

# Mido

in Levantine Arabic



# میدو



lingualism

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Supplementary materials for **Mido in Levantine Arabic** are available at [www.lingualism.com/mido-la](http://www.lingualism.com/mido-la):



- Free audio files
- Free PDF with page-by-page vocabulary lists and an alphabetical glossary
- Anki flashcards with audio (available separately)

# Introduction

I remember with great fondness reading *Le Petit Nicolas* stories in college. Childlike in their innocence, they were a welcome break from the more serious literature in the syllabus. This inspired me to create *Mido* for Arabic students.

The stories in this book are lighthearted and easy to follow, but also engaging, all the while presenting the lively language and culture of the Lebanese today. However, these stories are aimed at adult language-learners—and not children—as secrets and lies and crime make appearances.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to Mido and his family, as we take a peek at the household's typical morning. Mido's father, mother, brother, and sister each feature in a chapter showing a day in their lives. And Mido, our hero, stars in the remaining chapters.

The Levantine Arabic texts appear on the left-facing pages, while the English translations can be found on the right-facing pages along with cultural and language notes.

Dozens of beautiful illustrations can be found throughout the book to help the reader better understand the texts. Audio professionally recorded in Beirut is available to stream or download for free from: [www.lingualism.com/mido-la](http://www.lingualism.com/mido-la)

I would like to thank Hoda Hilal, Mona Mohamed, and Sam Sakhle for their contributions to this project. And I wish to extend a special thank-you to Mariam Khaled, who listened to my ideas about Mido and his family's adventures and turned them into the wonderful, vivid stories in this book, which would never have been possible without her creativity and hard work. Thank you, Mariam!

I hope you enjoy *Mido* and learn more Levantine Arabic along the way.

Matthew Aldrich

# Orthography

There is no official system of spelling Levantine Colloquial Arabic. There are many conventions used by the majority native speakers, but individual preferences abound. The official, written language is, of course, Modern Standard Arabic. But when Arabs do write in their dialect, they tend to follow orthographic rules of MSA to a point, while sounding things out and spelling them as they see fit when in doubt.

In *Lingualism* publications, every effort has been made to standardize the spelling for consistency, using some of the most common spelling preferences among native speakers.

The texts contain *tashkeel* (diacritics) to assist in reading. *Kasra* (◌ِ) and *damma* (◌ُ) are written to mark short vowels. They are not written before the long vowels *yaa* and *waw*.

*Sukuun* (◌ْ) is not written word-final to avoid cluttering the text, as Levantine Arabic does not have case endings (*i3raab*). *Sukuun* is written over *waw* when pronounced *ō* and over *yaa* when pronounced *ē*: يوم (yōm day), بيت (bēt house).

*Fatha*, the most common vowel in Arabic, is not normally written, in order to avoid clutter, as well. When a consonant is not marked, the default vowel is *fatha*. It is, however, written above an initial *waw* or *yaa*, and in a few other cases, for clarity. It is also written before *waw* and *yaa* when they are pronounced as diphthongs: هَيِّدا (hayda this), أو (aw or).

*Kasra* is not written in the definite article ال. The word الل (illi) is written without *kasra* and *sukuun*.

The PDF eBook version of this book, available at [www.lingualism.com/mido-la](http://www.lingualism.com/mido-la) includes an unvoveled version for those who prefer reading without *tashkeel*.



## الفصل الأول: عَيْلَة ميدو

“ميدو! يَلَا يا ميدو! فيق! رح تَتَأخَّر عَالِصِطِفَاف بِالْمَدْرَسَةِ!”

صَوْتُ إِمْرٍ زِيَادٍ عَمَّ تَوَعَّى مِيدُو مِثْلَ نَشِيدِ صَبَاحِي أَوْ مَوْسِيقَى يَوْمِيَّةٍ  
بُنِيَتْ مِيدُو وَعَالِزُجِحْ بَكْلَ بَيْتِ.

وَعِي أَبُو زِيَادٍ عَلَى الضَّجَّةِ وَقَالَ بَعْصِيَّةً “بَعْدُو نَائِمِ هَالْأَهْبَلِ؟” سَمِعَ  
مِيدُو صَوْتِ بَيِّو عَمَّ يَقْرَبُ مِنْ أَوْضَتُو فَنَطُّ مِنْ تَخْتُو بَسْرِعَةٍ وَقَالَ:  
“خَلَصَ بَابَا، أَنَا وَعَيْت!”

