

Beer in the Snooker Club
By Waguih Ghali
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CHARACTERS

Ram – male, Egyptian Copt, father is dead, in love with Edna, friends with Font and Vincent, 4 yrs in London, speaks English and French better than Arabic?
Edna Salva – wealthy Jewess, identifies as Egyptian (p. 37) with the fellah (p. 53)
Corrollos – Egyptian Copt, Ram's family servant for 25 years
Didi Nackla – female, Ram met in London, but lives in Egypt now

TIMELINE

1952 - Egyptian Revolution – response to British occupying Suez Canal Zone. Nasser one of the leaders.
1956 – Suez War

PLOT

Part I – Present, Day 1

Ram's Aunt Nouni is giving away parcels of land. Ram asks to borrow 1,000 pounds. She says no. Ram goes to Groppi's to drink whiskey. Omar, Jameel, Yehia, Fawzi and Ismail show up.

Flashback – Font selling cucumbers. Ram and Jameel get him off the streets. Jameel hires him to work in the snooker club.

Ram goes to the snooker club. Never pays the bills. Has "no job" or income. Drink "Bass" with Font. (From home) Ram calls Assam the Turk who is at Nackla Pasha's. His mother talks to him about the call.

Ram sleeps until 5pm then goes to Groppi's. Sees Jameel and Yehia, borrows Yehia's car.

Story – Font got drunk today, hit the Armenian Arevian with a snooker stick.

Ram goes to Font's place, sees Edna with a scar.

All go to the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

Ram and Edna spend the night in Edna's place.

Part II – 6 years ago

Aunt has a reception for her son Mounir, back from America. Ram and Mounir argue, coming to blows.

Ram starts walking home. Edna gives her his mother's car keys, asks him to drive her home.

Ram gets wine from his flat in Zamlek, takes Edna to the hospital to visit Font who was wounded at Suez.

Flashback – Roots of Font and Ram's friendship – both bookworms, inc politics – and Ram becoming lovers with Edna.

Edna proposes taking Ram and Font to England at her expense. Visa problems.

In London R & F go to Dr Dungate to help with long-term visa. Mrs Ward on the bus invites them for tea.

Flashback – At university Ram helped kill Zaki Bey

Dungates' cousin raped and murdered by Egyptians in Suez. Font slept with Jean but fancies Brenda.

R & F enroll in a polytechnics course and get a long-term visa.

Saturday R & F & Edna go to Mrs. Ward's home to meet her son Steve and his girlfriend Shirley.

All go to a pub. Ram meets Vincent, Shirley's brother, Mrs. War leaves, Ram makes moves on Shirley.

Steve is provoked into calling Egyptians "wogs" and blaming Jews for the world's troubles.

Steve leaves. Rest pick up Brenda and go dancing.

Ram walks Brenda home. Steve punches Ram. Meets Shirley's Irish stepdad Paddy.
Spends night at Brenda's home. Shirley visits in the middle of the night.
Next morning Ram learns from Edna about her Egyptian fellah childhood.
Ram finds a cheap room in Battersea. Edna leaves England, but leaves "adequate means of support."
Future sight – Didi Nackla moves to London, stays with R & F for eight months.

Part III – present, Day 2

Ram returned car to Yehia then goes home, talks to his mother and Corrollos.
Ram goes to the club – presumably Gezira Sporting Club – converses with the "bloods" -right term?
Flashback – Ram lost his virginity to Lady Tannely.
Ram Bey is invited to play bridge for money, lent 5 pounds by Hassan, but not to partner with Mounir.
Sue and Ram make out like bandits. Caroline frustrated with Moony.
Jack, C's husband and S's brother, shows up. Jack is an American on a fact-finding mission.
Ram borrows a bathing suit for Sue, nudges Mounir into the pool then runs away.
Ram goes to the snooker club, plays with Armenian Doromian who cheats so Ram cheats.
Ram tells Font that he does have a job, but then won't reveal any more. – collect prison photos.
Ram experiences terror when he thinks the police are knocking at the snooker club door.
Jameel and Fawzi arrive with 3 Greek prostitutes.
Ram's mother telephone summoning him home to see aunt and uncle. Mounir in pool "yesterday"?

Part IV – present, Day 2 (or 3?) and 3

Under questioning by uncle Pasha, Ram complains of fever – his mother calls it typhoid – Copt sickness.
Family pressures Ram to join the army and get married. Ram tries to distract with Umm Kulthum.
Ram goes to his room, pretends to be asleep when his uncle comes 2 hours later to go out on the town.
Next a.m. Ram has a hangover, tells his mother Didi Nackla, Mounir's fiancée, lived with him in London.
Dr Hamza, Jameel's dad and Ram's employer, calls. Ram spread photos, and Dr Hamza cuts off their ties.

Part V – present, Day 3 and 4

Ram visits Edna, who cut her hair, signifying that she and Ram were parting forever. She is married.
Flashback – After Font and Edna left England before Suez War, Ram joined the Communist Party.
From a bar Ram calls Mounir's place to ask if Caroline is there – No.
Ram wanders around, goes to Didi Nackla's house and knocks but declines to gamble with the crowds.
Ram gossips with Didi's blind mother, making her laugh, then sees book-binding Didi, sleeps, wakes.
Flashback – Ram living with Paddy after Font and Edna go back to Egypt. Tales of racing dogs.
Ram kicked out of England, hit policeman during Suez War, worked in Germany for a while.
Ram discusses concentration camps with Didi, screams at her perfect, unaware life, sleeps with her.
Next day Ram tells his mother he and Didi are getting married.
Ram meets his aunt where she is planning M & D's wedding. She tries to bribe him to go to England.
Before marrying Didi makes Ram promise to give up politics. He then makes a gambling date at Groppi's.

Compiled by Celeste, January 2023