

WADJDA

Written by

Haifaa Al Mansour

BLACK SCREEN.

Sounds of a busy schoolroom: shoes shuffling across the floor, girls shouting, laughing and gossiping to each other.

GUNSHOTS and the WHINNY of horses blare out. The girls fall quiet before they start singing in unison.

GIRLS (V.O.)
It's time for Jihad; it's the only
choice. The war is boiling,
calling.

TEACHER (V.O.)
Girls! Stand still in your spots!

FADE IN:

1 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM (SAUDI ARABIA)- DAY 1

A group of 11 YEAR-OLD GIRLS stand in three rows on a home-made wooden stage. A banner reads, "The Secondary Fourth School for Girls-Riyadh East." A TEACHER eyes them skeptically.

TEACHER
Again, from the beginning.

She pushes "play" on a small tape recorder on the floor.

CHORUS OF GIRLS
It's time for Jihad; it's the only
choice. The war is boiling,
calling.

The front row has four girls, one of whom is WAJDA, (11), cute face with big, smart eyes.

They all sing in tune except for her. She's looking away singing absentmindedly, missing most of the words.

Wajda watches two older girls, FATIN and FATIMA, pass by. Wajda waves to them as she sings.

She looks at the teacher, now scowling at her, tucks her hands in her pocket and tries to follow the other girls. They all look similar except for Wajda.

The SONG halts abruptly as the teacher hits "Stop" on the tape recorder. The girls' voices trail off.

TEACHER

Wajda! Step to the front, please.

Wajda makes her way out of the rows of girls. NOURA, (11), a sweet and perfect type, bumps into her, smiles and fills her place in the front line. Wajda stands in front of the line of girls alone.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Why don't you show us all how well you sing? Start with the first verse.

Wajda becomes very nervous. Her face reddens and she stares hard at the floor, she tries to sing, but her mouth clamps tight.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Well? If you don't want to share that "beautiful" voice of yours with us...

The teacher gestures towards the tape recorder.

Wajda stares at the floor as she sits down next to the tape recorder, scowling.

The line is much more unified now. The Teacher smiles with satisfaction then glares at her.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Well?!

Like a professional DJ, Wajda's hand rewinds the tape, stops it and hits "Play" all in one motion.

THE CHORUS OF GIRLS

It's time for Jihad; it's the only choice. The war is boiling, calling. The horses are prepared; the battle will start. War heals wounds way better than suppressing anger. If our religion is humiliated, heaven calls and our fate is written. Where are the proud men to answer the calls? Allhu Akbar is our song; It is our light and the fire we fight with!

THE CHORUS CONTINUES THROUGH THE TITLES

STATIC BLENDS OVER THE SONG LIKE A RADIO TUNING TO ANOTHER CHANNEL and then...

A RAUCOUS ROCK SONG STARTS!

2 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 2

In her small, sparsely decorated room between a single bed and a window covered completely with wallpaper, Wajda hits "record" on her tape recorder as the ROCK SONG continues.

Dancing and moving to the beat, she insures that a cord from the window is properly connected to the radio antennae.

She writes down the song on a track list labeled "Wajda's Awesome Mix Tape, Vol. 7." Next, she counts out homemade bracelets and puts them in small plastic bags. Finally, she puts on her black converse high-tops with colored laces.

As she waits for the ROCK SONG to end, she looks through the half open door to her MOTHER, busy drying her hair.

3 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 3

WAJDA'S MOTHER (33), struggles with a broken hair-dryer as she straightens her beautiful long hair. She is petite, with a definite sparkle in her eye, but right now she's frustrated. The brush becomes too hot and she quickly dries the rest of her hair without it.

4 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 4

Wajda takes some money from a drawer and puts it in her pocket. She hits "Stop" on the tape recorder and runs out.

5 INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY 5

Wajda's Mother twists her hair and adds colored clips. She moves to the kitchen and adds cups of cardamom and coffee to boiling water in an old pot. Outside a car HONKS its horn.

In rapid motions, her Mother takes the over-boiling coffee, puts it in a thermos and grabs her notebooks.

Wajda enters, drops her backpack and hurries behind, carrying the rest of her Mother's supplies.

The Mother grabs keys from a hook by the entrance. A string of blue prayer beads fall to the floor. She puts them back on the hook, pulls her veil over her face and turns to Wajda.

MOTHER

Don't forget your key, and don't lock the upper lock. Your Father may be coming later after his night shift.

6 EXT. FRONT OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY

6

A Pakistani Driver, IQBAL, (late 20's), squats in front of an old van, sticking the broken headlights on with tape. He turns as Wajda and her Mother emerge.

IQBAL

(In broken Arabic, bossy)
It very long way, Madame! Other teachers we are taking, very long way. You late every day! No taking you late.

WAJDA

She's not late! You just came! I saw you - five minutes not even!

IQBAL

I no talk to you little girl, I talk to your Mother, she is late!

Iqbal enters the car and slams the door. A picture of a cute, smiling child wearing traditional Indian dress with flowers in her hair, falls to the car's floor. Iqbal picks up the picture and cleans it carefully then puts it back on the car's counter.

MOTHER

Don't worry about him. Okay, yalla bye!

(to Iqbal))

No problem, Iqbal. You take lots of money; let's have some quiet for the long drive.

She takes her things from Wajda and quickly enters the van. The bus jolts away. Wajda is about to walk back into the house when the minivan swerves to avoid an oncoming car, almost crashing into it. She watches until it disappears, worried for her Mother.

7 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

7

Wajda grabs her backpack, stopping by the mirror. She looks at herself and touches her hair, then puts on her abbayah.

8

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

8

Concrete houses line the street. All the windows are covered in aluminum. A typical middle class neighborhood in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Groups of girls walk to school, completely covered in abbayahs and veils, distinguishable only by their different backpacks. Taxis and minivans pass by full of covered women in black.

Wajda exits her gate and walks towards school. Suddenly a rock flies by her feet and knocks a soda can from its place. She looks up to see her FATHER (35), smiling and tossing another rock up in the air, playfully.

Dark and handsome with short soft black hair and a well groomed mustache, he wears a worn-out blue oil-man's uniform.

FATHER

Watch this!

He flings the rock towards another can just past her on the wall. She ducks but looks over to see the can fly from its place. Wajda searches and picks up another rock.

WAJDA

Oh yeah, check this out!

Full of bravado, she flings the rock at a milk carton near his feet but it falls short and BOUNCES off target.

FATHER

Ha! Keep practicing. You're getting there!

WAJDA

Look who's back! Where have you been?

She smiles, runs and gives him a big hug.

FATHER

Oof. Look at this.

He pulls out a shiny black rock from his pocket.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It's volcanic, from the Empty Quarter. It has a great velocity. It'll help your aim. Now get going.

She takes it, beaming. He taps her on her head and she runs off to school.

WAJDA

We left the door unlocked.
Mom's been waiting for you all
week!

The father's eyes flicker at the mention of the mother. He passes his hand over his untidy black hair feeling uneasy.

9

EXT. FRONT OF THE CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

9

ABDULLAH, (11), a skinny, bright-eyed boy, stands near the entryway, setting up a billboard. He peeks inside at Wajda as she enters and heads for the candy bars, picking out chocolate. She sees him and smiles. Abdullah immediately looks away.

He busies himself with the billboard, attaching a large election poster of an overweight, mustached man on a chair that looks like a throne. The poster reads: "Vote for me for Municipal Council. Your glorious representation."

Abdullah's bicycle stands next to the board with his books clamped onto a rack on the back.

Out of the corner of his eye he watches Wajda approach, munching on a breakfast sandwich. He quickly brushes his hair into place and acts busy and important.

WAJDA

(laughing)

Huh, what is this, an advertisement
for mustache products?!

Abdullah smiles, composes himself and faces her with an annoyed look.

ABDULLAH

Smart-ass, it's a mustache so
strong a falcon could stand on it!

WAJDA

A falcon? An airplane could land on
that thing!

Abdullah smiles but then sees a group of boys approaching. He quickly snatches the sandwich out of her hands and runs off.

ABDULLAH

Thanks for buying me breakfast!

WAJDA

Hey! If it's a race you're after
don't blame it on the sandwich!

She breaks into a run after him. They race through the streets, away from the boys, switching positions in the race. She overtakes him, snatches the sandwich and looks back, pumping her arms in the air, relishing the victory.

Away from the other boys, Abdullah now smiles at her. He then runs back to the billboard.

10

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

10

Wajda walks on to school eating her sandwich happily. She continues the target practice with her beloved new rock, aiming at several objects as she goes.

Suddenly out of nowhere, Abdullah snatches her veil as he zips past her on his bicycle. Wajda falls hard to the ground, her sandwich now covered in dirt. Her hair is exposed. It's covered in curls and colored hair clips like her Mother's, but sloppier. Abdullah points.

ABDULLAH
(laughing)
What is all this?

She puts her hands over her head, embarrassed.

WAJDA
(indignantly)
It's so in fashion now.

Abdullah continues laughing. She runs furiously after him. He dangles the veil mockingly behind him as he rides ahead.

Pitying her, Abdullah finally slows down. Wajda reaches out and rips the veil from his hands but falls hard to the ground, into a puddle of mud.

Abdullah stops. Wajda angrily gets up and screams at him.

WAJDA (CONT'D)
Stupid! How can I go to school like
this?

He's about to get off his bicycle and help her when several boys come out of a nearby store. Abdullah thinly disguises his guilty look with a mocking smile.

ABDULLAH
Did you really think you could
catch me?

WAJDA

(confused)

I did catch you! You and your stupid bicycle.

ABDULLAH

Yeah right. Now you're late and covered in mud. If you had a "stupid" bicycle you could go home and change. But you don't, so you can't.

Wajda, hurt, looks up as he slowly pedals away with the other boys, all on bikes as well, talking and laughing. They ride in circles, challenging each other and showing off.

Wajda clutches her soaking veil, watching them all ride away together, happy and free.

WAJDA

(to herself)

I'll get one and show you.

As she smooths out her veil, now too dirty to put back on, she doesn't see Abdullah glancing back with a pained, sorry look.

11

EXT. INSIDE THE FRONT GATE OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

11

Wajda tries to blend in with the other girls and sneak in. MS. HUSSA, (35), the pretty but stoic principal, stands inside the wall that protects the privacy of the school entrance.

A loud LAUGH comes from the gate as Fatin and Fatima enter. Ms. Husa moves towards them.

MS. HUSSA

All right girls, you are just behind the gate, don't laugh so loudly. Women's voices shouldn't carry outside the door!

Fatin smiles and nudges Fatima. They giggle but act polite.

FATIMA

Sorry, Ms. Husa.

FATIN

It won't happen again.

Wajda seizes the opportunity to try to sneak past but--

MS. HUSSA

Wajda!

Caught! Wajda stops, turns to face her.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

(with malicious enjoyment)

Where is your head cover? Are you coming to school unveiled?! And who put those awful clips in your hair?

The girls all stop talking and giggle at her, except for Fatin and Fatima who watch sympathetically.

Wajda looks down in frustration at her wet veil.

12 INT. SCHOOL INTERIOR COURTYARD - DAY 12

The midday sun burns directly above Wajda as she stands in the corner of the schoolyard, punished.

13 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY 13

Wajda's sneakers stand out from all the other girls in plain black shoes, leaving school. Her eyes then catch colorful majestic feet as a group of boys pedal by on their bicycles.

They kick up dust and laugh, gliding past. Wajda watches them forlornly as they disappear around the corner.

Wajda continues walking, throwing the stone her Father gave her at various targets. She misses a few times and then finally hears a "Ping" as it hits its first mark: A SHINY GREEN BICYCLE

Somehow perched above the other side of a fence.

She stares at it, intrigued, for several seconds, as it seems to float on the other side of the fence. She picks up her black stone and entranced, her eyes follow this vision.

Suddenly it begins to move across the top of the fence, until it comes to the end, where Wajda sees that it's resting on the top of a moving truck. Her heart locks on it and without even thinking, she runs after the bicycle as it disappears down the next block.

14 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE TOY SHOP - DAY 14

Wajda's feet race, her eyes like steel and she finally catches up to the truck now parked in front of a toy shop.

Men unload boxes and bicycles wrapped in plastic bags. She cranes her neck. Where is the green one?

As Wajda moves forward she hears a SPLASH! She looks down. She's standing in a stream of water. She moves to the side.

As the truck pulls away the TOY SHOP OWNER goes into the shop and brings out THE BICYCLE. He puts it on display in the front, out in the sun. He takes a sign from his clipboard, writes, "Only 500 Riyals," and places it on the handlebars.

He goes back inside the store and puts an "Talal Maddah" record on an old record player, glancing at this strange little girl still standing outside his door.

Her eye then shift to the sign and the price as the MUSIC drifts out of the store.

15

EXT. THE CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

15

Wajda counts the small wad of money she made at school today and stuffs it back into her pocket in frustration. She takes out the black stone from her pocket and throws it across the field at a coke bottle. A group of WORKERS yell suggestive insults at her.

INDIAN WORKER

Nice throw! Come up and play
with us! Let me touch those little
apples.

Wajda freezes and pretends she didn't hear him.

They laugh vulgarly at her. As she hurries towards the rock, Abdullah appears and picks it up. He throws it far across the lot, knocking another coke bottle out of its place.

Wajda relaxes, relieved to see him, but then acts upset as she runs and picks up the stone. She picks up another one and throws it back towards him.

WAJDA

Take this! And stop following
me. I don't want to play with you
any more. They made me stand up all
day at school in the sun for not
having a veil today.

The rock falls short of Abdullah's feet. He looks at Wajda, ashamed. Wajda puts her stone in her pocket, glaring at him. He picks up the rock and runs to his bicycle and pulls out a package.

ABDULLAH

Here, I got you this.

Wajda looks at him, walks over and takes the package. She opens it and unfurls a new black veil with a yellow flower made of beads on the corner. She acts defiant as she puts it in her bag.

WAJDA

This doesn't make us even, you know. We'll get even when we race. I'll have my new bicycle very soon.

ABDULLAH

What? Girls can't have bicycles!

WAJDA

Then I guess it will be that much more embarrassing for you when I beat you!

Wajda walks away in a huff. Abdullah looks at the stone she threw at him and stuffs it in his pocket.

Abdullah rides away on his bicycle as a small pick-up truck passes by causing a huge cloud of dust over Abdullah. Wajda looks back and laughs.

The CONTRACTOR gets out of his car and heads towards the workers.

He looks at Abdullah.

CONTRACTOR

Hey, you, go away little boy!

