

Habibti

By

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CREDIT ROLE

MONTAGE:

John's EVENT COVERAGE ARTICLE provides a narrative for the following two sequences, which are intercut back-and-forth during the VO.

SEQUENCE A. A PAIR OF MALE HANDS, over some Bureaucratic office desk, methodically opens to the first page of one Saudi passport after another. Each passport reveals a pair of eyes staring up from behind a hijjab and veil on the alabaster-glossed ID page. With each new passport, the Pair Of Male Hands references the ID Number and scribbles it on a new piece of paper before passing the passport off screen.

SEQUENCE B. Like an army of black ants, SAUDI WOMEN wearing abayas, hijjabs and niqabs walk the King Fahd Causeway which connects Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. They march quietly with strength and purpose while holding their passports at their sides. Cars full of Saudi families pass; the eyes within shoot disapproving looks toward the women.

JOHN (VO)

(reading from his article)

Last week 75 Saudi women endured the shadeless bridge connecting Saudi Arabia to Bahrain, with their passports in hand. They marched peacefully toward the custom gates, prepared to attempt admission onto the island of Bahrain, without the routine letter of permission from their *Marham* or male guardian. Less than 40 years ago, women were able to travel freely but, in recent decades, conservative clerics have been enforcing this travel fatwa in an effort to counteract the increased Western influences inside the Kingdom. Previous attempts to resist have proven unsuccessful, ending in the arrest of the female perpetrator. However, last Tuesday's large-scale, non-militant resistance, led by a Maia Al Shura of Riyadh, proved impossible to ignore. Though they were not allowed to cross the countries' border, their action gained immediate attention of Saudi's monarch and Prime Minister and set into motion a very sudden change,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (VO) (cont'd)
leading to the lifting of the
travel fatwa, as of this Sunday
evening past...

IMAGE C. A SECOND PAIR OF MALE HANDS takes the first passport, opens it to a blank VISA PAGE and flattens a VISA STICKER on to it with purpose. In Arabic, it reads: KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA INDEPENDENT ENTRANCE AND RE-ENTRY VISA for MUNIRA AL OUFU.

ZOOM IN on the name MUNIRA AL OUFU.

INT. A BLACK SUV - DOWNTOWN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA - 3:30 PM
ASR PRAYER CALL sings from a distant tower.

MUNIRA AL OUFU (30) sits in the backseat of a an SUV. Only her eyes are revealed, deep in thought.

Munira is driven through the monochromatic cityscape of Old Riyadh, with the newer high rise buildings towering in the distance.

ZOOM IN on Munira's feet, decorated with golden peep-toe pumps. One ankle draws nervous circles in the air.

Soon the city fades into a desert road, heading toward an oasis of large Saudi-style homes.

The ASR PRAYER CALL ends.

INTERCUT:

INT. THE PRAYER ROOM - AL OUFU HOME - RIYADH

KHALID AL OUFU (45), a Saudi man with a full beard and kind eyes is barefoot in his thobe. He presses his forehead against one of the many prayer rugs which carpet a den-like room.

Mouthing a barely-audible prayer, he moves through his seamless repetitive choreography.

INT. A BLACK SUV - AL OUFU'S NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

The black SUV enters the neighborhood, full of ornate high-walled Saudi villas. MUNIRA fishes in her purse.

(CONTINUED)

The LAUGHTER OF TWO SAUDI MOTHERS pulls Munira's gaze up toward the car window. She watches the women power-walk on the opposite side of the street. Both women are fully-covered in abayas, hijabs, niqabs and fluorescent Nike sneakers. The SKINNY WOMAN holds hand weights and performs bicep curls as she chats in Arabic to the PREGNANT FRIEND at her side.

Now Munira returns to her purse and retrieves a WAD OF BILLS.

The SUV pulls into the driveway of the Al Oufi's villa and parks.

Munira leans forward to address RAFAY, her middle-aged Pakistani driver.

Munira speaks with a Saudi accent.

Rafay speaks with a Pakistani accent.

MUNIRA

I met with a friend at the Patisserie. We chatted for hours. Traffic was horrible on the way home.

Munira hands Rafay the wad of Riyals.

MUNIRA

You understand?

RAFAY

Yes, ma'am.

Rafay takes the money, with an uncomfortable nod, and stares down at it.

MUNIRA

I'll need the car again later tonight. 12:30. You can come into the driveway.

RAFAY

Yes, Madame.

A FOLDED PAGE OF LINED PAPER lies on the car seat next to Munira. She places it in her abaya pocket, before exiting the vehicle and walking through the courtyard toward her front door.

INT. THE AL OUFİ'S FOYER - LATE AFTERNOON

A marble foyer opens on to an ascending staircase. There are hallways on either side.

First, MUNIRA removes her niqab and hijab with a mesmerizing fluidity, to reveal long black hair. She is a fragile beauty. Her hands are soft and feminine. She goes on to remove her abaya. Underneath, she is dressed casually chic, in fitted jeans and a simple silk blouse.

Munira ascends the staircase and enters the upstairs hallway, crossing to her twins' bedroom door, which has been left ajar.

INT. THE TWINS' BEDROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

MUNIRA stands in the doorway and looks to her sons, SAMMER and GHASSAN AL OUFİ (4) who sleep next to each other on the bottom tier of a bunk bed.

Now PRIMA EVANGELISTA (50), the Filipina maid and nanny, appears behind Munira. She wears a service uniform.

Prima speaks with a Filipino accent.

PRIMA
(re: the twins)
Still sleeping, ma'am?

MUNIRA
Yes. How is Sammer feeling?

Munira drapes her outerwear over Prima's out-stretched arm.

PRIMA
Better ma'am. He was playing all day.

MUNIRA
Khalid is taking them to stay at their Jadda's tonight.

PRIMA
Yes, ma'am. There are clothes already for them in a bag. I'll give them a bath when they wake.

MUNIRA
I'll do it. The bath.

(CONTINUED)

PRIMA

Yes, ma'am.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

MUNIRA sits her purse on a dresser and takes from it a small pill packet. She pops out two unidentified tablets and places them on her tongue. Then, with a drink from a bottle of water on the dresser, she swallows the pills.

INT. THE TWINS' BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

SAMMER and GHASSAN splash and shriek in a bathtub.

MUNIRA sits on a closed toilet, above them. She tries to converse with her sons despite the chaos.

MUNIRA

What did you play today?

Sammar and Ghassan ignore their mother and continue with their cacophonous affairs.

MUNIRA

How is your throat Sammer?

Sammar and Ghassan continue ignoring Munira's attempts at rapport.

MUNIRA

Please. Sammer, stop this!
Ghassan! Khalas, habibi. Min
Fadhlek! You are messing the floor!

Sammer and Ghassan pay their mother no mind - instead they send a wave of bathwater on to Munira's lap without any fear of consequence.

Frantically, Munira rises and crosses to the bathroom door. She stands in the doorway and calls for help.

MUNIRA

Prima!

Prima arrives at the door in no time.

With a look of desperation, Munira motions toward her sons, still engaged in their chaotic play.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

Please...

Prima moves to the tub's edge and calmly kneels down to Sammer and Ghassan's level. She puts a hand on each of their shoulders.

The boys begin to settle.

PRIMA

Why are you not washing? You have 30 minutes until you go. You know, 30 minutes? It is a short time. No more playing. *Yallah*. Finish.

Prima takes a sponge and begins to lather Ghassan with soapy water.

Sammer and Ghassan both speak with thick Saudi accents.

SAMMER

(in proclamation)

I have a cat. His name is Youssef.

Prima shakes her head with a smile, as she rinses Ghassan.

PRIMA

You have?

GHASSAN

(dry)

We have no cat.

Sammer smiles and places some bubbles above his upper lip.

SAMMER

(with even more conviction)

Okay, but I have a tiger. His name is Mustache.

Ghassan shakes his head with a sigh and a dead-pan expression.

GHASSAN

We have no tiger.

Prima chuckles silently and moves on to lather Sammer.

PRIMA

(to Sammer)

Where are you keeping a tiger? I clean this whole house, I never see a tiger.

(CONTINUED)

Prima turns and spots Munira, still standing in the doorway. Munira has been watching thoughtfully.

PRIMA CONT.

(to Munira; in Arabic)

Madame, I will finish if you would like to get ready.

Munira exits, embarrassed.

Meanwhile, Ghassan has confronted Sammer with militancy.

GHASSAN

You are lying! We have no tiger!

Prima shushes Ghassan and taps the underside of his chin.

PRIMA

(to Ghassan)

He is only being silly.

SAMMER

I am not silly! You do not know because you can never see it! Only I see it!

Prima pacifies Sammer.

PRIMA

Okay. Yes. You have a Tiger. You have a tiger.

INT. THE AL OUFU KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

SUMI (25) a beautiful Indian woman, pours batter into a cheese puff tin. Sumi is dressed in a service uniform, similar to Prima's. She has an unusually small frame and hardly looks a day over 16. On her right cheek runs a LONG HYPERTROPHIED SCAR - still pink.

Now KHALID passes by the kitchen doorway, noticing Sumi in his periphery. He slows his stride and looks in at her with half-masked intrigue.

Sumi looks up to Khalid and nods shyly before he continues on his way.

Sumi watches him go.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - AL OUFİ HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

KHALID ascends the staircase into an upstairs hallway. PRIMA exits the Twins' Bathroom, with SAMMER and GHASSAN in tow.

The boys are wrapped in towels and smile when they see their father.

Khalid lunges playfully at his sons and they squeal in response.

SAMMER

We are going to Jadda's?

GHASSAN

She will have cake?

Khalid ruffles his sons' damp hair. He speaks with a thick Saudi accent.

KHALID

First, the real food. Where shall we go?

SAMMER

Popeye's! Because I am like Popeye the Sailor Man.

Sammer holds up a bicep.

SAMMER CONT.

Because feel me.

Khalid squeezes Sammer's bicep.

KHALID

Oh, very big!

Ghassan flexes his bicep, as well.

GHASSAN

And me. Feel it.

Khalid squeezes Ghassan's bicep with an impressed nod before flexing both of his own.

KHALID

Feel mine.

Sammer and Ghassan each latch on to one of their fathers' arms. Khalid lifts his sons like dangling barbells, bouncing the boys several times before setting them down. They screech and laugh.

(CONTINUED)

SAMMER

Yes, we are going to Popeye's?

KHALID

We will see. ...But, don't say it
to your mother.

(Beat)

Let Prima dress you. Yallah.

Ghassan yanks on his father's thobe.

GHASSAN

I am knowing my ABC song, Baba.

KHALID

Good for you, Habibi.

(in Arabic)

But only Arabic at Jadda's.

Prima leads the twins into their bedroom.

GHASSAN

(over his shoulder)

Hear me, Baba. A B C D E F G...

Khalid heads toward the Master Bedroom, in the other
direction.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Blacks and golds saturate the room, accented by several
pieces of Islamic Art, consisting of calligraphy and
abstract shapes.

MUNIRA is staring into a closet at her extensive collection
of couture. She is wrapped in a towel with damp hair.

KHALID smiles and goes to his wife.

KHALID

What to wear? What to wear?

Khalid goes to Munira and runs the back of his hands against
her bare arms. He kisses her ear.

KHALID

Good day?

MUNIRA

Mm. I saw an old friend.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

KHALID

Who is this new girl in the kitchen?

MUNIRA

Her name is Sumi. I have hired her to serve tonight.

KHALID

Only tonight?

MUNIRA

Why?

KHALID

(shrugs)

...You left me hungry again today.

Khalid kisses Munira's neck.

KHALID CONT.

If this girl's a skilled cook...

Khalid kissed Munira's neck again.

MUNIRA

Prima didn't cook for you?

Khalid moves to his side of the closet and pulls a starched thobe from its hanger.

KHALID

Everything she makes, it tastes the same. I prefer my wife's cooking...or what I remember. You know, your parents talked on and on about your love for the kitchen. It was a big selling point. Too bad for me it is no longer an interest.

MUNIRA

It is, Khalid.

(Beat.)

You remember the old dry cleaning on Al Nasif?

KHALID

I think so.

MUNIRA

It's empty now.

(CONTINUED)

KHALID

So?

MUNIRA

Well...it's for sale.

KHALID

So?

MUNIRA

So...eh...I know I've mentioned before, starting a small cafe. Khalid, this place, it would be perfect for something-

KHALID

(w/ a laugh)

- Munira. We are really still speaking of this? It's ridiculous. You want to do for hundreds of strangers what you cannot manage for your small family! And, you know nothing of business.

MUNIRA

(gently)

I manage your finances.

Khalid grunts and removes his thobe to reveal a white undershirt and long cotton boxers. He throws his thobe on the bed and pulls on a dressier version.

