Wissam

Ziad

Yumna

**LEVEL UP!**

# LEBANESE ARABIC

## STORIES
### BOOK 1

A1 · A2 · B1 · B2

# Level Up!
# Lebanese Arabic
# Stories
## Book 1

**lingualism**

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# Table of Contents

# Introduction

Welcome to "Level Up!", a unique approach to reading in Lebanese Arabic. This series is designed specifically for adult learners, offering culturally authentic stories that explore Lebanese life, history, and traditions. Each book in the series contains six original stories, with every story presented in four versions corresponding to CEFR levels A1 through B2.

The innovative format of "Level Up!" emerged from learner feedback on our "One Thousand and One Nights" series, where readers who purchased both elementary and intermediate books found that reading the elementary version helped them build confidence and skills to tackle the intermediate version. This led us to develop a new approach: presenting all four versions of each story together, allowing learners to experience how complexity builds naturally while maintaining the same core narrative.

Why is this approach effective? When you read the A1 version of a story first, regardless of your current level, you build a strong foundation of basic vocabulary and story comprehension. As you progress through the versions, you'll recognize familiar elements while encountering new vocabulary and more complex structures gradually rather than feeling overwhelmed by them all at once.

Each story in this collection has been carefully crafted to reflect authentic Lebanese experiences and perspectives. From modern life in Beirut to historical backdrops like the French Mandate, these stories provide not just language practice but also deep cultural insights. The adult-oriented themes ensure that the content remains engaging and relevant to mature learners.

Throughout the book, you'll find helpful features to support your learning journey. Before each story group, an Introduction provides cultural context, followed by Key Vocabulary that you'll encounter across the different versions. Every story has also been recorded by a native Lebanese voice artist, with slower, clearer pronunciation for A1/A2 versions and more natural pacing for B1/B2.

# How to Use This Book

The unique format of "Level Up!" has been carefully designed to support your learning journey. Here's how to make the most of its features:

### Story Versions and Layout

Each story appears in four versions, with layouts specifically designed for different learning needs. All versions include voweling marks (tashkeel) on the Arabic text, using a simplified system that omits the fatha where it can be easily predicted, reducing visual clutter while maintaining readability.

### A1 Version:

- o Three-column format (Arabic script, phonemic transcription, English translation)
- o The phonemic transcription helps beginners connect sounds to script
- o Short, simple sentences with basic vocabulary

### A2 Version:

- o Two-column format (Arabic and English only)
- o Phonemic transcription is removed to encourage direct reading of Arabic
- o Slightly longer sentences with expanded vocabulary

### B1 Version:

- o Single-column format with English following each paragraph
- o More complex sentence structures
- o Quick reference to translation while maintaining focus on Arabic

**B2 Version:**

- o   Arabic text with English on following page

- o   Most complex structures and vocabulary

- o   Translation placement encourages independent
     reading

## Reading Strategy

We recommend starting with the A1 version of each story, regardless
of your current level. This approach helps you:

- o   Build confidence with the basic narrative

- o   Establish core vocabulary

- o   Recognize story elements that will appear in higher levels

- o   Progress naturally to more complex versions when ready

## Vocabulary and Cultural Notes

- o   Before each story group, you'll find:

- o   An Introduction providing cultural context

- o   Key Vocabulary listing important words and
     expressions

- o   These sections help prepare you for all versions of the
     story

## Audio Recordings

Each version has been recorded by a native Lebanese voice artist:

- o   A1/A2 recordings are slower and clearer, with appropriate
     pauses

- o   B1/B2 recordings maintain clarity while using more natural
     pacing

- o   Use recordings to practice listening comprehension and
     pronunciation

o   Listen while reading to reinforce learning

Remember, the goal is to read for pleasure and understanding. Don't feel pressured to move to a higher level version until you're comfortable. Each version offers valuable learning opportunities, and the familiar content helps you focus on new language features as they're introduced.

**Visit www.lingualism.com/audio, where you can find the free accompanying audio to download or stream (at variable playback rates).**

# البيْت الْمُشترك

## The Shared House



In a time when Lebanese families are increasingly scattered across continents, three cousins inherit their سِتّ *sitt* (grandmother)'s بيْت عتيق *bēt 3atī?* (traditional house) in جْبيْل *jbayl* (Byblos). Through weekly meetings on Zoom and shared ذِكْرَيات *zikrayēt* (memories), they discover that their grandmother's تُراث *turās* (heritage) – from her handwritten وَصْفات *waṣfēt* (recipes) to her beloved شجْرِةْ التّين *šájrit ittīn* (fig tree) - might hold the key to keeping their family connected across oceans. Can they transform this silent house into a place that bridges past and present, while preserving its soul for future generations?

