! You know what? Yes, you're right. The truth will prevail!. You know where! In the history books! Twenty years from now.

OLAF WESTON

See?

IRMA WESTON

(Shouting.)

That's not what I want!

OLAF WESTON

Do you have a plan?

IRMA WESTON

My staff has has been working through the night to come up with something, but it's like having Herpes. I'm contaminated.

OLAF WESTON

Embrace it.

IRMA WESTON

What?

OLAF WESTON

That's what we do in the theatre.

IRMA WESTON

Embrace what?

OLAF WESTON

In order to play an evil person, you have to be able to love him. Otherwise the character you're playing will be a caricature.

IRMA WESTON

"We" in the theatre?

OLAF WESTON

I'm reading.

IRMA WESTON

You're reading?

OLAF WESTON

You know, after you said I didn't know anything I thought it might be a good idea to do some research.

IRMA WESTON

Very nice, but how is this helping me?

OLAF WESTON

You have to go against your instincts. What do you want?

IRMA WESTON

I want the whole thing to go away.

OLAF WESTON

Disappear?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

OLAF WESTON

That's impossible.

IRMA WESTON

I know!!

(Pause.)

OLAF WESTON

Bring it to the front.

IRMA WESTON

What?

OLAF WESTON

Him. Ahmed.

IRMA WESTON

Are you crazy?

OLAF WESTON

No. Bring him into the campaign and let him explain over and over again what happened, what he thinks about the Palestinian self Government. People need to hear different voices.

IRMA WESTON

It's suicide.

OLAF WESTON

You have a very explosive situation here. The only thing you're doing is taking away the fuse.

IRMA WESTON

But everybody will know.

OLAF WESTON

The audience is not stupid, you know that very well. They will appreciate your openness. Stick your neck out. Why not?

IRMA WESTON

I'll talk it over with my staff.

OLAF WESTON

Let me talk to them.

(They Exit.)

**END OF SCENE**

4 THEATRE TWO DAYS LATER

(OLAF and A'IDAH enter an empty stage of a small community theatre. This is where will be rehearsing and performing. They're intimidated.)

OLAF WESTON

(Looking up.)

It's bigger than I expected.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It is.

OLAF WESTON

(Looking around.)

Where's your father?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Looking around back stage.

OLAF WESTON

So, what do you think?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't know.

OLAF WESTON

I've never been on stage before.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Aren't you nervous, there's going to be 150 kids sitting there in a few months.

OLAF WESTON

(Stares at the audience.)

150?

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)

Are you Dr. Weston?

OLAF WESTON

Yes, sir. Are you the stage hand?

STAGE MANAGER

I am not the stage hand. I am the stage manager. Are you miss Ma-maudi?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Mahmoudy, A'idah Mahmoudy. I am the writer.

STAGE MANAGER

Excellent.

OLAF WESTON

Thank you for letting us look around.

STAGE MANAGER

You're the tenant. The theatre is yours.

OLAF WESTON

O, yes, that's right.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Off stage.)

A'idah? Dr. WESTON? Where are you?

OLAF WESTON

Over here Mr. MAHMOUDY.

(A'IDAH exits to get her father. A'IDAH AND AHMED  
MAHMOUDY enter, he is in awe. )

AHMED MAHMOUDY

This is very impressive.

OLAF WESTON

Yes, it is.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You are going to make theatre?

OLAF WESTON

I am.



AHMED MAHMOUDY

How many seats are there?

OLAF WESTON

150.

STAGE MANAGER

158. Do you need anything else from me?

OLAF WESTON

No, we will be leaving shortly, thank you sir.

STAGE MANAGER

My pleasure. If you guys leave, take the back entrance, the door will lock automatically behind you.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

OK! Thank you!

STAGE MANAGER

When's the first rehearsal?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Uhm . . .we don't know yet.

STAGE MANAGER

OK. Whatever, it's your call, just let me know a few days in advance.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

We will.

(To WESTON.)

He seems to be a nice man.

OLAF WESTON

I believe so.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(To AHMED.)

I never knew you had an interest in the theatre.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Do I? No, I don't. It's against my religion.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Smiles.)

What time is your plane leaving?

OLAF WESTON

We have to pick up your luggage first, right?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm staying.

OLAF WESTON

Oh?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What! You're not leaving?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You're leaving mom all by herself?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

She's fine, she just hired someone for the afternoons.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But why?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Mrs. Weston asked me to stay. To help her. With the campaign.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Will she be taking care of you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, I guess so.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Why didn't you tell me earlier?

OLAF WESTON

Is it a problem?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Just be careful what you say.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I will, I promise.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Mom already knows?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I left her a message last night.

(He exits.)

OLAF WESTON

Let's go.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Weasel.

OLAF WESTON

Him?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

He always talked about coming to America. That's why I'm here, he's obsessed. I don't think he's going back. He likes it too much.

OLAF WESTON

Maybe your mom can come too.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Looks at him in a motherly fashion.)

Sometimes Dr. Weston, you can be hopelessly naive.

(She starts off.)

OLAF WESTON

(Follows her.)

What do you mean?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Think, think like a man for once.

OLAF WESTON

(Thinks.)

Ooohh. . .

**END OF SCENE**

5 PARTY HEADQUARTERS, A FEW WEEKS LATER. PODIUM. GRAPH:

WESTON 19.8 WILEY: 66.3

(IRMA WESTON and AHMED MAHMOUDY enter. Her

face on the monitor and/or back screen. While she talks

propaganda images appear; American flags, golden sunsets,

children playing, flowering statistics etc. )

IRMA WESTON

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for coming at such short notice. Let me start off with thanking my wonderful staff for setting up this press conference, and all the hard work they've been doing, in this time of crisis.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is a time of crisis. I have been committed to our wonderful state for the last 10 years and I know I am going to be, in the coming years, serving the state in the nation's capital.

I consider a loss in the coming elections a loss for our state. My record, and my staff is pleased to hand you as many copies as you want, my record is superior to any other state politician in the nation.

I challenge anyone to hand me better results in finding jobs,

(Applause.)

improving education,

(Applause.)

medicaid,

(Applause.)

and controlling the budget.

(Applause, cheers.)

Thank you. Thank you. If I'm not going to Washington I will not be able to pursue my goal. My goal is your goal: the pursuit of your happiness,

(Applause throughout.)

equal justice, equal pay, equal taxes.

This brings me to Mr. Ahmed Mahmoudy here.

(Picture of Mahmoudy with his whole family, on the screen.)

So, what happened? I will be honest with you. What was said by Mr. Mahmoudy in the papers these days is true, but only partly.

Yes, he was a soldier in the Palestine Liberation Organization. Yes, he fought the Israelis, in 1967, and, truth be told, he doesn't always like the Israelis because they're bad for business. But does that make him an anti-Semite or a terrorist, as some people have proclaimed.

SNAKE

A suicide-bomber, today, killed 4 people.

IRMA WESTON

(Assertive.)

Listen, the issue tonight is not peace in the Middle East, OK? He met Mr. Arafat on several occasions and he calls him a friend. He also met the pope and he calls him a friend too.

VULPO

What's your point?

IRMA WESTON

We'll get there don't worry.

SNAKE

So what! He is a terrorist!



IRMA WESTON

No, he is not. He is not. He was a soldier doing his duty. And now Mr. Mahmoudy came to our country because he loves his daughter. He traveled a long way to see if she was alright.

SPEAKER

What are you talking about woman!

