

The Evangelist's Son

Fade In:

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY -- DAY

A slight African-American woman preaches from behind the pulpit. Her booming voice betrays her tiny frame as it echoes throughout the small sanctuary. This pastor, JANET PHILLIPS (40s), puts her all into her sermon.

JANET

Jesus told us to love our enemies
and pray for those who persecute
us.

The assembled crowd of young and old men, women and children sit in rapt attention, throwing in an 'amen' every so often for emphasis.

JANET

He knew it's easy to love the people
who love you. I look into the eyes
of my wonderful son...

A handsome young man sitting in the back of the sanctuary smiles and lowers his head a little in embarrassment. This is DEREK PHILLIPS (18), Janet's son.

Janet smiles at her son's bashfulness.

JANET

And I see the love he has for me.
He's my boy, and I will always love
him. It's easy to love him. His
father, on the other hand...

Janet and the crowd share a laugh at the mention of her ex-husband.

JANET

That man has caused me no end of
trouble.
(beat)
But I love him. I love him as Jesus
commanded us to love everybody. We
are meant to love each other, even
the people we don't really like all
that much.

Another laugh from the congregation.

JANET

And if we do these things....

Derek's cellphone vibrates in his pocket. He pulls it out to see the screen reads DAD.

Derek sighs and quietly gets up and exits the sanctuary.

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - LOBBY -- DAY

Derek answers his phone, speaking almost in a whisper.

DEREK

Speak of the devil.

On the other end of the line is Derek's father TERRENCE (40s).

TERRENCE

What's that supposed to mean?

DEREK

Mom was just talking about you.
What are you doing calling me on a
Sunday morning anyway?

TERRENCE

Your mother is keeping the Sabbath
holy enough for all three of us.

DEREK

She's in the middle of her sermon.

TERRENCE

I hope it wasn't the one about
honoring your father because I sure
don't want you to miss any of that
one.

DEREK

Pretty sure she's taken that one
out of the rotation.

The two, father and son, share a laugh. Derek catches himself and quiets himself down again.

DEREK

So why you callin' me, Dad?

TERRENCE

I thought we could have lunch.

DEREK
Lunch? Today?

TERRENCE
Yeah, today.

DEREK
Why?

TERRENCE
Because I'm your father, and you
love me with all your heart.

DEREK
And?

Terrence hesitates.

TERRENCE
You're too smart for your own good.
Just come by the house after your
mother gets finished saving our
souls from the wages of sin.

DEREK
Okay. Okay. I'll be there.

He hangs up the phone just as the parishioners begin to file out of the sanctuary and into the lobby.

Derek smiles and shakes a few hands while making his way through the small crowd of exiting worshipers. He soon finds himself back in the...

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY -- DAY

Janet stands in the front of the sanctuary, getting her notes and papers together. She looks up and smiles when she sees Derek enter.

JANET
You know you're not supposed to
leave in the middle of a sermon.

DEREK
I got a phone call.

Janet scowls playfully as Derek comes over to help her gather her things.

JANET

You know you're not supposed to answer your phone in the middle of a sermon.

DEREK

But I know how your sermon ends. The phone call was going to be a surprise.

Janet just shakes her head at her son.

JANET

Who in their right mind would call you in the middle of church anyway?

Derek gives her a look.

JANET

I should have known. Your father's idea of Sunday fellowship is watching football with a bunch of drunks in some seedy bar.

DEREK

He invited me to lunch.

Janet is taken aback slightly.

JANET

Taking time out of his oh-so-busy routine to spend some time with his son? He must be up to something.

DEREK

What happened to all that talk about loving everybody, even your ex-husband.

JANET

Loving somebody doesn't mean you have to fall for their crap.

They share a laugh, mother and son.

JANET

Just be home for dinner, and remember, anything bad he says about me is a dirty lie.

Derek leans in and gives his mother a kiss on the forehead.

DEREK
I love you.

JANET
I love you.

EXT. TERRENCE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Derek pulls up in front of a picturesque home on a tree-lined suburban street.

A tall, handsome man who looks like an older version of Derek stands in the yard, already waiting. This is TERRENCE.

He smiles when he sees his son approach and walks over to meet him as he gets out of the car.

TERRENCE
There's my boy.

Terrence grabs Derek and wraps him up in a giant bear hug.

TERRENCE
I think you've grown another foot
and a half and put on at least twenty
pounds of muscle since the last
time I saw you.

DEREK
Two months ago?

They break their embrace as Terrence throws his arm around Derek's shoulder and leads him up the sidewalk to the house.

TERRENCE
You kids grow up fast.

DEREK
I'm not a kid anymore, Dad. I'm
eighteen.

TERRENCE
You'll always be a kid to me, son.

They reach the front door of the house. Terrence opens the screen door and leads Derek inside.

INT. TERRENCE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Before Derek can continue his thought, he walks inside to see an attractive, well-put-together woman sitting on the couch by the door. This is ANGELA (early 40s).

She stands to greet him as they enter. Derek eyes her suspiciously.

DEREK

Oh, hello.

Terrence clears his throat to break the uneasy silence and walks over to put his arm around Angela.

TERRENCE

There's something I've been meaning to talk to you about, son.

Angela extends her hand for a handshake, but Derek just looks her up and down, a mild sneer on his face.

DEREK

I didn't realize we were having a guest for lunch.

Terrence's smile disappears from his face.

TERRENCE

If anybody's the guest here, it's you, boy. Angela and I have been together for a while now, and we're ready to take that next step.

DEREK

You're getting married? This is how you tell me you're getting married.

Anger rises up in Terrence from toe to head.

TERRENCE

Now you wait just a minute there...

Before he can explode, Angela jumps in and places a calming hand on his shoulder.

ANGELA

It's okay. I'm sure this is a lot for Derek to take in. I should go, and let you two talk this out alone.

Angela starts to take a step toward the front door when Terrence stops her.

TERRENCE
You're family now. You should be here, too.

Terrence calmly puts her arm back around Angela's shoulder. He's standing with her no matter what Derek thinks.

Derek looks at them, dejected.

DEREK
I guess I know now where I stand.

He turns and darts out the door, slamming the screen door behind him.

Terrence takes a step to follow him, but Angela stops him.

ANGELA
Let him go for now. He'll come back when he's ready.

Terrence sighs but follows Angela's advice as the sound of Derek's car starting up and racing off fills the air.

EXT. OLDER SHOPPING CENTER -- DAY

Derek's car sputters around the corner and into a parking spot on the otherwise empty parking lot.

He kills the engine and gets out of the car, slamming the door behind him and walking over just in time to see a huge puff of smoke escape from under the hood.

The car is toast.

DEREK
Dammit.

He kicks the side of the car in anger before pulling out his AAA card and his cellphone.

DEREK
(to phone)
Hey, Jack's Towing?
(beat)
Yeah, my car is a total piece of junk, and I need a tow.

He looks around for the cross streets.

DEREK

(to phone)

I'm in that shopping center on the corner of Fleming and Westgate.

(beat)

Yeah, it's the one with a ton of smoke coming out of it. You can't miss it.

(beat)

An hour?!?

Derek dejectedly sits down on the curb.

DEREK

(to phone)

Okay. Okay. If an hour's the best you can do, it's the best you can do.

(beat)

I'll be waiting... for an hour.

He hangs up his phone and returns it to his pocket.

Taking a long look around the shopping center, he sees rows on closed signs.

DEREK

What am I supposed to do with myself for an hour?

One business, however, is different from the rest. It's lit up and has a bright green neon OPEN sign in the window.

Painted on the sign above the door is OMAR'S BAKERY.

Derek picks himself up off the curb and walks over to the only open store in the shopping center.

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

A tiny bell jingles signaling Derek's entry into the bakery.

As he tentatively steps in, he sees a row of display cases filled with pastries, breads and other delights. The front of the store houses a couple of unattended tables, draped with cheap tablecloths.

It takes Derek a second to notice the young woman behind the counter, SALEEMA (16) stands only slightly taller than the

cash register on the counter. Her piercing brown eyes connect with Derek's, and they both instantly smile.

DEREK

You're the only store open in this whole shopping center.

SALEEMA

A lot of places close on Sunday.

She speaks with the slightest of British accents.

DEREK

But you don't?

Saleema shakes her head. Her timidity keeps her from saying too much.

SALEEMA

You've not been a customer here before?

DEREK

This isn't my usual neighborhood. But now that I know you're here. What's your name?

Saleema's light brown skin turns ever-so-slightly red with embarrassment.

SALEEMA

(flirtatiously)

I'm not sure we know each other well enough to exchange names. Is there something specific I could help you with?

Derek looks over the various selections.

DEREK

What's good here?

SALEEMA

Everything is good here.

She smiles coyly.

SALEEMA

But I think I have something special that would be perfect for someone like you.

Derek looks intrigued as Saleema slips into the back.

Derek takes a couple of steps forward, craning his neck to try to see into the back room.

After a short few seconds, Saleema reappears with a pie in her hands.

DEREK

A pie?

SALEEMA

It's a very special pie. You won't find another like it anywhere else in the city.

Derek smiles, impressed at her boast.

DEREK

Is that right?

SALEEMA

I would not lie to you. Not about something as important as pie.

Saleema carefully cuts a large piece from the pie and places it on a plate with a fork. She offers up the slice to Derek.

SALEEMA

You must try it.

Derek takes the pie from her and picks up the fork.

DEREK

What kind is it?

SALEEMA

Just try it, you will love it.

DEREK

What if I don't?

Saleema softly bites her lower lip as she smiles at Derek.

SALEEMA

You do not trust me?

Derek takes a long look at the slice of pie, and another long look at Saleema.

Finally, he digs in, picking up a modest bite on his fork and slowly putting it in his mouth.

His eyes widen as the taste settles in. Before he even swallows, he's hooked.

DEREK
This is really good.

He scarfs down another bite.

DEREK
Really good.

SALEEMA
That, my new friend, is the best
bean pie in this state, perhaps in
the entire country.

DEREK
Bean pie?

SALEEMA
Navy beans. Yes.

