

SHAMED.
A Radio
Play

By

Furquan
Akhtar

A TAP DRIPPING.

SHABANA (V.O.)
We belong to Allah and to Him we
shall return.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)
How's that fair? You have to bathe
them, feed them and...love them and
then one day you lose everything.

SHABANA
We *belong* to Allah and to Him we
shall return.

A DOORBELL RINGS.

SHABANA (V.O.)
She's not going to answer the door
again. *Aisha someone is at the
door.*

A BIG BOLLYWOOD SONG FROM THE 70S SUCH AS "AAJ MAUSAM..." IS
ON TO DROWN OUT THE DOORBELL.

SHABANA (V.O.)
Why does she always do this?

SHE UNLOCKS THE BATHROOM DOOR. THE MUSIC GROWS LOUDER.

SHABANA
Aisha! You can't have that on.

AISHA
What?

SHABANA
What is someone hears?

AISHA
So?

SHABANA
We're meant to be...quiet. We're
meant to be praying.

AISHA
The people at the door won't bring
him back.

BEAT.

AISHA (CONT'D)
Praying won't bring back my husband
mum.

SHABANA
How can you-

BUT THEY ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE SOUND OF THE DOOR BELL.

AISHA
(SIGHING)
I'm not answering it.

OFF A CHILD GURGLES IN HER ARMS

AISHA (CONT'D)
If someone hands me one more plate
of food as some sign of pity. I
swear I'll scream.

SHABANA (V.O.)
She's not the only one.

THE DOOR BELL RINGS AGAIN.

AISHA
Just ignore it.

SHABANA DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING.

AISHA (CONT'D)
Mum? Please don't answer that door.

SHABANA
(SHORT)
If I ignore it then doesn't mean
its not happening does it? They
know we're in. We have to face them
some time.

THE DOOR BELL RINGS AGAIN - MORE INSISTENT. SHABANA RELENTS
AND OPENS THE DOOR

MRS AMJAD
Oh Mrs Malik Khan!

MRS AMJAD BREAKS DOWN IN TO FAKE SOBS IN SHABANA'S ARMS.

MRS AMJAD (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry to hear about Rizwan.

SHE PASSES HER A BAG OF FOOD

MRS AMJAD (CONT'D)
Some samosas to see you through-

SHABANA (V.O.)
That's what that smell was...

AISHA
I can't handle this.

SHABANA
Aisha!

AISHA
Excuse me.

WE HEAR A DOOR SLAM

SHABANA
She's finding it hard to accept.

MRS AMJAD
I can only imagine.

SHABANA
Everywhere we turn there are reminders of him.

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
He's my son. He was...(everything to me).

MRS AMJAD
(CHANGING THE SUBJECT)
I brought you samosas...

SHABANA
(DISTRACTED)
Yes sorry. Funny isn't it? People always think food is the solution. We could live for weeks on these handouts...

MRS AMJAD
I think people don't know how to react during hard times.
(QUICKLY)
I didn't mean that. It's just a way to...give you my good wishes.

SHABANA (V.O.)
Why won't she just be quiet?

SHABANA
It was the same for those that came before you...

MRS AMJAD
 (CLUTCHING AT STRAWS)
 Who knows what to say in these
 situations?

SHABANA
 No you're right. You're right. I'm
 reliving what happened every
 second.

MRS AMJAD
 Put faith in Allah. He tests us and
 we can pray but ultimately time is
 the only thing that will heal these
 wounds Shabana.

(ON A ROLL NOW)
 You will learn to move on and
 adjust-

SHABANA
 But I don't want to adjust.

MRS AMJAD
 (FALTERING NOW)
 No of course what I was trying to
 say was-

SHABANA
 You're talking as if I should be
 mourning for my son.

MRS AMJAD
 Yes well, no but-

SHABANA
 I'm not going to mourn my son Mrs
 Amjad. He's not dead... He's very
 much alive.

CUT TO

2 INT PRISON

2

THE SOUND OF A BUZZER. A BIG METAL DOOR SHUTTING.

RIZWAN
 I'm innocent Mam. They're making it
 all up.

SHABANA (V.O.)
 I used to hate it when he called me
 Mam. My blood ran cold the first
 time that he said like I'd lost him
 to this foreign land.

OFF; SOUND OF PEOPLE TALKING. SCRAPING OF A CHAIR AS NERVOUS
 SHABANA SITS DOWN

SHABANA

Oh beta (son)! I know. I know.

SHABANA (V.O.)

But now I live just to hear him say it.

RIZWAN

(ALMOST RAMBLING)

I'm dreading the trial but then I think will they believe me when they see who I am? Will they understand?

SHABANA

They will.

RIZWAN

My own wife won't come to see me.

SHABANA

She's erm...Asif wasn't feeling well.

RIZWAN

Again? What's wrong with him?

SHABANA

You can't worry yourself about that...

RIZWAN

Mam. What's wrong with him?

SHABANA

Nothing...

RIZWAN

He's always ill. What's wrong with the kid?

BEAT.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

I don't want him to be...soft.

SHABANA

Don't be silly. He's a baby it happens all the time. I know what's it like I used to hold my breath every time you sneezed but-

RIZWAN

So you know what I'm going through?

SHABANA

Cough and colds happen all the time
but you...you were my miracle. Do
you know how long I waited for you?

RIZWAN

And you're waiting all over again.

THIS HANGS IN THE AIR.

SHABANA

You don't fret about me. You can't
think about anything outside of
here.

RIZWAN

But If she *thinks* there's something
wrong then I need you to get them
to the doctors and find out. Last
thing I want to know is that
there's something up with my son
and I'm stuck in here. Helpless.

BEAT

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

Why won't she come and visit Mam?

SHABANA

Hey you'll be home soon. We *will*
prove them wrong.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

He looks so skinny now. My little
boy looks so out of place amongst
these...men.

SHABANA

Are you eating?

RIZWAN

Jesus Mam. Yes I'm eating although
the food is as good as you expect
it to be at Her Majesty's pleasure.

SHABANA

Is it not halal?

RIZWAN

I'd be happy if it was edible.

SHABANA

I'll bring you something in okay?

RIZWAN

Please Mam, honestly it's fine.

SHABANA

You need to keep your energy up. Remember what I told you? It's just profiling isn't it? Mrs Mehmood said the same to me. They see a brown face and think we're all the same.

RIZWAN

(EMOTIONAL)

I'm innocent Mam. They're accusing me and Feroz just because what? We're taxi drivers? Some drunk little girl who used to come into the office now then and it's her word against mine?

SHABANA

But the lawyer is saying we've got a good chance.

RIZWAN

I know...I've not always been good but to be blamed for something like this...it's sick. I only went round their house to beg them to tell the truth and they're using that to deny me bail? Saying that I threatened them...

SHABANA

Oh darling I know you're innocent. We just have to pray to Allah that, that shines through don't we?

RIZWAN

(COMING TO SENSES)

Yeah...

SHABANA

Listen to me Rizwan, always remember I believe you.

3

EXT. BUS STOP.

3

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BUS JOURNEY.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I can't bear to see him like that. He pushed past my thoughts when I said it but he doesn't know what he means to me. My boy.

