

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

Andrew at Eid **by Adam Sirgany**

Andrew never got the front seat in Dad's van. Mom made Sarah and Andrew trade when they rode in her car. But they only went to Dad's on the weekends. The only places Dad went to on the weekends were the *mosque* or Sami's or Zayn's, his friends' houses. Anytime they went to any of those places Hassan, the tall guy that Dad rented a house with, came too. So Andrew never got the front at Dad's. He had to sit in the back with Sarah, and, every other weekend, with Hassan's kids, Sara without an h and Sharif. That was the worst. Sharif was pretty cool. He was really good at yo-yos and had a bunch of fun video games. Sara without an h was okay too because she kept Sarah from bugging him all the time. But Andrew was the youngest, and they all teased him about being smaller and dumber and not as good at yo-yoing and Mario. After all that they made him sit squashed in the middle or alone in the *back* backseat of the van.

It'd got worse lately too because a bunch of Dad's relatives were visiting from Egypt. Aunt Safia and her creepy husband, Uncle Mohammed, and their kids Yusuf and Ali. Auntie Abra and Grandma Anía, who had the scary glass eyeball that was blue even though her real eye was brown. They all came at once because Auntie Abra was supposed to marry some guy named Karam who owned an Italian restaurant that served okay spaghetti. But the wedding wasn't going to happen until Karam's brothers could all be there, and that wasn't until June. So everyone stayed in the house and waited.

They'd been here since December taking up all the space. Andrew didn't have his own room anymore. He even shared his bed with Dad. And so did Sarah – and when Mom's mom, Grandma Marie found out about it, she made a big fuss. But the house was so stuffed with people there wasn't anywhere else to be. Sometimes Andrew didn't even get to go to the store or the mall when someone went. Everybody wanted to get out of the house, so, unless they went to the *mosque*, Andrew had to stay behind, just him and Sarah and Grandma Anía, who didn't speak English and always wanted hugs and smelled like the meat she undercooked.

This afternoon that changed though. This afternoon Andrew got the front seat, even though Dad and his friends Sami and Zayn and Hassan, and Uncle Mohammed, and Andrew's cousins Yusuf and Ali, and Sami's son Mustafa and Hassan's son Sharif and six red coolers from Wal-Mart were all packed into the eight-passenger Caravan. Andrew got the front because, at nine years old and four foot nine and a half, he was the only one who could fit there with a cooler on the floor in front of the seat. That was the only place the last cooler would go.

But the front seat wasn't as good of a spot as it used to be. Not when it felt like eight pairs of eyes were watching the back of his neck, which was tilted down to keep them from seeing that his nose was still dripping and his eyes were still wet and red. Not with this weird, wooly ankle that felt sort of like his bear Randall, but not so nice, scratching at his knee. Definitely not with Dad in the driver's seat. Because Dad wasn't laughing and chatting as much as the other men. He just turned the visor quietly from time to time to keep the setting sun out of his eyes. It made Andrew afraid that even though he said he wasn't, Dad was really still mad.

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

Dad had been happy this morning. Andrew had heard him get up early, before everyone, except maybe Grandma Anía. And, while Dad showered and shaved and put on his cologne from the dark green bottle, Andrew said good morning to Randall, who had to stay in Andrew's backpack because Dad said teddy bears were for babies. So when Andrew heard the shower door open, he put Randall away and climbed back in bed next to Sarah. He watched Dad put on his shirt and his tie and tried to figure out which way the knots went. Andrew followed Dad into the kitchen and watched him bend down to kiss Grandma Anía right on the mouth. "*Eid Mubarak*," Dad said and hugged her and picked her up into the air. She started shouting at him and, even though Andrew didn't understand Arabic, he knew she wasn't *mad* mad. She just shouted sometimes. But Dad set her back down anyway and kissed her forehead. "*Baraha, habibti*," he whispered to calm her while she slapped him on the top of the arm. He smiled at her and said it again, "*Baraha*." Relax.

The kitchen smelled like *foole* and eggs fried in lots of olive oil. Dad looked in one of the big black frying pans sitting on the stove and smiled with half his mouth like he did when he was being silly. "Ah," he said as he took a bag of pita bread off of the counter. He opened it and ripped a corner off a half slice and tried to dip it in the hot *foole* beans. Grandma Anía swatted his hand and started shouting again. Dad dipped the bread again and put it and the mushy beans in his mouth anyway. Grandma Anía continued to shout. But she stopped when she saw Andrew standing in the doorway and came toward him mumbling to herself.

"*Habibi*," she said and held her arms out to him. "*Eid Mubarak*." He hugged her because he couldn't do anything else.

"Eed Moob-Arak, Grandma," he said, trying not to breathe in because the smell of *foole* and olive oil and Dad's cologne and Grandma Anía was too much to take.

"I. Love. You." Grandma Anía patted the spots at the corners of her mouth where he was supposed to give her a kiss. "Kiss," she said to make her message clear. "Kiss. Gran. Ma." He did as he was told. He kissed her but he tried to aim away from the lips because people don't kiss their grandmas on the mouth for the same reason they're not supposed to sleep in the same bed as their sister. "I. Love. You," Grandma Anía said again and kissed him really close to his lips.

Then, right when he thought she would let him be, she started tugging at his big blue Ninja Turtles shirt, the one he wore to bed at Mom's house and at Dad's. She started shouting and pulling and waving her free hand at Dad. Dad came over and told her to *baraha* again. "*Eid Mubarak*, son," Dad chuckled to Andrew and took Grandma Anía's fingers off the word *Teenage*. Andrew beamed at getting an *Eid Mubarak* before Sarah, not to mention having Grandma let go, even if she was still yelling. "She doesn't like your shirt, Andrew," Dad explained. "She's afraid this is what you're wearing to the *mosque*. Go upstairs and get a nice shirt on. And bring down one of my ties. We'll put it on you, and you'll be a handsome man."

Andrew ran through the living room and hurried up the stairs. He opened the door to the bedroom and snuck inside quietly so he wouldn't wake up Sarah. The shirt with buttons and a collar was waiting for him in the closet right next to all of Dad's. He grabbed it and his tan pants and Dad's black tie with the little purple boxes all over it. Then he went to the dresser and opened Dad's drawer—not his—and rummaged around for a pair of black socks. Holding all of those clothes to himself, he ran out of the room and hurried into the bathroom before anyone else

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

woke up and took it.

Andrew showered and dressed as fast as he could. Buttons were hard to button when he was so excited. But he got them on and dripped some of Dad's cologne from the green bottle onto his neck. It smelled better on Dad, but he was glad to have it on. He bounded out of the bathroom and to the kitchen, tie in hand and trailing behind him.