# Key Vocabulary

- بالْكوْن (*balkōn*) – balcony

- برّا (*bárra*) – abroad

- بيْت ضْيافِة (*bēt ḍyāfi*) – guesthouse

- تْرْويقة (*tarwīʔa*) – breakfast

- تِصْليح (*tiṣlīḥ*) – repair

- جْذور (*jzūr*) – roots

- جْنَيْنِة (*jnáyni*) – garden

- حنين (*ḥanīn*) – nostalgia

- سِتّ (*sitt*) – grandmother

- ضْيوف (*ḍyūf*) – guests

- عَيْلِة (*3áyli*)– family

- مشْروع (*mašrū3*) – project

- مهْجر (*máhjar*) – diaspora

- مونِة (*mūni*) – preserved food

- يَوْمِيّات (*yawmiyyēt*) – diary

| The Shared House | -lbēt ilmúštarak | البيْت المُشترك |
|---|---|---|
| Sitt (Grandma) Nada left a big house in Byblos. The house became her grandchildren's. | *sitt náda tárakit bēt kbīr bi-jbēl. -lbēt ṣār la-wlēd wlēda.* | سِتّ ندى تركِت بيْت كْبير بِجْبيْل. البيْت صار لَوْلاد وْلادا. |
| Wissam lives in Lebanon. Yumna lives in America. Ziad lives in Abu Dhabi. | *wisām 3āyiš bi-libnēn. yúmna 3āyši bi-ʔamērka. ziyād 3āyiš bi-ʔábu ҳábi.* | وِسام عايِش بِلِبْنان. يُمْنى عايْشِة بِأميْرْكا. زِياد عايِش بِأبو ظبي. |
| Every Friday, they talk together on the computer. They talk about the house. | *kill júm3a, byíḥku ma3 ba3ḍ 3a -lkōmbyūtir. byíḥku 3an ilbēt.* | كِلّ جُمْعة، بيْحْكوا مع بعْض عَ الكوْمْبيوتِر. بيْحْكوا عن البيْت. |
| Wissam said, "The house is old and needs repair." | *wisām ʔāl: "-lbēt ʔadīm u báddu tiҫlīḥ.* | وِسام قال: "البيْت قديم وبِدّو تِصْليح. |
| Yumna said, "We won't sell it. This is our grandmother's house!" | *yúmna ʔālit: "ma baddna nbī3u. háyda bēt síttna!"* | يُمْنى قالِت: "ما بِدّنا نْبيعو. هَيْدا بيْت سِتْنا!" |

| Ziad said, "Let's make it a guesthouse." | *ziyād ʔāl: "xallīna ná3imlu bēt dyāfi."* | زِياد قال: "خلّينا نعِمْلو بيْت ضْيافِة." |
|---|---|---|
| They fixed the house together. Wissam supervised the work. Yumna chose the furniture. Ziad made a plan for the project. | *ṣállaḥu -lbēt sáwa. wisām šáraf 3ála -ššíyil. yúmna xtārit ilʔasēs. ziyād 3ímil xíṭṭa la-lmašrū3.* | صلّحو البيْت سَوا. وِسام شرف على الشِّغِل. يُمْنى خْتارِت الأَثاث. زِياد عِمِل خِطّة للْمشْروع. |
| Now the house is beautiful. There are guests every day. They drink coffee under the fig tree. | *hállaʔ ilbēt ṣār ḥílu. fī dyūf kill yōm. byíšrabu ʔáhwi táḥit šájrit ittīn.* | هلّأ البيْت صار حِلو. في ضْيوف كِلّ يوْم. بيِشْربوا قهْوِة تحِت شجْرِةْ التّين. |
| Most importantly, the family talks to each other every week. | *w-ilʔahámm, -l3áyli ṣārit tíḥki ma3 bá3da kill ʔusbū3.* | والأهمّ، العَيْلة صارِت تِحْكي مع بعْضا كِلّ أُسْبوع. |

| The Shared House | البيْت المُشْترك |
|---|---|
| "The house is big, and the view is beautiful, but no one can live in it now." | "البيْت كْبير، والمنْظر حِلو، بسّ ما في يِسْكُن حدا هلّأ." |
| Wissam is explaining to his cousins over Zoom. He's the only one in Lebanon, looking at their grandmother's house in Byblos. | وِسام عم يِشْرح لوْلاد عمّو عبِر تِطْبيق زوم. هُوِّ الوَحيد يَلّي بِلِبْنان، وعم يِتْطلّع على بيْت سِتُّن بِجْبيْل. |
| Yumna, who lives in Michigan, is taking notes. "How's the main bedroom?" | يُمْنى، يَلّي عايْشِة بْميشيغان، عم تِكْتُب مُلاحظات. "كيف أوْضِةْ النّوْم الرّئيسية؟" |
| "There are three bedrooms, all with problems. The roof needs repair, and the electricity is old." | "في تْلات أُوَض نوْم، كِلُّن فيْن مشاكِل. السّقِف بدّو تِصْليح، والكهْربا قديمِة." |
| Ziad, their cousin who lives in Abu Dhabi, asked, "What are we going to do with it?" | زِياد، اِبْن عمُّن يَلّي عايِش بْأبو ظبي، سأل: "شو رح نعْمُل فيه؟" |
| Their grandmother Nada's house became theirs after she passed away. She was the last person to live in it. | بيْت سِتُّن ندى صار مِلْكُن بعِد ما تْوَفِّت. هيِّ كانِت آخِر حدا ساكِن فيه. |