OFF THE SOUND OF A PHONE PLAYING MUSIC.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I flew over oceans to meet my husband. My mother said it was my destiny that I was going to meet the man I'd not seen since my wedding...And that I was going to spend the rest of my life with him.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I didn't know then but she was right...because he gave me the greatest gift. He gave me my Rizwan...

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

After years of trying...He was my miracle and now they've taken him away from me.

SHABANA BURSTS INTO TEARS.

PASSENGER

Are you okay?

SHABANA

Yeah..Sorry I'm fine.

PASSENGER

I saw you in the prison. Some times these things can get a bit much eh...?

SHABANA

(COMPOSING HERSELF)

Yeah..yeah they can.

PASSENGER

My Tom's in there for...Doesn't really matter what they're in there for does it?

SHABANA

How do you mean?

PASSENGER

I mean all those lads in there on remand. Not even guilty yet and already they're marked by what they've been accused of.

SHABANA

My son's innocent.

PASSENGER

Exactly. So's my Tom. But that's the thing in't it? To everyone round my end he's the lad who held up the Offy and I'm the crazy bitch who stuck by him. Even if he's innocent that won't change. We'll be *that* couple...But do you know what I couldn't care less. Cuz I love him...

BEAT.

PASSENGER (CONT'D)

Sorry I'm gobbing off again. Just checking you're alright chick. These things can be a trial in themselves.

SHABANA

(QUIET)

Yeah...

PASSENGER

Don't worry though love you'll be home soon enough.

CUT TO:

4

EXT. WEDDING VENUE

4

A CRESCENDO OF INDIAN WEDDING MUSIC - (LIVE IF POSSIBLE). WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A CAR ENGINE BEING SWITCHED OFF. THE MUSIC IS NOT AS LOUD FROM IN HERE BUT IT GIVES THE SENSE OF CLAUSTROPHOBIA. ASIF GURGLES IN THE BACK.

AISHA

I don't want to do this Mum.

SHABANA

We have to.

AISHA

Why?

SHABANA

Because...because we haven't done anything wrong.

AISHA

No one will expect us to be there. They couldn't care less (about us)

SHABANA

(IN)

I care.

AISHA

Well I know that. Why do you think I am here?

SHABANA GIVES A SMALL LAUGH

SHABANA

You talk about being the same as the English but what makes us different? It's a bond. Like the one that I share with those people in there.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

You know Mrs Shafiq? When I first came to this country. I didn't know the price of milk. She took my hand...this stranger. Counted out the little money that I had and when I didn't have enough - she paid the rest. I've known her ever since Aisha. That's why I am here.

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Now come on.

WE HEAR THE CAR DOOR OPEN AND THE MUSIC FLOODS IN BEFORE AISHA SIGHS AND FOLLOWS.

CUT TO

5

INT WEDDING VENUE

5

SOFTER ROMANTIC BOLLYWOOD MUSIC HERE. SHABANA PUSHES HER WAY THROUGH THE CROWD TO GET TO THE GROOM'S MUM. SHABANA IS FULL OF BRAVADO.

SHABANA

Excuse me. Can I just get-

BEAT.

AISHA

Can we not leave now we've shown our faces?

SHABANA
Sshh. Excuse me.

BEAT.

AISHA
There's a lad..erm there's someone
over there I might go and speak to.

SHABANA
Who?...No, you're staying here. Oh
here she is.
(SPOTS HER)
Mrs Shafiq!

MRS SHAFIQ
Oh erm Mrs Malik-Khan.

SHABANA
Mubarakan! A gift for you.

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
This is my daughter in law Aisha.

MRS SHAFIQ
Thank you and hello Aisha. We met
at your wedding but I doubt you
remember. How crazy these things
are!

SHABANA
Of course she does. Careful with
the gift. It's fragile.

MRS SHAFIQ
Oh?

SHABANA
I got it from one of those big
stores in town.

MRS SHAFIQ
Lovely.

SHABANA
It wasn't in the sale.

MRS SHAFIQ
(SMALL LAUGH)
No of course not Shabana.

BEAT.

SHABANA
It's a gorgeous wedding.

MRS SHAFIQ

Thanks, much smaller than I would have liked.

AISHA

Yeah only a few hundred.

SHABANA

Aisha...

MRS SHAFIQ

No she's right gone are the days where you have to invite everyone. They want...what's the word. Intimate. I said to him "intimate" is for what happens after the wedding.

SHABANA AND MRS SHAFIQ LAUGH.

AISHA

(UNDER HER BREATH)

Oh gross...

SHABANA

Well I knew if Rizwan couldn't make it then I should come on his behalf after all our sons grew up together henna (right)? They were best friends.

MRS SHAFIQ

Best friends?...Well, they were friends, yes.

SHABANA

Friends like us. I was just telling Aisha how we met.

MRS SHAFIQ

You're making me feel old Shabana!

BEAT.

MRS SHAFIQ (CONT'D)

How are you both keeping?

SHABANA

You know we've had trouble lately...

MRS SHAFIQ

I heard. I wanted to get in touch but-

AISHA

So why didn't you?

SHABANA

Aisha!

AISHA

Well I'm just saying if you're as close as you say you are then why hasn't she got in touch?

MRS SHAFIQ

You're right...I've just been busy with the wedding.

AISHA

To busy to pick up the phone?

SHABANA

I'm warning you...

MRS SHAFIQ

Look thank you so much for the gift. Make yourselves comfortable. There's so much food and we're cutting the cake later.

AISHA

Well that's summat to look forward to at least.

MRS SHAFIQ

Shabana you should teach your daughter-in-law some respect for her elders. Now please excuse me.

SHABANA

Mrs Shafiq wait!

MRS SHAFIQ TAKES THE GIFT AND LEAVES.

CUT TO

6

EXT SHABANA'S HOUSE

6

SHABANA AND AISHA ARE DRIVING BACK IN NEAR SILENCE.

SHABANA (V.O.)

It's always another family. In another town isn't it?

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I used to watch the news when I first got here. Just for any glimpse of home.

(BITTER LAUGH)

(MORE)

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

But the only thing that I saw was my home torn apart. Scorched earth. Things here weren't much better...If they used to show a murder or something horrible and I used to be on pins until they said where it happened. And if it was London or somewhere down south - I used thank god that it wasn't near my family. Even before Rizwan I couldn't watch the victim's parents grieving for their child...and now I'm grieving too except I'm not the victim's mother. They don't show my kind of grief on TV...Where is this girl taking me?

SHABANA

Where are you going?

AISHA

It's match day - I'm going the other way round.

SHABANA SIMMERS.

AISHA (CONT'D)

Look please don't be angry.

SHABANA

Why not eh? You just tore into one of my oldest friends.

AISHA

Friends are people who stand by you.

SHABANA

She has.

AISHA

No! Not for a few quid down the supermarket. Friends stand by you when something serious happens. When your son get's arrested-

BEAT.

AISHA (CONT'D)

I can't cope, I never expected any of this.

SHABANA

None of us did.

THEY PARK UP.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

If you believe in sticking together so much then why won't you go and see him?

AISHA

Because...I'm scared.

SHABANA

What?

A BEAT.