Yusuf and Ali were already dressed and at the table eating. Uncle Mohammed was slopping gobs of *foole* beans on his plate. None of them had showered, but they all had on cologne too. It wasn't a nice clean smell like Dad's smell. It was more like the school bathroom when the janitor used too much deodorizer. But Andrew didn't care about the smell. He wanted to get Dad's tie on. So he ran to Dad who was getting a carton of orange juice out of the fridge.

"Dad," he held the tie towards his father. "Can I wear this one?"

"This one?" Dad said, holding the fat end and looking at it closely. "This one is a very nice tie." Andrew shifted his feet, not knowing if 'nice' meant it was a good choice or if he'd taken a tie he wasn't supposed to. "This is a good tie for my son to wear on *Eid*. Come here. Let me put it on you."

"Thanks, Dad." Andrew said as his father turned his collar up and wrapped the tie around his neck. Andrew watched every move of Dad's hands looping the purple squares around each other. He made sure to ask how to do them all, so next time he could tie the tie on his own.

While Dad tied Andrew's tie, Andrew heard the porch door close. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra came into the kitchen from the entryway. Their hands were shiny with grease from food they had carried out to the van. Andrew wondered why he hadn't seen them before. But sometimes they went off to talk 'woman talk,' the same way Dad and Hassan and Sami and Zayn and Uncle Mohammed had 'man talk' on the deck at night. Only when Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra women talked, they didn't smoke sweet tobacco from the hookah like the men. They just stood and chatted until someone came by. Then they would get quiet or scurry off. Unless it was a kid, in which case, they would give the kid hugs.

They gave Andrew hugs now. Dad had finished tying the tie. So they *habibi-ed* him and babied him. "*Eid Mubarak*. Happy *Eid*." They hugged him and kissed him all over his face. They asked him if he'd eaten and said he needed to because it was important for a young man to eat. They pushed him over to the table and told him to sit down and to *ay-god*. They put him next to Uncle Mohammed who stopped eating his food to slap Andrew on the back with a bean-spotted hand. "*Eid Mubarak*, Andkharoo," Uncle Mohammed said and pulled Andrew's head to his lips and kissed him on the forehead. "I- love. You. Andkharoo."

"Eed Moob-Arak, Uncle Mohammed," Andrew replied and looked at the tablecloth because he didn't want to look at the big hairy mole between Uncle Mohammed's mouth and his nose.

Uncle Mohammed went back to eating, and Yusuf and Ali *Eid Mubaraked* Andrew. He tried to say it back as nice and as smooth as they had said it to him. But it was a hard word to say. He apologized for saying it so bad, and Yusuf tried to show him how to do it right. "*Eid*," Yusuf said karate chopping the air to show how short of a word it was. "*MooBarak*." Yusuf chopped the air again to show that *Barak* bounced off *Moo*.

"*Eed*," Andrew said because it sounded almost like I with seed, "*Moo-Barak*." He shouted his *Barak*, and Yusuf and Ali and Uncle Mohammed started to laugh. Dad, who was

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

sitting at the end of the table eating his eggs, looked up from them to smile. Andrew looked at the corners where the red tablecloth lines met. He tried to remember how his cousins had said it. Eed Mubarak. He thought he was close.

"There, *habibi*." Aunt Safia said, coming up behind him to set a plate of eggs and *foole* on the table. "Eat. Eat."

Andrew ate his food with a fork because he didn't like the pita bread everyone else used. If you picked up your eggs that way, the yoke got all over your arms, and Andrew didn't want egg on his collared shirt. So he ate real careful and concentrated on getting the fork in his mouth without dripping. Dad and Uncle Mohammed talked. Yusuf and Ali talked. Sarah and Sara without an h came in gabbing about their schools, and Hassan and Sharif came in and got big plates of food.

Everyone ate, except for Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra. But nobody noticed Andrew's tie, not even the women. So Andrew showed his tie to Sharif. But Sharif didn't care because he was excited about the money people were going to give him at the *mosque*. Back in Amman in Jordan, where Sharif used to live, people gave kids money on *Eid*. Sharif said he needed fifty American dollars so he could buy a Cold Fusion, which was the best yo-yo you could have. Andrew wasn't good enough with yo-yos to buy a really good one, but he did want a nicer one. Sharif said you had to have a ball bearing to do a sleeper or to walk the dog, and Andrew probably only needed nine or ten dollars to get a yo-yo with a ball bearing.

Andrew ate while he thought about his new yo-yo. He forgot all about being careful and almost let some egg yolk fall on his collared shirt. After that he watched his eggs real close to make sure it didn't happen again. He watched his eggs so close that he almost missed Uncle Mohammed and his sons Yusuf and Ali get up one by one from the table. But he caught it because Dad got up too. Then Hassan and Sharif. Andrew got up and followed, even though he wasn't done with his *foole*. He left his plate at the table like everyone else. He followed them into the living room and found them lined up outside of the bathroom. No one talked but the door was open. Andrew could see Uncle Mohammed at the sink rubbing his ears and Dad bent over the bathtub, swishing water in his mouth. They were whispering to themselves, doing their *wudu*, so they could be clean for prayer.

Uncle Mohammed finished his *wudu* first. But it was Dad's house, so, when Dad finished too, he said the *adhan*. "*Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Ashadow-allah-e-laha-ill-la-la...*" It sounded like music to Andrew, even though he knew it was just words. Dad always told him that was because the *Qur'an* was poetry written by *Allah*. *Allah-soupana-awitala* wrote poems in Arabic because it was a musical language. Because that was the language *Allah* used to give the *Qur'an* to the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon Him, *Muslims* couldn't pray in English, even though Andrew only understood English.

But that was okay too because Andrew at least knew what he had to do. He knew that when it was his turn he needed to *wudu*. First he had to say *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*. Then he had to wash his hands in the bathtub water. Then his mouth. Then his nose. He had to wash his face and behind his ears. Three times for everything because three is a holy number. He got water on his fingers and ran them over his hair, even though Mom had cut his hair short when winter ended, so his hair couldn't really get dirty. By the time Andrew had taken off his dress shoes and his black socks so he could wash his feet, Sarah and Sara without the h had come in

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

too. Sarah started her *wudu* and Andrew grabbed his socks, and he ran to his spot by Sharif because everyone was already lined up and facing the *Kabbah* for prayer.