MUNIRA

I think maybe if I had a project for myself, it might inspire some -

KHALID

- Khalas! It's ridiculous. Our sons are your project - no? Cooking for your family is a project. End of discussion.

Munira nods quietly. She has made her final effort.

Now Khalid goes to his wife with a smile.

KHALID

Silly. You understand what I'm saying, don't you?

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

I do.

KHALID

I hope you're not angry with me.

(Khalid frowns, playfully)

I'll miss you tonight... - but it's Ladies Only. I know. I won't interfere.

(Beat. With disapproval)

Is your cousin coming?

MUNIRA

Maia? And a few others, yes.

KHALID

(shakes his head)

I am happy to leave then. Yet she is not so bad as her husband, I will say that. I don't like that man in my house.

Munira evades the topic of Faisal.

MUNIRA

I think your mother will be happy to spend some time alone with her boys, tonight.

KHALID

She prefers to have you there.

MUNIRA

I don't think so.

KHALID

She does. She enjoys your conversations. You have things to talk about - things in common.

Munira thinks on this a moment.

MUNIRA

...I suppose we're both women.

KHALID

That's not enough?

Beat. Khalid retrieves a squirt of gel from his bedside table and caresses his dense black hair.

Munira reaches for a tailored silk pant suit and a flirtatious summer dress, a la 1930s Paris. She considers her options.

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Khalid points to the pant suit.

KHALID
(re: the pantsuit)
I like that one.

Khalid straightens his collar.

Munira considers the pant suit with new resentment.

KHALID
Okay. Time to go.

Khalid goes to Munira and gently turns her head to face him. Munira's body follows reluctantly. Khalid takes a good look at his wife.

KHALID
It's a good thing you're so beautiful.

Khalid kisses Munira and slides his hands down the front of her torso, landing on her abdomen. Now he pulls his lips away.

KHALID
Any good news?

MUNIRA
It's too early to test.

KHALID
Still? Well...insha'allah.

Khalid gives Munira's abdomen a gentle tap before turning to exit the room, without looking back.

KHALID
No one can accuse me of being impatient.

Munira doesn't watch him go but replaces the pant suit on the closet rack, defiantly.

SAMMER and GHASSAN can be heard in the hallway.

GHASSAN AND SAMMER (OS)
Baba! Baba!

Munira turns toward the door.

KHALID OS
Kiss your mother 'goodbye'.

Sammer and Ghassan, dressed in mini thobes and skull caps,
tear into the room.

Munira smiles.

GHASSAN
Omy! Baba is taking us to get
buttermilk biscuits!

MUNIRA
Is he? He is taking you to the fast
foods?

SAMMER
Yes. Because then if we eat the
buttermilk biscuits we can be big
and strong like Popeye The Sailor
Man.

Munira raises an eyebrow.

MUNIRA
Buttermilk biscuits, they will not
make you big and strong. They will
make you big and fat.

SAMMER
No. Popeye the Sailor Man, he eats
the biscuits and he is not fat.

Ghassan lifts up his thobe and pinches a roll of skin on his
stomach.

GHASSAN
Yes. You see me? I am already
having the fat.

SAMMER
Let me see.

Sammer goes to Ghassan and inspects his roll of fat.

SAMMER CONT.
(re: Ghassan's roll)
It is only skin.

Khalid re-enters and stands in the doorway.

MUNIRA
(smiling)
Habibi...

Munira pulls Ghassan's thobe back down.

KHALID
Yallah.

MUNIRA
Come.

Munira kneels to the ground. Sammer and Ghassan each kiss their mother on the cheek. She inspects their faces briefly - one then the other - before kissing each on the forehead and nudging them toward their father, stiffly.

MUNIRA
Okay, Habaaibi. Ma'asalaama.

Sammer and Ghassan exit into the hallway.

Munira addresses Khalid before he turns to go.

MUNIRA
(with urgency)
Watch them close.

KHALID
(without sensitivity)
They will be with their Jadda! She
is the best mother I know.

Khalid exits.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BATHROOM - EVENING

MUNIRA sits at a vanity, wearing the FLIRTATIOUS SUMMER DRESS, seen earlier, cinched at the waist with a wide belt.

Munira opens her laptop, which sits next to a curling iron and scattered makeup.

Munira opens INTERNET EXPLORER, where two windows have been tabbed. The window displayed is a real estate listing which includes a picture of one BARE-BONES COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTY, FOR SALE (recognizable, as a retired dry cleaners). It has a label which reads: 124 Al NASIF, RIYADH. After a moment of consideration, Munira hovers her mouse over the CLOSE ICON before closing the tab with conviction. This reveals the next tabbed window, in which is displayed a similar real estate website. This one shows a TERRACED

(CONTINUED)

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTY, FOR SALE. The property seems to have a great deal of potential. There is a large display window and planters on the terrace. There is also the remnants of an old sign which reads: *Le Perle de Rose*. The location of this property is not visible. Munira looks at this listing for several moments before closing her laptop's lid.

Munira begins to apply a full-face of make-up with an effortless grace.

After several moments a DRESSER DRAWER OPENS in the adjoining bedroom.

Munira glances toward the door.

INTERCUT:

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

PRIMA is at the dresser and unloads folded laundry from a basket, at her feet. She takes a brief moment to study the finery of a set of royal blue lingerie, before placing it in a drawer full of similar items. Prima takes note of a half-hidden BOX OF PREGNANCY TESTS against one side of the drawer. The box has been opened.

MUNIRA (OS)

Prima?

Dutifully, Prima closes the drawer and moves toward the adjoining Master Bathroom. She stands behind the closed door.

PRIMA

Yes, Madame?

MUNIRA (OS)

Come in.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BATHROOM - EVENING

PRIMA opens the door tentatively and gives MUNIRA a respectful nod.

PRIMA

Yes, ma'am?

Munira does not turn from the mirror, but speaks to Prima's reflection, instead. She is curling her hair.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
You have met Sumi?

PRIMA
...This is the girl downstairs?

MUNIRA
Yes. She will be in the kitchen for tonight.

PRIMA
Yes, I saw her come in, ma'am.

MUNIRA
She will be doing the serving. You may help her if you find time.

PRIMA
Okay ma'am. But, uh... Why not me do the serving, m'am?

Munira ignores Prima's question. Beat.

MUNIRA
You have cared for many children, yes?

Short pause.

PRIMA
Yes, Madame. I have worked for six families until this one.

Munira nods nervously. Beat.

MUNIRA
Are my boys more badly behaved than the others?

Prima is surprised at the question. She treads lightly.

PRIMA
No, madame.

MUNIRA
You must say the truth, Prima.

MIRIAM
Yes, ma'am. It is the truth.

Munira shakes her head.

MUNIRA

They do not listen to me as they listen to you. I see this. Yesterday, I take Sammer and Ghassan to the swimming lesson. Sammer, he talks and talks all the time, about nothing, and Ghassan, he will not go in the water. The swimming teacher, she is American, she is very nice, she says, "Ghassan, swim to me on your front." But, Ghassan, he only cries. So I say to him, I say, "Habibi, if you do not swim habibi, you will not get your bag." I have bought them a bag of, eh, toy cars from Al Rashid. I say, "What is in your bag, habibi? What is in your bag?" But he does not even look at me - he screams and cries. I say, "If you do not swim, Habibi, you will not get your bag. In fact, you will be grounded, you will be grounded for five minutes." Still, he does not come off the edge - he does not stop screaming. The swimming teacher, she takes him in her hands; she tries to talk to him about anything. She asks, "what do you want to be when you grow up." He says, "I want to be a soldier..." And I am thinking, *insh'allah* he does not say something to shame the family...

PRIMA

What does he say, ma'am?

Munira continues without humor.

MUNIRA

"...Because I want to take the sharp - the knife - and I am going to cut off your head." He says this to her! She is American!

PRIMA

(curbing her amusement)
Where is he hearing this?

MUNIRA

His cousins. Khalid's sister's boys. They are always saying these

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA (cont'd)
things. But what can we do? We
cannot keep them from family.

PRIMA
They are only small, ma'am. They
will learn. Also, Ghassan has a
rash sometime on his leg. The pool
water makes it, eh, scratch...eh,
itch.

Munira takes this in, painfully. She shakes her head,
disappointed with herself.

MUNIRA
You see? I did not know this.

PRIMA
You are busy, ma'am.

MUNIRA
La'a. No. I am not so busy.

The DOORBELL RINGS, downstairs.

Beat.

Munira turns to address Prima, face on, as if she had never
established confidence between them.

MUNIRA
There are five suitcases in the
storage. You will fill them with
everything from my closet and
drawers.

Prima stands for a moment, confused. Munira crosses to
exit, but pauses in the doorway without looking back.

MUNIRA
Be discreet.

Munira exits, leaving Prima standing in disbelief.

INT. THE AL OUFU FOYER - EVENING

MUNIRA descends a staircase, to the entryway. She gathers
herself, for a moment, before opening the door to MAIA AL
SHURA (35-45) and her husband FAISAL AL SHURA
(50). Maia wears an abaya and hijab. Faisal, a handsome
Syrian man, is dressed in a business suit.

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The following dialogue overlaps, creating a festive energy which starkly contrasts the scene preceding it.

MUNIRA
Marhaba, Maia! Faisal!

MAIA
Salaam, Habibti!

FAISAL
Hello Munira.

Though MAIA is of Saudi nationality, she speaks with an American accent.

FAISAL speaks with a Syrian accent.

MUNIRA
I am so glad to see you both!
(to Maia)
The woman of the hour.

They greet each other with kisses.

MAIA
Don't start with all that. This is not about me. It's about us. And you know how I am; I like my anonymity.

FAISAL
But not so good at keeping it.

Maia removes her outer-clothes. She is wearing an elegant pant suit with killer stiletto heels and her hair tied back in a bun. Maia is confident and sexy, with a tomboyish sort of appeal.

Munira takes Maia's over-clothes and motions toward the living room.

MUNIRA
Come sit. Come sit.

INT. AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The living room is large, open and peppered with beautiful flower arrangements; it is connected to an elegant dining room with a long buffet table, set for a banquet.

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MAIA
Oh, this is beautiful.
(to Faisal)
Isn't it beautiful in here?

FAISAL
(sincerely)
It is.

Faisal plops himself onto a leather sofa.

MAIA
(intimately)
Thanks for going to all this
trouble.

MUNIRA
If I could not be part of the
action, I thought I can be part of
the reaction.

Maia wraps an arm around Munira's waist and squeezes affectionately.

MAIA
My God, Muni, there's nothing to
you!

MUNIRA
What? It is here, believe me. It is
hiding.

MAIA
Where?

Maia pats Munira down, unapologetically.

MAIA CONT.
Where is it? I don't feel it.

MUNIRA shoos her away, playfully.

MUNIRA
(w/ a nervous laugh)
Maia!

PRIMA enters from the foyer and crosses to take Maia's over-clothes from Munira before disappearing back the way she came.

FAISAL
We're the first to arrive?

Faisal shoots Maia an "I told you so" look.

MUNIRA

Mhmm. I'm glad to have you all for myself.

Maia takes a seat near Faisal.

MAIA

Go ahead, get it out of your system, tell her I was harassing you for the entire drive over-

FAISAL

-This woman was harassing me for the entire drive over.

(mimicking Maia)

"We'll be the last ones there, Faisal". "You're only going 60 kilometers per hour, Faisal". "Faisal use your horn." You're such a passive driver, Faisal..."

Munira laughs as she crosses to an entertainment unit and retrieves a remote. She switches on some CLASSICAL MUSIC.

MAIA

(to Faisal)

Are you finished?

FAISAL

Never drive with this woman in the passenger's seat. She will make you crazy.

MAIA

What other seat would you put me in, Darling?

FAISAL

Why you look at me like I am the reason you are not driving in this country? In Syria women drive where they wish: into trees; over pedestrians, through buildings, wherever they like.

MAIA

(to Faisal)

Remind me who drove your immobile tezak around Detroit while you were waiting to get your license?

(micro-beat)

Munira, sit. You're making me nervous.

(CONTINUED)

Munira crosses to an arm chair and sits, upright and poised, as Faisal continues.

FAISAL

That's completely different.

(micro beat.)

- You know, of course, Munira, I am saying nothing of your driving potential. But I am telling you, Maia should never be in control of an automobile in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is a fact.

Maia punches Faisal hard, now.

FAISAL

You see?! For this reason exactly! She is violent. For driving downtown, you need a cool temper.

MAIA

Is there some place we can send him so that we can have a civil conversation? Like, maybe a cage? Or a dungeon of some sort?

