

Hot Dog

Samah Meghjee

[samah.meghjee@emory.edu](mailto:samah.meghjee@emory.edu)

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SAHAR, a 15-year-old girl and her 12-year-old sister LAILA are lounging on couches in their living room, playing on their phones. Their 6-year-old sister AZHAR bursts into the room carrying a wiggling puppy.

AZHAR

Guys! Look what I found in the backyard! A puppy!

SAHAR and LAILA jump off the couch. LAILA runs to pet the dog, giggling all the way.

SAHAR

Oh my god Azhar, you need to get that thing out of here. You know that Mom is going to kill us.

AZHAR

(running around with the still wiggling puppy)  
It's just a little doggy Sahar!

SAHAR

It's haraam, Azhar, you know that!

LAILA immediately backs away from the dog, guiltily wiping her hands on her jeans.

AZHAR drops the puppy to the floor and it darts around quickly to sniff the furniture. SAHAR runs after it in a panic, trying to stop it from licking anything.

AZHAR

It's not Harambe. Harambe is a gorilla. And dead.

LAILA

No, Azhar. Haraam, like not allowed, like lying and alcohol and the lottery and stuff. Remember, you learned it last week in Sunday school.

SAHAR finally catches the dog and struggles to hold it as it tries to wiggle its way out of his arms.

SAHAR

The point is, we can't have the dog. Mom and Dad will flip out. And you, little guy -

SAHAR holds the dog up to her face and visibly softens. The dog licks her nose and SAHAR jerks her head backward, coming back to reality.

SAHAR (CONTINUED)

Yeah, you gotta go. Listen Azhar, take him back wherever you found him and just -

The sound of a car pulling up and car doors slamming come from off screen. All three kids look at each other, panicked. SAHAR passes the dog off to LAILA, who yelps and stuffs it into AZHAR'S hands.

AZHAR takes the puppy gleefully and starts to run to the door with it in her hands as if to show their mom. SAHAR yanks AZHAR back by the shirt to stop her.

LAYLA

What do we do?

The sound of the front door opening and closing is heard. The puppy starts to yap and wiggle harder.

SAHAR

Shh! Run!

SAHAR, LAILA, and AZHAR all sprint off screen.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

SAHAR, LAILA, and AZHAR are all stuffed inside of a small linen closet. AZHAR is still clutching the puppy.

AZHAR

It smells in here!

LAILA

Sahar, you're too big, you're squishing me!

SAHAR

Everyone shush! Now, we need a plan to get rid of this dog without mom seeing.

AZHAR

Why do we have to get rid of him? Why are dogs even haraam?

SAHAR

Because, because uh... Because... Well honestly, I don't even know. Laila?

LAILA

Uh, it's like their spit or something right? Their saliva isn't clean?

AZHAR

Their mouth water isn't clean? But then why is ours?

LAILA

These are all great questions.

AZHAR

Well then why do we have to get rid of him?

SAHAR

Uh...

The dog scrambles out of AZHAR'S lap and into SAHAR'S. SAHAR pets him and sighs, giving in.

SAHAR (CONTINUED)

I don't know. I want the dog too.

LAILA

Maybe we can convince Mom and Dad that he's a halal dog, and then we can keep him.

AZHAR

Yeah! We can make him pray namaz and stuff. I'll teach him how to bow down and everything.

LAILA

We can make him fetch the Quran!

AZHAR

He'll be the first Muslim dog ever and then Mom and Dad can't say no to him!

SAHAR

You two are ridiculous. But for now we can keep him in the dining room, because everyone is fasting and no one will go in there. Then we can decide what to do after dinner. Now let's get

out of this closet, I think the dog farted.

INT. PRAYER ROOM - NIGHT

SAHAR and LAILA are silently praying namaz in the prayer room. They are absolutely concentrated on their prayer until they hear shouting from the other room coming from their mom, ZAAMENA.

ZAAMENA (O.S.)  
Sahar! Laila! Azhar! Where did all of the iftaar go?

SAHAR and LAILA break their prayer and share a panicked look before running into the next room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

ZAAMENA is standing at the kitchen counter staring at what was once many plates of food. Instead, there are empty and half-eaten plates and food strewn across the table. SAHAR and LAILA run in, and AZHAR trails in behind them fearfully.

