

INT. MIMI'S BEDROOM - CAIRO, EGYPT

There's a small lamp in the corner, but the room is illuminated by the glow of the television, which plays a performance of Abdel Halim's *Ahwak (I Love You)*.

MIMI, 90, lays on her bed. She's in a deep sleep, the kind one doesn't wake up from. Her son ATIF, 65, is visibly emotional, as he tends to her for what might be the last time. He grabs a bottle of *zat zaytun* (olive oil), and pours some into his hands. He carefully works it into her hair and scalp, like a massage, then gives her forehead a tender kiss. He rubs it on her face, profusely kissing her cheeks. He massages her hands, each finger individually, passionately kissing her palms. He gets on his knees to massage her legs, and her feet. His eyes fill with tears as he goes toe by toe.

In the doorway we see RAMY, watching what might be the weirdest fucking thing he's ever seen. Atif finishes, and walks towards his son.

ATIF

(off Ramy's look)

Strange, I know, but she loved the feeling of *zayt zaytun*. It's our *khidmah* - to ease the hands that cooked for six children, and put them to sleep all on her own.

Ramy looks at her withered hands, shiny with olive oil.

ATIF (CONT'D)

To comfort the feet that came home sore every night, blisters oozing from a hard day's work - forming over the older, barely dried blisters, from another hard day's work - the day before.

Ramy stares at the oldest-looking feet in the world.

ATIF (CONT'D)

(Arabic)

Those hands. Those feet. They are this family. Touching them, is touching us.

Atif hands Ramy the bottle of olive oil.

ATIF (CONT'D)

Touch her, Ramy - she's touched you more than you'll ever know.

Atif nudges him to her bedside, and lifts Mimi's hand up to his lips. Ramy gives a reluctant kiss. Atif pats his son on the back, and turns to leave.

Ramy waits until he's gone, then puts the olive oil on the nightstand. He's not doing this shit.

He looks back at the glowing TV, two Arab actors argue.

He looks around the room, it's covered inch to inch with framed photographs: A young beautiful Mimi, with her children. The grandfather he never met in black and white. Great aunts and uncles, memorialized. His parents wedding day. Ramy and his sister as babies. The story of his family.

Then, right by her bedside, is Ramy's high school graduation photo. He's floored. With all the pictures here, he's so close to her bed. He didn't realize he meant so much to her.

Ramy stares at his grandmother's body for a moment. It's bluish, cold-looking. A beat. He picks up the bottle of olive oil and puts a little in his palm.

He slowly pushes through his discomfort, and rubs oil into her scalp, just like Atif. Her brow twitches a little. As Ramy looks at her face, something about her looks warmer than the moment before.

He palms more olive oil and starts massaging her hands. As he gets to the second hand, he decides to give it a little kiss. A small, sigh-ish breath escapes from Mimi. Ramy can't believe it. This is the most animated she's been.

Encouraged, he takes even more olive oil. He starts to get into it now, massaging down the legs, working her feet. He get on his knees, just like Atif. Her body is feeling warm!

He's face to face with soles of her feet. The bunions and calluses forming a map of her hardship. He looks away for a moment. His eyes catch a photo of Mimi in her work uniform.

He knows what to do. He closes his eyes - he takes a breath, leans forward, and just as his lips make contact with his grandmother's foot... she JERKS and THWACK!, kicks Ramy square in the face.

RAMY
(knocked back)
Fuck!

Her eyes shoot open!

MIMI
 (Arabic)
 Ya Allah!

Atif bursts in. He can't believe it, his mother's awake!

ATIF
 (Arabic, overjoyed)
 Mama! Allahuakbar!

MIMI
 (Arabic, disoriented)
 He kissed my feet?

ATIF
 (Arabic)
 What?

Ramy stands up, holding his possibly broken nose.

ATIF (CONT'D)
 (disgusted)
 You kissed her feet?

A beat. Not sure what to say, he blurts:

RAMY
You kissed her feet too!

ATIF
 No, I never kiss feet! You kiss
 hands. You kiss forehead. You never
 kiss feet.
 (Arabic)
 Feet carry the sin of the earth.

Ramy stares with wonderment and confusion... did he bring his grandma back from her coma? He tests his nose for pain, not realizing it's bleeding until he looks down at his hands - they're covered in blood.

TITLE CARD: TITLE OF SHOW

INT. CHLOE'S LIVING ROOM, LOWER EAST SIDE - 2:30 AM

Ramy and CHLOE are on the couch, making out and talking between kisses.

RAMY
 What's wrong with New Jersey?
 Jersey's basically New York. This
 time of night it's like a 25 minute
 drive.

CHLOE

Exactly. Drive. Because all the trains are closed. Because no one wants to go to Jersey. Only things I like from Jersey are you, my roommate Jackson, his boyfriend, and Bruce Springsteen. And I can see all of you in New York.

They kiss, then Chloe breaks away and goes to the kitchen.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

(presentational)

To celebrate your first *full* night at Casa de Chloe, we have only the highest quality boxed wine.

RAMY

I'm good, don't trust boxes. Like not even juice boxes. I was a strict Capri Sun kid. (beat) You got any Capri Sun?

