

nervous. Another two gates could be seen facing each other and leading to the two opposite directions. He chose the left gate and stepped slyly and smoothly towards the gate. It was a huge one. At the entrance he stumbled over something. He was about to fall on his face. Anyhow, he could hold the open gate and saved him from falling down. Gathering himself he looked ahead and he was filled with awe by the sight in front of him. A huge white monument was standing erect at the middle of the ground. In the moonlight it looked so charming that for a few minutes he forgot all about the earthly existence. The four minarets were set in the four corners of the monument. Its head seemed to be that of a tomb's. But Shahinur had never seen such a huge tomb. He could not go back though the place seemed to be devoid of human beings. So, there was no chance of finding his father there. He started to go close to the building. He could not decide what it could be. The road to the building was divided by a single stream.

When close to it, he found steps leading to the upper storey of the building. He went up to the upper floor of the building. From there the Yamuna River could be seen flowing silver-like behind the building. He stepped to the front of the building. A door was found open. As soon as he started for his journey to the inside of the building, in the moonlight he saw a man sobbing on the front door resting his head in his palms. He stepped close to him. What he saw was astonishing. It was the King. Why was he crying? He went close to him, sat down on the King's feet. The King felt his presence and looked at him with his wet eyes.

"Who are you? Why are you here at this hour? Don't you know no one is allowed to come inside the garden?"

"My Lord, I have come here to search for my father."

"Who is your father?"

"He is Aminur Alam. Does he work here?"

"I can't say. Now leave me alone."

"Why are you weeping my Lord?"

"It's your innocence that you dare to ask me this. This is where my beloved, my wife lies. One day I'll join her beside her grave. Now leave me. Otherwise....." he looked blank.

Shahinur left the place in hurry. From the entrance gate he took a last look of the tomb which was still shining peacefully white in the moonlight. He hurriedly stepped towards the Yamuna. His father might be there. He often spent his leisure a few years ago.

The river was flowing mildly. In the moonlight it looked like a silver belt. Near the banks of the river he rounded his eyes from one side to another. Far away something could be viewed moving on its one place. After a moment's hesitation he approached towards it. From a yard's distance he realized that it might be a person lying on his belly. When he reached to it and called out, "Who are you here?" The man raised his head, sobbing bitterly. For a few seconds Shahinur was awestruck. His heartbeat became fast. It was his father, blood-spattered and mud-spattered.

“Abba! Why are you here, abba?” he sat beside him.

“Who is there? Nur? I am ruined Nur. I am ruined.” His father broke into a loud cry. He extended his hands towards Shahinur. He took his hands in his hands. All the ten fingers were amputated.

“How all these happened Abba?”

“The king took away our fingers so that we can never build another Taj Mahal for anyone else. No one will be able to make such a fatal monument again. None..none..” A sobbing sound filled the air. Noor took his father's head on his chest. He hugged him tightly. The moon was over their heads. The Taj Mahal was shining in its light over the amputated fingers of thousands of people. The father rested his head on his son's shoulder. Tears were rolling down from the eyes of the two people. Yamuna was flowing on her won will. The whole world was sleeping peacefully except the men with amputated fingers.



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Excerpt from Albert Russo's new
ZAPY BURQA BURQUETTE story,
9th of the hilarious Zapinette series

AMINA'S STORY

Fatiha came to me crying her eyes out. That poor girl really fatigues me with her family's *catastrophically* goings-on. From now on I'll call her Fatiga, coz it's ok to have compassion, but at the end of the day, if there's too much of it, it compresses your heart and turns it into a piece of mush, then you want to bring up! Wow, compassion demands a lot of strength and courage, I don't know how long I'll be able to be com-passssio-nate. I'd rather listen to that old Cuban band Compay Segundo, them *gagageniarian* musicians with no teeth left but with a lot of dancing rythm.

Ok, now to the new disaster that has just plagued Fatiga's folks. She has an aunt, just a couple of years older than herself (she ... she ... shit), can you imagine! How do you figure having an auntie or an uncle almost your age? Well it apparently often happens in Muslim families, when your own grown-up uncle marries a girl (his third or fourth wife) of fourteen! In this case, her auntie Amina who is thirteen and a half and who was born here in France, was forced by her parents - who in reality are Fatiga's grandparents, do you follow me? Don't bother, I hardly follow it myself, it's too damn complicated for our poor Western brains - to go to Algeria, where she's never set foot before, and marry someone quadruple her age. Amina first thought it was a joke, but when her father hollered at her and threatened to flog the heck out of her buttocks, she understood that he was damn serious. So, during her summer vacations, Amina and her folks flew to Oran (not orang utan, you geographic nerd, that's a city), she saw nothing of the town and even less of its lovely beach. No, they all went from one house to another, drinking mint tea, eating *shawarma*, couscous, and delicious other home-cooked tidbits, with syrupy desserts full of honey and sesame and *so fork and ding dong*. But a fat lot poor Amina enjoyed all them goodies, cooked to honor her and her parents. The bozo she was to marry was a rich farmer, who owned two dozen goats and thirty sheep, he himself was the size of a hippo, with a mouth that seemed to have been repaired by a plastic surgeon, so *balthazarish* his thick lips were - you'd have thought that behind them he had maybe three tongues, coz he ate like a pig. By the way, you do know that Muslims aren't allowed to eat pork, it's *haram*, totally forbidden, on account that it isn't *hallal* - by now you must be familiar with all these words, I've spelled them enough times, so pay attention, ok.

