

Ayesha turns and then begins to run down the road, backpack over her shoulder and the pink plastic bag at her side, racing the oncoming bus to the bus stop. She's going to be so late.

CUT TO:

EXT. University Cafe - Late Morning

MAHA (V.O.)

No one told you that your dreams  
had Teeth. Hid Claws. Are built on  
Bones. You're inside- outside- in-  
between. Shouldn't have made a deal  
when you didn't have all the  
details. You have some chances for  
change, some choices to make.

Dana sighs as she looks at her lecture notes again. Someone jostles her, and she turns around, before quickly turning back. She plugs her headphones in, adjusting her bright blue hijab in the process. The cafe is crowded. She moves her chair closer to the table while reaching to take a sip of her coffee. The lecture notes haven't changed in that time as she'd hoped and she shakes her head. Suddenly, a large pink plastic bag is dropped on the table, nearly upending the coffee, and Ayesha takes the other seat. Dana glares at her. Ayesha looks on with an unrepentant grin.

AYESHA

That's yours.

Dana looks at the bag doubtfully, before turning back to Ayesha.

DANA

And what did I do to deserve  
this...gift?

AYESHA

From my mum to yours, Sudanese junk  
Aida brought back with her. And  
you'd better appreciate it, I had  
to carry it on the bus. Do you know  
how crowded the buses are in the  
morning?

DANA

No, because I did my driving test  
when I was supposed to, rather than  
letting my learners expire. Twice.

Aysha glares at her, arms crossed. Meanwhile, Dana, giving up on studying, begins to pack away her laptop.

AYESHA

You sound like my mother. I'll get to it when I get to it! Honestly! Public transport is there for a reason.

DANA

You were supposed to be here an hour and a half ago.

Aysha waves the comment away.

AYESHA

Linear time is a colonial concept.

Dana laughs and shakes her head.

DANA

You are so full of it.

Aysha grins and after a furtive glance around the cafe, reaches out to hold Dana's hand.

AYESHA

But you love me anyway.

Dana rolls her eyes but doesn't pull away, full attention on Aysha. For a moment, the sounds of the crowds fade and it is just the two of them.

DANA

For some inextricable reason, yes.

AYESHA

(Still grinning) Inextricable huh? Look at you and your big words, the law degree is paying off.

Dana untangles their hands and flips her off. She looks at her phone before sighing.

DANA

My tutorial is in fifteen. Help me carry this monstrosity to my car. Are we still on for later today?

AYESHA

Wouldn't miss it for the universe!  
My favourite movie, my favourite  
girl - its a match made in heaven!

She carries the pink bag and follows Dana out of the cafe and across to the student parking area.

AYESHA (CONT'D)

Though if my mom asks, we're  
working on a project.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PARK - EVENING

Dana and Ayesha sit under the shade of a large tree overlooking a lake. Ayesha lies on her back, chatting as she watches the light and shadows playing across the branches. She occasionally eats a chip from the packet beside her. Dana flips through a book, nodding once in a while to show that she is listening. They seem to be in a world of their own. The park is mostly empty, except a few children on the playground under their parents' watchful eyes and a person sitting alone on one of the benches facing the lake.

AYESHA

...and honestly that ending! I  
can't wait for the TV spin-off -  
wait are you evening listening?

Dana looks up from her book and takes a look at their surroundings, just as she is about to turn and answer Ayesha, she locks eyes with the person on the bench and freezes. It is Maha, whose gaze shift from Dana to Ayesha before retuning with a taunting smirk. Sending a glare in return, Dana quickly shifts her attention back to Ayesha, posture tense.

DANA

Yes. Hey, its getting late isn't  
it?

Ayesha realises that the break in the peaceful atmosphere. She carefully gets up and looks at Dana, concern in her features and voice.

AYESHA

Whats wrong?

Dana gives an unconvincing smile, resisting the urge to turn and look again.