Munira laughs.

Beat.

MAIA

(without surprise)

Is Khalid not here?

MUNIRA

Uh...no. He wanted to see you, but... He has taken the boys to visit their *Jadda*.

Maia nods.

MAIA

(beat; to Faisal)

Did you see what they did to their back patio?

MUNIRA

(to Faisal)

Yes. Khalid, eh, put in a new flat-screen outside. One-hundred six centimeters.

FAISAL

Really?

MAIA

(to Faisal)

Go check it out. Take your time.

MUNIRA

No, now Maia, he doesn't have to leave us.

MAIA

Sure he does.

(to Faisal)

Isn't Syria playing Saudi tonight?

FAISAL

Oh, my God.

(to the Ladies)

I am afraid to announce, Ladies, that I will be leaving you for a sporting engagement.

MAIA

Easy as that.

Faisal rises to his feet and bends to address Munira, before heading out.

FAISAL

Will you feel safe being left alone with my wife?

A pillow hits Faisal, square in the butt.

Munira smiles.

MUNIRA

I think so.

Faisal strolls out of the living room toward the back patio and disappears.

Maia checks to see that Faisal has gone, before proceeding.

MUNIRA

(Amused)

You both...

Maia continues with her own agenda, leaning in secretively.

(CONTINUED)

MAIA

I need to tell you about Rasha.

MUNIRA

- *Ma'ashalla.*

MAIA

Faisal wouldn't let her out of his sight, if he heard this.

Munira leans in, as well.

MUNIRA

What is it?

MAIA

The poor little thing has this earth shattering crush on her writing tutor at the Academy. Leon.

MUNIRA

Ma'ashalla.

MAIA

He's a returning student on one of the oil compounds. Probably 18 or so-

MUNIRA

-And Rasha, now, she is ten?

Maia raises an eyebrow.

MAIA

Biologically. I had to intercept a love letter the other day. She was planning on handing it in as a writing assignment.

MUNIRA

This is no surprise. Her mother is Maia Al Shura.

MAIA

Oh, I wasn't half so bold at that age.

MUNIRA

What?!

MAIA

Not a chance. I was influenced by a certain *younger* cousin of mine.

MUNIRA
(unconvincingly)
Which cousin?

MAIA
...a certain younger cousin who
found herself in a very similar
situation to Rasha's, if my memory
serves me...which it always does.

MUNIRA
(coily)
I don't know what you're talking
about.

MAIA
She called me after every tutoring
session with, "Sami this", "Sami
that"?

Munira rises with a smile and crosses to the kitchen as she
responds.

MUNIRA
Oh. This was nothing. He was a good
teacher. I enjoyed my studies.

MAIA
I'm sure you did.

MUNIRA
I'll get Faisal a drink. You want
a drink?

Maia waves a "no" as Munira pokes her head into the kitchen.

INT. THE AL OUFU KITCHEN - EVENING

MUNIRA addresses SUMI, who is sawing a baguette into
medallions.

Sumi looks up.

MUNIRA
There is a man in the back. Take a
drink to him, please.

Sumi nods obediently and Munira turns back to the living
room.

INT. THE AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - EVENING

MAIA has pulled a letter, written on yellowed paper, out of her purse. It looks as if it has been ripped from a composition book. She waves it at MUNIRA with a smile.

MAIA
Evidence.

MUNIRA
What?

MAIA
(reads)
Le 21 Novembre.

Maia looks up from the page.

MAIA
This was the month after I moved to Michigan. Should I read it?

MUNIRA
La'a. [No]

MAIA
I think I will.

Munira rests a hand over her mouth in anticipation.

Maia reads in French.

MAIA CONT.
(reading)
Dearest Cousin. I'm sure I have fallen in love with Sami.-

MUNIRA
(blushing)
- *Khalas* [enough], Maia.-

MAIA
(still reading)
I am taking sessions from him, three times a week. I think I might speak French better than he does now, so I have to pretend to make mistakes. I dream that we will move away together. Somewhere elegant.

POV MUNIRA

Munira shuts her eyes; her face is serene.

(CONTINUED)

Light floods through her lids and images dance like a kaleidoscope. The images illustrate a childhood dream.

As Maia continues reading, the voice of YOUNG MUNIRA speaks in tandem.

A. There is a sunny terrace, overgrown with colorful flora.

B. Under a rod-iron cafe table, two well-dressed feet connect to bare legs.

C. Rustic desserts are displayed in a sunlit window.

MAIA CONT.

(still reading)

I want to open a French Bistro,
with a garden on the terrace. I'm
creating a menu. Today I made a
Fig Tart with Thyme. I wish you
could have tasted it. I hope you
are liking America. Have you seen
snow? I would like to see the snow,
someday.

Munira opens her eyes and watches Maia as she finishes reading the letter.

MAIA CONT.

(still reading)

I miss you, Maia. If I can't be
there with you - insha'allah, I can
find my own paradise one day.

POV CAMERA

Maia looks up from the letter.

Munira is smiling.

MAIA

Lofty aspirations for a
nine-year-old girl.

MUNIRA

Lofty for a woman of 30.

SUMI enters with a drink in hand. She crosses to the back patio and exits.

Munira and Maia continue, paying her no mind. Maia hands Munira the letter. She marvels at it, shaking her head.

(CONTINUED)

MAIA

Can you believe my mother kept it all those years? I'm realizing she was quite the hoarder.

MUNIRA

Amaati. I really do miss her.

MAIA

Me too. More than ever, lately.

MUNIRA

Of course.

MAIA

(beat)

Oh! I have more...

EXT. THE AL OUFU BACK PATIO - EVENING

SUMI stands eyes-down in the doorway. She is holding the drink in one hand and seems scared to proceed.

FAISAL sits alone at a table, in a yard lit by morrocon lanterns. He is watching the football game, mentioned earlier, leaning forward with interest.

The TV is mounted on the lattice terrace top and PLAYS AT MEDIUM VOLUME.

FAISAL

(at the TV)

Yallah! Defense! Defense! La'a!

Faisal finally notices Sumi and gives her a friendly nod.

FAISAL

Hello.

Sumi nods and looks up, accidentally meeting Faisal's gaze.

FAISAL

This is for me?

Sumi is taken by his handsomeness. She nods.

Faisal smiles at her with half-hidden amusement.

Sumi averts his gaze.

(CONTINUED)

SUMI
Sorry Sir. Yes, sir.

Sumi takes the drink to him and bows as she steps away from the table. But Faisal catches eyes, once again.

FAISAL
What's your name?

Short pause.

SUMI
Sumi, sir.

FAISAL
Sumi from... Bangladesh?

Sumi shakes her head.

FAISAL CONT.
Sri Lanka?

SUMI
South India.

FAISAL
South India! Too easy.
(Beat)
Well, thank you very much Sumi,
from South India, with your
beautiful big eyes. Ma'ashalla.

SUMI
(nervously)
Yes please, sir. Thank you, sir.

Sumi turns to leave.

Faisal watches her go.

INT. AL OUFY LIVING ROOM - EVENING

MUNIRA has moved to sit next to MAIA. They are looking at a stack of photos.

SUMI crosses the living room and exits into the kitchen.

PHOTO A

A. YOUNG MUNIRA (9) is giving YOUNG MAIA (14) a piggy back ride. Both girls are in abayas; Maia is veiled, save her eyes. Munira wears a hijab and has a large candy in her mouth, making one cheek bulge.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

Look at us!

A portion of the picture is obscured by black. Maia references it.

MAIA

Ama was hiding the camera up her abaya sleeve. That's the dark bit there. She always had something up her sleeve, that woman.

Maia moves to the next photo.

IMAGE B

B. Young Munira is fast asleep in a bed, next to Young Maia who is propped up on her elbows, glaring tiredly at the camera. Maia's hair is all askew.

MAIA

This one's my favorite.

Munira smiles.

MUNIRA

(re: the picture)

This was Ramadan? I don't remember it.

MAIA

That's because you ate so much the night before, you slept for 14 hours straight. My mother got me up at 7:00 and let her favorite niece sleep until noon.

Munira stares down at the photo, nostalgically.

MUNIRA

I will admit, I used to pray I was more than her niece.

MAIA

It's hard to believe our mothers were sisters. I maintain mine was the product of an illicit affair with a circus clown.

Munira smiles.

MAIA CONT.
(re: the pictures)
You can keep those.

MUNIRA
Can I?

Maia nods and Munira holds the photos to her chest.

INT. AL OUFİ GARAGE - NIGHT

PRIMA finds the suitcases under a shelf in the garage. She pulls all six of them into the middle of the garage, awkwardly, and looks down at them with disgust. Upon finishing, she wipes her brow with a sleeve and blows into her shirt.

Leaving the suitcases, Prima enters back into the house.

INT. AL OUFİ KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUMI prepares coffee on the stove. A Saudi silver coffee set sits nearby, waiting to be filled.

PRIMA enters from the hallway and dispenses some water for herself from a water jug near the door.

PRIMA
You need help?

Sumi hesitates before speaking.

SUMI
No. Thank you.

PRIMA
My name is Prima.

SUMI
Sumi.

The OVEN TIMER BEEPS.

Prima motions toward the cheese puffs.

PRIMA
Those go in now.

(CONTINUED)

Before giving Sumi a chance to respond, Prima crosses to the pre-heated oven and slides in the tray of cheese puffs. As she closes the oven door, she glances over at Sumi, spotting her scar.

SUMI

Really I do not need help. There is not so much to do.

Prima resigns and goes back to her water, leaning against the counter and drinking.

PRIMA

You work for other families?

SUMI

...Yes.

PRIMA

You are working for them now?

Short pause.

SUMI

...No. They say they do not need me anymore.

Sumi exits with a coffee tray and mini tea biscuits in hand.

INT. AL OUFY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUMI pours MUNIRA and MAIA a glass of coffee before exiting back into the kitchen.

Munira reaches for the plate of tea biscuits.

MUNIRA

Here. Eat.

MAIA

No no no. Get those away from me. I don't have enough points left for 12 cookies.

MUNIRA

Take only one, then.

MAIA

If I were capable of that I wouldn't be on the program, now would I?

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

But you look incredible.

MAIA

Only because I don't have you
around all the time, flailing
carbohydrates in my face. You eat.

Beat. A painting on the wall, catches Maia's eye.

MAIA

Is this painting new?

Maia gets up to look at a painting, across the room.

MUNIRA

(uninterested)

Yes. Khalid bought it for me in
Dubai.

MAIA

See, Faisal couldn't choose a gift
like that if he had a gun to his
head.

MUNIRA

I don't believe it.

Sumi enters from the kitchen, with another drink in
hand. She crosses the room in tentative strides toward the
back patio.

Maia continues uninterrupted.

MAIA

Believe it.

MUNIRA

Faisal is very supportive. That is
a gift, no?

MAIA

He is.

EXT. A PARKED SUV - STREET OUTSIDE THE AL OUFU VILLA - NIGHT

A CADILLAC SUV sits on the road of a residential street near
Munira's house. The windows are heavily tinted.

(CONTINUED)

Inside, ZARA AL NIMAH(30's), a beautiful Lebanese woman sits in the passenger's seat. Her Saudi husband, FARIS AL NIMAH (30's) is in the driver's seat. Zara is dressed in a designer abayah/hijab, with her face revealed. Faris wears a thobe.

PRAYER BEADS hang on the rear view window.

Zara has the mirror flipped down and primps.

ZARA

Please come in Faris. Already my friends think I've been making you up all this time.

FARIS

(gently)

I've known Munira longer than I've known you.

ZARA

You are here now.

FARIS

(worried)

Will Khalid be there?

ZARA

(nurturing)

I have told you, Hayati, all of the husbands will be there. You won't be alone. What do you think we will be doing? Dancing naked around a fire?

FARIS

It's come to mind.

Zara flips the mirror back up.

ZARA

(re: her face)

There.

Beat. She turns to Faris.

ZARA

Now, stop pretending to be so shy and conservative.

FARIS

But I am.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

Pshh.

FARIS

Why, pshh?

ZARA

You married a lounge singer!

FARIS

What was I thinking?

ZARA

An extraordinary lounge singer!
Beautiful. Meant for the big stage.

FARIS

I think I remember.

ZARA

And you love her, uh?

FARIS

She is my wife and the mother to my
children.

ZARA

(almost defensive)

And there is no other woman like
her. I hope you realize.

FARIS

(smiles)

That is the truth.

ZARA

(now down-to-earth)

So, you will come?

Faris is quiet for a moment.

ZARA

I have been uncomfortable for you,
Faris. To support you.

Faris nods and exits the car. He moves around to the
passenger's side and opens the door for Zara who hops out,
crossing in front of him.