ZAAMENA (CON'T)  
Are you guys serious? You really couldn't wait until you finished praying to break your fast? And you made a mess! Come on, I didn't raise you to be this way - in this house, we fast and we fast properly, and we break our fast together after we pray.

AZHAR  
No mom that's not fair, it wasn't us -

ZAAMENA  
Well then who was it?

AZHAR  
It was the do -

LAILA  
We gave it to all to the needy!

ZAAMENA  
Yeah, I just don't believe you.

SAHAR  
Then it must have been a jinn!

LAILA lets out a small scared shriek. SAHAR kicks her and shakes his head furiously to try and get her to play along.

ZAAMENA

Hey, we don't joke about jinn in this house.

SAHAR

We're being serious mom! Who else could have done it?

ZAAMENA

(fidgeting nervously)

Well, if there is a jinn... I need to go pray.

ZAAMENA rushes out and the siblings breathe a sigh of relief.

SAHAR

This dog is sending us to hell in so many different ways.

LAILA

Good job pinning it on the jinn. They're always like -

ALL

"Do you think it's a jinn? It must be a jinn!"

LAILA (CON'T)

Where did the dog go?

AZHAR

I found him.

AZHAR gets on her hands and knees and pulls the puppy, who is still gnawing on a halal hot dog, out from around a corner.

SAHAR

Keep him on you for the rest of the night - we can't lose him again.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The entire family - ZAAMENA, SAJJAD, SAHAR, LAILA, and AZHAR - sits around the dining table, saying a quick prayer in Arabic. The table is laden with fresh mac and cheese and other quick to make food. The puppy is laying at Azhar's feet under the table.

SAJJAD

Alhamdulillah. Now let's finally break this fast, shall we?

The family digs in. AZHAR piles her plate absurdly high with food, and then surreptitiously sneaks a little off and onto the floor at her feet.

SAJJAD

So, what did you all do today? Besides maybe discovering the house's resident jinn.

The siblings all exchange looks squeamishly.

LAILA

Uh... I did homework.

ZAAMENA

In the middle of the summer? While you were fasting?

SAHAR

I did too. We did it together.

ZAAMENA

What are you talking about? You're not even in the same grade.

SAJJAD

Ma'shallah darling, they've been doing their Sunday school homework together! In the spirit of Ramadhan! What about you, Azhar?

AZHAR

I uh... made a new friend.

ZAAMENA

Oh really? Is there a new family in the neighborhood? I should bring them some mithai.

SAJJAD

Who is your new friend Azhar?

AZHAR

He's uh... he's very small. And he has brown spots.

SAHAR  
(clearing her throat very loudly)  
Ahem, freckles. He has so many  
freckles.

AZHAR  
And he wiggles a lot. And he has a  
tail.

LAILA shakes her head somberly.

LAILA  
(whispering)  
He's kind of a weird kid.

ZAAMENA  
What's his name?

AZHAR  
Musa.

AARIF  
(with surprise)  
Musa? Like Moses?

AZHAR  
Yeah, like the one who split the river  
and stuff.

SAJJAD  
Well, maybe you should invite Musa  
over for dinner someti -

SAJJAD is cut off by three sharp, distinct yaps.

ZAAMENA  
What was that?

There are several more yaps. LAILA rises halfway out of her  
seat.

LAILA  
Oh no, the jinn must be back -

The puppy jumps onto AZHAR's lap, who giggles maniacally,  
then onto the table, splashing straight into the mac and  
cheese. ZAAMENA shrieks loudly and backs away from the table.

SAJJAD  
Ya Allah! Where did that thing come  
from?

SAHAR

Wow, we have no clue -

AZHAR

Musa! Musa no!

AZHAR lunges across the table and grabs the messy Musa, holding him to her chest.

ZAAMENA

Did you three really bring a dog in here in the middle of Ramadhan? You know they're haraam! Now everything is Najis! We can't eat any of this food! Again!

SAJJAD

What were you three thinking?

AZHAR

But can we keep him?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ZAAMENA and SAJJAD have called a family meeting in the living room. AZHAR sits in the middle of LAILA and SAHAR on the couch, holding Musa in her lap.

