

Storm

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She was as I had never seen her: indefatigable, tempestuous, ungovernable. Her sentences, one moment coherent, the next minute capricious unintelligible things. I had been in the house less than five minutes when she seemed to take leave of her senses and this tempest began pouring out of her. I expected some sort of reaction, but this...

When I had first entered the house she had appraised me coldly and asked "Is this a *joke*?" "No mother. This is no joke", I had responded carefully. I was fully aware of the fragility of the situation; but my caution was to be of no avail. The next moment the storm broke and all of its fury was unleashed. She raged like a mad woman, and then unexpectedly she lunged forward as if to strike me. I went stiff and prepared for the blow. But then seemingly without reason or will, she halted. The blow never came. There is no doubt, God does exist. With her hand still upraised she fixed her fiery gaze upon me and through clenched teeth, that barely contained her unconcealed contempt, she hissed, "How dare you!" I did not flinch nor did I respond and this seemed to stoke her rage further. She raised her hands wildly toward her head as if in the next moment she would tear her perfectly manicured strands from their roots. But somehow in her tumultuous indignation she remained conscious of the fact that she was a woman of status and she resisted the overwhelming urge that had seconds earlier threatened to possess her. Nevertheless, her position in society required her to speak her next words without pause or contemplation. "You're nothing! We gave you *everything*!" She then spat a stream of vulgarities at me that I cannot and will not repeat. At last, trying to placate her, I said, "Mother, please try to calm down. I'm sure we can discuss this with some degree of civility, can we not?" She harrumphed and said, "You hate sand. You do remember that don't you?" I judged the comment to be impertinent and so I ignored it. A moment of suffocating silence ensued in which we both withdrew into ourselves and then, seeming to regain some semblance of composure, she sat down on the sofa. I moved to sit on the sofa opposite her when she said, "Don't. Not in those rags you're wearing." I remained standing. She looked at me reproachfully, and then, as if the sight of me was unbearable, her face contorted grotesquely and she looked away. How long did we stay like this? I cannot recall but eventually she stood and raised herself to her full height and said, her tone imperious, "You look like a clown. Positively hideous. Go

and change." I knew she was wrong. I was beautiful but her words were like shrapnel and I stumbled back from the pain like a wounded soldier. But I did not fall. When I showed no sign of obeying her she drew in a measured breath and said, "Very well. Get out. Until you remember who you are and stop this foolishness, you are not my daughter. Get out." I looked at her and although part of me understood her, the greater part of me pitied her. A woman who believed herself magnanimous, august and irreproachable, I had, in her estimation, affronted her in the worst possible way. But oh the pity I felt for her. She did not understand and yet her loss was that she did not *want* to understand; her pride prevented this. Would her pride be the cause of her eternal destruction? I shuddered at the thought. I turned toward the door; I would obey her in this, I would leave. I was nearly to the door when her voice called after me, "And what *is* that ridiculous thing on your head by the way?" I half-turned and regarded her evenly. "It's called a hijab mother. Muslim women wear it. It is an honour. I am a Muslim now mother and I am honoured to wear it." I turned and left, letting the door close quietly behind me.

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