AISHA

I can't see my husband like that. Broken...I had an Uncle who got deported when I was little. I went to see him. They kept him in this place. All these men...I know now that he wasn't meant to be here but then? Then I thought they're treating him like an animal. All I could think was I really loved him and they're locking him up and taking him away from people who love him.

AS THEY GET OUT OF THE CAR.

SHABANA

So go to see Rizwan then. Show *him* that you love him.

AISHA

That's what my Dad said about my uncle. "It's important that he sees that you love him beti". I went in...there can't have been smoke but I just remember this hazy place. Grim. Dirty. I tried to speak but the words just got caught in me throat. Cutting in. Then I started crying. Floods.

SHABANA

Oh love.

AISHA

I don't know if I...What is that?

SHABANA

Is that graffiti?

AISHA

Oh God.

CUT TO

7

EXT SHABANA'S HOUSE

7

A SPLASH OF WATER FROM A BUCKET THEN THE SOUND OF SCRUBBING.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Paedo...God I hope the neighbours
didn't see.

AISHA

Neighbours are going to have a
field day with this.

SHABANA

You think they saw?

AISHA

Big red graffiti? Yeah I think so.

SHABANA

I didn't want Asif seeing this.

AISHA

(LIGHT)

Good thing he's far too young to
read.

SHABANA

You know what I mean.

SHABANA SIGHS - DESPAIRING.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I remember when Rizwan's dad
explained it to me. That these men
took children from their families.
That's not my son...That's not him.

AISHA

If it makes you feel any better
they spelt "Paedo" wrong

SHABANA LAUGHS.

AISHA (CONT'D)

You can't let it get to you.

SHABANA

I know. No matter what I have to go
through.

AISHA

Even if it turns us into a pair of
scrubbers..

SHABANA

Exactly.

AISHA LAUGHS.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
What's so funny?

CUT TO:

8 INT PRISON RECEPTION

8

OFF THE NOISE OF PEOPLE TALKING.

SHABANA (V.O.)
(CHECKING)
Money...Phone...Keys...Food.

PRISON GUARD
Keep the queue moving please!

SHABANA (V.O.)
(CHECKING)
Money...Phone...Keys...Food.

SHABANA PUTS THE THINGS INTO A TRAY.

PRISON GUARD
All jewelry off and in the trays.

THE METAL DETECTOR SOUNDS.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)
Oi you! Stop!

SHABANA IS OBLIVIOUS.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)
You in the head scarf! Oi I said
stop.

SHABANA
Me?

PRISON GUARD
Yes you. Did you not hear what I
just said? When the buzzer sounds.
You stop. Now can you please take
off you're jewelry.

SHABANA
I'm sorry I must have missed
something.

PRISON GUARD
It's always the same with you
Asians. I could shake one of you
lot down and rake it in.

SHABANA
What did you say?

PRISON GUARD
And what have we got here?

SHABANA
Just some rice...Some...chicken.

PRISON GUARD
Oh lovely and what are the spices
that you've used?

SHABANA
Some masala, some-

PRISON GUARD
Are you being serious? Despite the
fact that I'd be on the toilet till
Christmas; It's against Prison
regulations to take food in.
Now please remove you jewelry and
move along. You're holding up the
queue.

CUT TO:

9 INT PRISON

9

SHABANA IS PRAYING.

SHABANA (V.O.)
Laa Ilaaha Illal Lahoo Mohammadur
Rasool Ullah.

RIZWAN ENTERS. HE'S BEEN BEATEN UP.

SHABANA
No...

RIZWAN
(PAINED)
It's much worse than it looks.

SHABANA (V.O.)
My boy. Oh my beautiful boy.

SHABANA
Who did this to you?

RIZWAN
Don't worry mam please.

SHABANA
Have you told the guard who did
this to you?

RIZWAN
It doesn't work like that...

SHABANA

Oh come on Rizwan this isn't a film. I'm calling the guard.

RIZWAN

Don't you dare Mam.

SHABANA (V.O.)

His eyes. I used to run home just to see those smiling brown eyes. And now? Swollen. They're darker than I remember too. Almost cold.

SHABANA

So?

RIZWAN

So...?

SHABANA

How did it happen?

RIZWAN

I had a fall out over summat in the canteen.

SHABANA

I can tell when you're lying.

A BEAT.

RIZWAN

Some lads found out what I was in for.

SHABANA

But you're on remand. If you were guilty then but-...Did you tell them that you're innocent-

HE LAUGHS BITTERLY WHICH MAKES THE WORDS DIE IN SHABANA'S MOUTH.

RIZWAN

Dad would know what to do. He'd say "Beta be strong." and sometimes that's all it took.

SHABANA

Abdullah would never have let it get this far. Even the day the accident happened. He was on his way to set up an account for you for university. I didn't want to lose you but guess what he said to me?

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 "Shabana be strong".

RIZWAN
 I miss him Mam.

SHABANA
 I know beta.

RIZWAN
 I spend most of my time in my cell.
 Thinking about him then waiting
 till I get to see you. *Hoping* that
 I get to see Aisha.

SHABANA (V.O.)
 He's broken.

SHABANA
 (RELUCTANT)
 I ask her to come but she's scared-

SHE STOPS HERSELF.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 She has demons of her own. And
 besides she can't bring Asif in
 here.

RIZWAN
 Is this you trying to tell me that
 there's not many people willing to
 look after a paedophile's kid?

SHABANA
 Don't you dare call yourself that!
 You're my son. You're a good man. A
 good husband to Aisha not
 that...Never that.

RIZWAN
 I'm sorry. I can handle this for
 now but I couldn't bear if people
 took this out on him...or any of
 you.

SHABANA
 (TRYING TO CONVINCING
 HERSELF)
 Don't think about the outside. Just
 think about you.

RIZWAN
 Will you give this letter to Aisha?

SHABANA

Of course. Of course I will.

RIZWAN

Thanks Mam. I love you; you know that?

SHABANA

I know.

RIZWAN

No you don't get it. The Imam used to say heaven is beneath your mother's feet. Trust her and respect her. I don't think I fully understood how right he was until this happened. I love you mam.

CUT TO:

10

INT PRISON RECEPTION

10

SHABANA

Excuse me. Can I have a word?

PRISON GUARD

If you wish to file a complaint then let me direct you to the supervisor.

SHABANA

No no it's not about you. I want to ask about my son.

PRISON GUARD

Which one is he?

SHABANA

Rizwan Malik Khan.

PRISON GUARD

What about him?

SHABANA

He's hurt.

PRISON GUARD

Oh yeah. A report's been filed. There's nothing left to say at the moment.

SHABANA

What kind of place is this? I want to see the manager.

PRISON GUARD

This isn't a restaurant. It's a prison. Now visiting times are over so please exit to the left.

SHABANA (V.O.)

How can I leave my boy here?

CUT TO:

11 INT SHABANA'S HOUSE

11

THE SOUND OF A DOOR SLAMMING AS SHE RETURNS HOME.

SHABANA

Aisha?!

SHABANA (V.O.)

All I want to do is stop him hurting. Does she even love him? I don't know who I'm living with.

SHABANA

Aisha!

AISHA

Sssh I just about got him to sleep. That child honestly. I think he wants a cuddle and then-

SHABANA

My son, your husband sent you a letter.

AISHA TAKES IT

AISHA

But it's opened.