Before closing the passenger's door, Faris swipes the prayer
beads from the rear view mirror and holds them at his side.

They head off toward Munira's front door.

CUT TO:

INT. AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

There is a KNOCK at the door.

Before MUNIRA has a chance to rise, ZARA has let herself in.

ZARA (OS)
Habibaati!

ZARA whirls into the living room, from the foyer, singing the lyrics to some Arabic tune. Her gold bangles clang pleasantly at her wrists.

Munira and MAIA stand to greet her.

MAIA	MUNIRA
I think our entertainment has arrived.	Zara! Salaam!

Zara greets Maia with kisses.

ZARA
 Our Shepard! Congratulations,
 Maia.

Zara greets Munira with kisses.

ZARA
 Salaam Munira. We missed you on
 the causeway.

MUNIRA
 Faris, I don't think you have met
 Maia.

FARIS
 I feel as though I have. Good to
 meet you.

MAIA
 Finally, huh?

Maia takes a good look at Faris.

MAIA
 So you were my replacement as
 Muni's 'partner in crime'.

Faris shares a look with Munira. It is clear that there is a history between them.

(CONTINUED)

FARIS
(smiling)
When I was a boy. Yes.

MAIA
Muni used to write me all about
your adventures.
(re: Zara)
And now you're hitched to this
masterpiece.

As if on cue, Zara removes her hijab to reveal a magnificent head of hair, curled to perfection.

Zara brushes the compliments aside but enjoys every minute.

ZARA
Please please.

MUNIRA
Look at that hair! *Ma'ashalla*.

Zara tosses her mane.

Faris looks uncomfortable.

ZARA
I just now came from the spa.

MAIA
You've always just come from the
spa.

ZARA
I have four boys. The spa is my
only recreation.

MAIA
(re: Faris)
But look how happy you've made your
husband. That is the smile of a
man who's bred an army.

ZARA
Absolutely, an army! You see why I
need the spa? To recover from daily
battles.

MUNIRA
I can consummate, Zara.

Zara looks confused.

MAIA

I think you might mean
"commiserate", Mun.

MUNIRA

Ah yes, commiserate.
(to Faris and Zara)
Would you like to sit?

FARIS

Where are the husbands located?

MAIA

Well Faisal's outside looking for
company. He's watching the game.

ZARA

And Khalid?

MUNIRA

(directly to Faris)
...He couldn't make it.

ZARA

He couldn't make it to his own
home?

FARIS

I think I will leave you ladies to
catch up.

ZARA

(to Faris)
I will go with you to say hello to
Faisal.
(to Maia and Munira)
Now, don't you breathe until I'm
back.

Zara exits to the backyard with Faris close behind.

ZARA (OS)

Faisal!

Maia looks to Munira.

MAIA

(gently)
Does Khalid know we're here?

Short pause.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
Yes. He does.

MAIA
Muni...?

MUNIRA
He knows we are here, Maia.

INT. AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUMI finishes plating assorted cheeses on to two trays, silently. PRIMA is fanning herself against the pantry.

PRIMA
You are very young. You have children?

Sumi is making a great effort to hide her irritation.

SUMI
No.

PRIMA
You are not married?

SUMI
(in Hindi)
Are you always this nosy?

PRIMA
(in Hindi)
Yes. Usually.

Sumi looks to Prima, surprised.

The conversation switches back to English.

PRIMA
(laughing)
Ten year in this country, I speak more languages than I want to know.

Sumi smiles now.

PRIMA
(Beat.)
If you like, I can recommend you for other families.

(CONTINUED)

SUMI
...No. Thank you. I have found
more work.

PRIMA
Who is your sponsor?

Sumi is silent for a moment.

SUMI
(quiet defiance)
I'm sorry. It is not your business.

Prima sits down and nibbles on a piece of baguette. In the process she eyes Sumi's purse on a kitchen chair.

ZARA OS
Okay! I've returned!

Prima motions toward the living room.

PRIMA
Take her abaya. You can put it in
the entryway closet.

Sumi reluctantly exits into the living room.

Prima reaches toward Sumi's bag, keeping a look-out.

INT. AL OUFY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ZARA removes her abayah to reveal a skin-tight dress hugging a perfect hourglass figure. She is dripping with heavy accessories.

SUMI has entered from the kitchen and meets Zara, halfway. She holds her hands out to take Zara's abayah.

ZARA
Thank you.

Zara turns back to Munira and Maia. They are still sitting in awkward silence, sipping their coffee.

ZARA
I was only kidding,
Ladies. Breathe, breathe!

Zara laughs heartily.

INT. AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

PRIMA has found Sumi's ID card while rifling through the purse. The name reads: RHIA NAYAMPALI. The picture is of a scarless Sumi.

There are FOOTSTEPS nearing in the service hallway, which alert Prima. She replaces the items and moves away from the purse, quickly.

INT. AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ZARA is sitting on the corner of the sofa, near MAIA. Munira is sitting across the coffee table.

Zara is in the middle of an animated monologue.

ZARA

And Layla was behind me. She was a "basket case". "Basket case"?

MAIA

"Basket case" - yeah, that's right. A "mess" you mean? From what I know of Layla, that sounds like an accurate description.

MUNIRA

(stewing over the language)
Why is it called "basket case"?

Maia ponders the origin of the phrase for a split second.

MAIA

I have no idea. That's gonna bother me.

ZARA

Anyway, we are marching and marching she keeps trying to hold my hand because she is so nervous but I don't want to hold her hand! I am already so hot. My abayah is sticking to my thighs...

MAIA

Your thighs?

ZARA

(quietly)
Mhmm. Shhh. I was wearing only lingerie.

(CONTINUED)

MAIA

You were not!

ZARA

For the occasion! We were soldiers in a revolution! I had to have the appropriate uniform! ...But don't tell Faris.

MAIA

Well you can thank Allah it wasn't you they took into the screening booth.

ZARA

Why?! What happened in the booth?

Maia seals her lips and shakes her head.

ZARA

You HAVE to tell us! What other reason did I come tonight - besides seeing lovely Munira. We are in this together, Maia. Everyone has been asking me "what happened in the booth" and I have to tell them my good friend is keeping information from me because she doesn't love me!

MAIA

I don't respond to melodrama.

MUNIRA

She hasn't told me yet, Zara. And I am family.

MAIA

(to Munira)

Well, I don't believe you asked, Cousin.

(beat)

When I do tell you two, you can't tell anyone, not even the others who were involved.

ZARA

(doubly intrigued)

Really?!

MAIA

See that kind of excitement scares me. I'd just rather it not be in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAIA (cont'd)
the press... Anyway, we'll wait
for Fatima.

ZARA
What for?

MAIA
Well she's the one who laid all the
groundwork at Royal Headquarters. I
think she deserves to be here for
the sharing of news.

ZARA
And when is The Great Minister of
Female Education and Secrecy going
to grace us with her presence?

MUNIRA
She and John will be late; She's
on her way from Mecca.

MAIA
That's where she's been this past
week?! Ah hah.

ZARA
(surprised)
Mecca? She is doing the Hajj?
(Beat)
I don't know, it seems
strange...for Fatima.

MAIA
(revelatory)
No, no, no. Think about it. The
week after the March for Freedom,
she takes off to fulfill one of the
five pillars of Islam? She's
managing to dodge a week's worth of
aftermath-related questioning at
the Royal Offices while proving
herself a devout Muslim.

ZARA
(unimpressed)
She's escaping.

MUNIRA
She's a genius.

MAIA
I think so too.

ZARA
It is a bit cowardly, don't you think?

MAIA
No.

MUNIRA
(subtle defensiveness)
Escape is not always an action of cowardice, Zara.

MAIA
Maybe she's just choosing her battles. I mean the deed has been done, the fatwa amended - in large part thanks to the greasing of wheels in ministries. All she's avoiding now are the final cries of the conservative clerics as they resign themselves to defeat.

MUNIRA
And maybe...Mecca has something to offer her, more than escape.

Maia nods. Short pause.

ZARA
Well we will see all this when she comes.

INT. AL OUFİ LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

PRIMA starts a load of laundry in the washer then moves to a hamper, extracting Munira's abaya. She shakes the abaya out in front of her, before sticking it into a dry cleaning bag. As she scrunches it into the bag, there is sounds of PAPER CRINKLING within.

Prima searches for the pocket and retrieves the FOLDED PIECE OF LINED PAPER, Munira had placed there that afternoon.

Prima goes to shut the laundry room door before unfolding the paper.

Prima reads it in silence.

Singing floats from the living room. The song is MAYBE THIS TIME (from "Cabaret").

EXT. AL OUFY BACK PATIO - NIGHT

The SOCCER GAME backtracks the scene.

FARIS and FAISAL are glued to the game.

But now Faris turns toward the music, thoughtfully.

FAISAL
Is it Zara? Very lovely,
ma'ashallah. You should hear Maia
singing...wff.

Faris is lost in the music.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ZARA is performing MAYBE THIS TIME, in front of the entertainment unit.

ZARA
(singing)
[Zara wraps up with the final
measures of the song]

MUNIRA and MAIA clap.

MUNIRA
Beautiful, Zara, Beautiful! What is
this song?

ZARA
Have you never seen "Cabaret"?

MAIA
Liza Minnelli.

ZARA
We have very similar voices. I was
told this many times from guests at
the hotel. ...Only, I am a better
dancer.

MUNIRA
(generously)
I'm sure you were really something.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

(flippantly)

I was. But, you marry a Saudi man, you become Saudi. I knew this. Lebanon is now an indulgence. It is fine.

MAIA

I see the way Faris looks at you. He knows he has a star on his hands.

ZARA

I was singing that song at the Al Bustan, Beirut, one night - many years ago, now. It was very late. Only one man sitting at the bar, drinking a Pepsi and looking very shy...but very sweet. There was no one to look at but each other. I sang only to him and he looked only at me and I cast my spell. And then: magic! For the next years I was his indulgence and then: magic! Four children. And now: magic! I am no longer so much of an indulgence.

MAIA

Sounds like marriage, Darling Dear.
(to Munira)
Your thoughts, Munira?

Munira nods knowingly.

Faisal enters from outside and crosses toward the kitchen.

FAISAL

We enjoyed the serenade, Zara.

MAIA

How did you know that wasn't me singing.

FAISAL

An educated guess.

The Ladies laugh.

FAISAL

Zara, if it's okay, I think I'll get your husband drunk. Do you mind?

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

Do I mind? I've been trying this
from our wedding day.

FAISAL

Does he not-?

(Beat)

I smell a challenge.

MAIA

Will you be good, please?

FAISAL

Don't you trust me, Maia?

With this, Faisal moves into the kitchen.

INT. THE AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

Faisal pokes his head into the kitchen.

SUMI is reading a book in Hindi at the table. She is
engrossed and doesn't look up.

FAISAL

Tsk. Tsk. Reading on the job.

Sumi is alerted and stands, obediently.

SUMI

I'm sorry. Would you like another
drink, Sir?

FAISAL

I don't want to interrupt your
reading.

SUMI

No, Sir. You're not, Sir.

FOCUS on the kitchen's service entrance, as if someone might
be lurking around the corner.

FAISAL

(smiling)

Good. I'll be outside. And one
also for my friend Faris.

Sumi nods.

(CONTINUED)

SUMI

Yes, sir.

FAISAL

Goodbye Sumi.

SUMI

Goodbye.

Faisal exits the kitchen.

Just then Prima appears in the kitchen's service entrance.

PRIMA

He's very handsome. Don't you think?

Sumi looks up.

INT. AL OUFY BACK PATIO - NIGHT

The SOCCER GAME backtracks the scene.

FARIS is alone, still watching the soccer game. He sits with all of the belongings from his pockets laying on the table in front of him (a CELL PHONE, a DR. NAME TAG, a set of KEYS).

Faris rotates his prayer beads.

FAISAL enters.

FAISAL

A drink is coming for us.

FARIS

Oh, no thank you.

FAISAL

What do you mean, "no thank you"?

FARIS

I don't drink.

FAISAL

Really?! Your self-discipline is admirable.

FARIS

(w/ dry humor)

We are in a dry country. Have you heard?

(CONTINUED)

FARIS

I had no idea!

(Beat)

Don't worry. I won't let it go to waste.

Faisal reaches into his pocket for two cigars.

FAISAL

Will you take a smoke?

Faris takes a moment before resigning with a half-smile.

FARIS

You have found my weakness.

FAISAL

Ah hah! Surely not your only weakness.

Faisal hands Faris a cigar.

FAISAL

I admit I am an advocate for indulgence.

Faisal leans over to light Faris' cigar then studies him for a moment.

FAISAL

So, your wife, she took part in The March?