| | |
|---|---|
| "I have an idea," said Yumna. "Why don't we fix it and make it a guesthouse?" | "عِنْدي فِكْرة،" قالِت يُمْنى. "لَيْش ما مِنْصلْحو ومْنعِمْلو بَيْت ضْيافِة؟" |
| "But who will manage it?" asked Ziad. | "بَسّ مين رح يْديرو؟" سأل زِياد. |
| "I'm here," said Wissam. "I can monitor it and check its work." | "أنا هوْن،" قال وِسام. "فيِّي راقْبو وشوف شِغْلو." |
| They decided to share the expenses. Ziad pays for the roof repair, Yumna takes care of decoration, and Wissam supervises the work. | قرّروا يِتْشاركوا المصاريف. زِياد بْيِدْفع تِصْليح السّقف، يُمْنى بْتِهْتمّ بِالدّيكوْر، ووِسام بْيِشْرِف على الشِّغِل. |
| Every Friday, they have a Zoom meeting. Wissam photographs the house and shows them what's happening. | كِلّ يوْم جُمْعة، بْيعمْلوا إجْتِماع عَ الزّووم. وِسام بيصوِّر البيْت وبيفرْجيْن شو عم بيصير. |
| "Look what I found!" said Wissam on Friday. He lifted an old box. "This is Sitt Nada's box. It has old photos and antique things." | "شوفوا شو لْقيت!" قال وِسام يوْم الجُمْعة. شال صنْدوق قديم. "هَيْدا صنْدوق سِتّ ندى. في صُوَر قديمِة وإشْيا عتيقة." |
| "You know what?" said Yumna. "This house brought us together again. We don't see each other much, but now we talk every week!" | "بْتِعِرْفوا؟" قالِت يُمْنى. "هَيْدا البيْت جمعْنا مِن جْديد. نِحْنا ما مِنْشوف بعْض كْتير، بَسّ هلّأ عم نِحْكي كِلّ أُسْبوع!" |

# البيْت المُشترك

## The Shared House

"مُسْتحيل نْبيعو! هَيْدا بيْت سِتِّي!"

"Impossible to sell it! This is my grandmother's house!"

صوْت يُمْنى كان واضِح عبر الزّومر، مع إنّا بِبَيْتا بِميشيغان، آلاف الكيلومِتْرات بْعيدِة عن لِبْنان.

Yumna's voice was clear over Zoom, even though she was at her home in Michigan, thousands of kilometers away from Lebanon.

"بسّ يا يُمْنى،" قال زِياد مِن أبو ظبي، "البيْت بدّو مصاري كْتير. السّقف، الكهْربا، السّنْغرية... كِلّو خِرْبان."

"But Yumna," said Ziad from Abu Dhabi, "the house needs a lot of money. The roof, electricity, plumbing... everything's broken."

وِسام، يَلّي كان واقِف بِبيْت سِتُّن ندى بِجْبيْل، فتح الكاميرا على المطْبخ القديم. "شوفوا... البْلاط الأزْرق يَلّي سِتّ ندى كانِت تْحِبّو بعْدو مَوْجود. والطّاوْلة يَلّي كِنّا نِتْرَوّق عْلَيا كِلّ صيْف..."

Wissam, who was standing in their grandmother Nada's house in Byblos, turned the camera to the old kitchen. "Look... the blue tiles that Sitt Nada loved are still here. And the table where we had breakfast every summer..."

سكتوا تْلاتِتْن. كِلّ واحد عم يِتْذكّر صيْفِيّات مِخْتِلْفِة بِبيْت سِتُّن. يُمْنى تْذكّرِت ريحِةْ القهْوِة الصُّبْح. زِياد تْذكّر اللّيالي يَلّي كانوا يِلْعبوا فِيا

وَرق على البالْكوْن. ووِسام تْذكّر سِتّ ندى هِيّ وعم تْعلِّمُن يعِمْلوا مْربّى التّين.

All three fell silent. Each one remembering different summers in their grandmother's house. Yumna remembered the smell of morning coffee. Ziad remembered the nights they played cards on the balcony. And Wissam remembered Sitt Nada teaching them how to make fig jam.