SHABANA

(LYING)

The prison have to check these things Aisha. What do you take me for?

SHABANA (CONT'D)

No.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Is it a lie if I've read it to protect my son?

AISHA

You've read this haven't you mum?

A BEAT.

SHABANA

I told you I haven't. Is it not enough that my little boy is battered and bruised because they think he's some dirty... I need you to stand by him.

AISHA

He's been beaten up? How badly?

SHABANA (V.O.)

I'm not sure she loves him.

SHABANA

Bad enough.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Why won't you go?

AISHA SIGHS.

AISHA

I told you about my uncle...

SHABANA

(EXASPERATED)

It's not just that. You're hiding something from me. You both are. I feel like I've been living in the shadows in my own home for so many months now. Back to when I was married - never knowing where I stood.

AISHA

I know...I know.

BEAT.

SHABANA

You can't think he's guilty...

AISHA

(RELUCTANT)

Your mind starts to race and you think of every little opportunity. He always did the night shifts.

SHABANA

So? You know what taxi drivers are like. They have to be working. You don't make money sat at home.

AISHA

So why does he come home...stinking of- (alcohol).

(MORE)

AISHA (CONT'D)
 The last time...He had too many and
 I'd had enough. Told him so and he
 hit me.

THIS HANGS IN THE AIR.

SHABANA (V.O.)
 Not *my* boy. He wouldn't do that.
 Would he?

SHABANA
 Some times it's the job of the wife
 to look past these things.

AISHA
 Don't. You don't believe that.

BEAT.

AISHA (CONT'D)
 Would you say that to your
 daughter? If you had one?

SHABANA
 You are just like my daughter. I
 just...I just can't...

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 We'll make things right when he
 gets home. I promise you.

CUT TO

12 INT SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

12

LOW NOISE OF AN OFFICE. PHONES RINGING ETC. SHABANA IS A
 SHADOW OF HERSELF NOW. GEOFF; RIZWAN'S SOLICITOR ENTERS.

GEOFF
 Mrs Malik Khan? Follow me.

SHABANA
 Hello Mr Stephenson.

GEOFF
 I'm sorry. Hello and call me Geoff
 please.

THEY ENTER AN OFFICE. THE NOISE IS QUIETER NOW.

SHABANA
 I er-

GEOFF

(READING NOTES)

Rizwan has been charged with
"meeting a child following sexual
grooming".

SHABANA

Yes...

GEOFF

It's hard to predict which way a
jury will go in a case that's as...
contentious as this.

SHABANA

What do you mean?

GEOFF

Well Rizwan hasn't got any previous
convictions.

SHABANA

But he was denied bail...

GEOFF

Well, look maybe you didn't
understand the bail hearing. Rizwan
shouldn't have approached the
family but it seems like his anger
got the better of him.

SHABANA

He's not normally like that.

GEOFF

Well under the Sexual Offences Act,
for someone to be arrested for the
offence of "meeting a child
following sexual grooming", the
suspect must have contacted the
victim at least twice - with the
intention of abusing them - before
the meeting takes place. The police
have to be able to prove this.

SHABANA

But he never...

GEOFF

(SHORT)

Okay...*but* that's what he's been
accused of. The suspect, in this
case Rizwan must have contacted the
victim at *least* twice.

SHABANA

He never would have-

GEOFF

(IN)

I don't mean to be unkind Mrs Malik Khan but the police think so. They would have to have enough evidence to think he had the intention of abusing her. I'm going to protect him but at the moment it seems like it's her word against his.

SHABANA

I...

GEOFF

He's still on remand and we have time. We have a respectable alibi in Feroz.

A BEAT.

SHABANA

And we can pass this off as silly teenage crush?

GEOFF

It's not that simple. There's an element of that there - this girl who had no father figure suddenly taken in by an older, charming and kind stranger. Our argument is that she has been spurned and unable to handle the rejection she wants revenge.

SHABANA

That's exactly it.

GEOFF

Ah but if you look at it from the prosecution's perspective it's an older man taking advantage of a young and vulnerable girl.

SHABANA (V.O.)

That's not true! It's not true.

GEOFF

We have to stick to facts. His word against hers won't help. Feroz's alibi, dates and times, from the taxi logs. Those are the things that will strengthen our case...Facts.

SHABANA (V.O.)

And I pray to Allah that we find them.

GEOFF
 Now...is there anything else you're
 worried about?

CUT TO

13 INT PRISON RECEPTION

13

A BUZZER SOUNDS AND A METAL DOOR SHUTS
 OFF THE SOUND OF PEOPLE CHATTING.

SHABANA
 Are you alright Aisha love? You're
 shaking...

AISHA
 Yeah...

PRISON GUARD
 Can you put your arms out please?

SHABANA (V.O.)
 It's that God awful guard again.

OFF; MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE MOVING ALONG

PRISON GUARD
 Belongings in the tray...Keep the
 line moving. Nice to see you again.

SHABANA IGNORES HIM.

SHABANA (V.O.)
 I hate this place.

SHABANA
 Don't worry Aisha love. It's just
 like the airport. There's no need
 to be nervous eh?

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 Hey...be happy for him?

AISHA
 What?

SHABANA
 Just for this visit. I need you to
 be positive. If not for him then do
 it for me.

CUT TO:

14

INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM

14

OFF; SOUND OF PEOPLE TALKING. SCRAPING OF A CHAIR AS NERVOUS SHABANA SITS DOWN.

RIZWAN

Oh My god Aisha. Aisha...

HE KISSES HER SEVERAL TIMES. FAR FROM ROMANTIC.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

Sorry Mam.

SHABANA

(CHUFFED)

Oh don't mind me. You look better darling.

RIZWAN

Thanks. Oh it's so good to see you.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

Yeah of course and how's the lad getting on?

SHABANA

Oh he's belting. That's what you say isn't it?

RIZWAN LAUGHS. A BEAT.

RIZWAN

Y'alright?

AISHA

Yeah. Getting on you know?

RIZWAN

How are you for money?

AISHA

Fine thanks.

RIZWAN

You get my letter?

AISHA

I did.

RIZWAN

All I think about is you. I came home to you at the end of every shift.

BEAT.

AISHA

I don't know where you went in between.

SHABANA

Aisha!

RIZWAN

No Mum it's fine...

SHABANA (V.O.)

He really loves her.

RIZWAN

I used to think that, honest I did. If I was in some backstreet dropping some drunk off at 2am. I used to think about being at home with my family.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I never had this...affection.

RIZWAN

I can do this. I can get out of here if you stick with me.

AISHA

Okay...

SHABANA (V.O.)

I prayed she'd be right for him.

A BEAT.

RIZWAN

You think I don't know our boy but I do. Before I got taken away I was learning everything about him. The food he likes. The times he wakes up.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I prayed that he'd be the father that he never had because I taught him what a good parent was. He looks stoic...strong.

BEAT.

RIZWAN

You know one afternoon one of Mam's old Bollywood DVDs was playing. I turned it over. Always hated them films. She used to force me to sit there for three hours and watch these ridiculous stories.

SHABANA
They're classic films!

AISHA
I like them.

RIZWAN
I know you do. You and me Mam had
this bond straight away.

AISHA
That's silly...