FARIS

Are you asking me because you do not know the answer?

FAISAL

(shrugs)

I am making conversation, Faris. Here we are, you and me, at a certain celebration... I am only interested because you seem to me like a more traditional man. I am curious to hear your thoughts.

FARIS

Traditional, yes. But the travel fatwa - when it existed- had no connection with Islam. It was political in nature. Therefore, what reason would I have to oppose? I am in medicine, not politics.

(CONTINUED)

Maia enters.

MAIA
Pardon my interruption but, dinner
is served.

FARIS
Thank you, Maia.

MAIA
Maybe I should clarify. Dinner is
"available for self-service".

Maia's cell phone rings in her pant pocket. She looks at the
caller ID. Beat.

MAIA
(to Faisal)
It's the nanny.

Maia answers the phone. Faisal looks on.

MAIA
(into the phone)
Flora? ...Oh, it's you, Habibti. Hi
hun. ...okay, he's right here.
(Beat. To Faisal)
She wants to speak to her father.

Maia hands Faisal the phone and he crosses into the moonlit
yard to speak.

FAISAL
(into phone; sweet)
Rasha, Habibti?

MAIA
(to Faris)
Which probably means she's poisoned
the nanny or set the house on fire.
Daddy tends to be more
understanding in those situations.

Faris smiles. Maia is suddenly distracted by the soccer game
and becomes instantly enthralled as Saudi drives toward the
goal.

Faris gets sucked in as well.

MAIA
(re: the game)
Oh - oh. Wait for this, wait for
this...

INT. AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MAIA (OS)
 (yelling at the game)
 Get in, Saudi! Get in!

FARIS (OS)
 (re: the game.)
 Yes! Yes! Haha!

Maia and Faris rejoice, off screen.

ZARA and MUNIRA, share a smile.

ZARA is filing through a cabinet of CDs.

MUNIRA
 I knew it. That is why she went out there to check the score. The truth is Maia likes to watch the games more than Faisal.

ZARA
 Ugh, they are so tedious. My eldest, Junaid, you know, he is a very good player. Of course I am happy is very good, but I don't know how many games I can take in my life. Do your twins like soccer? They are how old now, five?

MUNIRA
 In two months. They don't really care about the sports. They are very interested in talking. They talk all day, no stopping. I don't know what they will become.

ZARA finds a dusty cassette underneath rows of CDs. It reads: POP BALLADS. The collage of women on the tape cover are decorated with permanent marker, drawn on by customs officials, over any revealed patch of skin.

ZARA
 What is this?

MUNIRA
 (smiles)
 I haven't seen it since we moved here! Maia sent it to me from the States.

Zara sets the CD on the entertainment.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

For later.

(Beat)

So they will start the, eh,
kindergarten soon?

MUNIRA

Hm?

ZARA

Your boys.

MAIA enters and crosses to the buffet table, surveying the options while listening in on Zara and Munira's conversation.

MUNIRA

I just hope they are not too much
trouble for the teacher.

MAIA

Ah, they'll be too handsome to stay
mad at. Those eyelashes!
Ma'ashallah.

MUNIRA

(smiles)

I hope. They are stubborn as
camels, like their father.

ZARA

Munira, *Allah humdu allah*, He
waited so long to give you
children. I was nineteen and knew
nothing when mine came. And your
Khalid, now, his job is very
good. You can have many more. But
soon, hopefully. You are not
getting younger. You should pray
for more children now, Munira. You
are not working; you can manage a
big family.

Munira's face has gone white. She doesn't respond.

Maia joins the scene, on Munira's defense.

MAIA

Come look at this spread,
Zara. Munira, the food looks
superb.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
(rattled)
It's nothing, really. I'll just go
check, uh...

Munira exits into the kitchen.

Zara moves to the buffet table to take a look and Maia
corners her.

MAIA
(quietly)
Are you aware that Munira tried to
get pregnant for a decade before
the twins came along, and even
then, she was on bed rest for 4 of
the 9 months. We nearly lost her
when they came.

ZARA
I didn't know.

MAIA
I'd go easy on the baby talk.

INT. THE AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

PRIMA and SUMI are tending to the kitchen.

MUNIRA pretends to check on the status of everything.

MUNIRA
(re: the packing)
Prima? Is it coming along?

PRIMA
Yes, ma'am.

Munira nods and looks around for something to carry out to
the table.

She sets her eyes on a fresh pot of coffee and a plate of
olives and cheese.

MUNIRA
I'll take those out.

INT. THE AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA enters with the tray of food. She sets the coffee and cheese plate on the coffee table.

ZARA and MAIA have set themselves down again.

MUNIRA
Olives and cheese ladies?

ZARA
You know I am weak for olives.

Zara pops an olive in her mouth then smears some cheese on a crust of bread and eats daintily.

Faisal enters from the back patio with the cell phone in hand, covering the receiver. He crosses to Maia, looking a bit distraught.

MAIA
You're still on the phone? What's going on?

FAISAL
I told her she needs to talk to you about this.

MAIA
Why? What is it? ...Are you asking me to be the bad guy?

FAISAL
Take it, Maia.

Maia takes the phone.

MAIA
(into phone)
Rasha?

Maia crosses toward the foyer and disappears.

Faisal takes a plate and fills it with food.

FAISAL
This looks wonderful Munira.

MUNIRA
Thank you. Is everything okay?

(CONTINUED)

FAISAL
Yes, yes. Fine.

Faisal exits into the back patio, again.

Now Munira and Zara are in the room alone. Zara is savoring bread and brie.

MUNIRA
This Brie, you know, is a new one
from 'Perle de Rose'.

ZARA
It is like satin.

Munira rises and moves toward Zara.

MUNIRA
Triple creme.

ZARA
Where did you say you bought it?

MUNIRA
...Perle de Rose. You don't know
it?

Zara shakes her head.

MUNIRA
Oh Zara, it is a magnificent
place. It is right up your street.

ZARA
My street?

MUNIRA
...Eh, no. Eh, your road?

Zara looks confused.

MUNIRA CONT.
You know, it is, em, eh 'speech
figure'. How do you say it? These
small streets between buildings.

ZARA
Alley!

MUNIRA
Yes! It is right up your
alley. This means you, especially,
will like it.

ZARA
In Bahrain?

MUNIRA
(ignoring the question)
Il est très élégant.

ZARA
Oui?

MUNIRA
(in French)
Zara, there is something magical about the place. It transports you. It's as if I am sitting on the streets of Paris. Truly... There are always freshly-picked flowers; the table-tops are mosaic; there are tiered desserts in the windows and each dish is made with herbs from a small garden on the terrace...

Munira is halted by Zara's fixed gaze.

Zara has been examining Munira deeply, throughout the monologue. She sweeps Munira's hair from behind her shoulders and lays it against her chest.

ZARA
(w/ intrigue)
Munira.

Munira waits for Zara to continue.

ZARA
You are very sexy.

Munira is secretly delighted, at this, but she devalues the comment with a sideways glance.

MUNIRA
Everyone is sexy in French.

ZARA
Not everyone.

Zara takes Munira's chin and turns her face forward, again. She gets up close and speaks with a voice of experience.

ZARA
Believe me.

Munira laughs at this, their faces are still close.

Now Zara cracks a smile and sits back.

INT. AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUMI is tending to the cooking.

PRIMA is close-by, half staring into the pantry and half observing Sumi.

Several moments pass in silence as Prima waits for the moment to pounce.

PRIMA

I been here three years. With this family. I have always done the cooking, the cleaning... I care for the children... You coming back tomorrow?

SUMI

(irritated)

I don't know. She calls me. She tells me she needs help for tonight. That is all.

Prima takes a moment.

PRIMA

You run away from the other families?

Sumi turns toward Prima.

SUMI

I told you, they say they do not need-

PRIMA

- I looked in your purse. You're name is not Sumi.

SUMI

(yelling through a whisper)

You went in my -?! I will report you.

Prima shakes her head confidently.

PRIMA

Who can you tell? Who will care?

(beat)

But I can report you.

(CONTINUED)

Sumi fumes through a long pause.

SUMI

Okay...Yes. ...I run away. I was afraid. Now my sponsor, he is looking for me. If he finds me, its deportation - maybe worse. So, I find work on my own. I have two choices, find a job or get married. I call any family looking for jobs. This house too. Madame says she can use me tonight. I say okay.

(Beat)

That is the truth.

PRIMA

(casually)

I know. I have heard this story many times.

(Beat)

Why you afraid? They do something to you?

Sumi's mood shifts.

SUMI

The men here, the way they look at me -

Prima laughs.

PRIMA

- They look? Of course they look! You go to America, they will look. The Phillipines, they will look. You are a beautiful girl. They don't look at you in India?

SUMI

Here, they not only look!

Pause. Prima nods and studies Sumi's scar.

PRIMA

They do that to you?

Sumi catches a glimpse of her scar in a reflection.

SUMI

...No.

(CONTINUED)

SUMI
(unemotional)
I thought...if I cut it, these
things will not happen.

Pause.

PRIMA
Let me find some other nice people
for you.

INT. THE FOYER - AL OUFY HOME - NIGHT

MAIA is wrapping up the phone conversation with Rasha. She looks pained.

MAIA
(into phone)
We'll talk this through tomorrow
morning, Habibti. I love you. Bye,
sweetheart.

Maia takes a deep breath, holds it and lets it out. Then she proceeds into the Living Room.

INT. AL OUFY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MAIA has returned to the living room, post-phone call.

ZARA is putting in the BEST 80'S POP BALLADS cassette while MUNIRA sips at her water.

MUNIRA
Is everything okay, Maia?

MAIA
Oh, yeah. Yeah. It's just some
pre-adolescent girl angst.

ZARA
I'm glad I have sons.
(Beat;dramatically)
Okay Ladies! Let me take you back
to a time before the worries of
motherhood...

With this, ZARA presses *play* and Starships "NOTHING GONNA STOP US NOW" begins.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

It's the one you sent me in the mail. Remember? Zara found it.

Maia smiles pleasantly with a silent chuckle.

ZARA

Come on, Ladies! Sing with me this time.

EXT. AL OUFY BACK PATIO - NIGHT

"NOTHING GONNA STOP US NOW" sing-along floats outside.

FARIS and FAISAL are eating. Faris has noticed a shift in Faisal's mood.

FARIS

So, what about you, Faisal?

FAISAL

Me?

FARIS

You seem to me like a liberal man. You are obviously very open with your wife. What are your thoughts regarding the current events?

FAISAL

Maia was always this way - very sure of herself, a leader, outspoken... But professionally she was very diplomatic and even cautious. So, I always trust she will take action in a smart way, you know. This time was no different. I think it was a smart way. I support her, absolutely. But now, her name is known and it is becoming difficult. Just in two weeks, it's becoming...

Faris nods.

FAISAL CONT.

This was my daughter on the phone. Two of her friends, their mothers will not let the girls play with Rasha tonight... This is the thing, when it interferes with family... We may not be a traditional Muslim

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FAISAL CONT. (cont'd)
family, but we have values! I do
have values, despite what you may
think.

(Beat)

Perhaps I did not like the idea of
Maia taking this leadership role,
but, you know, sometimes you have
to compromise your comforts for
those you love. Am I right?

This resonates with Faris. He nods.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - AL OUFI HOME - NIGHT

"NOTHING'S GONNA STOP US NOW" sing-along continues
downstairs.

PRIMA sneaks into the bathroom, closing the door behind her
and locking it.

She heads toward the vanity, her eyes on Munira's closed
laptop.

Lifting a lid she focuses on the window before her: the
TERRACED COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTY, seen
earlier. Prima scrolls down. Now the location is also
visible, reading HAMAD BIN KHALIFA AL-THANI ST., BEIRUT
LEBANON. Prima fixes on the FOR SALE tag. The price of the
property is visible: \$1,500/mo.

Prima takes a moment before closing the lid and exiting the
bathroom into the Master bedroom.

"NOTHING GONNA STOP US NOW" ends.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - AL OUFI HOME - NIGHT

"ANOTHER 80'S POP BALLAD" begins.

PRIMA makes sure the door to the bedroom is also shut.

Prima sits on the bed with cellphone in hand.

After a moment of hesitation she dials a number on the
cellphone.

Seconds later a phone on the bedside table RINGS.

CUT TO:

INT. THE AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The sing-along continues.

MAIA and ZARA are singing along while Munira watches, tapping her heel on the ground.

The PHONE RINGS AGAIN and Munira is alerted.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

The 80's Pop Ballad sing-along continues off screen.

There is another RING.

Now, Prima lifts the phone and holds it on her lap for several seconds before hanging up and then ending the cell phone call.