Chloe laughs as she pours two glasses of red.

CHLOE

You realize there's a pouch in the box, right? This is basically a giant adult Capri Sun.

Chloe comes back to the couch and hands Ramy his glass.

RAMY

(laughing)

Really, I'm good.

Ramy sets it on the table and resumes kissing Chloe's neck.

CHLOE

You know, we've hooked up like three times and I don't think I've seen you have a drink.

RAMY

Yeah, I don't really drink.

CHLOE

Like at all?

RAMY

Yeah.

CHLOE
Shit, sorry. Are you like
recovering?

RAMY
No, no... remember I said I'm
Muslim.

CHLOE
(thrown)
Oh, guess I thought that was a
culture thing. Like I'm Jewish
because of my family, but I don't
do the stuff.

RAMY
(laughing)
Well, I like to do the stuff. I
mean not *all* the stuff.

Ramy, still kissing, nudges Chloe so she's on top of him. He
takes his wallet out of his back pocket, fumbling for a
condom. Chloe puts her glass on the table as they kiss.

CHLOE
(recollecting)
I asked if you wanted a beer and
you said you were at your limit.
The other night, at the bar.

RAMY
Well, I was... my limit's none.

A beat. Chloe slowly gets off Ramy's lap. She gets her wine.

RAMY (CONT'D)
Sorry. I guess I just try and hold
off on telling. Sometimes people
feel weird if they're drinking, and
I'm not, and I just wanted to get
to know you without any of that.

CHLOE
Being lied to feels weirder.

A beat.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
So you're actually religious? Like
God God, the whole thing?

RAMY
Um, yeah... God God.

CHLOE

(hesitant)

But, you seem smart. Sorry I just - the stories? The prophet flew on a horse and Moses parted the sea? So we gotta to pray to a magic man in the sky with our wish-lists... before the devil gets us? It just sounds... fucking dumb.

Chloe immediately realizes she went too far.

RAMY

(calmly)

I don't think prayer is a wish-list to God. It's more like affirmations to bring you closer to God - to being the best version of yourself.

CHLOE

Where you lie, but don't drink, but have sex.

A beat.

RAMY

(tries to laugh it off)

See, you get it.

CHLOE

I'm sorry - my roommate's gay, my brother is - I can't get behind religions that say they're gonna burn in hell for who they are.

RAMY

I don't think your brother is gonna burn in hell! Muslims don't all hate gay people, you know. I think the Quran probably just says no sodomy, or anal or whatever, because there weren't condoms - diseases were spreading. Like back in ancient times, or the 80's. You know with AIDS and stuff, that was a risk if you were gay. Maybe the Quran was just trying to protect gay people from AIDS. So they could be healthy.

(beat)

But like you could get AIDS even if you're straight.

(MORE)

RAMY (CONT'D)

Like if I didn't use a condom, I could get AIDS just as easily as your brother could get AIDS. So maybe the Quran was just pushing us all... to invent condoms.

The faucet in the kitchen behind them starts running. They look up and see JACKSON, Chloe's roommate, filling up a cup.

JACKSON

Sorry to interrupt. Just gotta stay hydrated. You know.. to be healthy.

He's heard the whole thing. Ramy scrambles to recover.

RAMY

I - look if God hates gay people then he hates all of us. Cause we're all a little gay - it's a spectrum, right? I've never told anyone this but, one time I was watching porn and I clicked out of it because I thought the guy's dick was weird-looking. Which, if you think about it, means there's a type of dick I don't like... so there must be a type of dick I do like. I'm not even into dick, and I'm kinda into dick. Obviously not as much as you are, but...

Chloe looks at Ramy with disgust.

RAMY (CONT'D)

It wasn't a weird porno where they try to pay a girl to get in a van or whatever. It seemed like they were in love. I only watch if I think they're in love.

A beat.

RAMY (CONT'D)

(to Jackson)

So you're from Jersey?

INT. LYFT

Ramy scratches his beard. His driver, Chad, is an aged jersey bro past his prime. He looks like a guy that would blast house music, but the car is silent. Ramy tries to strike a conversation.

RAMY
How's your night?

CHAD
Nah. You want a therapist, get a fucking therapist. I don't do this bro.

RAMY
Oh. I was just -

CHAD
Nah. You weren't. You were askin' about me, so I could ask about you. Then we "connect," and you have a little story about us you can bust out on a date. Not me, bro. Point A to point B, that's me.

Ramy almost speaks, but realizes there's nothing to say. Chad puts in earbuds and hits play on his phone. The car is silent, except for the faint sound of house music escaping Chad's earbuds. Ramy stares at the navigation which reads "38 minutes to destination."

They drive uptown, through the Lincoln tunnel, and then New Jersey. They arrive. As Ramy exits the car, Chad rolls down his window.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Yo, don't give me a low rating or some shit. That's a bitch-ass move, and you know it.

Ramy watches Chad drive away, then looks down at his phone. He gives Chad five stars.

