

to their children but do they actually mean it and act like that? I loved you so much but you didn't give me a chance even to cool down and understand you. How could I have known what kind of person was Joshua, a foreigner? How could I have known that he was not just seducing you with some ulterior motive? On the other hand, you can see the manner you paid me back for my twenty years of love and sacrifices?"

"Papa, don't talk of sacrifices. Nobody makes any sacrifice for anybody. Everyone is engaged in self-serving and satisfying own ego. You did whatever you thought could serve your interest or satisfy your ego. I did whatever I thought was appropriate for me. I could not tolerate the harsh words you had used for Joshua".

"But how could I have known, who Joshua was? What kind of person he was?"

"Papa, please do not hurt me or the soul of Joshua by talking about those things. It is better for you to take a return flight and go back."

Dinesh was not to give up so easily, "You silly girl, whatever has happened to you? Alright I will not talk about those things. How are you doing otherwise?"

"How do I look? Joshua worked hard and accumulated so much wealth that even if I did not take up a job I could still maintain myself all my life. I do not even have a child. I am working at the railway station just to keep myself busy". "Yes, I know". Anita was surprised, "How do you know? Had you been to the railway station?" "Otherwise how could I come here? Your security man gave me your name and said you lived close by. I reached your apartment by asking a couple of people about you."

"But why did you come at all? I had forbidden you."

"Anita, you are again asking me the same question. If you had earlier given me any idea about Joshua even by a letter I would have come to see both of you. I would definitely have loved to meet the person whom my daughter worshipped like a god."

Anita appeared to be moved by this expression of sentiment by her father. She lowered her eyes as she blushed a little, "Yes Papa, he was like a god to me. Not "was", but "is". The only difference is that now he is no more before my physical eyes. However, he remains before my mental eyes, always, always!"

"Dear daughter, I committed a blunder in understanding you as also the relevance of your selection of a partner. I have deeply been repenting over it for the last twenty years. Your mother could not take it anymore and left, but I have been surviving shamelessly."

Tears rolled down the cheeks of Anita, "Is my mother no more?"

In a heavy subdued voice he just said, "She was a fortunate person and left."

For a moment an awkward silence prevailed in the room. The atmosphere became heavy. Then with a heavy sigh Anita exclaimed, "My mother was the only person in the house who could understand me. You didn't even allow her to do anything. You are a double sinner!"

"I know, and I am carrying the load of both of these sins on this earth. Now when Joshua is no more, why not you come back to India with me?"

Anita's mood changed abruptly. In a sharp sarcastic tone she retorted, "Papa, there is a limit to selfishness. Where will I go in India? To you? Now when you have grown old and are weakened you want me to be there in India and nurse you? Papa, this place is like a place of pilgrimage for me, a place of worship. If possible, I will not want to exchange this life for all the luxuries of life in a heaven even."

Dinesh was dismayed, "Yes, my daughter! I erred again! It is indeed my selfishness. How can I ask you to come back to India?"

There was a grim and uncomfortable silence again in the room as if neither one had anything to say. Still just to gauge his daughter's feelings for him he added, "Well, then, dear daughter, I must return to my home now." Anita briefly said, "Yes! That's right!!"

Dinesh had not imagined that his daughter could be so cruel and ruthless; otherwise, he would not have uttered what he had. He had ruined all the prospects and had dashed all the hopes. Now how could he say that he actually wanted to stay for a while with his daughter? He took another chance, "If you so like I could stay with you for a month or two. May be I can be of some help to you. What is there for me to do? I have a reliable help there to look after my business."

Anita was sarcastic again, "No papa, you are better there. That is the place where you can spend your days of penance, a place where you sinned against me and my mother! Of what use will you be here for me even for a few weeks? Moreover, this is a place of my worship. Had Joshua been alive, it would have been a different matter." Then she also added curtly, "The fact of matter is that this place of my worship could even be defiled by your presence." Dinesh had no excuse to stay there any longer. He, surely, didn't want to defile the place of worship of his daughter. He got up abruptly with a heavy heart.

Anita threw a curious glance at him and asked, "Where are you staying?"

This time he gave a stern look into his daughter's eyes and retorted, "Why do you want to know? How does it concern you? I have even lost my right to call you a daughter." Anita seethed, "That you had lost a long time ago." Dinesh staggered out of his daughter's apartment. He was feeling thirsty, and the throat dry!

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Adventures in Tel Aviv

- Albert Russo

excerpted from Holyland Zapy, another hilarious Zapinette sequel

Every morning I'm allowed to go have a dip in the sea with my uncle - with him you don't get nothing for nothing, it's been like that ever since he first took me out of our apartment (my mom was quite happy to get rid of me for a few hours), that is as early as when I was five years old - and in the afternoons I have to abide by his cultural shenanigans, whether I'm tired or not, and when it's hot like now, I can nap only for half an hour, the child torturer!

