al-halqa (is that how it's pronounced)
(EXCERPT)
drew paryzer

characters
1 *(older brother)*
2 *(younger brother)*
jinn *(is onstage for the entire play)*
zohra

wordless brother communication punctuation
| = spans of closed-off self-involvement.
~ = anxiety. rarely goes unnoticed by the other.
_ = a pause. whoever has it's in control of the silence.

1 and 2 have just arrived in the other country.
Jinn is there with them. They're mid-conversation.

Jinn
USA. Very good.

2
Yes.

1
Yes? Good, you think?

Jinn
You come for the school? Learn Arabic?

2
Oh. Um.

1
We just come to
See.

2
See your beautiful country.

Jinn
Yes. Okay. Welcome.
You stay in medina?

2
Huh?

1
The medina, the old part of the city, yes.

Jinn
You stay in riad?

2
Huh?

Jinn
The house, traditional house, riad --

1
Oh! Riad! Yes. Riad Dar Zouhour.

Jinn
Dar Zouhour! I take you for it. No problem.

1
~

2
Thank you, very kind, but we would be fine with just directions.

1
Yes, thank you.

Jinn
I take you for Dar Zouhour. Come.

1
~~~~~

2
Is it straight down, and where do we turn next?

1
Izquierda?

2 *(to 1)*
Dude that's not –

1 *(to 2)*
There's Spanish influence in their dialect, man –

Jinn
I take you no problem, friend. You are in Muslim country. No problem.

1 *(to 2)*
Should we just --

2 *(to Jinn)*
We have a map, thank you, we'll find our way.

1
Thank you, you are kind, so so kind.

Jinn
No map, friend. Medina is very old. Many streets have no name.

1 and 2 look at the map, and around them at the streets.
Jinn is right.

2 *(to Jinn)*
But is this the right configuration? The right layout?
(pointing at map) Like this is the first right turn in that direction, but are there other right turns before this one that aren't marked, or --
Do you know what I --
~~~~~

1
~~~~~
|||||||

**Jinn**
The medina, the streets, they are --

**2**
Okay.

**1**
Okay. We go with you.

**Jinn**
Come.
First I take you to sweet shop.
Best in city.

**1**
Ooh!

**2**
No no no -- I mean no, thank you, but --

**1**
Bro --

**Jinn**
Not far.
Baklava, citroen, like this, very good.

**2** *(to 1)*
It's a commission thing.

**1** *(to 2)*
But what if it's *good*.

**2** *(to 1)*
It's a whole racket.

**Jinn**
Right here. My friends.

*Jinn walks to a sweet stand, a short distance away.*
*A couple of sweets on a silver platter.*
*A red lantern, hanging overhead.*

**1**
I mean even if it's not – the food on the plane was ugh –
~~~~~

2 *(to 1)*
This is a -- not a savvy move -- traveling-wise --

Jinn
Eat, my friends. Eat. These only.

2
How much?

Jinn
Twenty.

1
That's, like,
_____

2
Twenty? And twenty?

Jinn
(One sweet) Twenty.
(The other) Twenty.
No problem.

2
It's like seven and a half to a dollar?

1
So fifteen is two dollars. So.

2
It just seems like a lot for, like we won't get respect if we don't --

1
Five dollars, bro. Costs five dollars.

2
~~~~~~

1 gives Jinn some money.

Jinn
Eat.

They taste.
Nothing in the history of humanity has been more delicious.
They look at one another in astonishment. Then devour them.
~~~~~~

Jinn
You like?
These are last ones.

1
This is very sad.

2
Sad, sadly, yes.

Jinn
Last. Gone. Here, no more.

1
Ever?

Jinn
Gone. The thing, sweet, the --

Jinn makes a buzzing sound, twitches his fingers about.

1
Bees!

2
Honey!

Jinn
Yes, yes. There is less now. Price is high.

1
Global warming. Killing them.

Jinn
And this very hard, make. Price is high. Finish.

2
Yes. Yes.

Jinn
Unless more money here. Then, make more.

2 *(to Jinn)*
||||||||||||||||
Okay, thank you. I'm glad we got to buy. We can find riad now, thank you, thank you.