Abdullah is upset. The Contractor goes over to the workers.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)

All day and only one pillar? 5 men working and I get only one pillar?

He slaps one of them on his neck.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)

Go to car go.. We have to finish working on the other building.

He stuffs the workers onto the back of the truck. Some of the workers put wet towels on their heads to avoid the unbearable heat.

16 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY 16

Wajda's sneakers kick up small clouds of dust as she heads home. Green bushes have just been planted on the side of the road. She leans over and smells them. She smiles and picks the leaves off, one by one.

17 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 17

Wajda sits at her desk with her money out in front of her. The green leaves are now sorted into small plastic bags to the side. She writes "500 Riyals" on a piece of paper and draws a chart underneath. She sorts the notes and counts them.

WAJDA

10 riyals, 15 riyals, 17, 18, 19,
20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 riyals.

She writes "25 Riyals" on the chart. Then Wajda sits on the floor with her foot extended and wraps strings around her big toe making woven bracelets. She checks a list of girls' names and football teams.

She hears the DOOR opening and goes to meet her Mother.

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 18

Wajda's Mother's face is puffy and red. She falls down on the couch exhausted, removes her veil and fans herself with it. Her hair looks messy but full of ribbons and curls.

Wajda turns on the air conditioner, grinning. Her Mother looks at her as she struggles to lift herself from the couch.

MOTHER (O.S.)

I don't like this look. What are you up to?

WAJDA

(excited)

I'm going to buy a bicycle to race Abdullah Al Hanofi!

MOTHER

Three hours in the car without AC!
I swear this commute is going to kill me and you tell me bicycle?

She takes off her shoes and black socks, rubbing her feet.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Absolutely forget about getting a bicycle. Have you ever seen any girl riding a bicycle? (pause)
I'd rather sell fruit down at the hospital than go on this hideous trip every day!

Wajda makes a face and stomps off to her room. Her Mother goes to her bedroom and picks up a man's dirty blue uniform from the floor.

19 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY 19

Wajda hurries off through the gate of a house.

20 INT. LIVING ROOM OF WAJDA'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY 20

She enters and finds her GRANDMOTHER, an overweight woman in her 60's, watching TV, the remote in her hand.

GRANDMOTHER

(surprised)

Wajda! What are you doing here so early?

Wajda smiles. She goes up and kisses her forehead.

WAJDA

Good morning, Grandmother. Hope you are doing well today. Look what I got you!

Wajda gives her a plastic bag filled with green leaves. She then opens her abbayah, exposing a navy-blue vest on top of her gray uniform. She smiles wider.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

See, Grandmother, I'm wearing the vest you made me.

GRANDMOTHER

(smiling but suspicious)

It's nice of you to think of me this early in the morning!

She looks happily at the vest and smells the leaves. She pulls her braided hair from her veil and replaces the withering leaves with the fresh ones Wajda brought.

WAJDA
 (reluctantly)
 Only 10 riyals! I brought some for
 your friend Um Khalid too!

The Grandmother, twisting her lips in annoyance, slips her feet into her shoes, sighs, lifts herself slowly out of her chair and walks toward the next room.

GRANDMOTHER
 Did your Mother send you?

She struggles to get herself down a small step. Wajda looks at her sympathetically and helps her. Her Grandmother gently pats Wadja's back.

WAJDA
 No, Grandma! I'm trying to save
 some money... to buy a nice abbayah.

GRANDMOTHER
 I don't know what to do with you or
 your Father. He's always nagging
 me, "Should I take a second wife? I
 need a son." I tell him, "Go home
 to your wife and daughter and leave
 me alone," but he keeps coming here
 with a list of families I have to
 call for brides.

The Grandmother gets her wallet and gives Wajda 10 riyals.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)
 He can't even buy an abbayah for
 his daughter. Where would he get a
 dowry for a second wife?

WAJDA
 Thanks, Grandma!

Wajda runs out, avoiding looking at her Grandmother.

21

EXT. INSIDE THE FRONT GATE OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

21

Wajda walks past Ms. Hussa, tea-cup in hand, bored, watching the crowd of girls flow through the gate.

Noura approaches Ms. Hussa coyly. She gathers up her courage and holds out a single flower with a note attached.

NOURA
 (sweetly)
 This is for you.

Wajda watches from the corner of her eye. Ms. Husa looks questionably at Noura, takes the flower and reads the note.

MS. HUSSA

Thank you for your feelings, but you know you are not supposed to bring flowers to school.

Noura reddens. Ms. Husa gives her back the flower then heads over to the gate, not noticing the note falling to the ground.

Wajda rushes over, picks the note up, stealthily looks at it, laughs, sticks it in her vest pocket and hurries inside.

22

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

22

Wajda enters. One girl cleans the blackboard while others copy each other's homework.

ONE OF THE GIRLS

(to another girl)

Change the sentence a little, she will know you copied it!

(noticing Wajda)

Here comes the salesgirl!

ANOTHER GIRL

Hey Wajda, did you finish the bracelets?

WAJDA

Not all. I have only 10.
You have to pay 2 riyals extra.
It's a lot of work!

The girls gather as she hands out bracelets and collects money.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Quickly, I have to go!

23

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

23

Wajda is playing on the hopscotch grid. Noura raises her head and looks off into the distance.

NOURA

We need to go inside! Men are watching us!

All the girls look to where Noura is pointing. Wajda can barely make out a group of construction workers atop a building in the distance.

WAJDA

They're so far away; they can't see us from there.

NOURA

If you can see them, they can see you. Come on, all good girls are going inside.

She smirks at Wajda as the girls all follow her in. Shamed, Wajda thinks, then smiles and calls out.

WAJDA

Hey Noura!

(pulls out the note)

"I love you, Ms. Hussa. You are like the moon, my dream, my eyes, and my heart!" Ha Ha!

Noura looks furiously at Wajda who waves the note in the air, making kissing noises. She puts the note into her vest pocket and tosses a rock onto the hop-scotch grid. Noura storms inside.

Wajda looks up to see Fatin and Fatima pass by looking at a magazine while walking towards the back of the school.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Hey, you shouldn't be outside, men can see you!

FATIN

(sarcastically)

Men are watching? What a scandal! They'll tell everyone they saw Wajda al Safan playing provocatively in the schoolyard. They can't miss you, especially in that sexy vest of yours.

She and Fatima smile and head over to Wajda.

FATIN (CONT'D)

So, what's the latest mix?

WAJDA

(excited, like a salesman)

It's got everything, "Bink, get the barty start..."

FATIMA
 (laughing)
 "Party."

WAJDA
 Whatever, "party." 10 riyals.

FATIN
 (laughing)
 You little devil, I don't know
 where you get this music from. I'll
 get one later for sure. Hey, what
 about bracelets? Look at this
 gorgeous creature.
 (holds up a picture of a
 football player)
 I want a bracelet of his team- Al
 Hilal.

WAJDA
 (inspecting the picture)
 No problem, I'll make you a special
 one for tomorrow, but 10 riyals.

FATIN
 (patting her head)
 Okay, tomorrow then, little
 hustler.

WAJDA
 (smiling, pulling her head
 away)
 Don't mess my hair! And hey, you're
 not supposed to bring magazines to
 school! Ms. Hussa will kill you.

FATIN
 Look who's talking! Your bag is a
 24 hour convenience store.

The three laugh and Wajda continues playing. Fatin and Fatima sit just past the corner of the building. They pull out nail polish from their pockets and start painting their toenails blue, the magazine open next to them.

Wajda stops halfway through a leap on the hopscotch grid, her left foot still elevated, as she sees Ms. Hussa approach.

The girls quickly rush inside, dropping the nail polish bottle on the bench. Ms. Hussa turns to find Wajda alone, staring at her.

MS. HUSSA

What are you doing there?
Go to your class right now or
you'll be punished!

Wajda stares down at the ground and quickly follows Ms. Husa into the building. She sees the bottle of blue nail polish, scoops it up and hurries off.

24 EXT. INSIDE THE FRONT GATE OF THE SCHOOL - LATER 24

Ms. Husa stands in front of the gate, examining the girls as they pass. She stops one girl with a "Titanic" backpack.

25 INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY 25

Wajda's about to leave when an older girl, ABER, pulls her aside and whispers to her.

ABEER

Can you take this paper out to my
brother?

WAJDA

(suspiciously)
What is this?

ABEER

Shh! It's a... permission slip to
pick me up from school.

Wajda glances over at Ms. Husa, concerned.

ABEER (CONT'D)

(whispering, but adamant)
I'll give you 10 riyals!

Wajda looks back at Ms. Husa, then at Abeer.

WAJDA

20.

Abeer sighs, gives her some money and the note.

ABEER

He's outside on the corner in a
pickup truck.

Wajda goes out cautiously, trying to act casual.

26

EXT. INSIDE THE FRONT GATE OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

26

Ms. Husa scolds the backpack girl, who anxiously watches the bus fill up.

MS. HUSSA

...And change your bag, images are forbidden!

BACKPACK GIRL

(running towards the bus)

Okay, okay, Inshallah. I've got to catch the bus!

Ms. Husa turns just as Wajda's about to leave through the gate.

MS. HUSSA

Wajda!

She tries to hide the paper in her bag and heads over.

Ms. Husa pauses, looks at Wajda, then over to Abeer. Abeer pulls her veil quickly over her face and turns away. Ms. Husa squints down at Wajda, studying her.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Come with an abayah like this tomorrow or we will reserve your place in the sun for you. Here.

She hands Wajda a pamphlet with a picture of a black figure on the front. Wajda takes it and hurries off.

27

EXT. FRONT OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

27

Wajda passes by the school bus, overflowing with girls, and sees a handsome YOUNG MAN, (20's), by a pickup truck, waiting.

WAJDA

Are you Abeer's brother?

YOUNG MAN

(smiling)

Yeah sure, I'm her brother. Have you got the paper?

WAJDA

(holding it out)

Yeah, she said you'd give me 20 riyals to deliver it.

YOUNG MAN
 (skeptically)
 Really? Hmmm.

WAJDA
 (haughtily)
 You don't look like her brother!

YOUNG MAN
 (laughing)
 Okay, okay here's 20.

Wajda takes the money and sniffs it, making a funny face.

WAJDA
 Even your money reeks of perfume!
 I'll have to wash it.

He tries to suppress a smile, dismisses her with a wave, and gets in his car. He drives around in front of the gate.

GUARD (V.O.)
 Abeer Rassi come to the gate. Your
 ride is here to pick you up.

28

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE TOY SHOP - DAY

28

Wajda sees the green bicycle glimmering in the afternoon sun and stops in awe.

As The Owner comes out, Wajda licks her finger and rubs an "X" on the bicycle, claiming it. Her face beams with happiness.

WAJDA
 (indicating her "X")
 Don't sell this one. I reserved it!

The Owner uses his sleeve to rub the bicycle clean where she touched it.

He looks down at her with a glimmer in his eyes.

THE CALL FOR DHUHUR PRAYER interrupts the moment. He covers his goods with a big black blanket. Wajda watches as the blanket falls over her bicycle.

29 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

29

Abdullah is amongst A CROWD OF MEN heading to pray at the mosque by the toy shop along with HIS FATHER and mustached UNCLE. As Wajda sees him she turns away and hides the distinguishing yellow flower on her veil under her abayah.

As she turns back Abdullah sees her in the crowd. They look at each other. She gestures with her eyes to the handle of the green bicycle showing underneath the blanket.

Abdullah rubs his fingers together to show that it will take money to buy it. Wajda takes out twenty riyals from her pocket and waves it defiantly at him. She turns her head proudly and struts off.

30 INT. WAJDA'S PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

30

Wajda's on her Mother's bed, legs on the headboard, her toenails now painted blue. Her Mother sits in front of the mirror straightening her hair and singing beautifully.

MOTHER

I'll write you a love letter. Tell
you how much I miss you...

She takes another lock of hair and runs the iron over it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I wish I could cut my hair shorter
like Lubna Abdul Aziz.

WAJDA

Do it.

MOTHER

Your Father loves my long hair.
(singing)
I'll write you a love letter. Tell
you how much I miss you...

She takes out a bandana to wrap her hair and sees a new tube of lipstick in front of her.

The Mother looks at Wajda in the mirror with a touched smile. Wajda sees her Mother smiling and turns away shyly. Her Mother applies the lipstick.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'd thank you for this but I'm
afraid to ask where you got the
money. Did you ask your Grandmother
for it?

WAJDA

I sold her stuff! It's not charity!

MOTHER

I don't want you going over there!
Your Father finishes his shift
early tomorrow night. What should
we cook? Margoog?

WAJDA

I hate margoog. And is he going to
give me my allowance this month or
is he going to skip it again?

MOTHER

(ironing her hair)

Your Father loves margoog. We'll
cook it for him.

WAJDA

Cook me kapsa! He's paying the
second wife's dowry off with my
allowance!

Wajda's Mother stops ironing, her body language becomes stiff and tense.

Wajda reddens, Her Mother remains silent, ties the bandana into place, rises, and exits to the kitchen.

31 INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY 31

As Wajda she sees Ms. Husa at the end of the hall, glaring intensely at her.

32 INT. MS. HUSSA'S OFFICE - DAY 32

An avalanche of items comes pouring out of Wajda's backpack onto the desk as Ms. Husa shakes out its contents. Wajda sits nervously in a chair. The rock her Father gave her tumbles off the desk and onto the floor next to her.

Ms. Husa shakes her head as she goes through the bracelets, cassettes, schoolbooks, notebooks and candy bars. She picks up one of the tapes and relaxes back into her chair.

MS. HUSSA
 (Authoritatively)
 Tapes full of love songs,
 bracelets, all of this... You know
 are not allowed in school!

She opens a folder, signing papers as she talks.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 Abeer was always a good girl. Do
 you know how she ended up getting
 picked up with a strange boy by the
 religious police?

Wajda remains silent, trying not to fidget.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 Thank God they found someone to
 marry her off to, it's not like her
 family will let her come back to
 school after this.

Ms. Hussa stops signing, sits back in her chair and stares at
 Wajda, who looks back at her nervously.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 So, did you arrange this whole
 rendezvous for Abeer and her lover?

WAJDA
 (defensively)
 No, I didn't!

MS. HUSSA
 Don't lie. I know you took part in
 this. I just don't know how. What
 shall we do with you now? Expel
 you?

Suddenly her secretary, MS. JAMILA, enters the room. Ms.
 Hussa stops and looks at the folder in her hand.

Wajda looks down and notices her black stone. She quickly
 pockets it.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 (To Ms. Jamila)
 Just a moment please.
 (To Wajda)
 You may go back to your class.
 We'll finish this matter later.