"عِنْدي فِكْرة،" قالِت يُمْنى. "لِيْش ما مِنْحَوْلوا لبيْت ضْيافِة؟ نْصلّحو ونْخلّي النّاس تْعيش نفْس الجّوّ يَلّي عِشْنا."

"I have an idea," said Yumna. "Why don't we turn it into a guesthouse? We'll fix it and let people experience the same atmosphere we lived in."

"فِكْرة حِلْوِة،" قال وِسام. "بسّ مين رح يْدير المشْروع؟"

"Nice idea," said Wissam. "But who will manage the project?"

"كلّنا!" قالِت يُمْنى بحماس. "إنْتَ بْتِشْرِف على الشِّغِل لِأنَّك بِلِبْنان. أنا بْصمِّم الدّيكوْر وبعْمِل صفْحات السّوشْيال ميدْيا. وزِياد عِنْدو خِبْرة بِالْفنادِق، فِيو يَعْمُل خِطّة عمل."

"All of us!" Yumna said enthusiastically. "You supervise the work since you're in Lebanon. I'll design the decor and create social media pages. And Ziad has hotel experience, he can make the business plan."

زِياد فكّر شْوَيّ. "طيّب، بسّ لازِم نْقسِّم المْصاريف. أنا بِدْفع تِصْليح السّقِف والكهْربا."

Ziad thought for a moment. "Okay, but we need to divide the expenses. I'll pay for fixing the roof and electricity."

"وأنا بْجيب الفرِش والدّيكور،" قالِت يُمْنى.

"And I'll get the furniture and decor," said Yumna.

"وأنا بِشرِّف على العِمّال ويِخْتار المَوادّ," قال وِسام.

"And I'll supervise the workers and choose the materials," said Wissam.

وهيْك بلّشِت الرِّحْلة. كِلّ جُمْعة، بيِجْتِمْعوا عَ الزّوم يْشوفوا التّقدُّم. وِسام كان يْصوِّر كِلّ التّفاصيل: العِمّال عم يْصلْحوا السّقِف، الكهرْبجي عم يْمِدّ أسْلاك جْديدِة، النّجار عم يْرمِّم الخزايِن العتيقة.

And so the journey began. Every Friday, they met on Zoom to see the progress. Wissam would photograph all the details: workers fixing the roof, the electrician installing new wires, the carpenter restoring old cabinets.

يوْم الجُمْعة، وِسام فتح صنْدوق قديم لاقا بالْعِلّية.

One Friday, Wissam opened an old box he found in the attic.

"شو هَيْدا؟" سألِت يُمْنى.

"What's that?" asked Yumna.

"صنْدوق سِتّ ندى. فِ..." وِسام سكت. "فِ دفْتر يَوْمِيّات!"

"Sitt Nada's box. It has..." Wissam paused. "It has a diary!"

"قْري شي مِنّو!" قال زِياد.

"Read something from it!" said Ziad.

فتح وِسام الدّفْتر وبِلّش يِقْرا: "اليوْم زرعِت شجْرِةْ تين بالْحديقة. انْشاللّه وْلادي ووْلاد وْلادي رح ياكْلوا مِن تيناتا..."

Wissam opened the diary and started reading. "Today I planted a fig tree in the garden. God willing, my children and grandchildren will eat from its figs…"

دمّعِت عيْن يُمْنى. "شجْرِةْ التّين بعْدا مَوْجودِة؟"

Yumna's eyes welled up. "Is the fig tree still there?"

"أيْ،" قال وِسام. "وبعْدا بْتعْطي. بسّ ما حدا عم يْلِمّر التّين مِن سْنين…"

"Yes," said Wissam. "And it still bears fruit. But no one has picked the figs for years…"

"بْتعِرْفوا شو؟" قال زِياد. "خلّينا نْخلّي كِلّ شي مِتِل ما هُوِّ. نْصلّح يَلّي لازِم، بسّ نْحافِظ على روح البيْت."

"You know what?" said Ziad. "Let's keep everything as it is. Fix what's necessary, but preserve the spirit of the house."

مرقِت الأسابيع. البيْت بلّش يْتغيّر، بسّ بِطريقة حِلْوة. يُمْنى خْتارِت فرِش بيناسِب الطِّراز القديم. زِياد عِمِل موْقِع إلِكْترونْي للْبيْت، وحطّ صُوَر قديمِة وجْديدِة. ووسام رتّب الحديقة وزْرع ورِد حَوْل شجْرِةْ التّين.

Weeks passed. The house started to change, but in a beautiful way. Yumna chose furniture that matched the old style. Ziad created a website for the house, putting up old and new photos. And Wissam arranged the garden and planted flowers around the fig tree.

"بدّنا نِخْتار إسِم للْمشْروع،" قالِت يُمْنى.

"We need to choose a name for the project," said Yumna.

"بيْت سِتّ ندى؟" قْترح وِسام.

"Sitt Nada's House?" suggested Wissam.