IRMA WESTON

He came to see his daughter who is student of my husband.

VULPO

Dr. Weston?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

VULPO

How would you characterize the affair your husband has with Mr. Mahmoudy's daughter?

IRMA WESTON

(Biting her tongue.)

They are creating a performance piece for children about relativity.

SNAKE

(Gagging.)

Interesting.

IRMA WESTON

But that is not the reason I called you here. You, friends from the media, suggested I harbor a Palestinian war criminal, terrorist even. I'm here to tell you that this man has not committed any crimes. He was just a soldier, just like many of you have been.

SNAKE

So, your husband will be creating a theatrical production while your are campaigning?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

SNAKE

In previous campaigns he played an active part.

IRMA WESTON

It's his life. It's his decision, the opportunity arose, I respect him for that. But again, we are here together because-

VULPO

Are you and Dr. Weston having martial issues?

IRMA WESTON

You know I don't address personal issues.

VULPO

I am aware of that agreement, but this is something the people would like to know before they'll vote for you.

IRMA WESTON

Dr. Weston and I have a great relationship, he just decided to do something for himself this year. But, again, we are here to talk about what happened to Mr. Mahmoudy.

(She accidentally cues Mahmoudy.)

He is--

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Reading.)

Ladies and Gentlemen. I come here before your to explain. . .

My name is Ahmed Mahmoudy, I live in Bethlehem. That is in Palestine. You will find in the press release. I have a wife - one - and seven children. Their names are. . .

VULPO

Ooh. Get on with it! Why are you here?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Uhm . . . I am here to tell you that I am not a Jew - killer. I was soldier.

SNAKE

What kind of soldier were you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I was just a soldier.

SNAKE

Was that the last war you fought?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

What do you mean?

SNAKE

How long were you in the army for?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Six months.

VULPO

Was that the only war?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

For me?

VULPO

Yes.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

SERENA FRANKS

Describe the relationship of your daughter with Mr. Weston.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Oh, hello Ms. Franks. My daughter and Dr. Weston are good friends. They are doing a project together, but in a different environment.

IRMA WESTON

(Jumping in.)

He means that, Dr. Weston and Ms. Mahmoudy are not having the kind of relationship you were just describing.

SERENA FRANKS

Are you sure about that?

IRMA WESTON

(Impatient.)

Ladies and gentlemen, why don't we stick to the subject of this press conference?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

They're working in the theatre.

SNAKE

Please tell us more.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

In the theatre, they showed me.

IRMA WESTON

We are supposed to talk about Mr. Mahmoudy. If you are done with him the press conference will be over, let's go.

(She grabs MAHMOUDY'S arm to lead him off the stage.)

SERENA FRANKS

You're way down in the polls. What's your response?

(She turns around.)

IRMA WESTON

That's just atmospheric.

SNAKE

Atmospheric?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

SNAKE

I don't think so. I think you are losing your race right now, right here.

IRMA WESTON

How can you say that?

VULPO

But your husband. . . .

IRMA WESTON

We have nothing to hide. Why don't you go check it out at the Walden Community Theatre, that's where they're working.

SNAKE

We'll do that.

(They exit.)

IRMA WESTON

That didn't go very well.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Why are they doing this to you? An affair between Dr. Weston and A'idah?

IRMA WESTON

Scandal. That's what they thrive on.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Oh, my God, shouldn't we warn them?

IRMA WESTON

Why?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

To tell them they're coming?

IRMA WESTON

No. They have to act natural.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Why?

IRMA WESTON

Because we don't want them to act. Acting always raises suspicion.



AHMED MAHMOUDY

Ah.

IRMA WESTON

If they sense Olaf and A'idah's are trying to deceive them, even if they have nothing to hide, this campaign will be over.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

But there is nothing to lie about.

IRMA WESTON

In this country you may lie about anything except your sex life.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'll remember that. What do you want me to do next?

IRMA WESTON

That's very nice of you, but you have to get back to your business, your daughters, your wife.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I can stay a little longer.

IRMA WESTON

She wouldn't mind?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I don't think so.

IRMA WESTON

(Thinks a moment.)

If you can stick around, you'd be like an antidote. But we have to do something about that outfit of yours.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

My clothes?

IRMA WESTON

Yes. You know what? Let's go shopping.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Shopping?

IRMA WESTON

(Laughs.)

You're going to get a make-over.

(They exit.)

**END OF SCENE.**

6 THEATRE LATER THAT DAY

(OLAF and A'IDAH are on the floor. They are assembling  
an explosive device that will represent the Big Bang.

A'IDAH is wearing regular clothes, and a hijab.)

OLAF WESTON

Where is the detonator?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Right here.

(She hands him the detonator, he connects it to the  
pyrotechnics which explode instantly.)

OLAF WESTON

(Excited.)

Hoo-hooo! How did that happen!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Scared.)

That wasn't funny.

OLAF WESTON

Oh, come on, it's just a big ball of fire.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It's dangerous.

OLAF WESTON

Nothing can happen.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Maybe we should read the manual first.

OLAF WESTON

Why? How hard can it be?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I insist you read get the manual before any other accidents happen.

OLAF WESTON

We just have to put the wires in the right spot and maybe get a new detonator.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It's the detonators fault?

OLAF WESTON

Yes.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I think you did it on purpose.

OLAF WESTON

Why would I do that?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't know . . . because you could.

OLAF WESTON

Why are you so upset?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Because--

OLAF WESTON

Why?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Explosions aren't fun.

OLAF WESTON

Let's run a test. Here, you take it.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No, I can't.

OLAF WESTON

No, I insist.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You do it.

(He plugs in another charge.)

OLAF WESTON

This is the beginning of your show. You created it, you . . . try it. It's really fun.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Are you sure?

OLAF WESTON

Yes.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I'm not very fond of explosives.

OLAF WESTON

This is just a lot of fire and noise, you wouldn't be able to blow up anything with it.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I know that.

OLAF WESTON

Just turn the handle.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I know.

(SERENA FRANKS enters, monitors show what her  
camera registers.)

SERENA FRANKS

Dr. Weston?

OLAF WESTON

Hi, who are you?

VULPO

I'm Serena Franks from Channel 3 News. Can I ask you two a few quick questions?

OLAF WESTON

In a minute. All right. Here we go.

(A'idah ignites a device that causes a loud explosion.)

Not bad.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It's too loud, the children might get scared.

OLAF WESTON

But it's the Big Bang.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

They're going to be frightened.

OLAF WESTON

Kids here have no reference to explosions. They're not traumatized. I can imagine you people are, but American kids like explosions. This is an average Fourth of July explosion.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Little kids don't light fireworks.

OLAF WESTON

Of course they do. And they shoot guns.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

They shoot guns?



OLAF WESTON

That's what my dad did. He took me to the forest to hunt. I think I was six or seven.

I had to carry my own gun.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did you shoot anything?

OLAF WESTON

A shot a tree. It wasn't until a few years later I was able to aim properly. I shot a couple of rabbits.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

So yo really think this explosion is not too loud.

OLAF WESTON

That's what I think. What do you think Ms. Franks?

SERENA FRANKS

I'm with her, my ears are still ringing.

OLAF WESTON

But it's the Big Bang.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Who says the Big Bang made any noise?

OLAF WESTON

Nobody knows. And besides, what would be the observation point? There wasn't any. We just have to signify the beginning of time. Kids love explosions, so we use explosions.