Wajda takes her notebooks off of the desk and puts them
 slowly back into her backpack. She walks towards the door.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 And Wajda, wear normal black shoes
 like all the other girls!

33 INT. MRS. HUSSA'S OFFICE/CORRIDOR - DAY

33

Wajda stands outside and listens.

MS. HUSSA
 Call Wajda's Mother and see if she
 can come in for a meeting tomorrow.
 We have to decide once and for all,
 what to do about that girl.

Wajda becomes terrified.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 Now what is this?

MS. JAMILA (O.S.)
 The proposal for the Koran
 competition in the religion club.
 We just need your signature to
 request the prize money awards.
 \$800 riyals.

Wajda's ears perk up at the amount of money. Thinks...

MS. HUSSA (O.S.)
 At least we have something good to
 show the superintendant. Thank God
 not all the girls are delinquents.
 All right, let's get started on it.

Wajda's heart races. She pulls together all her courage and
 knocks on Ms. Husa's door.

34 INT. MS. HUSSA'S OFFICE - DAY

34

Ms. Husa takes a deep breath, and looks at Wajda, who
 nervously crosses her feet to cover her black high tops.

WAJDA
 I thought about what you said. I
 was wrong and am ready to change. I
 would like to join the religious
 club.

MS. HUSSA
 (incredulous)
 You are becoming a Shiekha
 all of a sudden?

WAJDA

Maybe I'll learn something. You know... to put me on the righteous path.

Ms. Husa peers at her, suspiciously.

MS. HUSSA

I will call your Mother tomorrow and speak to her about this. If we agree, it's your last chance.

35

INT. THE KITCHEN - EVENING

35

Wajda's Mother makes margoog, working handfuls of dough between her hands while she sings. Wajda cuts the dough as the Mother puts some in the pan.

MOTHER

I'll write you a love letter. Tell you how much I miss you...

WAJDA

Don't you wish you were a singer? You sing so well!

Wajda's Mother feigns shock.

MOTHER

Never! I seek refuge to God from what you said! Woman's voices shouldn't carry beyond the front door.

Her Mother continues singing, now performing dramatically.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'll write you a love letter;
Tells you how much I miss you.
Explains my pain in your absence.

Wajda joins her Mother in singing.

WAJDA AND HER MOTHER

Why did you leave? You forgot our nights? I'll write you a love letter...

Wajda and her Mother laugh together. After a moment...

WAJDA

So I've saved up 87 riyals already
and I only need 413 to get the
bicyc--

MOTHER

(annoyed)

Ouuuff! Again! We closed this
subject! You are not getting a
bicycle. It is haram!

They stand in silence while they cook idly. Wajda sighs and
after a moment smiles and looks away casually.

WAJDA

They said I need to wear the full
abbayah to school from now on. I
also registered in the religious
studies club.

The Mother smiles reluctantly.

MOTHER

Wow, wearing the full abbayah now,
religious study, someone has become
a woman, maybe we will marry you
off!

WAJDA

(scowling)

Ha ha. That's not funny.

Her Mother tries not to smile, acting busy with her cooking.
She puts last bit of dough in the pan, washes her hands and
goes to the bedroom.

MOTHER

Come with me.

36

INT. WAJDA'S PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

36

The Mother pulls out an abbayah from the cabinet and hands it
to Wajda.

MOTHER

Try this.

(laughing)

It might be long for you. Carry it
like this:

Her Mother bunches her dress up in her hands and walks around
the room as if she were wearing high heels. Wajda copies her
exaggerated movements.

WAJDA
 Just like Ms. Hussa!
 (bashful)
 Oh no, a thief!

She shakes her butt and pretends to scamper away.

WAJDA (CONT'D)
 I know! The girls told me the
 story about the thief that jumped
 the fence of their house to see
 her...

MOTHER
 (suppressing a smile)
 Shame on you, talking like this.
 We don't know, it could have been a
 thief.

They burst into laughter together. Wajda puts on the abbayah
 and the veil while her Mother looks out the window.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Your Uncle's wedding is coming up,
 you know. I have to buy something
 really nice so all the other women
 know what they're up against.

Wajda turns to her Mother, all in black. The phone RINGS.

37 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 37

Her Mother talks on the phone while checking the margoog.

MOTHER
 I'm so sorry, Leila. Iqbal our
 driver is so rude. He shouted at
 poor Aiesha today. Aiesha who never
 raises her voice! She cried the
 whole three hours on the way home.

38 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - EVENING 38

Wajda counts her money. The abbayah is on the bed. She goes
 to the list with "500 Riyals" written at the top, crosses out
 "25 Riyals" and counts and sorts the banknotes she has.

WAJDA
 45, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 81, 82,
 83, 84, 85, 86...87 riyals.

She writes "87 riyals" on the chart.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Leila, dear, we're completely full.
Honestly, you'd be better off with
another driver.

Wajda kisses the money with an enthusiastic "smack" and puts
it in the drawer.

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Really? Abeer? Daughter of Mariam?
How did she even end up in a car
with him? Who is he? Of course,
he's a playboy like his Father.

(laughs)

You have to admit, he is good
looking.

Wajda sits up on the edge of the chair, concerned.

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Religious police? Mariam must be
dying! They should have married her
off a long time ago. Pretty girls
are like curses.

They hear the front door open and someone come in.

39 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

39

MOTHER

I have to go, our Father has just
come. Keep me in the loop on this
Abeer scandal. Yalla bye.

She quickly hangs up, removes her bandana and fixes her hair.

40 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY

40

Wajda sits in her room waiting and looking concerned. Her
Mother peeks in.

MOTHER

Go and say hello to your Father as
I prepare his dinner. What's wrong?
Are you okay? Don't worry we won't
marry you
off...

(smiling)

Not just yet!

41 INT. THE MAJLIS - DAY

41

Her Father sits on the floor playing a video game on the TV. His gutra and Oqal are folded up next to him with a brand new cell phone on top. A string of light blue prayer beads are next to him as well. He turns and smiles at her.

Wajda walks past him to a side table and casually turns a framed certificate of excellence in math towards him. He quickly glances at it. She collapses casually onto the couch.

FATHER

I'm losing, I should have stayed
with my usual fighter.

On the screen a warrior rests, haggard from the fight.

FATHER (CONT'D)

(teasing)

So is that a real certificate or a
fake one like you made last year?

WAJDA

What?! I'm great at math, do you
want to hear...

(mispronouncing it)

pythagoreium's theory? It's a
miracle of God, all the things come
out the same!

FATHER

Sounds like you know what you're
talking about.

He laughs and continues playing. She waits a moment, then...

WAJDA

I'm saving to buy a bicycle!

Her Father is so focused on his game he doesn't hear her. He loses and the MUSIC announces the end of the match. He leans back.

FATHER

Oh, where is the margoog? Didn't
your Mother finish cooking?

Wajda watches him as he runs his prayer beads idly between his fingers. Her Mother enters and sets dishes on a little mat on the floor just beside the Father who lights up at her presence. She is all dressed up, looking her best.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Wajda, who is this movie star who just entered? Look at this hair, a beautiful black waterfall of silk!

The Mother tosses back her hair, pleased, but hiding it.

MOTHER

Cut it out!

(teasing, yet bitter)

A movie star huh? Then why is your Mother checking all over town for available women for you?

The Father looks up and their eyes meet with pained looks. He reaches out and puts his hand on hers. She pauses for a second and looks at him tenderly. She playfully pulls her hand away and tosses her hair over her shoulder.

He bursts into a charming laugh and pulls her towards him. Wajda watches them together, happily.

FATHER

I'm not sure she's working that hard! Sit and play with me!

She laughs seductively while she frees herself and continues setting up the plates.

WAJDA

Let me play! I'll take the old guy! Prepare to die!

She jumps off the couch while the Father is laughing.

42 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

42

Wajda sits in class, looking out the doorway into the corridor. Suddenly she sees her Mother walking with Ms Husa to her office and goes rigid.

Her Mother nervously fixes her hair and adjusts her blouse.

43 EXT. STREETS IN FRONT OF THE TOY SHOP - DAY

43

Frazzled, Wajda walks quickly home staring straight ahead. She looks up and sees the bicycle in front of the shop.

The Toy Shop Owner sits, drinking tea with ANOTHER MAN. A BEARDED MAN approaches.

The other man puts down his tea cup and quickly exits.

The Owner gets up to walk into the store with the Bearded Man. The owner is trying to be cordial with him.

The man breaks one of the toys.

Wajda hurries off. She hears the man shouting.

BEARDED MAN (O.S.)
No idols! Don't you fear God?

44 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY 44

The Mother cleans a pile of dishes from the previous night. One slips off her shaking hands and falls to the ground. She leans on the edge of the sink and yells loudly.

MOTHER
All this for a bicycle that you'll
never have as long as I'm alive. Do
you think I'll wait around until
you get expelled?!!

45 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 45

Wajda covers her ears as her Mother breaks another dish - on purpose this time. Wajda turns on the radio to a ROCK SONG.

MOTHER (O.S.)
And turn off that damn radio and
those evil songs! You're no better
than Abeer. She's staying home and
her parents are marrying her off.
And that is what we'll do with you
too! There's no school for you
tomorrow!

Wajda turns it off and lies down, looking at her shoes.

46 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 46

Wajda's Mother paces, talking on the phone, agitated.

MOTHER
I know Iqbal, but my daughter had a
problem at school. I didn't have
time to tell you. You're paid for
the trip whether I am there or not.
Don't come tomorrow.
(pause)
How dare you speak to me that way?
(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Do you think you are the only driver in town?... Fine! I'll find someone else!

She SLAMS the phone down hard and leans back into the couch.

47

INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

47

Wajda sits on her bed with her knee to her chin, coloring in the white toe and sole of her shoe with a black marker. She pulls out the colored laces and sadly replaces them with black twine from her bracelets.

We hear the door opening and her Father comes in. Wajda tries to listen.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Really? I should pay for it? Why can't you pay for something for once?

FATHER (O.S.)

What about your transportation allowance? You should use it instead of doing that group where you all pool your money.

Wajda puts down her shoes and leans her head on the door.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Yeah, and what about the dowry money, you handsome groom?

FATHER (O.S.)

Do you think I want to support two families? I'm the joke of the town. Are you going to give me a son? We both know that is not going to happen.

(frustrated)

Forget it, and don't count on me coming next week at all!

MOTHER (O.S.)

(yelling after him)

I don't care! Go to your mother's house to discuss potential brides all night!

A door SLAMS, then only silence. Wajda's eyes fall on the chart she made to map out her savings for the bicycle.

48 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY

48

As Wajda prepares to leave for school she looks through the half open door of her Mother's room. Her Mother's talking on the phone, her hair a mess, looking exhausted.

MOTHER

Can't you count it as emergency leave? I still have some days. You know I've been working hard, covering for everyone. I'll open up for the entire month if I have to. Okay, thank you, see you tomorrow.

She hangs up, distraught then sees Wajda through the doorway.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going? Didn't you hear me yesterday?

WAJDA

I sorted everything out with Ms. Husa!

MOTHER

Back to your room and don't come out. I don't want to see you today at all, I don't want to hear a peep from you - nothing!

WAJDA

Aren't you going to work today?

MOTHER

(sarcastic)

No darling, I'm staying here to watch over you. Happy?

The Mother gets into bed and rolls over, covering herself with the blanket.

49 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY

49

Wajda turns on the RADIO and lowers the volume until it's barely audible. She looks through her doorway at the house-keys hanging by the front door. She can see her Mother on the couch, smoking, watching TV, completely depressed.

50 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

50

Wajda sneaks past her Mother to the stairwell to the roof.

51 EXT. COURTYARD OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY 51

Wajda carefully lowers herself down a pipe along the side of the house. She slips and her black rock falls from her pocket onto the ground. Through the window she sees her Mother cover herself and rush over. She pulls herself against the wall and freezes. The Mother looks out, cautiously. Wajda holds onto the pipe, holding her breath. Her Mother finally returns to the couch and Wajda lowers herself down.

She opens the gate, takes gum out of her mouth and sticks in into the lock so it doesn't close completely.

52 EXT. ABDULLAH'S SCHOOL - DAY 52

Wajda waits by the boys' school, hiding behind a wall, until Abdullah finally arrives on his bicycle. Wajda throws a stone next to him and he looks over, surprised to see her.

WAJDA

Do you know how to go to Adira?

53 EXT. ADIRA STREET - DAY 53

Wajda rides on the back of Abdullah's bicycle as he pedals them along. As they pass the toy shop she sees the green bicycle glimmer in the distance. His feet spin the pedals.

ABDULLAH

You have to get off once we see someone on the road. I don't want people to talk about me. And cover your face, I'll say you're my sister!

WAJDA

No one will believe you, I'm too good looking to be related to you!

ABDULLAH

Yeah right. And isn't the principal going to call your Mother for skipping school like this?

WAJDA

I'm taking a personal day.

They approach a busy road. Wajda gets off and walks alongside him.

They arrive to an older part of the town where foreign workers pass by. AN INDIAN MAN sits in front of a house, smoking. Wajda approaches him, cautiously.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Hey, do you know where Iqbal the driver lives?

THE MAN

Do you know how many "Iqbal" drivers there are around here, little girl?

Wajda shrugs. They continue searching the area, from one street to the other. Wajda suddenly sees the minibus with the taped headlights parked next to a dilapidated house. She moves closer and looks into the car. She sees the picture of the little girl placed on the dashboard.

She motions for Abdullah to knock at the door, but he shakes his head and stands behind his bicycle.

ABDULLAH

It's your war!

WAJDA

Fine!

Wajda frowns at him and knocks at the door. She waits several moments and looks over at Abdullah, who looks away, ashamed. She knocks again and the door slowly opens.

Iqbal stumbles out, rubs sleep from his eyes and sees Wajda.

IQBAL

You! What do you want?

WAJDA

You can't do this! You..you..

Wajda is overtaken by emotion and cannot speak. Iqbal dismisses her and tries to close the door. Suddenly Abdullah puts his foot inside.

ABDULLAH

(assertively)

Where is your Iqamah (residency card)?

Iqbal looks at him threateningly, enraged.

IQBAL

Go away!

ABDULLAH

(more assertively)

It is a good job, there are no problems. Just go back to it and we'll all forget about this incident. Do you know who my Uncle is? The one with the moustache? Have you seen his election posters? I'm sure he'd be interested to look further into your legal status.

Abdullah holds his ground as Wajda folds her arms behind him, looking at Iqbal challengingly.

54

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

54

Wajda laughs hard as she runs after Abdullah, riding ahead on his bicycle. Wajda mimics him.

