

MARIAM'S JOURNEY

by

Adam King

Contact Info:

Email: adam.king0524@gmail.com

Website: theadamking.com

INT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - COLLEGE PARTY - NIGHT

We hold on a shot of **MARIAM BROWN, 20s, tall, slender, reserved**, sitting on a fancy couch with a wired piece headphones pinned to her ears. She appears to be in quite a somber mood as jovial and drunken college students dance, socialize and drink their time off in front of her. Loud and disruptive music blasts at full volume.

And as we zoom into her face...

TITLE CARD: MARIAM'S JOURNEY

JASMINE (O.C.)

Are you okay?

JASMINE NEWCOMBE, 20s, vivacious, dashing, sensitive then enters the screen. She carelessly slams onto the couch, wrapping her arm around Mariam's neck, while a red plastic cup rests in her opposing palm. Mariam's mood lightens ever so slightly.

MARIAM

Geez...how much did you drink?

JASMINE

What? I can't hear you over the um-music.

MARIAM

(removing her
headphones)

I asked, how much did you drink?

JASMINE

Oh...just a couple shots.

MARIAM

Just a couple?

JASMINE

What?

MARIAM

(louder)

Just a couple?

Mariam shoots Jasmine a familiar look. By the looks of it, Jasmine isn't too pleased and sobers quickly.

JASMINE

Yes, Mariam. I'm not an alcoholic.

MARIAM
Alright, alright chill.

Mariam replaces her headphones and resumes her depressive state. Jasmine, now settled from the gaze, then jabs at Mariam's cheeks with her finger until a response is motioned.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
What the fuck do you want Jasmine?

JASMINE
I asked if you were okay.

MARIAM
Yes, I'm fine...now leave me alone.

JASMINE
Come on Mariam.

MARIAM
(removing her headphones
once again)
Jasmine. Leave me alone please.

JASMINE
No...tell me what's wrong.

MARIAM
Jasmine.

JASMINE
Tell me!

MARIAM
Not right now, Jasmine.

Jasmine is noticeably starting to get more and more agitated as this conversation prolongs. There's a shift in her tone and posture.

JASMINE
I'm begging you Mariam. Just talk to me!

MARIAM
Jasmine, leave...please.

JASMINE
No! I'm not leaving until you tell me what's wrong!

MARIAM
Jasmine.

JASMINE
Mariam.

MARIAM
Jasmine!

JASMINE
What!

MARIAM
Just go...please!

JASMINE
I said no, Mariam. Not until you
tell me what is going on.

Mariam's chest grows larger and larger as she glares and fumes at Jasmine. We watch as her chest moves up and down, increasing in pace one after the other. Her lips begin to quiver.

Noticing this change, Jasmine adjusts her mood and posture again.

A long beat as Jasmine visibly softens from her pending rage. Her eyes become glossy and full.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
(crack in her voice)
Tell me what's wrong
Mariam...please!

That glare remains from Mariam. No words, no facial expressions, no movements.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Come on. You always do this.
(and)
Don't freeze up now...come on!
Don't do this to me Mariam!

A long beat.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Come on!

Tears begin to cascade down her face as the party goers start to shift their attention. Jasmine's emotion begins to clearly transform on her face. An underlining anger is resurfacing.

Meanwhile, Mariam's face slowly glows a red colour as she digs her nails into her skin. The crowd goes silent. All eyes on the two ladies as Mariam continues to glare at Jasmine. The loud music fades.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
(sobbing, angrily)
Do you even care about us anymore?
Huh?

She waits for a response. Nothing.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
6 months and you still can't
communicate your feelings to me?
Why Mariam?

She waits for a response once again. Still nothing.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Why!
(beat)
What have I done to you Mariam? Why
are you being so distant!

Jasmine shakes her head, looks away from Mariam and wipes her tears. She looks back.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Nothing?

Long beat.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
That's it. I'm done.

Jasmine rises from the couch and storms off through the sea of party goers. One of the party goers follow her as we...

CUT TO:

INT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasmine sits on a bedroom floor, back against the edge of the bed, bawling her eyes out. Some guy, **20s, slim, slightly feminine**, sits besides her and pulls her head into his lap.

We've met: **JOSIAH WINCHELL**.

JOSIAH
You'll be okay girl.

Jasmine continues to bawl, almost so much that her tears begin to form like a pillow on Josiah's lap.

She sits up, briefly controls her crying and breathing, in attempt to respond.

A beat.

JASMINE

I did too much, didn't I?
Was I too mean? I didn't mean to
yell at her. I-I-I couldn't control
it.

(to Josiah)

Was I too mean?

JOSIAH

Girl...are you serious? That's what
she deserves. She's been
frustrating you for a very long
time now.

JASMINE

Yeah but I-I-I-love her. I
shouldn't have yelled. I shouldn't
have. I feel awful...I need to go
and apologize.