"حِلو... بسّ في شي أحْلى،" قالِت يُمْنى. "خلّينا نْسمّيه: بيْت التّين."

"Nice... but there's something better," said Yumna. "Let's call it: The Fig House."

"ليْه؟"

"Why?"

"لِأنّو مِتل شجْرِةْ التّين. جُذورو عميقة، وكِلّ سِنة بْيَعْطي مِن جْديد."

"Because it's like the fig tree. Its roots are deep, and every year it bears fruit again."

بعِد سِتّة شْهور، سْتِقْبِل البيْت أوّل ضْيوفو. عَيْلة لِبْنانية مِن المهْجر، مِتِل يُمْنى وزِياد، جايّين يْعيشوا تجْرِبِةْ البيْت اللِّبْناني القديم.

After six months, the house welcomed its first guests. A Lebanese family from abroad, like Yumna and Ziad, coming to experience life in an old Lebanese house.

يُمْنى صارِت تْشوف التّعْليقات على المَوْقع كِلّ يوْم: "حسّينا حالْنا بِبيْت سِتّْنا"... "التّرْويقة عَ البالْكوْن شي خيالي"... "شجْرِةْ التّين عم تْذكّرْنا بِبْيوت ضَيْعِتْنا..."

Yumna started reading the website comments daily. "We felt like we were in our grandmother's house"... "Breakfast on the balcony was magical"... "The fig tree reminded us of our village homes..."

بسّ أحْلى تِعْليق كان مِن سِتّ كْبيرة بِالْعُمُر: "هَيْدا البيْت زبط معي. كِنِت عم دوِّر على محلّ يْذكِّرْني بِبيْت أهْلي."

But the nicest comment was from an elderly lady. "This house suited me perfectly. I was looking for a place that would remind me of my family home."

صار البيْت نِقْطِةْ لقاء. الضُّيوف بْيِحْكوا مع بعْض، بْيِتْبادلوا قِصص، بْيِشْربوا قهْوِةْ الصُّبْح تحِت شجْرِةْ التّين.

The house became a meeting point. Guests talk with each other, exchange stories, drink morning coffee under the fig tree.

وكِلّ جُمْعة، بْيِجْتِمْعوا يُمْنى وزِياد ووِسام عَ الزّوم. ما عاد يِحْكوا بسّ عن شِغِل البيْت. صاروا يِحْكوا عن حَياتُن، عن وْلادُن، عن أحْلامُن.

And every Friday, Yumna, Ziad, and Wissam meet on Zoom. They no longer just talk about the house work. They talk about their lives, their children, their dreams.

"بْتِعِرْفوا؟" قال وِسام. "سِتّ ندى كان عِنْدا حقّ. البيْت مِش حيْطان وسقِف. البيْت قِصص وذِكْرَيات. ونِحْنا هلّأ عم نعْمُل قِصص جْديدِة."

"You know?" said Wissam. "Sitt Nada was right. A house isn't just walls and a roof. It's stories and memories. And now we're making new stories."

# البيْت المُشْترك

"هَيْدا مِش قرار مْنِقْدر ناخْدوا بِدْقيقْتيْن عَ زوم... هَيْدي قُطْعة مِن تاريخْنا."

يُمْنى تْنَهِّدت وهِيّ عم تِشْرب قَهْوِتا بِميشيغان. السّاعة عِنْدا سِتّة الصُّبْح، بَسّ ما كان في مجال تْأَجِّل الإِجْتِماع. بِالنِّسْبة لِزياد بِأَبو ظي، كان بعِد الضُّهُر، ووِسام بِبيْت سِتُّن بِجْبيْل كان عم يْشوف آخِر شُعاع شمْس عم يِلْعب على البْلاط القديم.

"بَسّ يُمْنى، شو المَنْطِق نِصْرُف مصاري على بيْت ما حدا رح يِسْكُن فيه؟" سأل زِياد. كمُدير فَنادِق، كان دايْماً بيفكِّر بِالأَرْقام. "مْنْبيعوه، ومِنْقسِّم المصاري..."

"مصاري؟" قاطعِتو. "إنْتَ بِتْتذكَّر لمّا كِنّا نِتْخبّى وَرا البرادي القديمة ونِلْعب غْميضة؟ بْتِتْذكَّر ريحِةْ الياسْمين يَلِّي زرعْتو سِتّ ندى؟ هَيْدوْل ما إلُن سِعِر."

وِسام، يَلِّي كان ساكِت من أوّل الإِجْتِماع، مِشي لِلْبالْكوْن. الكاميرا تبعو صوّرِت المَنْظر: جْبال لِبْنان بِالبْعيد، وبِالْقُرْب شجْرِةْ التّين العتيقة يَلِّي زرعِتا سِتُّن.