Dad was at the front of everybody, waiting quietly for Sarah and Sara without an h to finish their *wudu*. Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra were still in the kitchen, but they didn't have to clean again because they didn't eat breakfast after they showered. They would keep washing the dishes until everyone was ready. Then they would come in and stand in the back, right when Dad started the *fatihah* prayer.

When the *fatihah* prayer did start Andrew was excited. At Dad's house, the day really didn't begin until after the Morning *Fajr* Prayer. So Andrew counted the number of times that Dad said the *fatihah* and the prayers Andrew didn't know and the number of times everyone bent at the knees and came back up and bowed and stood back up to say *Allahu-akbir*. And when Dad finally turned his head and said, "*As-Salaamu-alaikum-wa-rahmatulaah-abarikatu*," Andrew knew that *Eid* had really begun.

And it had. Because even though they had just done their Morning Prayer, it was already time to get everyone to the *mosque*. So everyone started moving through the kitchen and out to the driveway. Yusuf was singing a song that Andrew didn't know. But everyone else except for Sarah joined in on it. Dad said it was a special *Eid* song, and in Egypt they always sang it. While they sang, everybody tried to pile in the van. First, Yusuf and Ali and Sharif and Andrew because they had to sit in the back. Then Sarah and Sara without an h. Then Hassan and Uncle Mohammed. Meanwhile, Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra waited patiently outside with more food for the potluck at the *mosque*.

Everybody had to go today because it was a holiday. But not everybody could fit in the van. Not with nine people and four big red coolers and three plates full of grape leaves and baklava and Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra carrying more. Dad tried to explain to everyone that he would drive the men to the *mosque* first. Then he would come back for the women. He said it in English and then in Arabic, loud so he could be heard over Uncle Mohammed and Yusuf and Ali singing. Grandma Anía seemed upset about staying behind and started shouting at Dad in Arabic. So Dad led her and her platter of grape leaves into the car with the men. Then he came back over to Andrew and asked him to stay with the women, so there would be a man around. "Nothing will go wrong, *Insha'Allah*," Dad assured him, "but a man should be here to look after the women, just in case. Can you do that?" Dad held onto Andrew's shoulder until he had said he could. Even though he was proud to have the job, Andrew didn't want to stay with the women. But he felt better when Dad patted him on the back and told him he was a good man.

Dad and the men and Grandma Anía drove off. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra went and set their plates of food on the little black table in front of the house while they waited. Sarah and Sara without an h talked about Alex Lehman who Sarah had a crush on, even though she didn't want him to know. Sarah didn't talk about the boys she liked at Mom's house, not even with her best friend Jessie or with Mom. But Sara without an h didn't know Alex, so Sarah talked. Andrew didn't understand why Sarah liked Alex anyway, though. He was kind of a jerk, and he had pimples all over his face. And since Dad wasn't going back to Mom's house, Andrew thought he would have to look after Sarah and make sure she started liking nicer guys. He didn't know how yet, but he would figure it out.

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

Now he needed to watch the women and watch out for Aunt Safia who came to coddle him and hold his face with her sticky honey-hands. "Are you ready for the festival, *habibi*?" she asked. "We're going to sing and eat food. And your cousins, they will teach you to dance."

"Ay, *habibi*," Auntie Abra shouted and made a sound like a bird whistle with a cat purr, and Andrew and Aunt Safia turned and Sarah and Sara did too. Auntie Abra began skipping sideways from one foot to the other. She kept her arms out and kicked her own butt with the heel of her foot. Aunt Safia looked at her and shook her head, laughing. "Come. Come," Auntie Abra shouted, humming to herself and clapping her hands.

"*La-ah*," Aunt Safia said, shaking her head harder.

Even though Aunt Safia said *no*, Auntie Abra insisted. "*Aywa*," she said. It sounded like the state, but it meant yes. "*Aywa*," she said again, and she took Aunt Safia by the wrist and pulled her along. Aunt Safia began to dance, just like Auntie Abra, even though she pretended like she was mad. Sarah and Sara without the h got excited and they tried dancing too, and they sort of looked like they knew how to do it. It looked fun. So Andrew tried to dance with them. They all spun around, kicking their butts and throwing their hands into the air while Auntie Abra hummed and sang.

They were still dancing when Dad came back with the van. "Dad's here," Andrew announced and ran to him and told him all about the dancing. "Auntie Abra showed us how to dance an Eed dance," he said, "and she's been singing and I've been trying to do the tongue thing she does when she screams real loud but it's hard and..."

But Dad didn't seem happy about Andrew's dance lesson. "You shouldn't dance with women, Andrew," was all he said. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra must have known that they weren't supposed to dance with him because they had already stopped dancing and were getting the food off the table. Andrew got in the van and waited to see what would happen. But nothing did. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra passed Dad on the way to the van. Everyone was quiet when they got inside.

When they started driving, Dad didn't even turn on the radio. Andrew worried that the dancing had wrecked *Eid*. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra looked sad and Sarah and Sara weren't talking. Dad didn't say anything either. Dad always talked when he was driving. Instead he looked over at Aunt Safia in the passenger seat from time to time like Grandma Marie looked at Andrew when Andrew was sick. Halfway to the *mosque*, Dad's look started to change. He tried wiggling his eyebrows and making funny faces at Aunt Safia. Finally he started humming Yusuf's *Eid* song, and Auntie Abra started to sing, even though she didn't sing very good. Aunt Safia started singing too. Andrew and Sarah tried to sing but they didn't know the words, and it was hard to understand Arabic, especially when people sang. Sara without an h sort of tried to explain it, but mostly she just sang too. That didn't matter much though because some of the song was just like the *adhan* and Andrew knew the words to that. By the time they got to the *mosque*, they were all singing or trying to sing, and everyone was having fun again.

The *mosque* seemed like it was singing too. The parking lot was full. There were people all over, inside and outside, the old school that had been turned into the Muslim Community Center. Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra headed around to the back of the building with their plates of food, and Dad told Sarah and Sara to follow them. And he told Andrew to follow him, and the two of them walked into the big crowd of men who were all talking Arabic real loud. It sounded

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

pretty. But Dad knew everybody, and they all wanted to say *asalamu-alaikim*. They all hugged and kissed Dad on the cheek. Dad disappeared into the crowd.

Andrew didn't know what to do, but a bunch of men he didn't know saw him and hugged him and *Eid-Mubaraked* at him. He was so scared he wanted to scream. He tried looking for Dad or Yusuf or Ali or his friend Mustafa. He just wanted to find someone he knew. But he couldn't. He'd never seen so many people at the *mosque*. Not even when he had a long weekend and Dad brought him on Friday. Not even on the *Eid* after Ramadan.