INT. THE AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The music continues.

Soon, FAISAL steps into the doorway to watch the LADIES sing. FARIS is several feet behind.

Now Faisal switches between watching his wife sing and watching Sumi tend the buffet table.

Faris focuses on making himself a plate of food.

Prima enters from the kitchen and crosses to Munira, whispering something into her ear.

Munira follows Prima into the kitchen.

INT. THE AL OUFİ KITCHEN - NIGHT

Music continues as SUMI unloads the dishwasher.

MUNIRA

(to Sumi)

Will you excuse us for a moment?

Sumi bows and exits toward the service hallway, disappearing around the corner.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
It was Khalid?

PRIMA
Yes, ma'am. He says he is on his way home. Sammer's antibiotic, it spilled all over. He needs the second bottle.

MUNIRA
(frantic)
What? ...no. I- let me call him. I'll talk to him.

PRIMA
What do you suggest ma'am?

Munira glances behind her toward the living room.

MUNIRA
He doesn't need it - the antibiotic.

PRIMA
Why not, ma'am?

MUNIRA
(lying well)
Because, I gave him his evening dose.

PRIMA
When?

MUNIRA
...Before his bath.

PRIMA
(bitter)
...Oh. I'm sorry, I didn't realize.

MUNIRA
(masking instant guilt)
Yes, well... ...phone Khalid. Tell him he doesn't need to come.

PRIMA
(disgust)
Yes ma'am.

MUNIRA
Yallah.

(CONTINUED)

Prima bows and exits the kitchen out of the service entrance.

Munira takes a moment to collect herself and exits the kitchen toward the Living Room.

INT. AL OUFU SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The music continues as PRIMA saunters down the service hallway wearing the sour face of defeat.

CUT TO:

INT. AL OUFU FOYER - NIGHT

The "80'S POP BALLAD" sing-along continues.

FATIMA OBAIDULLAH (60), in an abaya, and hijjab enters the house with JOHN MACENDRICK, her bookish British husband (55-65).

Fatima and John enter side-by-side, toward the music. They both speak with British accents.

JOHN

Sounds like they started without you.

FATIMA

Good girls.

INT. THE AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FATIMA and JOHN sneak onto the scene.

Faisal and Faris are the first to notice the new guests. They smile.

Fatima joins in with the singing. She has a bright, unassuming energy about her.

Maia and Zara are delighted and continue singing, pulling Fatima onto their make-believe stage.

Munira watches with folded hands against her lips. She is obviously tense regarding the conversation with Prima.

Soon, Munira turns to greet John with kisses. They talk over the music.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
Marhaba, Johnathon.

JOHN
Hello Dear.
(re: the singing)
There's something decidedly
Un-Muslim about this whole display,
don't you think?

MUNIRA
(with a smile)
Do you find it offensive,
Johnathon?

JOHN
Deeply.

MUNIRA
I enjoyed your article very much. I
read it so many times.

John gives Munira another kiss on the cheek then crosses to greet Faisal and Faris, who step in and join the party.

John exchanges kisses with Faisal.

JOHN
Is this good sober fun?

FAISAL
Sobering, John. Sobering.
(short beat)
Speaking of sober, meet Zara's
husband Faris.

John extends his hand to meet Faris'.

JOHN
Johnathon. Good to meet you.

FARIS
Faris. A *salaam alaikum*.

JOHN
Walaikum A Salaam.

FARIS
Very nice.

Munira looks over to the men and catches eyes with Faris, briefly. Munira nods with a forced smile.

(CONTINUED)

FAISAL
(to John)
Would you like a drink?

JOHN
Would I like a drink?!

FAISAL
You see, the British are more my
speed! I'll be right back.

Faisal exits into the kitchen.

The tune ends and the ladies fall over each other, laughing
as they finish. Everyone claps.

FATIMA
So sorry we're late. We
underestimated the drive. Infernal.
The AC knackered out halfway
through.

Maia and Zara take turns exchanging kisses with Fatima.

ZARA
Aren't you boiling, Fatima?

Fatima squeezes Zara's shoulder with a smile of
acknowledgment but dismissing the question.

MUNIRA
I am so glad you came.

FATIMA
Of course, of course. I wouldn't
miss Munira's first hosting
experience.

Fatima pinches Muni's cheek.

FATIMA
And surrounding such momentous news
as this! Your house is lovely,
dear.

MUNIRA
Help yourself to food. And John,
you too.

Zara motions toward Faris.

ZARA

Fatima. Meet my husband Faris. He's
the one in the corner.

FATIMA

Hello Faris! It's a pleasure.

Fatima crosses to shake hands with Faris.

FARIS

Good to meet you.

Faisal returns from the kitchen with two drinks in hand.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SERVICE STAIRS - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

PRIMA hauls two suitcases up the service stairs, in a sweat.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

PRIMA sets the two suitcases open next to three others, all
empty.

Now she crosses to Munira's closet and opens the doors,
staring in at the rich wardrobe.

Prima reaches for several items and drapes them, hangers and
all, across one arm.

INT. AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MAIA, MUNIRA, ZARA, FARIS, and FAISAL are standing at
various locations around the living room. Some are eating.

JOHN is in the center of everything, reading from his
article.

JOHN

(reading)

...However, last Tuesday's
large-scale, non-militant
resistance, led by a Maia Al Shura
of Riyadh-

Maia looks at Faisal. There is tension between them.

John continues reading, uninterrupted.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN CONT.

-proved impossible to ignore. Though they were not allowed to cross the countries' border, their action gained immediate attention of Saudi's monarch and Prime Minister and set into motion a very sudden change, leading to the lifting of the travel fatwa, as of this Sunday evening past.

Everyone claps and 'woots'.

ZOOM IN on Munira during the remainder of the reading.

JOHN

(reading)

This most certinally marks a great victory for the women of Saudi Arabia. However, history will remind us that: to win a freedom is not to end a struggle. The influences this reinstituted right will have, on an individual level, remains to be seen. Fromme's social theory discusses a 'freedom to' versus a 'freedom from'. It should be noted that there are plenty of women who saw the former restriction as a 'freedom from' freedom itself. It will be these women who define the ongoing struggle.

ZOOM OUT

The group takes a moment of thoughtful silence.

JOHN

So, there you are.

FATIMA

He wants to write another article. Tell them, John.

JOHN

(re: his reading)

This was really nothing more than a broadcast. It just skims the surface. But if you ladies are willing, I'd like to take more personal interviews and compile

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (cont'd)
them into a large article -
possibly even a book. It would all
be anonymous of course.

ZARA
Ask me anything you like John!

INT. AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUMI is washing dishes and appears to be alone.

PRIMA's voice comes from the pantry.

PRIMA (OS)
(from pantry)
Ugh. There are too many bugs in the
grains again.

Prima emerges from the pantry with a bag of rice over one
shoulder.

PRIMA
Such a waste.

Prima exits the kitchen toward the service hallway.

INT. THE AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FATIMA, MAIA and MUNIRA are all eating at various places
around the living room.

FATIMA
Munira, this meal is stupendous.
You should go into business. I
didn't realize these were all your
own recipes.

MAIA
You really should.

FATIMA
Women are opening up small
businesses all over the place. Find
a hidden-away spot.

MUNIRA
I've considered it.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

I apologize. I can't take it anymore, Fatima.

Fatima looks up at Zara.

ZARA

Really, why are you still covered?

Fatima laughs amusedly.

FATIMA

I like the way it feels...for a change. ...for the moment, anyway.

ZARA

You are not hiding breast implants under your abaya?

FATIMA

I guarantee that's not what you'll find.

MUNIRA

How was the hajj, Fatima?

FATIMA

...it was significant.

Short pause.

ZARA

And it changed you, I think.

FATIMA

Not changed, no. ...Clarified.

MAIA

How so?

Fatima takes her time.

FATIMA

I suppose... I suppose, before this, I had considered a full surrender to faith - to God - a submission. A suppression of self.

(Pause)

And now...I think I am forming a different understanding.

(Beat)

Better to ask me in a week. It hasn't had much time to absorb.

(CONTINUED)

(Beat.)

Phew. I am hot, now that you mention it. And this thing is full of dust from the drive.

Fatima removes her abayah to reveal a long fluid floor-length dress. She gives a relieved sigh and fans herself.

ZARA

There she is.

FATIMA

Here I am. B cups and all.

ZARA

(to Fatima)

Your face is glowing.

FATIMA

We should all be glowing! Isn't that right? Progress has been made.

ZARA

It absolutely has!

MAIA

Through hard work and humility. Did I mention humility?

FATIMA

And faith. Faith in each other, in the ability to change a country blessed with epic inertia, a country whose ruling forces include those who believe women are so incapable of controlling themselves that they need a male relative to escort them in every task...

ZARA

Even if it means suckling your foriegn driver to make him part of your kin.

MARHEM

Instant Marham: Just add breast milk.

FATIMA

And, of course, faith in God.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA
(to the group)
Did we bring them?

The Ladies go to their purses and pull out their passports.

MAIA
Back in our hot little hands.

ZARA
Cheers to us! And we should not
forgot, also - cheers to our
forward thinking husbands.

MAIA
They are relatively evolved, aren't
they?

ZARA
I could fly off to Bangkok,
tomorrow, for a face-lift and be
back the next morning to make Faris
breakfast. He would never know I
left.

FATIMA
Don't you dare touch that face.

ZARA
(flippantly)
Or maybe leave it all behind. Go
back to Lebanon for fame and
fortune!

MUNIRA
Could you Zara?

ZARA
Don't be silly.

ZARA
Come ladies. A victory dance.

Zara turns up some Arabic music and begins to dance in sensual circles around the living room. She takes Maia and Fatima's hands and coaxes them to join.

Munira is hesitant and stands, looking down at her passport.

Fatima notices and goes to Munira, as Maia and Zara dance. Fatima places a hand on Munira's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

FATIMA

What's dancing in that head of yours?

Munira smiles up at Fatima.

FATIMA

Come dance.

Now, Fatima pulls Munira back into the dance. They surrender to the music and Zara is delighted at her friend's participation.

ZARA

Hips, Munira. More hips.

MAIA

Dates and Brie help tremendously, Muni.

MUNIRA

Yes, yes. I can do it. I can do it.

Munira decides to show the women what she's capable of and fully commits to the dance. The women hoot joyfully and encourage each other.

Munira closes her eyes and loses herself in the music.

EXT. AL OUFY BACK PATIO - NIGHT

JOHN, FARIS and FAISAL all sit around the table.

FARIS

So, how is it that Maia and Fatima know each other?

FAISAL

Fatima came to lecture at the University of Michigan. Maia and I were students - Maia was in graduate school. We were engaged at the time. And all she could talk about was this woman Fatima, Fatima, Fatima and her research and endless wisdom.

JOHN

(to Faisal)

They've been in contact since then, haven't they? Maia became quite the teacher's pet. And, of course,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (cont'd)
leading up to the recent events,
they worked in tandem.

FAISAL
I think Fatima reminds Maia of her
mother. Very strong, bold, and very
kind.

FARIS
(to John)
It must be interesting having a
wife in Fatima's position.

JOHN
It is most definitely interesting.
At Oxford, I was one of three men
in the Women's Studies department.
Now, living here and writing...
Being privy to everything
surrounding the recent events... I
feel very lucky. The challenge is
to keep my wife's involvement in
certain events confidential. My pen
can run away with me.

FAISAL
Yes. I know. I see it ran away with
my wife's name.

John pauses for a moment.

JOHN
I'm sorry, Faisal. I had Fatima ask
Maia, specifically, if we could
release it.

FAISAL
And she said, "yes"?

JOHN
She did. Yes.

FAISAL
Well then, I didn't know. What's
done is done.

Faris spots Munira dancing in the living room.

INT. THE AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The LADIES continue their dance.

MUNIRA still has her eyes closed and time passes effortlessly..

Suddenly, Munira's lids shutter open.

POV MUNIRA

Maia, Fatima and Zara twirl around her like a tornado becoming more and more unrecognizable and out-of-focus.

The MUSIC sounds GARBLED as if the scene is under water.

POV CAMERA

The MUSIC NORMALIZES AGAIN.

Munira appears dizzy and disoriented.

MUNIRA
(barely audible)
Excuse me.

Munira exits to the foyer.

Fatima is the only one who notices Munira's departure but she doesn't follow, at first.

INT. THE FOYER - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

Munira ascends the staircase, holding her abdomen, and strides toward the Master Bedroom.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

MUNIRA falls to her knees over the toilet, preparing to vomit. She isn't able. She waits there for a moment to catch her breath.

Now Munira crosses to her vanity and swallows two pills, dry.