"بْتِعِرْفوا شو قْريت بِدفْتر يَوْميّاتا؟" قال فجْأة. "كتِبِت: 'البيْت روح العَيْلة. ما بيموت إلّا إذا نْسينا.'"

"شو قَصْدك؟" سأل زِياد.

# The Shared House

"This isn't a decision we can make in two minutes on Zoom… this is a piece of our history."

Yumna sighed as she drank her coffee in Michigan. It was six in the morning for her, but the meeting couldn't be postponed. For Ziad in Abu Dhabi, it was afternoon, and Wissam in their grandmother's house in Byblos was watching the last ray of sunlight playing on the old tiles.

"But Yumna, what's the logic in spending money on a house no one will live in?" asked Ziad. As a hotel manager, he always thought in numbers. "Let's sell it, and split the money…"

"Money?" she interrupted. "Do you remember when we used to hide behind the old curtains and play hide and seek? Do you remember the smell of jasmine that Sitt Nada planted? These things don't have a price."

Wissam, who had been quiet since the start of the meeting, walked to the balcony. His camera captured the view: Lebanon's mountains in the distance, and nearby, the ancient fig tree their grandmother had planted.

"Do you know what I read in her diary?" he said suddenly. "She wrote: 'The house is the family's soul. It only dies if we forget it.'"

"What do you mean?" asked Ziad.

"قَصْدي... يُمْكِن في حل وسط. ما نْبيعو، وما نْخَلّي يِخْرب. نْحْييه مِن جْديد."

فتح وسام الكاميرا على صفْحة مِن دفْتر سِتّ ندى: "بيْتْنا صار محطّة. كِلّ صيْف بْيِرْجعوا وْلادي مِن برّا، وبيجيبوا معْن حْكايات جْديدِة. وكِلّ شي بْيِحْكوا بيصير جِزء مِن حيْطان البيْت."

"عِنْدي فِكْرة،" قالِت يُمْنى. عْيونا كانِت عم تِلمع رغْم التّعب. "خلّينا نعْمِل مِنّو مطْرح يِجْمع النّاس مِتل ما كان قِبل. بسّ مِش بسّ عيْلِتْنا... كِلّ النّاس يَلّي عِنْدُن حنين لهيْديك الإيّام."

"قصْدك بيْت ضْيافة؟" سأل زِياد، وصَوْتو تْغيّر. "بسّ... بِطريقة مِخْتِلِفة؟"

"أيْ. مِش فِنْدُق عادي. مكان بْيِحْكي قِصّة. قِصّتْنا وقصص كِلّ العيَل يَلّي مِتلْنا."

وسام قعد على الدّرج العتيق. "بْتِعْرْفوا شو أصْعب شي بِمَوْضوع الهِجْرة؟ مِش البُعْد. الخوْف مِن النّسْيان. خَوْفنا نِحْنا يَلّي عايْشين هوْن نِنْسى، وخَوْفْكُن إنْتو تِنْسوا."

"صحّ." همسِت يُمْنى. "أنا صار عِنْدي وْلاد، وما بعْرِف كيف بدّي خلّيْن يْحِسّوا إنّو هَيْدا تُراثُن، إنّو هَيْدي جْذورُن."

"طيِّب،" تْدخّل زِياد. "بسّ كيف مِنْخَلّي المشْروع يِمْشي؟ يَعْني عمليّاً..."

"كِلّ واحد فينا عِنْدو شي يْقَدّمو،" قالِت يُمْنى. "إنْتَ عِنْدك خِبْرة بِإدارِةْ الفنادِق. أنا بِشْتِغِل بِالتّسْويق الرّقْمي. ووِسام مْهنْدِس مِعْماري."

"I mean... maybe there's a middle ground. Not selling it, and not letting it fall apart. Bringing it back to life."

Wissam turned the camera to a page from Sitt Nada's diary. "Our house has become a station. Every summer my children return from abroad, bringing new stories with them. And everything they tell becomes part of the house's walls."

"I have an idea," said Yumna. Her eyes were shining despite her fatigue. "Let's make it a place that brings people together like it used to. But not just our family... all the people who yearn for those days."

"You mean a guesthouse?" asked Ziad, his voice changing. "But... in a different way?"

"Yes. Not just a regular hotel. A place that tells a story. Our story and the stories of all families like us."

Wissam sat on the old stairs. "You know what's the hardest thing about emigration? It's not the distance. It's the fear of forgetting. Our fear here of forgetting, and your fear there of forgetting."

"True," whispered Yumna. "I have children now, and I don't know how to make them feel that this is their heritage, these are their roots."

"Okay," Ziad interjected. "But how do we make the project work? I mean practically..."

"Each of us has something to offer," said Yumna. "You have hotel management experience. I work in digital marketing. And Wissam is an architect."

"وكمان شي،" زاد وسام. "لْقيت بِالعِلّية صندوق مِليان وصفات سِتّ ندى. المْربّيات، المونة، كِلّ شي مكْتوب بْخطّ إيدا."