JOSIAH

Girl...are you crazy? You haven't
done anything wrong. What are you
apologizing for?

JASMINE

I yelled at her. I don't like
yelling at people. And-and I think
I was too mean.

(beat)

She's gonna fucking hate me. I have
to go and apologize.

She motions to get up but Josiah sits her right back down.

JOSIAH

Jasmine, look at me. You have been
complaining about her since y'all
got together 6 months ago. She has
frustrated you, made you cry,
ghosted you...girl, you are doing
your best. You've done your best.
She's the one at fault here. She
always has been. She's a grown
adult and still don't know how to
talk about her feelings? Girl...
you can't teach her that. She needs
to figure out what the hell is
going on with her and fix it.
You've done your job. You've tried--
I've watched you try, over and over
again. So maybe, it is time to let
her go. You've given her enough
chances.

JASMINE

I-I-I-can't. Maybe I haven't given her enough chances. What if she gets better?

(to herself)

I fucking hate myself. Why would I even do that? Why would I-

JOSIAH

Girl, don't do that to yourself. You're not a bad person for yelling at her. And I know you don't like it, trust me...I've been friends with you for six years to know that but girl...don't you think it was kind of warranted? And how many times have you said that she might get better within the last 6 months?

She tilts her head to the sky. She thinks.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

A hundred times!

JASMINE

No, no. It was-it was only like twenty times.

JOSIAH

Girl...

JASMINE

What!

JOSIAH

Enough is enough.

JASMINE

But-but- she could still change. What if I give up to early?

JOSIAH

Girl.

JASMINE

I need to go apologize and tell her it was a mistake.

JOSIAH

Girl what mistake?

JASMINE

Josiah, I feel awful...please.

JOSIAH

Listen to me. You have known Mariam for 10 months now. You've basically worshipped her for that entire time too--giving her whatever she wants, showing up whenever she wants you, changing YOURSELF for who she wants you to be. Girl...how is any of that fair to you?

JASMINE

But I chose to do that. That was my decision.

JOSIAH

And look how that turned out.

(beat)

Let me ask you a question. How much has she done for you? How many times has she shown up FOR YOU?

A long beat before...

JASMINE

I know, I know. But I still feel awful and I want to apologize. Plus, I'm not ready to let her go. I-I-I don't want to. She's the only person who has ever liked me. Who has seen me for me. Don't you remember how I was bullied for YEARS about my looks and for my sexuality? I've had nightmares, visions, SURGERY Josiah for things I'm not even in control of. But then Mariam came and saw some beauty in me. She's the only one Josiah and you know it. What-what if I don't find someone else who even thinks I'm remotely attractive?

Josiah sighs and looks at Jasmine with a delicate glance.

JOSIAH

I know Jas but-

JASMINE

I want to give her one more chance...maybe she can prove herself this time. I know she can. I know Mariam.

JOSIAH

But do you?

(long beat)

Do you know her?

Long beat.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

The red flags have been waving in
front of you for far too long,
Jasmine. So please...be smart. You
have to look out for yourself too.
I mean...are you even happy?

She thinks and thinks and thinks.

A long beat.

JASMINE

I-I-I think so.

JOSIAH

Jasmine. Are you happy?

Her face drops to the floor as she's overwhelmed with
emotion. Her fingers crease by her eyes as she responds...

JASMINE

No, not really.

JOSIAH

No further questions.

Jasmine's breaths intensify as her face swells and tears
stream down her cheeks like a free-flowing river.

An agonizing moment of pure heartbreak as we sit to the music
of Jasmine's sobbing. Josiah pulls her head into his chest
while rubbing her back.

A long beat.

But then...

JASMINE

(in his chest)

I'm gonna give her one more chance.

I love her and I don't want to let

her go just yet.

(and)

I need to go apologize.

Jasmine then gets up and head towards a mirror in the room. We watch as she wipes her face, fixes her hair and tries to control her breathing. Her sobs decrease in volume. Josiah then follows and massages her shoulders from behind.

JOSIAH

Be smart out there Jasmine. If you're going to fight for this relationship, make sure to set your boundaries. You can't keep putting up with this shit forever. And I know it may be hard for you to do but you're going to have to be assertive. You have to stay strong to your word. Make her think a little. Make her lose you for a moment and see how she responds. And that will tell you all you need to know.

JASMINE

But I don't want to come off as mean.

JOSIAH

Girl...being assertive does not mean being mean.

JASMINE

But-but...

JOSIAH

Jasmine. Do you want this to continue?

JASMINE

No.

JOSIAH

Do you want to break up with her?

JASMINE

No.

JOSIAH

Then fight for what you deserve.

Jasmine ponders that for a moment--long and hard. She then shakes her head, smiles to the mirror, takes a deep breath and holds her head up high.

JASMINE

You're right.