DEREK
I didn't even know you could make
pie out of beans.

SALEEMA
I'm sure a properly motivated person
could make a pie out of anything.
I'm surprised you aren't familiar
with bean pies. They are quite
popular here.

DEREK
I guess I just run in the wrong
circles.

He takes another bite.

DEREK
You're not from around here, are
you?

SALEEMA
The accent gave me away, didn't it?

She laughs.

SALEEMA

As much as I try to pass for a local,
I haven't quite gotten the local
patois down quite yet.

DEREK

If you want to fit in with us locals,
you're going to have to quit using
words like patois.

They both laugh. An obvious connection is building between them.

Before they can act any further on these feelings, Saleema notices the tow truck outside.

SALEEMA

Is that for you?

Derek turns and sees the tow truck. His face drops.

DEREK

The one time they're early...

He stands up and begins to leave, only to stop himself and take another quick bite of the bean pie before he goes.

SALEEMA

It has been lovely to serve you
today. Perhaps I will see you again
soon.

DEREK

Count on it.

He opens the door and starts to step out. Saleema calls after him.

SALEEMA

My name is Saleema.

Derek stops, turns toward her and smiles a smile bigger than Dallas.

DEREK

I'm Derek.

Saleema returns his smile as Derek exits the store and heads to his car.

Inside the store, back behind the counter, Saleema beams with happiness.

INT. JANET'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Derek helps his mother set the table for dinner.

JANET
So you walk in, and she's just sitting there?

DEREK
Right there on the couch.

JANET
And he didn't say anything about her before he marched you in there to meet her?

DEREK
Not a word.

JANET
I hate to say it, but that sounds like your father.

Derek nods in agreement.

JANET
You'd think he'd see the error of his ways at some point and get those lines of communication opened better.

DEREK
You'd think.

JANET
But hey, some people like surprises.

DEREK
Nobody likes a surprise meeting with their Dad's girlfriend.

Janet laughs.

JANET
No. I don't suppose they do.

They put the finishing touches on the table settings and both sit down to eat.

JANET

You probably shouldn't have walked out like that, though.

DEREK

Don't you go getting on me about it, too.

Janet instinctively serves her son, putting food on his plate for him, rather than letting him do it himself.

JANET

Part of being a grown-up is learning to face your problems head on. You can't go running off with a head full of steam every time something doesn't go your way. Besides, it's not her fault she's in love with an idiot. I've certainly been there, too, with that very idiot.

She finishes with Derek's plate and starts on her own while Derek digs in to his food.

JANET

But just because he's an idiot doesn't mean he's not also your father.

DEREK

If you say so.

JANET

I was there. I should know.

They both laugh, though Derek cringes a little at the thought of his conception.

DEREK

Can't we get through just one meal without you talking about that?

Their laughter dies down, and they continue to eat.

JANET

Tomorrow, you'll go by and apologize to him for running off.

DEREK

But Mom!

Janet cuts off Derek's protest before he can get it started.

JANET

You can tell him all about your feelings, but you need to tell him you're sorry.

Derek considers reiterating his protest but thinks the better of it.

JANET

And if you really want to, you can tell him I think he's an idiot.

They give each other a loving smile and continue on with their dinner.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Derek walks into a small but busy newsroom filled with African-American workers milling about.

Terrence stands at a light table with a couple of young staffers (JOHN & ERYN), looking at a mock-up of 'The Phoenix' front page.

TERRENCE

Are we really running a story about a cat on the front page?

JOHN

Boss wants more human interest stories. Says it sells papers.

TERRENCE

In what way is a cat a human interest story? A dog I could see maybe. People like dogs. But a cat?

ERYN

The cat saved its owner from a fire.

TERRENCE

If you need a cat to keep you alive, I say you aren't worth saving. Take it down. Walter may sign the checks, but my contract says I'm the boss.

Terrence spots his son waiting a few steps away. He smiles excitedly.

TERRENCE

Derek!

He walks over to his son and throws his arm around him.

DEREK

Hey, Dad.

TERRENCE

I'm sorry about yesterday...

DEREK

No. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have run off.

TERRENCE

No. No. No. Angela told me not to spring the marriage on you like that, but

(beat)

I don't know. I'm just happy to see you.

They walk over to Terrence's office. Terrence sits down behind his desk, throwing his feet up as he leans back in his chair, proud of his domain.

TERRENCE

It's been a long time since you came by the paper.

DEREK

It hasn't changed much.

TERRENCE

Every few years, somebody dies or retires and we hire some young kid to take their place. That's about the only change we get around here.

They sit in awkward silence for a few seconds before Terrence jumps up from his desk.

TERRENCE

So you wanna get some lunch?

DEREK

How long have you and Angela been together?

Terrence plops back down into his chair. He hesitates before he answers.

TERRENCE

It's always a tricky situation. Dating after divorce. So many land mines out there just waiting to be stepped on. And when you've got kids. Forget it. The best you can do is what seems right at the time, knowing that hindsight will eventually prove you wrong.

DEREK

Is it ever possible to get a straight answer out of you?

A bit of controlled anger washes across Terrence's face.

TERRENCE

Does it really matter? If it's ten years or ten minutes, we're getting married now. She's going to be a part of the rest of my life, and I hope you will be, too.

DEREK

You could've told me about her.

Terrence takes a deep breath to relax himself.

TERRENCE

You're a lot like your mother, you know? Spending all sorts of time worrying about things that can't be changed. The past is gone. Let's focus on the future. Starting with lunch. Where do you want to go?

Derek stands up, clearly still upset by the exchange.

DEREK

Not today, Dad.

He walks out of the office with Terrence following behind.

TERRENCE

Okay. I'll just give you a call this week, and we'll set something up. Okay?

Derek exits the newspaper without answering.

EXT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

Derek sits in his car in the parking lot outside Omar's Bakery watching Saleema through the window as she works.

After a few moments watching, he steels himself, takes a deep breath and walks inside.

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

The jingling of the tiny bell above the door alerts Saleema to Derek walking into the bakery. They both smile wide as their eyes connect.

SALEEMA

You could not stay away for even one day.

DEREK

I didn't realize until I got home last night that I never paid you for that delicious bean pie yesterday.

SALEEMA

So the only reason you came back today was to pay for yesterday?

DEREK

I wouldn't say that exactly. But it wouldn't be right to take something without paying.

SALEEMA

The first one is always free.

DEREK

Always?

SALEEMA

Store policy.

DEREK

And how long has this policy been in place?

SALEEMA

Since about the time you walked through that door yesterday.

They share a short moment.

SALEEMA

So now that your bill is all settled up, will you be getting on your way?

DEREK

You want me to leave?

SALEEMA

I did not hear anyone say that.

DEREK

So you want me to stay?

Saleema doesn't answer, but she gives him a look that says 'yes'.

DEREK

How about another one of those delicious bean pies?

SALEEMA

Of course.

Saleema disappears into the back for a few seconds, returning with a freshly cooked bean pie.

SALEEMA

Straight from the oven.

She hands the pie to Derek.

DEREK

How much do I owe you?

SALEEMA

Nothing. It is on the house.

DEREK

You said only the first one was free.

SALEEMA

We are running a special today. Free bean pie for anyone who shares it and some good conversation with the bakery staff.

DEREK
Is that a popular special?

SALEEMA
It is only available to one special customer.

Saleema walks from behind the counter and sits at the small table near the front of the bakery.

Derek watches her as she walks by him.

SALEEMA
Are you not going to sit with me?

Derek quickly sits down across from Saleema.

DEREK
Of course. Of course.

He joins her at the table, picks up a fork and digs in to the bean pie, again finding it delicious.

DEREK
You never did tell me where you're from.

Saleema considers a moment whether to answer.

SALEEMA
London.

Derek is obviously impressed.

DEREK
London. Wow.

SALEEMA
Have you ever been?

DEREK
To London? No. I've never even been on an airplane.

Saleema smiles.

SALEEMA
It's a lovely city, though since I have lived there my entire life, I sometimes find it difficult to notice
(MORE)

SALEEMA (CONT'D)
its charms. Sometimes you can know
a place too well.

DEREK
I won't dispute that.

SALEEMA
Have you lived here your whole life?

DEREK
Not yet.

They both laugh at Derek's obviously stolen joke.

DEREK
I would like to leave.

SALEEMA
What's keeping you here?

DEREK
Until yesterday, I probably wouldn't
have had a good answer for that.

SALEEMA
But today?

DEREK
Now I'm all about these bean pies.

He takes another big bite as Saleema laughs lightly.

SALEEMA
And another succumbs to the
irresistible lure of the bean pie.

DEREK
The irresistible lure of the bean
pie and the beautiful girl serving
them.

They lock eyes again for a moment before continuing their
conversation.

DEREK
Do you think we could go do something
sometime
(beat)
Together.

Saleema leans back in her chair, suddenly more stand-offish than before.

SALEEMA

As much as I am always interested in taking part in something somewhere, I am not sure it is such a good idea.

She gets up from the table, returns to her place behind the counter and begins distracting herself with busywork.

Derek stands up, dejected.

DEREK

I didn't mean to...

She cuts him off.

SALEEMA

It is not you. I am just not really supposed to...

She hesitates for a moment. Tense as she considers. And then...

She exhales, her shoulders fall and a smile creeps across her face.

SALEEMA

I would love to go do something sometime with you.

Derek stands and practically runs up to the counter without setting his feet on the ground.

DEREK

How 'bout tomorrow night?

SALEEMA

It is a date.

INT. GROCERY STORE -- DAY

Janet pushes a halfway full cart down the aisle as Derek walks alongside. She holds a grocery list in her hand that she continually refers to.

JANET

I don't know why they have to keep moving stuff around all the time.

DEREK

They aren't moving stuff around,
Mom.

JANET

This used to be the aisle with the
ketchup and mustard. Do you see
any ketchup or mustard? No, because
their moving stuff around all the
time.

DEREK

I have a date tomorrow.

Janet continues to be distracted by her shopping.

JANET

And where in the world is the spray
cheese? It's not with the cheese.
It's not with the stuff you put
spray cheese on. Where else would
you put it?