Let me tell you that there are some real hunks here on the beach, and they like to preen themselves in front of the girls in bikini, who range from light blond to pitch black, a real United Nations, but it's not only in front of the girls that they flaunt their muscles and something else too - a few even wear just a jockstrap, shameless that they are -, coz Tel Aviv is also supposed to be a haven for gays. How do I know? I read it in Time Out, which lists all kinds of pornographic addresses. But what's funny is that, a hundred meters to the right, you have a beach reserved for the *Haredim*, that's the religious folk whose women go fully clothed into the water. Jeezette, what contrasts within such a small distance! Apparently the latter throw stones at the lay people in Jerusalem who drive their cars past their ghetto in Mea Shearim on *Shabbat*. They don't dare do that here in Tel Aviv, which they call Sin City. And how did I learn this? Do you think my uncle leaves me in peace, even when he sees that I'm about to yawn - I do that loudly, first to hint that I'm fed up with his local history, and secondly so that he too starts yawning, on account that it's the most contagious addiction men and animals alike have invented. But *low and bee hold*, after imitating me, he gets back to his anecdotes ... and he supposedly dotes on his lil niece. So, now whenever I pass by a bearded, hatted and cassocked bozo, I put my arms around my head to protect my poor lil self from the possibility of getting stone-faced. What, it's not the right word? Tough luck if you don't understand me. I ain't your walking dictionary.

Here in Israel the religious folk are a very small minority, but in the Moslem world, there are millions of them, and even in the more advanced countries like Turkey, their numbers are increasing, instead of the other way round. Being the *felinist* that I am, I think it outrageous that women be treated almost like slaves, having to cover themselves from head to toe, many of them can't even breathe properly with their nose and their eyes hidden behind them slits that look like mail boxes or

mosquito nets. What kind of MCPs - it means 'male chauvinist pigs', you ninny, even if they aren't allowed to eat pork - do they have for husbands, fathers and brothers! Specially since these bozos can trot around dressed in the most modern fashion, with shorts or bermudas and bathing trunks, when they go swimming. Those backward countries deserve to have a real Feminist Revolution, like the non-violent movement led by Gandhi to chase the British colonialists out of India, not like the French Revolution, with all the guillotining and the bloodshed that went with it, and which the Islamic terrorists take as an example, hiding their bearded faces *washmore* behind hoods, double cowards that they are!

My Muslim sisters oughta go on strike day after day, is what I say, and stop cooking delicious food for their male oppressors - mmm ... steaming *aromalous* (yeah yeah yeah, I've just invented that word and tough luck if you don't like it) couscous , with ... mmm ... mu tutut mutton and ... triple mmm ... spicy lil sausages, with all them nifty veggies -, or darning their stinking clothes, then running the family errands, loaded like bloomin mules under the bloomin hot morning sun on the edge of the bloomin desert. And I get the shivers thinking of the poor lassies that get lashed or even worse, stoned, on account that they've been abused by strangers, or even by a family member.

Hey wake up my sweet *duddesses*, you're half of the population of this ozone-trashed planet of ours, and you'll see what happens to the other half if you decide to stop serving them if only for a stretch of forty eight hours. And if you repeat this every week I guarantee that you will get your rights before the end of the season and that those big bad wolves - though some of them are scrawny like Iran's rat of a president - will turn into the gentlest and cushiest lil lamb you've ever seen, with their lousy tails hanging between their legs, and don't twist my thoughts and become vulgar, ok. But I also am mad as hell at the fat rich mosquito-netted *mammamushis* you see strolling along the Champs Elysées in Paris or on Fifth Avenue in New York, swaying their Vuitton bags and their shiny Gucci parcels like bumble bees that have escaped the jungle for a shopping spree. They're quite happy the way they are, so long as they can flaunt their expensive wares in front of their numerous kin within the walls of their harems. Their revolution is called «Buy me diamonds and furs - yeah, you read right, furs, which they wear in their air-conditioned boudoirs - and some of those lovely designer clothes, plus a couple of electronic geegaws I saw in the last issue of Vogue magazine, and I won't complain, I swear».

And to show how grateful they are to their sugar daddies, they remain obedient and complying. They're even happy when some of their poorer sisters get stoned for mere trifles - I do love trifle-pudding, but that's another story -, like them widows who dare make eyes at a stranger in a department store (try doing that through a silk mosquito-net), while

they themselves get stoned, in this case, by sniffing powder behind their masters' back.