SERENA FRANKS

(Enters the stage from the auditorium, to A'IDAH.)

Hi, my name is Serena Franks.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Hi.

SERENA FRANKS

Can we do a short interview?

OLAF WESTON

About what?

SERENA FRANKS

About you two.

OLAF WESTON

Why?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What do you mean "you two"?

SERENA FRANKS

How are you guys getting along?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Can you do this? Walk in with a running camera?

SERENA FRANKS

I asked the guy in the booth. He said it was OK. Let me be straight forward. Why are you not campaigning with your wife? Are there problems in the marriage? Are there any sexual deficiencies?

OLAF WESTON

No, of course not. We have a great sexl--

(Sees A'IDAH staring at him.)

Oh, let's not talk about our sex life in public. The reason I'm not running with her is that I have been running with her for as long as I know her. I'm tired of campaigning, I wanted to do something for myself.

SERENA FRANKS

And why did you choose to work with Ms. Mahmoudy?

OLAF WESTON

Because she was my student and she wrote a wonderful story that we are adapting into a children's play.

SERENA FRANKS

And she is beautiful.

OLAF WESTON

(Looks at A'IDAH.)

Yes. Now you mention is, she is very pretty indeed.

SERENA FRANKS

Are you suggesting you never noticed her appearance?

OLAF WESTON

(Blushing.)

No, of course. But we have a strictly professional relationship.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Why are you asking these questions? Why is this important?

SERENA FRANKS

I'm asking questions because I am a reporter. This is important because the voters deserve to know if Mrs. Weston's marriage has enough stability to with stand the strenuous tensions of a national political career.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Oh, I didn't know that was important.

SERENA FRANKS

In this country it is.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

So what are you going to broadcast?

SERENA FRANKS

Just that you two are working together.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Don't forget to mention that we open November 11.

SERENA FRANKS

Sure no problem.

(Exits.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What do you think?

OLAF WESTON

I think we're going to be screwed.

**END OF SCENE.**

7 OLAF'S OFFICE - GRAPH WESTON: 39.6 WILEY: 45.4

(OLAF, AHMED and IRMA are staring at the monitors.)

SERENA FRANKS

Mrs. Weston denied her husband had an affair with an unmarried woman.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

But the question is: does he?

SERENA FRANKS

Hard to say Frank. Right now he is adapting a short story by A'idah Mahmoudy into a play.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

You didn't find anything suspicious?

SERENA FRANKS

No direct proof of a sexual relationship, except this.

(Monitor shows the moment when Olaf admits he thinks  
A'idah is pretty.)

IRMA WESTON

What?

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

So what do you make of this?

SERENA FRANKS

Well Frank, you know I like to keep my personal life and my professional life separated, but I have to say this. My parents went through the same process. Mom had a flourishing real estate business, dad, owned a flower shop. One day he hired a very pretty girl to work for him in the store.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

And the moral of the tale is . . . .

IRMA WESTON

Here it comes.

SERENA FRANKS

My dad and his cashier celebrated their 10th anniversary last week.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Thank you very much Serena Franks. Excellent reporting. Next--

IRMA WESTON

(Presses the 'mute' button. Furious.)

What were you thinking; "she's so beautiful!" How could you!

OLAF WESTON

We didn't do anything.

IRMA WESTON

That's not the point.

OLAF WESTON

But we we're trying to.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Dr. Weston I'm very disappointed in you.

IRMA WESTON

(Screaming.)

Why. Why on earth did you do it? How could you. HOW could you.



You are so selfish. Do you ever think about anybody else? I always thought you were special because you were not like them. You know, those skirt chasing idiots. But you, you, you are worse. You find a flower and you just take it.

OLAF WESTON

That wasn't me! That was her dad!

IRMA WESTON

Don't you get it! That doesn't matter.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It's the same thing.

OLAF WESTON

But I only said she was pretty. I didn't even touch her.

IRMA WESTON

This is it. It's over.

OLAF WESTON

Nothing is going on!

IRMA WESTON

Again. That is not the point.

(She points with her fingers at her skull.)

This is where reality is, OK? People are not scientists. They don't perceive these detailed discrepancies you rely on. TV is just a blur. Real! Not for you but for them, for them!

(She exits.)

OLAF WESTON

Can you talk to her? Explain it?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You are telling the truth, right?

OLAF WESTON

Of course.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Looks at him, shakes his head in disbelief.)

I talk to her. Then I talk to you.

(AHMED exits. OLAF claps his hands in frustration.)

**END OF SCENE**

**8** IRMA'S OFFICE. LATER WILEY 79.2 WESTON 13.1

(IRMA AND AHMED are staring at the monitor which shows Wiley gloating.)

IRMA WESTON

I can't see a glimpse of irony in this. Look at him, ungrateful bastard. He's acting as if it was his own accomplishment.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Isn't that station on his side?

IRMA WESTON

Yes, but still . . . .

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Fate dealt them a good hand.

IRMA WESTON

So to speak, yes.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

What are you going to do next?

IRMA WESTON

In a few minutes I'll be meeting my staff -- that is, if anyone is coming back. We can't sink any lower in the polls.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You're going to fight?

IRMA WESTON

Fight, work, smear, do whatever we can.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Against whom?

IRMA WESTON

What do you mean?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I think right now our worst enemy is our own camp. Not Wiley. You have a weight tied around your neck. You have to get it off.

IRMA WESTON

You mean you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No. I'm not the problem right now.

IRMA WESTON

Olaf?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

IRMA WESTON

Get rid of Olaf?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You have to distance yourself from him.

IRMA WESTON

How?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Separate.

IRMA WESTON

Divorce?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You know the story of King David?

IRMA WESTON

The one about Bathsheba?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, you are David. He wanted Bathsheba for himself. Let's pretend Bathsheba is your victory and Uriah is your main obstacle.

IRMA WESTON

Didn't David kill him?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No, he sent him, his favorite general, to the front line of the war.

IRMA WESTON

She must have been one hot neighbor. Do people still do that over there?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Do what?

IRMA WESTON

Bathing on the roof.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Snippy.)

No, we have bathrooms.

IRMA WESTON

(Contemplative.)

We have been married for 14 years.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I think it's the only chance you've got.

IRMA WESTON

Let's ask my staff.

(She exits.)

Why don't you come along?

(They Exit.)

**END OF SCENE.**

9 THEATRE THE NEXT DAY

(OLAF and A'IDAH are holding a large piece of cloth.

They're standing at opposite sides of the stage making waves. On the floor there's a bottle of beer.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Do you like the color?

OLAF WESTON

I do.

(He drops the cloth.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Are you OK?

OLAF WESTON

No.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did you get recognized?

OLAF WESTON

Yes!

(Pause.)

I got 637 emails.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

From whom?

OLAF WESTON

Friends, colleagues, a lot of people I didn't know.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did you reply?

OLAF WESTON

I started . . . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

A friend called me. She was laughing so hard.



OLAF WESTON

I don't think it's funny.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You replied?

OLAF WESTON

I'm going to send them a statement.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You know that's going to make it worse.

OLAF WESTON

No, they assumed what they saw was the truth and I felt obliged to prove them wrong.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

In a few years we'll be laughing about it.

OLAF WESTON

Maybe.

(He takes a sip of beer.)

STAGE MANAGER

Mr. Weston?

OLAF WESTON

What?

STAGE MANAGER

There's a messenger back stage. He says he needs to deliver it to you personally.