WAJDA

"Don't you know my Uncle? With the giant mustache?"

Abdullah laughs as he dismounts.

ABDULLAH

He knew him, right? That mustache is a registered trademark!

Abdullah directs her attention to a house busy with MEN coming in and out. He directs her away from the scene.

ABDULLAH (CONT'D)

Their son put stuff around his waist that blows up and died. Boom!

He acts out pulling a cord and makes an explosive noise.

WAJDA

He's crazy! That must have hurt.

ABDULLAH

No, if you die for God, it's like a prick of a needle, and then you fly up and you have seventy women!

WAJDA

Really?

She acts out a big explosion.

WAJDA (CONT'D)
 Boom! Seventy bicycles!

Abdullah leans his bicycle against the wall and runs towards a small grocery store. He shouts back to her.

ABDULLAH
 It doesn't work that way. Stay with the bicycle so no one steals it.

Wajda leans on it and strikes a pose ala Marlon Brando in the "The Wild One."

55 INT. COURTYARD OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY 55

Wajda looks through the window at her Mother, lying on the couch. As soon as she gets up, Wajda ducks down quickly. She waits for her Mother to go to the bathroom and then sneaks inside.

56 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 56

Wajda lies on her bed, exhausted. She looks over at her savings chart and sorts her money again.

WAJDA
 60, 70, 80, 85, 86, 87 riyals...

Her Mother pokes her head inside and Wajda shoves the money under her pillow, feigning innocence and repentance.

MOTHER
 Had enough?

Wajda nods.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Tomorrow you can return to school, but you are joining that religious club, like you told Ms. Husa.

57 INT. THE MOSQUE - DAY 57

Wajda's black converses dangle above the floor while she sits at a row of desks with twenty other girls. On the blackboard the KORAN TEACHER writes "The Religious Club: Agenda" then turns to the class.

KORAN TEACHER

Let's compile all the stories we know about torment in the grave and make a pamphlet for the whole school. Any ideas?

NOURA

(raising her hand)

I want to tell the story of the giant snake from Hell that was sent to torture the girl that did not pray after she died.

Wadja is busy drawing a picture of a bicycle when she hears Ms. Husa's high heels approach. Behind Wajda, Yasmine whispers to Noura, giggling.

YASMINE

There was a thief at Ms. Husa's house...

NOURA

It was her lover, not a thief! Her Father thought it was a thief and called the police!

A conservative older girl, SALMA, shushes them.

SALMA

If she said it was a thief, then it was a thief.

NOURA

(rolling her eyes)

Of course you would think that, Salma. The only man that would ever speak to you would have to be a thief.

Salma looks down, eyes watering. The girls giggle then compose themselves as Ms. Husa enters.

KORAN TEACHER

Girls, Ms. Husa is here to explain the Koranic competition rules. It's only five weeks away. I'll pass around a sign up sheet.

The teacher hands out the sheet as Wajda turns the page to hide the bicycle drawing. Ms. Husa glances at Wajda, then at the class.

MS. HUSSA

First, we've increased the amount for the prize. It is now 1,000 instead of 800 riyals. You'll have to learn all the long suras (the first 4 chapters of the Koran).

Wajda raises her eyebrows. She flips through the Koran on her desk and measures the amount of paper she would have to learn.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

The competition is two parts: you'll to study the associated vocabulary along with the reasons why the verses were descended from heaven. You also have to learn the verses and the proper recitation. The correct tone, rhythm and pacing are very important.

Wajda sneaks a look at her bicycle drawing and watches the sign up sheet as it passes from one girl to another, nervously. Salma is the first to sign up followed by Noura and then Yasmine..

The sheet finally comes to her and Wajda scribbles her name. Noura raises an eyebrow and looks to Yasmine as Wajda smugly brings it up, hands it to intrigued Ms. Husa and smiles.

58 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE TOY SHOP - DAY 58

Walking home from school, Wajda stops, checks out the bicycle and then walks inside with determination.

59 INT. TOY SHOP - DAY 59

She exchanges a glance with The Owner as he counts his receipts. He flips over a record on the player.

WAJDA

Do you know they invented a new thing called a tape player?

TOY SHOP OWNER

Do you plan on buying anything?

WAJDA

How would I know? People need to browse, don't they?

Nonchalantly, she walks around in the aisles pretending to look at other toys. Her eyes stay focused on the bicycle section. She looks up to see The Owner looking at her as he organizes his records and she quickly turns away.

She heads to the computer game section and looks at one that says "Learn the Koran the easy way." She studies it, thinking.

TOY SHOP OWNER
You won't find any tapes back
there. We only have CD's.

He smiles, mockingly. Wajda looks back, suppressing a smile.

WAJDA
Thank you very much! See you
tomorrow

On her way out the door Wajda slowly passes by the bicycle and runs her fingers through the ribbons on the handlebars.

TOY SHOP OWNER
Can you even ride one?

WAJDA
(confidently)
Ride? I race the wind.

Wajda trips as she exits. The Owner laughs in amusement and turns up the record player.

60 INT. PHOTO SHOP - DAY 60

Wajda walks up to the counter and pulls out a photo.

WAJDA
Can you put this picture on a mug?

The picture shows a veiled woman holding a smiling baby girl.

61 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY 61

As Wajda waits for her mug, at the front of the store, she throws her rock idly up in the air, keeping an eye on the bicycle next door.

Abdullah rides up on his bicycle, which is loaded down with rolls of lights and extension cords.

ABDULLAH
 Hey, where's your bicycle? I
 thought you're getting the nice
 green one! HA!

WAJDA
 (furious)
 I will, I have a plan.

ABDULLAH
 (laughing)
 I'm sure you do, but it doesn't
 seem to be working.

As he pedals away, the shopkeeper comes out and hands Wajda the mug. She takes 15 riyals out of her pocket, looks at the money, sighs and reluctantly hands it to him.

Wajda runs after Abdullah, determined to catch him. He laughs and tries to pedal away, but is weighed down by the lights.

Wajda closes in on him, and pulls him down to the ground by grabbing the string of lights over his shoulder.

WAJDA
 (breathing heavily)
 I just signed up for a Koranic
 recitation competition. I'll get a
 thousand riyals by the end of the
 semester. I'll buy a bicycle and a
 helmet like people on TV. I will
 race you and win!

ABDULLAH
 Yeah... Race me and win... In your
 dreams, little girl!

He laughs again, gets back on the bicycle and pedals off.

WAJDA
 (yells)
 I caught you didn't I?

ABDULLAH
 I let you catch me!

62 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY

62

Wajda counts her remaining money.

WAJDA
 57, 58, 59, 60, 61...62 riyals.

She sighs, picks up the mug, and stares at the picture on it.

63

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

63

The TV is on, muted, in the background. Wajda lays on the floor. She looks up at the TV and sees a commercial for the movie the "Matrix". Wajda's Mother, holding a phone to her ear, looks at her disapprovingly. Her Mother collects herself and turns away from Wajda. Her hair is up, with a few curls dangling seductively on her neck. She smiles, flirtatiously.

MOTHER

Come on, don't you miss us? It's been almost two weeks. Are you punishing us or have you already found someone new?... If I'm the original brand, why do you look for imitation?

After flirting with the Father her Mother hangs up, worried, goes into her room and makes another call. Wajda takes the chance to put the mug on the table.

MOTHER (O.S.)(CONT'D)

I collected the money from the other girls for you, Leila. It's been with me for sometime now. Aren't you coming to take it?... Really! You're working in the hospital across the road? What did your husband say? Doesn't he mind you working with men?!

(pause)

What? Yes, great, we're home.

She hangs up. Wajda watches her go to her dresser and pull a wad of money from a drawer. The doorbell RINGS. Her Mother notices Wajda's curiosity and starts to close the door.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Go see who it is.

64

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

64

Wajda opens the door and sees Abdullah, holding a rolled up extension cord over his shoulder. They stare at each other in a confrontational way. Wajda acts annoyed.

WAJDA

What do you want?

ABDULLAH

My Uncle wants me to string up these lights all the way down the street. Can I attach them to your roof? And by the way you never said thank you!

WAJDA

Use the neighbors; we don't care about your Uncle or his mustache. Thanks for what?

ABDULLAH

(annoyed)

They don't have a pole to hang them on. Yours is the only roof that will work. "Thanks" for taking you all the way to Adira and fixing the driver situation. He's taking your Mother again, right?

WAJDA

(looking at his bicycle)

Hold on.

She slams the door and runs to her Mother's room.

65 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

65

WAJDA

(yelling through the door)

Hey Mother! Abdulla Al Noufi wants to use our roof to string up lights for the election so his Uncle with the mustache will win.

Her Mother opens the door, holding the mug, smiling at Wajda. Wajda smiles back upon seeing the mug.

MOTHER

Thank you, sweetie. You were such a cute baby.

(frowning suddenly)

Tell the boy to go away. His Uncle is not even from our tribe and we will not vote for him.

66 EXT. FRONT OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - EVENING

66

Abdullah stands, impatiently. Wajda comes back, thinks.

WAJDA
 (casually)
 I'll let you onto the roof *if* you
 bring your bicycle.

They look at each other defiantly across the doorway.

They both turn as a minibus full of foreign, mostly Filipino, nurses stops in front of their building. A fully covered Saudi woman, LEILA, jumps out. The minibus waits, idling.

Leila hurries up the stairs towards Wajda. She accidentally bumps into Abdullah as he tries to move out of the way.

LEILA
 Hey Wajda, it's me Leila.

She removes her veil and exposes her face, smiling.

LEILA (CONT'D)
 You look so grown up and cute!

Wajda glances at Abdullah, making sure he heard the compliment. He gets on his bicycle and pedals away.

LEILA (CONT'D)
 Can you call your Mother? The bus
 is waiting.

Just then her Mother appears behind her. She stands just behind the front gate, hiding from strangers.

MOTHER
 You traitor! I can't believe you're
 working so close to my house
 without even telling me!

67 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

67

LEILA
 (laughing)
 Working at the hospital is great.
 It pays more, they provide
 transportation and I don't have to
 endure someone like Iqbal for three
 hours every day!

Both women laugh. Wajda's Mother hands Leila the money.

LEILA (CONT'D)
 Thank you, dear. When is your turn?

MOTHER

Next month. I want to buy a nice dress for her Uncle's engagement.

She gestures at Wajda, kicking a rock on the ground.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

All the other potential wives will be attending his brother's wedding as well.

LEILA

God be with the one he chooses-- You might rip her heart out that night!

Wajda laughs and the Mother glares at her.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Is he going to drive you to the wedding so he sees you before you go to the women's section?

MOTHER

No, his Mother is taking us in a cab!

The minivan HONKS.

LEILA

Ugh. I have to go. Oh before I forget, they're hiring at the hospital. Think about it. It's closer and we can chat all day!

MOTHER

(rolls her eyes)
My husband would kill me. He's so jealous. He couldn't stand the thought of other men looking at me!

LEILA

(laughing)
Cut it out! You blame everything on him. If you change your mind, call me! I'll keep an application at reception for you.

As she leaves, the Mother watches Leila, enviously.

Wajda's black colored shoes sit in a pile with all of the others by the door. The girls sit on the floor in a circle. Wajda sits patiently, focused on the teacher.

The Koran Teacher has Salma pass out a copy to each student from a small shelf in the corner of the room.

KORAN TEACHER

Now girls let's start our program.
But before we start, I know some of
you may have gotten your period, so
you are not allowed to touch the
Koran.

Some of the girls GIGGLE.

KORAN TEACHER (CONT'D)

This isn't a laughing matter. You
are young ladies now. Your bodies
are fragile like flowers and there
are dangers lurking around every
corner. All right, let's read.

Yasmine flips the pages, using a Kleenex. The teacher looks at Wajda, sarcastically.

KORAN TEACHER (CONT'D)

Let's start with the new face in
our group - Wajda. Start with Surat
al Nisa, from ayat 59.

Wajda slowly opens the book, looks at the pages, and looks at the teacher. The teacher looks at her sternly.

WAJDA

(reading in broken pacing)
O you who have believed, obey Allah
and obey the Messenger and those in
authority among you. And if you
disagree over anything...

KORAN TEACHER

(correcting her)
...refer it to Allah and the
Messenger...

WAJDA

(repeating the teacher)
...Refer it to Allah and the
Messenger, if you should believe in
Allah and the Last Day. That is the
best [way] and best in result...

KORAN TEACHER
 (holding out her hand)
 Stop, please. Noura, continue.

NOURA
 (in perfect harmony)
 ...refer it to Allah and the
 Messenger, if you should believe in
 Allah and the Last Day. That is the
 best [way] and best in result

KORAN TEACHER
 Beautiful as always, Noura.

Wajda looks at Noura with extreme envy.

69

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

69

Fatin and Fatima once again look at a football magazine and
 take off their shoes to paint their toenails.

FATIMA
 Where is the blue nail polish? I
 hid it under there the other day.

Wajda approaches but ducks back just as Ms. Hussa swoops down
 on the two girls.

Fatin and Fatima cover their feet, looking panicked. They
 push the magazine under each other's clothes.

MS. HUSSA
 What are you doing here? Why were
 your hands under her skirt?

The girls freeze in their tracks. Wajda stands motionless,
 watching.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 This is all we need at our school:
 two girls hiding in the back yard,
 putting their hands all over each
 other! Tell me what that means?

The girls recoil from each other, mortified.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 "Sorry" isn't going to cut it this
 time. In my office. Now!

70 EXT. SCHOOL - LATER 70

Wajda sees Fatin and Fatima leaving the school, extremely upset. They pull their veils down covering their angry faces. Crowds of girls bump past Wajda, all wearing black abbayahs. Wajda wearily puts on hers as well.

71 INT. THE TOY SHOP - DAY 71

Wajda heads straight to the bicycle and runs her hand over it. She sees that it is locked down with a chain. The Owner comes out with a box.

TOY SHOP OWNER

What are you doing? Still browsing?

WAJDA

No. I know what I'm here to get.

She picks up the "Learn the Koran the Easy way" game while the owner restocks the shelves, watching her.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

How much?

TOY SHOP OWNER

Only 80 riyals... Cheaper than a bicycle.

WAJDA

(in a polite tone)

How about 62?

72 EXT. THE ROOF OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY 72

Wajda sits on Abdullah's bicycle, trying to turn it in circles on the small flat surface of the roof. She awkwardly pedals and turns, barely keeping her balance.

Abdullah fastens a hook with lights attached. He looks over at a crudely constructed mess of metal hanging off the edge.

ABDULLAH

What is that?

She looks at him defensively, offended.