“يَلَا عَجَّلْ يَا كَسْلَانِ قَبْلِ مَا يُسْكُرُوا بَوَابَ الْمَدْرَسَةِ.”

تَطَّلَعَ مِيدُو عَلَى خَيِّو الْكَبِيرِ زِيَادِ، الْأَكْبَرَ بَعِيْلَةَ مِيدُو (وَلِهَيْكَ أَهْلُو إِسْمَنْ  
إِمْرٍ زِيَادٍ وَأَبُو زِيَادِ\*). كَانَ بَعْدُو نَائِمِ بِالْتَّخْتِ وَمَا حَدَا عَمَّ يِحَاوَلِ يُوَعِّيهِ

## Chapter 1: Mido's Family

“Mido! Come on, Mido! Wake up! You're going to miss the morning assembly at school!”

The voice of Em Ziad calling for Mido to wake up is like a daily morning anthem or a soundtrack in Mido's family's house and probably in every house.

Abu Ziad woke up because of the noise. Annoyed, he said, “That stupid boy is still sleeping?” Once Mido heard his father's angry footsteps approaching his room, he jumped out of bed and said,

“I'm up, Dad!”

“Hurry up before the school doors close.”

Mido looked at his elder brother, Ziad, the eldest son in the family (and that's why his parents are called “Abu Ziad” and “Em Ziad”). He was still asleep in bed without anyone waking him up early.

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الإصطفاف بالمدرسة (lit. *school line-up*) is the morning assembly that begins each school day in Lebanon. Students line up in the school yard for the national anthem and physical exercise.

و (prefix) *u* = and

وعى See vocabulary notes on p. 15.

و (suffix after consonant) = his, him. After a vowel, it is هـ but not pronounced. The vowel becomes long. (Modern Standard Arabic (MSA): هُ)

ف (prefix) = so, therefore; and

\*Such names are كَنِيَّة (= teknonym), whereby parents are informally known by the name of their eldest son, or daughter.

آ is usually pronounced *-i* and, in this book, is written آ but is pronounced *-a* after certain consonants. آية is pronounced *-iyyi*.



لأنّو بواب مدرستو بتسكّر الساعة ٩ مش ٧،٣٠ متل ميدو، فبيقدر يوعى  
مأخر. كمان زياد بيقدر يختار إذا بدو يروح عالمدرسة أو لا. ففكر ميدو  
**بينو وبينو حالو:** "أيمتى رح أكبر متل زياد وأعمل اللي بدّي ياه؟"

قطع **حبل أفكارو** صوت إمّو اللي قالت: "ميدو! عجل لتلحق تتروق.  
عملتك سنديشتين جنبه وواحدة مربى وواحدة نوتيلًا."

ليس ميدو تياب المدرسه الكحلية مع القميص الأبيض المخطّط وراح  
ليتروق.

"حطيت كل كتبك ودفاترك بالسنطة؟ إوعى تكون نسيت شي."

"ما تخافي ماما. حطيت كل شي."

"يلًا. تفضل هالرغيف الخبز وكول البيض المقلي اللي حضرتهك"

ياهن."

"حاضر ماما."

"حتعلمك مس منال اليوم؟"

"ايه."

"أوكي. نتيه منيح كرمال تعطيك علامة عالية، مش متل المرّة"

الماضية لما كانت ما كتير راضية عنك."

ما في شي يبجّو ميدو بالدني كلاً أكثر من البيض المقلي. **ما عندو مانع**  
ياكلو عالتروية والغدا والعشا. كان ميدو مستمتع بترويقته لما سمع

That's because he can wake up late as his high school leaves the door open until 9:00 a.m., and not 7:30 like Mido's [school]. Ziad also gets to choose whether he wants to go or not. Mido thought to himself, "When will I grow up like Ziad and do what I want?"

His mother's voice interrupted his thoughts as she called, "Mido! Hurry so you have time to eat breakfast. I made you two cream cheese sandwiches, one jam, and one Nutella".

Mido put on his navy-blue school uniform, with a white striped shirt, and went to eat breakfast.

"Have you put all your books and notebooks you need in your bag? Careful not to forget anything."

"Don't worry, Mom. I've got everything."

"Here. Take this loaf of bread and eat the fried eggs I made for you."

"Yes, Mom."

"Is Miss Manal teaching you today?"