(OLAF sighs, takes a swig of beer, goes back stage to  
retrieve his package. He enters with a blue envelope.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What is it.

OLAF WESTON

Legal documents.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

For what?

OLAF WESTON

I have no idea.

(He opens the envelop, starts reading.)

I don't believe it . . . divorce papers.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Thank God.

OLAF WESTON

What?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I thought they're going to shut us down.

OLAF WESTON

(Grunts at A'IDAH, dials cell phone.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Are you going to sign them?

OLAF WESTON

No!

(Angry.)

Hi, it's me. I have received your letter, I repeat. I have received your letter. My answer is no! Are you out of your mind? I am your husband, not --

(Thinks.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Obstacle.

OLAF WESTON

.-- not some obstacle you need to get out of the way. We are supposed to love each other!

(Ends call.)

I left a message.

**END OF SCENE.**

10 IRMA'S OFFICE - GRAPH WESTON: 32.8 WILEY: 59.7

IRMA WESTON

I can't hire you. Technically you'd be a volunteer, but we'd take care of all the expenses.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I would be honored.

IRMA WESTON

I will be honest to you. You will be honest to me. That's the only way I can work. We're lying and cheating the rest of the world, that's why I need 100 percent trust within the confines of these walls. Are you game?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Of course. It's like a marriage. Inside the walls you shout at each other, but outside everything is cookie and egg.

IRMA WESTON

Cookie and egg?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

That's an expression. It means: everything is alright.

IRMA WESTON

Exactly. That is the exact attitude I need. You're good AHMED.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

What are we going to do first.

IRMA WESTON

You have to go with me to see a few people from the Jewish community to explain - and to apologize.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

For what?

IRMA WESTON

Doesn't matter, just apologize, but make sure the cameras are rolling and the photographers are in position.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No problem.

IRMA WESTON

And there's one more thing.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes?

IRMA WESTON

Your daughter.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

She will be going home soon.

IRMA WESTON

Olaf and her, they need to get married to make this all work. They seem to like each other. It shouldn't be a problem.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Speechless.)

I . . . .

IRMA WESTON

I would like to arrange a marriage between my husband and your daughter. Is that possible?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Most times it's a son and a daughter who are brought together.

IRMA WESTON

But what if an older man wants to marry?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Then he negotiates himself.

IRMA WESTON

Let's pretend I'm the older man's sister and I want to. . . surprise him. Besides, you have seven daughters, be glad one of them is taken care of. Remember: expenses are taken care of.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

What did Mr. Weston say of this?

IRMA WESTON

He's ready to commit.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

He is?

IRMA WESTON

Yes the divorce papers are on their way.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

He divorced because of your career?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

A sacrifice.

IRMA WESTON

Exactly. A sacrifice. But that's not enough, the dragon is still hungry.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

'The dragon?'



IRMA WESTON

Public opinion.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

It is hungry?

IRMA WESTON

Very.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm not giving her away.

IRMA WESTON

Dr. Weston is a good candidate.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

But she's young, and he is old.

IRMA WESTON

They will grow on each other.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I don't know.

IRMA WESTON

You know what? Let's just wait for the polls. If the numbers are up we don't take action. But when the difference is more than 10 points we renegotiate; more than 20 we do it, no questions asked. Deal?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

NO!

IRMA WESTON

Can we talk about it next week?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes but I'm not promising anything.

IRMA WESTON

You're getting good at this.

**ND OF SCENE.**

**11** IRMA'S OFFICE - 2 WEEKS LATER GRAPH WESTON: 33.9 WILEY: 54.7

OLAF WESTON

How can you do that?

IRMA WESTON

I asked him.

OLAF WESTON

Weren't you supposed to ask me first? Am I your possession? We're still married for Christ's sake.

IRMA WESTON

Watch your language.

OLAF WESTON

Why?

IRMA WESTON

You'll have to convert.

OLAF WESTON

Become a Moslem?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

OLAF WESTON

Do you really think this is going to happen?

IRMA WESTON

(Shows him a press release.)

Yes.

OLAF WESTON

(Reading.)

You've got it all written out.

IRMA WESTON

After you sign the divorce papers, you will have access to open expense accounts, with a credit card, at your convenience. Then you two will get married. This here is a contract between you and us which states you will need to stay married until after I have been elected to my second term, and that you are going to be discreet about this.

OLAF WESTON

Second term? Are you nuts? That's two years!

(Reads.)

IRMA WESTON

Just a safety precaution.

OLAF WESTON

(Stunned.)

How about her mom?

IRMA WESTON

There's absolutely nothing wrong with you. You're a great catch. She's all for it.

OLAF WESTON

Am I going there anytime soon?

IRMA WESTON

Funny that you mention it.

OLAF WESTON

O my God, you already got tickets to get me out of the way?

IRMA WESTON

No, no, noo. They're vouchers, you and A'idah can use them at your convenience.

Here.

OLAF WESTON

(Throws them back at her, desperate.)

No! What are we doing! We are about to obliterate our relationship to turn our marriage into one of your campaign tools. It's morally and ethically despicable.

IRMA WESTON

I know that.

OLAF WESTON

Please reconsider.

IRMA WESTON

I won't.

OLAF WESTON

My whole life is on the negotiation table right now. Not just our bond. Where am I supposed to go? And you? What's going to happen to you?

IRMA WESTON

I'm going to win the election.

OLAF WESTON

And that's more valuable than our marriage.

IRMA WESTON

We'll stay friends; what changes is our legal status.

OLAF WESTON

But you want me out of your life.

IRMA WESTON

Face it, a congresswoman is married to her country first, second to her husband.

OLAF WESTON

(Pause.)

You know what. You're right. But you're wrong. You're not married to your country, you're married to yourself! Divorce granted! But no wedding!

**END OF SCENE.**

**12** HEADQUARTERS, PODIUM, A FEW WEEKS LATER GRAPH WESTON:

36.7 WILEY: 52.8

(Ahmed Mahmoudy is addressing the media as Irma  
Weston's campaign spokesperson. )

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Next question?

VULPO

Do I have to assume Ms. Weston has changed sides on whether the US should alter the current peace plan?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm glad you asked Vulpo, because this presumption has troubled us from its inception. The answer is downright: No. She has 'fine-tuned her stand', not 'changed position'. The campaign-team, Ms. Weston, and myself have been going over the situation and decided that neither side deserves our pity.

We also agreed that the jar of sympathy is empty. But, we do not, and we will not abandon either party. We discussed sending in a new mediator, but as you well know, this option has been exhausted.

VULPO

You like doing this, don't you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, I do, thank you.

VULPO

One last question. Do you anticipate any strategy changes in the current campaign?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Uhm. No. Not really. I think we're on a good track right now, support is still growing. Polls are up. We don't expect any surprises. Even donations increased after last week's debate. We're confident we're going to Washington. You.

SERENA FRANKS

Is it true that you and Ms. Weston have developed a love-relationship?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Dead pan.)

No. That is not true. Anything else?

(Pause.)



Thank you gentlemen, ladies. Keep an eye on your mailbox for the next press-conference.

(Exits.)

VULPO

I'm absolutely positive he's banging her.

SERENA FRANKS

Why?

VULPO

He didn't blink. He was prepared.

SERENA FRANKS

You really think so?

VULPO

Why not?

SERENA FRANKS

I don't know. I didn't expect it.

VULPO

Let's find his wife, and ask her.