All he could do was say *Eed-Moo-Barak* and keep walking. Andrew knew Dad would come into the *masjid*, in the big room where everyone prayed. So he kept going through the crowd and into the long tiled hallway. He was thirsty and had to pee, but he didn't even stop to get a drink of water or go to the bathroom. He needed to find Dad. He didn't want to break his *wudu*.

He got to the *masjid*. But everyone was still talking outside or in the halls, their voices disappearing as the door to the prayer room closed. He felt better outside of the crowd, and he knew that Dad would come to the *masjid* soon. Andrew thought he must be the only one there. The first person in the *masjid* on *Eid*. It was an exciting thing to be alone in a quiet place while so much was going on outside. He ran into the long room that was covered with dark green carpet and prayer rugs. "*Bismillah*," he shouted and jumped forward with both legs to see how far he could go. He breathed out hard. "*Ir-Rahman*," he jumped, this time without running. "*Ir-Rahim*," Andrew yelled and ran all the way to the end of the room. He started running back the other way, and he almost got back to the door when he realized that he wasn't really the first one in the *masjid*.

An old man with a Bulls sweatshirt was sitting in the back corner. He was there every week because he didn't stand very well. So he had to sit in the chair to do his prayer. The old man looked at Andrew. He didn't seem happy. But he had big wrinkles on his face, so he never looked happy. He just sat there whispering to himself and turning his *tasbih* prayer beads. Andrew wanted to talk to him, but the old man didn't speak English. Instead, Andrew went and sat Indian-style next to the chair to listen to the old man say his bead prayers. The old man didn't stop. He just said *Allahu-akbir* and turned one big green bead over his fingers with the face of his thumb. He kept on praying until he got back to the big bead on the end. When he was done, he cleared his throat. He slowly leaned to the side and used the back of his hand to hit Andrew on the bottom of his shoe. Andrew remembered that he was supposed to take off his shoes in the *masjid*. He ran to the door and took them off and put them on the shoe rack up front. Then he hurried back to the old man to apologize. But the old man was already praying his beads again and Andrew didn't know the word for sorry in Arabic anyway. So he sat down and waited for the *adhan* to be called and for the men to line up for the Middy *Dhuhr* Prayer.

Andrew didn't think the wait was really long, even though it felt pretty long. Men started to come in even before the *imam* came to call the *adhan* on the microphone that sounded all over the building. Andrew watched for Dad as the men walked through the door. It took him a long time to get there. Mustafa came in with his dad, Sami. Sharif and Hassan came in. Even Yusuf and Ali, who didn't like coming to the *mosque*, made it before Dad did. But none of them noticed Andrew sitting by the old man. And, when Dad finally came, neither did he.

The men all lined up and the *imam* led the prayer. Then he told the story of *Ibrahim's*

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

wife, *Hagar*, and how she was pregnant, but she ran around the *Kabbah* seven times, and how an angel showed her the *Zam-Zam* well that tastes like milk and honey. Then the *imam* told how *Hagar* had *Ishaq*, how even though *Ibrahim* and *Hagar* loved *Ishaq* and raised him to love *Allah*, *Allah* sent an angel to tell *Ibrahim* he had to take *Ishaq* up the mountain and kill him. So *Ibrahim* took *Ishaq* up a mountain, and *Ishaq* asked what was happening, and *Ibrahim* told him. And *Ishaq* told his father to do what *Allah* asked. And *Allah* was so happy with *Ibrahim* and *Ishaq* for doing what he told them to do that he didn't make *Ibrahim* kill *Ishaq*. Instead, *Allah* sent a sheep at the last second, and *Ibrahim* got to kill the sheep instead of his son.

Muslims go to *Mecca* in Saudi Arabia, and they pretend to do it all again for the *Hajj*. They run around the *Kabbah* and up mountains and drink from the *Zam-Zam* well. They throw stones at *Shaitan*, the devil, because *Allah* ties him up for a day. The *Hajjis* kiss a stone that *Allah* sent from *Jenna*, which is Heaven. The stone used to be white but it turned black because people sinned.

"The *Hajjis*," said the *imam*, "are our Muslim brothers, like we are all Muslim brothers. They are on a great journey that each one of us should take if he is given the opportunity, *insha'Allah*. It is one of the Five Pillars, like our daily prayers or giving *zakkat* to the poor. Even though we cannot be with them today, we must pray for them. They are our brothers, and they are on a difficult journey."

Andrew was sitting on his knees, but he couldn't see over top of the men to the *imam* with his dark skin and round belly. So Andrew stared at the back of the men's heads, half-covered with white *kufi* caps. "And even though," continued the *imam*, "we cannot be with them, it is our duty and our privilege to participate in the *Eid* celebration... I encourage each one of you, if your family has not already, to purchase an animal for sacrifice. *Eid-al-adha* is, of course, the Festival of the Sacrifice, and it is our responsibility to purchase an animal as is in our means. Also, we will be taking donations at the meal for those of our brothers and sisters who are unable to afford an animal for sacrifice on this day." The *imam* said his whole speech again in Arabic. He was more excited when he talked in Arabic, and, even though Andrew couldn't see him, he knew the *imam* was pointing at the ceiling really hard when he made a good point, and his round belly was bobbing when he brought his arm down. Andrew watched the old man, who nodded from time to time and prayed his beads to himself as he listened.

When the *imam* finished, all the men began to leave the *masjid* and went the gym for the potluck. Andrew stayed seated next to the old man, watching him pray and wondering if he could walk himself to the meal. Dad found Andrew looking at the old man. "This is where you've been," he said, sounding annoyed. "I've been worried. Now, get your shoes. We need to eat; we have a lot to do today." Dad started to walk away.

"But Dad..." Andrew tried to stop his father. He ran to Dad and grabbed him by the wrist. "What about that guy? I think he needs help getting to the gym." Andrew pointed at the old man thinking of how the *imam* would say something he wanted you to remember.

"His son will come and get him," Dad told Andrew and picked his shoes up off the rack. "Come now." Even though Andrew was still worried about the old man, he trusted Dad. Andrew grabbed his dress shoes too and tried to put them on as he walked so he wouldn't fall behind. Dad took his hand when he caught up, and Andrew held it, looking back to see if the old man's son had really come to get him.

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

The gym had the same kind of tables as Andrew's school in Cato, the ones that fold up into the walls. All of them, from one basketball hoop to the other, were down. The line of people in their nice *galibeyas* and pretty *hijabs* went all the way down the middle of the court and around the walls. He walked Andrew down the line and found Uncle Mohammed and Yusuf and Ali. Dad got in line with them. Andrew thought that was budging, but Dad said it was okay because they were coming to stand with their family.