RIZWAN
I know that now.

HE GIVES A SMALL BITTER LAUGH.

SHABANA (V.O.)
I had to make sure that he had
everything because he was part of
me. Then they get older and pull
away and it tears you apart. No,
not my Rizwan. He's going to look
after me till I'm old and grey.
Well, greyer.

RIZWAN
My boy though...My boy started
crying his eyes out when I switched
it off. Bawling. I thought that's
it she's got to him. My mother's
got to him and I never even had a
chance.

SHABANA
Rizwan...

RIZWAN
Let me finish Mam. What I'm trying
to say is that it's not just about
me. It's about us. Our boy is gonna
have all your brilliant and kind
qualities Aisha. I just want him to
be a part of me too.

AISHA
He will be.

RIZWAN
(BETRAYING SOME QUIET
ANGER)
Not if I'm in here.

SHABANA SNAPS FROM HER REVERIE.

SHABANA

That's enough now Rizwan. Listen I saw your solicitor yesterday

RIZWAN

Oh?

SHABANA

He said to keep your spirits up because we have a good case.

(POINTED)

Aisha's by your side and Feroz...

RIZWAN

I can't tell you what a relief that is Mam.

SHABANA

We're here for you every step. Isn't that right Aisha?

AISHA

Yes Mum.

CUT TO

15

INT SHABANA'S HOUSE

15

A BOLLYWOOD SONG PLAYS. AS THE FILM COMES TO AN END.

SHABANA

Oh I liked that one.

AISHA

Yeah.

SHABANA

Too many of these new ones are arty farty and try to have a real life ending but give me masala any day. I was brought up on masala.

AISHA

Yeah. Real life's not all that.

A BEAT.

SHABANA

Are you okay? I bet you feel better now eh? Now that you've spoken to him.

AISHA

I do Mum yeah.

AISHA GETS A TEXT.

SHABANA

I wish I had that with my husband.
He's not going to let you down from
now on. I know it...I know it
Aisha.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Are you listening?

AISHA

I am. It's just...It's Deena -
Feroz's wife?

SHABANA

I know who Deena is. What's she
saying?

AISHA

She wants to see us tomorrow - it's
about the case.

CUT TO:

16 INT SHABANA'S HOUSE

16

A DOORBELL RINGS.

AISHA

I don't want to be here. What about
Asif?

SHABANA

He's with Mrs Amjad. We have to be
here. She's asked us round. It's-

AISHA

Please don't say what will the
community will think because I
might scream.

SHABANA

I wasn't actually. I was going to
say it's solidarity.

SHABANA (V.O.)

What's taking them so long?

AISHA

Do you remember what happened the
last time we showed someone some
solidarity?

SHABANA
Yeah you went running your mouth
off. This is different. These
people are supporting us.

AS THE DOOR OPENS

AISHA
Deena...

DEENA
Assalamu alaikum...Come in.

AS THEY ENTER. THEY TAKE OFF THEIR SHOES AND COATS.

SHABANA
Is Mrs Awaan not in?

DEENA
(AWKWARD)
No er she's out.

SHABANA
Oh.

SHABANA (V.O.)
Something's not right...

DEENA
Sorry for taking so long to open
the door.

SHABANA
Don't be silly. We're early.

DEENA
It's just that it's hard for me to
get up the courage.

SHABANA
What do you mean?

DEENA
Every time I do it's to defend
someone I love.

A BEAT.

DEENA (CONT'D)
People don't understand why Feroz
is putting his own reputation on
the line for...

SHABANA
My son?

DEENA
I'm sorry but you don't understand
what it's like.

AISHA
Are you for real?

AISHA EXHALES

SHABANA
(BERATING)
Aisha.

SHABANA (V.O.)
She's right though. This girl has
no clue.

DEENA
I'll defend my husband to my dying
breath...but it's too much for us
to take on.

AISHA
Oh here we go...

DEENA
The reason I invited you over...

BEAT

DEENA (CONT'D)
My marriage...my family mean too
much. We can't risk them. I
won't...risk them.

BEAT

SHABANA
(GROWING DREAD)
Deena, look...

DEENA
No...We've spoken to our lawyer.
Rizwan used Feroz's name.

AISHA
No...

DEENA
Feroz is going to tell the police
everything he knows about Rizwan.
All the times that he...he had to
cover for him-

SHABANA
(DEVASTATED)
They're friends...

DEENA

That's what Feroz thought but he used my husband as an excuse to see that girl.

AISHA AND SHABANA ARE WINDED.

AISHA

You know that's not true.

DEENA

You don't even believe that yourself. You *know* he's guilty.

SHABANA

How dare you?...

DEENA

I think you should go.

CUT TO

17 INT SHABANA'S HOUSE

17

AISHA RUNS UPSTAIRS AS SHABANA TAKES ASIF FROM MRS AMJAD.

SHABANA

Aisha!

MRS AMJAD

Oh dear. Is everything okay?

SHABANA

Err yes. Just some bad news.

MRS AMJAD

Oh?

SHABANA

Thank you for staying.

MRS AMJAD

Oh...of course. He was as good as gold.

A DOOR SLAMS UPSTAIRS.

MRS AMJAD (CONT'D)

Are you sure everything is okay?

SHABANA

I should...get on. Thank you again Mrs Amjad. Khuda Hafiz.

MRS AMJAD
Khuda Hafiz...

SHABANA
Right you. Mummy needs some time to
calm down. So how about you sit
with your Daadi Amma?

SHABANA IS PLAYING WITH HER GRANDSON. WE HEAR HER RIFLING
THROUGH A TOY BOX.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
Let's see what have you got here.
All these toys aren't you spoilt
eh? You know you'll need a big job
to pay for nice things when you're
older.

THE CHILD GURGLES.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
Hmm how about a fireman?

OFF: RATTLE SOUNDS IN A TOY BOX

SHABANA (CONT'D)
No not one of those... A what is this
a doctor? You know I knew what I
wanted to be when I was a little
girl. I thought I had it all
figured out.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
Maybe one day you'll be a doctor.
Then doing good will your job and
then everything else will just be a
blessing.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
You won't remember any of this. Me
rambling like an old woman but then
it means that you wont remember any
of the pain that your daddy's going
through. And that's only a good
thing...God you look so much like
him...

SHE BRINGS THE CHILD CLOSE. BREATHING HIM.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
(TEARFUL)
I won't let anything happen to our
family. Not again. I promise.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 Come on let's put you down for a
 nap eh?

CUT TO:

18 INT AISHA'S BEDROOM

18

AISHA IS FURIOUSLY PACKING. AS SHABANA ENTERS

SHABANA
 Have you calmed down? We need to
 get our heads together and think
 about what we're doing next. I've
 made you a brew. I know chai isn't
 always the answer but...

AS SHE NOTICES.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 What do you think you're doing?

AISHA
 I'm sorry mum. I can't do this
 anymore.

SHABANA
 Where are you going? What do you
 think you're playing at?

AISHA
 I'm leaving.

SHABANA
 No you are not. My son has just
 been betrayed by his best friend -
 he can't lose you too.

OFF THE SOUND OF HER PRIZING THE SUITCASE FROM HER HANDS

AISHA
 Mum will you stop-

SHABANA
 Don't you call me that! No daughter
 in law of mine would do this. Don't
 you dare call me mum!

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 Did you not hear what she just said
 to us?

THEY TUSSELE OVER THE SUITCASE AGAIN.

AISHA

I'm not letting you take my grandchild out of this house.

AISHA (CONT'D)

All I ever wanted was to do right by you. I thought I might not have much love for him but I found a mum in you. A mum I never had and then you do it again. You choose him over me. Again.

SHABANA

You're giving me no choice. My innocent son is in jail for-

AISHA

How are you so sure that he's innocent?! Hmm?

SHABANA

What?

AISHA

I've seen text messages mum.

BEAT.

AISHA (CONT'D)

I've seen texts. From the girl.

SHABANA

(DEVASTATED)

No...

AISHA

Text messages from that girl on another phone. A sperate phone...

BEAT.

SHABANA

She was obsessed with him!

AISHA

Where's the izzat (respect)?
Where's the respect when it comes to ruining an innocent girl's life?
Why does it go out the window when we have to protect our own?

AISHA BREAKS DOWN. ALMOST FERAL.

SHABANA

Beti...(daughter)

AISHA
Don't touch me!

AISHA (CONT'D)
He said that it was for work but I
knew he was lying. I always knew
but I didn't dare look.

SHABANA
You belong here. With me. We're
family aren't we?

AISHA
No. You're protecting him again.

SHABANA
Beti please don't...

AISHA
What hmm?

SHABANA
Please don't say anything.

AISHA
(BITTER AND AT THE SAME
TIME)
...don't say anything.

AISHA (CONT'D)
This is it. I'm done. I'm moving
out. If Rizwan is innocent well
then we'll see but I can't live
like this anymore.

AND WITH THAT SHE MAKES TO LEAVE.

SHABANA
Aisha? Aisha please I'm sorry.

BUT WE HEAR THE DOOR SLAM AND SHE'S GONE WITH ASIF.

CUT TO

19 INT PRISON

19

SOUND OF A BUZZER AND AN ELECTRIC DOOR. HOW WILL SHE TELL HER
SON THAT AISHA IS NO LONGER BY HER SIDE.

SHABANA
I'm here to see Rizwan Malik Khan.

SHABANA (V.O.)
I never thought at this age could I
despise someone as much as this
man. Normally it takes years for
this kind of hatred.

PRISON GUARD

Name?

SHABANA

Shabana Malik Khan. His mother.

PRISON GUARD

I'm afraid...Mrs Malik Khan. Rizwan has retracted your visiting order.

SHABANA

(STUNNED)

There must be a mistake.

PRISON GUARD

There's not.

SHABANA

Well how do I change it?

PRISON GUARD

There's nothing you can do. If he doesn't want to see you then I'm afraid he doesn't want to see you.

BEAT.

PRISON GUARD (CONT'D)

I'm going to have to ask you to move aside now Mrs Malik Khan.

CUT TO:

20 INT SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

20

SHABANA IS ON HOLD.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Come on...come on.

GEOFF

Mrs Malik Khan? I'm afraid I'm in between meetings.

SHABANA

Geoff. What can you tell me? Why have they stopped me seeing him?

GEOFF

It's not them...It's Rizwan he doesn't want to see you.

SHABANA

He doesn't want to see me? He must be in some kind of trouble...This isn't him!

GEOFF

Well...yes. He's mightily upset.
Feroz turning against him has
derailed the case and our odds
aren't looking great. I think you
should prepare yourself that this
might not go our way. Now if you'll
excuse me.

THE LINE GOES DEAD.

CUT TO

21

EXT/INT AISHA'S HOUSE
THE SOUND OF INSISTENT KNOCKING ON THE DOOR.

21

SHABANA

Aisha?

NO RESPONSE.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I can't get my head around this.
Why doesn't he want to see me?

SHABANA

Aisha?!

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Please! Just speak to me.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Why won't anyone speak to me?

WE HEAR THE DOOR OPEN SLOWLY.

AISHA

My Dad's taken Asif out.

SHABANA

It's you I've come to see.

THEY WALK THROUGH TO THE KITCHEN.

AISHA

Can I get you anything...Chai?

SHABANA

No I'm fine.

AISHA CAN'T DEAL WITH CONFRONTATION. SHE LOOKS THROUGH THE
CUPBOARDS.

AISHA
Honestly. Can't find anything since
I moved out. The amount of junk my
Dad eats now I half expect Channel
Four to be knocking on the-

SHABANA
(IN)
Come home.

AISHA
Mum-

SHABANA
You don't belong here anymore you
should be in your actual home. Not
here.

AISHA
It hurts too much.

SHABANA
Don't say that.

AISHA
It does.

SHABANA
I need you to come back. He needs
you by your side. With you back at
home and by his side well then he
stands a better chance especially
after Feroz's...accusations.

AISHA
He knows that I've left.

SHABANA
(DEFEATED)
The lawyer? Well I mentioned it in
a meeting but-

AISHA
No. Rizwan knows. One of his mates
saw me leaving that day. Bags
packed. Doesn't take a genius does
it? And now you've come because
what? His legal case? Nah I don't
buy it.

A BEAT.

AISHA (CONT'D)
What's he done?

A BEAT.

SHABANA

He won't see me. No explanation.
Nothing and I know it can't just be
about Feroz.

AISHA

That cheeky-

SHABANA

He must blame me for letting you
go...you love him don't you? Tell
me that you still do because if I
can tell him that then maybe I-

AISHA

Mum! Don't you dare blame yourself.
Even in there he manages to control
every little thing.

SHABANA

Don't say that...

AISHA

Yes I love him. That's why this
hurts. This constant
manipulation... He knew you'd come
to me and he knew I wouldn't be
able to say no.

SHABANA

Does that mean you're coming home
because I'm not sure how much more
my heart can take.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

I feel like I've used up all my
heartbeats love.

A BEAT.

AISHA

No. I can't let him win anymore.
After all that I know now. I can't
come back to that house Mum.

SHABANA

I see.

SHABANA IS DEFEATED AND DESOLATE.

AISHA

Mum-

BEAT.

SHABANA

I pray that you don't ever have to feel a fraction of the pain I feel right now.

AND WITH THAT SHE LEAVES.

CUT TO

22

INT MOSQUE

22

THE CALL TO PRAYER SUBSIDES. THE NOISE OF WOMEN TALKING.

SHABANA (V.O.)

The mosque should be where I feel safe but these women are pedalling their poison...

SHABANA

I don't think I should be here Mrs Amjad.

MRS AMJAD

Praying is good for the soul Shabana. Besides we're your sisters.

SHABANA (V.O.)

In the Quran it says to backbite is akin to eating the flesh of your dead brother. It used to stop me dead when I was a child. The thought turned my stomach. Now I only recall it when I feel I'm the victim. It still makes me feel sick.

BEAT.

MRS AMJAD

I can't imagine what you're going through.

SHABANA

It's hard to explain...You know once I was in town with Rizwan. This was before his Dad had passed but still I worried about him. I took him everywhere with me. Didn't even let him sleep at his friends' house. Selfish really.

MRS AMJAD

It's hard for us mothers to let go.