"Yes."

"Okay, do your best so she gives you a good grade, unlike last time when she wasn't so happy with you."

There's nothing Mido likes more in the world than fried eggs. He would eat them for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Mido was enjoying his breakfast when he heard his father coming

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حَالُو = to oneself (lit. between him and himself)

The detached direct pronouns *يا* *ya* him/it, *ياها* *yaha* her/it, *ياهن* *yahun* them are used after *بَدُو* (= want) and verbs which have indirect pronoun suffixes or take two direct objects (such as *عطى* 'give')

حَبْلُ أَفْكَارُو = train of thought (lit. rope of thoughts)

لِ: لِتَلْحَقْ (prefix) in order to, so that. يَلْحَقْ، لِحَقْ، يَلْحَقْ = to hurry and..., have time to (do), manage to (do), arrive in time for, catch

مَا عِنْدُو مَا نَع = doesn't mind (lit. doesn't have an objection)

بيو ضاهر من الحمام عم **بيقولو**: "عجل يا ميدو لتوصل عالوقت،  
وخود هال ٥,٠٠٠ ليرة لتشتري فيا كيس شيبس وعصير من الكافيتيريا."



أخذ ميدو المصاري من بيو وهي إممو  
عم تحط السنديشات بشنطتو.  
ومتل كل يوم قالت: "يا ويلى، شو  
ثقيلة هالشنطة! شو بتحط فيا؟ كتب  
أو حجار؟!"

ليس ميدو الشنطة وضر من البيت  
وإممو متل العادة عم توصيه: "مع السلامة حبيبي! على مهلك إنت  
ونازل من الباص. إذا حدا غريب حكى معك ما ترد عليه. الله يحميك."

قعدت إمم زياد لترتاح شوي بعد ما خلصت من واحد، لتأخذ نفس قبل  
ما نفس المشهد يتكرر مع خيو وإختو. هلق دور بنتا الكبيرة: هبة اللي  
عم تدرس علم النفس بكلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية **بالجامعة  
اللبنانية**.

"هبة... يا هبة!" هزنا وشالت عنا الحرام. "يلا يا بنت! قومي لحقي  
صفك عالسعة. صارت الساعة ثمانية."

نقزت هبة ونطت لتشوف الوقت على تلفونا. لاقت إنو الساعة بعدا  
ثمانية إلا تلت. قامت من التخت معصبة كيف إمم كل مرة بتضحك عليا

out of the bathroom saying to him, “Get moving so you arrive on time, and take this 5,000 pounds to buy yourself a bag of chips or juice from the cafeteria.”

Mido took the money from his dad while his mom put the sandwiches in his backpack, and just like every day, she said, “Dear God! This bag is so heavy! What do you put in it, rocks or books?”

Mido put on his backpack and left home while his mom said her usual commandments, “Goodbye, honey! Get off the microbus carefully. If a stranger talks to you, don't reply. God protect you!”

Em Ziad sat down to rest a little now that she had gotten rid of one of them and to catch her breath before the same scene would play out with his brother and sister. Now it was Heba's turn, her eldest daughter, who was at the Lebanese University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Department of Psychology.

“Heba... Heba...” She shook her and pulled off the covers. “Hey, girl! Hurry to catch your lectures at nine. It's eight now!”

Heba jumped up, freaked out, and looked at her cell phone to check the time, and saw it was still 7:40. Heba got up annoyed, not believing how her mom could pull that over on

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يقول: This imperfect verb normally has a long *ū*: يقول *biḡūl*. However, when an indirect object pronoun is added (here: *-lu* = to him), the long *ū* becomes a short *i*. Kasra (◌ِ) is written to reflect this, while *و* remains, although not pronounced.

ها (هـ) prefixed to the definite article) = this

٥,٠٠٠ خمستلاف = 5,000 (= \$3.20)

ليرة = lira, (Lebanese) pound (pegged to the U.S. dollar: \$1 = 1,507.5 LBP)

ل (suffix) her. (MSA: لها)

الجامعة اللبنانية is Lebanon's only state (public) university, with around 80,000 students.

وَيَبَالِغُ بِالْوَقْتِ. طَبْعاً مِثْلَ كُلِّ الإِمْهَاتِ اللَّبْنَانِيَّةِ.

