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English 100: Life Choice Memoir, Draft #2

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## **Anqa**

**October 2012**

“Walk away from harm’s way and celebrate the fact you’re far away from it. Heard that kid? That’s what it means.”

“The old man warned you. should have listened,” said the voice in my head as I put my shaky hand on the ground, trying to force my knees off it. A crimson red drop splashing on the cracked asphalt was the first thing I saw once I opened my blurry eyes. The street was empty, everything was dead silence, as if it was a ghost town. Moments later I’m was able to push myself up and stand again. I was on the sidewalk of an intersection turn, too stunned to be aware of anything around me. I felt two hands across my chest shoving me backwards. I held on to the gray school fence, but a second stronger shove followed by knocking me onto the street, a white car slammed the side of my body. Luckily, the driver was able to slow it down enough to a level where the hit didn’t cause any bone breaking damage. The driver thought we were recklessly playing and I ended up falling based on the looks of it, he was shouting. I can’t recall what were his words, but I assume he was furious because if he wasn’t aware of himself things could have easily went sideways. One of the kids stepped forward and kick my back, the driver then realized that nobody was playing around, and things were serious, he rushed his way

outside the car. I can't remember his face my body was collapsed, but his red shirt was about to explode because of his muscle mass, he was about 5'8 and a body that looks like a human tank. He threw a punch at that kid, I didn't clearly see it. but I'll never forget the sound of it. it sounded like the swing of a baseball bat. He helped me get back up, and offered to take me to a hospital,

"I'm fine. nothing's broken, however there is a grocery store two blocks away, I'd appreciate it if you take me there."

"Why in the hell would you go there? That's not where you need to be,"

"I know the owner, I want to stay there until I'm good to go home."

"I'll get you there."

## **April 2012**

I grew up in the world's oldest capital, the city with countless artefacts, breath-taking green yards. Damascus, Syria felt like heaven on earth, never thought it'd turn into hell on earth to me. Stubbornness and curiosity are some of my earliest characteristics, curiosity nearly killed me, in second grade I jumped off the back of a truck to find out how will I land! Nearly landed on my neck, sound more like stupidity than curiosity now. I enjoyed being hard-headed as a kid, never thought it will keep getting me in trouble. But it taught me a lot. My life was like a Ferris wheel, whenever I have everything together it rolls back to the bottom, I strongly valued friendship, as a teenager in school you need friends to have your back, just like wolf's form packs, no one can afford being the lonely sheep in school. I had few friends that were like

family, we looked out for each other. School is over by 2:10, 20 minutes later streets are empty and its dead silence. Kids rushed to hangout at food places, me and my friends would hangout daily 2 blocks away from the school. there was a lot of food places around a parking lot, my friend's grandpa owned a grocery store there, we'd sit around it same time everyday, he was an awesome old man who often talks to us about school, I always called him "Old Man" because it annoyed him, but the more he knew me the more that word grew on him. Around the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, me and my friend got to his grandpa's store a bit later than usual, it was because of an altercation I've had with another student on our way out.

"Late today huh?"

"yeah, he's just being an idiot" my friend said referring to me

"Why, what happened?"

"He acts like an idiot every time someone says something to us"

"The dude was..."

"You know you shouldn't start problems with others" the old man interrupted me.

"I don't know, maybe,"

"Listen kid, I'll say it again, don't get yourself involved in trouble, you'll get hurt, epically you.",

"Me?"

"Yes, don't play dumb, you're the only one in that school with a different religion than others, some people won't accept it"

It took few moments to process his words,

"You got a point, I just can't let people know that I'll accept what they say, that will only make things worse, I can't allow others to shove their beliefs down my throat"

“Right, you shouldn’t. But you can do it by walking away showing that you’re the better person, if you act like them you’re not making a difference.”

few seconds of silence followed, a proverb people use in the middle east “stay away from evil and sing about it” makes zero sense translated, but in Arabic it has a great meaning, that proverb was what the old man said following his last few words.

“It makes no sense”

“It does when you think about it”

“That’s the problem, he never thinks” my friend broke his silence

“Walk away harm’s way and celebrate the fact you’re far away from it. Heard that kid? That’s what it means.” he walked back inside.