DEREK

What do you want with spray cheese
anyway?

Janet stops her cart.

JANET

You have a date?

DEREK

Don't act so shocked.

She starts pushing the cart again.

JANET

I'm not shocked. You're a handsome
and eligible young man. I'm actually
surprised you don't date more often.

DEREK

Then who would go grocery shopping
with you?

JANET

Lotta help you are. You don't know
where anything is, either. Where
did you meet this girl?

DEREK
She works at that bakery over on
Fleming. Her uncle owns it.

JANET
Oh.

She lets that hang in the air for a few moments before Derek
chimes in.

DEREK
What do you mean by that?

JANET
Nothing.

DEREK
Nothing?

JANET
It's really nothing. So where are
you planning on taking her?

DEREK
I don't know. Wherever she wants
to go, I guess.

Janet stops and playfully slaps Derek on the chest.

JANET
Boy, I thought I taught you better
than that.

They pass onto a different aisle, enraging Janet even more.

JANET
Now what is this? This is not
supposed to be the bread aisle.
But look.

DEREK
It must be a conspiracy.

JANET
To get me to quit shopping here?
Because that's what they're about
to do.

She stops and picks up a couple of loaves of bread, squeezing
them a little to check the freshness.

JANET

You know the color of the twist-tie tells you how long the bread has been sitting here.

DEREK

Is that right?

JANET

Each color represents a different day of the week. Of course, they probably changed the colors on me, too, so a good squeeze is really the only way to tell.

She picks up another couple of loaves and squeezes them.

JANET

You can't go picking up this young woman and then asking her what she wants to go do. She'll expect you to have something all planned out. Something special.

Derek thinks a moment, trying to come up with an idea.

Janet finally settles on some bread and begins to make her way down the aisle again.

JANET

But don't worry. This date will only set the tone for the entire relationship. No reason to put much thought into it.

She smiles to herself as Derek continues to stand amongst the bread, thinking.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Saleema stands in front of a mirror, applying make-up when a large Middle Eastern man who could best be described as swarthy ambles by. This is OMAR (40s).

He notices Saleema prepping herself for something as he walks by and turns around and enters the bathroom.

OMAR

What is it you are doing?

SALEEMA
I am getting ready.

OMAR
Getting ready for what?

SALEEMA
I am going out.

OMAR
Out?

SALEEMA
Yes. You know, going to someplace
that is not here. Out.

OMAR
I am aware of the concept. Where
do you think you are going, and why
do you think you need to paint your
face to go there?

Saleema rolls her eyes.

SALEEMA
It is what people my age do.

OMAR
People your age do lots of things
they are not supposed to do. Do
not ever forget that Haya is part
of our faith. Modesty is our way.

SALEEMA
People in make-up can still be
humble.

OMAR
I am not so sure of that.
(beat)
You never did tell me where you
were going.

SALEEMA
Just out with some friends.

OMAR
Boy friends?

Saleema just keeps messing with her make-up.

OMAR
Saleema? Listen to me.

Saleema stops and turns to her uncle.

SALEEMA
What?

OMAR
Your parents trusted me to take care of you, to keep you safe from harm.

SALEEMA
I know this.

OMAR
But they also wanted me to bring you closer to our faith. To help you understand what it is like to be a Muslim and to stay true to our beliefs.

SALEEMA
I know this, as well.

OMAR
And that means absolutely no boys!

Saleema's cellphone dings alerting her to a new text message. She flips her phone out of her pocket and checks the message.

SALEEMA
I have to go. I'm supposed to meet him in a few minutes.

OMAR
What did you just say?

Saleema realizes her mistake but tries to play it off.

SALEEMA
I'm supposed to meet them in a few minutes. What?

Omar gives Saleema a suspicious eye but does not stop her as she gathers her things and heads to the front door.

SALEEMA
I won't be late.

She grabs her coat and leaves.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Derek paces nervously in front of the local multiplex, tickets in hand. He keeps an eye out on the parking lot, waiting for his date to arrive.

He checks his watch obsessively as he walks back and forth under the theater marquee.

After a few seconds of his pacing, Saleema appears from the parking lot. Derek smiles and takes a few steps toward her as she rushes onto the sidewalk.

DEREK

I was starting to think you weren't going to make it.

Saleema looks at her watch.

SALEEMA

The movie doesn't start for another ten minutes.

DEREK

Really?

Derek looks at his watch.

DEREK

I guess I'm just nervous.

Saleema pats him on the arm with a smile as they enter the theater.

SALEEMA

There is no reason to be.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

As they walk through the theater lobby, a few of the older men and women stop and begin to stare at the couple as they walk through. Some of them begin to mutter under their breath as the couple passes.

Derek looks around, confused at the response they appear to be getting.

DEREK

What's with these folks?

SALEEMA
New girl in town, I suppose.

DEREK
This town isn't that small.

Derek grabs hold of Saleema's hand and leads her a little quicker to their theater.

Right before they reach the door, a chubby bearded man in a tank top and cammo pants steps out in front of them.

CAMMO PANTS
Our kids are dying in Iraq fightin'
them and you're over here datin'
one of 'em.

Cammo Pants walks away shaking his head before Derek or Saleema can process what they've just heard.

DEREK
What was that supposed to mean?

SALEEMA
Do not worry about it. It does not
matter what he thinks.

Derek reluctantly lets it go. He opens the door to the theater and they walk inside.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Derek and Saleema walk out of the theater with smiles plastered across their faces.

SALEEMA
That was a lot of fun. I am glad I
agreed to go on a date with you.

DEREK
I'm glad to hear you don't regret
going out with me.

SALEEMA
As a matter of fact, I am not quite
ready for the date to end.

DEREK
We could get something to eat. Or
there's a park right around the
corner...

SALEEMA

That sounds perfect.

Saleema grabs Derek by the hand and begins to pull him as she rushes toward the park around the corner.

EXT. PARK AROUND THE CORNER -- NIGHT

Derek and Saleema walk hand-in-hand down one of the trails. They appear to be enjoying each other's company.

SALEEMA

I do not think I will ever understand why Americans insist on calling it an 'elevator' when 'lift' is so much quicker and easier to say.

DEREK

Maybe we just can't get around the fact that it doesn't just lift. It also goes down, too.

SALEEMA

But you Americans have such an obsession with speaking quickly and using smaller and smaller words and phrases. Just listen to you with your 'don't' and 'can't' You are constantly making things as short as you can, but when it comes to the lift, you add four completely unnecessary letters, making the word twice as long as it needs to be.

DEREK

I guess we're just weird that way.

SALEEMA

A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

DEREK

I don't know what that means.

SALEEMA

To me, it means you are fascinating.

Saleema spots the playground swings in the park and excitedly motions toward them.

SALEEMA

Come on. We have to try those out.

Derek follows close behind as she trots over to the swings and sits down.

DEREK

Do you want me to push you?

SALEEMA

I want you to sit next to me.

Derek takes the swing next to her, and the two begin to swing lightly - not too high.

SALEEMA

I have not done this in a long time.

DEREK

They don't have swing sets in England?

SALEEMA

We do. But sometimes you have to travel halfway around the world to be reminded of the things you liked at home.

After a few seconds of swinging, the two settle in and basically sit in the swings, just looking and talking with one another.

DEREK

That man. In the movie theater. Did that bother you?

SALEEMA

I have learned to ignore such people. The clothing and the accents might be different back home, but my people still have plenty of detractors.

DEREK

Your people?

SALEEMA

Muslims.

Derek is a little surprised by Saleema's faith.

DEREK
I didn't even realize you were
Muslim.

SALEEMA
Is that a problem?

Derek takes a second to look deeply into Saleema's eyes.

DEREK
No.

Saleema smiles.

SALEEMA
Good.

DEREK
It's not like I know a whole lot
about Muslims anyway.

SALEEMA
It is not like I am a very devout
Muslim anyway. It is my faith, but
I do not wear it on my sleeve. If
I were to truly follow the rituals
and customs like my Uncle Omar would
like me to, we would not be on this
date tonight.

DEREK
I'm definitely thankful for that.

Saleema gets up from the swing and extends her hand for Derek.

SALEEMA
Let us walk some more before I have
to go.

Derek takes her hand and stands up. They begin to walk down
the path again.

SALEEMA
And speaking of making words
unnecessarily long, why 'flashlight'
instead of 'torch'? Five whole
extra letters you do not even need.

DEREK

Well, the British are sure the ones
to talk to about extra letters.
There is no 'u' in color or humor...
well, there's one in humor, but
only at the front.

Their voices and laughter fade as they walk further away.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

A short time later, Derek and Saleema walk, hand-in-hand, to Saleema's car in the parking lot.

When they reach the car, they turn to face each other. They stand close to each other, a bit more intimate than they've been before.

DEREK

I really did have a great time
tonight.

SALEEMA

Maybe we can do it again sometime.

DEREK

Sometime soon?

SALEEMA

Very soon.

They stand for a moment, looking into each other's eyes.

Finally, Saleema begins to lean in and Derek does the same.

They kiss. For just the right amount of time. Not too long.
Not too short.

After the kiss ends, they both take a moment to catch their
breath, though they remain a little flustered.

SALEEMA

Okay.

DEREK

Okay.

SALEEMA

I will see you soon.

DEREK
Sounds great.

She gets into her car and starts the engine, giving Derek one last look before she drives away.

Derek stands for a few seconds after she's gone, reflecting on the evening which brings a big smile to his face.

DEREK
Damn.

Now very happy, Derek struts a little bit as he walks back to his own car.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Saleema practically floats into the apartment on a cloud of happiness.

Uncle Omar waits for her sitting in his most intimidating pose.

OMAR
You are home.

Saleema looks around.

SALEEMA
Yes. I am.

OMAR
You had a good time?

SALEEMA
Very much so.

OMAR
With your *girl* friends?

Saleema rolls her eyes and heads for her bedroom.

SALEEMA
Uncle Omar.

Omar stands up and follows Saleema to her room.

OMAR
I notice you did not answer me.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

SALEEMA

I chose not to dignify you with a response.