عْيون يُمْنى لمِعت. "مْنعْمُل مطبخ صْغير. الضّيوف بْيِقْدروا يِتْعلّموا كيف يِطِبْخوا أَكِل تقْليدي..."

"ومِنْحُطّ بِكِلّ غِرْفة قِصّة،" كمّل زياد. "قِصّة مِن يَوْميّات سِتّ ندى، صُوَر قديمِة..."

"وبِالحديقة،" قال وسام، "في مساحة كْبيرة تحِت شجرِةْ التّين. مْنعْمُل جلْسِة صْغيرة، محلّ للْقهْوة الصّبُح..."

سكتوا تْلاتِتُن. كِلّ واحد عم يِتْخيّل المشْروع بِطريقة مِخْتِلْفة، بسّ كِلُّن عم يْشوفوا نفْس الحِلم .

"سِتّ ندى كانت دايْماً تْقول شي،" تْذكّرِت يُمْنى. "كانِت تْقول: 'البيْت يَلّي بْيِسْكُت، بيموت.' خلّينا ما نخلّي بيْتا يِسْكُت."

مرّت سِتّة شْهُر. البيْت صار غيْر. مِش لأنّو تْغيّر كْتير، بسّ لأنّو صار في حَياةْ مِن جْديد.

كِلّ صُبْح، الضّيوف بيفيقوا على ريحِةْ القهْوة وخِبِز الصّاج. وكِلّ ليْلة، بْيِقْعدوا بِالجْنيْنة يِسْمعوا خبْريّات بعْض. ناس مِن كِلّ العالمِ، كِلّ واحد عِنْدو قُصّةْ حنين مِخْتِلْفة.

وعلى باب كِلّ غِرْفة، في صفْحة مِن دفْتر سِتّ ندى، مع صورة قديمِة، وجِمْلِة كتبِتا يُمْنى: "هوْن، كِلّ ذِكرى إلا بيْت."

يوْمِ الجُمْعة، بْآخِر إجْتِماع زوم، سأل زِياد: "حدا فيكُن بْيِتْذكّر ليْش كِنّا بدّنا نْبيع البيْت؟"

"And something else," added Wissam. "I found a box full of Sitt Nada's recipes in the attic. Jams, preserves, everything written in her handwriting."

Yumna's eyes lit up. "We'll make a small kitchen. Guests can learn how to cook traditional food..."

"And we'll put a story in each room," continued Ziad. "A story from Sitt Nada's diary, old photos..."

"And in the garden," said Wissam, "there's a large space under the fig tree. We'll make a small seating area, a place for morning coffee..."

All three fell silent. Each one imagining the project differently, but all seeing the same dream.

"Sitt Nada always used to say something," Yumna remembered. "She would say: 'A house that falls silent, dies.' Let's not let her house fall silent."

Six months passed. The house was different. Not because it changed much, but because it had life in it again.

Every morning, guests wake up to the smell of coffee and saj bread. And every evening, they sit in the garden listening to each other's stories. People from all over the world, each with a different story of longing.

And on each room's door, there's a page from Sitt Nada's diary, with an old photo, and a line written by Yumna. "Here, every memory has a home."

On Friday, at their last Zoom meeting, Ziad asked, "Does anyone remember why we wanted to sell the house?"

ضِحْكِت يُمْنى. "غَريبة! أنا نْسيت! بسّ بْتعْرِف شو ما نْسيت؟ نْسيت إنّي بْعيدِة. صِرِت حِسّ إنّي مَوْجودِة بِبِيْت سِتّي كِلّ يوْم."

"يِمْكِن هَيْدا سِرّ البْيوت العَتيقة،" قال وسام وهُوّ عم يْطفّي ضَوّ البالْكوْن. "ما بْتِسْكُن فِيا بسّ هِيّ بْتِسْكُن فيك."
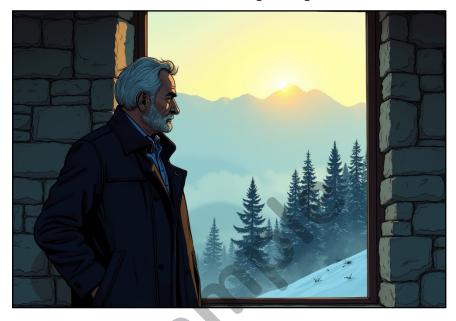
Yumna laughed. "Strange! I forgot! But you know what I haven't forgotten? I forgot that I'm far away. I feel like I'm in my grandmother's house every day."

"Maybe that's the secret of old houses," said Wissam as he turned off the balcony light. "You don't just live in them. They live in you."