WAJDA

What do you think? It's an antennae. I can get signals from beyond your world on that thing.

(MORE)

WAJDA (CONT'D)

How do you think I make my "Awesome Mix Tapes"?

ABDULLAH

(while he works)

With all the people shouting?
 "Awesome" indeed. My Uncle now
 listens to the Koran radio station.
 He will speak on the channel now.
 They have all those famous Koran
 readers. "It makes your heart
 melt," my Uncle says.

WAJDA

(her hand over her heart)

He should hear my Mother sing! She
 should have a channel of her own.

Wajda leans over against the railing to push herself along on
 the bicycle. She idly switches a broken bare light-bulb on
 and off on the side wall.

ABDULLAH

Stop, you'll burn it out!

WAJDA

It doesn't work anyway.

She looks down at the campaign tent.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Why does your Uncle look different
 now?

In the poster the Uncle has shaved his mustache and has grown
 out a big beard.

ABDULLAH

Didn't you hear? Men shouldn't
 shave their beards! It is haram!
 What do they teach you at school?

WAJDA

(challengingly)

I don't know. "Women's stuff."
 Our "special days of the month"...

She bursts into fits of laughter as Abdullah, embarrassed,
 goes back to work. Wajda balances awkwardly on the bicycle
 and RINGS the little bell.

ABDULLAH
 (smiling while he works)
 Everyone in the neighborhood will
 hear you ringing that bell.

WAJDA
 Who cares? Look, I'm a natural.

She swerves and falls hard. Abdullah giggles.

ABDULLAH
 Yeah right. All that fuss for a
 bicycle and you don't even know how
 to ride?

WAJDA
 How would I? Where would I ride a
 bicycle?

She makes a face as Abdullah jumps up and stands behind her.

ABDULLAH
 Go ahead.

He holds the bicycle steady and trots alongside her while she
 goes in circles around the edge of the roof.

73 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

73

Wajda sits on her bed tuning her radio. She stops, lingers,
 then idly turns to the Koran station.

ANNOUNCER
 You are listening to the one and
 only Koran station. Tune in to hear
 your favorite readers. Now, Al
 Hudafi will recite Surat al Baqara.

READER (V.O.)
 In the name of Allah, the
 Beneficent, the Merciful. Alif Lam
 Mim. This Book, there is no doubt
 in it, is a guide to those who
 guard against evil.

She lies down in her bed listening.

Her gaze falls on the video game she just bought. Her Mother
 comes in and closes the Koran.

MOTHER
 Don't leave the Koran open! Satan
 will spit in it!

Wajda jumps up, takes the video game box and leaves.

74 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

74

Wajda sits on the floor trying to hook the game to the small TV in the living room. She fiddles around with the cords.

WAJDA

This game doesn't work on our
"state-of-the-art TV".

Her Mother looks perplexed, then realizes.

MOTHER

Don't even think of it. Your
Father will go mad if you mess up
his TV.

Wajda sighs, staring at the locked Majlis door, where her Father's TV sits.

75 INT. THE MOSQUE - DAY

75

Wajda listens as the teacher finishes a lesson passionately.

KORAN TEACHER

Wajda, what do you think?

Wajda takes a moment and exchanges a glance with Noura, who elbows Yasmine and rolls her eyes.

WAJDA

I think this competition is very
hard for me.

Noura and the girls all giggle.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

But I heard on the Koran channel
yesterday that if it is easy for
you, you get only one reward. But
if it is hard for you to read and
remember you get two rewards. One
for reading the Koran and one for
the trouble you go through!

KORAN TEACHER

Thank you, Wajda, for sharing this
with us. Girls, I want you all to
take Wajda as an example of a
person who tries hard and is
devoted to God.

Noura and her cronies look dumbfounded.

WAJDA
(surprised)
Thank you!

ANOTHER TEACHER passes by and motions for the Koran teacher. They talk for a moment. She looks over at Wajda.

KORAN TEACHER
Ms. Husa said she needs to see you. Go to her room now. I told her how well you're doing.

76 INT. MS. HUSSA'S OFFICE - DAY

76

Wajda stands nervously in front of Ms. Husa's desk.

MS. HUSSA
Wajda, I have to say, I didn't believe it but apparently you're doing well in class. If this is a permanent thing I will be very impressed.

Wajda puts on a polite smile. Ms. Husa looks through a filing cabinet. She deliberately pulls out a file, looks at it, and puts it on her desk.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
You may not believe it, but I was a little reckless at your age too. And look at me now.

Wajda watches Ms. Husa sit back and thumb through the file.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
If you keep going the way you're going, I believe you may actually be able to win this competition.

She leans over and presses a button on the intercom.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
Ms. Jamila? Please come by later and pick up the Koran competition file. All of the questions are complete now. Thank you.

She leans back in her chair and pushes the folder to the front of her desk, towards Wajda.

MS. HUSSA

I'll bet the other girls would die
to know what is in that folder.

Wajda looks at the folder on the desk, puzzled. A KNOCK and then and Fatin and Fatima walk in.

MS. HUSSA

Close the door, please.

Fatin politely turns, closes the door and stands next to Fatima. Wajda is surprised to see the girls and shuffles her feet nervously. Ms. Hussa sits back.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

So you still insist that you
weren't doing anything there behind
the school?

FATIMA

We were reading magazines and
that's all, but nothing like what
you mentioned.

(to Wajda)

Ask *her*!

Ms. Hussa taps her fingers on the folder on her desk, looking at Wajda.

Wajda looks at the girls, who look at her confidently, sure she will back them up. Wajda looks at Ms. Hussa, then looks down uncomfortably.

WAJDA

I'm not sure. I was standing far
away.

The girls gawk at her in disbelief. Wajda avoids their gaze.

Ms. Hussa looks at the girls, smugly. They stare at Wajda.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Well, I was worried the men on the
faraway building would recognize me
because of my vest...

She pauses as Ms. Hussa looks at her with slight impatience.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

It's a very distinct vest.

MS. HUSSA

I see. Thank you, that's enough. So we may never know if they were just painting their toe nails as they said. There wasn't even any nail polish.

Ms. Hussa looks accusingly at the two girls, then to Wajda with a satisfied smile.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Wajda, thank you very much, you may return to your class. Please take this folder out to my secretary, Ms. Jamila. And close the door behind you.

Wajda takes the folder from Ms. Hussa and turns to leave. The taller girls move out of the way so she can exit. They tower over her, glaring as her tiny figure passes between them.

77 INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

77

Wajda stands in the empty corridor, staring at the folder in her hands. She opens the folder and is about to read as the conversation carries over from Ms. Hussa's office

MS. HUSSA (O.S.)

It's only a few words, just sign it and we will all forget it.

FATIN (O.S.)

(almost crying)

No! We weren't touching each other!

The bell RINGS and the NOISE of OTHER GIRLS overwhelms the scene. Wajda looks at the folder and back towards Hussa's office. She closes the folder and enters the next room.

78 INT. MS. JAMILA'S OFFICE - DAY

78

Ms. Jamila is by a cabinet. She looks at Wajda as she enters.

MS. JAMILA

Is that the competition folder?

WAJDA

(handing it to her)

Yes, Ms. Hussa told me to give this to you.

As she hands it over and leaves Ms. Jamila opens the folder.

MS. JAMILA
Weird, the pages are empty.

79 INT. WAJDA'S ROOM - DAY 79

The FAJR prayer RINGS out. Wajda's Mother wakes her up, tenderly.

MOTHER
Wake up, little troublemaker, it's
time for school.

Wajda rubs the sleep from her eyes and looks over at the bottle of blue nail polish next to her money-saving chart.

80 INT. BATHROOM - DAY 80

Wajda stands on a stool next to her Mother as they wash for prayer.

WAJDA
I saw girls on TV riding bicycles.
Why don't you give me the money to
buy it? I know you have money. I
saw it in the drawer.

MOTHER
Here, girls don't ride bicycles.
You will not be able to have
children if you ride a bicycle!

WAJDA
You don't ride a bicycle and you
can't have children!

Her Mother drops her towel on the floor, turning to Wajda in anguish.

MOTHER
How could you say that? I almost
died having you! Wash for prayer!

81 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 81

They put their prayer rugs in place and line up to pray.

WAJDA
(provocatively)
I'm not going to school today. Go
ahead, marry me off.

MOTHER

You want to stay home? Fine. But we
are going to the mall for my dress
the second I come home today!

Water DRIPS from the faucet in the bathroom. The sound mixes
with the IMAM'S VOICE announcing the start of FAJR prayer
from the nearby mosque.

IMAM (O.S.)

Qad gamat Al Slalah

The mother gets ready and raises her hands up near to her
ears. Wajda follows.

MOTHER

Allhu Akbar.

She moves her lips silently reciting the prayer.

82 EXT. FRONT OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

82

Wajda's Mother rushes out of the front gate with all of her
supplies, followed by Wajda. The Mother looks up to see the
string of lights attached to their roof. She looks down at
Wajda, who looks away, still upset. Her Mother takes her
things and gets into the car.

MOTHER

(indicating the lights)
We'll talk about that later.

Iqbal glares at Wajda. She sticks a finger under her nose,
indicating a mustache, reminiscent of Abdullah's threat.
Iqbal hurries back into the car, spewing curses. The bus
jolts away, blowing gray smoke as they embark.

83 INT. WAJDA'S PARENT'S ROOM - DAY

83

Wajda opens several drawers in her Mother's dresser. When she
opens the top drawer she moves aside some clothes to reveal a
large wad of money. She flips through the notes, counting
them one by one. She contemplates the money for a while, and
looks over at her Mother's almost empty closet. She puts the
money back, closes the drawer and leaves.

84 INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

84

Wajda opens a small box underneath the cabinets next to the
oven and pulls out a ring holding all the house keys.

85 INT. THE MAJLIS - DAY

85

The Majlis door is open with the key in its lock. Wajda sits in front of her Father's nice, new TV with a game controller in hand. The video game box is open and empty.

VIDEO GAME

Choose the correct answer: Who are the Sabians?

WAJDA

The what?

She hits a button.

VIDEO GAME

Incorrect! Try Again. Who are the Sabians?

WAJDA

Okay, mister..um...

She hits another button.

VIDEO GAME

Incorrect! Try again. Who are the Sabians?

Frustrated, she throws the console onto the floor.

WAJDA

How am I supposed to know??

Suddenly, the doorbell RINGS.

86 INT. THE STAIRWAY LEADING UP TO THE ROOF - DAY

86

Wajda and Abdullah carry the bicycle up, both out of breath.

WAJDA

I don't care if they memorize everything. I'll be better! I'll beat them all! I'm getting good!

Not wanting to argue, Abdullah pushes the bicycle upwards.

87 EXT. THE ROOF OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY

87

Abdullah puts the bicycle down. Wajda sees that it has two additional training wheels and gets angry.

WAJDA
What is this?

ABDULLAH
It will help you learn. I need to
work on the lights. I can't push
you all day.

Wajda violently smashes the lights, stomping her feet.

WAJDA
I can't recite and I can't ride! I
hate you. And...

She collapses to the floor, crying. Abdullah goes over to the
bicycle, takes off the wheels, then sits next to her.

ABDULLAH
Here, I took them off.

Wajda doesn't move. He reaches into his pocket and takes out
some notes.

ABDULLAH (CONT'D)
I'll give you 5 riyals if you stop
crying.

With one hand covering her eyes, Wajda's other hand reaches
out and snatches the money. She puts it in her pocket, raises
her head and wipes her nose. She looks up at the ribbons on
the handlebars, swaying in the breeze.

She squares her shoulders, gets up and heads over.

88 EXT. IQBAL'S CAR - DAY

88

Wajda and her Mother ride silently in the back of the car. As
they pass the toy shop, Wajda sees The Owner talking to a man
and his son, right by her green bicycle! She can't hear what
they're saying but can see that they're bargaining.

She squints out to get a better look as The Owner looks up
and notices her. He smiles while he talks to the man,
explaining something. The car pulls away. When she can no
longer see the toy shop, Wajda sits back, agitated.

Her Mother watches her and looks back at the shop.

IQBAL
Madam, only one hour. I don't have
time to wait for you. You are late,
I go. You find taxi.

MOTHER
(irritated)
We understand that, Iqbal. Enough.

She pretends to text someone to stop him from talking to her.

Wajda looks at the little girl's picture. She leans forward and tries to talk to Iqbal.

WAJDA
Who is this little girl, Iqbal?

IQBAL
This is my daughter. I didn't see her for 3 years now.

He then shakes his head happy with himself.

IQBAL (CONT'D)
She goes to school now. (pause) I didn't go to school.

WAJDA
Obviously you didn't go to school because you don't have manners.

IQBAL
You have a big mouth.

Wajda sticks her tongue out to him. Her mother looks at her angrily. The car moves quickly across the dessert.

89 INT. THE MALL - DAY

89

Wajda's Mother passes ahead of her as she stands mesmerized by a kiosk selling accessories. Quickly she goes to the salesperson and points to a rack full of bracelets similar to the one's she made with a sign that says "Only 20 Riyals!"

WAJDA
I make better bracelets than these.
How much will you pay me? 10?

SALESMAN
No thank you, I buy them from China, I can get like 10,000 for 10 riyals.

WAJDA
China won't do the national colors!

SALESMAN
You mean like this?

As he points to one, she hears her Mother calling her from the upper level. She runs towards the escalator, shooting the salesman an angry look.

90 INT. DRESS SHOP - DAY

90

They enter a shop that has an assortment of dresses and gowns in the window. A red dress stands out among the others.

While they talk, Wajda sits on a chair in the entry-way watching the action outside. The salesman pulls out the dress and examines the Mother's covered body.

SALESMAN

It is a beautiful dress but maybe
a little big for you.

The Mother tucks her hands into her abayah, nervously.

Wajda watches a group of fully veiled women walk past a group of young men. They turn their heads, flirt with smiles and laughs. After passing each other, they pull out their cell phones and text rapidly.

PASSING GIRL

The jerk, he says I have a big ass!

The group of girls laugh and disappear in the long aisle.

MOTHER

What size is it?

SALESMAN

Large.

MOTHER

All right. Can I try it?

SALESMAN

Okay, you can try it on in the
women's bathroom at the end of the
corridor. And if it turns out big,
we can tailor it for you after you
pay a deposit.

The Mother looks at a pair of beautiful red shoes on display.

91 INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

91

The mother in a small bathroom, with Arabic toilet on the floor. The floor is wet.

She is trying to finish zipping it up while holding the edge of it between her legs so the dress doesn't get wet.

MOTHER

(whispers)

I know it's a lot of money but I have to show your Father he can't get anything better than me.