**END OF SCENE.**

**13 TV STUDIO GRAPH WESTON: 33.5 WILEY: 58.3**

(The stage is an automatic TV studio in Jerusalem. Layla Mahmoudy enters. She feels very intimidated.)

VOICE OF PRODUCER

OK, here we go, first we're going to ask you your name . . .

(Pause.)

And your name is?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Layla Mahmoudy.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Good. The second question is: what is your husband's name?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Ahmed Mahmoudy.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Excellent.

The third question is: how long have you been married, and 'b', do you have any children?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

27 Years. Seven daughters.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Seven! Excellent.

Can you tell us why your husband came to America?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes, because our daughter was having trouble at school.

(On the monitors we see AHMED entering the studio in DC, sits, clips on a microphone.)

VOICE OF PRODUCER

And did you hear from him since?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

He called and said that he found the man and that everything was OK.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Everything was OK?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes, it was a misunderstanding.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

And then?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Then, a week or so later, he left a message that he'd found a job there and that I had to run the stores.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

And that was. . .

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

5 weeks ago.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Looks like they're ready. Now look into the camera in front of you.

(To director.)

We're ready.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Mr. Mahmoudy?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

We have a few minutes, if you want you can have a word with your wife.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Sure.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

Mrs. Mahmoudy

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes?

SPEAKER

We have a little time. Your husband wants to talk to you.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Hi.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

What happened to you? I hardly recognized you.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm an American!

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

I guess you are. What is the meaning of all this?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

It's complicated.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Try.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I don't think you want to know.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Don't you think I'm entitled?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, but. . .

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You left me here, by myself, I have to pay people to work in the store, we're hardly coming by, and you, look at you, you are a rich American!

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Without flinching.)

I found a job I really like, and I'm good at it. I'll figure out when I'm done here with my work what's going to happen next.

VOICE OF PRODUCER

30 Seconds.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(Icy.)

Maybe you should stay there.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Maybe I will.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You're selfish.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'm doing something I've always dreamed of. This is my one chance, why can't you be happy for me?

VOICE OF PRODUCER

15.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Because you left me behind.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I'll send money, I promise.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Money? How--

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Channel 5 has an exclusive interview tonight with Mrs. Layla Mahmoudy. Good afternoon, Mrs. Mahmoudy, or should I say good night.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Hello. Yes, it is already night time here.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

And in the studio in Washington, Mr. Ahmed Mahmoudy.



AHMED MAHMOUDY

Good evening Frank.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

You have made quite a career switch haven't you?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes, Frank, two months ago I was selling Christmas ornaments in Bethlehem and now I am a campaign manager and spokes person for the best candidate for US Congress.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Most of my colleagues are very impressed with you.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Thanks Frank, that's nice to hear. Well I guess I have to be grateful to my dad who started the business and taught me how to sell. And of course my family who have been supportive my whole life.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

My producers tell me your marriage is suffering from your absence.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Well Frank, I --

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

He knew he was going to stay there.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Layla, please, this is not the time.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

When is the time? How many phone calls can I afford? You know very well I can't call you every day. Now is the time!

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Can we do this after?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

My husband is a bad husband.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Well, do we have a treat for you! It seems the man who joined Mrs. Irma Weston's campaign team, has joined the home team too, if we may believe these pictures.

(Pictures of Irma Weston and Mahmoudy hugging and kissing.)

Is that your husband Mrs. Mahmoudy?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(Shocked.)

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Mrs. Mahmoudy?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

That is Mr. Mahmoudy? Your husband of 27 years?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

What is your response to these pictures?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(She exits.)

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Mr. Mahmoudy?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Stunned.)

How did you get these?

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Are you and Mrs. Weston developing a love affair?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No, we're -- as the picture show -- very good friends.

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

Thank you Mr. Mahmoudy.

Let's take a look at the weather. Albert?

VOICE OF ALBERT DOWNING

We're looking at this huge system coming in from the Pacific and will reach us in two or three days--

**END OF SCENE**

**14** THEATRE A FEW DAYS LATER GRAPH: WESTON: 30.1 WILEY: 60.3

(OLAF opens a can of beer. The stage is empty. A'IDAH enters upset.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Where's our stuff?

OLAF WESTON

He keeps cleaning up after us. That's his job.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Do you remember the set up?

OLAF WESTON

No.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Where's everything?

OLAF WESTON

I don't know.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Looks at him.)

Are you drunk?

OLAF WESTON

Almost.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But we were supposed to work today.

OLAF WESTON

I don't think it's going to work. We're worse than the amateurs who usually perform here.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But you said you like the play.

OLAF WESTON

I do, I do. But it wasn't very smart to do it ourselves.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You said you could do it.

OLAF WESTON

I thought I could. How hard could it be?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Are we quitting?

OLAF WESTON

No. Let's just work on the text.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I kind a liked what we were doing.

OLAF WESTON

(Points at the booth.)

Ask him, what he thinks.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

He? What does she know?

OLAF WESTON

He works here, he's seen a lot of theatre.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did you ask him?

OLAF WESTON

Ask.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Hello! Mr. Stage manager!

STAGE MANAGER

Yes?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What do you think of our show?

STAGE MANAGER

(Starts to laugh, switches off microphone, his laughter is audible somewhere in the belly of the theatre.)

OLAF WESTON

See?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Sad.)

I think I'm going home.

OLAF WESTON

O, come on! We tried. We'll just do the reading, that should be more than sufficient.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

But you got a huge grant.

OLAF WESTON

Did we learn something?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes. We shouldn't be making theatre.



OLAF WESTON

Are we able to put what we have learned into use?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes. Next time we will ask professionals.

OLAF WESTON

That's what I did. There's a small theatre group on campus. They're going to finish it. No money wasted.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Maybe I can still graduate this year.

(Pause.)

OLAF WESTON

Shall we ask him to order a pizza?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes, I'm starving.

OLAF WESTON

Hey, stage manager.

STAGE MANAGER

Yes?

OLAF WESTON

Pizza!

STAGE MANAGER

Give me half an hour.

OLAF WESTON

You see? No money wasted.

(Enter IRMA. Nobody speaks.)

STAGE MANAGER

Shall I bring an extra large?

OLAF WESTON/A'IDAH

MAHMOUDY

NO!

STAGE MANAGER

Okidoki.

IRMA WESTON

There is an emergency.

OLAF WESTON

I know.

IRMA WESTON

You are supposed to act.

OLAF WESTON

We're not going to do any acting.

(Laughs.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

We're not going to do the play.

IRMA WESTON

(Contained anger.)

I don't care about your play. I asked you to help me. Now you're doing the opposite.

Did you talk to her?

OLAF WESTON

No.

IRMA WESTON

You were supposed to talk to her.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

About what?

IRMA WESTON

He will tell you. You know, and I'm not threatening you here, but if you don't do anything to help--

OLAF WESTON

I signed the papers.

IRMA WESTON

That's just a formality. I need action. If you're not going to do what we agreed upon--

OLAF WESTON

What you agreed upon.

IRMA WESTON

I will personally make sure that--

OLAF WESTON

What exactly are you going to do?

IRMA WESTON

I don't know. I'll find something.

STAGE MANAGER

Are you Mrs. Weston?

IRMA WESTON

Yes.

STAGE MANAGER

There's a driver waiting for you in the lobby.

IRMA WESTON

Thank you. I have to go now.

(She starts off.)

I'm warning you. I'll win, at any expense!

(Exits.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

She seems desperate. What's going on?

OLAF WESTON

You don't want to know.