They waited in line a long time. It seemed like a longer time because Dad was talking to Yusuf and Ali in Arabic, so Uncle Mohammed kept trying to talk to Andrew. But Andrew didn't understand him, and Uncle Mohammed smelled worse than usual because he was all sweaty from being in a room with so many people. It was okay when they got to the food though because there was lots of good stuff to eat. *Baklava* and Aunt Safia's grape leaves and black olives with the pits and dates and a whole lot of meat that smelled like grease and cinnamon. Somebody even brought a bunch of bags of Doritos.

Andrew wanted to try some of everything, except maybe the greasy meat. He filled his plate until his last scoop of rice tumbled down the pile of food like soybeans fell into Grandpa's grain bins. Andrew had to be careful not to spill on himself following Dad to the table where Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra and Sami's wife Mina and Sarah and Sara without an h were putting out silverware. He sat down at the table next to Mustafa who was sucking his cheeks into his teeth. "Eed-Moo-Barak, Mustafa." Andrew said.

Mustafa spit out the date pit he had been pulling the pulp from. "*Eid Mubarak*." "Are you having a good Eed?" Andrew asked, picking up a date of his own. "*Eid* hasn't started yet," Mustafa said as if Andrew should know what he meant. Without explaining, he started digging into a funny-looking piece of meat.

Andrew spit his half-eaten date into his hand. "No," he insisted. "Today is *Eid*." Mustafa looked at him for a minute like he hadn't heard. He might not have with Dad and Uncle Mohammed and Hassan and Sami and Zayn talking, and Mina talking to Sarah and Sara without an h, and Yusuf and Ali and Sharif arguing, or what sounded like arguing; it was hard to tell. "Today is Eed," Andrew shouted and a bunch of people turned to look at him, even though the whole gym was loud.

"Yeah, but we haven't gotten our sheep yet," Mustafa said between bites of what Andrew guessed was a beef rib. "My dad took me for the first time last year. It's the best part of *Eid*."

Andrew turned to face Mustafa and tried to keep his voice down. "Yeah," he said "I'm coming this year too."

"My dad said this year he might let me help." Mustafa put his rib on the table next to his plate and looked at Andrew. "Tomorrow he's going to take me to Cherryville Mall and we're going to go buy some stuff with my *Eid* money."

"Yeah?" Andrew asked.

"Yeah." Mustafa tunneled into the pile of food on his plate, looking for something in particular. "I'm gonna get an N64 DD."

"What's an N64 DD?" Andrew asked imagining a nice yo-yo with a ball bearing.

"It's the best video game system you can get," Mustafa said, pulling up a big black olive and licking a piece of rice from where it stuck to his finger. "You know Sharif's Nintendo?" Andrew nodded his head thinking about all the great games Sharif played on it. "This is better

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

than that," Mustafa said. He started eating the meat off his olive with his front teeth. "You wanna come help me get it. Maybe you can get one too."

"Yeah," Andrew said, excited at the idea of a video game system, especially one that Sharif didn't have yet. "I'll ask my Dad." With the issue settled, the boys continued to eat their food and to listen to the whir of the men's Arabic.

Andrew was too excited to eat much, but he liked to watch the men. They ate fast. They talked even while they chewed bits of meat off their chicken bones. Normally meals were long events, especially meals at the *mosque*. The men would work slowly through their dinners. Later, everyone would go to Sami's or Zayn's house to talk until the sky turned dark. Then they would eat again and go outside to pass the hookah until long after Sharif and Mustafa and Andrew had fallen asleep on the living room floor. Today, though, they were in a hurry. They let Uncle Mohammed finish his food because, even though he ate twice as fast as the other men, he ate three times as much as anybody else. When he was finished, the men told everyone to speed up and to get up, *i-wok-uff*. The women all got up to pick up, even though none of them were finished, because the men said that it was time for the Sacrifice. If they didn't have the Sacrifice, there would be no food for supper.

Sharif got up immediately and swatted Mustafa on the arm. "Come on," he said and pulled at Andrew's shirt. "We have to run." Sharif told Hassan that the boys would be right back. He ran down the gym to the first family he saw that had finished its meal. Mustafa and Andrew ran after him. When they caught up, Sharif said something in Arabic to the oldest man in the family and held out a hand. The man smiled and reached in the pocket of his *galibeya* robe and pulled out a thick brown wallet. He gave each of the boys a five dollar bill. "*Shukran*," Sharif said and Mustafa and Andrew repeated the word. "*Shukran*. Thanks." Even though the man's face was all covered with his beard, Andrew could see he was smiling.

Sharif ran off and Mustafa followed him and Andrew ran after them both. But he stopped for a moment when he saw the old man in the Bulls sweatshirt, sitting alone at a table with his side against the wall. Andrew was glad that the old man's son had brought him to the potluck, but he wondered where the old man's son had gone. Maybe he was getting his father food. Or maybe he was getting their car, so they could go to the Sacrifice too. Andrew wanted to ask, but the old man couldn't understand him because Andrew didn't speak Arabic, and the old man didn't speak English. So Andrew tried not to worry about it. He decided he should go back to his own dad, and that way they could get to the best part of *Eid*.

When Andrew got back, Sharif and Mustafa weren't there. But Dad and Hassan and Yusuf and Ali and Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra and Mina and Sarah and Sara without an h all were. And when Dad saw Andrew, he didn't look happy. "Where have you been?" Dad asked.

Andrew moved to the other side of the table before he started to explain. "I was with Sharif and Mustafa and we went to ask for money because it's Eed."

Dad turned away from Andrew and took a grocery bag full of silverware from Aunt Safia. Grandma Anía and Auntie Abra and the other women wiped at the table, even though it looked clean. "Don't do this," Dad said to Andrew.

"Why not?" Andrew asked. "Sharif said it was the best part of Eed and Mustafa is going to get a..."

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

"This is for beggars and babies," Dad said. "Come now. We need to get to the Sacrifice."

Dad made Andrew help put the table back into the wall, and then they met everyone outside by Dad's van. Dad told Grandma Anía and Aunt Safia and Auntie Abra and Sarah and Sara to go back to his house in Sami's van. Sami told Mina she would have to drive because none of the other women had American driver's licenses. Dad made Sharif and Yusuf and Ali get in the *back* back of the van. And he told Mustafa and Andrew to sit on the big red coolers that Sami and Zayn had brought from Sami's van. Then the men got in. Dad drove and Uncle Mohammed sat in the passenger side. And the men all sang as they made their way out of the parking lot and to the Sacrifice.