Anger shows in Omar's eyes. He takes a deep breath to calm himself.

OMAR

I am only doing what your parents would have me do.

Saleema sits on her bed and simply stares at her uncle.

SALEEMA

I have given you no reason not to trust me.

She looks him dead in the eye, not breaking her stare.

After a second or two, Omar backs down, takes a few backward steps out of Saleema's room and shuts the door.

After he's gone, Saleema lets out a sigh of relief.

She takes her cellphone out of her purse and begins to text.

SALEEMA (TEXT)

I had a great time tonight.

Only a few seconds go by before she receives a reply from Derek.

DEREK (TEXT)

I really like being with you.

Her thumbs begin to work sending another response.

SALEEMA (TEXT)

Maybe we should do it again.

A short few seconds pass.

DEREK (TEXT)

Maybe??

She smiles to herself before composing another text.

SALEEMA (TEXT)

Definitely.

She waits a half second before starting another text.

SALEEMA (TEXT)
Good night, Derek.

An almost instant response comes through.

DEREK (TEXT)
Good night.

Saleema puts her phone on her nightstand and lays back on her bed, smiling contentedly from ear to ear.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- MORNING

The next day, Omar comes to Saleema's open door to wake her. As he sees her sleeping, he notices her cellphone on the nightstand.

He tiptoes into the room and snags her cellphone off the night stand, his eyes fixed on the sleeping Saleema the entire time.

She stirs. Omar freezes in place.

As she rolls over, still asleep, Omar slowly backs out of her bedroom, her cellphone in his hand.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM -- MORNING

Omar sits at the table, scrolling through Saleema's texts. His face is red with anger.

Saleema, barely awake, wanders past the dining room, catching sight of Omar and stopping before she passes.

OMAR
What is this?

He holds up her cellphone for her to see.

SALEEMA
Who told you that you could spy on me?

She stomps over and attempts to snatch the cellphone out of Omar's hand, but he pulls it away before she can.

OMAR
Who told you that you can lie to me?

She takes a step back.

OMAR

You are not to see this Derek person anymore.

SALEEMA

We are not doing anything wrong.

OMAR

Sneaking around. Telling me you are going out with your girl friends. Going on dates with a boy without a chaperone. This is all very wrong.

SALEEMA

You are over-reacting. You do not understand.

Omar stops and takes a breath.

OMAR

I was once young, too, you know. It was not so long ago that I do not remember. And, like you, when I was young, there were many things I wanted to do and some things that I did that I thought were very normal and right, even though these things went against what I had been taught by my family and by my faith.

Omar takes Saleema's hand in his and looks her deep in the eyes.

OMAR

I pray that you will soon gain the wisdom to find your way on your own.

His gaze turns decidedly more threatening.

OMAR

But until then, I will use my wisdom to guide you.

EXT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

Derek sits outside the bakery in his car, his cellphone in hand.

He looks at a long list of unanswered texts to Saleema, each a little more worried than the last.

DEREK (TEXT)
Did I do something wrong?

He waits for a reply that isn't coming.

After a bit of waiting, Derek gets out of his car and heads into the bakery.

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

The bell on the door rings as Derek enters the seemingly empty store.

Omar appears from the back, wiping his hands on his apron. Seeing a customer, a large grin appears on his face.

OMAR
Welcome to my bakery!

He holds out his hands in welcome.

OMAR
What delicious morsel can I tempt
you with today?

Derek does not meet Omar's gaze, preferring to shyly look around the store.

OMAR
Surely there is something that meets
your liking. Have you been here
before?

DEREK
Yes. Once or twice.

Omar's smile somehow grows wider.

OMAR
No one ever comes to my bakery just
once. What did you have last time
you were here?

DEREK
Bean pie.

OMAR

Oh yes. The bean pie is a specialty.
Best in the entire state.

DEREK

So I've heard.

OMAR

I am sure you have. Let me get you
another.

Omar disappears into the back and quickly returns with a
bean pie.

Derek takes it from him, grabs a fork and takes a big bite
while Omar watches him, smiling.

DEREK

Where's the girl who usually works
here?

Omar's smile disappears.

OMAR

Why do you ask?

Derek senses trouble and attempts to play it cool.

DEREK

No reason. She just usually helps
me is all.

Derek sheepishly returns to his bean pie as Omar spies him
suspiciously.

OMAR

Your name. Are you Derek?

Derek stops chewing and looks up at Omar, unsure of how to
answer.

DEREK

Maybe.

OMAR

You do not know your own name?

Derek sits up straight, collects himself and looks Omar
directly in the eye.

DEREK
Yes. My name is Derek.

OMAR
And you know my niece Saleema?

DEREK
Yes, sir.

OMAR
You aren't to see her anymore.

DEREK
Excuse me?

OMAR
No more dates. No more texts on
her mobile. No more coming here to
speak with her. No more.

Derek is speechless.

OMAR
As a matter of fact, I think you
should leave here now and never
come back.

Derek tries to formulate a response but fails.

OMAR
Go on.

Omar dismisses him with a wave. Derek gets up from his seat
and slowly walks out the door without a word.

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY -- DAY

Janet stands behind the pulpit in front of an darkened, empty
sanctuary practicing her upcoming sermon.

JANET
God is sometimes less interested in
what we do than in why we do the
things that we do. We've all heard
about somebody doing something for
the wrong reasons. A lot of us
have probably done some of that
ourselves.

A long beam of light breaks the darkness as Derek comes
through the door from the lobby.

Janet sees him enter and stops her practice.

DEREK

I always thought you made up your sermons on the spot.

Janet steps down from the pulpit as Derek turns the lights on and walks down the aisle toward his mother.

JANET

It takes a lot of work to make it look that way.

DEREK

All my illusions are being shattered right before my eyes.

JANET

That's what happens when you grow up.

DEREK

If I would'a known that...

JANET

You would've grown up just the same. Not a whole lot of other options out there.

DEREK

I don't guess so.

JANET

As much as I love to see your beautiful face, you wanna clue me in as to the purpose of your visit?

DEREK

Sometimes, a boy's best friend is his mother.

JANET

I'm pretty sure that's what Norman Bates says to Marion Crane right before the shower scene.

DEREK

I'm just having some troubles, and I'm not sure what I should do.

JANET

As much as you probably don't want to hear it, I'm sure you know what I'm going to tell you.

DEREK

Pray about it.

JANET

And do what you know is right.

DEREK

That's not the most satisfying answer.

JANET

But it's the only one I have to give.

She pats her son lovingly on the shoulder.

JANET

The answers will come. They may not be the answers we want, but they will be God's will.

DEREK

I know.

JANET

And if you want to talk about the details, I am here to listen even if I can't solve your problems for you.

DEREK

I appreciate that.

Janet looks over her son for a moment, seeing the inner turmoil on his face.

Finally, she stands up and heads back to her pulpit.

JANET

This sermon isn't going to perfect itself. You can stay and watch if you like.

Derek stands up and begins his walk out.

DEREK
Maybe next time.

As he walks out the door, Janet starts up her sermon practice again.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Saleema stares longingly out her window.

She is taken out of her stare by a small rock hitting her window.

Confused, she tries to look down to the parking lot below. As she looks, another small rock taps against the window.

Saleema opens her window and looks down to see Derek rearing back to throw another rock. He stops in his tracks when he sees her.

They both smile.

SALEEMA
What are you doing?

DEREK
I went to the bakery today.

SALEEMA
I am sure that was unpleasant.

Derek spies a large tree nearby and begins to climb it.

SALEEMA
Get down from there. You will break your head open if you fall.

DEREK
I'm not going to fall.

He climbs out onto a branch so close to her window that they could reach out and touch fingers.

DEREK
I don't want to stop seeing you. I don't want to stop dating you.

SALEEMA
My uncle has forbidden it. My parents would not approve.

DEREK
How do you feel?

SALEEMA
That is not important.

DEREK
It's the most important.

SALEEMA
What is it that people say? There
are plenty of fish in the sea.

DEREK
Why would I want to keep fishing
when I've already caught the prize-
winning trout?

Saleema laughs.

SALEEMA
Every girl should hear herself
compared to a fish.

DEREK
You're definitely the best fish in
the pond.

They both laugh, maybe a little too loud.

SALEEMA
I want to be with you, too, but I
do not know how that can happen.
My uncle will never approve.

DEREK
We'll just have to try harder to
make it work.

A loud KNOCK on the door startles the lovers. Derek falls
from his perch on the tree but manages to hold on to a limb.

SALEEMA
What?

Omar opens the door and leans in, anger on his face.

OMAR
Who were you talking to?

SALEEMA

I am sitting in my room alone. Who
could I be talking to?

Omar stomps in and looks around the potential hiding places
in the room.

OMAR

I am not hearing things.

SALEEMA

And yet, there is no one here except
me.

Omar checks the closet, finding nothing. He looks out the
window but fails to see Derek dangling from a branch just
out of sight of the window.

Omar looks Saleema straight in the eyes.

OMAR

Do not push me.

Omar lets his threat sink in for a moment before stomping
out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

Saleema rushes to the window and sees Derek dangling from
the branch.

SALEEMA

Are you alright?

Derek struggles to get a foothold that would allow him to
climb back to his perch.

DEREK

I'm fine. I'm okay.

He finally is able to situate himself in the tree.

SALEEMA

You really should go.

DEREK

Not until you promise me that we'll
see each other again.

SALEEMA

You heard my uncle. He will not be
happy if he catches us together.
He will send me back to London.

DEREK

Then we better make sure we don't
get caught.

EXT. TERRENCE'S HOUSE -- DAY

A KNOCK on the door.

Angela, Terrence's finance opens the door to find Derek
looking back at her.

ANGELA

Derek? It's good to see you here.
Your father isn't here.

DEREK

I know.

Angela opens the door wide, inviting Derek inside.

ANGELA

Do you want to come in?

DEREK

No. No. No. I can't stay.

ANGELA

(confused)
What can I do for you, hon?

DEREK

I need a really big favor.