**END OF SCENE.**

15 HOTEL ROOM TWO DAYS LATER GRAPH WESTON: 22.1 WILEY: 61.3

(Empty room, enter Olaf and Irma.)

OLAF WESTON

(Cheerful, intoxicated.)

These rooms are nice.

IRMA WESTON

I know.

OLAF WESTON

I accept your apologies.

(Pause.)

Why are we here. A hotel?

IRMA WESTON

We need privacy.

OLAF WESTON

Admit it, you miss me.

IRMA WESTON

I don't have time for good memories.

(She checks her messages on her cell phone.)

OLAF WESTON

(Starts taking his clothes off.)

Remember the time you and I were in that little motel in Vermont and all the neighbors complained about us?

IRMA WESTON

What are you doing! Put that back on!

OLAF WESTON

I thought you said you and me. . .

IRMA WESTON

Why are you so cocky?

OLAF WESTON

I'm cocky because I have been drinking all day, on my own, and everyone I used to know is avoiding me thank-you-very-much.

IRMA WESTON

It doesn't suit you.

OLAF WESTON

Are you going to tell me why we're here?

(There's a knock on the door, IRMA opens, enter AHMED  
and A'IDAH.)

IRMA WESTON

You'll see.

OLAF WESTON

What are they doing here?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What's going on?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Wait.

IRMA WESTON

Good afternoon A'idah.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What--

IRMA WESTON

Thank you so much for coming.



A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Where's my mom?

IRMA WESTON

Your mom?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

He said she was going to be here.

(To AHMED.)

Mom's not coming?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

IRMA WESTON

You told her, her mom would be here?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Sort of.

OLAF WESTON

(To IRMA.)

What have you done to him?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(To AHMED.)

You're a liar.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Soothing.)

Truth is a process, not a --

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Lying to you own kids.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

-- that's what I have learned so far.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

A process?

OLAF WESTON

Interesting.

IRMA WESTON

Can we start?

OLAF WESTON

(To himself.)

The analytical process preceding the find, indeed, that's part of the truth as well.

IRMA WESTON

Are you ready?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Think about the morality.

OLAF WESTON

The dynamic automatically eliminates moral dilemmas.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Exactly.

OLAF WESTON

Interesting.

IRMA WESTON

The reason why we are here. Ahmed?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Opening his briefcase.)

Yes. Go ahead.

IRMA WESTON

I want you two to sit and listen. We have a situation. Show them the prognosis.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Handing them a sheet of paper.)

These are the combined prognoses of three different independent research organizations. We sank below 20.

IRMA WESTON

(Emphasizing.)

Below 20!

AHMED MAHMOUDY

This is a disaster.

IRMA WESTON

This is all your fault.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Agitated.)

Why? You just need a scape goat. I think your demise is of your own making. And what if it was my fault, then what? Maybe it is predetermined, fate, divine intervention. Maybe winning this election is not in your future. Maybe you should learn to accept that you can't always win.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

18 out of 24 psychics would disagree with you. They think this victory is in her future.

OLAF WESTON

You interview psychics?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No, the *Friends of Irma Weston* did.

OLAF WESTON

*Friends of Irma Weston?*

AHMED MAHMOUDY

It's also called *The Presidents Club*.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Is she running for president now?

IRMA WESTON

Maybe some time in the future. Let's get to business. Ahmed?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Locks the door.)

We're here today because we have a problem.

And that problem is going to be solved today, in this room. This is to show you how  
... desperate we are.

(Throws key out of window.)

Bye-bye!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Dad, NO!

OLAF WESTON

Are you crazy?

You're locking us in?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes.

IRMA WESTON

We stay here until the dragon has been fed.

OLAF WESTON

The dragon.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

The dragon?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Public opinion.

OLAF WESTON

(Cynical.)

How to milk a metaphor.

IRMA WESTON

Watch it with the attitude mister. I am the only one who can call the desk for a key. I gave specific instructions.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What's going on?

OLAF WESTON

(Gets up.)

I'm leaving.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Pushing him back.)

Better not.

OLAF WESTON

He's pushing me.

IRMA WESTON

Yes he is, because, as I said, we're here to accomplish something.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You can't make us.

IRMA WESTON

We already did, didn't we, now, hear me out.

OLAF WESTON

You're kidnapping us.

IRMA WESTON

No we're not.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

You came with us voluntarily, and we accidentally lost the key.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

How long are you going to keep us?

IRMA WESTON

Until we're finished.



A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Finished?

IRMA WESTON

With both of you,. Ahmed?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Thanks Irma.

OLAF WESTON

“Thanks Irma”? What’s this, are we in an official session? Shall I take minutes? “I yield to my good friend the president.”

AHMED MAHMOUDY

(Ignoring Olaf’s mockery.)

As we know the campaign is in a slump and there is only one significant variable which causes Irma’s fall in the polls.

OLAF WESTON

The other guy? Wiley. He must be good.

IRMA WESTON

Olaf, please.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No, it's the insecure family relation of candidate Irma Weston.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

How do you know?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We asked five thousand people.

OLAF WESTON

Oh, no. Wait a minute. I know what you're getting at.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What?

OLAF WESTON

Don't you get it? They're locking us into a room hoping we're going to get together.

IRMA WESTON

That's such a negative perspective.

OLAF WESTON

We're not going to do it.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

How do you expect me to respect you as a father?

IRMA WESTON

Whatever you say, you're still responsible.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No, I'm not. You can't hold me responsible for this.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I am responsible too, but I paid my dues, and that's something to be respected.

IRMA WESTON

Yes, you did. And Olaf too, he signed the divorce, and moved out.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

So what? What am I supposed to do?

IRMA WESTON

You know what you have to do.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No, I don't.

IRMA WESTON

Didn't he tell you?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Tell me what!

IRMA WESTON

Olaf!

OLAF WESTON

I told you I wasn't going to.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

WHAT!!

OLAF WESTON

They wanted us to get married.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(To AHMED.)

An arranged marriage? With Olaf?

(She starts laughing.)

OLAF WESTON

I told you it was an ill-conceived proposition.

IRMA WESTON

Not quite. Research shows that I will lose votes because I am sustaining an adulterous husband.

OLAF WESTON

Which you're not.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

In the eye of public opinion you are.

IRMA WESTON

We discovered a few things. First, people are not as short-sighted as we thought they were. Second, they are willing to forgive, but only when it's true love. The people don't want to see me married to a lustful skirt chasing man. And you know what's funny. We discovered that women voters will not vote for me because they're afraid I want to take revenge on you. How many guys signed up to volunteer the last two weeks?

OLAF WESTON

Guys?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

1231.

OLAF WESTON

For what?

IRMA WESTON

To meet me.

OLAF WESTON

How do you know?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We asked them.

IRMA WESTON

You two have to do the honorable, and I will forgive you for it.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

From your point of view it makes perfect sense, but we have to give up the lives we  
live? For you?

IRMA WESTON

And for your country.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Not my country.

IRMA WESTON

I can see what I can do.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What! Dad! Say something. . . This is outrageous.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Research said that you two--

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Research?

IRMA WESTON

Yes. That's our compass.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

And research has also told you that we should get married?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Focus groups.

OLAF WESTON

Focus groups? How would they decide about our lives?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We explain the problem, and they answer.

OLAF WESTON

How many told you to quit the whole thing?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

11.