Andrew didn't know how long it took to get to the farm. And he couldn't see the clock because Sami's shoulders were so wide. At first, it seemed like it took a long time because Andrew was worried Dad was mad at his asking for money. But Sharif and Mustafa spent a bunch of the ride comparing who got more money before Sami found them and made them come to the car. No one was mad at Sharif and Mustafa. Andrew decided it probably wasn't too bad of a thing to do, and the rest of the ride went by pretty fast.

The Sacrifice was at a farm, but not like Grandpa Joe and Grandma Marie's farm. Grandpa and Grandma's farm was big and way out in the country on a road that was named Murray after Grandpa. This farm was really little, and it only had one barn and no grain bins and it was right off of the highway.

A man in a big grey *galibeya* came out of the barn as soon as the van pulled into the driveway, like he'd been waiting. He rushed to the car shouting, "*Asalamu-alaikim. Asalamu-alaikim. ASALAMU-ALAIKIM. Eid Mubarak. Aywa. Aywa. Eid Mubarak.*" The man was so loud that Andrew heard him even in the back of the van. The men started getting out of the van, and everyone *Alaikum-assalamed* the farmer, who kissed everybody on the cheek. Andrew didn't like that because the farmer had a big beard. It felt weird to get kissed by someone with a beard.

Once the farmer had kissed everyone, he asked if everyone spoke Arabic. Dad told him *aywa*, even though Mustafa and Andrew didn't. "But Dad," Andrew pleaded, trying to keep up with his father's long stride. "Dad, I don't."

"Don't worry, Andrew," Dad said. "He only means the men. You won't miss anything," Dad put his hand on Andrew's shoulder and squeezed. Andrew felt better, even though they were walking into the barn and the smell of dust and manure was creeping into his nose.

The barn was long and empty down the middle. And it had a bunch of pens on either side like the one Grandpa Joe kept his brood sows in. Only the farmer in the grey *galibeya* didn't keep pigs; he kept lambs and sheep. Even though Andrew had been on lots of farms, he had never been to a lamb farm. This was sort of new. Some were small and white like Sarah's Lamb Chop pillow. Some were big and grey like the farmer. Andrew tried petting one of the white ones. It wasn't as soft as he thought it would be, sort of like his bear Randall, but rough and dirty. But it still felt sort of nice. Andrew said *hello*. Mustafa said the sheep probably didn't understand *hello* because it spoke Arabic, like its farmer. "Eed Moo-Barak, lamb," Andrew said. The lamb just looked at Andrew and Mustafa with a sideways eye. Andrew liked it anyway.

Sharif told Mustafa and Andrew they should all ask their fathers if they could pick out the sheep for their families. So the three of them went to ask their dads. But Dad and Sami and Hassan were all listening to the farmer and watching him point at the sheep while he walked

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

down the barn. "Dad, can I pick the lamb?" Andrew asked anyway because the man was pointing at a big old sheep, and Andrew thought they should have a nicer one.

"Quiet," Dad said. He put his finger to his lips and bent his face right down to Andrew's. "This man is telling us which sheep are the best."

"I think that one's the best," Andrew told Dad and pointed back to the lamb he had been petting.

Dad squatted down and let the other men and their sons move around him. "Which one?" Andrew poked the air with his finger. "That one. In the corner."

"This one?" Dad asked, now pointing himself. "Andrew, this is just a small one. There are lots of us. We have to get a sheep for our whole family."

"Why can't that one be for our whole family? I really like that one," Andrew insisted.

"It's too small. Now be quiet," Dad said. "I need to listen to this man so we get a good sheep. Yes?"

"Yes," Andrew said because he knew Dad wasn't going to take the lamb he wanted.

Dad had already caught up to Uncle Mohammed and Sami and Zayn and Hassan and Yusuf and Ali and Sharif and Mustafa and even the farmer. Andrew ran to catch up too. They all marched to the end of the barn until the farmer had said something about every sheep. Then Dad talked with Uncle Mohammed and passed some twenty dollar bills back and forth. Sami and Zayn did the same. In the meantime, Hassan and Sharif picked out their sheep. When the other men were done passing money, Dad and Sami picked sheep for their families too. The farmer looked real happy when he got the money for the sheep, and he *shukraned* and went off. The men talked in Arabic and Mustafa told Sharif and Andrew how excited he was that they were about to go to the Sacrifice. Sharif told Mustafa that he was going to help his dad with theirs. Mustafa said he was probably going to help his dad too.

Then the back doors of the barn started to open and Dad and Hassan helped the farmer get them open all the way. The farmer had backed his white Chevy pickup truck to the barn. A man about Yusuf's age was in the back of it; his *galibeya* robe was robin's egg blue. The farmer in the blue *galibeya* hopped down from the back of the truck, and the farmer in the grey *galibeya* said this was his son. Then the farmer's son had to kiss and *Eid Mubarak* everyone, and he didn't seem to like it much. He hurried through it, then set a board on the tailgate and walked the sheep into the truck as fast as he could. When the sheep were in the back, the farmer's son got back in and sat on top of the wheel well. Andrew asked Dad if he could ride in the back of the truck with the sheep too. But Dad told Andrew to get in the van, so they could go to the Sacrifice.

Andrew ran up to Mustafa and pulled at his shirt. "C'mon," Andrew said, and he ran toward the van. Mustafa ran too but no one else did. The van was locked, and they had to wait for the men to come. And when they came, everyone had to get back inside just to drive around the barn to the pasture. They parked under a tree near a moldy picnic table. Andrew thought it was a weird place to put a table, but he didn't say so because there were lots of things about *Eid* he thought were sort of weird. The men got out of the van, and Dad told Yusuf and Ali and Andrew to get the big red coolers out and set them by the picnic table. They each took one. Andrew held his up to Dad and asked if it should go on the table instead of by it. But Dad said, "No."

So Yusuf and Ali and Andrew set their coolers beside the picnic table, and Andrew

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

stopped to watch the farmer's son grab a sheep by its sides and try to drag it out of the truck bed. The sheep didn't want to leave though. So Sami and Zayn went to help pull it. Andrew thought it was funny and started to giggle. But Ali slapped him on the back of the head and told him to get the rest of the coolers. He ran to the van and grabbed another cooler. Then he was out of breath. So before he got the last two, he stopped to see if the farmer's son was still having trouble with the sheep. But all of the sheep were already off the truck.