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

In walks in Angela, unusually dressed in a slightly-too-small
sweater and hideously out-of-style horn-rimmed glasses. She
cradles a clipboard in her left arm.

She bursts through the door with a giant smile pasted on her
face. She makes a bee-line toward Omar who stands dumbfounded
behind the counter.

ANGELA

Hello. Hello. Hello.

Omar views this intruder warily.

OMAR

Hello.

ANGELA

You must be Saleema's father. I saw the family resemblance right away.

OMAR

I am her uncle.

ANGELA

Her uncle!? Of course. I am so sorry about that, but I was still right about the family resemblance.

She smiles a toothy smile at him. He still stands confused.

OMAR

Is there something I can help you with?

ANGELA

Why of course you can. I work at Saleema's school. I run an after-school program where the kids do volunteer work in the community. We call it "The Helping Hands Club", and it's a wonderful little group. We do all sorts of stuff, and everybody in town just loves us.

OMAR

How nice for you.

ANGELA

It is. It is very nice. And it's so good for these kids. They get out there and really get their hands dirty helping the less fortunate and those in need. And, I'll be honest with you, colleges sure look kindly on these kinds of extracurriculars, if you know what I mean. You want Saleema to go to a good college, don't you?

OMAR

Of course I do.

ANGELA

Then the Helping Hands is just what she needs.

OMAR

I do not think this is right for Saleema.

ANGELA

Now don't you be so quick to dismiss us. We make sure that our charitable work does not interfere with our kids' schoolwork.

OMAR

I understand, but...

ANGELA

And it does so much for their self-esteem to know they're doing so much good for people in our community.

OMAR

That sounds like a very noble goal, but...

ANGELA

And, Lord knows, some of these kids would be out there causing trouble and doing all sorts of things their mommas wouldn't want them doing if the Helping Hands didn't give them something constructive to do with their time.

Omar's interest is piqued.

ANGELA

Why, instead of spending all her time thinking about boys and wanting to go on dates and all the bad stuff that sort of thing leads to, a young lady in Helping Hands can go into the world and spend her time thinking about making the world around her a better place.

Omar is hooked. He smiles at Angela.

OMAR

Where do I sign her up?

EXT. TERRENCE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Derek paces back in forth in the yard as Angela pulls into the driveway and gets out of her car.

DEREK
How'd it go?

Angela smiles at him. He returns her smile.

DEREK
He went for it?

ANGELA
Thanks to my wonderful performance
as the head of the Helping Hands
Club of James B. Bonham High School.

Derek leans forward to hug Angela but hesitates for a second before just giving in and planting a big lo' bear hug on her.

DEREK
Thank you. Thank you so much.

ANGELA
It was my pleasure.

Derek practically floats back to his car on a cloud of happiness.

ANGELA
I hope this girl is worth it. If
that uncle of hers catches you again,
he's going to hit the roof. And
then he's going to come looking for
something else to hit.

DEREK
She's worth this and anything else
I have to do to be with her.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Omar paces around like a giddy schoolgirl while Saleema gets her things together for her night out.

OMAR
I sincerely believe you will enjoy
this group. Charity is an often
overlooked part of our religion.

SALEEMA

I imagine I would like it better
had I not been signed up against my
will.

Omar's giddiness subsides a bit.

OMAR

It did not occur to me that you
would resist doing good deeds.

SALEEMA

It would not have occurred to me
that a person would fail to simply
ask before committing another person.

Omar sighs.

OMAR

No matter how the opportunity came
about, it is an opportunity just
the same.

Saleema softens.

SALEEMA

I know.

She turns to him and smiles.

SALEEMA

And you will no better next time.

Omar returns her smile.

OMAR

Yes. Next time.

She leans in and gives her uncle a kiss on the cheek.

SALEEMA

Thank you.

A bit of pride creeps across Omar's face.

OMAR

No. Thank you.

Saleema leaves, closing the door behind her. Omar sits in
his chair, pleased with himself for getting his niece back
on the right track.

EXT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

As Saleema walks down the stairs, she smiles as she whips out her cellphone.

SALEEMA
(to phone)
It worked. I will see you there.

EXT. ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT -- EVENING

MONTAGE

Derek and Saleema hit the various spots during their secret date together. They laugh with each other and an outdoor cafe. They play games together. They walk hand-in-hand near a small lake. They sit on a bench and share a kiss as the world passes behind them.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Derek and Saleema walk, holding hands, to her car. The smiles on their faces stretch for a mile while happiness practically exudes from their persons.

They reach the car, and Derek opens the door for Saleema.

Before she steps in, she turns to him and plants a passionate kiss on his lips.

As their kiss gradually dies out, Saleema reaches out and gently touches Derek's face.

SALEEMA
I do not want to go.

DEREK
I don't want you to go.

She looks at her watch and does some math in her head.

SALEEMA
I could likely stay a little bit longer.

DEREK
I'll take whatever time with you I can get.

A light bulb goes on in Derek's head.

DEREK
There's a place. Not far. I've
been wanting to share with you.

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY -- NIGHT

Derek leads Saleema into the empty sanctuary of his mother's church, turning on a few lights that give it an almost romantic glow.

SALEEMA
This is your church?

DEREK
This is my mother's church.

He points to a photo of his mother in her preacher regalia hanging on the wall.

Saleema steps in to take a closer look.

SALEEMA
Your mother is a preacher?

Derek nods his head and smiles.

SALEEMA
I have heard that preacher's sons
are not to be trusted.

DEREK
You're thinking of preacher's
daughters.

SALEEMA
Maybe it is different here in the
States.

Saleema begins to walk around the sanctuary, taking in the room with wide eyes.

DEREK
When we moved to this town, this
was an empty lot. My mother built
this church.

SALEEMA
With her own two hands?

DEREK
Practically.

Saleema admires a stained-glass window near the pulpit.

SALEEMA
This is beautiful.

DEREK
That was a gift. It's an antique.
I think from an old church somewhere
in Eastern Europe.

SALEEMA
It is gorgeous.

DEREK
Apparently the Communists weren't
too big on Christianity when they
took over after the war. Churches
moved underground, and people had
to worship and pray in secret. So,
you don't want to go advertising
your love of Jesus with a giant
stained glass window. But they
didn't want to let them be destroyed,
either.

SALEEMA
That would have been devastating.

DEREK
So they sneaked these out, piece by
piece. And put them back together,
piece by piece by piece.

SALEEMA
And they just gave them away?

DEREK
Hopefully to places that would
appreciate what they had.

SALEEMA
Amazing.

DEREK
I used to sit right over there.

Her motions toward a pew at the back of the sanctuary.

DEREK

By the time the last sermon would roll around late Sunday morning, I'd already heard it at least ten times. So, I'd be pretty bored.

He starts to walk her down the aisle toward his former seat.

DEREK

One day when I was like eight or nine, I snuck one of those bubble blowers in and starting blowing bubbles from the back of the sanctuary.

Derek mimes blowing bubbles.

DEREK

I guess they were going everywhere, all over the sanctuary, because after a couple of minutes, I hear DEREK TERRENCE PHILLIPS! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

SALEEMA

On no.

DEREK

I cut out the bubble blowing but quick.

SALEEMA

I can imagine.

DEREK

For like years after that, she would call me Bubbles. It became my nickname all around the church. Even to this day, there are members of this church who still call me Bubbles every time they see me.

SALEEMA

That's sweet.

DEREK

It was sweet when I was eight. Ten years later...

They take a few seconds to look deeply into each other's eyes.

SALEEMA

Thank you very much for sharing
this place with me.

They share a smile.

And then a kiss.

And then a bigger kiss.

Very quickly, they are passionately making out.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Omar paces around his living room, cordless phone in hand.
He looks at the clock. It's late. Past midnight.

OMAR

Where is that girl?

He dials the phone and waits for an answer that doesn't come.

Saleema's voice mail picks up.

SALEEMA

(recording on phone)

Hi. This is Saleema. I cannot
take your call...

His face reddens in anger as he hangs up the phone.

He dials the phone again, this time he calls 911.

911 OPERATOR

(on phone)

9-1-1. What is your emergency?

OMAR

My niece is missing.

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - CLOAK ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek and Saleema lie in each other's arms, undressed and in
post-coital bliss. Both are asleep.

From the lobby, the sound of the front door opening stir
Derek awake.

ANGELA
 (yelling from lobby)
 Derek? Derek are you here?

Before Derek can respond, Angela appears at the cloakroom door and sees Derek and the awakening Saleema wrapped up together. She sighs.

ANGELA
 Derek!

DEREK
 Angela? What're you doing here?

ANGELA
 Uncle Omar is on the warpath. We need to get her home before he has the police busting down the door on you.

Derek springs to attention as Saleema starts putting her clothes back on.

DEREK
 How did you even know to come looking for us?

ANGELA
 Your father is buddies with just about every cop on the force. When her uncle called the police and said his underage niece might be with you, they called the house to give him the heads up. I answered.
 (beat)
 Now c'mon. I'll take the little lady back to her apartment, and you go on home and maybe have your mother say a few prayers for all of us.

Derek turns to Saleema, and they look wistfully into each others' eyes before embracing tightly. They share one last kiss before Angela takes Saleema's arm and begins leading her out of the church.

SALEEMA
 I love you!

DEREK
 I love you!

Derek stands crestfallen as Angela and Saleema leave.

The clang of the front door shutting punctuates Derek's sudden loneliness.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Saleema sheepishly enters the apartment to find Uncle Omar sitting in a chair in tears.

He quickly composes himself, wiping a tear from his cheek, and stands up to confront his wayward niece.

SALEEMA

I am sorry.

OMAR

You cannot stand there and tell me you are sorry. You do not get to knowingly do wrong and then ask for forgiveness. If you were truly sorry, you never would have defied me and betrayed me.

SALEEMA

I have not betrayed you.

Omar's face reddens with anger.

OMAR

Do not interrupt me!

Saleema shrinks in place.

OMAR

You have betrayed me. And I will not have it.

He edges closer to her, balling his fists in rage.

OMAR

You have broken my trust, and you have done this on purpose. Do you understand how angry this makes me?