She dry heaves.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOYER - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

FATİMA searches for Munira, discreetly. She decides to ascend the staircase and climbs to the upstairs hallway. The Master Bedroom door has been left ajar and Fatima peeks in. She spots the five suitcases, closed on the bedroom floor and looks up into Munira's empty closet.

MUNİRA'S retching is audible from the Master Bathroom.

Fatima has a moment of realization, followed by a moment of consideration, and decides to leave her be.

With this, Fatima descends the staircase once more.

INT. THE AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FATİMA enters the living room, trying to appear unfazed by what she has seen.

MAİA and ZARA notice Fatima's entrance and slow down. They are exhausted but energized.

FATİMA

Just popped to the loo. I can't keep up with you young ladies.

MAİA

Where's Muni?

FATİMA

Just went to check behind the scenes, I'd imagine.

MAİA

I'll be right back. Gotta make a quick phonecall.

With this Maia exits into the foyer.

Fatima wonders if she, too, is aware of Munira's plan.

INT. THE FOYER - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

MAİA enters the foyer with phone in hand, dialing as she walks.

Simultaneously, MUNİRA appears in the upstairs hallway.

They spot each other and Maia instantly notices her cousin's state.

(CONTINUED)

Munira forces a smile.

MAIA

Muni?

MUNIRA

Hi Maia. I just, eh...

Maia begins to climb the stairs.

MUNIRA CONT.

I shouldn't dance after so much eating.

MAIA

(gentle)

What eating? I saw you relocate your food. I didn't see you eat any of it.

MUNIRA

Were you looking for me?

MAIA

No. But I should have been. Now I realize how insensitive we've all been tonight.

Munira is speechless.

MAIA

Want to talk about anything?

Munira meets Maia half-way up the stairs trying to prevent her from coming up.

MUNIRA

Were you making a call?

MAIA

I wanna be sure that Rasha fell asleep alright.

MUNIRA

What's wrong with her?

They both sit on the stairs.

MAIA

A couple of Rasha's friends weren't allowed to play with her this evening, because of me.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

Oh no.

MAIA

The worst of it is, she didn't feel like she could talk to me about it.

(Beat)

I'm an adult. I can see the big picture. What I, we accomplished was good. It was right. Because of what we did, she and all of her peers will benefit in the long run. But in Rasha's world, she might lose these two friends, now, and that's bad. And I am sorry for that. But there will always be casualties.

MUNIRA

You're brave Maia.

MAIA

You're brave, Cuz.

(Beat)

Sneaking behind Khalid's back to pull this whole thing off?

Munira is stricken, she thinks she's been found out.

MAIA

This whole party is a confidential affair - I know. What did you tell him? It was just the Ladies hanging out tonight? Doing our nails and blabbering about Chanel and whatnot? Khalid is Khalid. We all know his social opinions. It's no reflection on you. You don't need to be so secretive about it.

A strange expression sweeps across Munira's face - almost relief.

INT. AL OUFY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FATIMA and ZARA are sitting across from each other, eating dessert.

ZARA

I have a lot of questions for you Fatima.

(CONTINUED)

FATIMA

Uh oh.

ZARA

How is the King? Is he sexy?

Fatima cracks up.

FATIMA

I, personally, don't think so.

ZARA

I had to asked because, you know, those with blue blood, you expect something.

FATIMA

You'd be surprised. He's one of the more humble men in the parliamentary system. He's attractive for that reason. If he had his way, women would have far more rights than they do.

ZARA

And yet how many mistresses does he have?

FATIMA

Ha! God only knows.

ZARA

And yet you can say he is humble and forward thinking?

FATIMA

Promiscuity is only a dishonest trait if it is valued as such. I tend to value it as such. But our good King certainly does not.

Zara looks disturbed by this. Pause.

FATIMA

It's none of my business, Zara. But... Does this have anything to do with your husband?

Another pause.

ZARA

(stoic)

I used to be his wife and his mistress. My mother warned me about
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ZARA (cont'd)
this - marrying a Saudi man. I
thought maybe he was different.

Fatima is attentive, letting Zara work through it.

ZARA
But I have agreed to it. Because he
asked me if it would be alright.
And I was proud, of course, and
pretended I didn't care.

FATIMA
Will you ask him to stop?

ZARA
No. I want him to be happy. And I
understand that men have needs that
one woman cannot always
fufill. And I would rather he
didn't go behind my back to fufill
them.

FATIMA
That's intelligent.

ZARA
And I know that women, likewise,
have needs that sometimes the male
sex cannot fufill, so... if Faris
is going to take mistresses...so
will I.

Fatima is silent for a moment.

FATIMA
(smiles)
Women?

ZARA
Are you surprised?

FATIMA
Not entirely. I just didn't think
you were working up to that.

(Beat)
Will you ask Faris, as he asked
you?

ZARA
I haven't made up my mind.

INT. THE STAIRWAY - AL OUFİ HOME

MUNIRA and MAIA stand up from their seat on the stairs.

MAIA

Come on. Lets join your party as
the war-torn veterans that we are.

They descend the staircase.

MUNIRA

I'll be there in just a moment.

MAIA

Okay.

Maia smiles, kisses Munira on the head and disappears into the living room.

EXT. AL OUFİ BACK PATIO - NIGHT

FAISAL and JOHN are engaged in a lively conversation. Faris listens.

Suddenly Faris' phone, which is exposed on the table, VIBRATES. Faris looks at it and opens up a text in Arabic. It reads: I'M IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM. PLEASE COME. The sender isn't visible

FARIS

Excuse me.

Faris stands and looks through the window.

Then he enters the house and crosses the room, holding the phone up to his ear. He waves at the ladies and points to the reciever.

INT. THE AL OUFİ FOYER - NIGHT

FARIS enters the foyer, keeping an eye out for any followers.

Now he crosses into the service hallway looking for the laundry room.

INT. THE AL OUFİ LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA is waiting for Faris against the dryer.

Faris enters and they look at each other gravely for a moment, before speaking in Arabic.

FARIS
(quietly)
Are you bleeding?

MUNIRA
No. I'm really dizzy. And nauseous.
Is that normal?

FARIS
Were you dancing?

MUNIRA
(guiltily)
Yes.

FARIS
Why?

MUNIRA
If I didn't, they'd assume
something was wrong.

FARIS
Well, that's why you're dizzy.
You're nauseous because you're
taking the anti-inflammatory on an
empty stomach. Drink some water and
eat a bit of bread - to absorb.

Munira nods.

MUNIRA
Thank you.

Long pause. Faris checks behind him.

FARIS
You know, I respect Khalid.

MUNIRA
Yes, I know.

FARIS
I believe in trust between husband
and wife. I hold family in highest
regard... And Islam.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

Yes, Faris.

FARIS

...but I also value friendship. I was worried about your life carrying another child...

MUNIRA

That's right.

FARIS

That's why I helped you. It is the only reason. You realize I could lose my practice, *everything* if-

MUNIRA

Faris, please! I know. ...I know.

Faris is quiet a moment.

FARIS

Let me know if there is any bleeding.

Faris turns to exit.

MUNIRA

Faris. Sammer missed his evening dose of antibiotic. Do you think he will get sick again?

FARIS

...uh...how many days has he been taking it.

MUNIRA

Six now, I think.

FARIS

He should be fine.

Munira nods.

Faris exits into the service hallway.

INT. THE SERVICE HALLWAY - AL OUFU HOME - NIGHT

FARIS continues slowly toward the foyer, whispering scripture from the Koran and rotating his prayer beads inside his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

FARIS

(in Arabic)

"Our Lord. We believe, therefore
forgive us and have mercy on us for
Thou art Best of all who show
mercy."

INT. THE LAUNDRY ROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

MUNIRA is still inside, recovering.

Faris' whispered prayer continues, backtracking the scene.

FARIS V.O.

"Thou art our Protecting Friend,
therefore forgive us and have mercy
on us, Thou, the Best of all who
show forgiveness."

Munira spots the PIECE OF LINED PAPER, unfolded and left
facedown on the dryer. She experiences a moment of dread,
before turning it over and confirming its identity. After a
quick glance, she drops it onto the washing machine so that
the content is visible. In handwritten Arabic, the title:
POST-OPERATIVE ABORTION CARE, heads the paper. Below is
listed treatment guidelines.

Munira looks up toward the door, understanding that Prima
now knows her secret.

INT. AL OUFİ LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA enters from the foyer into MAIA, FATIMA and ZARA'S
lively conversation.

ZARA

Finally, Munira! We've been
waiting. They are going tell us
what happened in the booth.

MAIA

Would you like to hear Munira?

MUNIRA

Very much.

MAIA

So, after all the others were
detained, one of the security
officials walks me into the women's
section of the screening facility

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAIA (cont'd)

where three clerics were waiting for my arrival. They were talking all over each other and red faced and when I arrived they got really quiet. I could see they were intimidated. But I was fearless. Fatima and I had made a plan - everything was happening as we predicted. All they could think to ask was the obvious. "Where is your husband?" they said. I said, "I left him at home." One of the other men said, "where then is a Marham". I said, "I'm sorry, I left them at home too. They're all busy.". Another one said, "You need a marham's permission to cross the border. You cannot cross alone". I said, "In that case, I'd like to ask your permission to cross." He said, "I am not your Marhem." And that's when I said, "I'd like to make you one."

Maia maintains a dry expression for affect.

Fatima smiles.

Munira and Zara look at Maia in shock.

MAIA

And then I offered him my breast.
...verbally, of course.

The women erupt in cries of approval.

MAIA

(militant now)

Sh sh sh sh! Now, this is in strictest confidence, Ladies. Zara!

ZARA

I understand! Brilliant, Maia.
Brilliant.

MUNIRA

I can't believe it.

Maia initiates a high five from Fatima.

SUMI has entered and busies herself clearing serving plates. She moves back and forth along the buffet table while ladies continue their conversation.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

I'm very proud of you, Maia.

MAIA

Thanks, Mun. I'm proud of you. It's hard to be the apple who falls far from the tree. If you could all meet Munira's sisters. They were the poster children "The Perfect Saudi Girl". When Muni was a little girl she would strut around my mother's house with her undershirts stuffed and sporting stilletos while her sisters were at home reciting the Koran backwards.

FAISAL enters and moves toward the cake, stealing another slice silently, just as Sumi reaches to clear it from the buffet table.

MAIA (OS)(CONT)

There was a time when she idolized Cher.

MUNIRA (OS)

For a short time.

Faisal and Sumi smile at each other and Faisal places the cake slice on to his dessert plate.

MAIA (OS)(CONT)

Don't let this demure act fool you.

FATIMA

I'm not fooled.

MUNIRA

(a dose of reality)

Yes, well, Maia when your family left it wasn't so easy to stay as free. For one thing that was all before I became a woman. And then my parents became much more protective. I had no one to go to then.

MAIA

I know. I forget that.

ZARA

But she is here for you now.

(CONTINUED)

MAIA

And I don't plan on leaving anytime soon. It was my parents who left. Not me.

Zara glances over just as Faisal picks up the serving plate and holds it out to Sumi with a smile. He makes deliberate eye contact with her. Sumi blushes.

Zara quickly returns her gaze to the group.

Faisal exits with his cake to the back patio and Sumi disappears into the kitchen once again.

Zara turns to Munira.

ZARA

I need to run to my car for something. Where is my abaya, please?

MUNIRA

Come. I'll get it for you.

Munira leads Zara into the foyer.

INT. THE AL OUFU FOYER - NIGHT

Munira crosses to a closet and reaches to open the door.

Zara take Munira's wrist.

ZARA

No need.

Munira swivels to face Zara and sees that she is distraught.

MUNIRA

What is it?

ZARA

This Indian girl. Where did you find her?

Munira takes a moment to collect her thoughts.

MUNIRA

She called here, one month ago, looking for work. Probably, she was calling every number in the phone book. I did not need her at the time, but... I thought I could use an extra girl for tonight.

(CONTINUED)

ZARA

You know, Sana Al Hussein? She is the wife of Omar from the bank-

MUNIRA

Yes. I think so.

ZARA

Last month she had to throw out a service girl.

Pause.

MUNIRA

Really?

ZARA

This girl was trying to steal away Omar. And if you know Sana, she is not dramatic. She said herself, this girl was a very good employee - good with the children. But always an eye on Omar and her kids. Dangerous, you know?

MUNIRA

I never heard this.

ZARA

(Beat)

Munira, this girl you have working in the kitchen... I said to myself this girl is like Sana described but I didn't want to be mistaken... Now I am quite sure she is the same one.

Munira, looks toward the kitchen.

INT. THE SERVICE HALLWAY - AL OUFY HOME - NIGHT

Munira strides down the hall toward the kitchen, with confidence.