Dad and Hassan were both tugging at one by its long-little head. Sami and Zayn were pulling at another that was making short *bahahats* like the sound of Grandpa Joe's ratchets. Yusuf and Ali were pulling a sheep by its sides, while Sharif and Mustafa sort of pushed the back of it and didn't look like they were really helping much. Uncle Mohammed and the farmer weren't doing anything either. Maybe that was because they were smarter than everyone else and didn't want to get their *galibeyas* all gross. Everybody else had dirt on their collared shirts, and their dress shoes were all muddy. Andrew's shoes were getting dust spots. Mostly he was still clean, and he was glad he got a job that was clean too.

He went to get the last of the coolers. One in the other with their lids sticking out, they were tucked between the driver's seat and the seat where Sami and Zayn and Hassan had sat. Andrew pulled them both out and carried them, their lids making loud-low bumping sounds as they bobbed around inside. He set them by the picnic table and sat down on one of the benches to watch the men pull the sheep towards him. Dad and Hassan got their sheep to the picnic table first. Then Yusuf and Ali. Then Sami and Zayn, who each had sweat dropping from their sideburns, even though it was still spring and cool. Everyone else stood under the tree. While the farmer and his son drove out of the pasture in their white Chevy pickup, Andrew went and stood under the tree too.

Dad shouted something in Arabic at Yusuf, who took off for the van. Hassan kept holding onto the sheep while Dad rolled up the sleeves on his beige shirt. Yusuf ran back from the van carrying a thin, white box and handed it to Dad. Dad opened it and pulled out a long round thing that looked a lot like a wand. Then he pulled out the biggest knife that Andrew had ever seen. And Hassan, who was holding the sheep, moved around its backend. His hips were bent, and he looked funny because of how tall he was. Dad scraped the knife back and forth on the wand and set it back down. He walked up to the sheep and put one of his legs over top of the animal.

The sheep didn't like Dad being there, and it picked up its hooves, one at a time, to tell him so. It shook its head, and its ears twitched when Dad cupped its neck. Dad pulled the wool away from the sheep's throat with his big knife. The skin was white and pink and it looked funny against the dirty grey wool surrounding it. The sheep started *bahahating* and trying to shake its head some more, but Dad pinched its head to his chest. He moved the knife, and, at first, it didn't look like a cut at all. Andrew thought Dad was pulling the knife away. But all of the sudden there was lots of blood; it came from the sheep's neck like water ripples on creek rocks.

The blood spilled all over the grass. Andrew knew he was crying, but he didn't realize that he was screaming until Yusuf asked what was wrong. Dad got off of the sheep and Hassan let go of it. The sheep took a couple of shaky steps forward before it fell and landed on its face. One of its back legs kept moving, and Sami called to Yusuf and Ali. They hurried over and helped Dad and Hassan pick up the sheep by its legs and throw it on the picnic table.

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

The sheep was still bleeding when they dropped it down. It was still kicking too, and it almost got Ali in the stomach when he let go of its ankle. Andrew was still crying and screaming, and Uncle Mohammed and Sharif and Mustafa were all around him. And Sharif and Mustafa were asking what was wrong. Uncle Mohammed was in the back of them saying, "*La-ah. La-ah.*" Andrew couldn't see the lamb anymore, but he could see Dad coming, shouting, "*Baraha. Baraha.* Calm down. What is wrong?"

Andrew tried to explain. He tried to tell Dad that he didn't know. He just didn't know that the sheep would die like that. That it looked like it hurt real bad. He didn't want the sheep to die.

But Dad didn't understand. He looked so mad, standing there in front of Andrew with his shoulders back and his shirt coming untucked. Uncle Mohammed and Sharif and Mustafa were in the background smiling and snickering, and Andrew felt bad that they were laughing at him. He couldn't help it and he started to cry more. But that made Dad more mad, and he started shouting, "What are you doing? Why are you crying?"

Dad grabbed Andrew's arm and pulled him along to the van. He opened the van door and told Andrew to get inside. "Why are you crying?" he asked. But Andrew couldn't stop to tell him. "Why are you crying?" Andrew pulled his knees up to his belly and hid his head in them; he wished he had Randall or Mom there to make him feel better. Dad got in and sat on the seat next to Andrew. "The Sacrifice is for men," he said, grabbing Andrew by the tops of his arms. "I brought you here because you are a man. Are you a man?"

"I don't know," Andrew sniffled.

"Listen," Dad ordered, shaking at Andrew's arms. "Yes, you do know. You are a man. Now why are you crying?"

Dad took Andrew's face in his hands and lifted it up out of Andrew's knees. "It looked like it hurt so bad," Andrew said, trying not to look at Dad. "The sheep yelled and there was lots of blood."

"This sheep?" Dad let go of Andrew's face with one hand and used it to point out the window. "This sheep, it didn't feel a thing. This sheep is the sheep of *Allah-soupana-awitala*. This sheep went to Heaven before the knife even touched its throat. This sheep?" Dad said. "Sheep pray to be this sheep."

But Dad told Andrew once that animals don't go to Heaven. Andrew didn't say so but thinking about it made his stomach feel empty until it hurt. Dad stared at Andrew but let go of his face. "This sheep will go to Heaven. This is the sheep of *Allah-soupana-awitala*." Dad turned away from Andrew and opened the van door. "I am going to help with the Sacrifice. When you are ready to be a man, you can come join us." Dad shut the van door behind him as he left.

Andrew moved down the seat and looked out the window. Sami and Zayn and Yusuf and Ali were putting another sheep on the picnic table. Dad's sheep was lying on the grass by the tree. Sharif was helping Hassan move their sheep to the place where the other two had been killed. Andrew started to cry again. He cried for a long time until he didn't think he could cry anymore, even though he was still sad. He knew Dad wanted him to be a man. When he stopped crying, Andrew opened the van door and got out.

The air smelled more like a barn than a pasture, and Andrew could taste blood in it like when Grandma Anía cooked meat. The last sheep was on the picnic table, and it didn't seem to

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

be kicking much. Hassan and Sharif were watching it anyway. Dad and Zayn were cutting apart Dad's sheep, and there was blood and weird body parts lying around like broken kick balls in the grass. Andrew wanted to cry again, and his belly hurt too. But he held back his tears and went up to Dad and watched him peel the wool from the sheep's skin. Dad pulled at it hard and the wool snapped, like the sound of water poured on ice. He looked up from the sheep to Andrew and smiled. Andrew asked Dad if he was still mad. Dad said he wasn't, but Andrew wasn't so sure. He didn't have time to worry about it, though, because the others were starting to shout and cheer.