EXT. RAMY'S FAMILY HOME

Ramy gets to the front door and quietly inserts his key, opening the door gently, making as little noise as possible. He tiptoes past the living room where we see Atif, his father, passed out on the couch with a crossword on his chest. The Quran plays loudly from somewhere. Ramy fumbles around until he finds his father's iPhone, where he pauses the audio from a YouTube clip playing verses. He tiptoes upstairs, past his parents' and sister's bedrooms, finally getting to his.

INT. RAMY'S BEDROOM

Ramy lays down in bed. He takes the contact lenses out of his eyes and sticks them on the nightstand, where they join other dried up ones. The lights are out but he's still awake. He can't sleep. He rolls over and grabs his MacBook off the floor. He puts on his glasses as he opens the laptop and clicks around. With only the computer glow visible on his face, he looks towards the door. As he looks back, his eyes briefly dart past the prayer mat on the floor. He clicks and audio begins playing from the laptop:

SANCHEZ (O.S.)

Holy shit, she's fucking beautiful.
Roll down the window. Hey, babe!

HOT MILF (O.S.)

Yeah?

SANCHEZ (O.S.)

Wanna come ride with us in the van?
We're making a documentary... about
Miami. We'll give you like two
hundred dollars for uh, interview -

Ramy begins to unbuckle his belt.

EXT. MOSQUE

An upper-middle class New Jersey suburb. A group of Muslims mill their way into the mosque, which sits on the corner of the street. Women in full length skirts and dresses, donning various states of headscarf: tight and close, loose and casual, or none at all. Men in dress shirts, some wearing blazers. A smatter of conversation happens as everyone removes their shoes in the entryway.

INT. MOSQUE

IMAM QATANANI sits at the head of a table presiding over two families: MOHAMMAD's family to the right, TUGBA's to the left. This ceremony is called *Al Nikah*, the signing of the marriage contract.

Sitting along the wall is a small group of non-family members. Ramy watches from there as the Imam begins. He speaks poetically in perfect English, littered with Arabic phrases. His most defining feature is his deep sincerity.

IMAM QATANANI

Bismillah and welcome, beloved.
 Allah has called us here today as
 family, or as intimate companions,
 to witness the joining of Mohammad
 and Tugba. I know we're always
 eager to get to the grander
 festivities - the food, the dancing
 - but this is a very special room.

Sitting next to Ramy are his two other buddies, RABIH and AHMED, who are both joined by their WIVES. As Ramy scans the room, he realizes that he's the only one, with the exception of a little boy and girl running around, that doesn't have a significant other by his side. Then the two children sit down and hold hands. As everyone looks on, beaming with pride, a look of loneliness settles onto Ramy's face. Rabih puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

RABIH

(whispering)

Get on our level, bitch.

AHMED

(whispering)

Seriously man, you're running out of options. There's two hot Muslim girls left in town and they'll be gone by the end of the year.

RABIH

(whispering)

Who? Fatima and Haya? Nah, they only seem hot cause they're what's left. It's already too late. You're gonna have to go out of network if you want quality.

AHMED

(whispering)

Yeah, my cousin had to do that. Took them forever but my Aunt finally found him a girl in Ohio.

RABIH

(whispering)

Yeah, but now he has to live in Ohio. Ohio sucks. Why do you think Kyrie left? Cause of Lebron?

(Ramy doesn't respond)

Cause Ohio sucks. His only problem with Lebron is that he's from Ohio.

RAMY

(whispering)

Guys, I'm fine being alone. Really.
Can we stop talking about women
like it's the NBA draft?

RABIH

(whispering)

How do you think they talk about
us? Dude - if you don't find
someone while you still have a
hairline, you're gonna be on
MuslimMatch swiping through
divorced chicks.

Rabih picks at Ramy's hair, examining its thickness.

RAMY

(whispering)

Stop.

RABIH

(whispering)

You got less time than I thought.

AHMED

(whispering)

We're just trying to look out for
you, bro. I know you have fun with
white girls, but at the end of the
day, you're gonna want someone who
gets where you're from. And someone
who's hot.

RABIH

(whispering)

You're gonna be lonely as shit at
the reception tonight. Just have
your parents hook it up. They got
tabs on everyone. Best decision I
ever made.

Rabih's wife shushes him, and he puts his arm around her.

RABIH (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Sorry, babe.

Ramy refocuses on the Imam. Without thinking, he scratches at
his hairline.

IMAM QATANANI

Our partners, our paths, the state
of our heart and our affairs -
these are all the will of God.
Anything that is, or is not, is
only because of Allah. God may give
us love or loneliness, but always
what we need. The Quran tells us
even the birds in the sky are held
up not by their wings, but by
Allah's will. With his grace they
fly or they fall - as do we.
Inshallah.

The Imam hands a fountain pen to Tugba, who signs an ornate looking contract. Mohammad signs, and then their fathers follow suit. Tugba's father gives an exaggerated sigh to "signing away" his daughter and the room laughs. Mohammad and Tugba share a moment, staring lovingly at one another.

IMAM QATANANI (CONT'D)

Alhamdulillah. Let's take a moment
to enjoy and wash up before we
pray.