The mother opens the door and shows the dress to Wajda. Wajda is leaning over the sink and holding her mother's Abbya.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Do you think your father will like it?

The dress is too big for her. She pulls the ends of the dress around her waist to tighten it. Wajda shrugs her shoulders.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Let's take the dress back to the salesman so he can tighten it. Then go quickly before Iqbal gets angry and leaves us.

The mother raises the dress edge over her feet and enters the bathroom booth again. Wajda hands the mother her Abbya from over the door.

WAJDA

Don't worry, he won't leave.

92

EXT. THE ROOF OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY

92

Wajda rides the bicycle, more steadily but still awkwardly, in a circle.

ABDULLAH

I think I'm done with the lights now.

He looks over the edge. The lights are all aligned beautifully.

WAJDA

My Mother saw the lights but forgot to ask me about them again.

ABDULLAH

She doesn't know? Does your Father?

WAJDA

I think they like your Uncle now
that he was on that radio program!

MOTHER (O.S.)

Aiiyyeeeee!!!!

They turn, both stunned to see Wajda's Mother at the entrance of the roof. The mother tries to hide the cigarette in her hand and put it out secretly.

Wajda tips over, lands hard and hurts herself. She looks up pleadingly at her Mother.

WAJDA

I'm bleeding... I have blood!

Her Mother grips the railing, screams and covers her eyes.

MOTHER

You stupid-- you think you can act
like boys? Your honor, your honor!
Oh my God, oh my God. Where is the
blood coming from? Where is it
coming from?

WAJDA

(confused)
From my knee...

MOTHER

What? Oh thank God!

She sighs in relief, then grabs Wajda by the shoulder.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Bicycles are dangerous for girls
and you almost saw why!!!
(to Abdullah)
And you!! What were you thinking?
I'll tell your Uncle to teach you
some manners. Get out of here!

Abdullah runs away, panicked. The Mother points at the bicycle.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And take that damn thing with you!

Abdullah quickly comes back and picks up the bicycle, then runs into the stairway, struggling with the bicycle alone.

We hear a loud CRASH as the bicycle falls down the stairs. Wajda and her Mother look at each other, the Mother trying to compose herself and then... both burst into laughter.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 (straightening up)
 Shame on you, bringing a boy
 upstairs with no one home. What
 would your Father do if he knew?
 He'd kill you!

WAJDA
 Why are you home early, anyway?

Her Mother sits on her knees and faces Wajda, threateningly.

MOTHER
 Listen to me, don't ever bring him
 up here again. I will seriously
 tell his Uncle and he will be in
 big trouble. If I weren't busy with
 your Father's party, I would have
 gotten really upset with you and we
 would have a long talk about this.
 (Switching moods suddenly)
 Now let's get downstairs, we need
 to start cooking. Your Father's
 friends are coming over tonight.
 And get your game out of there;
 he'll be mad if he knows you are
 using his TV.

Wajda looks up quickly at her Mother, surprised.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 You think I don't know your tricks?
 At least you're learning the Koran.

As they walk off the roof Wajda kicks a piece of ribbon that had fallen off the bicycle. The ribbon flies in the air as their figures disappear into the stairwell.

WAJDA (O.S.)
 Are you going to tell his Uncle?

MOTHER (O.S.)
 He is a nice boy. His only problem
 is that you won't leave him alone.
 (they both laugh)
 We'll cook the best dinner for your
 Father's party tonight.

93 INT. THE KITCHEN - EVENING

93

Wajda helps her Mother prepare the massive plates of food for the group of men in the other room, talking and laughing loudly. Trying to relieve the tension, she starts to SING.

MOTHER

Be quiet! Do you want them to hear you? Put this in the oven.

Wajda stops singing and looks at her Mother, pushing back a lock of hair off her forehead, looking exhausted.

Her Father KNOCKS once and they pass the plates through to him at the door. He smiles as he takes it.

FATHER

Wow! All this food!

He kisses the Mother's forehead and looks her in the eyes.

FATHER (CONT'D)

They'll be really impressed. You make me so proud!

MOTHER

Obviously not proud enough.

She goes back to the kitchen and starts fixing the next dish.

94 INT. THE MAJLIS - LATER

94

Wajda and her Mother clean up dishes from a long sitting area on the floor.

WAJDA

Wow! What is this?

Wajda examines a gift given to her Father. It is a family tree. She runs her finger along the branches.

MOTHER

(cynically)

Your Father's glorious family tree.

Her Mother eats discarded food from the plates, then finds her husband's prayer beads and picks them up tenderly.

Wajda leaves the family tree and hooks her game into the TV as her Mother leaves the room.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Make sure you clean that all up. I don't want to do anything that will get him upset with us again.

Distracted, Wajda puts down the controller and looks at the family tree. The names read: "Khalid, Mansour, Mohammed, Omar..." Her Father's name stands alone while all of his brothers have leaves with boy's names below them. Wajda cuts a piece of blank paper from the Koran, writes her name on it and adds it under her Father's name.

MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I almost forgot. Ms. Husa called earlier.

Wajda looks at her, wide-eyed, while hooking up the game controller. The Mother enters, smiling suspiciously.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

She's really pleased with you! Honestly, the way Ms. Husa was going on I wasn't sure we were talking about the same person!

She looks at Wajda expectantly, but Wajda shrugs, turns the game on and busies herself with it. Her Mother stops cleaning for a moment.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You keep surprising me!

95

INT. THE MOSQUE - DAY

95

All the girls crowd around Salma who passes around pictures. The girls laugh and reach for them.

NOURA

Let me see! Let me see!
Are you wearing this only?

Noura covers her face in astonishment. The Teacher comes in and Wajda pulls herself away from the scene. The other girls don't notice. Noura points at a picture.

NOURA (CONT'D)

Is this your Father?

SALMA

(upset)
That's Khalid, my husband!

NOURA

He looks like your grandfather. But
I guess that's the best your family
could do--

Humiliated, Salma snatches the photo back. All the girls
except Wajda laugh. The Koran Teacher appears behind,
catching them off guard.

KORAN TEACHER

What's going on here?

The girls immediately go silent.

WAJDA

(quickly)

I told them they can't have
pictures at school.

NOURA

No you didn't!

(turning to the teacher)

Salma just got married. Look, she
brought in pictures!

KORAN TEACHER

(grabbing the pictures)

Let me see. Who's this, your
Mother? Is this your husband?

As they talk, Wajda looks out to the hallway where Fatin and
Fatima pass by with their furious MOTHERS. Fatin tries to
explain something but her Mother silences her with an angry
look. Fatima notices Wajda watching sympathetically. Fatima
looks away.

KORAN TEACHER (CONT'D)

Okay, put them away now. Wajda's
right, you're not allowed to show
pictures at school.

Wajda looks down, trying to hide being ashamed.

KORAN TEACHER (CONT'D)

Let's get started. Yasmine, read
from page 13.

YASMINE

(whispering)

I need a Kleenex.

KORAN TEACHER

Wajda, read.

Wajda closes her Koran and looks at the teacher hesitantly.

WAJDA

I'll try without looking.

The Koran Teacher looks at her, surprised.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

(reciting nervously)

And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination. Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. They call upon instead of Him none but female [deities], and they call upon none but a rebellious Satan.

KORAN TEACHER

Very nice Wajda, you remembered it all. But you have to recite. You can't just go..badababdababdaba!

(turns to Salma)

How about our young bride? Let's hear that voice. And listen Wajda, you have to recite like *this* if you want to win.

SALMA

And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination...

The sweet sound echoes through the room, while the girls follow along. Noura's eyes stare at Salma through angry slits. Wajda looks out at the empty hallway, disappointed.

On her way home from school Wajda looks over and sees the green bicycle in front, relieved that it's still there. She enters the shop.

97 INT. THE TOY SHOP - DAY

97

WAJDA

Who were talking to yesterday about the bicycle? I saw you showing it to some kid when we drove by.

TOY SHOP OWNER

I don't know what you're talking about.

WAJDA

You know exactly what I'm talking about. I don't want you showing my bicycle to anyone else.

He shakes his head. She reaches into her pocket.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

Here, I made you a mix-tape. Since we are friends now.

TOY SHOP OWNER

(Sarcastically)
Thanks for your generosity.

WAJDA

(Sarcastically)
Don't mention it. But don't sell my bicycle.

98 EXT. FRONT OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY

98

Wajda walks past Abdullah by his Uncle's election tent, without saying anything.

ABDULLAH

What, are you the one who is upset with me now? Your Mother almost broke my neck pushing me down the stairs!

WAJDA

My Mother doesn't want me talking to you anymore.

She smiles and walks towards her house. He pulls out a bicycle helmet and runs after her.

ABDULLAH

Since when do you listen to your Mother? Here - I got you this. It's a helmet, like the ones on TV.

Wajda's whole face lights up as she takes the helmet.
Abdullah is pleased.

ABDULLAH (CONT'D)

Do you want to ride in the empty
lot behind the tent? We have a few
minutes before people come.

99 EXT. THE CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

99

Wajda, wearing her abbayah and the helmet, rides in circles
in the empty lot. Abdullah sits on a cinder block, watching.

WAJDA

Watch this? See! See!

She takes her hands off the handlebars. He nods. She quickly
puts them back on but periodically takes them off while
riding.

ABDULLAH

The Toy shop owner told Khalid and
his Father that someone reserved
the bicycle.

Wajda's Gets excited and hits the brakes hard.

WAJDA

He must be holding it for me!

100 INT. THE MAJLIS - DAY

100

Wajda sits playing her video game, wearing her helmet. A new
resolve in her eyes.

VIDEO GAME

What is Al Mihrab?

WAJDA

I know that one.

She hits the button.

VIDEO GAME

Correct!

WAJDA

Finally!

She falls back onto the couch. She looks up to see the family
tree. Her name has been taken off, and the leaf she wrote it
on is crumpled up on the table. She picks it up, sadly.

Through the half open door she sees her Mother on the phone in the other room, yelling.

MOTHER

Well if you won't listen to me, I don't know why I should listen to you!

Her Mother hangs up, puts on her abayah and yells:

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Get ready, we are going out!

Wajda quickly takes off the bicycle helmet. The Mother puts on her Abyya quickly. The new red shoes are left on the floor.

101 INT. THE HOSPITAL - DAY

101

The Mother fidgets. At the far end of the room she sees Leila, in a lab coat, putting files onto a shelf. She stands on a ladder, wearing only a hijab, with her face and some hair showing.

A SAUDI MAN puts a cup of coffee on the counter next to her. They exchange jokes.

WAJDA

Are you going to work here with Leila? Those lab coats are cool, like the Matrix, only white!

MOTHER

Shhh! I... just want to give her something.

Leila steps down and heads over.

LEILA

Hey! You came! Wait, let me get you the application.

MOTHER

Leila, what happened? Why you are you revealing your face?

Laila smiles to her confidently and searches under the desk, her male colleague comes back. He smiles at the Mother.

MALE WORKER

Hello, How are you?

She doesn't answer, uncomfortably tucking her hands into her abayah, looking away. Wajda looks at him casually.

WAJDA

Hello.

The man smiles to Wajda, grabs a file, and exits. The Mother, now really uncomfortable, tries to get Leila's attention.

MOTHER

Leila, don't worry dear. I'm not here for an application. We were just passing by.

Wajda is surprised by her Mother's lie.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

We'll leave you now to work. Looks like you're busy.

LEILA

(sympathetically)

It's a good job and the places are filling up quickly. You should...

MOTHER

(interrupting)

It's so good to see you, Leila. I'll call you later.

She grabs Wajda's hand and leads her towards the door. Wajda looks back at Leila wistfully, then at her Mother.

WAJDA

I thought you were going to--

MOTHER

Enough!

Her Mother shushes her and quickens her pace out the door.

102

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

102

The girls line up for an assembly. Ms. Hussa makes her way to the stage and picks up the megaphone. She stares over the crowd, sternly. She checks the microphone.

MS. HUSSA

Hello...Hello...In the name of God. First I want to thank all the girls for their hard work this term. We are the best school in the area.

(MORE)

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

And I would like to remind all the girls that school is a place for virtue and knowledge. (clears her throat). Girls, I would like you to listen very well. We caught two girls committing a sin behind the school. Their names are Fatin Ali and Fatima Umar.

The girls stare intently as Ms. Hussa motions the "offenders" forward.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

And now they will come to the front of the stage to repent.

Fatin and Fatima make their way to the stage. They appear broken, their heads hanging low and their faces blank. Wajda, upon seeing the girls, feels sick to her stomach.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

To avoid similar situations, you are no longer allowed to bring flowers to school for your friends, or give each other letters or autographs. And no one is allowed to hold hands. Do you understand? Good. You may go to your classes now.

The girls move quickly toward the door. As Fatin and Fatima leave, Fatin bumps into a GIRL.

GIRL

(panicked, screaming)
Don't touch me!

Fatin says nothing. Wajda starts to walk toward them both when she sees Ms. Hussa waiting by the stairs.

Wajda stops, glances at the two girls, then back at Ms. Hussa who smiles at her. Wajda turns her head quickly and walks away from Fatin and Fatima, feeling guilty and uncertain.

103

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

103

Wajda brings in her Koran and sits on the floor next to her Mother who irons her Father's thobes, singing.

MOTHER

The handsome man stole my heart;
with his black eyes. I come closer,
he goes away;

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 making me feel hollow. No tears, no
 words can bring him back; Oh my
 heart..

Wajda ignores the piles of note-cards scattered around her,
 looking morose. Her Mother looks at her, concerned, and stops
 singing.

WAJDA
 I don't want to finish the
 competition! I hate Ms. Hussa! I'm
 tired.

MOTHER
 What does Ms. Hussa have to do with
 it? It's your business!
 (smiling encouragingly)
 Your Father is happy that you are
 doing this. He is so proud of you.
 Please, Wajda. That's very
 important right now.

Wajda looks at her Mother, a glimmer of hope in her eyes. She
 sits up straight and recites Surah 30 (Ar-Rum), verse 21:

WAJDA
 And of His Signs is that he creates
 for you mates out of yourselves, so
 that you may find tranquility in
 them; and He has put love and mercy
 between you. Surely in this there
 are indeed Signs for a people who
 reflect.

Wajda stops reciting. Her Mother looks at her, lovingly.

MOTHER
 Give it a tone like this.
 (beautifully)
 And of His Signs is that he creates
 for you mates out of yourselves, so
 that you may find tranquility in
 them - Go on try it.

WAJDA
 (imitating her Mother)
 And of His Signs is that he creates
 for you mates out of yourselves, so
 that you may find tranquility in
 them.

