



## Un/Common Ground

*Arielle Pierce*

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Jamal just wants to be happy. Escaping a repressive country, he has come to Saratoga Springs to attend university. Jamal's freedom, however, is an illusion, for even thousands of miles away from his homophobic father, he dares not act on the feelings he has for the local barista.

Matt feels like his life has stalled out. His dreams of being an artist are being sucked away by the reality of life, and now he works in a coffee shop and wishes things could be different.

When Jamal receives news that a gay friend back home has been hurt in a hate crime, he flees his apartment, oblivious to the rapidly worsening weather. A blizzard strands him at the local coffeeshop, where Matt, the man he's been pining over for three long years, happens to be working.

Helping an elderly neighbor home through the storm is enough to break the ice, but is their growing attraction enough to convince Jamal to break faith with his family back home? As Jamal and Matt struggle to find some common ground, the cultural differences between them work to pull them apart. Torn between his family and his heart, Jamal is faced with a choice: break free of his family's expectations, or lose his chance to find happiness with Matt.

## Un/Common Ground Details

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## From Reader Review Un/Common Ground for online ebook

### **Maria says**

#### **This was so hard to read...**

Jamal is a young man, a guest student in the US, having his first taste of freedom. Because he is a Muslim, gay, and is already afraid of going back home East, where he will either conform and marry a girl, or come out and not only loose his family, but probably also his life.

But for as long as he's in the US, he really likes to at least pretend to be free for a second. And when he meets Matt, really meets him, it all gets intense very fast. It tender, tentative and heart-breaking. Especially because it gets you thinking about all the repercussions the oppression of the LGBTQ community all over the world really has. The problem of safe sex and testing is one of them, and one that a lot of people (me included) sometimes completely forget about. We focus on the violence, the mortal danger, the torture. What we tend to forget is the everyday life and what that kind of oppression really means. It doesn't matter how educated you are, how far away from home you are, how different your current freedom is from the rest of your life - it always stays with you. And you will always see repercussions for your actions everywhere. And I loved how the author managed to show it without saying it.

I enjoyed this story very much. Matt might not have been my most favorite person in the world. I found his empathy and understanding to be lacking. A lot. Seriously, how selfish and ignorant can you be? Never heard of persecution because of one's sexuality? Never heard about gay witch hunts or honor killings? Maaaaan. Really. But on the other hand - and it's hard for me to swallow - I can understand that his experiences with oppression are really non-existent. So who am I to judge so harshly? But I couldn't help but be annoyed with him.

Jamal was the gem of this story for me. His POV, his thoughts, his fears really stayed with me and made me think about him and people in similar situation for quite some time. Really good.

The writing wasn't as smooth as I'd have liked, but it wasn't bad. I did love the set-up and how it all turned out. The ending was perfect, and fit the tentative and unsure tone of the story perfectly. A HEA would have been ridiculous under the circumstances and if you're honest, then I'm not sure if there even was a possible solution for Jamal's drama. But I'd still love to read more about these two.

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### **Lisa says**

A short story featuring Matt a local barista and Jamal, Khazastani student.

They have both liked each other for the last 3 years where they meet at a meeting of the LGBT.

The story goes into the cultural differences between the 2 and what it is like to be gay in Khazastan.

Word count 22955.

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### **Simon Vandereecken says**

A short story about Jamal, coming from Kazakhstan and studying in the United States and Matt, an american guy. Found it quite moving, I had hard times for Jamal when reading the aspects of homosexuality in his country, but the whole story is quite touching and sweet. Overall, I loved it, and would advise if you want to bright a bit your day and just put a goofy smile on your face :)

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### **Lelyana says**

It's not easy being gay.

Being gay and a Muslim , disaster. I'm a Muslim, and I know, how it is like for Muslim gay even until now. Jamal, luckily lived in New York, at least for a while.

It's still not easy for him though.

Until he met Matt, that sweet gentleman barista and falling in love with him.

The AIDS test issue, family issue, made them even stronger. I loved that.

This is a sweet story, with a big question mark through the ending.

Will they make it? What if Jamal come home to Kazakhstan and he must obey his Papa's demand to get married to a woman?

Well, I don't want it to happen. If there's no sequel for this, I'll be sure to make my very own HEA ending. Recommended.

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### **Elci says**

Please author, may I have some more?

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### **Leisha says**

Rating overview

Writing: ★★★★

Story: ★★★★

Characters: ★★★★★

Overall: ★★★★★ (4.33)

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This really was quite stunning - two young men, one from a modern and open America and one from a conservative and close-minded Kazakhstan and a snow storm that changes them forever

I really enjoyed this one, there were a few bumps in the writing and also I would've liked there to be a proper epilogue to the story but overall definitively one of the best M/M shorts I've read.

It's a story about prejudice, longing, second chances and respect and a very good one at that.

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### **Ameena says**

I loved it, it was really beautiful and I completely understand Jamal because my country is the exact same as Kazakhstan, I am so glad that he found love and happiness and wish it to all the gay guys and girls all over the world, great job and well done and thank you for giving us hope that it could happen no matter what you will find love, thank you again and wonderful writing.

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### **Rachel Emily says**

I really, really loved this. Loved the characters and I totally want more! Thanks for a great story!

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### **Sandra says**

[I thought for sure Jamal was a virgin and he was just misunders

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### **CrabbyPatty says**

A lovely short story about Jamal and Mark. I look forward to reading more about them!

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### **K says**

4.5 stars rounded up

Excellent contemporary story about Jamal, a student from Kazakhstan who has been studying in the US for three years. When he received bad news of a friend from his father, Jamal wanders outside into a coming snow storm. He finds himself in Uncommon Grounds, a coffee shop where Matt, an arts graduate works. Matt has been watching Jamal since he first met him and seeing him upset invites him tell him what's wrong. As he does a snow storm arrives and the pair help coffee shop regular, Ms Feinstein, home before going to Matt's apartment. This story shows the development of Jamal and Matt's relationship really well, but it also gives an extremely sad insight of what it means to be gay in a country where it is completely unacceptable - to the extent that Jamal's own father thinks gay people should be shot - and what dangers there are in such normal thing for most of us, like buying condoms.

I absolutely loved this story, the main characters are very well drawn but I have to say the scene stealing 83 year old liberal Jew that is Ms Feinstein just wins it for me hands down :) Thank you Arielle.

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**Anna K?avi?a says**

Reality check, my darlings.

While the story is about homophobia it's not depressing as hell. Or maybe it is, depends on how you look at it.

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**Sanet says**

Young Adult based but with moving emotion that one cannot help but feel.

Its was such a beautiful plot and from the get go... I wanted more. This short story could use reworking into a full novel.... about the struggle that comes after.

As someone that believes.... its your very right to love whom you want to love... no matter race, place or creed .... this one once again shows us that there is still room in the world for acceptance, unconditional love.

So do yourself a favor and read it.

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**Steelwhisper says**

3.5\* rounded up. Very nice study of characters.

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**jules0623 says**

Nice story but the ending was a bit too unresolved for me.

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