The families shake hands and hug. Rabih and Ahmed walk over to congratulate the newlyweds. As Ramy watches everyone celebrate, his attention shifts to a window behind the Imam. He stares out as a large black raven lands on the ledge.

INT. MOSQUE - HALLWAY

Ramy peeks into a clearly crowded bathroom. He needs to wash up for prayer but the fountains are occupied. Not wanting to wait, he navigates to the bathroom in the basement.

INT. MOSQUE - BATHROOM

It's empty, just as he planned. Ramy enters a bathroom stall and pees. He zips up his pants and goes to the wash fountain. He rolls up his sleeves, removes his socks, and rolls up his pants. He proceeds to perform *wudu*: washing the hands, water in the mouth, the nose, face, arms, forehead, ears, and feet.

Ramy goes to grab a paper towel to dry up, when suddenly a booming voice comes from the corner of the bathroom.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Brother! What you just did was
haraam!

Ramy jumps, startled. From the corner emerges an OLD HAJJ Ramy's never met before. He's wearing a crumpled white polo and has a long beard that runs down past his neck. He has the energy of someone who has traveled through time to deliver urgent information. He hasn't.

RAMY

(Arabic)

Hajj! What's wrong?

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Everything. You have sinned.

RAMY

(Arabic)

I don't know you, do I?

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Allah destined us for us to meet.
In this bathroom.

RAMY

(Arabic)

I'm sorry if I got in your space -

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Before you pray, you must wash
yourself properly! When you address
God, you must be clean!

RAMY

(Arabic)

Hajji, wallahi, I know. I did.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

You're covered in piss.

RAMY

(Arabic)

What?

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

You peed standing up. The water
splashed back and hit you. Gravity.
You're covered in piss, and - you
didn't get water in your nostrils -
you'll never smell heaven!

RAMY

(Arabic)

Actually, with my nose it -

OLD HAJJ

(saved the worst for last)

And son, your feet are filthy! Feet carry the sin of the earth.

RAMY

(Arabic)

Yeah... I've heard.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Then why didn't you go between the toes? Dirty toes, dirty heart. The prophet never left a toe dry.

RAMY

(Arabic)

Hajj, relax. I think God knows my intentions and isn't looking at my toes or up my nose.

The Old Hajj is disgusted. He rolls up his sleeves and heads towards the fountain Ramy stands next to.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic, muttering)

Washing like this, good chance your prayers have never counted... piss-covered kid... whole life must suck.. probably can't even find love...

The Old Hajj gets on his knees and begins washing his hands. He grabs Ramy by the waist and pulls him close.

RAMY

What are you doing?

He starts aggressively scrubbing between Ramy's toes.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Allah sent me to save you! If the water doesn't go between your toes, the devil goes between your toes!

He then starts to pat down Ramy's pant thighs with water, uncomfortably close to his crotch.

OLD HAJJ (CONT'D)
 (Arabic)
 Free yourself from your waste!

RAMY
 (Arabic)
 This feels like a sin.

INT. MOSQUE - PRAYER HALL

Imam Qatanani leads the group in prayer. Everyone stands solemnly, eyes closed, except for Ramy. His eyes are wide open and he's staring at his feet, where there's a small hole in his left sock. The Imam reaches the end of *Al-Fatiha* prayer and the group chants -

EVERYONE
 AMEEN.

Ramy can't help but stare through the hole, at his toe.

INT. RAMY'S FAMILY HOME

The table is set with food that's a mix of Egypt and New Jersey: hummus, olives, bagels with lox, turkey bacon and cereal.

Ramy's family eats breakfast together, but everyone is in their own world. Atif, his father, is immersed in an Egyptian newspaper, scanning headlines about Syria. His mom, Dahlia, is playing an intense game of Candy Crush on her phone. His sister, Reem, is watching *The Handmaid's Tale*. Ramy looks around the table, trying to get a conversation going, but his eyes are unmet.

A series of sounds fill the silence, creating a semi-musical rhythm. His dad's spoon clanks against the cereal bowl, a dramatic sound cue from *Handmaids*, a satisfying POP! from Candy Crush, a crinkle of the newspaper page. The various sounds loop a few times until Ramy finally interrupts.

RAMY
 So... Mohammad's Katb-Kitab was really nice yesterday.

ATIF
 (not looking up)
 She's cute.

DAHLIA
 (not looking up)
 Too cute.

Another loop of kitchen sounds.

RAMY

I guess it was weird, being like
the only single person there. I
thought you were gonna come, Reem?

REEM

Nah.

Another loop of kitchen sounds.

RAMY

Mohammad actually seemed happy.

ATIF

(Arabic, uninterested)
When Allah wills it, it is easy.

Candy Crush POP!, tea sip, TV soundtrack cymbal hits.

RAMY

Hey Mom, how's that girl Nour?
Mrs. Hassan's daughter.

Everyone stops dead in their tracks. The newspaper goes down,
Candy Crush makes a crashing sound, the TV is paused. The
room is suddenly silent. Dahlia gives Ramy her full
attention.

DAHLIA

(Arabic)
What, Habibi?

RAMY

Nour... from when we all hung out
last Ramadan?