Saleema is almost cowering. She remains silent.

OMAR

Do you!?

Saleema whispers a barely audible answer.

SALEEMA
All I can be is sorry.

OMAR
And that is not good enough.

A ball of rage, Omar stares down Saleema. His teeth practically squeak from being clinched so tight.

Tears run down Saleema's cheeks as she cowers by the door.

After a few very tense moments, Omar backs down.

OMAR
I have spoken to your father. He agrees with me that it would be best if you went back home.

SALEEMA
Home?

OMAR
I will speak with your school and make all the arrangements. Your parents are traveling, so you will fly home once they return.

Omar pulls a computer print-out off the counter and shoves it into Saleema's hands.

OMAR
You leave on the 19th. Until then, you do not, under any circumstances, leave this house.

Omar puts on his intimidating face again.

OMAR
Do you understand?

SALEEMA
Yes.

OMAR
Good.
(beat)
It is very late. I am going to sleep. I suggest you do the same.

Omar stomps down the hallway to his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

Saleema runs to her room and collapses in tears on her bed.

EXT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Saleema is roused from her bed by light taps on her window.

She rushes to the window and opens the blinds to see Derek smiling at her from the branch of the tree outside her window. She thrusts open the window to speak to her love.

DEREK
Are you in trouble?

SALEEMA
I would say so.

DEREK
I'm really sorry for all this. I
didn't mean to...

SALEEMA
It is not your fault. I wanted to
see you just as much as you wanted
to see me.

DEREK
So, are you like grounded or
something?

Saleema musters up the courage to tell him.

SALEEMA
Uncle Omar is sending me home.

DEREK
Home? Like London home?

SALEEMA
I leave on the 19th.

Derek starts to panic.

DEREK
He can't do that. I don't want to
be here without you. You have to
stay.

SALEEMA
I cannot stay if he wishes me to
leave. You could come to London.

DEREK

I don't even have a passport.

SALEEMA

Or a job, or a place to stay if you were to get there.

They take a second to consider any more possibilities.

DEREK

I don't want to lose you.

SALEEMA

You cannot lose me. We will have email and video chats. We can stay in touch until we can be together again.

DEREK

I don't know if I can do that. I don't think I can make it without being near you.

SALEEMA

Our bodies will be apart, but our spirits will remain together.

DEREK

I don't want you to go.

SALEEMA

We will be together again.

(beat)

Go home, for now, and know that we will speak again soon.

Derek leans as far as his position on the branch will let him. Saleema leans out her window. They reach their fingers toward each other and touch finger, though just barely.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Derek steps off the elevator and into the busy newsroom.

He finds his father in his office, sitting behind the desk looking over some paperwork.

Derek knocks on the open door, getting Terrence's attention. Terrence smiles when he sees his son.

TERRENCE

Son. I didn't know you were coming by. It's good to see you.

He loses his smile once he notices Derek's sadness. He takes off his glasses and walks over to his son.

TERRENCE

What's going on?

DEREK

Didn't Angela tell you?

TERRENCE

No. What's wrong.

Derek starts to break down. Terrence leads him over to a chair and sits him down.

TERRENCE

What's the matter?

DEREK

There's a girl.

Terrence sits in a chair opposite Derek.

TERRENCE

Girl trouble. I know a little something about that.

DEREK

It's more like father trouble... or uncle trouble, really. He doesn't like me. Doesn't want me to see her anymore.

TERRENCE

Doesn't like you? What kind of person wouldn't like you? You're a great kid.

DEREK

He forbid her from seeing me before he had even met me.

TERRENCE

Forbade.

DEREK

Forbade. Whatever... I just think he doesn't want his niece dating anybody who is anything like me.

TERRENCE

Because you're black?

DEREK

Because I'm Christian.

Terrence leans forward in his chair.

TERRENCE

Christian?

DEREK

They're Muslim.

TERRENCE

You want to date a Muslim? With the head scarf and the praying toward Mecca and the Allahu Akbar and all that?

DEREK

She doesn't wear a hijab.

TERRENCE

A hi-what?

DEREK

Head scarf. A hijab... we still worship the same God. We just do it a little differently.

TERRENCE

Okay. Okay. You know, your granddad didn't care for me so much, either. When your mom and I would date, she'd have to pretend she was going out with her little girlfriends and then meet up with me at the mall or wherever.

(beat)

So the uncle doesn't like you, you just gotta figure a way to sneak around so he doesn't find out.

DEREK

We tried that already.

TERRENCE

And you got caught. Yeah. You never were very good at sneaking around.

DEREK

Now her uncle wants to send her to London.

TERRENCE

He's having her deported?

DEREK

Not really deported. That's where she's from.

TERRENCE

Oh.

DEREK

I love this girl. I don't know what I will do without her. I can't deal with the idea of her leaving.

TERRENCE

Where can I find this uncle? Maybe I can have a talk with him.

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

Terrence storms into the bakery and marches up to the counter. Before Omar can even speak, Terrence tears into him.

TERRENCE

You Omar? Saleema's uncle?

Omar laughs off Terrence.

OMAR

You must be the father of that delinquent who has defiled my niece.

TERRENCE

Delinquent? Derek is a good kid.

OMAR

A good kid would not go against the beliefs and wishes of a young girl's family.

TERRENCE

If your beliefs weren't so backwards...

OMAR

Stop right there. Before you say something I will make you regret.

Terrence takes a second.

OMAR

If you do not respect my religion or my wishes, I will ask you to please leave my store.

TERRENCE

They're in love. Who are you to stand in the way of that?

OMAR

Our conversation is finished. Good bye.

Omar begins tending to the baked goods in the store, ignoring Terrence.

TERRENCE

You are making a mistake.

Omar refuses to acknowledge Terrence.

Terrence realizes he's getting nowhere, turns and storms out of the bakery.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Terrence charges out of the elevator and into the newsroom, barking orders at the newspaper staff.

TERRENCE

Hold the front page.

John, a staffer, runs up to Terrence and follows beside him.

JOHN

We're fifteen minutes to the press run.

TERRENCE

So we have fifteen minutes to repaste the front page.

Terrence rushes into his office and sits down behind his computer.

John sighs and turns to the rest of the newsroom.

JOHN

Okay people, front page is a redo.
Everybody get ready for new copy.

The staff doubles their speed, getting ready for the new front page.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET -- DAY

A newspaper delivery man stuffs a stack of papers into a newspaper rack.

At the top of the newspaper front page in bold print, it reads:

MUSLIM BAKER DEFIES AMERICAN VALUES

INT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

An enraged Omar looks at the headline in 'The Phoenix' for what is surely not the first time.

A customer in the bakery attempts to eat a bean pie as Omar rails against the paper.

OMAR

Can you believe the arrogance of
this man?

The customer continues eating without acknowledging Omar's question.

OMAR

I am against American values? How
am I an opponent of American values?
I am a small business owner. I pay
taxes. I am living what I have
always understood to be the American
dream.

Omar is practically shoving the newspaper in the customer's face. The customer continues to try to ignore him.

OMAR

When I was a child dreaming of coming
to this country, I knew of America
as the land of the free. Freedom
to do what you wish to do. Freedom
to pursue whatever path you wanted
to follow.

He slams the newspaper down on the counter with a loud WHAP!

OMAR

Freedom to practice whichever
religion you wish, including Islam.

Omar catches the sight of something in front of his store.
He rushes to the front window.

OMAR

What is this now?

A lone man begins walking back and forth in the parking lot
in front of Omar's Bakery holding a sign reading TERRORISTS
GO HOME!

OMAR

Oh good. Now there is a protester.
This day continues to get better by
the minute.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Terrence sits in his office with his feet up on his desk as
he admires the latest edition of the paper.

Eryn runs in and grabs the remote control for a television
in the corner and turns it on.

ERYN

Channel 4's doing a story on your
column.

She tunes it to the channel just in time to see a local
television reporter interviewing protesters in front of Omar's
Bakery, now numbering at least a dozen, each with their own
anti-Muslim sign.

TV REPORTER

(on TV)

And why are you protesting against
this bakery?

The formerly lone protester from before looks into the camera and gives his answer.

LONE PROTESTER

(on TV)

We don't want no terrorists in our city. If they don't want to live like good Christian Americans, then they need to go back to where they came from.

The TV reporter takes the microphone back and does her outro for the piece.

TV REPORTER

And the protests continue to grow out here in front of Omar's Bakery. The crowd has more than doubled just since we've been here, and it looks to...

Terrence grabs the remote and turns the TV set off.

ERYN

Looks like your column is a big hit with the moron crowd.

Before he can come up with a witty retort, the telephone on his desk rings. Terrence walks over and answers it.

TERRENCE

Hello?

(beat)

Really.

(beat)

Then we gotta do a second run.

(beat)

Okay.

He hangs up the phone and looks to a curious Eryn.

TERRENCE

Paper's sold out all over town.

We're printing a second run.

Eryn shakes her head and smiles.

ERYN

I weep for the future of this town.

Terrence playfully throws a wadded up ball of paper at Eryn as she walks out of his office.

INT. JANET'S HOUSE -- DAY

Derek sits down at the breakfast table as his mother finishes preparing their meal.

Janet sets a plate down in front of him, but before he can dig in, she hands him a copy of 'The Phoenix'

DEREK
The Phoenix? I didn't know you
read Dad's paper.

JANET
I don't normally, but somebody told
me I might be especially interested
in today's edition. Take a look.

Derek unfolds the paper and scans the front page.

JANET
Seems like your father is taking an
unhealthy interest in your love
life.

Derek's eyes widen as he reads his Dad's column.

DEREK
This is not good.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Omar stomps out of the elevator and into the newsroom. He's almost immediately stopped by John, who places his hand on Omar's chest to stop him.

JOHN
Can I help you?

Omar looks down at the hand on his chest, causing John to sheepishly remove it.

OMAR
I am looking for Terrence Phillips.

John pretends to look around for Terrence.

JOHN
I don't think he's available for
visitors today.

Omar pushes past John and heads further into the newsroom.

John helplessly follows behind.

JOHN
Hey, you can't just go in there.