She enters the kitchen.

INT. AL OUFİ KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUMI is washing dishes within.

MUNIRA

Sumi?

SUMI

Yes?

MUNIRA

May I speak with you?

Sumi follows Munira back into the service hallway.

INT. AL OUFİ SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

MUNIRA and SUMI stand, face-to-face.

MUNIRA

I'll just say it...

Munira proceeds uncomfortably, choosing her words.

MUNIRA

Riyadh is a small enough town. My friend has recognized you.

Sumi looks at Munira innocently.

SUMI

From where, ma'am?

MUNIRA

They are only protecting themselves, you understand.

SUMI

Protecting from what, ma'am?

Pause.

MUNIRA

(matter-of-fact)

... They think you will seduce their husbands.

Sumi stands in unsurprised resignation.

SUMI

I have done nothing wrong, Madame.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

It doesn't mean you are not a threat. I will ask you to leave my home for now.

Sumi turns slowly to leave, but Munira stops her.

MUNIRA

Shway. [wait] There is something else.

Now Munira reveals a key in her open hand.

Sumi looks at it, confused.

SUMI

What is it for?

Beat.

MUNIRA

I would like you to return to seduce my husband.

Sumi looks at Munira in disbelief.

SUMI

I don't understand.

MUNIRA

It won't be difficult. Khalid will like you. You're young and beautiful. In fact, he has noticed you already, I think. Once you are married, he will give you anything you want.

Sumi looks Munira in the eyes.

SUMI

Why you think I want something you are throwing away?

Long pause.

MUNIRA

I think you had no chance in India. You dream of something more. You come here and hope a wealthy man will propose marriage - that you'll be given an easy life, children who will have a future, money. It is the dream of many. There is no shame in it. But it is not mine.

(CONTINUED)

(Beat.)
Khalid is a respectable
man. Gentle. A good provider. A
good father...

Sumi looks frightened, like a child.

A nervous Muni extends the key in her direction.

SUMI
No. Thank you. I'll get my things.

Sumi exits the hallway into the kitchen and is gone for
several moments before returning with her purse.

She exits through the garage.

INT. THE AL OUFU KITCHEN - NIGHT

MUNIRA enters the kitchen - she pours herself a glass of
brandy and shoots it back.

Now Munira lifts the silver coffee tray from the counter and
exits toward the Living Room.

INT. THE AL OUFU LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA enters the living room, carrying the tray of coffee.

FAISAL, FARIS, JOHN, MAIA, FATIMA and ZARA are mingling
about.

Zara spot Munira. Faris is preparing to leave.

ZARA
Munira, darling, I think we will go
home to the boys. We told the nanny
we'd be home by midnight.

MUNIRA
Is it midnight?

Munira looks to a clock on the wall. It reads 11:45.

MUNIRA
I didn't realize it was so late.

MAIA
I have a spinning class at 7:00
tomorrow morning and we still have
to drive back.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA
(an obligatory offer)
Not one last coffee, Fatima? John?

FATIMA
No, no. Now I'm sure you have
things to do tomorrow as well.

JOHN
Thank you Dear. I'm filled to the
brim.

CUT TO

INT. THE AL OUFY FOYER - NIGHT

MUNIRA addresses each of her guests individually. The others
mingle as they wait to bid farewell.

The women are slowly donning their over-clothes, in
preparation for the outside world.

Munira kisses Maia.

MAIA
(speaking low)
Are you sure you don't want me to
stick around and help you hide the
evidence? You know, get rid of the
cigar smoke and man smell - maybe
fumigate?

MUNIRA
I'll be fine. Will you be fine,
Maia?

MAIA
Yes. And, you know you can tell me
anything, right? I'm here now and
we can take on the world together
again, just like old times.

At this, tears spring from Munira's eyes. She wipes them
aside quickly as she nods.

Maia hugs her cousin close.

MUNIRA
Love you.

(CONTINUED)

MAIA
Love you too.

Faisal butts in for a kiss.

FAISAL
Your food was delicious. Oh no, the
tears are flowing. Too much love.

MUNIRA
Thank you for coming, Faisal.

FAISAL
It was my pleasure, Munira.

Zara works her way in.

ZARA
(singing)
Munira. Lovely Munira.

Zara and Munira kiss.

ZARA
You are wonderful, fabulous,
spectacular! And you should bring
your boys to play with mine, okay?

Munira forces a smile and nod.

Zara doesn't notice her discomfort and turns to mingle with
the others.

Now Munira goes to Faris. They don't touch but they stand
close.

FARIS
Thank you for dinner, Habibti.

MUNIRA
It was the least I could do.

With a hand on Munira's shoulder Faris leans in stiffly for
a kiss on the cheek.

JOHN
Thank you, Darling. It was a real
treat. May I interview you for my
article, Munira?

Fatima places a hand on Munira's shoulder.

FATIMA
John, john, not now.

JOHN
You're right, you're right. I get
carried away.

Now Fatima talks to Munira intimately.

FATIMA
Thank you for tonight. Truly. And,
Munira, I want you to know that I
am a supporter of you - no matter
how distant we are.

Munira cocks her head a bit at this.

Fatima leans in and whispers in her ear.

FATIMA
(whisper)
Be careful love.

Munira is speechless at this. How could Fatima have known?

CUT TO"

EXT. THE FRONT COURTYARD - AL OUFU HOME - NIGHT

MUNIRA stands in the doorway and waves goodbye to her
guests, as they cross the courtyard.

INT. THE AL OUFU FOYER - NIGHT

MUNIRA stands with her back against the front door, for a
moment.

She looks to a clock on the wall which reads: 12:00.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA sits at her vanity for several moments with stoicism.

There is a KNOCK on the bathroom door.

PRIMA OS
Ma'am?

Munira wipes the tears from her cheeks before responding.

(CONTINUED)

MUNIRA

Come in.

A stone-faced PRIMA enters the bathroom.

PRIMA

It is finished, ma'am. The bags are by the door.

MUNIRA

Thank you.

Prima turns to exit.

MUNIRA

Prima...?

Prima turns around again. Pause.

MUNIRA

...I have reasons-

PRIMA

- Never mind, Madame. It's not my business.

MUNIRA

It will be your business.

(Beat.)

Sammer and Ghassan came after 9 years of trying the fertility treatments. And still, with them...I was so frightened...

(almost apologetic.)

I don't want to die.

Prima appears unsympathetic.

PRIMA

I see, Madame.

MUNIRA

This is why I say... Do you understand? I think it was not God's will for me to be a mother.

Beat. Long pause.

PRIMA

I have 3 children of my own ma'am. In the Philippines. I have seen them only one time in the last three years.

(CONTINUED)

At this, Munira turns from her vanity and faces Prima.

PRIMA CONT.

(unemotional)

The youngest - a girl - she is
4. Last time I go home to Manila,
she look at me like I am a stranger
like some lady on the street.

Munira is obviously affected by this.

MUNIRA

I cannot imagine.

PRIMA

If you cannot imagine...

(Beat. Blunt.)

If we were given children, ma'am,
it was no one's will but God's.

Munira doesn't respond.

Prima exits the bathroom and, as soon as she is out of sight, Munira collapses into tears.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

Prima watches Sumi enter the front door, from above, and waits there as Sumi climbs the stairs and passes her.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

SUMI walks through the Master Bedroom tentatively toward the Master Bath.

The door is ajar and Sumi spots Munira crying.

Sumi lets herself in and Munira looks up, spotting her through the mirror.

SUMI

I've changed my mind.

Munira studies Sumi for several moments before turning toward her.

Sumi holds out her hand.

SUMI

I'll take the keys.

(CONTINUED)

Munira takes the keys off of the vanity, rises and approaches Sumi, face-to-face.

Munira looks at Sumi for several moments, with tears still in her eyes, before dropping the keys in Sumi's outstretched palm.

MUNIRA

(re: the scar on Sumi's face)
And what is this really?

SUMI

(emotionless)
At the last family I work for...
the wife thinks I am tempting her
husband away from her. One day she
comes into the kitchen. I am
chopping parsley. She take the
knife away from me, and...

Munira nods.

MUNIRA

Sana Al Hussein.

SUMI

(nods)
Sana.

MUNIRA

She never told that part.
(Beat.)
You may start work tomorrow morning
at seven.

Sumi exits.

Munira looks resolute now. She lifts her laptop off of the vanity and exits.

INT. KHALID'S OFFICE - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

MUNIRA moves to a well-organized desk in a very masculine looking office. There is a DESKTOP COMPUTER and a pile of FILES visible. The files are all labeled with a LOGO STICKER which reads: AL OUFİ construction in Arabic.

Munira opens her laptop to the same display, seen twice previously: TERRACED COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE at HAMAD BIN KHALİFA AL-THANI ST., BEIRUT LEBANON. She glances at the price, which still reads \$1,500/mo.

(CONTINUED)

Now, Munira wakes up the desktop's monitor and opens a SPREADSHEET labeled: AL OUFU CONSTRUCTION FINANCES. She scrolls over to a column titled: MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE FUND and scrolls down to view the total amount, which equals: \$10,000. She highlights the entire column and DELETES it.

Next, Munira reaches under the desk and retrieves a CASHBOX. She opens it and reveals rows of neatly stacked and bound riyals. She takes two bundles and sticks them in her purse, replacing the cash box, under the desk.

Munira turns back to her laptop screen and glances at a portion of text which reads: CALL THIS NUMBER TO MAKE A BID.

Munira retrieves her PHONE and opens the address book. She views a listing named: BEIRUT RESTAURANT PROPERTY and checks the number against the one on the computer screen. It is correct.

Finally, Munira replaces her phone and slips her laptop into her purse.

INT. AL OUFU MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

MUNIRA pulls on her abaya, wraps her head in a hijab, ties a niqab around her face and stares at herself in the mirror above the dresser. Now she lifts her purse from the bed and turns to exit.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - AL OUFU HOME - NIGHT

MUNIRA crosses to her twins' bedroom and looks in with conviction.

MUNIRA
(in Arabic)
Never be afraid...

Munira pulls shut the door.

INT. THE AL OUFU FOYER - NIGHT

MUNIRA descends the staircase. Six hard-shelled suitcases are lined up in a row near the front door, waiting.

INT. THE DRIVEWAY - AL OUFİ HOME - NIGHT

RAFAY loads the suitcases into the trunk of the SUV. MUNIRA approaches the vehicle, climbs into the back seat of the SUV and shuts the door.

Rafay does the same and they pull out of the driveway.

INT. A DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

RAFAY drives MUNIRA down a long desert road, bookended by rocky sand-scape and the distant glow of an airport. Munira sits erect and still. She holds a boarding pass: RIYADH TO BEIRUT, in her lap.

Rafay drives over a pothole and the car dips and jerks.

RAFAY

Sorry, ma'am.

The car continues down a low grade and as the car descends, an UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE, can be heard ROLLING UNDER HER SEAT, LIKE A RAINSTICK.

Munira looks to the floor and finds a small pool of rice communing at her feet.

MUNIRA

(to Rafay; calmly)

Pull over, please.

The car turns off to the side of the road and rests in a cloud of dust.

MUNIRA

Unlock the back.

Rafay presses the automatic unlock feature and Munira steps out into the settling sand and moves around to the back of the vehicle. She opens the hatch and peers in. Six suitcases are wedged together, leaving no floor visible.

Munira drags out one suitcase with effort and brings it to the sandy ground. She looks to the floor where the suitcase had lain but sees nothing. Then she pulls out another suitcase - still nothing. And another - still nothing. As she sets the third suitcase on the desert floor, the fifth (still in the cab) unlatches at the top. A flood of white rice pours from its hard-shelled stomach, onto the sand below. Munira looks up; there sits three large sacks of rice, nestled side-by-side. One has a tear at the edge.

(CONTINUED)

With this, Munira unlatches each of the suitcases at her feet, exposing identical bags of white rice.

Now, Munira stands above her luggage, looking in.

RAFAY

Madame, your flight will leave in one hour.

Munira looks up.

MUNIRA

I know.

Now Munira walks to Rafay's open window.

MUNIRA

Do you have a smoke?

Rafay nods and pulls a cigarette from the pocket of his uniform shirt, handing it to Munira.

MUNIRA

A light?

Munira lets Rafay light the cigarette for her.

MUNIRA

I'll only be a few minutes.

With this, Munira heads off into the desert toward a low jebel. As she walks she unties her hijab and niqab, letting them swirl into the wind.

When she reaches the jebel, she climbs to the top and sits, staring off into the distance.

After several moments, Munira reaches into her abayah pocket and extracts her passport. She flips through the stamped pages and takes a slow drag.

End.