DAHLIA

(Arabic)
Dear God in heaven.

REEM

Are you fucking kidding me?

DAHLIA

(Arabic)
There is only one God, Muhammad is
his messenger.

REEM

You had one lonely night at a
wedding, now you want Mom to set
you up with a Muslim girl?

RAMY

(to Reem)

This has nothing to do with you.

REEM

Of course it does. If you get married, they'll start putting pressure on me to start a family. They'll look at my stomach like it's the answer to their mid-life crisis. I'm not ready for that.

ATIF

(Arabic)

Everyone, calm down.

REEM

You don't even have a real job! You do nothing at a startup that does nothing.

DAHLIA

(Arabic)

They are just starting up, habibi. Give them a chance.

ATIF

Ramy, a date with a Muslim woman is a big deal. You have to take her seriously. Not like... others. Are you sure you're ready for that? I mean sometimes I wonder if I was too quick to -

DAHLIA

(English, snapping)

Of course he's ready!

(Arabic)

My son is finally becoming a man.

REEM

Bullshit!

(to Ramy)

You're trying to fill the emptiness inside of you with a woman, and it's going to ruin my life! Fuck you, Ramy. Fuck you!

ATIF

(weakly)

... the cursing.

She storms out. Dahlia turns to her son adoringly.

DAHLIA
 (Arabic)
 My little man.

Dahlia returns to her game. There's a "POP!" sound from her phone, as she clears a whole row of candies.

EXT. EGYPTIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ramy sits at a table on the patio of an authentic Middle-Eastern restaurant. Arabic house music plays, as people eat and smoke hookah. Ramy takes a bite from the hummus spread in front of him. Across from Ramy sits NOUR, a pretty Egyptian girl who is modestly dressed. Also at the table is MASUD, a slightly-older Egyptian guy with slicked-back hair. He speaks great English, but with a thick Arab accent.

Ramy looks at Masud, who is staring at him.

RAMY
 So Masud... Have you lived in
 Jersey your whole life?

MASUD
 (gestures to Nour)
 You're here for her, not me. I'm
 just the chaperone.

Ramy looks to Nour, then back at Masud, who continues to stare directly at him, not menacingly, but intensely.

RAMY
 Right. So Nour... You've lived in
 Jersey your whole life?

Nour gives a polite smile, but still not excited.

NOUR
 Born and raised. Exit 17.

RAMY
 Cool! Me too... I mean, 16W.

This date has no energy. Then, from the sidewalk, the loud, drunken conversation of three JERSEY PARTY GIRLS steals the attention of the table. One of the girls notices Ramy.

PARTY GIRL 1
 Ramy Youssef?

RAMY
 Oh, hey... Tiffany.

PARTY GIRL 2
Tiff, you know him?

TIFFANY
Haha, yeah! Of course I know Ramy!

Ramy, nervous, doesn't want Nour to think this is his crowd.

RAMY
(to Nour and Masud)
We went to middle school together.
Long time ago!
(to Tiffany)
Well, hey, it was great seeing you
again! Hope you're healthy -

TIFFANY
Yaaas middle school! Actualllly,
Ramy was my first kiss in 6th
grade! And then in high school we -

RAMY
(To Nour and Masud)
It was spin the bottle! Everyone
gave each other a little peck,
super innocent stuff. The bottle
was empty, obviously. The school
basically made us do it. I've
changed a lot since 6th grade.

Masud continues to stare at Ramy with his intense look.

PARTY GIRL 2
(to her friends)
Tiff, let's get out of here!

TIFFANY
We're going clubbing at Dante's.
You guys should come!

MASUD
You're going to Dante's tonight?

TIFFANY
Yeah. Why?

MASUD
No no no. You don't want to go to
Dante's on a Friday. There's a line
out the door, and the DJ plays
horrible house music. What you want
to do is go to PJ's. Tell the guy
working the door you know Masud.
He'll get you.

TIFFANY
 (impressed)
 You have an in at PJ's?

PARTY GIRL 3
 Let's go! I'm dying in these heels.

TIFFANY
 It's so hard to get in there. I've never even made it close to the front of the line.

Ramy senses an opportunity.

RAMY
 (nervous)
 I mean... if Masud knows PJ... maybe he should go with you guys?

Tiffany seems excited. Masud stares Ramy down for a moment.

MASUD
 (a beat)
 PJ is like a brother.

Masud hops over the banister to join the party girls for a night of clubbing. Masud leans over to Ramy and whispers:

MASUD (CONT'D)
 You should relax a little bit, man. You're carrying a lot of tension. You seem like a good guy, but she's not gonna see the real you if you're so wound up.

He gives Ramy a pat on the back and turns to the girls.

MASUD (CONT'D)
 Ladies, after you.

TIFFANY
 Come later, Ramy and Ramy's girlfriend!

The group continues down the sidewalk. We're back with Ramy and Nour, who sit quietly now that the party has left.

RAMY
 So your cousin... he's a pretty interesting guy.

NOUR
 He's not even really my cousin. He's just one of those, you know -

RAMY

Oh I know, an Arab cousin.
Basically anyone who's also Arab
that you've ever met, anywhere.