SHABANA

That was thing. I kept him close with me. Holding his hand and not letting him go so he ran off.

MRS AMJAD

Boys.

SHABANA

Boys. I thought he's trying to teach me a lesson so I'll hold out. I'll wait and I'm sure that Rizwan will give in first.

MRS AMJAD

And did he?

SHE GIVES A BITTER LAUGH.

SHABANA

No. He's more stubborn than I am if you can you believe it.

MRS AMJAD

I can't.

THEY LAUGH.

SHABANA

But then it stopped being funny. I started calling for him. That panic rising from my stomach until I could feel it in my throat. Hear it in my voice and I thought if he heard that now then he'll feel guilty and he'll come forward and he'll stop me feeling like this.

A BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

He didn't. The security guard had to drag him out of a changing room he'd been hiding in. But I still felt sick like I had lost him.

MRS AMJAD

Oh Mrs Malik Khan.

SHABANA

I feel like that now. Constantly sick.

(MORE)

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 My hearts in my mouth and I cant
 breath. I'm alone. I'm alone. My
 son has been taken from me and no
 matter how loud I shout or how
 panicked I am. There's no one to
 hear it.

AS THEY ENTER THE ROOM THERE IS A NOTICEABLE DIP IN THE
 CONVERSATION AS PEOPLE SPOT SHABANA

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 This isn't a good idea.

MRS AMJAD
 You need to be around people who
 love you at a time like this.

SHABANA
 I'm not sure I deserve anything.

MRS AMJAD
 Don't say that.

BEAT.

MRS AMJAD (CONT'D)
 Have you heard from Aisha?

BEAT.

SHABANA
 Not since the other day.

MRS AMJAD
 I can't imagine what would make her
 push you away like that.

SHABANA
 She's not in the right mind.

MRS AMJAD
 How do you mean?

SHABANA
 (RELUCTANT)
 She's never been happy with Rizwan.

MRS AMJAD
 So this is an excuse?

SHABANA
 I don't know-

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 I just-

MRS AMJAD
 (FISHING)
 Yes?

SHABANA
 I think she was looking for a way
 out.

MRS AMJAD
 A way out with someone else?

SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE IT HERSELF BUT SHE SAYS IT IN ANYWAY...

SHABANA
 Yes. I think she's wanted someone
 else all along.

CUT TO

23

INT SHABANA'S HOUSE
 OFF LOW SOUND OF THE TELEVISION ANYTHING TO DROWN OUT THE
 SILENCE. SHE'S ON HOLD ON THE PHONE TO THE PRISON.

23

SHABANA
 Come on...

PRISON GUARD
 Hello? Mrs Malik-Khan?

SHABANA
 Yes. I've been on hold for-

PRISON GUARD
 Look we've told you before
 prisoners have to phone you if they
 want to get in touch.

SHABANA
 But-

PRISON GUARD
 No buts...We can't make exceptions.

SHABANA
 Is he safe?

PRISON GUARD
 I'm sorry?

SHABANA
 Is he safe? My son?

PRISON GUARD
 He's fine.

THE LINE GOES DEAD. OFF BINS CRASHING OUTSIDE.

24

EXT. SHABANA'S HOUSE

24

OFF; THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC AND THE SOUND OF AN AEROSOL. WE HEAR SHABANA'S HEART POUNDING.

SHABANA

Oi! What are you doing?

THE VANDAL RUNS OFF. SHABANA GIVES CHASE. THE NOISE OF A BUSY ROAD. THE VANDAL FALLS OVER AND SHABANA HAS THE PERPETRATOR BY THE HOOD OF HER CLOTHES.

ALIYAH

Gerroff me you scum!

ALIYAH (CONT'D)

What did you just say?

SHABANA BEGINS TO MARCH HER DOWN THE STREET.

ALIYAH (CONT'D)

I said get off me.

SHABANA

No there's no way. I'm not having this. Why don't we tell your parents about it eh?

ALIYAH

I'm not telling you where I live.

SHABANA

But it's okay for you to invade my home?

ALIYAH

It's nothing compared to what you deserve.

SHABANA

I'm sorry? No you know what? I'm sick of being a victim-

ALIYAH

You're the victim in this?

SHE SCOFFS.

ALIYAH (CONT'D)

Whilst your son keeps saying that he is innocent my sister Saara is upstairs crying her eyes out.

SHABANA

What are you going on about?

SHABANA (V.O.)

This girl is unhinged. She's not right.

ALIYAH

Do you even know who I am because I know who you are.

SHABANA

No...

ALIYAH

Your family has ruined my sister's life.

SHABANA

I've never seen you before!

ALIYAH

Yeah but everyone around here knows who you are. Your son abused my sister!

SHABANA (V.O.)

She's lying. This can't be happening.

SHABANA

Look I-

ALIYAH

Don't you dare pretend to wash your hands of this...Shabana. My sister is lost to me forever.

SHABANA

I don't know if he did it...He didn't do it.

ALIYAH

That's your defence? That you're ignorant?

BEAT.

ALIYAH (CONT'D)

No...My fifteen year old sister is at home crying her eyes out every night. Not knowing what she's done wrong. And that's because you raised a monster.

(GETTING TEARFUL)

I am the only one she has and now she doesn't trust me because he got into her head.

SHABANA

I'm sorry.

ALIYAH

Prove it. If you can stand by a man who can ruin so many lives then...well then you're just as bad. If not worse.

SHABANA

I'm sorry...

ALIYAH

Stop saying that! Why would he do it Shabana hmm? Tell me *Auntie jee* because we had no one else. The "community" looked away when my mum gave us up and now what? They come back to abuse us? We have the same blood you have. We're Asian just like you!

SHABANA (V.O.)

She looks like Aisha as well. Doe eyes. Golden skin. How could he do this?...

SHABANA

(UPSET)

It's wrong. It's wrong whatever your colour or your-

ALIYAH

We had it hard before but he's tainted us even more.

BEAT.

ALIYAH (CONT'D)

How could he do this to us?

SHABANA (V.O.)

Yah Allah.

CUT TO

25

INT. BUS

25

A BUS RATTLES ALONG.

SHABANA (V.O.)

The journey feels even longer now. Aisha used to drive me to the station. She used to pick me up when I asked her. I can't drive on the motor ways...

SHABANA (V.O.)

It does give me time to think. When you're not in control of the rattling. You can just sit there listening to it instead. Sometimes the train gets so loud you hope it'll drown out all your thoughts.

SHABANA (V.O.)

All those little houses. Houses. Tower blocks...farms even. Each one lived in.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Each one of those boxes is full of people. People who at one point who have laughed. People at one point that have cried. Everyone at some point has done that. We've gone all through those emotions.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Even him. He used to be such a sweet boy. Soft. No not soft but caring and understanding. He laughed when I used to try and tell him jokes and then mess them up. He cried when his dad passed away. And I was proud he wasn't afraid to show that. He was good.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

What is he now?

26 INT PRISON

26

A BUZZER SOUNDS. THE NOW FAMILIAR NOISE OF THE PRISON. THE SCRAPE OF A CHAIR AS SHABANA SITS OPPOSITE HER SON.

SHABANA

Hello...

RIZWAN

So Aisha's gone then?

SHABANA

I'm sorry. I tried.