Alerted by the activity, Terrence steps out of his office
and stands at the door.

TERRENCE
It's okay, John. I'm interested to
hear Omar's opinion of my column.

He turns to Omar.

TERRENCE
Please. Come in. Have a seat.

Omar huffs into the office and sits.

Terrence closes the door behind him and makes himself
comfortable behind his desk.

TERRENCE
I take it you read my column today.

OMAR
How can you say these things about
me?

TERRENCE
I'm a newspaper man. I deal in the
truth.

OMAR
Truth? This is not truth.

TERRENCE
The truth is sometimes just how you
see it.

OMAR
There are people outside my shop
protesting. Calling me a terrorist.
Yelling at me to go home. Because
of you. You are doing this to me.

TERRENCE

I came to you and tried to handle all of this in a civil manner, and you attacked me. You attacked my son. I am just fighting back.

Omar stands up and slams his fist against Terrence's desk. Terrence does not flinch.

OMAR

I am not a terrorist!

TERRENCE

Listen, I can make this all go away, or I can keep at it until some mob has ruined your business and run you out of town. It's your choice.

OMAR

My choice?

TERRENCE

Sure. It's completely up to you how this goes. You pull the giant stick out of your ass and let my son date your niece, and I'll write a column praising you as the second coming of Jesus. But if you insist on keeping these two wonderful kids apart... well then...

Terrence shrugs his shoulders.

TERRENCE

Then it's out of my hands.

Omar looks Terrence up and down as Terrence simply sits there smirking.

OMAR

I will not let you bully me.

TERRENCE

That's your choice.

Omar turns and storms out of the office and into the elevator.

As soon as he's gone, John pokes his head into the office.

JOHN

He seems nice.

Terrence hops up from his desk and rushes out of his office.

TERRENCE

Tell production to hold the front
page, I've got another column coming.

EXT. OMAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

A handful of protesters march in front of Omar's apartment building, chanting anti-Muslim slogans and carrying anti-Muslim signs.

Omar stomps up the path to the building. His anger grows even larger when he spots the protesters in front of his home.

He tries to get past them without incident, but one of the protesters spots him.

APARTMENT PROTESTER

Hey, there he is!

The assembled protesters start booing Omar, calling him a terrorist and throwing cups and other small objects at him.

Omar hurries through the throng and up the stairs into his apartment, slamming the door behind him.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Saleema comes out of her bedroom with a worried look on her face. She finds Omar standing with his back pressed against the door.

SALEEMA

What is happening?

Omar dashes over, picks up Saleema's cellphone from the counter and holds it out to her.

OMAR

You need to call your boyfriend and
get him to put a stop to this.

SALEEMA

Stop to what?

Omar moves in closer, his eyes almost pleading for Saleema's help.

OMAR

There are people in front of my
business, in front of my house
throwing things at me and calling
me a terrorist.

SALEEMA

What does that have to do with Derek?

OMAR

His father. His father did this.

He lowers his eyes toward the cellphone, motioning for Saleema to make the call.

She takes the phone from him and dials.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

Derek talks on his cellphone as he walks out of the elevator.

DEREK

(to phone)

I didn't ask him to do any of this.

SALEEMA

(on phone)

I know you would never ask him to
do such a thing, but you must ask
him to stop. There are people
outside our flat calling us
terrorists and throwing things at
us.

DEREK

(to phone)

I am so sorry. I will get Dad sorted
out right now.

Derek peeks into Terrence's office but finds it empty. He sees John walking by and stops him.

DEREK

Hey, where's my Dad? I need to
talk to him.

JOHN

Follow me.

Everyone in the office is gathered around a large-screen television tuned to FOX NEWS CHANNEL.

Derek looks around but doesn't spot his father.

DEREK
(to John)
I don't see him. Where is he?

John points to the television.

JOHN
He'll be on in just a sec.

Derek returns his attention to his phone.

DEREK
(to phone)
You're not going to believe this.

INT. TV NEWS STUDIO -- DAY

Terrence sweats in a bar-stool style chair as hair stylists and sound men flock around him, readying him for his TV appearance.

A well-dressed PRODUCER explains the situation to Terrence.

PRODUCER
Okay. The director over there will cue you when you're on, and you'll be able to hear the host in your ear and see him on those monitors there.

He motions toward the monitors as Terrence nods in understanding.

PRODUCER
Make your points clearly and succinctly, and, most important of all, don't make the host look bad.

Terrence smiles.

PRODUCER
You'll do great.

A FLOOR DIRECTOR starts counting down from ten, causing everyone to scurry away, leaving Terrence baking alone under the hot lights.

INT. 'THE PHOENIX' NEWSROOM -- DAY

The assembled staff, including Derek, watches and waits for Terrence's face to pop up on the screen.

DEREK
(to phone)
Turn your TV to FOX NEWS.

SALEEMA
What? Why?

DEREK
Just trust me. I'll call you back
in a few minutes.

A hush falls over them as the HOST starts the program.

HOST
(on TV)
Are hard core Islamic terrorists
infiltrating the heartland of
America? Our guest today says yes.

The TV changes to a split screen showing the Host on the Left and Terrence on the Right.

HOST
Please welcome to the program, live
via satellite from our affiliate
station, Editor and Columnist for
'The Phoenix' newspaper, Terrence
Phillips.

TERRENCE
Thank you for having me on today.

HOST
You had a very provocative column
in your newspaper today in which
you claim that a local Muslim... a
bakery owner, correct?

TERRENCE
Correct.

HOST
This fundamentalist Muslim bakery
owner is working to undermine
American values?

TERRENCE

Absolutely true. It all started when my son met and started dating a lovely young woman named Saleema who turned out to be the niece of Omar El-Sayed, the purported owner of the Muslim bakery in town.

HOST

And the uncle knew about your son, who is quite active in the Baptist church, I understand, dating his niece?

TERRENCE

No. And as soon as he found out, he flew into a rage, threatening people and locking his niece in their apartment, cutting her off completely from the outside world.

HOST

That's terrible. Absolutely terrible. And, you well know, these fundamentalist Muslims routinely practice honor killings where they murder their daughters or nieces or anyone who's brought dishonor to the family. It's required as part of their religion.

TERRENCE

That was my own fear. And, as far as I know, no one outside of her uncle has talked to this young lady in several days now.

HOST

For all we know, she could already be dead.

TERRENCE

Exactly.

Derek's cellphone begins to ring. He looks and sees the call is from Saleema.

He walks over to a quiet part of the newsroom to answer it.

DEREK

Hello?

SALEEMA

How can he say these things? On television?

DEREK

I don't know. He's obviously gone off the deep end.

SALEEMA

Call the station. Tell them I am not dead. At least set them straight on that.

DEREK

I'll do what I can. I am so sorry for all of this.

SALEEMA

I do not blame you. We do not choose our parents.

(beat)

Or our uncles.

DEREK

I love you.

SALEEMA

I love you.

Derek hangs up the phone and leaves the newsroom as his father's voice still blares from the TV.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Omar sits in a chair in front of his television. His mouth agape in shock. As Terrence's segment wraps up, Saleema grabs the remote and turns off the TV.

SALEEMA

This is not Derek's fault.

OMAR

I do not even understand what is happening. How could things have come to this?

(beat)

All I wanted was to do the right thing.

Before Saleema can comfort her uncle, the telephone rings. Omar jumps up and answers it.

OMAR
Hello?

TODD
Mr. El-Sayed?

OMAR
Yes.

TODD
This is Todd will Pro-Safe Alarm
Systems. We're getting several
active alarms at your store right
now...

Before Todd from the Alarm Company can finish, Omar hangs up the phone, grabs his coat and rushes to the front door.

SALEEMA
What is going on?

OMAR
These protesters are breaking into
my store.

He runs out, slamming the door behind him.

EXT. OMAR'S BAKERY -- DAY

The protest has turned into a mob scene with near-riotous protesters jammed together, filling nearly every square inch of the parking lot.

The front windows of Omar's Bakery lay shattered on the asphalt as people throw anything and everything that was once inside the bakery out onto the parking lot to the cheers of the rest of the mob.

Omar watches from behind the wheel of his car. Sadness envelops his face as he watches his business destroyed.

EXT. TV NEWS STUDIO -- DAY

Terrence strides out of the TV station with a smile as wide as Texas on his face.

To his father's surprise, Derek walks up and confronts him.

TERRENCE
Derek. I didn't expect to see you
here? Did you see me on TV?

DEREK
Why would you do that?

TERRENCE
Why would I go on TV and try to put pressure on that backwards-thinking Neanderthal to get him to let you date his niece?

DEREK
You called him a terrorist,
practically accused him of murder.

Terrence starts to walk to his car, Derek follows closely behind.

TERRENCE
I may have let some exaggeration get through there, but that's how these things work. Nobody takes that seriously.

DEREK
There are protesters at his business.
At his house...

TERRENCE
They'll find something else to be all up-in-arms about in a couple of days.

Derek shakes his head in disbelief.

DEREK
Do you even really believe in anything, or do you just say whatever you think will let you get your way.

Terrence turns and gets up in Derek's face.

TERRENCE
You came to me. You wanted me to help. This is how I help. You don't like it. Next time, you don't ask. But right now, I think you owe me a thank you.

Derek takes a long look into his father's eyes before turning and just walking away.

As he gets a few dozen feet away, Terrence yells after him.

TERRENCE
You're welcome!

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- DAY

Saleema nervously looks out the window at the growing protest in front of her building.

She looks down to the cellphone still in her hand and decides to make a call.

DEREK
(on phone)
Hey, are you okay?

SALEEMA
There are a lot of people outside my window. I am scared.

DEREK
Is your uncle there?

SALEEMA
The alarms were going off at the store...

DEREK
Just stay away from the windows. I'm coming over.

SALEEMA
You should probably not do that. Uncle Omar will be home soon. I am sure this crowd...

Derek interrupts.

DEREK
Saleema.

SALEEMA
Yes?

DEREK
I am coming right over.

Her voice lowers to almost a whisper.

SALEEMA

Thank you.

