



**WORST CASE,
WE GET
MARRIED**

SOPHIE BIENVENU

TRANSLATED BY JC SUTCLIFFE

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Yup, my name really is Aicha.

It's from that song, you know. No, you don't know. Nobody ever knows, but oh well. I know I really look like I should be called Emily or Camille, but I'm called Aicha. Aicha Saint-Pierre.

Saint-Pierre's my mother's last name, and Aicha...well, that's because my father's Algerian.

Well, okay, not my *father* father, but the guy my mother was with when she got pregnant with me.

He stayed for a while, I guess. Until he stopped hoping my hair and eyes would turn brown. And my skin.

He was nice.

He was hot too.

I have a photo of him in my purse. If you want to see it, I can show you sometime. Soon, like when they give me my purse back.

They *will* give me my purse back, right?

Because I have important stuff inside it. Will they go through it?

Whatever.

When my mother left to go who knows where—to work, according to her—the two of us stayed behind, him and me. I never went to school on those days, didn't even get dressed,

and we watched movies all day and stuffed our faces with pizza and fries. The only thing he liked was those super old films like *Scarface*. I preferred cartoons, but he couldn't stand them, so I ended up getting used to his tastes.

And I ended up learning English too.

"You wanna fuck with me? Okay. You wanna play rough? Okay. Say hello to my little friend."

In the film, Tony Montana says that, then he pulls his gun out and blows everyone up.

One time with Hakim... Oh, I didn't tell you. His name was Hakim. To start off with, when I was little, I called him Dad, but everyone at school started laughing at me because he obviously couldn't be my real dad, so I stopped. I think he was hurt by that. He and my mother had a screaming match about it. He listed off all the insults he could think of, and then he started yelling in Arabic. But I wasn't really listening. After that he disappeared for a while, but then he came back. He always came back. Except for that time he didn't. That crazy woman had thrown all his stuff out the window, screeching like she was possessed. You should have seen her! She was a fucking mental case. She grabbed me really hard, and her nails dug into my arm and everything. "Go to your room and stay there," she yelled. She was seriously afraid I'd go with him, you know? And I would have if I'd known he was leaving for good.

...

I forget where I was.

Oh yeah.

So one time we were watching *Scarface* again, me and Hakim, pretty much the whole thing. We knew the words off by heart. Especially the bits where someone dies. There's like a bajillion people who die in that movie. It's basically my favourite movie now. Have you seen it?

Anyway. It's all good. The girl in it, the one who plays Elvira,

apparently she looks like me. Her eyes and hair. And her breasts, for now, but I figure mine are going to be bigger than hers soon. But smaller than yours, I think. Yours are really big.

They're like that crazy bitch Élisanne Blais's, except yours are saggier and look softer. They look more like real ones.

Anyway.

I'd really like to show you my photo of Hakim. You can't see him too well because he's in profile, and anyway, my mother's half hiding him. But it's the only one I have of him. He had long hair, it was before I was born. It was taken in Kamouraska, or somewhere or other. Someplace beginning with K, I can't remember. I asked her about it again the other day, but she didn't answer me. Whenever I'm around, basically all she does is give me orders and then sigh. "Get out out of my way!" "Turn the TV off!" "Go and play somewhere else, I'm expecting someone!" "Feed the budgie!"

That fucking budgie. One day I'm going to barbecue that bird, I swear.

It spends all its time tweet-tweeting, or whatever sound budgies are supposed to make. The only way to make it shut up is to put a sheet over it.

One day I tried the same trick with my mother... You should have seen her beat the crap out of me afterwards! But it was *totally* worth it...

She was in the middle of doing her nails. I hate it when she does that. She thinks she's super important, even more than normal. She wanted me to bring her the phone, because she couldn't move because the polish was drying.

"Go and get it yourself," I said.

She started yelling at me. I picked up the bird's sheet—which wasn't even clean, it was all full of feathers and bird shit and crap—and then I threw it over her and said, "Shut your face!" Afterwards I got out of there fast, laughing my ass off.

I thought she might have forgotten, or gone out, when I got back from the library, but she hadn't. You should have seen the way she shook me! She was seriously losing it. It was violence against children. I could have made a complaint if I'd wanted to. But I don't really have any other family, so if I'd reported her they might have put me in a home with people I don't know, and I don't like people I don't know. But they don't like me either, so it doesn't bother me. And since I don't know anyone, well, I guess I don't like many people.