This, dear reader and *readeress*, is called an aside, and I love writing asides!

We spent the whole afternoon at the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, and I must admit that even if before going there I pulled the sourest face this side of purgatory, I couldn't stop staring at those old pictures and the funny garments the Jews scattered on the five continents wore before the Second World War and during the past centuries. Once you see all of this, you don't know anymore what a Jew looks like - for those of you who believed that they all had crooked noses and that the men wore long beards with spaghetti-like curls hanging on both sides of their heads -, on account that they acted and dressed in a thousand different ways. If there's a Rainbow people, they are the ones. And I can vouch for that, specially today, just look at the faces you see in the streets of Tel Aviv, you'd think they all just walked out of the United Nations building in Manhattan. And you wouldn't believe it, some of them look like they were siblings of the Swedish royal family, with their long flowing platinum manes, while others have the color of ebony - those young Ethiopian men can be stunning, they look like they descended from Ancient Egypt's Pharaohs. But you also come across scary looking bozos you wouldn't want to meet in a dark corner. I even thought I saw the twin brother of Saddam Hussein or his double and let out a scream.

«What's the matter, dearie?» my baffled uncle hissed, like Shoesha the snake.

«I thought they'd killed him after all the people he tortured and gassed.» I muttered.

And when Bonka insisted to know what was on my mind, I growled «Never mind!» and shut him up, on account that I didn't want to appear ridiculous, even in front of him, coz such hallucinations don't smell kosher, specially if what I saw was the Jewish cousin of the late - he should have been hanged much earlier - dictator of Irak. Wow, talk of Jerusalem *sin drome*! If you didn't know it yet, this is the land where they invented sin, starting with the Ten Commandments and all them you shan't's and *so fork and ding dong*. And we haven't even gotten to the capital yet.

Outside it was hot and sticky and we had to take two buses to get back to the pension. The shoving and pushing was nobody's business, actually, it was mine since I was pressed like a poor lil sardine - my uncle thought it terribly funny and didn't seem to be bothered by all the hullabaloo, pancake that he is! - and my ears were caught in the fire of screaming schoolkids.

«*Ma ze ballagan*! this has nothing to do with a maze or balls, it means, 'cut

out the din'» I shouted in Hebrew with all the strtnegth of my deflated lungs, coz I was drenched in sweat.

A boy my age looked at me, at first *non-pussied*, then, realizing I was a foreigner, he imitated my accent and his pals started giggling. Bonka baboola put on one of his Purina chow smiles, like he was watching some bloomin dog vaudeville. And he's supposed to protect me, the *shlemiel*. I might as well carry a cardboard poster for a body guard, with Arnold the Terminator on it, or be accompanied by a bloomin sandwichman, in which case we might both get mugged together. Didn't you guess it yet? I'm the bloomin protector of my *shenaniganned* uncle. There oughta be fines for such *pussy-mousied* adults. Who's the egg and who's the chicken here, for crying out loud? And you think I'm mixed up!

Yaloni greeted us home with arms wide stretched. She didn't come too near us on account that we were huffing and puffing and dripping something too terrible.

«Go refresh yourselves quickly, my dear boy - hey she thinks my uncle is a kid now - and dear little Zoompy - damn it, everytime she calls me a different name! -, because I have a sur prrrr ise for you.»

So, we hurried up, taking a nice hot shower each, me first tho - lassies get the priority, specially when they're the *protectress*.

We were sitting, the three of us, in the livingroom, when the bell rang, with a drilling sound that can scorch your eardrums.

«Here sheee eeez.» boomed Yaloni, jumping out of her chair like a well-fed *djinnette*.

The surprise was a bones and knuckles lady with a long neck that reminded one that man, instead of descending from monkeys, had girafes for ancestors.

She did have a pretty face though - usually girafes are cute -, with silky blue jay hair and big brown eyes that almost gobbled you alive, when they stared at you. She wore a flowery blouse and a salmon-colored mid-length skirt, with shocking pink high heels, like them nineteen-fifties pin-ups. But Goddess almighty, when she spoke, she gave you the willies, on account that her voice was that of a witch, hoarse and crackling, which didn't fit at all with her elegant appearance.

«Let me introduce you to my very best friend, Boolissa.» chanted Yaloni, as she flailed her arms in her direction, like two mega butterflies performing in 'Le ballet des papillons'. «And she's a widowww!» Yaloni added.

I didn't understand why she made that last remark until she turned towards my uncle, adding: «And furr the morre she's frreeee like a bird. No man in sight, not yyyet.»

You should have seen Bonka's face, a beetroot! I myself must have turned *lizardy*, coz I knew that we were going to face a tough one this