

The Encounter

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1 BLACK SCREEN 1

The screen is black. We hear arabic music. Maybe
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxXuVOpEIwA>)

SINGER
Habibi ya noor el 'Ain

ya saken khayali

'Ashek bakali snin

wala gherak bi bali

habibi habibi habibi ya noor el 'Ain
habibi habibi habibi ya noor el 'Ain

ya saken khayali

Habibi ya noor el 'Ain

ya saken khayali

The screen shows in Arabic: اللقاء and in English 'The Encounter'

2 INT. CAB. EVENING 2

We see a driver, a middle eastern man in his mid-thirties, is driving a cab (or LYFT). We hear the music through his radio. He passes by the STATEN ISLAND FERRY, and a man, Alec, early 20s, stands on the sidewalk with his hand out. The driver shuts off the radio, and pulls over.

3 INT. CAB. EVENING 3

Alec enters the cab, dropping his backpack on the floor.

ALEC
Can you drop me at the Brooklyn Bride?

DRIVER
Sure.

The Driver pulls out. Alec stares out the window. It is quiet for a minute.

ALEC
Man, the city is breathtaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

DRIVER

It is.

ALEC

It's so busy, you know? it's incredible. It keeps your heart pumping.

DRIVER

Keeps you motivated.

ALEC

EXACTLY.

Alec stares out the window again.

SHOT: CLOSE UP ON THE DRIVER LOOKING AT HIM THROUGH THE MIRROR.

4 EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDE 4

Alec exits the car, and heads for the bridge.

5 INT. CAB. EVENING 5

The Driver has his next passenger in the car. She is in her late 40s. They are stuck in traffic. The car behind them honks. The woman rolls her eyes and crosses her arms.

The phone rings. The Driver picks it up.

FADEL

Can't talk now.

He hangs up. The woman glares at him from the backseat.

6 INT. FLASHBACK 6

The Driver is sitting across from his wife, Murielle. It is a nice house, they get by just fine. She is picking through her food.

DRIVER

Are you not hungry?

MURIELLE

I don't know. I have knots in my stomach.

DRIVER

From what?

(CONTINUED)

3.

CONTINUED: 2

MURIELLE

From what? Are you joking? With the political climate that we-

DRIVER

Please. There is nothing we can do about this.

Murielle is silent. Driver gets up and kneels next to her. He takes her hand.

MURIELLE

I'm just scared.

DRIVER

I know. I wish there was something I could do. Everything will be fine.

MURIELLE

I hope you're right.

There is a loud honk.

7 INT. CAB 7

The Driver is back in the cab. It's later. He passes by Central Park.

8 EXT. CENTRAL PARK 8

Melanie, 30s, beautiful, is standing outside of Central Park. The Driver pulls over.

9 INT. CAB 9

Melanie is on the phone in the backseat. She is on the phone.

MELANIE

Hi. Yes. This is Melanie Price. Price. P-R-I-C-E. I'm supposed to have a facial appointment in fifteen minutes. I think I'm going to be late. Just wanted to let you know.

She pauses.

She puts her hand over the phone.

MELANIE

You should have taken the West Side Highway. It's your job to know the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

MELANIE (CONT'D)
quickest route.

She gets back on the phone.

MELANIE
No, I'm sorry. It's my cab driver.
Thank you.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

10

Murielle and The Driver are laying, watching television. She is very visibly pregnant, and has her head in his lap.

MURIELLE
Are you going to miss me?

DRIVER
Hmm?

MURIELLE
Are you going to miss me when you move
to the U.S?

Driver lowers the volume on the television.

DRIVER
I'm not moving. I'm just going to
study.

MURIELLE
I still don't understand why you can't
study here.

DRIVER
They don't offer a specialization in
cosmetic surgery. After two years, we
will be set. It will be a much better
life.

MURIELLE
How can it be a better life if you're
gone for two years? How are we going
to live without you? How can you
expect me to take care of our daughter
by myself?

Driver kisses her forehead.

DRIVER
You are such a strong woman. We'll get
through it. We can talk every day. And
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5.

CONTINUED: 2

DRIVER (CONT'D)
then you can come live with me in the
United States, we can get you away
from all the soldiers. Our daughter
can't run around out here, she can't
be free. We need this for our family,
for our future.

He takes her hand. Murielle sighs.

MURIELLE
I understand.

The Driver smiles at her.

DRIVER
But I don't like it.

He kisses her lightly, and cups her face in his hands.

11 EXT. NYC SCHOOL OF MEDICINE. 11

The Driver is on the phone.

DRIVER
What do you mean?

FRIEND
(On the phone)
I'm sorry. The drone attack killed
almost everyone. Murielle was killed
instantly. Your daughter was
transferred to the hospital, and died
within 72 hours. I'm so so sorry.

Driver begins to sob. He drops down outside the school on the
sidewalk.

12 INT. CAB. EVENING 12

We see the Driver gripping his steering wheel. Melanie has
hung up the phone.

MELANIE
Can you let me out here? I'll just
cross over. Thanks.

The Driver pulls over. She gets out. He pulls away.

13 INT. CAB. EVENING 13

We see the Driver over time, as New York City passes him by.
(CONTINUED)

6.

CONTINUED: 2

His facial expression doesn't change.

14 INT. CAB. EVENING

14

A priest is sitting in the back seat. He leans forward.

PRIEST

New York City. The city that never
sleeps.

The driver doesn't say anything.

PRIEST

What's your name?

DRIVER

Afzaal.

PRIEST

Afzaal? Am I saying that right?

DRIVER

Yes.

PRIEST

Do you mind if I ask what that means?

DRIVER

It means grace. It's plural for grace.
So... graces.

PRIEST

That's very fitting.

The priest smiles. The driver looks at him through the
mirror.

PRIEST

Are you from New York?

DRIVER

Not originally, but I've been here for
about three years now.

The sound fades out as they keep talking.

15 INT. COFFEE SHOP

15

The priest is sitting next to the driver in a coffee shop.
It's the first time that he's smiled the entire movie.

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CONTINUED: 2

7.