It's logical, right?

You seemed surprised when I said I went to the library. Do I look like I can't read or something?

No, no, I get what you mean. You weren't really expecting that when you saw me. It's not why I go there anyway. Well, yeah, I read sometimes, or I pretend to so people leave me alone. The armchairs they have there are super comfortable and they have Internet and everything. Not the whole Internet, but close. It's cool. Better than outside in winter.

Better than my house anyway.

You know those times when you feel like you have to be out of the house because your mother has a new guy over and she hasn't told him she has a rug rat, or she's ashamed, or she can't face seeing you, or she's trying to teach her fucking bird to talk and that makes you wanna smash your head into the wall until it starts bleeding... There aren't many other places you can go except the library.

Because I haven't got any friends.

Obviously, I have Melissa and Johannie, but they aren't always around. And they don't want me to hang out with them too much because it's not great for business. And because they don't want some guy to pick me up and make me do stupid shit because he thinks I'm a ho too. "Be careful, Aicha, there are some sick people out there," they tell me.

And they should know what they're talking about. You have to be a bit sick to want to sleep with a whore that's a guy dressed up as a girl, right?

They're cool and everything, but let's be honest, it's not like guys want to get sucked off by them because of their wonderful personalities.

No, I reckon you have to be kinda sick.

If you like guys, you like guys. I don't have a problem with that, I know tons of queers. If you like girls, you like girls, and that's fine too. But what's the point of picking up some woman on the street if she's not even a woman?

Apparently I'm too young to understand.

But I did ask the oldest guy I know, and he didn't get it either. It was Mr. Klop, the guy who owns the convenience store. I don't know how old he is exactly, but he's so old that he doesn't just have hair in his ears, it's actually *white* hair.

Klop's his real name. It's totally true. I'm not making it up, I swear. I take a lot of shit for being called Aicha Saint-Pierre, but just imagine if I was Aicha Klop! It's a Jewish name. So yeah, seems they're the chosen people and all, but if it means you have to be called Klop, they can keep it—their God and everything. And the old guy doesn't even believe in God anyway. Just think about that. He has to put up with being called Klop and it's all for nothing.

I'd be seriously mad.

But I'm mad all the time, apparently.

My mother says so, but she would, my teachers say it, even Melissa and Johannie say it, but all they do is insult people. What's that saying about clearing the crap away from your own door before sweeping your neighbour's porch?

Yeah, that. Whatever. You know what I mean.

...

Sometimes I'd like to rewind to when Hakim was still here.

Before I was mad all the time. Because it's true, I am mad all the time.

Everything was so cool back then, it seems like it can't really have happened, I just imagined the whole thing. Like someone else told me the story and I'm just pretending it was me. Or I saw it in a movie or something. With all the shit that went down afterwards, I told myself things couldn't ever have been that good.

You know what I mean?

Fine, you don't get it. I'm going to try to explain it to you just like a normal person.

It's like... Okay, imagine you're watching *Scarface* and you fall asleep right at the part when Tony gets married and everything's all happily ever after. And when you wake up he's being shot at from all sides. You wouldn't even think it was the same movie, even though it's the same actor and everything.

But okay, that's right, you haven't seen it. You wouldn't know. It was the exact same thing in my situation. Everything was going well. I didn't want anything, except to go back home and for Hakim to be there. For him to cut the crusts off my toast, or help me pull off my snowy boots, for us to snuggle in front of the TV and share a Twix, and for him to come and turn off my bedroom light and say, "Night night, kiddo."

That's happiness, right? Someone calling you kiddo with so much love in their voice that you whisper it to yourself over and over again like some kind of idiot until you fall asleep. I really did that, I swear.

And if that's not happiness, I don't know what is. If that's not happiness, I don't want anything to do with it.

Anyway, like I was saying, everything was just fine, and then there was nothing. No, not nothing, that's not true. Everything was shit. Just shit. Nothing but shit, everywhere, all the time. Everything was so shit that the less shitty days almost seemed good.

Who wouldn't be mad about being furious all the time,
right?

Yes, I felt good when I was with “Sebastien.”