1 *(to Jinn)*
How much money? To make one more batch of --

2 *(to 1)*
Bro --

Jinn
I do not ask for --

2 *(to Jinn)*
I'm sorry we are very tired --

1 *(to 2)*
It's not your money to give --

2 *(to 1)*
You told me to navigate, right, you --

Jinn
I do not ask money, friends --

1 *(to 2)*
I wanna help --

2 *(to Jinn)*
We just need to rest, that is all --

1 *(to 2)*
You need to rest, so go rest, but don't speak for --

Jinn
You come to my home? Have tea?

Silence.

Jinn
I only ask friendship.

1
~~~~

2
~~~~

1
~~~~
If you – showed us to riad – you would be true friend!

*Jinn nods.*
*Then guides them a few steps away.*
*They're now at the riad.*

**Jinn**
Dar Zouhour. Here.

**1**
Thank you so incredibly much.

**Jinn** *(as in "you're welcome")*
Welcome.
We are open to you.

*He shakes 1 and 2's hand, patting his heart with his hand twice after each shake.*
*Then, he is gone.*
*They are now in the riad. A more spacious square light.*

**1**
You okay?

**2**
I'll pay you back, you know.
For the ticket and for the
All this
When I find a job and
||||||||||

**1**
Those cookie things –
They were the most --

**2**
Holy fucking --

**1**
Best thing I've --

**2**
I almost fell on my --

**1**
There are no words ---

**2**
Flaky then sticky then --

**1**
Some sort of nut thing but like --

**2**
Just -- just --

**1**
Divine.

**2**
_____
I forgot to ask what it was called.
And his garment. What's the name of that.

**1**
What a great guy.

**2**
I know the name.

**1**
The hospitality in this place.

**2**
I think it's called a *djellabah*, lemme --

*2 takes out his cell phone.*

**1**
I can tell you're scared. About something.

**2**
||||||||||||||
The wireless is kinda -- spotty -- would be great to know the name --

**1**
Definitely a *djellabah*.

**2**
Definitely?

**1**
It was in the guidebook.

**2**
The one you lost?

**1**
The one *you* lost. It was in a little side-box.

**2**
Was there a picture?

**1**
It’s a tunic thing, hoodless, long --

**2**
That’s not it. His had a hood. You didn’t see?

**1**
___
No. I was --

**2**
Yeah.

**1**
Too busy trying to convince you that he was a human being --

**2**
Yeah. A hood. You didn't notice. Yeah.
*(re: the phone)* Zero bars now. Nada.
Shit.

**1**
Are you scared?

**2**

~~
I really don't wanna be on my phone. On this trip. Remind me not to.

**1**
I bet you're dehydrated.

*1 reaches for his Steri-Pen.*

**2**
I'm starving.

*1 tosses a bag of buffalo jerky to 2. Drinks from the Nalgene.*

**2**
Let's go find a meal.

**1**
~~~~
Out in the.

2
Yeah.

1
The dark, and the MC Escher streets.

2
You scared?

1
Let's just eat jerky until we're full enough to sleep. Early start tomorrow.

2
Are you so scared?

1
I'm --
~~~~

2
Scared, scared, scared. Look at all your scaredness, pouring outta you, covering all your brave rip-stop clothing, so so scared, you scaredy scaredy --

1
I feel like you're about to hurt yourself.
I came here with you because if I didn't, and I get a call a month from now that you've –
I would never be able to live with myself.
Does that scare me? Is that what you're asking?

2
~~
~~~
~~~~
~~~~~
~

*1 tears into the jerky. Eats ravenously. Silence.*

**1**
It's amazing. That sweet shop owner, he didn't even know you, but he wanted to help you.
Man, this is the best country –

**2**
That wasn't his shop.

**1**
Um.

**2**
He was a tout, he gets a cut of the sales, that's why he stands on the corner and hustles –

**1**
But he was the only one at the stall.
Right?
And he knew about *making* the stuff, with the honey.
Right?
So.

**2**
____
Maybe.

**1**
That's why I wanted to give him –

**2**
Don't know for sure.
~~~~~

1
Don't feel bad. It's been a while since you've traveled. You'll --

2
Those sweets.
They’re called – something –

2 reaches for his phone.

1
No phone, bro. Right?

2 doesn't pick up the phone.
1 closes his eyes.

1
You asked me to remind you.
~~~
Am I
helping?
At all?

*1 falls asleep.*
*2 doesn't.*
~~~