She takes another big breath, turns and heads for the door. And like a proud father, Josiah watches as she exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - COLLEGE PARTY - FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

Here, we see Mariam perched onto the front steps of the guest house, sniffing. Her headphones are strapped around her neck and her knees are up to her chest. Her jacket is shrouding her head and we watch as two party goers pass her without a skip in their steps.

We then shift to the right of her to highlight slow ambling footsteps advancing towards her from behind. We identify the individual.

JASMINE

Mariam. Please tell me what is
going on. I want to help
you...please.

Mariam jumps. She quickly pulls down her legs and stops sniffing. She clearly doesn't want to be seen like this.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for yelling at you. I
didn't mean to. I'm sorry.

She ignores. Jasmine, who seems a bit nervous but uncharacteristically confident, sits besides her on the steps.

And somehow, Mariam can't keep up this act. She begins to whimper and then...**BAWL**. Jasmine softens up as Mariam just bawls and bawls and bawls. She's never seen this from her before.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

Mariam, please talk to me.

Cascades begin to form in Jasmine's eyes once again. She doesn't like to see Mariam like this. In fact, she doesn't like to see anyone like this.

She then wraps her arms around Mariam and pulls her in to lay on her lap.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

I love you, Mariam. Please...just
talk to me.

Mariam then buries her face into Jasmine's lap. She seems ashamed, scared.

MARIAM

I can't be fucking crying...are you kidding me? This is fucking ridiculous.

(to herself, slapping her face)

Stop it, stop it, stop it!

Jasmine doesn't know how to respond. She's frozen. She's never have to deal with this before.

But then...

JASMINE

It's okay, it's okay.

Mariam then pulls herself together and sits up. She slaps her face again and again and again. Jasmine holds Mariam's hand and pulls them away slowly from her face.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

It's okay.

Mariam stops.

Jasmine gives Mariam a few moments to settle while she reengages into her confident self--what's she really here for.

But this is still new territory for Jasmine. She's never done this before. So, she trembles as...

JASMINE (CONT'D)

What is going on Mariam? Talk to me.

A long beat.

MARIAM

I-I can't.

JASMINE

Why, Mariam...why?

MARIAM

Because I don't want to hurt you.

Jasmine utilizes her finger to wipe a lonely tear that runs down Mariam's face. She appears to be growing in this new-found confidence. Her trembling ceases.

JASMINE

You not communicating is hurting me more than anything, Mariam.

MARIAM

I just ca-

A beat.

JASMINE

Mariam...please...I'm here for you.
Just talk to me!

MARIAM

I can't.

Mariam springs up from the steps, visibly trying to avoid this conversation and begins to walk off. Jasmine grabs her hand. She stops. She looks back.

JASMINE

I'm not letting you go, Mariam.
Well, at least I don't want to. But
if you won't talk to me, I don't
know if I can deal with all of this
anymore. I've given you everything
I have. I've given up my soul for
YOU Mariam. And you have barely
given me anything.

(beat)

But I want to give you one more
chance. To prove to me that you can
do better. Look...I'll be right
here on these steps if you decide
to come back. But if you don't, I-I-
I don't think I can do us anymore.
I'm sorry.

That confidence begins to slip. She chokes up.

JASMINE (CONT'D)

I love you, Mariam...so so much.
And I just want you to see that. I
just want you to see that I'm here
to support you. I just want you to
see that I'm here to love you. So
when you're ready to be here for
me, I'll be right here...waiting
for you.

She releases Mariam's hand as Mariam just stares at her. That same stare from before. A plastic smile gradually creeps onto Mariam's face as she turns and walks off.

We then cut to Jasmine who begins to shed tears on the steps.

The camera slowly drifts away.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - COLLEGE PARTY - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mariam is stationed in the corner of this bathroom, sniffing. Her jacket forms like a veil over her head as her headphones lay beside her on the floor.

In the background, we could faintly hear music pulsing as the party is still in full swing. A creak. The bathroom door slowly opens. Mariam gathers herself quickly.

MONICA

Honey...why are you on the floor?

MARIAM

Because the toilet overflowed with all my tears.

MONICA

Girl...please. You don't cry.

Mariam dresses a plastic smile. A beat.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Fine...I'm coming down there with you.

MONICA SPRINGER, 20s, tall, sexy, confident sits besides her and pulls Mariam's head towards her chest.

MONICA (CONT'D)

So...what's wrong? I'm here for you honey.

MARIAM

(lifting her head)

Really? Did Jasmine send you?

MONICA

Of course she did Mariam. She cares about you. She loves you. You should be so damn grateful that someone cares so deeply for you. She still hasn't moved from those steps Mariam and she has every right to be enjoying her own birthday party. So yes, she sent me. Now what is going on?

MARIAM

I'm just- just

She buries her head between her knees. She breaks down. Monica, unlike Jasmine, is a pro at this. She pulls Mariam in tighter.

MONICA
(rubbing her back)
It's okay...it's okay girl.

MARIAM
Jesus...crying again.