قَرَّرْتُ هِبَةَ إِئْتُو تَعْفِي إِمَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ تَفْيِيقِ زِيَادٍ وَتَوَعَّيْهِ هِيَ هَالِمَرَّةً.

“زياد، ما بدك تفيق؟ قوم روح عالمدرسة أو دروس شوي لصف التاريخ. يا زياد!”

“سكتي وتركيني لحالي!”  
“قوم أو رح آكل كل البيض المقلي وما إتركك شي!”  
“أفففف! أوكي، أوكي! قيمت.”

قالت هبة لإمّا وبيّا: “صباح الخير بابا! صباح الخير ماما!”

ما حدا ردّ عليّا. بيّا كان مرّكز باللابتوب تبعو مع فنجان قهوة يأيديو، وإمّا كانت بلّشت بروتينا اليومي اللي هو ضبّضبة البيت مطرح ما ميدو تارك بيجامتو وكلّساتو وغراضو.

قعدت هبة لتتروّق وعيّطت لإمّا:

“ماما! ماما! وين فنجان النيسكافيّه تبعي؟”  
“أوكي أوكي، عم صبلّك ياه. ما كان بدّي صبو بكير كرمال ما يبرّد.”  
“شكرًا ماما حبيبتني.”

هبة، كونا بنت الوحيدة بالعيّلة، كانت إلى حدّ ما مدلّلة من أهلها. بسّ مش قد ميدو، آخر العنقود اللي إمّو يتخاف عليه أكثر ممن كلن.

her every time, exaggerating the time. Just a typical Lebanese mom.

Heba decided to save her mom the fuss of waking Ziad up this time and to do it herself.

“Ziad, aren't you getting up? Go to school or study for your history class a bit. Ziad!”

“Shut up! Leave me alone!”

“Get up or I'll eat all the fried eggs and not leave you any.”

“Arghhh! Okay, okay! I'm up.”

“Good morning, Dad! Good morning, Mom!” Heba said to her parents.

No one responded. Her father was focused looking at his laptop with a cup of coffee in one hand, while her mom had already begun her daily routine of picking up the house wherever Mido left his pajamas, socks, and things.

Heba sat down to have breakfast and called, “Mom! Mom! Where's my mug of Nescafé?”

“All right, all right, I'm making it. I didn't want to pour it for you earlier or it'd get cold.”

“Thanks, my lovely mom.”

Heba, being the only girl among the children, was more or less spoiled by her parents, but not as much as Mido, the youngest child, whose mother worried about him the most.

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نيسكافيه The brand name Nescafé is used generically to refer to any instant coffee.

“بَدُّكَ أَعْمَلُكَ شَيِّ تَأْكُلِيهِ بِالْجَامِعَةِ؟”  
“شُو عَمَّرَ تَحْكِي مَامَا؟ بَدُّكَ يَضْحَكُوا عَلَيَّ النَّاسُ؟ أَكِيدُ لَأُحَاشِرْتَنِي سُنْدُوشِيَّةً مِنَ الْكَافِتِيرِيَا.”  
“أَوْكِي، الْحَقُّ عَلَيَّ سَأَلْتِكَ!”

أَخِيرًا شَرَّفَ السَّيِّدُ زِيَادَ عَالْتَرُوبِيَّةً. قَعَدَ عَالطَاوَلَةَ مُعَصَّبٌ وَبَلَّشٌ يَأْكُلُ  
بُدُونِ مَا يَحْكِي أَيَّ كَلِمَةٍ. ضَلَّتْ هِبَةٌ عَمَّرَ تَتَطَّلَعُ فِيهِ، خَائِفَةٌ تَحْكِي مَعُو  
وَهُوَ بِهَا الْحَالَةَ، لِأَنَّهُ يَبْكِرُهُ الْفَيْقَةَ بَكِيرًا.

وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَمِتَ طَوِيلٌ، قَالَ أَبُو زِيَادٍ: “طَيِّبٌ يَا وُلَادُ، أَنَا رَايِحٌ إِفْتَحِ  
الصَّيْدَلِيَّةَ. بَدُّكَ شَيِّ؟”

قَبْلَ مَا يُخَلِّصُ الْجَمَلَةَ حَتَّى، رَدُّوا زِيَادَ وَهَبَةً بِنَفْسِ الْوَقْتِ: “بَدُّنَا  
المَصْرُوفُ!”

“طَبْعًا طَبْعًا، مُسْتَحِيلٌ تَنْسُوا هَيْكَ شَيِّ. تَفْضَلُ إِسْتَاذَ زِيَادٍ. تَفْضَلِي  
سِتَّ هِبَةٌ.”  
“شُكْرًا بَابَا.”

وَدَعَتْ إِمْرًا زِيَادَ أَبُو زِيَادَ وَقَالَتْ: “مَعَ السَّلَامَةِ. جِيبْ مَعَكَ شُويَّةَ فَوَاكِهِ  
لِلْوَلَادِ إِنَّتَ وَرَاجِعْ.” هَزَّ أَبُو زِيَادٍ بَرَأْسَهُ وَسَكَّرَ الْبَابَ.

“يَلَا عَجَلُوا إِنَّتُ التَّنِينُ لَتَلْحَقُوا الْمَدْرَسَةَ وَالصَّفُوفَ.”  
“حَاضِرٌ مَامَا،” التَّنِينُ قَالُوا بِنَفْسِ الْوَقْتِ.

“Do you want me to make you something to eat at the university?”

“What are you talking about, Mom? Do you want people to laugh at me? Of course not! I’ll buy sandwiches from the cafeteria.”

“All right, sorry I asked!”

At last Mr. Ziad showed up to breakfast. He sat down at the table without saying a word. He was grumpy and started eating. Heba looked at him scared to talk when he was that fussy, as he really hates waking up early.

After a long silence Abu Ziad said, “Okay, kids, I’m taking off to open the pharmacy. Do you need anything?”

Before he even finished his sentence Ziad and Heba both replied, “We want our pocket money!”

“Sure, sure. You can’t ever forget something like that. Here you are, sir. Here you are, miss.”

“Thank you, Dad.”

Em Ziad walked Abu Ziad to the door and said, “Goodbye, buy some fruit for the kids on your way home.” Abu Ziad nodded and closed the door behind him.

“Hurry, you two, so you don’t miss school and your classes.”

“Okay, Mom,” they said in unison.



“بَدَّكَ نَاخِدُ سَرْفِيسَ سَوَا؟” هَبَّةٌ سَأَلَتْ زِيَادَ.  
“لَا شُكْرًا. رَايِحٌ مَعَ رُفَقَاتِي.”  
“أَوْكِي.”

وَفَقَّتْ هَبَّةٌ قِدَامَ خَزَانَتَا مِثْلِ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ. “مَا عِنْدِي شَيْءٌ إِلَّا سَوَا.” وَأَخِيرًا  
قَرَّرَتْ تَلْبُسَ قَمِيصٍ وَ بَنْطَلُونَ جِينَزٍ وَزَبَطَتْ شَعْرًا وَبَلَّشَ أَكْبَرَ تَحَدِّي  
لِلْيَوْمِ:

وَضَعِ الْكِحْلِي. وَبَعْدَ فِتْرَةٍ مِنَ التَّعْدِيلِ  
وَالْتَّرْطِيبِ، نَجَحَتْ هَبَّةٌ بِالْمُهْمَةِ وَتَطَلَّعَتْ  
نَظْرَةً أُخِيرَةً عَ حَالًا بِالْمِرَايَةِ قَبْلَ مَا تُضَهَّرُ.  
“يَلَّا بَاي مَامَا!” وَرَكَضَتْ عَالِبَابَ قَبْلِ مَا  
تَلْحَقُ إِمَّا تَقُولًا مِثْلَ الْعَادَةِ “شُو  
هَالْبَنْطَلُونَ الصِّيْقِ الْيَلِي لِابِسْتِيهِ؟ رُوحي  
غَيْرِيهِ هَلَّقُ!”



زِيَادُ كَمَا نَ ضَهَرَ مِنْ أَوْضُنُو لِابِسَ أَوَّلَ شَيْءٍ شَافُو بَكُومَةَ الثِّيَابِ عَالِكِرْسِي:  
بَنْطَلُونَ أَسْوَدَ وَتِيَشِرْتِ. فَتَحَ الْبَابَ وَفَلَّ.

“زِيَادُ..؟”

ضَهَرَتْ إِمَّ زِيَادُ مِنَ الْمَطْبُخِ بَعْدَ مَا خَلَّصَتْ جَلِي لِتَتَأَكَّدُ إِنْهُ هَيْدَا زِيَادُ  
الْيَلِي فَتَحَ بَابَ الْبَيْتِ. فَلَاقَتِ الْبَيْتَ فَاضِي وَمِثْلَ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ قَالَتْ: “شُو  
بَدِّي أَطْبُخُ الْيَوْمُ؟”

“Do you want to take a taxi together?” Heba asked Ziad.