MOTHER
 Very good! Now do the next lines
 like this:

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(reverently)

And He has put love and mercy
between you. Surely in this there
are indeed Signs for a people who
reflect.

WAJDA

(following)

And He has put love and mercy
between you. Surely in this there
are indeed Signs for a people who
reflect.

MOTHER

(proudly, teasing her)

Excellent! Your voice is as lovely
as your Mother's.

Wajda stops, realizing she's doing it well!

WAJDA

I feel shy! I can't recite like
this in front of everyone.

MOTHER

You are shy? Ha! I only wish it
were true!

Wajda makes a face at her Mother, who bursts out laughing.
Wajda barely smiles.

Outside they see the lights Abdullah strung up turn on and
illuminate the street and their living room.

Wajda and her Mother look at each other.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You've worked hard. Come on.

She quickly turns the iron off and they run up to the roof.

104

EXT. THE ROOF OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

104

The two look out as groups of men gather in the street below.
The lights reflect on Wajda and her Mother who look so much
alike in the dim light. A breeze blows their hair gently.
Down the street they see Abdullah's bearded Uncle greeting
everyone as they arrive.

Abdullah stands at the end of the row, dressed up in his
thobe and gutra. Wajda points down at her Father, excited.

WAJDA
See! My Father is there.

MOTHER
(intrigued, searching)
Where?

WAJDA
(points down firmly)
There!

MOTHER
(excited)
Oh! I see him. Look how handsome he
is!

Wajda looks at her Mother from the corner of her eye. She is busy looking at her Father. Wajda throws a little stone where Abdullah stands and he looks up. He sees her without a veil or head covering in the golden lights he himself strung up, and smiles.

He fixes his gutra by throwing its ends on his shoulders, to show how well dressed and important he is.

Wajda smiles back and gestures that there's something on his cheek. Abdullah looks worried and tries to clean his face. Wajda laughs. Her Mother looks at her, disapprovingly.

Another man, standing next to Abdullah, looks up. Both Wajda and her Mother duck behind the wall quickly, laughing softly.

Wajda's Mother lies down on the roof and stares at the stars in the clear sky. Wajda lies next to her and smiles.

WAJDA
So do you love him?

MOTHER
(a little shy, surprised)
Who? Your Father?

WAJDA
(smiling, teasingly)
No, the neighbor's boy?

MOTHER
(also teasingly)
I don't think *I* am the one in love
with the neighbor's boy!

Wajda gets embarrassed, laughing dismissively at her Mother.

Her Mother laughs. Wajda flips to her side and rests her head on her arm in order to face her Mother.

WAJDA

You didn't answer!

MOTHER

I was in high school when he asked for my hand. All the girls were so jealous when they saw his picture. He was the first man in my life, and most probably the last! And I have to admit, he's a lot of fun.

WAJDA

You are way prettier than any other woman I have ever seen. You'll give my Father a heart attack with your red dress.

MOTHER

(suddenly sad)

Yeah. He won't see it. He'll be busy in the men's section. The man I know... he talks big, but he would never burn my heart with a second wife. I don't know who fills his head with this nonsense.

She sits up, quickly, changing the subject.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Enough. Let's practice one more time for your competition tomorrow. And don't tell anyone about that crazy bicycle story of yours, they'll never let you win.

Wajda makes a face, sits up, determined, and recites.

WAJDA

And of His Signs is that he creates for you mates out of yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them; and He has put love and mercy between you.

MOTHER

(warmer inflection)

...Mercy between you...

WAJDA

...Mercy between you.

MOTHER

Let it come from your heart, and
forget everyone around you.

She takes Wajda's hand and places it over her heart.

WAJDA

(more sincere)

And of His Signs is that he creates
for you mates out of yourselves, so
that you may find tranquility in
them; and He has put love and mercy
between you.

Her voice echoes across the empty roof while the election
lights sway in the breeze.

105 INT. WAJDA'S PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT 105

Wajda lies in her Father's place in the bed. Her Mother
sleeps next to her in a semi-fetal position. Wajda stretches
her arms in the vast empty space of the bed, occupying only a
small part of it.

106 INT. WAJDA'S PARENTS' ROOM - DAY 106

Wajda now sleeps in a semi-fetal position. Her Mother wakes
her up, already dressed in her abayah to leave for work. She
caresses Wajda's hair.

MOTHER

Now, you've got a big day today.
When you go up on the stage, say
this after me: God inspire me, make
things easier for me. Untie my
tongue so I speak fluently.

Wajda squints to see her Mother, struggling to remember.

WAJDA

Where are you going so early? God
inspire me, make things easier for
me..

MOTHER

(while fixing her veil)

I have to open up the school today.
I'm the teacher on duty... Untie my
tongue ...

Wajda yawns and runs her hand through her hair.

WAJDA
 ...Untie my tongue...

MOTHER
 ...So I speak fluently

They hear a car HONKING at the door. Wajda touches the beads on her Mother's abayah.

WAJDA
 ...So I speak fluently.

Her Mother kisses her forehead and gets ready to leave.

MOTHER
 I wish I could come today. You know this damn long commute. I know you'll nail it! And don't forget, your Grandmother wants you to wear the vest she made you for luck.

WAJDA
 I hate that vest. I only ever wore it that day I went to visit her.

MOTHER
 I know you hate it, but do it for her.

Wajda stares out into the hallway as her Mother pops her head back into the doorway.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 And whatever happens, for God's sake, act wise. No bargaining, no fighting, and no crazy ideas about bicycles. Watch that tongue of yours. Understand?

She smiles and leaves. Her black shadow stretches across the wall and then disappears. Wajda sighs and falls back onto the bed. She reaches over and touches her Father's prayer beads on the night-stand.

107 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

107

Wajda walks, whispering to herself the tajweed rule from a note-card. She throws her Father's rock at a bottle.

WAJDA
 Man yajaala, Mayyjaal, edgham
 beghunah.

PING! The bottle spins. She smiles and walks on to school.

108 INT. THE TOY SHOP - DAY 108

The Owner puts on his glasses and looks skeptically down at a tape labeled "Wajda's Awesome Mix Tape Volume 8." He puts it in the player and presses "play." A ROCK SONG starts. He shakes his head disapprovingly, smiling.

109 INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY 109

Wajda and several other girls practice their recitations. Wajda goes through her note cards, pulling pieces of paper out of her pockets and scanning them. Ms. Hussa enters.

MS. HUSSA

Alright girls, make sure you empty your pockets and leave all your study material behind. No note cards, no reasons of descendance, no vocabulary cards. Alright?!

NOURA

Vocabulary? Reasons of Descendance?! We were supposed to know all of that?

Wajda empties her pockets, pulling out note cards and pieces of paper. She takes out her Father's prayer beads and the black rock. She notices Salma, sitting on a bench with her hands tucked between her shaking knees, looking around nervously. Ms. Hussa moves to leave.

MS. HUSSA

If we find any type of study material on your person you will be disqualified.

Wajda slowly walks over to Salma, bends down next to her, holds out her rock and shows it to her.

WAJDA

With this rock I can't lose.

SALMA

I'm not clean, I can't read the Koran.

Wajda looks at her, perplexed. Overhearing, Noura approaches.

SALMA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You know..... after you sleep with
your husband... you have to wash
before you read the Koran.

Noura nods in agreement, hiding her excitement.

NOURA

If you feel nervous about it, maybe
you shouldn't do it.

(pause)

It's a lot of stress.

Salma gives Noura a hateful look. Ms. Hussa passes by, her hands full of paper. Salma gets up and runs over to her. The two speak quietly. Wajda watches them, slowly moving the rock between her thumb and fingers as Ms. Hussa sends Salma out the door.

110

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

110

Wajda sits in a line with 7 girls and one empty chair, as the following: Wajda, Contestant #2, Noura, Contestant #4, Yasmine, Contestant #6, Contestant #7, and an empty chair. She nervously shakes her leg, facing a table with the teachers. Ms. Hussa writes "First Round" on a small blackboard and heads back to her seat with the other teacher.

A fan turns slowly above them, rattling in the silent room.

MS. HUSSA

Welcome girls, we are very proud of
you for all of the work you have
put into this competition. Now,
let's start with vocabulary from
the verses you learned. If you get
the answer right, you stay in line.
If you get it wrong, please exit to
the right of the stage. Wajda,
please come forward. Who are the
Sabians?

Wajda tries to compose herself. She brushes the sweat off her forehead and walks to the front of the stage.

WAJDA

They lived in Iraq. Their book is
the Zubar.

MS. HUSSA

Correct. Next. What is Ayat?

The girl next to Wajda gets up and moves to the front.

CONTESTANT #2
Parts of the Koran.

MS. HUSSA
Incorrect. Next. What is Ayat?

The girl lowers her head and leaves to the right. Noura comes to the front of the stage.

NOURA
It's proof, like evidence.

MS. HUSSA
Correct! Go back to your place.
Next. What's Al Fitnah?

CONTESTANT #4
A problem?

MS. HUSSA
Incorrect. Next. What's Al
Fitnah?

YASMINE
A temptation.

MS. HUSSA
Correct. Next. What's sodgatehun?

The 6th Contestant thinks hard, unsure. Noura looks at her happily, while Wajda looks at her compassionately, holding the black stone.

CONTESTANT #6
Um... charity?

MS. HUSSA
Incorrect. What is sodgatehun?

CONTESTANT #7
Dowry.

MS. HUSSA
Excellent. Well done all of you.
And now--

Just then, Ms. Jamila enters and whispers to her.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
She's ready? Good, send her in.

Salma enters from behind the stage. Her hair is dripping wet and she has obviously just showered. Red faced, and mortified, she sits at the end of the line. Wajda glances at her. Noura glares at Salma, furiously.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Salma, please come forward. What is Al Farqan?

Salma moves to the front of the stage.

SALMA

The Koran.

MS. HUSSA

Excellent. Next. From the beginning. Da'ab?

Wajda moves back to the front of the stage.

WAJDA

Habit?

MS. HUSSA

Correct. Next. What is Zaygh?

NOURA

Weakness.

MS. HUSSA

Correct! Next. What is "hoban Kabiran"?

YASMINE

Ummmm....

MS. HUSSA

Well? Sorry Yasmine. Next. What is "Hoban Kabiran"?

CONTESTANT #7

A big.....thing?

Ms. Husa suppresses a smile. The girl stands nervously in her spot.

MS. HUSSA

Also incorrect. What is "Hoban Kibiran?"

SALMA

Great Injustice.

MS. HUSSA
Correct. Thank you.

Wajda looks at Ms. Hussa, trying to hide how nervous she is. Only the three girls remain in the eight chairs.

Ms. Hussa confers with the other teacher and then stands up and moves to the front of the room.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
Those of you on the right of the stage, please come and collect your certificate of appreciation, thank you for participating, I'm sure you learned a lot. Noura, Salma, and Wajda, congratulations, you're going to compete for the championship. Good luck.

111 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (LATER)

111

Ms. Hussa stands under the words "Championship" on the blackboard. Noura, Salma and Wajda sit at a table in front of the stage.

Wajda looks petrified, while Noura smiles with contentment and Salma stares ahead in quiet determination.

NOURA
(whispering to Wajda)
I'll bet you never thought you'd make it this far. But beware of the ugly bride over there, she looks pretty determined to win. Especially after her shower.

Wajda turns away. Salma flashes Noura a look of intense anger about to cry.

MS. HUSSA
Girls, we'll now have you recite. Please read until we indicate for you to stop. We'll start with Surat al Nisa, from ayat 66, Noura begin with "If we had decreed":

NOURA
(flatly but correct)
And if We had decreed upon them, "Kill yourselves" or "Leave your homes," they would not have done it, except for a few of them.
(MORE)

NOURA (CONT'D)

But if they had done what they were instructed, it would have been better for them and a firmer position. And then We would have given them from Us a great reward. And We would have guided them to a straight path. And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.

Ms. Husa raises her hand for her to stop. Noura sits back confidently. Ms. Husa looks to Salma to begin.

MS. HUSSA

Salma start Surat al Bakara from the beginning.

SALMA

(lowering her eyes)

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Alif Lam Mim. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard against evil.

Noura's cold eyes distract her.

SALMA (CONT'D)

Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them. And who... and who...

KORAN TEACHER

(giving her cues)

...And who believe...

SALMA

(shaken, continuing)

...Who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you and... uh

KORAN TEACHER

...And they are sure of the hereafter.

SALMA
 (more shaken, continuing)
 ...And they are sure of the
 hereafter. These are on a...

Salma stops and looks up. Ms. Hussa raises her hand.

MS. HUSSA
 That's enough. Thank you, Salma.
 Let's continue.

Wajda removes her sweaty hand from the table, leaving a moist imprint on it. She dries her hand on her dress.

She puts her hand in her pocket, pulls out her Father's stone and grips it tightly. A piece of paper sticks out of the pocket on her vest. She looks at Salma, trying not to cry.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)
 Let's continue.

Wajda puts the stone back in her pocket and waits silently for the teacher's instructions.

KORAN TEACHER
 Wajda, please start with Surat al
 Bakara, ayat 7. Starting with
 "There is disease."

Wajda looks uncertain, feeling small in the large room. She steadies herself in a moment that drags on endlessly. In the crowd she sees Fatin and Fatima looking directly at her. She is about to lower her eyes but something in their now beaten faces makes her find her confidence.

She meets their eyes right on and starts reciting in a beautiful voice, which begins weak and then gradually grows stronger and more intense.

WAJDA
 In the name of Allah, the
 Beneficent, the Merciful. There is
 (pause)
 There is... a disease in their
 hearts, so Allah added to their
 disease and they shall have a
 painful chastisement because they
 lied. And when it is said to them,
 Do not make mischief in the land,
 they say: We are but peace-makers.
 Now surely they themselves are the
 mischief makers, but they do not
 perceive.

Wajda stops and looks around the room for some indication on whether or not she should continue.

MS. HUSSA

(softly)

Thank you, Wajda, that was very good.

Noura looks worried and very angry. Fatima has a small smile on her face. The two teachers lean in to consult each other. The moment seems endless to Wajda.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Girls, you did an excellent job and you should be proud you all made it this far. Congratulations...we will announce the winner after the prayer.

Out of the corner of her eye she sees Noura, peering down at Wajda's vest pocket. Wajda looks at her, confused, then down at her pocket and sees the paper sticking out.

Noura's mouth widens in a devilish grin as she sits straight up in her chair.

Wajda blanches, pushes the paper down in to her pocket, hiding it, then looks up quickly, panicking.