DANA

Nothing, really. It's just a bit cold, and I should go home before mum arrives. Besides...

MAHA (O.S.)

(Only Dana can hear)  
You've become a good liar darling

Dana shivers and laughs to cover it up.

DANA

You haven't checked your phone in like six hours. Imagine how frantic your mum would be if you miss the bus home.

Ayesha shoots her a dubious look before capitulating.

AYESHA

Yeah, I guess I should go and see what nonsense level the wedding prep has reached. Besides, the cousins should have descended onto the house by now.

Dana tries to not visibly sigh in relief and grasps onto the conversation like a lifeline, hoping to keep Ayesha distracted.

DANA

Hmm you've got to check and make sure your room hasn't been completely invaded.

Ayesha gave a sigh of annoyance as they began to pack their bags. Dana helped her up.

AYESHA

Times like this I wonder if I could move out. At least then I wouldn't have to share a room with every visitor that stays over. Aida and Yusuf never make these sacrifices.

Dana laughs, surprised at her own genuine amusement, at Ayesha's exaggerated expression of dejection.

DANA

Oh please bring that up with your mother in this fortnight before the wedding – Preferably where I can see.

Ayesha shot her a mock glare as they walk out of the park.

AYESHA

Lull me into a false sense of security and then make a suggestion like that! This is just all part of your grand plan to get rid of me isn't it?

Dana stopped walking and looks at Ayesha with stubborn sincerity.

MAHA (O.S.)

(Only Dana can hear her)  
She's not wrong.

Dana reaches out to Ayesha before pulling back. Hesitation and fear

DANA

(voice soft but filled with unyielding ferocity)  
Never.

She once again resists the urge to look behind them, Though Maha's eyes follow her like a brand as she moves, expression unreadable. Ayesha looks at her with surprise and concern, before laughing, hoping to dispel the strange mood that has settled over them.

AYESHA

Hey hey, I was only joking. The only way you'd get rid of me is if you told me to get gone.

She bumps their shoulders together and smiles. Dana wanly returns the expression. She moves as though there is a weight on her shoulders and is careful to hide Ayesha from Maha's line of sight.

AYESHA (CONT'D)

And I remember someone promising me a trip around the world after they become a big deal lawyer. Don't think you can get out of that.

Dana laughed despite herself. They are out of the park and meters away from the bus stop. The bus arrives, and people begin to disembark, they pay it no mind, beyond a look.

DANA

Yes. Because the promises of a twelve-year-old are binding.

Dana's face shifts as a sadness she tries to hide breaks through for an instant.

AYESHA

Obviously.

MAHA (V.O.)

(Only Dana can hear)  
She doesn't realize how right she is.

Ayesha hesitates. Looks around as though she heard something before turning back to Dana.

AYESHA

Seriously though, are you okay?

Dana laughed again, this time she can't hide the edge of anxiety to her voice, She hopes Ayesha reads it as exhaustion.

DANA

I'm fine! Go and find out what the chaos twins have done to your room or if your mother and Aida have strangled each other. I'll text you later.

AYESHA

You better.

She reaches out and hugs Dana, who smiles softly, and leans up to whisper in her ear.

DANA

You're about to miss your bus.

Ayesha startles back and looks at the bus stop where the driver is pulling up the ramp.

AYESHA

Fuck!

Ayesha breaks out into a run, and Dana laughs again. Waving her off as she stumbles into the bus. As it moves away, her smile fades into a look of rage and fear as she turns to look back.

MAHA (V.O.)

There is a universe between you and I. Choices. Chances.

(MORE)

MAHA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We weigh up whether the end will ever, could ever, justify these means. And that darling, is the universe between you and I.

The bench is now partially obscured by the trees, and she can no longer see any sign of Maha. The trees rustle in a sudden fierce breeze, Dana, alone, shivers again, arms wrapping around herself. It's begun.

MAHA (V.O.)

You have some choices to make.