NOUR

(laughing)

I swear, every time we run into
someone my Dad says "Meet your
cousin!" or "This is your uncle!"
and I'm like, how have I never
heard of this person before?

RAMY

We need blue check marks, like
twitter. Verified cousins.

Nour laughs, examining the menu.

NOUR

The hard part about eating at an
Egyptian place is finding a dish my
mom doesn't cook better.

Ramy picks up and examines a stale piece of pita.

RAMY

To be honest, even the bread my mom
buys is better than this.

NOUR

This doesn't feel like where you go
to get good Egyptian food, it feels
like where you go to show off that
you know a place that has Egyptian
food.

RAMY

(embarrassed)

Yeah... works better on non-Arabs.

Nour smiles.

NOUR

I don't mind bad food. I just feel
like if you're gonna take me
somewhere that sucks, really go for
it, you know? This food should
either be way better or way worse.
This is kinda half-ass.

Ramy's taken aback for a moment, then gets it.

RAMY
I just... don't know you very well.
I like to save the really shitty
spots for someone special.

NOUR
Oh okay, I respect that.

RAMY
But, I mean, maybe I can make an
exception.

INT. MCDONALD'S - NIGHT

Nour is chewing on a Big Mac.

NOUR
(loving it)
Wow, this is awful.

Ramy is having a McChicken and jamming fries.

RAMY
(mouth full)
Great! I just want this to be as
bad as possible.

NOUR
Totally working. Thank you so much.

RAMY
(examining the burger)
I know we're supposed to hate this,
but GMO's are kind of amazing. We
invented them. What's the point of
being an advanced society if we
don't use science?

NOUR
(mouth full, agreeing)
We're eating science.

RAMY
Yes! This is as impressive as going
to the moon. Especially since we
probably didn't go to the moon.

NOUR
Wait - are you one of those
conspiracy theory guys? Are you
about to start quoting Loose
Change?

RAMY

No, no.

(Ramy swallows)

Loose Change 2. It's way more detailed.

NOUR

I'm gonna need dessert if we're talking about jet fuel and steel beams.

(beat)

You're getting me a McFlurry, right?

RAMY

This is moving really fast.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ramy and Nour are walking down the street, talking comfortably. They each have a McFlurry, which they take the occasional bite from. It's been a really nice night.

RAMY

There's a different wedding every weekend. It's like how my Grandpa's been slowly watching his friends die, but I'm watching my friends start their lives.

NOUR

Yeah... pretty much.

Without speaking, they switch McFlurry's to try the other's flavor.

RAMY

It's weird, right?

NOUR

Super. It kinda just snuck up on me. One day I was like, oh wait, I guess I'm already at that age where I'm supposed to be an adult. Whoops.

RAMY

Haha, yeah. I just don't understand how anyone could feel ready.

NOUR

I don't think it's that complicated.

(MORE)

NOUR (CONT'D)

I think of it as an equation. When your loneliness becomes greater than your need for independence, then you just do it.

(shrugs)

But I'm a math person... I think of most things in equations.

They switch back McFlurry's.

RAMY

You're lucky, that's way clearer than I see it. I mostly can't imagine being married. I feel like I'm still figuring myself out. Picking a partner feels like I'd have to decide all these other things about me. But then I have these moments where, all of a sudden, I wish I had someone who knew me inside and out.

NOUR

(laughing)

Yeah, that doesn't make mathematical sense, buddy.

RAMY

You know those moments! Like, I want a girlfriend every time it rains. It's wet, and cold, and you just want somebody to cuddle with and watch a movie. Or like, after a mass-shooting.

NOUR

Oh yeah. Nothing like a good post-massacre cuddle.

RAMY

Yes! We mourn together - and as a country - then we forget anything happened, until the next one.

They share a sweet look. They get each other.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ramy and Nour walk through a parking lot.

NOUR

Hey, for a thing my mom helped set up, this actually wasn't too bad.

RAMY
Tinder doesn't have shit on our
moms.

They arrive at Nour's car.

RAMY (CONT 'D) (CONT'D)
We should do this again.

NOUR
Definitely.

Ramy's not sure what the protocol is with a Muslim girl. Firm handshake? He gives Nour a quick hug, then releases. They look at each other for a beat. Ramy thinks about going for more, but decides against it.

RAMY
Alright, well... get home safe.

He turns to leave, when:

NOUR
(confidently)
So I don't get a kiss goodnight?

Ramy laughs, a little taken aback.

RAMY
Oh... Yeah. Sorry. Wasn't sure if -

NOUR
If I kissed?

RAMY
No! I'm sure you kiss. I just
didn't know if I could...

Nour laughs. They step closer. Ramy's words trail off as they move into a soft, tender kiss. They keep kissing. Nour gives Ramy a playful bite on the lip. It starts to turn heavy. She turns Ramy around and pushes him up against her car. She reaches for the door handle.

NOUR
Let's get in my backseat.

RAMY
(in awe)
Okay. Yeah.

She opens the door. Before Ramy gets in, he takes a glance around and realizes she's conveniently parked in a hidden part of the parking lot, under the shade of an overhanging tree. It's almost too convenient... was it strategic?

They climb in the backseat, where it gets even heavier. Ramy assumes Nour's more traditional than he is, so he's trying to take a cautious approach. Nour, however, amplifies everything.

He puts his hand on her side, and she moves it to her breasts. She's breathing heavy, moaning with pleasure. She runs her hands over his jeans, grabbing what's underneath, and he flinches a little.

RAMY (CONT'D)

Whoa.

NOUR

You alright?

RAMY

Yeah.

NOUR

Okay, good.

She starts to undo his belt buckle, and Ramy stops her hands.

RAMY

Hey, actually...

Nour stops, breathing heavy. She senses Ramy's hesitation.

NOUR

Sorry - you don't want to have sex?

RAMY

I mean yeah, but... can you? Even though we're not married?

NOUR

Oh. I didn't realize you wanted to do it that way. Yeah, we can get married!

Nour goes for her phone.

RAMY

What?

NOUR

(scrolling)

I got this Imam who does temporary *nigahs* over the phone, then we'd get divorced right after. Just gotta Venmo him.

RAMY

I'm not trying to do a temporary marriage! I don't think we should try to trick God. If we're gonna do it, I'd rather just do it, but... maybe we shouldn't do it.

(beat)

To be honest, this is moving a bit faster than I was expecting.

Nour re-adjusts.

NOUR

Hey, it's fine. We don't have to have sex, if you don't want to.

RAMY

Yeah?

NOUR

Yeah.

NOUR (CONT'D)

There's other things we can do to have fun.

Ramy smiles. She turns his head and they start kissing again. The mood's made a full recovery. As they kiss, Nour remains the aggressor. She goes to unbutton Ramy's pants. Ramy lets it happen, but then he moves her hands away, controlling himself. Nour then tries to subtly guide his hand over her crotch, but Ramy keeps shifting back up. Finally, she takes matters into her own hands. She unbuttons her jeans and starts to pull them down. Ramy is a bit startled.

RAMY

What are you, um -

Nour kisses Ramy's neck and gets close to his ear.

NOUR

(whispering into his ear)

Choke me, while I touch myself.

RAMY

What?

She keeps kissing his neck.

NOUR
Don't worry, it's not penetration
so it's okay. We're not breaking
any rules.

Ramy is stunned, but he nods.

RAMY
Okay.

He gently wraps his fingers around her neck. Nour starts touching herself. After a moment, she's moaning.

NOUR
Harder.

RAMY
You sure?

NOUR
Mm-hmm...

Ramy's not sure. He rubs her neck lightly. Nour laughs.

NOUR (CONT'D)
Like, actually harder... it's not a
massage.

Ramy looks out the window, concerned a passerby is going to think he's trying to murder her. No one is around to see, so... he takes a breath and increases the pressure.

NOUR (CONT'D)
Yes! Just like that, keep going.

The harder Ramy squeezes, the more Nour is into it. It's starting to work. Nour is moaning, her face turning red. Ramy winces as he looks at his hand around this pretty girl's throat. She continues to dirty talk, but the words are having trouble coming out. Her eyes are watering. She starts to cough. Ramy's not sure he should keep going, when suddenly... THUD!

Ramy and Nour jump. Something large hit the hood of the car, but it's too dark to see what. Ramy shoots a worried look at Nour, then exits the car.

He looks at windshield. A large, dead, black Raven stares back at him. He's speechless. Was this a sign?

NOUR (CONT'D)
What is it?

RAMY
This bird fell from the...

Nour grabs Ramy's hand and pulls him back in the car.

NOUR
It's okay, come on. I'm so close to finishing.

She gets them back into the position they were in, trying to revive the momentum, but Ramy can't stop looking at the bird on the windshield. Ramy pulls back.

RAMY
I don't think we should be doing this.

NOUR
Are you serious?

RAMY
I'm not into choking. I don't want to choke you.

Nour scoffs, and pulls up her pants.

NOUR
Bullshit.

RAMY
What?

NOUR
You're full of shit. It's not the choking that's too much. It's choking a Muslim girl.

RAMY
No, it's just our first date...

NOUR
Ramy, you barely even hugged me.
(a beat)
You've never choked anyone?

Ramy says nothing. He clearly has.

NOUR (CONT'D)
Yeah.

RAMY
Look, I'm sorry, I'm just a little thrown off. I didn't expect a girl like you to wanna...

NOUR
A girl like me?

RAMY
No, I just mean...

NOUR
You just mean I'm in the little
"Muslim" box in your head. The
wife. The mother of your kids. I'm
not supposed to cum.

Ramy takes a breath, contemplating everything she's said.

RAMY
Okay... I'll choke you.

He puts his hands to her neck.

NOUR
Please get out of my car.

RAMY
What?

Nour gets out of the car and goes to Ramy's door, opening it for him. It's a strange, reverse chivalry. Ramy gets out.

NOUR
Here - your McFlurry.

She grabs the McFlurry from the car and hands it to him. Then she gets back in the driver's seat and drives off, the bird still on the windshield.

Ramy is left alone in the parking lot, stunned.

