

When Cliches Are Okay
by Djamila Mostefai

POLICE REPORT

March 2022

ASSOCIATED PERSONS

TYPE	Name (Last, First, Middle, Title)	Street Name City, State, Zip	Res. Phone Cell. Phone
PERSON REPORTING	Amila	Boucherville, Qc, J4B 8R1	+1 514- 123-4567
PERSON INTERVIEWED	Amila	-	-
DEFENDANT	Mother of plaintiff	-	450-333- 444
SUSPECT	Amila (The Cold)	-	
DEFENDANT'S LAWYER	-	-	-

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW OF DJAMILA MOSTEFAI

POLICE

How did you meet?

AMILA

My mother introduced us, she thought I'd do well to learn from her. My dad did like her but then again, he wasn't around all that much.

POLICE

Were any other crimes committed?

AMILA

Yes, she stole a lot.

POLICE

Can you describe your relationship with the aggressor?

AMILA

Cold, cold, cold and cold. She followed me everywhere.

It had always been cold, but back then, it was even colder. Canada is a notoriously cold country, especially in Quebec. I wasn't born here, but one adapts to the kisses of crisp air on soft cheeks after 13 years. I'd sometimes even spare a few laughs for ice skating. The way snowflakes loved to hug my curls was annoying, but kind of cute. Arguing with my mom about appropriate clothing for going out was a daily ritual, although her concern for warmth and personal definition of a slut would often gang up on my fashion sense. Still, similarly to clingy family friends you are forced to befriend, those who border the limits of friendly touchiness, I learned to tolerate the cold for a cute outfit or a good run.

Then, The Cold mistook my casual socializing for more. Forget family friend, she fell in love with me. It was an abusive relationship. I could feel her scraping my bones until they became as brittle as branches. No matter the number of shirts, zip-ups and hoodies I barricaded myself with, she'd find some perverse way to invade my thin flesh.

Going to the bathroom was a horrifyingly nerve-racking race against The Cold. Taking off the leggings underneath my sweatpants allowed her chillingly delicate hands to travel further down my spine. Her razor-like nails cut through my skin like fresh meat, except I was rotten. I had become frangible, like autumn leaves succumbing to a whisper of winter's kindest wind. I tried to stop her but it was too late, I had let her win too many times. There was no point in trying.

POLICE

Were you forced to interact with the aggressor?

AMILA

At first, yes.

POLICE

Can you elaborate on that?

AMILA

Everyone told me to cover up and I would always refuse. Dresses make for a pretty waist. I don't even care about waists. It's The Cold, she was in my bones.

DEFENDANT'S LAWYER

Thank you for sharing. Just to get one thing clear though- wouldn't the aggressor be the defendant?

AMILA

Yes.

DEFENDANT'S LAWYER

Did you not identify your mother as the aggressor?

AMILA

...

POLICE

With this information, we're afraid the prosecution doesn't have much of a case.

AMILA

My mother made us share a room!

DEFENDANT'S LAWYER

Didn't you choose to stay in contact with the aggressor? Even when your mother tried to separate you?

‘*Yimma*¹, can I ask you some questions about Amazigh culture?’

¹ Arabic (Algerian dialect) word for “mom”

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *Good morning, ladies and gents, hope you enjoyed this beautiful day because tonight we are seeing your favorite rivals, yup you guessed it: it is Impulsive and emotionally unstable mother facing off detached and emotionally isolated Father!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 2 (Bill): *We are seeing these iconic enemies yet again and while their techniques have become quite the routine, the epic violence of their duels never seems to get old! Does it Will?*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *Absolutely not, Bill!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 2 (Bill): *Without further a due, let's take a look at our hothead mama as she takes the lead and opens the game:*

'In Setif, where I am from, when something really bad or- how do I say- something kbil²- something important or big happened, they would mark their face forever. I think we're supposed to use tattoos to cast out bad energies too! Like jinns³!'

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *Ah and there she goes with her usual weakness!*

'But I really don't know much on this! Don't quote me!'

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *You know Bill, it is really sad that she does that every time! She could be a much better player.*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 2 (Bill): *I have to agree, Will, she is a strong player and her attacks truly are ruthless but the hesitation in her movements always slows her down! Her potential unfortunately remains unfulfilled.*

² Arabic (Algerian dialect) word meaning "of great size"

³ Arabic word designating a spirit or a demon

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *And here comes the broken inner child with his countermove, watch out mama!*

‘Those are just popular beliefs. The real story is about the evil eye protection: if you have something special, people will compliment you, but their energy of jealousy will follow you and ruin your goods. That’s why they mark things for protection. There’s ariacha too. It’s an earring for children whose family suffered loss. It’s in gold, even if Islam ‘prohibits’ it and sexism makes it unconventional- you know how they are- to cast out bad spell

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *This ambush was executed very nicely!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 2 (Bill): *Ah, here comes his wife, impulsive as ever! The referee always makes me laugh when these two are facing off! There’s no point buddy, Haha!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *I see you’ve noticed too Bill. Look at this poor little girl trying to separate these beasts... Honey, give up already!*

‘Ahmed, I don’t care if you want to be white, leave her teacher out of this!’

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *OH, AND TOUCHDOWN ON THE INSECURITIES!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 2 (Bill): *I would not expect anything less from this mama! She does have a history of being much more upfront with her attacks!*

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *Likewise, Ahmed retaliates with subtle strikes at her vocabulary.*

‘Amazigh people also use crates and colors to illustrate survival through a complicated history of colonialism and genocide. Your mother can’t tell you that.’

Examples karma (surface level)

	Examples	Results
Bad	To oppress To pollute Cheating	To live in ignorance To live in an unhealthy world To lose your sense of self
Good	To compliment Choosing what is moral over what is easy	To make meaningful connections To strengthen your soul

I got lost in LaSalle. I had planned everything. I was supposed to attend a track practice to see if the team was the right fit for me. That plan had been carrying all the faith I had left; every bleak morning I had to miss school due to physical exhaustion and every muscle tearing step taken on my way to the shower, where frost would meet my bones. Witnessing my teenage years slip away was fine as long as I could run with a team. I had a plan for a normal, healthy routine. Looking back on how heavy my hopes weighed, no wonder my (very simple) plan fell apart. Regardless, I took a wrong turn and rain followed.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1: *We are nearing the end people, I sure hope the commercial break gave you time to catch your breath, because it is about to get even more heated here. Yes,*

we are back on air and our ruthless players are now about to wrestle for the final prize of the season: Blame!

Calling my mother resulted in screams and tension, as it always did, except this time, I lashed out right back. My usual nonchalant façade had lost its wooden foundations⁴. Rightfully disturbed, my mother, who was unable to drive at the time, texted my father.

The raindrops were throwing soft punches at my skin. While waiting, I did the only thing I could do. The one thing no one, no illness, temperature or type of nutrient deficiency, had ever taken away from me. I ran. That way, the frigid air would have to bend to my heavy panting, my sweat would welcome the rain and my overall annoyance would serve as secondhand fuel.

My dad parked his car and I casually greeted his simultaneously pitiful and apologetic face. Although, ‘casually’ implies that I was usually ‘casual’ with him, which was far from the case. Until that evening, our conversations had been colder than my internal temperature, and that’s saying something. Awkward *wikihow*-like questions tainted with guilt and replies whose few words struggled to hide the abandon of any hope of a decent father-daughter relationship summed up our interactions. The beginning of the ride home was fairly representative of it.

‘You know, at your age, I had a thing like yours’ He said, interrupting my epic narration of the raindrops's race on the car window.

At that point, I was faced with multiple options.

⁴ Wood brittles in Cold weather

A) Respond with my beloved ‘huh’s and my ‘dang’s to subtly reject his obvious attempt at building something,

B) Witness my favorite raindrop reach the finish line,

C) Experiment!

At that point, I had nothing else to lose. I had dropped off my heavy pride somewhere along the way to Lasalle. It was too much to carry (I had starved off my muscle mass). Option C seemed fine.

My father was surprised and probably grateful for any higher power out there that I was asking him to elaborate past his opening line. He read his life out as if he had been carrying a thoroughly annotated draft of this story around for years. After dusting it off, I learned more about my father in roughly 30 minutes than I did in my entire life, he parked in front of my mother’s house. We sat with our old friend, Silence again. It was oddly comforting, as if the trio was meeting after years of growth.

‘Papa, do you believe in karma?’

He threw his head back on the car seat with a sigh which seemed to carry all the forgiveness he had left. (I often throw my head back and sigh too.)

‘Not at all’

‘Why’

‘Horrible people do horrible things and their life goes on just fine’

Wait. I don’t like debating topics I’m not completely familiar with.

Notes (observations and further questioning) on karma:

- To the West, karma simply contextualizes what we, as humans, deem 'good' or 'bad'. Foolishly, we seek logic in everything. This is inaccurate.
- First, I must define the concept of oneness. The true concept of karma derives from the consistent theme of oneness with the universe in many philosophies and religions. This universe is a giant and we are its fingers. Or it is a plant and we are its leaves. Or it is a big bang and we are all bits of the same stars; empty atoms only observable through energetic interaction, which implies universal oneness. Whatever your rational mind chooses to believe, it is through others that we are.
- There exist multiple types of identities, all defined by different standards and factors. We are all part of it. In this melting pot, it is normal for events to happen with no specific reason. I enjoy picturing us as highways making up a huge map (the universe). Accidents are bound to happen in all this traffic.
- Unfair things will happen. Events that have nothing to do with the individual on the receiving end.
- A wounded person taking their pain out on an innocent victim is a great example of this.