Andrew went to see what they were doing. Uncle Mohammed and Yusuf and Ali and Mustafa were all standing around Sami who was cutting through a big purplish blob and pulling out stringy brown stuff. It smelled like cow pies but more sour. "You done bawling yet?" asked Mustafa, chuckling.

"Yeah," Andrew said.

"Look. Look." Mustafa forgot about Andrew's bawling and pointed to his father, who was shaking the stringy stuff like a jellyfish. "It's the sheep's stomach."

Andrew couldn't help his tears then, but he didn't want Mustafa or Dad or anyone else to see. He ran back to the van and got in the seat in the *back* back. And he cried. He cried until he got the hiccups and his face was itchy with tears. He cried until he fell asleep and everyone came back to van and woke him up. He must not have slept long because when Dad told him he had to get in the front because they had to put a cooler there, Andrew's nose was still dripping and his eyes were still wet and red.

The van smelled like old meat and sweaty bodies, but no one seemed to notice except Dad and Andrew. Everyone talked and laughed. But Dad didn't talk or laugh as much as the other men. Andrew kept his head down so no one could see he'd been crying, even though they all knew. He didn't want to be there in the van next to Dad. He tried to keep his eyes closed, so he could pretend he wasn't. He pretended that he was in Egypt listening to men sing in a market or that he was on a battleship in World War II like Grandpa Joe. But sometimes the sheep's ankle that was sticking out of the cooler would rub up against Andrew's leg and he would remember where he really was.

When they got back to the *mosque* and Sami and Zayn and Mustafa got out and hugged and kissed and *Eid Mubaraked* Dad and Hassan goodbye, Dad didn't tell Andrew to get in the back; he just waved to his friends as they drove off in Zayn's car. Andrew was afraid to move unless he was told. He stayed in the front with the cooler and the ankle and Dad until they got back to the house. Andrew didn't move until Dad and Uncle Mohammed and Yusuf and Ali and Sharif had all gotten out of the van. He stayed put until Yusuf told him to get out so he and Ali could take the cooler inside. Then Andrew got up to go inside too.

In the kitchen, Grandma Anía ran up to him. She grabbed him by his face and kissed him right on the mouth. Her hands were already covered with sheep fat from the meat she was cutting up, and it made his face feel gross and slimy. "I. Love. You." Grandma Anía said and started to say something else to him in Arabic.

Aunt Safia came over and left Auntie Abra at the counter to keep cutting up the sheep. "She wants to know if you had a very good *Eid*," Aunt Safia explained. Andrew felt like crying again. He felt like telling her *no*, that he didn't like *Eid* at all. But instead he said *yes* and ran into

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

the living room where Sarah and Sara without an h were watching Sharif play Mario Cart.

Andrew tried to get into the bathroom, but Sharif said that Dad was already in it and Uncle Mohammed and Hassan and then he were all in line first. Everyone had to hurry since it was almost past time for the Afternoon *Asr* Prayer. Then Sharif explained that he really needed to get clean since he helped with the Sacrifice. "You should have seen it," Sharif said, pausing his game and turning his head to Sarah and Sara without an h.

"I don't wanna know, Sharif," Sara without an h looked away and waved both of her hands at her brother.

"No," Sharif insisted. "It was great. Right, Andrew?" Sharif looked at Andrew for help. "There was lots of blood. And..."

"I don't wanna know," Sara without an h shouted.

Sarah covered her ears. "I don't wanna know either," she said putting her head down. "Tell 'em, Andrew," Sharif kept on waving Andrew towards him. "Come on."

Andrew walked forward slowly. He didn't want Sharif to tell the girls what he'd done. "Yeah," Andrew said. "There was lots of blood and it came out of the sheep really fast like this." He took his hands and wiggled his fingers away from his neck. Sarah and Sara without an h told him to knock it off and Sharif laughed. But Andrew didn't knock it off. Instead, he pulled his bottom lip over his bottom teeth and flicked it with his tongue real fast. He hummed, "*mledledledledledledledled...*" Sarah said she was going outside, and Sara without an h got up to leave with her. But Andrew stepped towards them as they walked away from the couch, his hands flailing way out like he was a squirt gun. "...*ledledledledledledle...*" He walked closer to the girls, so they had to walk with their shoulders against the wall to avoid him. "...*ledledledledledledle...*"

"Stop, Andrew," Sarah shouted at him. "You're not funny." Andrew could hear Sharif laughing from the couch, but only a little bit, because Andrew was getting louder over the top of it. Aunt Safia must have also heard him and run in from the kitchen to see what was going on. Andrew could hear her a little bit too, her soft, high voice was telling him to *baraha*. Sarah kept yelling at him to stop and ducked under his arms and headed toward the kitchen. Sara without an h did the same. But Andrew was still following them, still getting louder, "...*ledledledle...*" And he kept getting louder until *ledledle* turned into *ledledledlehkha hkha*. Air popped up his throat and his nose, and it hurt somewhere the air scraped. Andrew stared at the spot where the floor met the wall. The girls were gone, and Aunt Safia must have followed them. The room was quiet except for his own loud breathing and for Sharif, who was still on the couch laughing to himself. After a minute Sharif stopped his laughing and, without another word to Andrew, went back to playing his Nintendo.

Andrew went back up to Dad's room and lay down on the bed. He couldn't sleep though. So he got up and took off his dress shoes that still had shadowy dirt spots from the pasture. He took off his tan pants and Dad's tie and the collared shirt and the black socks too. He shoved them all into his backpack with the other stuff that was supposed to go back to Mom's house on Sunday. Andrew went back to the bed in his underwear and lay down again. But he still couldn't sleep. He rolled and moved around and pulled the blankets on and threw the blankets off. But nothing seemed to help.

So Andrew got up and opened his backpack. He pulled out Randall and held him up with

Note: This story is reprinted with permission.
Reproduction of this story without the express,
written permission of the author is prohibited.
Associated Colleges of the Midwest www.acm.edu/nickadams

both hands. “It’s okay,” Andrew told the bear. “It’s okay. It didn’t hurt.” Andrew’s thumbs pressed under Randall’s chin, and he looked at the stitches that held on Randall’s head. For a second Andrew was sad but when he pulled his thumbs away from Randall’s chin, the bear’s head fell down like a nod. Randall thought it was going to be okay too. He smiled at Andrew. Andrew smiled back. Just then he heard Dad calling, “*Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Allah-hoo-ugbir. Ashadow-allah-e-laha-ill-la-la.*” Andrew pushed Randall into the bag, underneath all the dress clothes, and he put his PJs on. Then he ran to the bathroom to do his *wudu* because he knew they had to pray before dinner.