OLAF WESTON

Of course.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We had three 20 people focus groups. 6 Women and 5 men told us to stop. 27 women and 4 men, that is more than 50 percent, said you two should get married.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What did the others say?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Two men said that we should have Olaf killed, or heavily wounded.

IRMA WESTON

We have considered a coma for you.



OLAF WESTON

I'm not surprised.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

And the other 16?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

These were all guys. Two said both of you should be kicked out of the country, nine didn't know, and the remaining five wanted to marry you.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Suddenly starts screaming and stamping on the floor.)

Help! Help! Let us out! Let us out.

OLAF WESTON

(Grabs a chair begins slamming it on the floor.)

Help! Help! Help!

IRMA WESTON

All right, all right!!

(Pulls out a key.)

Here.

(Irma holds up the key, slaps it on the table. Olaf and

A'idah both grab the key with their right hand.

Ahmed handcuffs them. At the same time Irma handcuffs their left hands. Irma and Ahmed exit, leaving Olaf and A'idah behind, facing each other.)

OLAF WESTON

The phone!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Picks up the horn holds it against Olaf's ear.)

Dial 9?

OLAF WESTON

It's dead.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

They took out the cord.

OLAF WESTON

Do you want to shout?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't think that's going to help.

OLAF WESTON

They'll be back.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't know. They seemed persistent.

OLAF WESTON

I'm sure they're listening outside.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No.

OLAF WESTON

(Loud.)

OK We're going to do it! Right now! Right here!

(Listens, no reaction.)

I'm touching her! We're kissing! Come and watch us you perverts!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

They're probably downstairs by now.

OLAF WESTON

Any ideas?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No.

OLAF WESTON

Do you have anything in your purse? A hairpin, pocket knife?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't have a purse on me.

OLAF WESTON

(Observing the hand cuffs.)

These things look pretty sturdy.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Mine is a little tight.

OLAF WESTON

Slide it up a little bit. Here.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Thanks, that's better.

OLAF WESTON

(Long pause.)

I don't think we should smash the window and cry for help.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Why not.

OLAF WESTON

It's going to be a mess.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

With the dragon you mean?

OLAF WESTON

Yes. It's going to eat all of us alive.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I guess.

Do you also think it's my fault?

OLAF WESTON

No. It's just an accident.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Which I caused.

OLAF WESTON

You're not to blame. You'd be to blame if you would have done it on purpose. You even came to our house to tell us what had happened. If you've had any bad intentions you would have let this thing blow up right in our faces. Are you OK?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes.

I feel really bad about it though. If I knew. I feel so stupid. . .

OLAF WESTON

Are you sure you are OK?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Don't worry.

OLAF WESTON

You look a little. . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

When do you think they'd be back?

OLAF WESTON

I don't know.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Fifteen minutes?

OLAF WESTON

May be.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Or is it going to be more than an hour?

OLAF WESTON

I really don't know. Maybe they're downstairs getting a coffee, maybe they're coming back tomorrow.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Tomorrow!

OLAF WESTON

Do you have to 'go'?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No. You?

OLAF WESTON

I've been drinking beer all day. But I wouldn't know how to . . . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Let's just talk about something else.

OLAF WESTON

All right.

(Pause.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

My dad!

OLAF WESTON

I liked his principles regarding the truth. You see, we think we can find the truth, but what we tend to forget is--

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Can't we talk about something normal?

OLAF WESTON

Normal?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Like, what's your favorite food?

OLAF WESTON

My favorite food?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes.

OLAF WESTON

Tzatziki.



A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Tzatziki?

OLAF WESTON

It's a Greek yoghurt and cucumber sauce. It's refreshing, spicy, creamy. Great with grilled lamb.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Sounds good, do you know how to make it?

OLAF WESTON

I do. It's very simple. The secret is to drain the yoghurt and to dehydrate the cucumber with some salt. What's yours?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

It's called mezze.

OLAF WESTON

Mezze?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes. It's basically a salad bar, all kinds of different salads. You eat it with pitah bread.

OLAF WESTON

What kind of salads?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Bakdounsieh is a parsley and tahin salad. And we have one with tomato, onion, parsley and mint.

OLAF WESTON

What kind of dressing do you use.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Just olive oil, lemon juice, some pepper, salt.

OLAF WESTON

I'm getting hungry.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Me too.

OLAF WESTON

Do you like fish.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes. I like it grilled, outside on a little charcoal grill.

OLAF WESTON

Fresh, right out of the sea.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Let's talk about something else, my stomach hurts.

OLAF WESTON

I have to go.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You will have to wait.

OLAF WESTON

No, you don't understand.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I understand it really well, you will have to wait.

OLAF WESTON

We can just go to the bathroom and--

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No!

OLAF WESTON

Talk about something else.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

(Pause.)

Shall we just pretend to them?

OLAF WESTON

To get out?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Yes.

OLAF WESTON

I don't know.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What's the worst thing that can happen?

OLAF WESTON

The worst thing would be that she loses the election and blame us for the rest of our lives.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

That'll wear off.

OLAF WESTON

No. She's stubborn. Irma's mother once told me that 8 year old Irma wanted to go to DC to see the White House. For two weeks the only thing she said was: I want to go to DC.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

She did?

OLAF WESTON

Brush your teeth Irma. I want to go to DC! Clean up your room Irma. I want to go to DC!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

And did the mother give in?

OLAF WESTON

Yes she did. After 12 days.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

You think she will come after us if we fake it?

OLAF WESTON

Someone is bound to find out, and if that happens, and she loses, she will blame it on us. We'll be cursed.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Can't we reason with her?

OLAF WESTON

(Laughs too loud.)

Sorry, but now I really have to go.

(He gets up, drags A'IDAH with him into the bathroom.)

(Enter IRMA and AHMED.)

IRMA WESTON

Where are they? O God, they're gone. I told you this was a bad idea.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

It was your idea.

IRMA WESTON

Whatever.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

There's no way they could have escaped.

(AHMED looks in the direction of the bathroom, points,  
gestures her to be quiet, then they slowly and quietly exit.

OLAF and A'IDAH enter. )

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

This is not the first thing one wants to do when one meets someone new.

OLAF WESTON

Thanks anyway.

(Zips his pants, enter IRMA and AHMED.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Hi.

IRMA WESTON

(Cheerful.)

Can we come in? The door was open.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

The door was open?

IRMA WESTON

What did you decide?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

We'll do it, but we'll just pretend. There's going to be a divorce.

IRMA WESTON

Good enough.

**END OF SCENE.**

**16** PARTY HQ, PODIUM GRAPH WESTON: 48.3 WILEY: 46.4

(AHMED MAHMOUDY, OLAF WESTON, IRMA WESTON and A'IDAH MAHMOUDY on the podium, AHMED behind the microphone. Pictures of the happy couple on the monitors.)

IRMA WESTON

Ladies and gentlemen, good news.. My ex-husband, the man I lived with and campaigned with, for many years, turns out to be an honorable man after all. He and his fiancee - yes, they are engaged to be married - yes you may applaud.

(Applause.)

This young couple caused my campaign a lot of trouble. But we were able to set things straight and regain the trust of many voters. My biggest "thank you" goes however to my friend Mr. Ahmed Mahmoudy who dedicated these last few weeks to my campaign, and helped me rebuild the confidence of many Jewish voters who were misled to think that he was actually a Palestinian terrorist.



We are going to vote the day after tomorrow. I am very confident that we are going to do well. We have campaigned hard, we have won back many voters, and we are very very tired. This is going to be our last official press conference, so, fire away.