MONICA
Uh, uh. Don't do that. Crying is good.

Mariam groans and attempts to pull herself together. As she struggles to, she looks across at Monica and stares. But this stare is different. Different from the one that we're use to seeing from her. There's something hopeful about this gaze.

A long beat.

MARIAM
Thank you for being here.

MONICA
Of course, you're welcome. Now, I'm gonna give you 5 more minutes to gather yourself some more and I'll be right back. I'm here to listen, Mariam. I'm not here to judge you. So when you're ready to talk, I'll be here.

Monica slowly gets up from her sitting position and walks towards the door. She opens the door and glances back at Mariam.

MONICA (CONT'D)
I love you girl.

MARIAM
I love you too.

Monica exits the bathroom. We hold on Mariam as she stares at the door.

MARIAM (V.O.)
If there's one thing I've learnt in life, it's that the people who care for you never shut the door. They will never shut you out.
(MORE)

MARIAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They don't watch you suffer in
silence and they don't watch you
drown yourself in too much glee.
They keep you grounded. They keep
you safe.

The door reopens.

PARTY GOER
Oh, I'm sorry.

It recloses.

MARIAM (V.O.)
I've never been one to talk. I
always preferred sitting in
silence, allowing my emotions to
rot away beneath the surface.
Communication has always been a
strenuous task for me but I always
knew the value of it. It's just
that if I don't express what I
feel, people can't judge me. People
can't betray me. People can't hate
me. I'm way too afraid of hurting
people so I'd rather just keep my
lips pinned. But I can't keep them
sealed forever. The volcano will
erupt at some point and I don't
think I'm prepared for the
devastation of it.

A knock.

MONICA (O.S.)
It's Monica. Are you ready to talk
dear?

MARIAM
One second.

Mariam wipes away her tears, fixes her hair and sports a
plastic grin. She takes shallow breaths in anticipation of
her reply.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
You can come in.

Monica steps into the room with a dazzling presence. She
ambles towards Mariam and reaches her hand out to her. Mariam
interlocks fingers as she rises from the floor. Both ladies
sit on the counter.

MONICA

So...what's up. What's going on?

Mariam takes a deep breath. A beat.

MARIAM

Well...things with me and Jasmine haven't been so great.

MONICA

What-what happened? I thought you guys were thriving.

MARIAM

Well, yeah...ish. We've had problems with communication--like big problems.

MONICA

What do you mean?

MARIAM

I mean like I actually, truly love her. I actually feel real feelings for her and that became really scary for me.

MONICA

Okay...now I'm not following. How is that a bad thing honey? And what does that have to do with the communication?

MARIAM

It's called fearful avoidance or disorganized attachment. That's my attachment style. It's basically where I yearn for love and a deep emotional connection with someone but that's also what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid that I'll be abandoned again. Left out to dry if I cling on to close. I fear intimacy. So instead of talking about it, I run away. I'm afraid that I'll hurt her. I'm afraid that I'll be hurt.

MONICA

Okay but how is that relevant for tonight? I mean you walked in with your headphones on and didn't really speak to anyone. Even Jasmine.

MARIAM

I don't know. I was just really sad all day. Just not in the mood for a good time I guess. And-and I didn't want to ruin Jasmine's birthday so I just stayed far from her so my energy wouldn't bring her down.

MONICA

Honey...avoiding your girlfriend on her birthday? At her birthday party? How does that sound to you?

MARIAM

I don't know. I just thought it would've been best to keep my distance.

MONICA

From your girlfriend...on her birthday?

MARIAM

Okay, I know how it sounds. But... I don't know.

There's a sudden change in energy as Mariam's face starts to shrink. Tears begin to take shape in her eyes.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

I love her so much Monica. I love her so much that I want to let go. I want to release the rope but I also don't want to. I don't know...I-I don't know what or how but today just kind of brought up a lot of emotions that I've been neglecting for a very long time. I mean...these last two months have been a constant battle within myself between giving and pulling away and-and my heart couldn't handle it anymore.

MONICA

Mariam, my love...all that you have just said to me, you should be telling her. You're not alone. I can only imagine that Jasmine has always been there for you. And I'm almost sure that she must have been battling with herself too.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

Especially if you continuously pulled away without any warning or explanation. Look...you can use your love as an escape. Think of it this way. Out of love for her, you should tell her. The greatest way to conquer fear is by facing it head on. And it probably would end those wars within her too. But I understand how you feel and those feelings are ones that you can't necessarily control. But you also should be proud of yourself because you've become self-aware of your feelings and as they say, self-awareness is always the first step.

A long beat as the two ladies stare at each other.

MARIAM

Thank you, Monica. I've always felt safe talking to you.

MONICA

Girl...how long have we been friends?

MARIAM

7 years?

MONICA

8. Honey...don't embarrass me.

They chuckle.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Why are we still friends after 8 years?

MARIAM

Because we trust each other.

A beat.

MONICA

Go on...

MARIAM

We love each other. We've been here for each other. We enjoy spending time with each other.

MONICA

Okay but what's the most important thing that kept our friendship alive?

MARIAM

We both like Cardi B?

MONICA

Girl...

Monica nudges Mariam's shoulder.

MARIAM

Megan Thee Stallion?

MONICA

Don't.

MARIAM

I'll stop, I'll stop. Is it because we've always felt safe with each other?

MONICA

It's because we're not afraid of hurting each other. So everything said or done would be genuine and out of love. And that's where the safety comes from.

Mariam's cheeks swell as she looks across at Monica.

MARIAM

I love you.

MONICA

I know you do.

MARIAM

So I'm not gonna get it back?

MONICA

Are you desperate or something?

MARIAM

Oh...really?

(and)

That's why you built like that.

MONICA

Oh- I'm sorry. I haven't been rejected like 20 times before.

MARIAM
At least some people like me.

MONICA
At least I have friends.

MARIAM
At least I have a father.

A long beat.

MONICA
Wow, Mariam. Thanks a lot.

MARIAM
I'm sorry...I didn't mean it. I was joking.

MONICA
Why did you think it was okay to joke about my father abandoning me.

MARIAM
I-I-I-I thought we were playing.

Mariam gulps aggressively and looks away. Her arms begin to tremble as they draw closer to her skin.

MONICA
That's not anything to play around about Mariam. You know how that makes me feel.

MARIAM
But-but-but..we usu-

MONICA
We usually what, Mariam.

MARIAM
Nothing, nothing.

MONICA
I can't believe you right now.

MARIAM
I'm sorry.

Monica gazes at Mariam with her lips puffed. Mariam, on the other hand, appears to be holding her breath. A long beat.

MONICA
You know I just playing with you girl.

Mariam exhales. A sigh of relief.

MARIAM
You gotta stop doing that Monica!

MONICA
It gets you every time.
(and)
Why do you keep falling for it?

MARIAM
You already know I'm not good with emotions...especially the negative kind.

MONICA
I know. That's what makes it fun.

MARIAM
Fuck you, Monica.

MONICA
Fuck you too!

A long beat as the women glare at each other intensely. A very, very serious moment but then

...giggles.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Now go save your relationship honey!
(and)
But you may also want to speak with someone else first to, you know, work through it a bit more.

MARIAM
Yeah, yeah. Of course.

Mariam then levitates from the counter and head towards the door. She looks back.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
Thank you, Monica. I really appreciate you coming here. I love you!

MONICA
I love you too, Mary.

Mariam exits the bathroom as we pan across to Monica. Monica looks to the camera and winks.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - COLLEGE PARTY - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Back to the bedroom. This time with Mariam flat across the bed and a phone stuck to her ear. There's clearly some inaudible conversation going on from the look of Mariam's lip movements. And after a moment, she places the device on the bed and presses something on the screen.

We then hear...

JESSICA (O.C.)
(from phone)
But how do you feel?

Here, we meet **JESSICA RICHARDS, 40s**, calming voice. She sounds intelligent and wise like if she's a teacher or therapist of some sort.

MARIAM
I don't know. I think I'm just
afraid. I mean, I don't want to be
single but am I really fit to be in
a relationship right now?

JESSICA (O.C.)
I think that's a great question to
ask.
(and)
Are you fit to be in a relationship
right now?

MARIAM
I mean, probably not. But I don't
know. I think I can work on myself
with her.

JESSICA (O.C.)
Okay...well what steps are you
going to take?

MARIAM
Well I guess I should probably talk
to her about what's been going on
first.

JESSICA (O.C.)
And...

MARIAM

I don't know...maybe I just need to start trusting her.

(beat)

Maybe try opening up more. Not be afraid to be vulnerable.

JESSICA (O.C.)

And how do you plan on doing this?

MARIAM

I-I-I don't know.

JESSICA (O.C.)

How do you think you'll be able to open up?

MARIAM

I don't know, I think by just going for it.

(beat)

Maybe being honest with myself.
Being honest about how I feel.

JESSICA (O.C.)

Okay, great. That's some good insight Mariam. Avoidant attachments tend to lack self-regulation. Medication or journaling is a good way to help with this. Practicing mindfulness and providing yourself a safe space to express your emotions is key for healing. It's a way to practice vulnerability in comfort and in safety.

(and)

Also, being self-aware of your triggers is very beneficial. So if I may ask, do you know what your triggers are?

MARIAM

Yeah, I-I think so.

JESSICA (O.C.)

Can you give me some examples?

MARIAM

Um-like when we would argue...I would like stay quiet because I wouldn't want to or-or I would be stubborn and not listen to what she has to say or I would try to change the subject.

JESSICA (O.C.)

And why do you think you do that?

MARIAM

I don't know. I guess to avoid the conflict. I don't like conflict. I-I don't like how it brings up emotions. I mean...today is the first day I've cried in YEARS.