AZHAR

Mom. Just listen. Dog is spelled D-O-G, right? And God is spelled G-O-D. They're basically the same word. And so God has to love dogs and they have to be halal. It just makes sense.

LAILA

Dad, what we really wanted was to get a camel, but this is America. This really was the next best thing.

SAHAR

Hear me out, hear me out. Maybe, this dog really is the jinn that's been haunting our house. So then it's not really a dog. And we have to take care of it because it lives in our house and it's a nice jinn and it probably won't eat us like other jinn.

ZAAMENA smacks SAHAR lightly upside the head.

ZAAMENA

Don't be dumb. You know jinn don't eat people. Do you three ever pay attention in Sunday school at all?

SAJJAD

He is pretty cute, darling...

ZAAMENA

We cannot keep this dog! At all! Whatsoever!

LAILA

But what about that story in the Quran where those townsmen got stuck in that cave? And then they fell asleep for 1,000 years and they only survived because they had a dog protecting them. A halal dog! Maybe this is our halal dog!

AZHAR

Yeah! We taught him namaz! Look, do sajdah Musa.

AZHAR puts Musa on the ground and throws herself into a kneeling position. Musa just stares.

AZHAR (CON'T)

See?!

ZAAMENA

Okay first of all, we can't even wake you guys up to pray Fajr. I don't want you potentially sleeping for 1,000 years.

SAJJAD

Maybe the dog can wake them up to pray Fajr?

LAILA

He'll bark at sunrise and then we'll all pray together!

ZAAMENA

He's not a rooster, Sajjad. I need you to stay on my side.

SAJJAD picks up Musa and holds him up to his face. MUSA licks SAJJAD's nose and SAJJAD giggles.

SAJJAD

He's just so cute. Why'd you name him  
Musa, Azhar?

AZHAR

Because of the story we read in Sunday  
school last week about Musa. He took  
strangers and orphans into his home  
and fed them after he was saved as an  
orphan. We saved the baby orphan dog  
Musa.

ZAAMENA's face visibly softens. She even lifts a hand to pet  
MUSA, but then thinks better of it.

ZAAMENA

Azhar, where did you find this dog?

AZHAR

Uh... uh... in Mrs. Johnson's  
backyard...

LAILA

(smacking her forehead)

Oh my God, Azhar.

SAHAR

Are you serious Azhar? Did you  
seriously steal a dog?

ZAAMENA

Okay, that's it, we're giving the dog  
back. And as punishment you all have  
to clean this entire house. Three  
times.

LAILA

What?! Three times?!

SAHAR

But it's all Azhar's fault! Make her  
do it!

ZAAMENA

Everything is najis now! It all needs  
to be washed three times before it's  
clean! Now Sajjad, go give that dog  
back and apologize and bring Mrs.  
Johnson some of my mithai. And don't  
you hide it too, if I find a dog  
anywhere in this house again I will

personally sic a jinn on all of you.

AZHAR

(starting to cry)

No! Musa!

ZAAMENA and SAJJAD immediately start to panic.

ZAAMENA

Oh no baby, it's okay, he's not ours  
so we have to give him back.

SAJJAD

But we'll get you a new pet!

ZAAMENA

We'll what now?

SAJJAD

Yeah, a nice parrot, okay Azhar? Don't  
you want a nice parrot? She can say  
your name to you and sing in the  
mornings.

LAILA

And wake us up for Fajr!

SAHAR

And scare away the jinn!

LAILA

We'll even teach it to say the Qalma!  
It'll be a Muslim parrot!

SAJJAD

And we can use it to teach the kids  
Gujarati, darling! Or we can teach it  
to recite the Quran and it'll give the  
adhan every day at prayer time!

AZHAR

And I'll teach it to say "poop!"

ZAAMENA

(throwing her hands up in the air)

I'll never have peace in this house.  
Never. Allah, give me sabr.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is six months later. The kids are lounging on the couches.

SAHAR and LAILA are playing on their phones and AZHAR is reading. SAJJAD is reading the newspaper and ZAAMENA is flicking through channels with the sound on mute. A beautiful red and gray PARROT is sqwaking in the corner.

PARROT

Allahu-akbar! Sqwak! Allahu-akbar!