So, Amina returned from that first trip to North Africa depressed, deflated - she ate hardly nothing, she just couldn't swallow what her folks had prepared for her, the future marriage with *Salaam el Pigo*, I mean, and consequently, her throat closed up, refusing anything that oughta have passed through it, except for liquids; she drank so much that she spent a third of her time there, peeing, which was the only relief left to her, at least in the loo no one was ogling or leering at her nearly inexistant

tit - and totally dejected, actually she felt that her own soul had been ejected from her body and she couldn't recognize herself when she faced the mirror. 'Who's that person in front of me,' she would ask herself, 'a servant, a slave, a *Mamelukette*' (ok, that's me adding)? She dreamed of being completely engulfed in a *nikab*, with just the eyelashes sprouting out from the tiny cotton cleft, like some mustacho bristle, and divided in two, *washmore*, where the nose stands - in such cases, not even the nose is to be seen, can you imagine, as if it were a *phallinozick* symbol; I don't know if you remember that *jerquette* of an *aristocritic* girl, classmate ha! - who always wants to be my best friend in order to share with me all the nasty things she thinks of everybody else, on account that she's the opposite of a beauty, more the crossing of a opossum and a baby croc, with on top of it, a face so pockmarked, you'd swear an army of ants visits her every night. Yeah, according to her, boys who have big schnozzles have a big thing down there. What about her, coz not only are her nasal flippers narrow, but they are the size of a worn out shoehorn and they're as bent as a crow's beak, with so many holes in it that you'd think it was at the lowest rung of the pecking order. Now DO you remember her? Charlotte de Jerk, the one who believes her ancestor was Louis the Fourteenth's commode guard, in other word, the guy who brought HRH 'his royal highness', for your nerds!) the wooden thingamagig with a hole carved in the most precious rosewood for the royal number two, and if that wasn't enough, the guard had to be present while Louis was pushing down, full force and full stink, and make sure it was nice and big so's to show the doctor the stuff for the *ladder* to see and smell if everything was norrrmal, *fercryinoutloud!* - nowadays, thank goddess, at least here in the West, we have proper WCs. Apparently the Japanese have even invented one that sprinkles your tushy then wipes you off with jets of hot air so that you can dispense with regular toilet paper.

Even back in France, Amina refused to eat, and she became *anorexitically* thin, to the point where you could count her ribs - they were probably tickling her to death -, my oh my, I wouldn't want to see a sight like that, it's concentration camp stuff.

Her parents took her back to Algeria during the Christmas vacations (it's Catholic, not Muslim, you nerds), and it all resumed like in the previous summer, only now the weather was cooler and she continued to sweat, not because of the heat, mind you, but because of her nerves being all twisted and contorted, with her mind going bonkers. Isn't the human body stupidly constructed? you get hot even when there's a cold breeze around you and you shiver, *fercryinoutloud!*

If we are made in the image of God, then He must have stopped working on mankind early on, maybe regretting that He ever started the whole caboodle. He probably intended to massproduce us, instead of acting as the craftsman he ought to have been. Just compare them made-in-China slippers and bespoke (yeah, shake'em pears again) hand-sewn *babouches* (them beautiful leather flip flops you can buy in a Moroccan market - they're so genuine, they still stink of bleeting goats, having just taken their crap, you know them tiny balls that look like playing marbles, only that in

this instance, they're mushy and dark brown. I can see Him - God in Hell - yawning out of boredom when He got to the tenth of his job, saying to Himself: (Let those unfinished humans cope with what I gave them, shiiit, who do they think I am!)

Actually, I'm doing him a damn favor by *refurring* to him with a capital h. he doesn't deserve it, naaah, even if the h stands at the beginning of a sentence. Had we been 'manufactured' by a Goddess, I'm sure, we would be in a much better shape, on account that women are more finicky and they usually like things well done, look at most of the housewives around the globe. What would their hubbies and children say if they gave them rotten food to eat, with cockroaches or strands of hair floating in the soup, and if they kept the bathroom disgusting and smelly, not to mention bedsheets full of lice or whatnot - yuk yuk and double phew.

