

Muna What do you think?

Wasim I'm finding him a little irritating.

Muna What do you think about the books?

Wasim We can't buy them.

Muna Why not?

Wasim The Ministry of Education will never let us teach them.

Muna They might. If we ask. If we make adjustments.

Wasim Forget it. Let's have our coffee and go. I've arranged to meet Khaled in the old city. His wife's a painter. You'll like her.

Muna You told me you liked this proposal.

Wasim I know.

Muna You told me to set up a meeting.

Wasim I know.

Muna Have you even read the textbooks?

Beat.

Wasim!

Wasim Darling, you don't think I came all the way to Damascus to talk to an English teacher, do you?

You're annoyed.

Muna Of course I'm annoyed.

Wasim Look. I'll tell you the truth. The Minister of Education has called us in for a meeting – tomorrow. She wants to look at funding. I could have taken the Assistant Dean with me but he's hopeless. I wanted someone sharp with me. I wanted you.

Besides, tonight is the Writers' Union annual dinner.

Muna You've got it all planned out.

Wasim All the old faces will be there. Abu Amar, Khaled. I knew you'd want to go.

Muna We're supposed to be working.

Wasim Darling, it's been so long since we spent time together. Let's not waste it working.

Muna Our students don't have decent textbooks, Wasim.

Wasim There are always textbooks. There's a rep coming from Hong Kong next week. And one from Singapore. There are a hundred good language programmes we can use. It's all English, darling, It's all the same.

Muna He's come from all the way from the UK.

Wasim So he'll have a nice holiday.

Muna What am I supposed to say to him?

Wasim Anything you like, darling, I don't care.

Muna You didn't even read the books.

Wasim I trust you to do that.

Tell him whatever you want. Just make it quick. We're in Damascus – the city is ours. Let's not languish in a foyer.