She hangs up the phone and takes another look outside her window at the mob outside that seems to grow more agitated.

EXT. OMAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Derek drives up to see a mob that's quickly turning violent. They are hurling bottles, rocks and anything else they can find at the apartment building.

Derek jumps out of his car and rushes to the apartment building, but the crowd is so thick, he can't make his way through.

He PUSHES and the mob pushes back, almost knocking him onto the ground.

And then it happens...

Someone in the crowd throws a MOLOTOV COCKTAIL at the apartment building entrance, setting it immediately aflame.

The fire spreads quickly, engulfing the wooden door and frame.

Derek looks up to Saleema's window but he doesn't see her. Moving as fast as he's ever moved before, Derek runs to the tree outside her window and begins to climb.

He reaches the top and calls out for his love.

DEREK

Saleema!
(beat)
Saleema!

His voice is drowned out by the din of the unruly mob.

Derek inches out further on the branch near Saleema's window. He calls for her again.

DEREK

Saleema!

She's still nowhere to be seen.

He looks around for something to throw at the window to get her attention when he realizes he has his cellphone in his pocket.

He takes out his phone and weighs it in his hand before taking a long look at the window.

As he rears back his hand to throw his phone at the window, it begins to ring.

Feeling stupid, he looks at the phone and sees the call is from Saleema. He quickly answers it.

DEREK

Saleema...

SALEEMA

Derek. I am very scared. Will you be here soon?

DEREK

I am at your window right now.

SALEEMA

The window?

DEREK

I don't want you to panic, but there's a fire in your building.

SALEEMA

A fire?

DEREK

Please. Stay calm. I need you to come to your window.

Saleema pulls back the curtains and appears behind the window.

She quickly opens the window.

SALEEMA

What do you mean when you say that there's a fire?

DEREK

Just a small fire by the door to the building. Nothing to worry about yet.

Saleema seems to worry anyway.

DEREK

If you jump to me, I can catch you.

Saleema scoffs.

SALEEMA

You could not catch me. You can barely keep from falling yourself.

Derek studies his situation.

DEREK

I think I can catch you.

SALEEMA

I think you are crazy.

DEREK

Just jump. Even if I don't catch you, the fall probably won't kill you.

SALEEMA

I cannot do it.

DEREK

Yes you can.

SALEEMA

I cannot. It is too far, and I am not a chimpanzee.

Derek surveys the distance again.

DEREK

You're right. Okay, if you can't come out, I'm coming in. Move over a little bit.

He motions for her to move away from the window as he readies himself to jump.

SALEEMA

It's just as far going this way.

DEREK

Just step aside for a second.

Saleema sees that he's serious about jumping and moves out of the way.

Derek readies himself and leaps, grabbing hold of the window sill as his body slams against the brick wall.

Saleema runs over and grabs hold of his arm, helping him pull himself into the apartment.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Once inside, Derek sits himself down on the floor to rest for a moment.

The apartment is already beginning to fill with smoke as Derek takes a moment to catch his breath.

Before he can stand up, Saleema leans in and kisses him passionately.

SALEEMA

Thank you for coming to rescue me.

DEREK

Any time.

Derek stands up and grabs hold of Saleema's hand to lead her out of her room.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Derek leads Saleema into the living room. He briefly lets go of her hand in order to rush into the attached kitchen and check under the sink.

DEREK

You wouldn't happen to have a fire extinguisher, would you?

SALEEMA

There is one by the door to the building.

DEREK

The door that's on fire?

SALEEMA

Yes. That one.

He comes back out to the living room and looks around, searching for an exit.

DEREK

Are there any other doors out of here?

SALEEMA
No. Just the one.

DEREK
Any closer trees?

SALEEMA
No.

Saleema begins to cough from the smoke.

Derek runs to the bathroom, grabs a washcloth from the linen closet and runs some water over it.

He comes back and hands it to Saleema.

DEREK
Put this over your mouth and nose.
It will filter out some of the smoke.

She does as she's told.

SALEEMA
You are good in a crisis.

DEREK
Don't decide that until I get us
out of here.

Derek looks around again, trying desperately to think of a plan.

He finally, reluctantly goes over to the front door and places his hand flat against it.

He quickly pulls his hand away.

DEREK
Ouch.

SALEEMA
Is it hot?

DEREK
Very hot. The first must be right
outside the door.

Derek looks down the hallway toward Saleema's room.

SALEEMA

That tree is starting to look much better.

The smoke is getting thicker where they stand.

They look deeply into each other's eyes.

Derek grabs Saleema's hand again and leads her back down the hallway to her room.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - SALEEMA'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Derek busts through the door with Saleema in tow. The room is not only filled with smoke but parts of the walls and ceiling are on fire.

Derek squints and coughs through the haze to get to the window.

Just a few steps from the window, a CRASH...

A large chunk of the ceiling falls in, catching Saleema and knocking her to the ground.

DEREK

Saleema!

He drops to his knees and searches the floor for Saleema.

He finally spots her, her head and arm sticking out from underneath a pile of debris.

Derek brushes some hair out of Saleema's face.

DEREK

Saleema. Are you okay?

Saleema tries to pull herself out from under the ceiling fragments but cannot.

SALEEMA

I think I am stuck.

Derek grabs some of the fallen detritus and throw it off to the side, but there are large pieces he cannot move.

The fire continues to worsen around them.

DEREK

Try again.

He grabs hold of her free arm and pulls as she tries to free herself.

It is of no use. She's stuck.

SALEEMA

You must go. Go, while you still can.

DEREK

I'm not leaving you. I'm not leaving you here to die.

SALEEMA

It's suicide if you stay. I cannot let you kill yourself.

Derek leans in and kisses Saleema deeply and passionately.

DEREK

I'm not going anywhere.

They lock eyes and smile at each other. He holds her hand tightly in his as the flames rise all around them.

EXT. OMAR'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Fire trucks fill the area where protesters once stood. The fire is out except for a few embers burning here and there. The apartment building is a total loss, burned and collapsed.

Omar stands weeping as a female police officer attempts to comfort him.

Two firemen trudge out of the building carrying a pair of body bags - the remains of Derek and Saleema.

Omar falls to his knees as the firemen pass with the body bags. He is emotionally destroyed.

OMAR

My Saleema.

Terrence pulls up and rushes out of his car to survey the fire damage.

TERRENCE

Oh my God.

Omar sees Terrence and angrily cuts him off from getting any closer to the building.

OMAR

You!

He points to Terrence, his eyes red with rage.

OMAR

This is your fault!

Terrence steps behind a police officer, using her as a shield from the enraged Omar.

TERRENCE

I couldn't have known this would
happen. I would never.

His voice breaks as he struggles to hold back his own tears.

TERRENCE

I would never do anything to hurt
my boy. I love him.

Omar backs down a little. He points over to the pair of
body bags now lying on the ground.

OMAR

There is your boy now.

Terrence can hold back the tears no more. He breaks down
crying.

Intimately knowing his loss, Omar comes and puts his arm
around Terrence.

TERRENCE

I am so, so sorry.

OMAR

In time, perhaps I can forgive you,
but you will never forgive yourself.
I will be angry with you tomorrow.
Today, we mourn.

The two men sit silently as the firemen continue to work the
scene.

INT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY -- DAY

Janet stands in front of a full house for Sunday services at
her church.

The choir sings as the assembled parishioners sing and sway with them.

The song ends, and Janet approaches the pulpit.

JANET

As many of you know, I lost someone very important to me this week. My son died in that apartment fire we all saw on the news.

Several heads in the crowd nod in recognition.

JANET

The fire department says that fire was caused by somebody throwing a bottle filled with gasoline at the building. But you and I know that's not exactly the truth.

Some scattered mumbling from the crowd who's not sure where she's going with this.

JANET

This fire and all the destruction that came from it was caused by one thing and one thing along. Hate. Hate caused this fire. Hate burned that building to the ground. And hate killed...

She stumbles on her words for a second, choking back a tear.

JANET

Hate killed my son and the girl he loved.

Janet takes a second to collect herself again.

JANET

And it wasn't just that one man who threw that bottle who was filled with hate that day. There were dozens, maybe hundreds of people in front of that building and in front of that bakery, spouting nothing but hate for a man who's only crime was being a little bit different than us.

A few amens rise up from the pews.

JANET

And I'm pretty sure I see a few
faces out in this church today that
I saw on television protesting
against our Muslim brother.

Some embarrassed coughs emanate from the crowd.

JANET

Jesus would not be proud of us.

She lets that sink in for a few moments before continuing.

JANET

In some ways...

Janet is distracted by the doors at the back of the sanctuary
opening.

Omar walks inside and stands at the back wall.

Janet smiles when she sees him.

JANET

In some ways I'm envious of my son
because I know he's in a better
place right now. He's standing
hand-in-hand with his true love and
looking down upon us from his place
in Heaven.

Her demeanor improves as she speaks of her son.

JANET

And I have to continue to live in
this town with the bunch of you.

She laughs as she says it, but the church members aren't
sure whether they should join in.

JANET

It's okay to laugh. There will be
many times when I will laugh when I
think about my son. I will miss
him terribly until that day comes
when I join him in Heaven, but until
then, my memories of him will be
happy ones. And many of them will
make me laugh.

Janet's eyes meet Omar's, and Omar manages a smile.

Janet continues to almost stare at Omar, as if she's speaking directly to him.

JANET

The Bible tells us that a glad heart
makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow
of heart, the spirit is crushed.
Do not let your spirit be crushed
by sorrow. Remember those who are
no longer with us for the joy they
once brought and the joy we will
have when we see them again.

Omar looks comforted by Janet's words. He smiles at her again and gives her a little nod before he takes his leave of the sanctuary.

EXT. MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

Janet's sermon can be heard in the background as Omar walks out of the building and into the street.

As he walks away, Janet's words ring out over the town.

JANET

(v.o.)

Love is patient, love is kind. It
does not envy, it does not boast,
it is not proud. It is not rude,
it is not self-seeking, it is not
easily angered, it keeps no record
of wrongs. Love does not delight
in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails.

FADE OUT: