

SHRINKAGE

Pilot Episode

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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

LAYLA KAMAL is sitting beside her father GEORGE KAMAL's bed watching a DVD of an old Arabic black and white comedy play on the TV.

The room is decorated with flowers and family pictures from their village in Palestine.

The dialog from the play prompts Layla's laughter.

Accompanying her laugh is a sound that is a cross between clearing a throat and choking: "GHHH, GHHH".

Layla turns to George,

LAYLA
It never gets old, right?

Layla is a beautiful 37 year old Palestinian-American. She is dressed in chic-professional attire.

George is in a vegetable state. He has a tube attached to his stomach and wires connected to his body monitoring his vitals. The left side of his face is almost collapsing but he looks relaxed.

Another funny scene ensues in the play.

GEORGE
GHHH, GHHH.

Layla laughs and turns to her father,

LAYLA
You're OK?

He turns his eyes to her, stares for a moment then slowly blinks.

She smiles and holds his hand.

MARIANA, a nurse, enters. She speaks with an Eastern-European accent. She's pleased to see Layla.

MARIANA
Hiii. How are you?

LAYLA
Hi Mariana. I'm fine, thanks.

She notices the play on the TV. Layla turns the volume down.

MARIANA
Hi George, what are you watching?

LAYLA
A comedy.

MARIANA
Starting the week with a comedy.
(To George)
It's good to laugh, George. You can
go to Broadway with your daughter
when you get out of here.

George slowly turns to Layla.

GEORGE
Ghh, erww, ahhhn.

MARIANA
(To Layla)
Oh, he's talking to you. That's
good. What's he saying?

LAYLA
I don't know Mariana, I don't speak
stroke. Let me check.

Mariana is smiling as Layla puts her ear close to her dad's
face.

GEORGE
Errwwhh.

LAYLA
What? Adrian? What?

GEORGE
Oooo.

LAYLA
No, no, Apollo died in the fourth
one. You don't remember this? We
watched it together.

Mariana laughs.

MARIANA
You are naughty.
(To George)
She's making fun of you.

They both look at George and wait for his reply. He slowly
rolls his eyes up then blinks.

The ladies laugh.

LAYLA
What's new, right?

MARIANA
(To Layla)
OK, you can go now.

LAYLA
(To George)
Time for your bath, dad.
(In Arabic)
Bet you wish mom treated you like
this!

GEORGE
Ghhh.

Layla kisses her dad on the cheek a number of times.

LAYLA
I love you.

He looks at her tenderly, or as tenderly as he can.

Mariana gestures to the photos.

MARIANA
They're still unable to come?

Layla looks at the pictures.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KAMAL HOUSE - PALESTINE - DINING ROOM - DAY

A simple home with basic furnishings.

George, his wife AMIRA, 17 year old Layla and her TWIN brothers are having a family lunch - and an argument.

Dialog in Arabic.

GEORGE
No way. You don't need to go.

LAYLA
But it's a full scholarship. I just
need the ticket.

AMIRA
Let her go.

GEORGE

They teach the same things here
that they do in New York.

LAYLA

Not psychology. Not like this.
They're even arranging my visa.

GEORGE

You're 17. What are you going to do
with a psychology degree? You can't
treat Arabs, they'll never change.

AMIRA

Maybe she has bigger ambitions.

GEORGE

Why doesn't she become a nurse? Her
cousin is a nurse.

LAYLA

My cousin is pregnant. She's 19.

GEORGE

And what's wrong with that?

BEAT.

LAYLA

I think you'll be my first patient,
dad. I'll give you a family
discount.

Laughter.

GEORGE

(Mocking)

Hahaha.
I'm not sending you to America and
that's it.

AMIRA

It's her lif...

GEORGE

SHUT UP.

Layla jolts. Amira is casual about the shouting. The boys
don't flinch.

Silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(To all)

I decide in this house. What I say goes. You understand?

LAYLA

Dad, please. I worked hard for..

George stops eating and raises his hand.

GEORGE

Keep talking and you'll get a slap.
Keep talking.

Layla leaves the table.

Amira looks at her daughter then at George. The twins keep their eyes on their food.

An Arabic song accompanies the following MONTAGE.

INT. KAMAL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON - MONTAGE

Amira is selling her gold to her girlfriends. She argues about the value of some of the pieces then relents. As Amira collects money from them, she keeps checking outside the window to see if anyone's coming.

EXT. KAMAL HOUSE - DAY - MONTAGE

Amira hands the money to the twins and gives them instructions. They hear a noise. They panic and hide the money. They see it's just a wandering goat.

She gestures "go, go" to the boys.

They leave.

She gestures "go, go" to the goat.

The goat leaves.

INT. LAYLA'S ROOM - KAMAL HOUSE - DAY - MONTAGE

Amira gives her daughter an airline ticket. Layla is overjoyed. She hugs and kisses her mom. They're animated as they discuss George's repercussions.

Amira calms Layla down then helps her pack two bags.

The song fades out as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - NEW YORK - DAY

Layla is strutting down the street after the hospital visit. She attracts attention and a few admirers.

She enters a coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NEW YORK - DAY

Layla is in a queue when she gets a text message.

TEXT: "I'm sorry I don't think this is working for me. I think we should see other people."

LAYLA

Pussy!

A few patrons look at her. She just realized she said it out loud.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

(Insincere)

Excuse me.

The female customer in front of her gives Layla a disturbed look.

Layla volunteers,

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Why are men such cowards? They can't even break up with you in person.

CUSTOMER

I don't know.
(Cynical smiles)
I'm happily married.

The customer turns away.

LAYLA

(Sarcastic smile)

Are you, though? Are you?

The customer turns back to Layla and stresses,

CUSTOMER

Yes.

Layla rolls her eyes.

LAYLA

OK. I'm happy for you.

CUSTOMER

Thank you.

The queue moves.

LAYLA

He's not cheating on you, right?

CUSTOMER

What? No. Excuse me but I don't want to talk to you anymore.

LAYLA

OK.

JAMAL, 35, a tall and good looking man approaches Layla. He's holding his drink.

JAMAL

Hi, stranger.

Layla is pleasantly surprised.

LAYLA

Oh hi. Wow, how are you?

JAMAL

I'm good. How you been?

LAYLA

Great. Everything's great.

JAMAL

How's, eh, what's his name?

LAYLA

Oh, that's not happening anymore.

CUSTOMER

(Softly)

Shocker!

LAYLA

(To Customer)

Excuse you!

Jamal snickers.

JAMAL

It's good to see you. I gotta go.

LAYLA

Good to see you too. Take care.

JAMAL

Say hi to Kim for me.

LAYLA

Will do.

Layla watches him leave.

INT. LAYLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A cozy living room. There's a desk behind the leather single seater Layla is seated on. A crystal encrusted cigarette case sits by her computer screen. A white Beats Pill complements the arrangement.

Layla is finishing a session with her patient, 32 year old ERIC JONES.

Eric is in the two-seater leather sofa facing her. A wooden coffee table acts as a buffer.

Eric is wearing a bespoke suit.

LAYLA

..so then why do you need to be diplomatic?

ERIC

I don't want to. I'm told I should.

LAYLA

But you seem happy and well-adjusted.

ERIC

With work, yes. In fact, as an investment banker it is considered an advantage to be blunt. But apparently I rub people the wrong way with my...opinions.

LAYLA

Do you care what people think of you?

ERIC
Not really.

LAYLA
Are you satisfied with your
personal life?

ERIC
Yes.

LAYLA
And you're certain you don't want
to follow your heart.

ERIC
Oh absolutely. The heart leads to
bankruptcy. I love my life.

LAYLA
I have no idea why you're here. Is
it personal? Is there someone
you're trying to attract but can't?
Because of your demeanor?

ERIC
No.

LAYLA
Then there's nothing wrong with
you.

We're now viewing Layla's wall of credentials. A BA from
Columbia University and a Masters from Oxford are hanging
prominently on the wall.

ERIC
(O.S.)
That's it?

We see a number of her framed magazine covers. Family photos
taken in her Palestinian village hang on the lower row.

LAYLA
(O.S.)
Do what makes you happy, Eric. It's
your life.

Back to the session,

ERIC
And if I rub people the wrong way?

LAYLA

Fuck 'em. You weren't going to get along with them to begin with. Who cares what people think? And like you said, results are all that matter in your business. Whoever told you to come here is insecure about their position. I will venture a guess; a colleague or a superior?

ERIC

(Astonished)
Colleague, actually.

She nods.

ERIC (CONT'D)

OK. Makes sense. Thank you.

LAYLA

You're welcome.

He gets up and doesn't miss a beat when he advises,

ERIC

You should charge more.

LAYLA

Hm?

ERIC

You should charge more. I would have paid sixty percent more than your current ask.

LAYLA

You think? I added a premium over what people usually pay.

ERIC

Not enough. You're selling honesty. That's a rare commodity. And no one knows the value of a rare commodity, the true value, better than an investment banker.

(BEAT)

You should charge more.

LAYLA

I'll look into it. Thank you.

ERIC
 You're welcome.
 Wanna get a drink this weekend?

LAYLA
 (Smiling)
 No, I'm good. Thanks for the offer,
 though.

ERIC
 (Smiles)
 Fair enough.

LAYLA
 Don't hurt your colleague too bad!

ERIC
 Oh I'm gonna fuck him up.

He's walking out then turns back to ask,

ERIC (CONT'D)
 By the way, why is it you prefer
 Arab patients? Your ad.

LAYLA
 I don't. I'm an equal opportunity
 head-fucker! I just know for a fact
 they need more help.

ERIC
 You know, that kinda makes sense. I
 have a friend, Habib, who is
 always...

LAYLA
 (Interrupts)
 You can go now, thanks.

He leaves.

INT. LAYLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Layla is sipping an espresso and reading a detailed profile
 on a tablet.

She gets a message on her phone from KIM.

KIM: "On for tonight?".

She replies with emojis: thumbs up, 3 glasses of wine and the
 aubergine.

Kim: 'loool, What about homeboy?'

Layla: 'tell you later'.

We hear a BELL.

Layla checks her tablet, sees a woman on the picture-in-picture security camera feed, then presses a buzzer.

Layla puts her phone away. Moments later, her next appointment, NANCY enters.

LAYLA
Hi, come in.

NANCY
Good morning, Dr.Layla.

LAYLA
Please, just Layla. Good morning.
You know how this works?

Nancy sits in the two-seater and places her green crocodile-skin bag next to her. Nancy is sharply dressed in a white pant suit. She crosses her legs, right over left, and she casually swirls her right foot revealing her Louboutin red-bottoms.

She's soft spoken.

NANCY
One session, one problem, complete honesty, no holds barred.

LAYLA
Good. I was just going over what you had sent me again. So what seems to be the problem?

NANCY
(Pointing at tablet)
It's not clear?

LAYLA
It *is* one session but it won't be that easy. Have you been to therapy before?

Nancy thinks about it.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPY SESSION 1 - MONTAGE

Nancy is in a therapy session with a middle-aged male therapist.

INT. THERAPY SESSION 2 - MONTAGE

Nancy is in a therapy session with an older female therapist.

INT. MOTIVATIONAL SEMINAR - MONTAGE

The audience is cheering "YES I CAN". Nancy feels out of place sitting in the back row, wearing sunglasses and looking around.

INT. THERAPY SESSION 3 - MONTAGE

Nancy is expressing herself laying on a couch with her therapist seated behind her.

BACK TO:

INT. LAYLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

NANCY

Once or twice.

LAYLA

Why do you think you need to see a therapist?

NANCY

I don't know why I feel this way but I want to leave it all. Disappear.

LAYLA

What is all?

NANCY

Family, friends, work, money. All of it.

LAYLA

Can I have those shoes when you go?

Layla smiles. Nancy doesn't.

Nancy's eyes wander to Layla's family photos.

NANCY
(Pointing)
Where is that?

LAYLA
(In Arabic)
Palestine. Where are you from?

NANCY
Earth. I'm British. I think. Born
and raised. Originally from 7th
century Mesopotamia.

LAYLA
Hey, we're cousins.

NANCY
I guess.

Nancy smiles.

LAYLA
So why do you want to leave,
cousin?

NANCY
I feel out of place.

LAYLA
In what way?

NANCY
I don't feel I belong...

LAYLA
(Nodding)
Go ahead, it's OK.

NANCY
...with them. My whole family.

LAYLA
How long have you felt this way?

NANCY
A couple of months.

LAYLA
What do you do, Nancy? For a
living.

NANCY
I'm a marketing consultant.

LAYLA

That's a three thousand dollar bag you're carrying this early in the day. Business must be good.

NANCY

It's our own company. I started it from scratch with my best friend Sarah. We worked hard; it wasn't always like this.

LAYLA

(Impressed)

Good for you. OK, tell me about your family.

NANCY

(Almost defensive)

I love my family. I love my children. I even love my parents.

Layla tries to hide her grin.

LAYLA

OK. What about your husband?

NANCY

I love him too. I think. I mean I don't hate him. He looks after us, he's a wonderful father, he's patient - with me. I don't hate him. So I guess I do love him.

LAYLA

Do you like him?

BEAT.

NANCY

What do you mean?

LAYLA

Simple question. Do you like him? As a person.

NANCY

Yes.

LAYLA

Like a friend?

Silence.

NANCY

Yes.

LAYLA

Dependable, fun to be around, miss him sometimes but not often?

Nancy has a revelation.

NANCY

Yeah!

LAYLA

Where did you meet?

NANCY

In the living room.

Layla bursts out laughing.

LAYLA

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I didn't expect that.

NANCY

(Scoffs)

It's OK. I just heard it myself. Bit silly.

LAYLA

Arranged marriage?

NANCY

Yes. As arranged as can be in the UK.

Nancy bites the corner of her lower lip.

Layla gives her a moment then asks,

LAYLA

How does that make you feel?

NANCY

It's tradition. You know how it works.

LAYLA

I do. Answer the question, please.

Nancy gets shifty.

NANCY

Ehmm, I don't know. Did I want it?
Not at the time but...was I ready
to start a family? I think so.

LAYLA

Misdirection! Dabble in PR, do we?
OK marketing lady, one word. Give
me one word. How did it make you
feel? Angry? Content? Sad?
Frustrat...

NANCY

(Interrupts)
Property.

Nancy is looking Layla dead in her eyes.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I felt like property.

LAYLA

OK.
Tell me, why do you work so hard?
What are you getting at?

NANCY

What are you getting at? What does
that mean?

LAYLA

What is your objective? Money?
Fame? Because I see security all
over you. So what is the objective?

NANCY

I don't know. We never thought of
that. Sarah and I just clicked;
besties since college. We hung out
all the time. We went to the same
fashion shows. Best friends.

Layla takes notes.

LAYLA

Go on.

NANCY

We had the same major and decided
we were going to start a business
together. We found a niche and
started a company that focuses on
the Arab demographic. It was hard
in the beginning.

(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)

Just like in any business, it's a man's world. Mrs. Freud never wrote a book, am I right?

LAYLA

You're right.

NANCY

So we worked late, put in every penny, borrowed, lost money, made money, lost money, made money then never looked back.

LAYLA

You have a problem with straight answers. That's all great but what is the objective?

NANCY

I honestly don't understand your question. Why do you do what you do? One session, total honesty.

LAYLA

I love helping people but I don't have the patience to drag things on when I know what the problem is. Your turn.

NANCY

OK. I'm not sure. I never thought of it that clearly before.

LAYLA

Fair enough. We'll come back to it. How did your family feel about starting your own business?

NANCY

Early days were hard but not because of the business. They didn't like Sarah.

LAYLA

Why not?

NANCY

She put her career first. So to them she was unconventional; a rebel. Which only means "I don't understand you so I'm putting you in this box".

(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)

But when the money started rolling in, everybody shut their mouths. Money does that to people.

LAYLA

Tell me about it.

NANCY

She saw the hypocrisy and stayed away from them.

Layla nods.

LAYLA

OK, but why do you work so hard? Not you the businesswoman. Nancy. You.

NANCY

It's my passion.

LAYLA

Let me ask that in another way. How many hours a day do you work?

NANCY

Depends on the project.

LAYLA

On average.

Nancy thinks for a moment.

NANCY

12? 10 to 12 hours.

LAYLA

How does that affect your family life?

NANCY

I drop the kids off to school, go to work and then I come back for a quick dinner. If I have a big project, I'm back in the office. If not, I work from home.

LAYLA

OK. How many hours a day do you spend with your family?

NANCY

What?

Layla waits for an answer.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 (Raises hands)
 I don't know. Ehhh,

Nancy is counting in her head.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 (Doubtful)
 Hmmm, no, that's not right.

LAYLA
 Round it off.

NANCY
 But it doesn't...two? Two.
 How?

LAYLA
 How is clear. 'Why' is the
 question.

Nancy is pondering an answer.

NANCY
 What are you saying? Are you saying
 I'm...avoiding? Why? I don't think
 so. No, no. I'm avoiding them? I
 don't think so.
 (Leans forward; defensive)
 I'm not avoiding them. Why would I?
 Why?

LAYLA
 That is the correct question. Think
 about it for a second.

The air is quiet and uneasy.

Moments later,

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 OK, we'll get there.
 When was the last time you had sex
 with your husband?

NANCY
 Oh God! Are you serious?

Layla nods.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 I mean, I don't know. Pfff, months?

LAYLA
Round it off.

NANCY
Good God, with the rounding. What
are you, a fucking golfer?

Layla smiles. She is pleased Nancy is opening up.

Nancy does the math in her head again.

NANCY (CONT'D)
(Frustrated)
Ehhh..I think...what? I don't...

Nancy looks away, almost embarrassed.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Shit! Eight months.

BEAT.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Eight months, McIlroy! Happy?
(Irritated)
Are you going to say something?
What does that mean?

LAYLA
It means you need to get laid. When
was the last time you *enjoyed*
having sex with your husband?

NANCY
Oh fuck you, man.
(Sarcastic)
Safe place, right?

Layla is taken aback. She's doing her own math now.

LAYLA
(Inquisitive)
Nancy, when was the last time you
had sex?

NANCY
What?

LAYLA
(Firm)
You really need to stop deflecting.
It's not going to work. Just be
honest. The truth.
(MORE)

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Give me a truthful answer. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll know.

Nancy is hesitant.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

It's OK, I know. But you have to say it.

NANCY

(Uneasy)

Seven weeks ago.

LAYLA

So it was just the one time?

NANCY

Not even.

LAYLA

What was his name?

NANCY

Gorik.

LAYLA

(Surprised)

Armenian!

NANCY

(Points at Layla)

See? That's why. This is all we do.

LAYLA

Where did you meet?

NANCY

Bedroom!

Layla bursts out laughing again. She gestures "sorry".

NANCY (CONT'D)

Tinder. We flirted, met for a drink, got a hotel room.

LAYLA

And?

NANCY

Very nice guy, charming, a gentleman. I was comfortable. I was excited. We fooled around, got undressed then I stopped.

LAYLA

Why?

NANCY

Armenian! Can you fucking believe it? This is what they did to me. I can't even cheat in peace. One moment I'm thinking of great sex and the next of his background.

Layla is attentive.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(Aggravated)

Fucking bullshit. My brain is fried from categorizing every single human being I meet.

(Loud)

What sect are you from? Oh! What's your religion? What's your family name? Which village are you from?

(Louder)

Oooh, I'm sorry, I can't accept your DICK because no matter what part of the world you're from; if you're not an Arab, if you're not a Muslim, you either KILLED my grandfather, STOLE our land, trying to convert me or planning all of the above in the near future. WHAT THE FUUUCK?

Silence.

LAYLA

Must have been some dick!

Nancy laughs out loud.

NANCY

Why can't I live my life?

LAYLA

Why don't you try to? What would have happened if you liked someone and introduced him to your family?

CUT TO:

INT. NANCY'S FAMILY HOME - DINING TABLE

Nancy is having dinner with her family; her mother, father, brother and sister. Her two children, aged 6 and 7, are also present. Everyone is dressed up and looks pleasant sitting around a feast. Nancy's date, Gorik, is sitting next to her.

NANCY

(Voice)

Like in the movies? The first thing they'll do is ask him where he's from,

Nancy's father mouths "Where are you from?"

NANCY (CONT'D)

(Voice)

...and if he says anything other than what they want to hear,

Gorik smiles and mouths "Armenian".

NANCY (CONT'D)

(Voice)

...all hell will break lose.

Her family's eyes widen. Suddenly, the family members are wearing camouflage and each one is carrying a weapon; a machete, a machine gun, a sword, and the mother an axe. They attack Gorik who pulls two knives from his back and defends himself. The two kids leap over the table and join the action.

Bullets, blood and chaos takeover the scene as Nancy calmly eats her dinner.

BACK TO:

INT. LAYLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

NANCY

Ahhh God! What's wrong with me?

LAYLA

(Warm smile)

We're getting there. Did Sarah find it funny?

NANCY

Yeah. I think. Not really. She was kind of pissed off.

LAYLA
Are you looking for someone else?

NANCY
Are you kidding? No way.

LAYLA
Did you feel bad for your husband
when you cheated?

Nancy takes some time.

NANCY
(Wincing)
Honestly...no.

LAYLA
So why not find someone - serious?

NANCY
I don't have time. And Tinder is
not for me. At least not right now.
I felt like a spy for Mossad. Like
I was cheating on the entire Arab
world!
(Mimics)
Shame, shame.

LAYLA
(Snickers)
Why did you choose marketing,
Nancy?

Nancy lights up.

NANCY
Oh, I'm obsessed with everything
American. Not necessarily a fan,
but I love how they sell. They'll
sell you everything from water to
war - and you'll buy it. Greatest
marketeers in the world. I just
love how they package a story and
the presentation of it all. I
connected with that.

LAYLA
Good. A straight answer.
Now, how do you see yourself?

NANCY
What do you mean?

LAYLA

If you were a product, how would you sell you?

NANCY

Huh! I never thought of that before. How would I sell myself?

LAYLA

Where would you start?

NANCY

What is the product? I have to get to know the product and the brand's DNA.

LAYLA

OK, what's your DNA? Who are you?

NANCY

I...am a passionate professional who..

LAYLA

Nobody cares about that shit. Who are you?

NANCY

I..am an ambitious..

LAYLA

Cut the crap. Who are you?

NANCY

(Stern)

I am a successful...

LAYLA

Stop selling. Who are you?

NANCY

SHUT UP.

Silence.

Layla lets her have her moment.

Layla doesn't speak but maintains eye contact.

Nancy is struggling. She looks up. She opens her mouth,

NANCY (CONT'D)

I don't know.

LAYLA
 (Understanding)
 That's OK.

Nancy exhales, leans back and looks up.

NANCY
 I don't know who I am.

LAYLA
 We all know, deep down. We just
 haven't thought it through or given
 ourselves consent.

NANCY
 Is that true?

Nancy looks back at Layla.

LAYLA
 Yes. For example, how would Sarah
 answer that question?

NANCY
 (Smiles)
 She'd say I'm picky, bossy, loving,
 funny, generous...

LAYLA
 Are you speaking for her or has she
 said that about you?

NANCY
 A little bit of both. Also, we're
 kind of similar so...

Nancy pauses.

Nancy does the math.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 (Questioning)
 I don't..I don't think so?

Layla lets her get there.

Nancy is struggling with a thought.

Moments later,

NANCY (CONT'D)
 I think I have fff..feelings for
 her.

LAYLA

I know.

NANCY

No, no, like...strong feelings.

LAYLA

(Smiling)

I know.

Silence.

Nancy is processing her deductions.

Moments later,

NANCY

(Whispers; barely audible)

I'm gay!?

Layla nods.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I'm gay!

LAYLA

I know.

NANCY

I mean in a lesbian way. Not happy.

I mean I'm happy. Now.

(BEAT)

Kinda.

(Whispers)

I'm gay?

Layla smiles.

LAYLA

It's not the Armenian part that
stopped you; it's the penis part.
And the facial hair. And...you get
it.

NANCY

How did I not see it?

LAYLA

You walked it off.

NANCY

What does that mean?

LAYLA

It's like being rushed in for knee surgery and the doctor asks what happened? And you say, 'oh I fell down the stairs - two weeks ago...but I walked it off'.

NANCY

(Confused)

How did I not know?

LAYLA

You knew. Did you feel it? Be honest.

Nancy nods.

NANCY

Yeah, I da...I did.
Is that why I work so much?

Layla lets answer her own question.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(Aware)

I wanted to be with her. But I tried to ignore it. Oh my God, I overworked myself to gay!

Nancy is assessing the information.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(Serious)

No. No, I can't have feelings for her.

LAYLA

Why not?

NANCY

They'd kill me if they found out about Gorik. This? There's no marketing strategy for this!

LAYLA

Fuck 'em.

NANCY

Easy to say.
It's not just family, it's...it's everyone. It's culture, it's country, it's religion, it's...everything.

LAYLA

Fuck 'em. The best piece of advice I ever got: 'if they're not happy for you, they don't want you to be happy.'

NANCY

I can't do this.
(Aggravated)
Ah, fuck you, man.
Ahhhh!
This is the worst.

LAYLA

Why?

NANCY

You know how we are. We take everything personally. "No daughter of mine will be gay". As if I have an option. How do I explain to them it's not power steering?

LAYLA

Carefully.
Off the top of your head, who do you think would be on your side?
Your mom or dad?

NANCY

Neither to be honest. Mom grew up in a world where your value is directly correlated to your husband's. You were a good woman if you were married when you were "supposed to".

LAYLA

And your father?

NANCY

Even worse. He holds a certain status in the community. They look up to him because of his wealth. If word got out his daughter is gay, he'll blame me for ruining *his* life.

LAYLA

Wow. Siblings?

NANCY

My brother, maybe. My sister, I'm not sure. She's mom 2.0.

Nancy huffs and puffs.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Why does it have to be so hard?

LAYLA

You're a hologram in 1965. It makes no sense to them so it must be the work of the devil.

NANCY

But that's not fair.

LAYLA

No it's not.

NANCY

What do I do then? What's the point? See? I told you I can't like her.

LAYLA

You have to live your life. Don't hide from yourself.

NANCY

OK McIlroy, what if best case scenario, by some celestial miracle everyone is happy for me. She doesn't reciprocate. What then?

LAYLA

Does that change who you are?

Layla gives her a moment to digest.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Listen, this is a big decision. Not the gay part. The 'what now' part. You may have to abandon your family. Let's hope not. But worst case scenario,

(BEAT)

(Shakes head)

I don't have an answer for that. That's not what I do. All I know is how to help you find your truth. All I ask, is that you *live* your truth. I can give you a number. Call them and they can guide you. They're extremely helpful in these situations.

NANCY
I don't know.

LAYLA
Talk to Sarah. You'll need someone
to talk to for support. And you
know she won't judge you.

Nancy nods.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
It's a bit heavy, I know. But the
truth is it's your life. Don't hide
from it.

Nancy agrees but isn't happy about it.

Layla checks her phone then writes a phone number down on a
piece of paper.

Nancy gets up. Layla stands.

Nancy surprises her with a hug.

NANCY
Thank you.

LAYLA
You're welcome. Here. Please think
about everything and give them a
call when you're ready.

Layla gives her the paper.

NANCY
I will. Thanks again.

Layla smiles and nods.

Nancy leaves.

Layla reaches for the cigarette case on her desk and opens
it. It's filled with neatly rolled joints. She takes one out,
lights it up and takes a long drag. She blows the smoke.

LAYLA
Whaaat!

Layla is shaking her head in disbelief as she takes her
tablet and plays a song on the Beats Pill;

Song plays: GUNS N ROSES 'Live and Let Die'.

She gets an ALERT on her tablet. A new client signed up.

She reads the profile:

"Hi Dr.Layla,

My name is Majid and I think I have a problem. I want to stop cheating on my wife but can't. Please understand I'm a decent man and I love my wife but I don't know why I'm cheating. It all started when..."

She puts the tablet away.

She smokes and gets into the song as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Layla is casually dressed as she enters the club.

The song fades out.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

We're watching KIM, the 34 year old female comic in the middle of her set. She's wearing fashionable blue baggy jeans, high heels, and a white T-shirt. Her T-shirt has a funky Lebanese flag design on it with a heart shaped Lebanon Cedar.

Layla is at the bar.

KIM

..so I said, "dad, how holy can this matrimony be if even God is single?"

Laughter.

Kim mimes a slap.

KIM (CONT'D)

Tshhh. Right across the face. Sixteen, mind you. I was sixteen. So naturally, everyone thought I was going in the wrong direction and I needed religious classes. The funny thing about religious classes is - NOTHING. It's the only class where you don't learn anything.

Kim gets a mixture of laughs and boo's.

KIM (CONT'D)

OK, hear me out. The only way you learn is if you question. If you can't question, you can't learn. If you're in class and you go "Ms. Johnson, why is the sun hot?" Ms. Johnson never says "how dare you?".

A few more laughs and a couple of walk-outs.

Kim is slightly nervous.

KIM (CONT'D)

So here I am *trying* to learn. What do I do? I ask a question. I'm holding the bible and I say, 'Father, I have a question'. He goes, 'I understand my child, is it about the language?' I say 'no I get that part.' He goes 'is it the message? Because that takes time'. I say 'no that's clear - be kind, rewind, I get it.'

Laughter.

KIM (CONT'D)

He goes 'OK, what's your question?' I say 'it's really more of a clarification'. He goes 'sure'. I say...'is this the first draft?'

Louder laughter.

KIM (CONT'D)

He goes "WHAT? HOW DARE YOU?" I said 'take it easy, man, it's not like you wrote it! What are you, his agent?'

Laughter and applause.

KIM (CONT'D)

That's my time, you guys have been great. My name is Kimberly Cain. Have a good night.

Layla is clapping and cheering as Kim gets off stage.

Kim walks over to the bar.

LAYLA

Damn!

They kiss on the cheek.

KIM

Yup. You would think they'd know by now how comedy works. No red lines, people. That's why you're here; so we can vent on your behalf.

LAYLA

I don't know how you do it, babe. You're my fucking hero.

KIM

Lets drink.

LAYLA

Lets.

KIM

(To Bartender)

Jimmy, two shots, two beers.

(To Layla)

How was your day?

LAYLA

It was really good. I met..

(Points at her)

You...six years ago.

KIM

Oh wow. How did it go?

LAYLA

Exactly the same. So sad. Nothing changed. And Muslim.

KIM

Oh, poor thing. Did you give her the number?

LAYLA

Yes, thanks. I never thought I would get to use it.

A comedian passes by.

COMEDIAN

Hey, Kim. Good set. Fuck those assholes.

KIM

Thanks.

Jimmy brings the drinks.

JIMMY

Here you go, ladies.

(To Kim)

By the way, Jesus called, he said
"get there sooner".

KIM

Setup was too long?

JIMMY

Yep. But the premise is KILLER.
It's a solid bit; you can get an
easy 15 out of that.

KIM

Thanks, babe.

JIMMY

Ignore the haters. They're afraid
to think for themselves.

Layla is grinning ear to ear.

KIM

I fucking love you, man. I swear to
God if I dated Neanderthals, you
would be the first.

JIMMY

I want to say I'm flattered?

He smiles and gets back to the other patrons.

KIM

What a guy! You should hit that.

LAYLA

I don't think so.

KIM

Why not?

Layla shows her the break-up message.

LAYLA

Didn't even bother calling. That's
it, I'm raising my standards.
Yalla, let's go dancing.

KIM
Shot it down.

LAYLA
Shot it down.

They down the shots and take a swig of the beer.

KIM
JIMMY.

She takes out her wallet.

JIMMY
(Waving)
On the house.

She blows him a kiss.

KIM
(To Layla)
You really should get with him.
He's a sweetheart.

LAYLA
Not in the mood. Let's turn up,
biatch.

They walk out excited.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Layla and Kim walk in laughing.

The club is lively with R&B and hip-hop music.

KIM
Oooh it's lit. Let's get some
drinks!

They're at the bar. Kim is ordering and Layla is checking out the crowd.

LAYLA
Is Zak on tonight?

KIM
Zakari-ya from Sy-riyya. I think
so.

A DJ takes over from another. His laptop has a "DJ ZAK" sticker on the back. They see him and wave. He waves back.

KIM (CONT'D)
So you taking a break from men?

LAYLA
No but I want more. Better.

An average looking, average dressed man is approaching them.

KIM
That's good. I mean he was a little
iffy to begin with.

LAYLA
Why didn't you say anything?

KIM
Come on, you're the shrink. Nobody
wants to hear that.

Layla nods in frustration.

Kim sees the man approaching.

KIM (CONT'D)
Incoming.

MARK
Hi ladies, I'm Mark.

LAYLA
Hi. I'm Layla. This is Kim.

KIM
Hi.

Kim turns to the bar to get their drinks.

MARK
Can I buy you guys a drink?

Kim is disappointed for him.

MARK (CONT'D)
Oh, two steps too late.

LAYLA
How's your evening, Mark?

MARK
Not bad. Long day; trying to
unwind.

LAYLA
What do you do?

Kim sips on her cocktail watching the back and forth.

MARK

I'm in I.T. I develop software for
a new start-up.

LAYLA

How many more apps do we need?
Really.

MARK

Two.

Mark smiles. Layla laughs. Kim is impressed. Mark tries to
chat up Kim so as not to alienate her.

MARK (CONT'D)

(To Kim)

What do you do, Kim?

KIM

Syntax error, Mark. Not your type.
Pun intended.

Mark feels up to the challenge.

MARK

How would you know?

KIM

I'm a vagitarian.

MARK

Me too. I'm a vegetarian too. We
have something in common.

KIM

VAGI-tarian.
(Quotes a rap song)
Pussy that'll make you think twice
about leavin', the wife even.
Picture that. Biggie! Uh!

LAYLA

(Clarifies)

She's gay.

MARK

Yeah, no, I got that.
(To Kim)
I'm a vagitarian too, Kim. All
straight men are.

LAYLA

Nice.

MARK

(To Kim)

And it's Method Man, genius. Not Biggie.

KIM

Oh! Shit, you're right. Ticaaal.

Kim gives him a high-five.

KIM (CONT'D)

You get mad props, son.

LAYLA

(To Mark)

Sorry, we're having bit of a ladies night. Maybe another time.

MARK

Sure. Pleasure to meet you guys. Have a good night.

LAYLA & KIM

Bye.

KIM

Why'd you do that? Nice enough guy. Works well under pressure.

LAYLA

I don't want nice enough anymore. I want exceptional.

KIM

Good luck with that.

DJ ZAK

This one goes out to Kim the comic and her friend Layla.

DJ Zak plays an Arabic-fusion song with heavy Arabic percussions.

KIM

Whaaat! Come on, yalla yalla.

The ladies hit the dance floor. They get into their Middle-Eastern swagger. Layla starts belly dancing. A circle forms around them. The crowd is cheering.

KIM (CONT'D)

Aywaaa.

Layla lets loose.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - BOOTH - NIGHT - LATER

Layla and Kim fall into a booth.

KIM

(In Arabic)

You lit up the room.

LAYLA

(In Arabic)

I miss home. Dying to go back.

KIM

Fairouz and tea, olives and cheese,
feeling the breeze. Ya salaaaam.

They sing Fairouz's "Habbaytak".

LAYLA

What the hell, man? Why can't I
find a guy I like? I don't get it.

KIM

You did and fucked it up, remember?

LAYLA

(Mocking)

No. Remind me again how I fucked it
up please?

KIM

I'm just saying boo, you can't play
games with people. You will get
hurt. YOU'RE THE SHRINK!

LAYLA

I know.
(BEAT)
I saw him today.

KIM

Really? How did he look?

LAYLA

Like I fucked up.

KIM

Ouch.

Layla pulls her phone out.

LAYLA
You know what?

KIM
That's my girl.

Layla texts Jamal: "hey, how's it going? Was good seeing you today".

Jamal replies: "Hi, was great seeing you too."

Layla: "What are u up to?"

KIM (CONT'D)
That's my girl.

Their eyes are affixed on the screen as they wait for a reply.

The screen reads "Jamal is typing". Kim is rooting for her horse,

KIM (CONT'D)
Come on, boy.

Laughter.

Jamal replies: "All good. Chillin. U?"

Layla quickly types: "Just had dinner with a friend."

Kim grabs her arm.

Jamal replies with a thumbs up emoji.

KIM (CONT'D)
Motherfucker what?

LAYLA
It's cool. I got it.

Layla types: "Wanna hang out? Make me a late night cheese sandwich like the old days"

Jamal adds: "Sounds good. I'm out of cheese but maybe I can make you something else". He adds a wink.

KIM
Better make her come!

LAYLA
EHH. What's wrong with you?

KIM
Isn't that how you people talk?

LAYLA
What do you mean you people?

KIM
(quotes Tropic Thunder)
What do you mean you people?

They laugh.

KIM (CONT'D)
Go have fun.

LAYLA
(Excited)
Love you.

KIM
Love you.

Layla gives her a peck on the lips.

They get out of the booth. Layla is heading out.

KIM (CONT'D)
(Cheering)
Get it, girl.

Layla giggles like a kid with a crush.

DJ Zak spins a new record: Chance The Rapper's "NO PROBLEM".

KIM (CONT'D)
(Enthusiastic)
Ohhh shit.

The heads in the club start bopping.

She looks around at the dance floor, nods and points at a big fat black man. He points back bopping. She dances over to him.

They dance and sing along.

KIM (CONT'D)
..you don't want no problem, want
no problem with me.

Kim gets into the song.

The song keeps playing as we,

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - STREET - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Layla is in the back of the cab thinking. She grins. Suddenly, she touches her armpits then smells her hand. She's relieved.

The cabbie notices and smirks.

BACK TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Kim and her dance partner are cutting up a rug.

She mixes her partners.

She dances with a couple.

She dances with two women.

She points at Zak who's laughing. He waves at her.

She gets back to the big man.

INT./EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

Layla gets out in front of a building in an upscale neighborhood.

She enters the building.

The music fades out.

INT. JAMAL'S BUILDING - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Layla is fixing herself up in the mirror.

She looks closer at her face.

She notices a line under her eye. She touches it.

She's thinking "I'm getting older".

INT. JAMAL'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Layla exits the elevator to,

SONG: Patynextdoor's "COME AND SEE ME".

(The song plays to the end of the episode.)

She walks up to Jamal's apartment and rings the bell.

He opens the door.

Jamal stands barefoot in T-shirt and jeans.

They smile at each other.

INT. JAMAL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The lights are dim in this duplex with a great view.

He pours her some wine. They drink and chat for a bit at the open kitchen's counter.

He looks deep into her eyes.

They kiss.

They move to the couch where they devour each other.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is slow dancing. Kim is slow dancing with the big man.

INT. JAMAL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Layla and Jamal are having passionate sex.

We see old burn marks on Layla's back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAMAL'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Layla is in a Yeezus T-shirt looking out at the city lights.

Jamal brings her a glass of water. She takes it as he kisses her on the cheek.

He holds her.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - LATE NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

There's still a small queue to get into the club.

Kim comes out with big man. They're laughing and dancing. He offers to take her somewhere. She checks the time. She says something to him and gestures "come along". He agrees.

They get in a taxi.

INT. JAMAL'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jamal is making Layla a sandwich as they chat and laugh.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - LATE NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Kim is on stage doing another set.

She's doing a little better than before.

Big man is watching from the bar and chuckling. Jimmy is behind the bar laughing as he pours a cocktail.

Kim seems pleased with herself. She's energized and gets animated on stage.

Laughter.

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT

Still in the Yeezus T-shirt, Layla looks serene as she's walking down the street.

She's thinking about something.

She stops and hails a cab.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATE NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Layla tip toes into her dad's room.

She sits next to him and caresses his face. She takes his hand, places it on the side of her face.

She stands, looks at him lovingly then begins to strangle him.

Monitors BEEP.

INT. JAMAL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Layla wakes up in shock. Jamal is asleep.

LAYLA
(Bewildered; Mouths)
What the fuck?

FADE OUT.