- The Sanskrit definition of "karma" means "action" not "fate". In Buddhism, this implies that karma does not guarantee the future. All it signifies is that one can change the course of their life through actions, thoughts, words and deeds. We create karma every minute of every day. This can start with modifying your perspective or putting a stop to self-destructive patterns.
- Nonetheless, at its core, karma is about oneness with the universe. To be asked a question means that you have to answer that question, and the way you answer impacts the other, but yourself as well. You get to choose your impact, and in doing so, you are playing an active part in your destiny.
- To elaborate, whatever you decide to spread comes back to you, this can be explained by quantum physics and atomic energy for the scientists, or by psychology and the reflection of our subconscious thoughts and feelings for therapists. Sociologists will say that being surrounded by hate and negativity affects your brain. Philosophers will use a metaphor about a farmer reaping what was sown while the spirituals might seek a higher approach. The results remain the same; in one way or another, everything comes back to you.
- Whatever level you choose to identify with, it all comes down to the same choice. Either wake up and decide that your father's mistakes, which we now

know aren't really related to you (although granted, unfair) will take your focus away from other things you love, or let go.

We often get the the true meaning of karma wrong because of two reasons :

- a) It is easier to find logic in the simplified concepts of morality of the West.
 - Through a preconceived version of "good" or "bad", we often seek blame and reason for events and such which are out of our control.
- b) The misguided notion that we have absolutely no power against destiny.
 - When it comes to pain, we seek someone to blame, subconsciously looking for a justification, something that will ease our burdens.

The link between karma and Identity

- In Hinduism, every act (karma) attracts something analogous to dust which clings to the jiva (any entity with a life force) and weighs it down. So, to evolve and grow, it is necessary to scrub off the old dust. Identity is expendable. Like everything else in this universe, we constantly change.

I baptized my father, a bad person in primary school. I have never seen myself as a judge of morality; I've hurt plenty and I have always believed humans to be capable of change. However, in a classroom where 8-year-olds were given sad emoji faces for every misstep, it was only

natural for me to attribute my dad at least a hundred of them. One for every time he made my mother cry and one for every time, she made me cry because he made her cry.

My teacher never let me bring home those sad emoji faces. He received a grand total of 0 emoji faces. Meanwhile, I accumulated many angry emoji faces.

More observations on karma (Taoism)

- The name of the man who created Taoism means 'the old boy'. Legend says he was born with a long beard because only the history of an old man could give him this knowledge. Elders have seen the big picture.
- When he said "Who am I ultimately behind everything", he was referring to the material realm, which juxtaposes the Tao. This includes the 'ego', meaning that one's actions aren't necessarily a reflection of their true identity, or a reflection on the elements affected by said actions.
- The definition of Tao is not fixed because there is no A-B-C way of Tao, the ways of life and the ways of being. The concepts of 'good' and 'bad', or 'success' and 'failure', for instance, are of the 'ego'. The Tao is what makes us all the same (oneness). Things aren't anything, they simply are.

	Examples	Results
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Good	To let go	To feel eternal contentment with lanterns priced 1.25\$ at Dollarama (they go up really high) and reggae in the morning (no matter how early).
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It is sadistically hilarious that my father's pride is partly fueled by his high IQ. His natural genius allowed him to skip over 2 grades of primary school. Metaphor aside, he genuinely was never given enough sad emoji faces.

Every word of those stories I always avoided were the missing pieces of a puzzle I had been childishly frustrated with my entire life (I am a sore loser). I had been trying to fit 'pettiness' in a sudoku.

In that moment, I felt the weight I had been trying to starve off of my veteran of a heart finally shed. When I got out of the car, my spine hurt a little less and my lungs felt lighter on my ribs.

My posture had changed. I never knew how tall I truly was until then.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR 1 (Will): *This is a first in the history of Intergenerational Trauma,
Bill! They are forfeiting! The crowd is going wild!*

1.EXT. AMILA'S ROOM-NIGHT

At the end of this movie featuring the leading mental disorder in teenage girls, the most common racial stereotype of fathers in pop culture and one of the oldest philosophical concepts of our world, the credits roll down on the final scene while the song 'Mama said' by the Shirelles starts playing.

CUT TO:

Amila is crying to her mother about her stupid ex and her mother starts ranting about her even more stupid husband, and it's all so cliché.

Eh, at least it wasn't cold.

MUSIC CUE: 'Mama said there'll be days like this, there'll be days like this, Mama said (...)'

An upcoming sequel with Oscar-nominated Health and Inner Peace in the cast is currently being discussed amongst the director and executive producers.

Works Cited

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