As the girls exit the stage Noura approaches the table where the judges sit. She leans over to Ms. Hussa and whispers something into her ear. Ms. Hussa furrows her brow, pauses for a moment and looks at Wajda.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Wajda, please come over here.

Worried, Wajda walks over to the judges' table.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Empty your pockets.

Wajda stares at her.

WAJDA

I wasn't cheating, I swear!

NOURA

I saw a cheat-sheet in her pocket, Ms. Hussa. You said that they were to have no notes or else they'd be disqualified.

MS. HUSSA

Thank you, Noura, for your courage.
You may go now.

Noura shoots Wajda an evil smile.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Wajda, empty your pockets, please.

Wajda slowly pulls out the contents of her pockets, first the rock, then her Father's prayer beads, and puts them on the table. She pauses, looks down at her vest pocket, and reluctantly pulls out the folded piece of paper. Not remembering what it is, she looks at it with despair and lays it on the table.

The Koran teacher takes the paper from the table and reads it. Her face relaxes and she suppresses a smile. She hands it to Ms. Hussa.

KORAN TEACHER

Ms. Hussa, someone loves you and
thinks you are like the moon! I
don't know if we agree with that!

She laughs teasingly to Ms. Hussa then looks to Wajda kindly.

KORAN TEACHER (CONT'D)

You know very well you shouldn't
bring notes like this to school,
not after the whole saga with Fatin
and Fatima.

Ms. Hussa takes the paper and looks at it, shocked. She looks over to Wajda for answers. Wajda looks at her wide-eyed, petrified to be caught with it.

MS. HUSSA

Thank you, Wajda. Please go join
the other girls for prayer.

She smiles and hands the note back to her.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

And when you return this note to
its illustrious author, I assume
you will do so with the benevolence
and graciousness your Koran
learning has taught you.

Wajda takes the note, turns away, still wide eyed, and inches slowly away from the table. As she moves away from them her look of fear and shock turns into a very broad grin.

112 INT. CORRIDOR - DAY 112

When she gets out into the hallway, alone, Wajda's smile breaks into a giggle, until she bursts out into uncontrollable fits of laughter.

113 INT. MOSQUE - DAY 113

The girls line up into rows. Some are taking out their abbayahs and wrapping themselves for prayer.

Ms. Husa is in the first row along with the other contestants and a very angry Noura at her side.

Wajda sees Fatin and Fatima in the middle of the mosque and lines up next them, smiling. She unfolds her abbayah and gets ready to pray. Fatin looks over at her, raising her eyebrows.

FATIN

You sure you want to stand next to us?

Fatima holds Fatin's arm, then looks gratefully at Wajda.

FATIMA

Congratulations.

WAJDA

They haven't announced the winner yet.

FATIN

You won, and you're their favorite convert, so I'm sure they were all rooting for you anyway.

Wajda stares uncomfortably at the floor, unsure what to say.

WAJDA

I... I want to buy a bicycle. I'm sorry, I had to win.

Fatin pushes Wajda away with her elbow. Fatima shakes her head at Fatin and turns to Wajda.

FATIMA

A bicycle? You would never dare. We all know that you're a coward.

Wajda looks up to see Ms. Husa searching for her.

MS. HUSSA

Wajda! We saved you a spot in the first row with the other contestants.

Wajda looks back to Fatin and Fatima, fixing their abbayahs for prayer. Wajda hesitates.

FATIMA

Go.

Fatin looks the other way but Fatima nods. Sadly, Wajda lines up next to Ms. Husa who grabs Wajda's abbayah and pulls her next to her. She whispers down to her.

MS. HUSSA

Good Muslims have to line up close to each other so the devil...
(indicates Fatin and Fatima))
...doesn't get in between them.

Wajda avoids looking at Ms. Husa as she lines up in her spot. The call for the start of prayer is announced and all of the girls pray in one synchronized voice.

GIRLS

Allhu Akbar.

114

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

114

Noura, Salma and Wajda wait nervously on stage. Ms. Husa reaches to a megaphone behind the blackboard.

MS. HUSSA

Standing in front of me are the three finalists of the school-wide Koran competition. Only one will be awarded the cash prize, but all will receive 1st, 2nd and 3rd place certificates. The third place winner is..Salma Andul Azziz.

Salma smiles to Wajda.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

And now, the runner up to this year's competition is...
(pauses)
Noura Al Markoon.

Wajda covers her face, tearing up with happiness, the exact opposite of Noura's right now.

Salma rushes up and gives Wajda an ecstatic congratulatory hug. She scurries back to her seat and savors every second of Noura, rigid and miserable, trudging up to Ms. Husa, taking her certificate and storming off the stage and out of the room.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Wajda Al Safan, you are our champion. Congratulations! You are in this spot because of your devotion and perseverance, and I hope all the girls here today learn from your example.

Wajda's face beams with happiness as she walks slowly to the front of the stage. She nods "thank you" as Ms. Husa hands her the certificate. She looks nervously at the megaphone.

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

Alf Mabruk bint al Saffon. Don't be shy! And what are your plans for the prize money?

As Ms. Husa hands her the megaphone, Wajda pauses and scans the faces of the audience.

WAJDA

Mmmmm.

Ms. Husa looks at Wajda and smiles encouragingly. Wajda's gaze falls on Salma and the rest of the girls and then she sees Fatin and Fatima, looking up at her - Fatin, with contempt and Fatima with a glimmer of pride. Wajda takes a big sigh and gathers her courage.

WAJDA (CONT'D)

(defiantly to Ms. Husa)
I am going to buy a bicycle from the shop down the road.

Giggles and laughter erupt from the audience.

MS. HUSSA

What?

Wajda looks at Fatin and Fatima, who both smile, impressed with her statement. Wajda looks back at Ms. Husa.

WAJDA

(matter-of-factly)
I'm buying a bicycle.
(pauses and smiles)
With no training wheels, of course.

Fatin and Fatima laugh, along with the rest of the crowd.

MS. HUSSA

(persuasively)

Now Wajda, wouldn't you rather donate the money to our fighting brothers in Palestine?

WAJDA

I don't think so. I'm going to buy a bicycle.

Wajda looks at Ms. Hussa calmly and shrugs her shoulders. Ms. Hussa stands, unsympathetically.

MS. HUSSA

A bicycle is not a toy for girls Wajda. Especially Muslim girls who need to protect their honor. Plus, I'm sure your family won't allow it. We will donate the money in your name to our brothers and sisters fighting in Palestine.

WAJDA

But--

MS. HUSSA

Thank you for your obedience and generosity. You may step down now.

Wajda stares at Ms. Hussa, then looks over at the other teachers cautiously, realizing their disapproval. She continues staring at Ms. Hussa, knowing she cannot argue. Distraught, she turns to leave, but Ms. Hussa stops her

MS. HUSSA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

You think you can act however you want and people won't notice? This will haunt you forever.

Wajda, infuriated, speaks very loudly.

WAJDA

You mean like your "handsome" thief??

The crowd goes silent as does a shocked and humiliated Ms. Hussa. Wajda marches down to join the crowd of girls leaving the big hall - Fatin and Fatima right by her side. Fatima messes up her hair and Wajda tries to smile, holding back tears.

115 EXT. FRONT OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

115

Abdullah waits outside as Wajda exits, sobbing. She storms past him without pausing. He runs along after her, confused.

ABDULLAH

Didn't you win? Where is the money?

WAJDA

In Palestine!

She continues walking. He stands in disbelief for a few seconds and then runs along after her. She is heartbroken with tears in her eyes. She turns her head to hide them.

Abdullah retreats, taken aback by her vulnerability.

Wajda runs off, leaving him standing alone in the street.

116 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE TOY SHOP

116

Wajda speeds up as she nears the toy shop. She breaks into a run as she sees that the bicycle is no longer there. She looks up to the Toy Shop Owner, unloading boxes from a truck. He glances over at her and shrugs his shoulders.

TOY SHOP OWNER

I had to.

Wajda storms off angrily, crying fresh tears.

Abdullah, standing at the corner, stares at the empty spot in front where the bicycle once sat.

117 EXT. THE CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

117

Wajda trudges slowly, defeated, trying not to cry. The workers taunt Wajda as she approaches, making rude gestures.

WORKER

Come up and play with us little girl. We will have lots of fun!

Wajda stops, breathing heavily. Determined, she scoops up handfuls of stones and throws them violently at the workers, who run for cover. She cries.

WAJDA

Take this! Take this!

Abdullah catches up, sees what's going on, scoops up a handful of rocks and joins in, aiming for the workers. The FOREMAN approaches them menacingly, shaking his fist.

FOREMAN
Hey you kids! Stop that!

ABDULLAH
(holding up a big stone)
Tell your workers to stop bothering her. She deserves better!

His arm still outstretched, he looks at Wajda who drops her remaining stones, turns and runs back towards her home.

118 EXT. FRONT OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - DAY 118

Wajda and Abdullah walk slowly back towards the house.

ABDULLAH
(softly)
I'll give you my bicycle.

WAJDA
(shaking her head)
Then how would we race?

Wajda walks on ahead of Abdullah.

ABDULLAH
Hey, Wajda!

She turns.

ABDULLAH (CONT'D)
(gathering up his courage)
You know I'll marry you when we grow up, right?

Wajda stops and looks at him sadly. She turns away and continues towards her home.

119 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 119

Wajda pushes open the front door of her house, surprised to see it's unlocked. She walks in, tired.

Her Father sits on the edge of the couch, nervously twiddling his thumbs. He runs his hands through his freshly combed hair when he sees Wajda.

FATHER
Hey, finally you're home!

Wajda looks at her Father, suspiciously.

WAJDA
(pretending to be cheerful)
What's up with the new hairstyle?

FATHER
Your Mother's rejecting my calls.
I've been trying to call her all
day. Where is she?

Wajda, without saying anything, pulls the certificate from the competition out of her bag, walks slowly over to her Father and hands it to him.

He looks at her, confused, and reads it. His face changes to excitement.

FATHER (CONT'D)
You won? I can't believe it.
That's amazing!

He hugs her. Wajda rests her head on his shoulder and lets a few tears flow from her eyes. He holds her in front of him.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Hey, why are you crying? You won.
You should be happy?

Wajda is about to tell him everything when his phone RINGS. He goes to the hallway to talk in private. He turns away from Wajda, laughs, says something soft and hangs up. He returns to the Majlis and picks up his ghutra and Okal.

As he leaves, he messes up her hair playfully.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I'm so proud of you, my little
champ.

He looks back at her.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Tell your Mother I waited for her.
I wanted to talk with her. Tell
her...
(clears his throat)
Tell her I love her.

He turns back once more, giving Wajda an apologetic smile and leaves. Wajda sits back into the couch. She looks up at the clock on the wall. The phone RINGS and she picks up.

WAJDA

Hello? Hi Aunt Leila... No, I don't know where she is... Yeah, she's usually home by now... Okay, I'll let her know. Bye.

She lays down and continues staring at the ticking clock.

120 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

120

Wajda sleeps on the couch, still in her school uniform. She's awakened by the sound of GUNSHOTS and BLASTS of fireworks in the distance. She sits up and sees that the living room is dark. Lights are shining from the bathroom and her Mother's room. She gets up and cautiously walks over.

She looks in through the doorway and sees her Mother's abayah on the bed right next to:

A NEW WHITE LAB COAT.

She heads for the bathroom.

121 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

121

Wajda leans over the sink to wash her face. She sees clumps of freshly cut hair along the inside of the sink. As she examines it closer, she hears more GUNSHOTS and BLASTS of fireworks. She looks at the stairway leading to the roof.

122 EXT. THE ROOF OF WAJDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

122

Wajda sees her Mother smoking a cigarette in the dim light. Her hair is cut to shoulder length, twirling in the wind. She stares off into the distance, at a party, where strands of lights line a house a few blocks away.

Wajda walks over and stands next to her Mother, tossing her Father's rock idly in her hand. Her Mother tries to discretely put out her cigarette. Wajda stares out at the house with the lights on it, confused. The Mother smiles sadly.

MOTHER

I heard the news. Congratulations,
I'm so proud of you.

WAJDA

(pouting)

They didn't give me the money.

She puts the rock back in her pocket. The Mother messes up Wajda's hair, playfully.

MOTHER

I can't believe you said you wanted a bicycle!

(laughing))

They must have thought you were crazy!

(pauses)

Damn them, you don't need their money, anyway.

Wajda is taken aback by her Mother's tone. She watches her skeptically as she squints off towards the house having the party.

WAJDA

Isn't that my Grandmother's house? I thought my Uncle's wedding wasn't until next month. Right?

MOTHER

It's not your Uncle's wedding they are celebrating.

Wajda looks up at her Mother suddenly. Her eyes widen in realization. Wajda rushes over to hug her, and they embrace.

Her Mother sits them down and wraps her arms around Wajda's head and shoulders as GUNSHOTS ring out in the distance. Her Mother wipes the tears from Wajda's eyes.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's all right. He made his decision. It'll be only the two of us now. It will be fine.

She strokes her daughter's hair. Wajda looks up, determined.

WAJDA

Let's buy the red dress and go over there and get him!

MOTHER

There's no need for the red dress anymore. Besides, I used that money to buy you something else.

She reaches over and flicks on the bare light-bulb on the wall.

The weak light falls directly on the corner of the roof revealing..

THE GREEN BICYCLE!

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I wanted to surprise you tomorrow morning.

Wajda stares at it in disbelief then looks over to her Mother, who smiles at her tenderly.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I hope it's the right one. The Shopkeeper said he has been holding it for some spunky little girl for weeks.

They embrace each other and cry as fireworks continue behind them.

123

EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

123

Wajda pedals through the neighborhood on her new green bicycle. The wind blows through her hair. She slides to a stop in front of her Grandmother's house. She looks up at the lights and remaining decorations. She sighs and continues on.

As she pulls away she sees Abdullah approach with a few other boys. She smiles at him. He smiles back, waves the others to go on without him and pushes hard to catch up with her.

As they pass the toy shop, The Owner sits sipping tea in front of the store chatting with another FRIEND.

FRIEND

What is this music?

As the children pass by, The Owner smiles at Wajda. His friend looks at him in utter confusion.

Wajda turns and pushes her bicycle ahead faster. She looks back to see if Abdullah is catching up to her.

WAJDA

Catch me if you can!

She passes by several BYSTANDERS who look at her disapprovingly. She holds out her arms proudly and steers the bicycle without touching the handlebars, smiling.

Wajda breaks away and pedals until she reaches the end of the road, where the highway begins. She slides to a stop, looks back and smiles to see Abdullah catching up to her, then she turns and stands watching the trucks and cars rumble by.

FADE OUT: