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Nature's Mistake

As you stroll through a Syrian garden, you will notice many exotic foods prospering in the warm, red soil. From fruits to vegetables, there is a vast amount of color spread into the agriculture. As you continue to progress through, you will soon find yourself around a plant. A rather tall plant, with large leaves. A plant so vile and disgusting; a plant so repulsive on the interior yet so appealing on the exterior. Surrounded by a cool midnight purple color, it is unworthy of such a captivating shade of color. Yes, I am indeed speaking of the fabled *eggplant*.

Now, being from the Middle East, my opinion is not very common among fellow Arabs. *Eggplants* are very commonly used in dishes in the middle east, often as an appetizer before the meal. A very popular dish that consists of *eggplants* originated in Syria, known as Baba Ghanoush. The dish contains, garlic, yogurt, salt and, more obviously, *eggplants*. In this mixture the other flavors drown out the taste of rottenness that exists within the *eggplant*, and I can actually tolerate the taste. *Eggplants* are also used in many Iraqi cuisine. In the Iraqi culture, *eggplants* are often used in Dolma. Dolma is an assortment of vegetables stuffed with rice and different spices. Although *eggplants* are used, Dolma primarily contains stuffed cabbage leaves. I am not capable of tolerating the *eggplant* in this dish, just a sliver of taste from it is enough to keep me away.

Hi, my name is Abdullah Ibrahim, and I am an *eggplant* hater. My hatred for this vegetable arose in my earlier childhood years. As a child my family was not very well off, so we couldn't afford a variety of food. But guess what food was very cheap in Syria? Yep, you

guessed it! Potatoes. Although true, that which I truly despise, the *eggplant*, also happened to be very inexpensive. I can still recall the nights, my mother would be cooking, making food for six others, bringing out one dish at a time. As I heard the *eggplants* sizzling, I knew it was me against the clocks, I would try to fill myself up off one dish as quickly as possible. Holding my breath, I attempted to escape the rancid, sweaty odor so it wouldn't take away my appetite (just reliving the scent of it being grilled is enough to give me night sweats). Although sometimes, I just couldn't escape it, I was faced with the mushy, soggy, brown inner layer surrounded by what looks like a black rubber band staring at me, taunting me almost. "How did you know you hate it if you never tried?" I was asked. I slowly picked up the greasy piece, eyeing it for almost a minute. As it began to collapse in my hand I quickly tossed it into my mouth. The flavor that hit my taste buds, I still remember today. The alarms were going off, my face quickly switched expressions, I was now caught in a squint from the bitterness within the *eggplant*, a single manly tear escaped my face as I fought the urge to vomit. It was as if I bit into a mixture between a snail and a mushroom. "Never again" I told myself in the midst of revulsion.

I stayed true to my words. Some time after my first experience with *eggplants*, my uncle began to test my hatred. He wanted to see how far I was willing to go to avoid my nemesis. He decided to make me a wager. He offered to purchase me a toy, but under one condition. I was told, "either eat both of these hot peppers, with no water or anything, or eat an *eggplant* slice." You know looking back at it, in hindsight, it wasn't a very fair deal. Without any hesitation, I said hand me the peppers. A large grin appeared on my uncle's face as he handed me the red, hot peppers. Also no hesitation, might I add. I looked at the peppers, then at my uncle, then back at the peppers again. I was determined to get that toy. I did not stall to toss the peppers into my

mouth. And so it begins. I took my first bite and tried to play it as cool as possible, shrugging it off as if it didn't affect me.

“Where's my toy” I said, cockily. In reality I was dying, it felt as if my lungs were attempting to escape my mouth with every cough that flowed through. Everything was on fire, my taste buds went numb. My face turned about as red as the pepper I just casually tossed into my mouth. I was sweating profusely, but I wasn't going to let that slow me down. I was a man on a mission. And the mission was to get some water. In reality that's how I would've wanted it to play out. But alas as soon as I bit into the peppers, I went into a frenzy. I ran the 500 meter dash to the hose outside and held my mouth open like a rabid dog and sprayed, hoping to relieve my taste buds. “Still better than the *eggplant* though” I said to myself as I walked back inside. As I returned to the meal, my family, especially my uncle, were all sitting there, cracking jokes as they saw a drenched version of me come in.

“So about that deal” I stammered to my uncle. “Do I still get the toy?”

“Only if you eat the *eggplant* now.” He replied while smirking.

Sigh. I didn't get the toy, sadly. But on the bright side, I did learn something from this experience. There's only so much I'm willing to do without resorting to something that is distasteful to me. Also my uncle is a dick.