“No thanks. I'm going with my friends.”

“Okay.”

Heba stood in front of her wardrobe like every day. “I have nothing to wear.” Finally, she picked a blouse and jeans and fixed her hair and started the most challenging part of her day: matching the eyeliner. After a while removing and adjusting, she completed her mission and took a final look in the mirror before she left. “Goodbye, Mom!” And she ran to the door before her mom could say anything like “Those pants are too tight. Go change!”

Ziad also left his room, wearing the first thing he saw in the pile of clothes on the chair: black pants and a t-shirt. He opened the door and left.

“Ziad?”

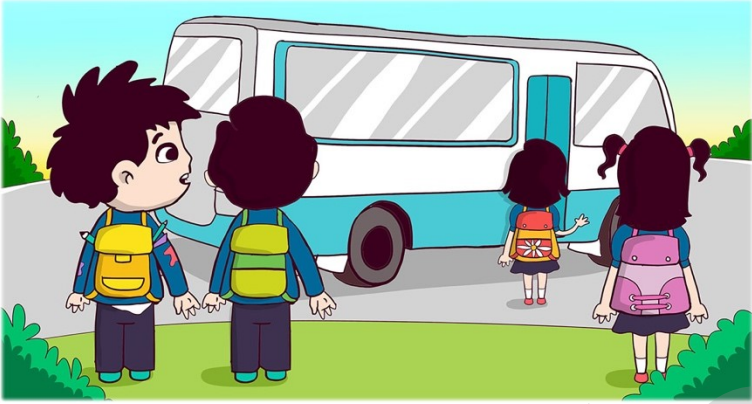
Em Ziad went out of the kitchen after she finished washing the dishes to check that it was Ziad who had opened the door of the house. She found the house empty, and, as every day, she said, “What should I cook for lunch today?”

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سرفيس is a shared taxi.

Compare the following vocabulary, which you will see in this and other chapters of the book. Verbal nouns (masdars) are shown in parentheses. (Intransitive verbs are on the left.)

to wake up	(وَعَى، يُوَعَى وَعَى)	to wake (s.o.) up	(وَعَى، يُوَعَى تَوَعَى)
to wake up	(فَاقَ، يُفَاقُ فِيقَةً)	to wake (s.o.) up	(فَاقَ، يُفَاقُ تَفَاقَ)
to get up	(قَامَ، يَقُومُ قِيَامًا)	(s.o. = someone)	



## الفصل الثاني: الباص الغلط

صوت جرس الحصة الأخيرة مثل الموسيقى بُدِينْ ميدو ورفاقو. أول ما يسمعه الولاد يركضوا **ليراً** مثل كانوا سمعوا إنذار الحريق. هجووم على باب الصف ونزول عالدرج، وأخيراً كل المدرسة بتتجمع ع باب الحديد اللي هدف كل الولاد يظهروا منو، لأنو **صارن** من الساعة سبعة الصبح ناظرين هيدي اللحظة.

بعد معركة الإنصراف، ميدو وكل الولاد ظهروا بحالة لو شافتا أي أمر حتغيب عن الوعي. قميص مجعلك و**برات** البنطلون، بقع مختلفة عالقميص مدري من وين جاية، وأكد شريط الصباط مفكوك.

مشي ميدو عالبطية، تعبنا بعد نهارو الطويل بالمدرسة.

## Chapter 2: The Wrong Bus

The last class's bell is like music to the ears of Mido and his friends. Once the students hear it, everyone runs as if it were the fire alarm. Everyone rushes to the classroom door, pushes down the stairs, and finally, the whole school gets jammed at the iron gates of the school, getting through which is the goal of all the kids, who have been waiting for this moment since 7 a.m.

After the battle of leaving school, Mido and all the kids are in a such a state that if any mother saw, she would faint. A wrinkled, untucked shirt, various stains from unknown sources on the shirt, and, of course, loose shoelaces.

Mido walked slowly, exhausted from the long day at school.

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برّا (location) outside; لبرّا (direction) outside; برّا (preposition) outside of  
صار + ل (lit. happen to) followed by an active participle (here: ناظرين  
waiting) = have been \_\_\_ing