Getting threatened by other kids because of my religion was something normal to me, I had to learn how to live with it since I’ve been hearing it since first grade. My friend’s grandpa wasn’t the only one who tried talking some sense into me, many other people tried. I never listened because regardless of all the threats I heard, nobody ever attempted to get me seriously hurt. Which is why I thought getting angry at everyone that says anything to me regardless of how silly it is was the solution for the problem. It kind of gave me the sense of being grown up who could handle himself and doesn’t need the advice of adults.

#### **October 2012**

I attended school for fun, I knew I’m leaving the country, so I didn’t take school seriously, I just wanted to spend time around my friends. It was tough visualizing the day I’ll tell them goodbye, they were a huge part of my journey, but I’m was getting ready for a new

one. I walked back class one day, from mandatory religion class, I had my own teacher since I'm was the only Christian in the school. As soon as I stepped in, a new kid in the school said "You hate us, don't you? That's why you left the room." He understood me leaving the room as a move of disrespect to everyone's religion, which was Islamic. The kid recently moved from the east of the country. A place where people suffer from poverty, lack of education and on top of that it's people are extremely religious. They border a country of war, so they've seen and heard about a lot of violence. I saw where his lack of understanding why I left the room comes from. Which is why I never put all the blame of his behavior on him, he grew up in a traumatizing environment. That's how the world works! Maybe I could have explained it to him, or had a teacher explain it. but instead, I ignored him. eight more weeks until my move to the U.S. No reason to start problems with anyone. "School's almost done, I'll be waiting for you outside" he said.

"Cool, have fun waiting."

"Don't leave directly, we could wait my buddies and go together, that way he won't come near you" my friend said.

"I'm good, he's alone, it's not even serious and I've got transfer papers to do after school, he won't wait that long, I'll see you tonight."

"Sure?"

"Yes, I'm keeping it peaceful for the next few weeks."

"See you later then."

I got my papers done, as soon as I stepped outside the new kid and two others with him were standing across the street. I realized things might not go well, decided to ignore them as I walked by.

“Take it off” he said referring to the cross around my neck.

I kept walking, didn’t say anything.

“You heard me.” I realized there is no walking away, I could have taken it off, just to give him that sense of power he wants, and problem solved! My narrow mind didn’t allow me to make that decision

“Make me” I replied

“Take it off” as he reached for it to rip it off, I got a hold of his hand, “Whack” I snapped couple of his fingers, sounded like pool balls when you break the rack, I tried to break away into a sprint, but one of the kids tripped me, the only thing I remember after that is punches raining on me, it stopped over a minute later, I felt weakness that I’ve never experienced, I had my hands on the ground trying to push myself back up while having a flashback of my conversation with my friend’s Grandpa while telling myself,

“I could have reported what the kid said to me in school, could have taken my cross off and walked away and could have gone with my friends... instead here I am my decision-making is about to get me killed.”

That altercation happened about ten minutes prior to me getting pushed onto a car. Looking back at it now, it could have been some reckless guy driving. Or it could have been someone who would ignore the situation, that could have led into some kid stabbing me, I’m no stranger to that either. Someone attempted to about a year earlier, for the same reason.

Fortunately, the driver was a good man who offered his help.

"This is it, Thank You" I told the driver as he dropped me off.

"Just be careful next time."

"Yeah, you told me so, save your speech for later." I said as I walked to the store,

"Kid, what happened to you, Should I call your parents" said the old man with a concerned look

"No, don't call anyone. I won't be attending school anymore, not worth it. I just came to say I wish I would've listened whenever you tried to talk some sense into me. Also, this is the last time I'll see you. I'm never coming down here again!"

He saw that it was painful for me to talk because of the beating I took, so he kept it short

"Just be glad you're fine, I'll call my grandson to walk you home."

I stood near the door watching my friend approach from distance, "I'll never get engaged in any violence again, not unless I have to stand up for someone else, I own that to the man who stood up for me." I said

"Kid, I hate to see you physically hurt, but I hope you learned something today"

"learned a lot, this is it, Farewell old man"

"Don't behave like a jackass over there, my grandson will keep me up to date about you" he gave me one last smile.