EXT. PARK AVENUE, RUTHERFORD - 1:00 AM

It's raining. Ramy walks down Park Avenue. In one hand, he has his phone, which is open to Chloe's contact card. In the other, he carries the melted McFlurry. The street is dimly-lit by lamps and the bright fluorescent sign of the only thing that's open, Dunkin Donuts. From a distance, he sees someone sitting on the bench under the awning of the Dunkin. It's a man with a white polo and a long beard. As he looks closer, Ramy sees it's the old hajj from the mosque, having a cigarette with a coffee and donut. Ramy stares for a moment, then decides to cross the street and approach him.

RAMY
I'm clean!

The old hajj stares blankly at Ramy.

RAMY (CONT'D)

(Arabic)

You said my prayers have never counted cause I don't wash between my toes. But that's bullshit! I'm sick of everyone acting like they know everything, when they don't. You don't.

The old hajj takes a bite of his donut.

RAMY (CONT'D)

(Arabic)

So now you got nothing to say?

He eyes Ramy, taking a drag of his cigarette.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

Salaam Alaykum.

Ramy is caught off guard. He expected a fight.

RAMY

Sorry, I didn't... Walaykum Al Salaam.

The old hajj takes another bite of donut. Ramy folds into the bench next to him. There's silence for a moment, except for the cold, wet rain hitting the awning.

RAMY (CONT'D)

I don't know what I'm doing. Nothing fits. It's like wherever I am, I'm not who I'm supposed to be. The thing is I actually like being Muslim. I wanna be. I look at my parents, and how strong they are. Like, they're fucking crazy, but they also have this peace. Like they know everything's gonna be okay no matter what, because they have God. I want that. Sometimes I feel like I have that. But then I just wanna be in the moment, and do what everyone else is doing, because that makes me happy too. I like having sex, even though I'm not married. I think I wanna try mushrooms one day. That means I'm not Muslim?

(MORE)

RAMY (CONT'D)

It's like I'm always being haunted by the rules I'm breaking - so I'm never *really* anywhere, because I'm just judging myself.

The Old Hajj seems touched. He offers Ramy some sprinkle donut.

RAMY (CONT'D)

I guess I don't really know what I believe. I haven't read like the *whole* Quran. The parts I've read are really beautiful... some of the other parts seem kinda scary but I think maybe they just got translated weird. I just feel like there's no way to *really* know, but everyone acts like they're so sure and they make these huge decisions - I don't get it. My friends are *married*. That's crazy, I feel like we're so young. But then also like, dating is crazy, and... we're getting older.

Ramy takes a bite of donut.

RAMY (CONT'D)

I know there's a God. I get these feelings stopping me when I'm doing something wrong, or pushing me in the right direction. Things happen and I know they can't just be weird coincidences. Like, man, one time this girl texted me two minutes after I jerked off to her Facebook photo. You're gonna tell me this isn't all connected? Like, she hadn't texted me back for months and then suddenly she says "sup"?

Ramy turns to the Old Hajj.

RAMY (CONT'D)

Do you get any of this?

There's a silence. The old hajj takes a long, contemplative drag from his smoke.

OLD HAJJ

(Arabic)

I think you jerk off too much. Stop that. And wash between your toes.

The old hajj ashes his cigarette and puts on a hat that says "DD" in bubble letters. He enters the store and through the window Ramy sees him go behind the counter, put on his apron, and start serving two Jersey bros.

Ramy sits on the bench, alone.

INT. RAMY'S FAMILY HOME

Ramy quietly inserts the key, but enters to find Dahlia wide awake in the living room. She's watching "The Dish." She instantly shuts off the TV, and turns to Ramy.

RAMY

Hey Mom.

DAHLIA

Habibi. How was your night?

The air is charged. Dahlia is trying to look calm, but she has the energy of someone awaiting the results of a cancer biopsy. Ramy pauses, thinking about how to respond.

RAMY

It was... fine.

Dahlia bursts into rapid speech.

DAHLIA

(Arabic)

Alhamdulillah! I spoke with Nour's mother, and the Hassans are coming for dinner Saturday. I'm making kushari, she said it's Nour's favorite. Remember when it was your favorite? You don't like anything anymore -

Dahlia is practically shaking with joy. Ramy can't believe he has to see Nour again.

RAMY

I gotta go to bed.

Ramy turns to walk down the hall. Dahlia dabs her moist eyes and whispers to herself.

DAHLIA

My little man... Alhamdulillah.

INT. RAMY'S BEDROOM

Ramy lays down in bed. The lights are out, but he's still awake. He can't sleep. He rolls over and grabs his MacBook off the floor and stares at the screen, the glow filling his face. After a beat of internal debate, he closes the laptop, and puts it back on the floor as he slips out of bed.

INT. RAMY'S BATHROOM

He stares at the toilet for a moment, then pees standing up.

Ramy starts making wudu: hands, mouth, etc.

INT. RAMY'S BEDROOM

Ramy reaches down to the floor, past his laptop, and grabs his prayer mat from under his bed. He unrolls it and steps onto it. He looks down at the mat and closes his eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.