# لِغِز الأٌرِزة

## The Cedar Mystery



Deep in the مِحْمية *miḥmíyyi* (nature reserve) of Lebanon's cedar forests, where some أرِز *ʔáriz* (cedars) have stood for centuries watching over the mountains, something is amiss. When a former مْحقّق *mḥáʔʔiʔ* (investigator) turned village retiree receives an urgent call from the forest حارِس *ḥēris* (guard), he finds himself drawn into a mystery that threatens Lebanon's natural heritage. In a place where every شجْرة *šájra* (tree) represents a piece of history, where the ضباب *ḍabāb* (fog) conceals both beauty and danger, can an experienced detective and a passionate young ranger work with the أهْل الضَّيْعة *ʔahl iḍḍáy3a* (village community) to protect these treasured trees? As they follow cryptic clues and suspicious tracks in the تْراب *trāb* (soil), they discover that the true value of the غابِة *ɣēbi* (forest) lies not just in its خشب *xášab* (wood), but in the bonds it creates between those who protect it.
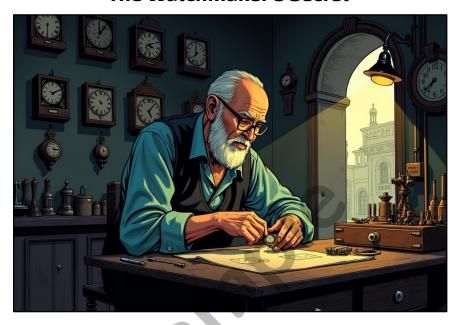
# مشْروع الحديقة

## The Garden Project



Among the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon are Syrian refugees living in informal مُخيّمات *muxayyamēt* (settlements/camps) in the البْقاع *libʔā3* (Bekaa Valley), where summer temperatures soar and winter brings bitter برِد *bárid* (cold) and وَحِل *wáḥil* (mud). But even in these harsh conditions, between the خِيَم *xíyam* (tents), the human spirit finds ways to create beauty and sustenance. How can a small patch of أرض فاضْيَة *ʔáriḍ fāḍya* (empty land) become a source of not just food, but أمل *ʔámal* (hope) and community? This story explores how traditional agricultural knowledge, carried across borders through ذكْرَيات *zikrayēt* (memories) and saved بِذِر *bízir* (seeds), can transform refugee life and build unexpected bridges between communities.

# بِسِرّ السَّاعاتي

## The Watchmaker's Secret



Set in the final days of the French Mandate in Lebanon, this story weaves together the personal and political through the delicate work of a ساعاتي *sē3āti* (watchmaker). In 1943 Beirut's ancient souks, where gold merchants and craftsmen worked side by side, every shop held its secrets. But what happens when an elderly craftsman, bound by professional ethics to keep his customers' secrets, discovers that someone is using his respected profession for dangerous political purposes? Through the precision tools and quiet wisdom of a traditional watchmaker, we explore questions of loyalty, ضمير *ḍamīr* (conscience), and the subtle ways people resist occupation.

# صوْت وصورة

## Sound and Image



In the vibrant world of Lebanese weddings, where tradition meets modernity, two artists find themselves repeatedly crossing paths: a مْصوّرة *mṣáwwira* (photographer) with an eye for candid moments and a مُغنّي *muɣánni* (singer) devoted to classical أغاني *ʔaɣāni* (songs). While he fills wedding halls with the warmth of traditional لحْن *laḥn* (melodies), she captures the fleeting لحْظات *laḥẓēt* (moments) that tell each عِرس *3íris* (wedding)'s unique story. Their initial quarrels – him annoyed by her camera's intrusion, her frustrated by his rigid adherence to tradition – gradually transform into something unexpected as they learn to see the beauty of حفْلات *ḥaflēt* (celebrations) through each other's eyes. But in a culture where both الصُّور *iṣṣúwar* (photographs) and الموسيقى *ilmūsīʔa* (music) are considered essential to preserving memories, can these two artists find harmony in their different approaches to capturing love?

# الشِّتِي

## Winter Rain



On a stormy winter afternoon, when the شِتِي *šíti* (rain) pounds Beirut's ancient streets, a traditional قهْوِة *ʔáhwi* (café) becomes an unexpected sanctuary. Inside, where the aroma of fresh coffee mingles with the smoke of water pipes, an unlikely group gathers: a مُهنْدِسة *muhándsi* (architect) racing to document vanishing heritage, an elderly شوْفور *[choffeur] tēksi* تاكْسي (taxi driver) who once crossed the city's divide, an Armenian جَوْهرْجي *jawhárji* (jeweler) guarding the secrets of his حِرف *ḥíraf* (craft), and others whose lives tell the story of a changing city. Through their ذِكْرَيات *zikrayēt* (memories) and حْكايات *ḥkēyēt* (stories), we discover how a simple rainstorm might help preserve what luxury buildings and real estate developers threaten to erase from the city's ذاكْرة *zēkra* (memory).