JESSICA (O.C.)

Why don't you like emotions?

MARIAM

I-I don't know. It's a sign of weakness I guess. None of my other friends cry.

She chokes up a bit here.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

I remember in elementary school, I was teased for crying about my pet dog dying. I-I-I was hated on for crying over something as "stupid" as my dog DYING. But it isn't that stupid, isn't it?

JESSICA (O.C.)

No, of course not. Grief-grief is a big thing.

MARIAM

My emotions were always shifted on. They make me feel small and weak. And you know what hurt the most about that whole dog situation? My "friends" were teasing me about it too. And at that time, they were the only ones I had.

She takes a moment. She inhales and exhales slowly.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

My-my parents were never there for me.

(MORE)

MARIAM (CONT'D)

They would always fight in front of me and-and my dad would beat me whenever I tried to break up the fight or if I-I defended my mom just a little.

She takes another moment. We've never seen this side of Mariam before. And honestly, I don't think she has either.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

He-he would tell me to stop crying while beating me with his belt. He would beat me all about my body, when I was naked, when I was young. Sometimes he would just beat me when he was angry. I-I-I was like his punching bag. An object for him to deal with his rage. And when he was beating me, he would always scream and tell me to stop-stop- to stop-stop being **weak**. Even as a girl.

A long beat as she breaks down. We just sit with her. Be there for her. Her vulnerability is finally cracking through.

JESSICA (O.C.)

I'm so sorry Mariam.

(and)

Thank you for sharing that. That was very brave of you. Crying is not a weakness, it's a strength. I'd say that it's "weak" to hold back on something that's beneficial for you. By not crying, you stop yourself from possibly feeling better. It's a release. I think that it shows strength because it allows for emotional processing. It's a way to healthily self-regulate as it is a natural response to stress and pressure. And by allowing your body and yourself to do what could be beneficial to you is a real sign of strength to me.

(beat)

Did you talk to someone about it? Did you have support from family or friends?

MARIAM

I-I never told anyone about it. I just kind of dealt with it on my own. I became really dependent on myself to help get me through things.

JESSICA (O.C.)

And what would you do to self-regulate?

MARIAM

I-I would tell myself that I deserved it or when emotions or thoughts came up about it, I would hate on them and they'd just disappear. I would focus on other things like my schoolwork or painting. Something I could control, you know.

JESSICA (O.C.)

And how'd that make you feel?

MARIAM

Better, I guess. But I don't know, I guess I didn't really deal with it, did I?

(and)

I just kind of shoved it away.

JESSICA (O.C.)

Absolutely. That's great insight Mariam. I'm proud of you.

She smiles but something quickly goes off in her head triggering another emotion.

MARIAM

But-but, how do I even get better? How could I heal from this attachment?

JESSICA (O.C.)

I'd say there're three major things. One: identify when you have those triggers and the patterns of them. This could help in breaking them. Two: embrace those moments when you feel small or vulnerable. Don't shy away but embrace them. This would help in providing a safe space to express those emotions.

(MORE)

JESSICA (O.C.) (CONT'D)

And three: see your emotions as a strength and not a weakness. Expressing and talking about what you feel is sign of self-love. Love yourself enough to own what you feel because all of your feelings are worthy and warranted.

(and)

And also just practicing those healthy self-regulating exercises that I spoke about earlier. Medication, journaling, crying. They are all ways to begin communicating, emotional processing and emotional release in a safe environment.

Mariam takes it all in. She wipes her tears, forces a smile and lifts the phone in her hands.

MARIAM

I guess I could journal. I do like writing.

JESSICA (O.C.)

Good, good.

A beat.

MARIAM

But-but how would I talk to Jasmine about it? I'm
-I'm too scared. What if I say something stupid? What-what if I make things worse?

JESSICA (O.C.)

You're not perfect, Mariam. It's okay. Just stay true to yourself.

(and)

Emotions are confusing and it might take you a while to fully express and process them. But once you're being honest with yourself, you'll be okay. Trust me.

MARIAM

Okay.

(beat)

But-but how would I even start the conversation? How would I know what to say?

JESSICA (O.C.)
Trust your instincts.

MARIAM
But what if my instincts feel
wrong?

JESSICA (O.C.)
Then you're going to have to
believe in yourself Mariam. Believe
in who you are and believe in what
feels right to YOU. How you treat
yourself is exactly how you're
going to treat everyone around you.
So, you have to believe in you, you
have to trust you before you can
trust anybody else. And when you
trust and believe in yourself, that
fear that rests inside you would
fade.

MARIAM
Okay.
(beat)
But what if she doesn't believe me?

JESSICA (O.C.)
That's out of your control.

MARIAM
But-but-

JESSICA (O.C.)
Trust yourself Mariam. If you're
honest, everything will fall into
place. You CAN be vulnerable.
You've just showed me that you can
be. So, if she sees that you can be
too, that's already a sign of
improvement.

