

Detainee  
written by  
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DETAINEE

By Jack Riley

A YOUNG, SKINNY, ARAB BOY SITS AT A TABLE IN A DETENTION CELL. AFTER A SHORT WHILE, ELIJAH, A VERY FAT WHITE MAN ENTERS.

ELIJAH                    Good morning.

THE BOY SAYS NOTHING

ELIJAH (CONT'D        I trust you've been fed and watered? We wouldn't want  
)                        you starving to death on us, now would we?

THE BOY SHAKES HIS HEAD

ELIJAH (CONT'D        No. We wouldn't.  
)

ELIJAH TAKES A SEAT OPPOSITE THE BOY AND SNAPS HIS FINGERS. A SERVANT ENTERS WITH A GLASS OF WATER AND A PLATE OF CRÊPES. AS QUICKLY AS HE ARRIVES, HE LEAVES.

ELIJAH (CONT'D        Eat up! You must be starving.  
)

THE BOY TAKES A SLOW SIP OF THE WATER AND STARES AT THE CRÊPES.

ELIJAH (CONT'D        Well go on then.  
)

THE BOY DOESN'T EAT THEM. ELIJAH SIGHS AND PULLS THEM TO HIS SIDE OF THE TABLE.

ELIJAH (CONT'D        Where are your parents? What's a little boy like you  
)                        doing alone, in a place like this. If I were you I'd  
                          be out in the park, out on the football pitch.  
                          Playing ball in the schoolyard.

ELIJAH STARTS TO EAT THE CRÊPES. HE SAYS SENTENCES BETWEEN MOUTHFULS.

ELIJAH (CONT'D        But of course I'm not like you, am I? Nor are you  
)                        like me. We couldn't possibly be more different.  
                          Thoguh we share passing resemblances. We're both  
                          human, we share the same eye colour, and those of a  
                          more liberal inclination would even draw even more  
                          connections. But we all know that's a load of old  
                          rubbish, don't we?

ELIJAH EATS HIS LAST BITE

ELIJAH (CONT'D        Don't we?  
)

THE BOY GOES TO TAKE ANOTHER SIP, BUT BEFORE HE CAN ELIJAH TAKES THE GLASS AND DRINKS THE ENTIRE THING IN ONE GO.

(CONTINUED)

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ELIJAH (CONT'D ) Got to wash it down. Can't do with a dry throat.

Can I tell you a secret? I've never ever told this to anyone in the whole world. Not even my wife knows. I think my mother did, but she's not relevant anymore, God rest her soul.

I have a fear of water. Can't stand it. Not all water of course, I'm not afraid of tap water, that would be ridiculous. But the sea... I shudder to even think about it, let alone mention it. I know, I know, island nation and all, but it just gets to me. How it... swallows everything up. How did you manage it, I wonder. True bravery. I commend you. Not a lot of people have your resilience. I've read your file.

THE BOY GOES TO SAY SOMETHING BUT IS INTERRUPTED

ELIJAH (CONT'D ) Where are your parents?

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THE BOY'S EYES BEGIN TO FILL WITH TEARS, BUT HE DOESN'T CRY.

ELIJAH (CONT'D ) Well go on then! Say something! The whole room is waiting! The room is filled with people that love you, and we're all on the edge of our seats!

BOY I. Don't. Know...

ELIJAH You don't you know? Why not? Why don't you know? What use is that? We can't use that. I told you my secret and that's the best you can give me? Alright. It's alright. Don't cry. I've seen enough of your kind crying. I've been to your homeland. I was in the army, you know. We came to keep the peace, and keep it we did. In all kinds of ways. Come to think of it, you're a lot paler than the rest of you. What was it this time? Civil war? Revolution? A healthy mix of the two? Conflict is a fickle thing. One always leads to another. Hard times make tough men. Tough men used to create good times, now they only seem to make harder times. I'm sure it'll all work out in the end. I'm an optimist. And a survivor. We're a dying breed.

ELIJAH LAUGHS HEARTILY

BOY أب('ab)

ELIJAH What? What did you say? Oh I'm sure it was nothing. Pure gibberish, don't worry, we'll nip that in the bud right away.  
(MORE) (CONTINUED)

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We'll put you through the finest of education we have to offer. Or at least we would. Of course, we're sending you back. Can't have you all just running around the place.

THE BOY STARTS TO CRY. ELIJAH LAUGHS AT THIS.

ELIJAH (CONT'D ) I'm joking! I'm joking! People can't take a joke these days. Can you imagine what they would do if we did? It would be a catastrophe. No, we've got something much better in store for you. We'll make a fine gentleman out of you, I'm sure of it. Beats putting you in with the rest of them. Home doesn't feel like home anymore. Are you ready?

HE WAITS FOR AN ANSWER

BOY ...Yes.

ELIJAH Yes what?

BOY Yes... sir?

ELIJAH Better.

PAUSE

ELIJAH (CONT'D ) What's your name, again?

END