HE SIGHS.

RIZWAN

That's my son growing up not knowing who is dad is.

SHABANA

I tried...

A FEW BEATS PASS.

RIZWAN

She's a bitch. She never wanted to be with me. You know that don't you? She just said yes to get away from her crappy life.

SHABANA

Don't talk about her like that. She cared for you. She...

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Your father would know what to do.

RIZWAN SCOFFS.

RIZWAN

"Be strong"? That...that was how far his love went for me. If he couldn't fix anything -he'd resort to "Be strong beta". That's when I knew there was no hope.

SHABANA

That's not fair. We didn't have it easy Rizwan. I tried to protect you from anything that would upset you...

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)

Ask him.

SHABANA

I should've tried harder to protect you...You're not the same person.

RIZWAN

I'm in prison Mam.

SHABANA

Before that. It happened before that.

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)

Please just tell me what's happened? Rizwan?

RIZWAN

I've always been this way. You know who I am.

A BEAT.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

I married her for you.

SHABANA

You could have stopped it. How many times did I ask you if you were happy?

SHABANA (V.O.)

Ask him for the truth.

RIZWAN

I lied.

SHABANA

I thought I could see past your lies. How can I defend you now? Feroz said that he had to lie for you. You hit your wife. There are text messages from the girl on your phone. Don't I deserve the truth Rizwan?

RIZWAN

It's not what you think.

SHABANA

Then tell me.

RIZWAN

You won't understand it's not-

BEAT.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

I love her.

SHABANA

And Aisha loves you too.

RIZWAN

No not Aisha.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

The girl...I love Saara.

SHABANA

No...

RIZWAN

Mum don't look like that please. I just...It started off innocent.

BEAT.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

And then she started coming in with her mates a lot.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I feel sick.

RIZWAN

She was always talking to me. We were friends.

SHABANA

No stop it. Stop it Rizwan!

SHABANA (V.O.)

He's sick. He's sick...if I'd tied that black thread around his wrist I could've stopped this evil.

RIZWAN

I fell for her then. She was funny and actually listened to what I had to say. She kissed *me*.

SHABANA

She was a child...

BEAT.

RIZWAN

She was my *gunaah* (sin).

SHABANA

She wasn't your sin. What you did...That's the sin!

RIZWAN

I kept telling myself that Mum. So many times. I even prayed on it- But I couldn't stop myself. It's the truth. There were moments when it all made sense. When my heart was racing and then it was all over and I'd pray and promise on anyone and anything that I'd never touch her again.

SHABANA

(CLUTCHING AT STRAWS)

You could tell them that. Tell them that you're sorry-

RIZWAN

The truth is that those moments quickly pass. They pass and then that...that urge returns.

SHABANA

I don't know who you are.

RIZWAN

She knew me. And at first she was all mine. It was like the films. The films that you made me watch when I was a kid? I didn't buy that people could fall in love like that. That quickly. But I did Mum. I did...but I gave her up because if it ever came out then...what would people say?

SHABANA

So you stopped it? Is this her trying to get back at you?

RIZWAN

I gave her up...for you. To spare you the shame.

SHABANA IS CRYING NOW.

RIZWAN (CONT'D)

I did it to protect you. I gave up someone who I loved up to spare you Mam.

SHABANA

Don't you dare put this on me!

SOME JEERS FROM THE REST OF THE INMATES. THE SCRAPING OF A CHAIR.

RIZWAN

Mummyjee...don't. You're all I have...

SHABANA

Only Allah can forgive you now Rizwan.

CUT TO

27

EXT/INT SHABANA'S HOUSE

27

WE HEAR THE CLATTER OF POSTBOX AGAINST THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC.

MRS AMJAD
Mrs Malik Khan!

SHE RATTLES THE POSTBOX AGAIN.

MRS AMJAD (CONT'D)
Shabana!

THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC SUBSIDES AS WE GO THROUGH THE HOME AND HEAR SHABANA. SHE'S PRAYING. AS THOUGH ON REPEAT. A PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS.

SHABANA
Rabbi inni zalamto nafsi faghfirli.
(Oh my Lord, I have indeed
wronged my soul!)

MRS AMJAD
(FROM A DISTANCE)
Let me in.

SHABANA HAS NEVER FELT SO ALONE.

CUT TO

28 EXT/INT. AISHA'S HOUSE

28

SHABANA INHALES SHARPLY.
THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. A NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN SONG
PLAYS ON THE RADIO. AISHA OPENS THE DOOR.

SHABANA (V.O.)
Yah Allah...

AISHA
Mum...

SHABANA
I've not lost you calling me that
then?

NO RESPONSE.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
Can I see my grandson?

AISHA
He's asleep.

BEAT

OFE NOISE OF TRAFFIC DIES DOWN AS THEY ENTER THE HOUSE.

SHABANA
I bet he's so big now.

AISHA
 He's shooting up. None of his stuff
 fits him anymore. I had to-

SHABANA
 (IN)
 I'm sorry.

THIS HANGS IN THE AIR.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 I don't know how or if you
 will...(forgive me).

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 I'm so sorry Aisha.

AISHA
 Do you know how...bruised I am?

SHABANA HAS BEEN KEEPING IT BOTTLED IN. SHE'S ALMOST
 RAMBLING.

SHABANA
 I do. I've been thinking and I
 realised that my whole life I've
 wanted to feel that connection from
 someone else. My parents never
 understood me - It was a different
 time and place. My husband-

BEAT.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
 Then Rizwan came along and
 everything made sense. He needed me
 and I needed him but he grew apart
 from me and I pretended that he
 hadn't. So I kept you here when I
 shouldn't have. I made those
 decisions for you. When I shouldn't-

AISHA
 No...you shouldn't have...My Auntie
 said she sees you in the mosque a
 lot.

SHABANA (V.O.)
 Trying to absolve my sins...

SHABANA
 Yes...That's the funny thing about
 religion you don't realise how much
 you need it until it hurts.

AISHA
Have you been praying for him?

NO RESPONSE

AISHA (CONT'D)
Have you seen him?

SHABANA
Not since...he admitted it.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SHE'S SAID IT ALOUD.

SHABANA (CONT'D)
(GROWING EMOTION)
Oh god. Aisha please forgive me?

SHABANA BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS. AISHA GOES OVER TO HER.

AISHA
I can't.

SHABANA
No...

SHABANA (CONT'D)
I'll do anything.

AISHA
Does being alone terrify you that much?

SHABANA
It's not just that...I love you like a daughter.

AISHA
No, now you're just believing your own lies.

BEAT.

SHABANA (V.O.)
No, no, no.

AISHA
We're leaving. Starting fresh somewhere else.

SHABANA
Please don't.

SHABANA (V.O.)
How much pain have I caused this poor girl?

SHABANA

Where?

AISHA

It's better if you don't know.

BEAT.

SHABANA

How can you do this?

AISHA

We can never move past this. Around here I'll always be the paedo's wife. I'm not having Asif being called the paedo's son.

SHABANA

What about me?

AISHA

He was *your* son...but you have to make decisions for yourself now. You're...

(DISTORTED)

Your own person.

SHABANA'S HEART BEAT RACES.

SHABANA (V.O.)

I'm alone...

FADE OUT.