It’s weird, you calling him Sebastien. Nobody calls him that. His name’s Baz. And you’re making it sound like he’s dead.

He isn’t dead, is he?

You scared me there. But with my luck, I wouldn’t have been surprised.

One time I told him he would totally get run over by a snowplow or get shot by a stray bullet someday. Obviously he asked why I said that. I wasn’t going to say, “Because I love you,” because I would’ve looked like a total loser. So I just shrugged my shoulders, and he laughed right in my face. But not meanly. He’s never mean.

He’s really not dead, right? You’re sure?

...

He saved my life once. Yeah. That’s how we met.

It's pretty boring here, isn't it? Can't you put some music on or something? I don't know how you can handle this silence. Doesn't it, like, distract you? For me, if there's not enough noise, it's like having a fridge humming in my head, until all the things I'm thinking about just rattle around in there.

That's not super fun.

But anyway, here I am talking to you, so it's fine; it's stopping me from thinking about stuff.

What do you want me to tell you? About the time he saved my life? Or everything? Should I tell you everything?

I'd be happy to.

But I'm warning you, I don't know the exact dates or anything. I suck at remembering dates and that kind of stuff. One time Baz tried to teach me guitar and I sucked pretty bad. You're going to say that's got nothing to do with it, but dates are kind of like knowing which finger goes on which fret, and which string to press and all that. I preferred listening to him play. Or maybe I should say watching him play.

Or resting my head on his shoulder while he played, and singing along, but just quietly, some song that isn't supposed to be played or sung quietly. Like, if you whisper the lyrics to a heavy metal song, it sounds seriously poetic.

Anyway.

It makes me feel all tingly in the pit of my stomach whenever I hear an amp buzzing. It's like a hot dead space. A hole... I dunno. And the first chord he always strums before he really starts playing. It's always the same one. The way he strums the chords, quietly but not too quietly. I'm not, like, trying to impress you with everything I know about music. But it's important if you want to understand why I love him.

Well, that's why, because of how he strums chords, and a ton of other stupid tiny little things like the little repaired chip in his tooth that's a completely different colour than the rest. I have a list, I can show it to you if you like. It's in my purse too. You'll see, there's all these sheets of paper, all these different-coloured pens, because I studied him for a long time. I didn't put little hearts on the i's or any of that kind of stupid shit. I'm not a total loser. Girls in school do that. And they write each other letters about their crushes and lose their shit when the guy walks past. I don't do that. I don't have anyone to write letters to. But I don't care, it's stupid anyway. And I don't lose my shit when I bump into Baz.

Anyway, we never bumped into each other. Never never never.

We always *met up*.

If you bump into someone, it's, like, not deliberate. But we didn't do that. We always met up on purpose. Mr. Klop thinks it's fate. Hakim always used to say that God meddles in our business to arrange things his way. "Insh'Allah, God willing," he said. I don't really believe that, or else God's just a piece of shit. But fine...fate, chance, God, or some alien kid with tons of cash who plays with us like we're just an ant farm, whatever, Baz and me never just bumped into each other.

You should write that down, it's important.

Have you written it down?

...

If you want, I can lend you my list of reasons why I love him. Or I could mail it to you, maybe. Then you won't have to write it out again if you need it. I don't care, it's not like it's personal or anything. One time I shouted out to the whole city that I loved him. Well, okay, to the whole neighbourhood, but when it's dark our neighbourhood is kind of like the city.

I told him I never looked at the sky, and he thought that was sad. But looking at the sky seemed stupid to me. Like staring at the TV screen when it's turned off. Sometimes a plane goes by, but then you can just say, "Look, there's a plane," and you don't give a shit because it's never you in the plane.

Well, it's never me.

What I mean is, it's boring looking at the sky. Everybody goes on about the stars and everything. In movies you always see it when the guy and the chick are in love. But I don't think anybody in Montreal can be in love, because I've never seen people gazing at the fucking stars. That's why I don't look at the sky. It's depressing that nobody in this city is in love. So that's more or less what I said to Baz. Maybe I explained it better, but you know.

So he took me up on the roof of his building so we could look at the sky, him and me. I teased him a little, because it was cheesy as shit, but it was cool. More than cool, actually.

...

Okay, well, at the beginning it was shitty.