She ponders this. A beat.

MARIAM
I guess you're right. Thank you,
Jessica.

JESSICA (O.C.)
Of course.
(and)
I'm so proud of you Mariam. You've
made significant process from when
we first met.

(MORE)

JESSICA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
You're a great person. And you
deserve to be sharing your love
with someone.

She smiles again. But not just any smile, a smile that we've
never seen before. A blush. She takes in those words.

MARIAM
Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank
you.

JESSICA (O.C.)
Of course.
(and)
Now, I do have to go but remember
Mariam, embrace your vulnerability,
embrace your emotions because
they're worthy and is a positive
sign of strength.

MARIAM
I will.
(beat)
And thank you for being available
to talk on short notice. I know it
wasn't really an emergency but I
don't want to lose her. I don't
know...I-I didn't know what else to
do.

JESSICA (O.C.)
Of course. I'm always here whenever
you need me.

MARIAM
Thank you!

A beat.

JESSICA (O.C.)
Alright Mariam. Have a good night.
(and)
I'm proud of you.

MARIAM
Thank you...you too!

Mariam hangs up the phone as he sits up and stares. But it's
not the stare she's known for, it's the hopeful one. It feels
bold. It feels...life-changing.

We hold on the stare as we...

FADE TO:

EXT. RANDOM GUEST HOUSE - COLLEGE PARTY - FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

We return to the front steps of the guest house where we spot party goers leaving the party. Some of the students brush Jasmine upon their exit, with whom is still seated on the steps, visibly more angry than the last time we saw her. Mariam walks into frame.

MARIAM
(to the party goers)
Bye! Have a good night...catch you
later...have a good one...bye!

As the last party goer exits the house, Mariam carefully traverses to Jasmine on the steps. She folds her arms tightly as she walks with her head to the ground. She pulls over her hoodie. She sits.

A long beat.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
Hey.

JASMINE
Hi.

Mariam reaches out for Jasmine's palms but she hesitates.

MARIAM
I'm sorry for ruining your birthday
and your birthday party.

JASMINE
You didn't ruin anything Mariam.
It's okay.

MARIAM
No, it's not okay. I definitely
didn't make it worthwhile and for
that, I'm sorry.

Jasmine shifts her head and stares at Mariam. She doesn't break eye contact. WHATSOEVER.

JASMINE (V.O.)
Come on Jasmine. You can do it. Be
assertive. Fight for what you
deserve.

She takes a big breath.

JASMINE
No, Mariam. I don't want anymore
apologies.

(MORE)

JASMINE (CONT'D)

The damage has already been done.
The scars are already there. I have
tried my best over and over again
and I really don't know how much
more I can take. I really don't. So
please...I don't want anymore
sorrys.

MARIAM

I understand and I'm ready to talk
now.

A beat.

JASMINE

Well...

MARIAM

I love you, Jasmine. I really do
love you and I know that it might
not appear that way but there's
something that I've been meaning to
tell you for a very long time.

Mariam takes a deep breath.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

I'm a fearful avoidant.

JASMINE

A what?

MARIAM

A fearful avoidant. It's basically
when you're so afraid of love that
you run away from it. For the last
two months, I've just been fighting
an unwinnable battle within myself,
between fully pulling away or
holding on to you. I have endlessly
grappled with thoughts of breaking
up over and over again and it got
really overbearing for me today.
And I didn't want to hurt you but
talking about all those feelings
would be very triggering for me. So
instead, I ran. Instead, I watched
you fall apart while I was too. I
was very selfish Jasmine and I am
so so sorry. In all my
disorganization, I never once
thought to look at it from your
perspective.

(MORE)

MARIAM (CONT'D)

You must have been truly hurting underneath all those smiles and I'm sorry. I don't want you to leave me...please.

Water begins to form in her eyes.

MARIAM (CONT'D)

I was pulling away because I was afraid. I was afraid that if I got too attached to you that you'd betray me. That you'd hurt me because that's all I know. Monica is the only person on this planet who has ever been by my side. I've been cheated on three times before you, I've been bullied, I've been abused, I've been betrayed and-and I didn't want to keep fighting thorns anymore. I was tired. Tired of the betrayal. Tired of giving and not receiving, so I decided to place walls around my heart to lessen the impact. And that's why I wouldn't communicate. That's why I would dodge questions. That's why I wouldn't want to argue. But I don't want to be fighting anymore. I want to hang up my swords now. So...I'm begging you to please not let me go. Give me one more chance to prove to you that I could do it. I'm so sorry Jasmine. I really am. And I hope that you can forgive me...please.

Jasmine turns to look at Mariam.

JASMINE

I understand, Mariam. But that's all I've been asking you to do for 6 months. I've given you so many chances to talk to me. I've done everything for you Mariam.

(beat)

And I can forgive you but I've given so much already and I don't really want to keep giving more if I'm not going to be met halfway.