Yeah, that god with his bloomin beard makes me think of today's ISIS and Al Qaeda monsters with their *Kishkas-nikovs* hanging on their shoulders as if they had been born with them. They looove to film children wearing them too, with the difference that the *Kishkas-nikovs* are bigger than the kids themselves. Nice example they give them. 'Kill, kill, maim, maim' is their motto and don't you confuse it with Rita Hayworth's song 'Put the blame on Mame', when she dances like a gypsy queen in that mafioso nightclub, making her lover's blood boil, ok! That's an entirely different story. It's called unrequited love, meaning: «I love you yeah, I love you not, I dunno if I really love you, so, to hell and gone.» And it all ends with passionate murder and sobs and mumblings «Oh why did I do it, why ... why, and so fork and dingdong.» and this is supposed to be god's *masterpizza*? Pizzas are some of my favorite dishes, specially when they are crusty and thin like the real *Eyetalians* cook them 'al forno'. Quiet now, Shushsh, let me go further with Amina.

Back in Algeria, around Christmat time, Amina's fatso fiancé gave her the most magnificent jewels she ever saw: an emerald engagement ring set in red gold, with lil diamonds surrounding the big stone - don't forget that green is the color of Islam - along with a matching necklace and a bracelet, both in the same precious red gold, studded with dozens of small emeralds and tiny diamonds - not Swarovsky, you nerd, those are much less expensive.

Her parents almost jumped out of their skins for joy. I just can't imagine who invented that *stoopid expreshun*, how can you jump out of your body and remain whole? unless you've already become a ghost. But Amina plunged inside her own skin, if you want to go on with that *expreshun*, meaning that her cheeks got swallowed inwards, her eyes became smaller than ever and her bosom stretched to that of a boy, not to mention the rest of her, which floated puppetlike within her clothes while her head disappeared behind her veil, so that you could only see her nose jutting out, like a very wrinkled finger.

Gosh, she must have looked worse than the shadow of *E.Tette* (the feminine of E.T., if you haven't understood it). Then, all of a sudden, *roboticwise*, her face swung left than right, right then left, and so fork and ding dong, for five solid minutes that must have seemed like a whole hour

- try to watch a movie scene getting jammed because the damn projectionist, instead of following the film for which he is responsible, takes a snooze and spectators have to wait till he wakes up.

Amina's parents, her fatso fiancé and his family - parents, brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, cousins and even dogs and cats - watched her aghast, yeah yeah, she was more of a ghost at that moment rather than flesh and bone.

«What's wrong, darling?» Amina's mother asked her, getting brown-purple. Amina opened her mouth but no words came out, only a hiss like *Serpentina*, in a Walt Disney animated *toon*.

Fatso's parents also got very worried and brought back some resurrecting salts from the bathroom then sprayed them on the poor girl's face all the while an old toothless aunt waved a fan at her, made of dry camel skin, before she would faint or even suffocate and stop breathing altogether. But all to no avail, on account that Amina felt even worse and thought her last second was near ('last hour' is much too long in cases like this).

She was laid on Fatso's parents' bed - a mega-mouse-size piece of furniture surmounted by a velvet-covered canopy, with its four spiral-bound poles painted in blood red; maybe they thought that that bullish color would give the poor girl a healthier look, coz you should know that in those developing nations *supertissues* (superstition, ha!) go hand in hand with modern stuff like Kleenex and microwaves. Have you ever watched some of the Saudi camel drivers, holding a cell phone close to their ear and weqring Nikes?

When Amina came to (to what? that's an *expreshun*), she must have believed she was wandering in a fairy tale, until ...until she recognized Pigface. Then, all her screws went bang and, for the first time since she'd arrived in Algeria, she started hollering:

«I don't want to get married. No one has asked my opinion. Go to hell all of you!»

My oh my! The scandal that ensued shook the whole house as if an earthquake had just exploded. Usually, when Muslim women celebrate a happy occurrence, like an engagement party or a wedding, they let out loud *youyous*, lolling their tongues in every which way, while clapping their hands so hard that some of them brake a few fingers. But in this case, instead of *youyous*, the attending females, young and old - there might have been a dozen of them around, not counting Amina's mother - made high-pitched bleating noises like pregnant nanny goats that are pushing to give birth but can't, for some reason or other. At a certain point, Amina thought she was going to drown in a pool of spit they were spuing so much saliva on her. The men, on the other hand, or better said, on the other caboodle, groaned like a herd of warthogs.

In spite of all the racket, or maybe, encouraged by it, the girl got up from the bed and ran away into the streets of Oran.

They had to call the police, describing Amina like someone who had just escaped a madhouse, and *low and bee bold*, half an hour later, they found her and returned the girl, whose dress was in tatters, as if she had been manhandled or maybe worse - she did look like a little slut - all black and