SNAKE

Are you going to stay Mr. Mahmoudy?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I would love to. But we have to take care of the paperwork first.

VULPO

Are you going to join Mrs. Weston in Washington?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

I sure hope so.

SNAKE

What can you do to secure this election?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

This is how I see it. When you vote for a candidate you enter a relationship. Just like a marriage. You have to be able to blindly trust the person you vote for. But on the other hand the voter expects the representative, while she is in office, to lie and cheat - - if necessary -- to protect the interests of her voters.

VULPO

Are you guys going to get married?

IRMA WESTON

You know I don't answer personal questions, but I will make an exception: No. We're not. We became very good friends during this campaign, but for now we will focus on our professional goals. Don't you agree?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No.

(Laughter.)

I would love to marry you.

IRMA WESTON

(Blushing.)

You would? I thought we were just good friends??

AHMED MAHMOUDY

No, I do, honestly.

IRMA WESTON

(Badly acting.)

I'm sorry, this is . . . I didn't expect this to happen. . .

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Would you?

IRMA WESTON

Only if I win.

(Applaus. A'idah and Olaf are amazed, shake their heads in  
disbelief.)

IRMA WESTON (CONT'D)

Any more questions?

SERENA FRANKS

No, you win.

**END OF SCENE.**

**17** IRMA'S HOTEL ROOM, ELECTION NIGHT

(Irma and Ahmed are watching the results of the election.)

NEWS ANCHOR FRANK MORTSON

. . . Wiley 46. . Weston 51 . . Let's go live to Weston's head quarters where Serena  
Franks. . . Hey, Serena, are you there?

## SERENA FRANKS

Yes. . . I hope you can hear me. People are going wild. Everybody is waiting for Irma Weston to come down. What a victory, who would have expected Weston to win. Not after a series of scandals. First the Arafat friend, then her relationship with the same Palestinian. It seems her unprecedented campaign of openness and honesty has paid off.

(The audience in the background cheer: "Weston Rules!"

"Weston for President!" Etc.)

## IRMA WESTON

I think they're going a little crazy down there.

## AHMED MAHMOUDY

Let them wait a little. . .

## IRMA WESTON

Wow. We did it. We really did it.

(Phone Rings.)

That's Wiley.

(She picks up the phone.)

Weston. . . . Hi Wiley. . . . Hmm-mmm . . . Hm . . . Hmm-mmm. Thanks anyway. . .

Maybe you'll do better next time. Bye Wiley!

AHMED MAHMOUDY

What did he say.

IRMA WESTON

He conceded. Said I was lucky and told me I should suck his you-know-what in two years.

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Let's go. We won.

IRMA WESTON

So we are actually going to go through with, you know, what you said?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

Yes. We cannot not do it.

IRMA WESTON

So what do we promise them next time?

AHMED MAHMOUDY

We'll think of something.

(They exit. Roaring crowd explodes in cheering.)

**END OF SCENE**

18 OVERLOOKING JERUSALEM, A FEW MONTHS LATER.  
(LAYLA, A'IDAH and OLAF are drinking tea.)

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

He just paid me off.

OLAF WESTON

What are you going to do?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

That's why I'm here. I want you two to take over the business.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Mom, come on. Raisa can do it. She wants to.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

I'm offering it to you.

OLAF WESTON

That's very kind, but we're scholars. We're not able to do anything else. Even

A'idah's book was a flop.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I'm going to get my PhD.

OLAF WESTON

I've landed a position at an Online University in Britain. I can work from here.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You guys are staying together and still pretending?

OLAF WESTON

Yes.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

All right.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Don't worry.

(OLAF picks up the tea pot to get more tea. Exits.)

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Did you . . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You know what I mean.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

No.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Did you and Dr. Weston?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did we do what?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You know . . . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Ooh. That.

Are you sure you want to know this?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(Pulls shoulders, looks away.)

Aeh.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I don't think you can handle it.

(Enter OLAF who immediately pours the tea.)



OLAF WESTON

Can handle what?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Mom was wondering if we had had sex.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(Blushes)

No, no. I was wondering . . . I thought

(Drinks tea, stuffs cookie in her mouth.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Shall we tell her?

OLAF WESTON

You want to talk about sex with your own mom?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

We're women, that's what we do.

OLAF WESTON

Tell her the first time you took my pants off.

(LAYLA chokes, OLAF and A'IDAH pat her on her back.

Layla gets up because she spilled.)

OLAF WESTON (CONT'D)

We have pretend sex.

(Laughs. Layla shakes her head. She exits to get a few napkins to wipe her shirt. Returns almost directly.)

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

We're just teasing you mom.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

First your father, now you.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

I haven't touched him.

OLAF WESTON

I wouldn't let you if you did.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Why?

OLAF WESTON

You know they call it reversion instead of conversion?

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

What do you mean. . .

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

(Starts to laugh.)

He did it!

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Did what?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Snipsnip.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Snipsnip?

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

Yes.

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Ooh. . .

OLAF WESTON

I know I didn't have to do it, but I figured, might as well. . .

A'IDAH MAHMOUDY

Does it hurt?

OLAF WESTON

No.

LAYLA MAHMOUDY

You should pray she's not going to change her mind.

(OLAF panics, looks at A'IDAH, who starts to laugh with

LAYLA. OLAF's "wound" suddenly starts hurting.)

**THE END**

## Bibliography.

Allison, Robert J. *The Crescent Obscured. The United States and the Muslim World 1776-1815*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Bergson, Henri. *Laughter; An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.

Bogart, Anne *A Director Prepares. Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Euripides. *The Bacchae*. Trans. C.K. Williams. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1998.

Findley, Paul. *Silent no More. Confronting America's False Images of Islam*. Beltsville, MD: Amana, 2003.

Frank, Anne: *Het Achterhuis. Dagboekbrieven, 12 juni 1942 - 1 augustus 1944*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2001.

Judt, Tony. "Israel: The Alternative." *The New York Review of Books*. October 23, 2003: 8, 10.

McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters. Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Kalam, Murad. "Egyptian Like Me." *The New York Times Magazine*. November 16, 2003: 116.

Kaul, Mythili, Ed. *Othello. New Essays by Black Writers*. Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997.

Naipaul V.S. *Among the Believers. An Islamic Journey*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1981.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Douglas Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Paolicci, Henry. *Zionism Superpowers and the P.L.O.* Smyrna, DE: Griffon House Publications, 2002.
- Pechter, Edward. *Othello and Interpretive Traditions.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999.
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business.* New York: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Postman, Neil. *Wij Amuseren ons Kapot. De geestdodende Werking van de Beeldbuis.* Tran. Aldert van den Boogaard and Janneke van der Meulen. Houten: Het Wereldvenster. 1986.
- Said, Edward. *Covering Islam/ How the media and the experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1993.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism.* London, Penguin, 1987.
- Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* New York: Barnes & Nobles Books, 1996.
- Shaheen, Jack G. *The TV Arab.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular University Press, 1984.
- Shakespeare, William. "The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice." Eds. Tucker Brooke and Lawrence Mason. *The Yale Shakespeare. The Complete Works.* Edited and Annotated under the Direction of the Department of English, Yale University. Eds. Wilbur Cross and Tucker Brooke. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993.
- Vaughan, Virginia Mason. *Othello. A Contextual History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Villiani, Andrea Ed. *Shirin Neshat.* Milan, Italy: Edizione Charta, 2002.