(beat)

I'm sorry. That was a little harsh.

MARIAM

It's okay.

(and)

But I'm willing to work on myself
for YOU. I want to do better
Jasmine. I really do.

JASMINE

But how can I trust you?

MARIAM

I'm gonna prove myself. I promise.

JASMINE

But how?

MARIAM

Tonight was just the start. I'll
over communicate if I have to.

JASMINE

But how can I trust you? What if
you just said all that so I
wouldn't break up with you right
now. What if you just slip back
into your old ways?

MARIAM

Well...that's the point. I don't
want you to break up with me. So
I'm trusting myself to do what's
right. To do what's best for us.

JASMINE

Which is?

MARIAM

Communicating and growing together.
As persons and as a couple. Why?
Because I love you, Jasmine
Codrington. I really do.

Jasmine ponders her sentiments--long and hard. She stares in
her eyes, searching for an instinct reaction.

A long beat.

JASMINE

Okay. I am going to trust you on
this. But if you resort back, I'm
out.

MARIAM
That's fine with me. Thank you,
Jasmine.

The two characters share a beautiful moment. Both their eyes water as Jasmine holds her hand out, raises Mariam's chin and then...

their lips touch.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
I love you, Jasmine.

JASMINE
I love you too, Mariam.
(and)
This-this is all I've been asking
for.

MARIAM
I know and I'm sorry.

A heartfelt moment of the two ladies crying as we zoom out into...

BLACK

EXT. SOME BEACH - DAY

Jasmine and Mariam sit besides each other on beach lounge chairs as they sun bathe in their dazzling bathing suits. Mariam is reading a book as Jasmine admires her beauty.

JASMINE
Hey beautiful.

Mariam lowers her book and looks across at Jasmine.

MARIAM
Hey gorgeous.

JASMINE
I love you.

MARIAM
I love you too, Jasmine. So so
much.

JASMINE
I'm glad we worked everything out.

MARIAM
I'm glad too.

A long beat.

JASMINE

So...how do we move forward from here?

MARIAM

In love.

JASMINE

What does that mean?

MARIAM

Communication, honesty, respect and kindness.

JASMINE

But what if you feel like that again? What are you gonna do differently this time?

MARIAM

Talk to you and then we'll work on it together.

JASMINE

So you're not going to run away anymore, right?

MARIAM

I'll try my best not to. But that's where the honesty and communication comes in. I just have to trust you. I just have to feel safe so I could open up about my emotions without judgement.

JASMINE

So you weren't safe before?

MARIAM

It's not that you didn't make me feel safe. It's that I didn't allow myself to feel safe with you. Because I was afraid.

JASMINE

So are you no longer afraid?

MARIAM

I feel less afraid now than I previously was. Is all of it gone?

(MORE)

MARIAM (CONT'D)
Probably not but this time I'm
willing to work on the rest of
it...with you by my side.

JASMINE
I can provide a safe place.

MARIAM
I know you can because you have
continuously shown me that I can
count on you. Thank you for that.

JASMINE
Yeah, of course.

A beat.

MARIAM
But what about you? What do you
want me to work on?

JASMINE
Keep being who you are. I love you,
for you. And I don't want you to
change yourself for me. That's all
I'm asking for.

MARIAM
Okay. I can do that.

The two women smile gloriously at each other.

A long beat.

MARIAM (CONT'D)
Forever?

JASMINE
And always.

MARIAM
I love you.

JASMINE
I love you more, pumpkin.

Jasmine glances over her sunglasses to the water. She looks
back across at Mariam.

JASMINE (CONT'D)
Are you ready to go swim?

MARIAM
I don't know...not yet.

JASMINE

Come on Mariam. The book isn't going to go anywhere.

MARIAM

But-but- I just have one more chapter to go.

JASMINE

As I said, the book isn't going anywhere.

MARIAM

It's not going to take me that long, I swear.

JASMINE

Mariam.

MARIAM

Jasmine.

Jasmine springs puppy eyes at Mariam.

JASMINE

Come on!

MARIAM

20 minutes.

JASMINE

Seriously...

MARIAM

10?

JASMINE

Mariam.

MARIAM

5?

JASMINE

I will literally snatch that book from your hand.

MARIAM

You wouldn't dare.

JASMINE

Is that a challenge?

MARIAM

Maybe...

A long beat as they lock eyes with each other. Then...

Jasmine launches over at Mariam and grabs the book. The two lovers wrestle each other in Mariam's chair for a brief moment until it concludes in romantic laughter. Jasmine looks at Mariam fondly in her eyes.

JASMINE

Let's go!

MARIAM

Fine.

Mariam puts away the book in her bag as Jasmine rises from the lounge chair. The two women stare at each other. Jasmine holds out her hand to Mariam as she interlocks her fingers into hers.

The two ladies then dance off to the ocean.

FADE OUT.