Howzat!

A play

By

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CHARACTERS

AHSAN	Pakistani	40s
ALIA	His wife, also Pakistani	30s
GAURAV	Indian	30s
SOFIA	His wife, Greek	20s

SETTING

The back gardens of two neighboring Villas on the Palm Jumeirah, Dubai

TIME

October, 2016

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Dusk. We hear the "Call for Prayer" echoing softly through the theatre.

As a SPOT comes slowly up we discover AHSAN in soft light at prayer in his garden. SPOTLIGHT WAS MUCH TOO BRIGHT LAST TIME. SET LEVEL MUCH LOWER – DIM. AND BRING IT UP SLOWLY – NOT SHARP.

The stage is divided into two parts - representing two back gardens of Villas on the Palm.

On the left, where AHSAN is praying, the outdoor furniture is a little weathered and run down. On the right the furniture is shiny brand new.

Beyond the furniture we see sand and a sliver of water and beyond that the Villas on the next frond; towering over them the foreboding shape of Atlantis.

Between the two sets of furniture is what remains of a collapsed wall which has been cleared away - a few bricks and dust.

AHSAN continues to pray as GAURAV enters stage right with full lights coming up

GAURAV

(on phone) No bru, I'm there right now. Wait till you see it. Frond P. (LISTENS) Parked out the front. Living the dream bru. Living the dream (HE SEES AHSAN) Hang on someone is here….

GAURAV notices and creeps over to AHSAN, who is still praying. AHSAN finishes praying and turns to see GAURAV.

They both scream and jump back. Beat.

TOGETHER

Who the hell are you? (BEAT) What the hell are you doing in my garden? (BEAT) Your garden? (BEAT) Stop copying me. (BEAT) You stop copying me. (BEAT) Get out of my garden!

AHSAN

This is not your garden.

GAURAV

(*Pointing*) That is my house so this is my garden.

AHSAN

There is meant to be a wall - there. *(Demonstrating)* My garden, your garden.

GAURAV

What happened to the wall?

AHSAN

It fell down.

GAURAV

When?

AHSAN

A few months ago.

GAURAV

Then why hasn't it been fixed?

AHSAN

We've asked.

GAURAV

Clearly you don't have any *wasta*.

AHSAN

And you do?

GAURAV

I carry some clout around town.

AHSAN

Why don't you try!

GAURAV

You clearly don't know the right people.*(making a call)* I'm sorting this out right now.

AHSAN

Who are you calling?

GAURAV

The agent.

AHSAN

The agent will put you to the landlord, who will put you back to the agent, who will put you to the developer, who will put you to the landlord who will put you back to the agent - and then you can start again.

GAURAV

Maybe when *you* speak to them. Watch and learn.*(on phone)* Dave, it's Gaurav (LISTENS) Gaurav Sharma. (LISTENS) I just moved into Villa 56, Frond P.

AHSAN

Wasta.

GAURAV

(on phone) There's a very rude Indian man here who says he is my neighbor. (LISTENS) No, I don't know his name. (*TO AHSAN*) What's your name?

AHSAN

Ahsan Ali Khan. But you can call me A.A.K.

GAURAV

(on phone) Says his name is A.A.K. Thinks he's some kind of film star. (LISTENS) Oh, he's from Pakistan ...

GAURAV looks at AHSAN. AHSAN gives him a little wave.

GAURAV

Now about the wall ... (*LISTENS*) Well there isn't one. *(LISTENS)* No I don't want the wall raised. I just want a wall. Like on the website.

AHSAN

The website? You bought the house online?

GAURAV

Of course not. We came to the house.

AHSAN

Then how did you not know about the wall?

GAURAV

(mumbled) We only looked on the inside.

AHSAN

What was that?

GAURAV

We only looked on the inside.

AHSAN

You bought a nine million Dirham house and you didn't bother to look in the yard. You are clearly a genius.

GAURAV

Nine million? I paid ... Yeah nine, not more for sure. Besides we couldn't stay long. Sofia was tired. Now please - I'm on the phone.

AHSAN

Who is Sofia? Your cat?

GAURAV

Sofia is my wife.

AHSAN

Lucky girl.

GAURAV

(On phone) Yes Dave, so you'll have it sorted out immediately? (*LISTENS*) The landlord? Why do I need to speak to the landlord?

AHSAN mouths the answer in unison: "Structural issue"

GAURAV

Structural issue? How is it a structural issue? It's outside the building. (LISTENS)

AHSAN mouths the answer in unison again: "Dubai Municipality."

GAURAV

Dubai Municipality? Why do they have to get involved? Please have someone come around and sort this out immediately. (LISTENS) I don't care if you're having dinner. I would have dinner too if I had a wall to protect my from my neighbour.

AHSAN

Actually I am the one who needs protection

GAURAV

(LISTENS, GETTING HEATED) I don't care if it's your brother's birthday!

AHSAN

Matthew. Please send him my regards. This is his second birthday this month. His wife celebrated three.

GAURAV

No you listen to me - I paid more than a…I paid a *fair price* for this Villa and I expect to get what I paid for, which is a garden wall!

AHSAN

Nothing for the house then? (OR Question is who pays for the wall)

GAURAV

(*LISTENS*) I know I have lots of walls but I want a wall in my backyard. (*LISTENS*) No you call the landlord! You're the agent! It's not my job!

AHSAN

Ah the national sport of Dubai - shouting at people on the phone.

GAURAV

(To Ahsan) Stop listening to my private phone conversation!

AHSAN

Closely followed by shouting at people in person. I'm not listening to your private phone conversation. I am standing in my garden. Trying to enjoy a lovely winter evening.

GAURAV

(On phone) Listen Dave, that's what a failure looks like and I do not fail. So I need you to fix this.

AHSAN

Now comes the list.

GAURAV

I need three things from you. Firstly, I need an apology in three ways - written, verbally and in person. No, no buts Dave. I'm not interested in your buts. ... (*BEAT*) Dave?

AHSAN

Maybe he didn't like the reference to his "butts". (BEAT)?

GAURAV