

ROYALTY

Written by

micah rose

INT. UPSCALE WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Three YOUNG WOMEN exit, colorful clothing in hand, laughing and smiling.

FATIMA, 25, beautiful, tall and voluptuous, wears a hijab, stands in front of the full length mirror and avoids eye contact with herself. She tries on a top.

FATIMA
This will not do.

KHADIJAH AYOOR, 25, stunning, strides into the dressing room. Her dress threatens to reveal her most intimate parts. She teeters on 6 inch Louboutins.

KHADIJAH
I need a female opinion about which dress looks better. Miss?

Fatima turns and looks past Khadijah for a way out. Khadijah stands with a smile pasted on her face. Fatima objects.

FATIMA
Me? I don't work here.

Khadijah brushes past her to gain access to the mirror.

KHADIJAH
You're a woman, aren't you? What color works best: Begonia or Acacia?

Khadijah adores herself in the mirror, smiles and poses.

FATIMA
Acacia, I guess.

KHADIJAH
Perfect. You're a doll.

Khadijah admires how the Acacia looks. Fatima looks down and notices how her cleavage peeks out. She adjusts her shirt. Fatima catches a glimpse of her teenage years.

FATIMA
Khadijah? Khadijah Ayoor?

Khadijah looks at Fatima in the mirror. Fatima turns red.

FATIMA (CONT'D)
Mrs. Hinkle's art classes and halaqah.

Fatima forces herself to look at Khadijah and smiles.

KHADIJAH

Yes. I see. You're taller or something. I usually recognize everyone from my past unless they've changed.

Fatima scrutinizes Khadijah's figure while she hangs the dresses on a hook and perfects her laugh in the mirror. She gets caught. Khadijah dismisses her stares but explains...

KHADIJAH (CONT'D)

I'm on my way to a cocktail party.
Black tie.

Khadijah turns to Fatima and gives her an obvious once over.

KHADIJAH (CONT'D)

What was your name again? Lydia?

FATIMA

Fatima.

KHADIJAH

Fatima. Fatima. So... traditional.

Khadijah caresses Fatima's hijab. Fatima leans away.

FATIMA

Right. Where did you move to after graduation?

KHADIJAH

Never left. Ended up going to the University for a Business degree. Let my parents talk me into that.

FATIMA

You parent's let you go to University? I'm surprised... especially since your mother led our Halaqah.

Khadijah spins around to the mirror and adjusts her cleavage. Fatima looks down at herself and remembers.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT - HALAQAH

Young WOMEN in hijabs sit in a circle. A plump, older woman, MRS. AYOUR addresses them. Fatima, who sits across from Khadijah, hides her voluptuousness with her arms.

MRS. AYOUR

My daughters. Be aware of how you are perceived. If a man is tempted by you, let it be because of your purity, not because you dressed provocatively. You are royalty.

The young Women look perplexed. Fatima squirms in her chair.

KHADIJAH

My father works as a janitor at the hospital. We are far from royalty.

All eyes turn to Khadijah. Her mother crosses to her and places her hand on her shoulder.

MRS. AYOUR

My daughter... Our people were kings and queens of great dynasties. You cannot escape the greatness coursing through your veins.

Mrs. Ayour walks over to Fatima and signals for her to fix her shirt. She turns to the group and points to the mirror behind Fatima.

MRS. AYOUR (CONT'D)

Come. See.

The young Women are cautious as they cross to the mirror. They look at each other's reflection. Fatima, fights her way to the back of the group.

MRS. AYOUR (CONT'D)

You are queens, concealing that which will be revealed to one who is worthy. Your husband, your king.

The young Women giggle and poke each other. Khadijah catches Fatima's eye. She wears a look of disgust. Fatima follows her eyes down to her cleavage. She adjusts her shirt, again.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Fatima lets her gaze drift to Khadijah's intrusive bust line and snaps back to her face.

KHADIJAH

My husband and I run a charity that helps women escape oppression. Actually, my husband insisted I run it. We are so connected. He is so selfless.

Fatima shifts her weight, crosses her arms.

FATIMA

So American.

Khadijah squares her shoulders and looks Fatima in her eyes.

KHADIJAH

We are in America, dear.

FATIMA

And he let's you dress like this? You disgrace your husband and your father by being so... free.

They stand opposite each other, like two boxers.

KHADIJAH

My husband is quite pleased with the way I am.

Khadijah lifts her breasts in her dress so that they teeter on the edge of obscene.

KHADIJAH (CONT'D)

He paid for these.

FATIMA

You're the lust of his manhood. You come from royalty. Did you forget what we learned in Halagah? You used to be a good example. Now...

KHADIJAH

How dare you! So pious! Hiding who you are doesn't make you more holy!

Khadijah moves close to Fatima.

KHADIJAH (CONT'D)

You wish you could be me.

Fatima is done.

FATIMA

Whatever.

Khadijah stands firm. Fatima doesn't ask her to move. She pushes past her to the open dressing room door. Khadijah turns.

KHADIJAH
Wait. Please.

Fatima stops with one hand on her door. Her scarf slips.

KHADIJAH (CONT'D)
I apologize. I was rude.

Fatima won't turn around. She sighs.

FATIMA
Me, too. We're even. Enjoy your party.

Fatima walks into her dressing room, closes the door behind her. Her chest rises and falls. Silence fills the space.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
I couldn't live my life as a hijabi.

FATIMA
I can't imagine living with no regard to tradition.

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
Tradition is stuffy and boring. I like myself this way.

Fatima looks at herself without her hijab. She notices her curves. She is breathtaking in this light. She reaches for her cellphone. "Dinner? Out? <3" appears on the screen.

FATIMA
I know.

Fatima's tears betray her. Khadijah is seen over her door.

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
You sat in the back of Mrs. Hinkle's class. Quiet.

Khadijah's hand rests gently at the top of the door. Her nails are perfectly manicured.

KHADIJAH (O.C.) (CONT'D)
You were an artist. Do you still...

Fatima flops into the plush chair, closes her eyes.

FATIMA
Sometimes. I've been featured at
the mosque's gallery.

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
I was always jealous of you.

Fatima is alert now.

FATIMA
I'm sorry?

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
You were talented. You didn't care
what anyone else thought. You were
the most beautiful girl in school.

FATIMA
Tommy Shepler made my life hell.

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
He was relentless.

Fatima leans back. Khadijah turns to face Fatima's dressing
room door, her eyes still hidden.

FATIMA
I knew that my hijab was beautiful.
I was an ambassador of Allah. It
honored my family, the Prophet
Muhammad... praise be unto him, and
Allah... may he be glorified and
exalted.

KHADIJAH (O.C.)
My mother said that I wasn't
dedicated enough.

FATIMA
It's never too late.

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Khadijah closes her eyes. Each word stings.

KHADIJAH
My husband is honored by the way
men look at me. He knows that I am
his.

Khadijah sees herself in the mirror. She tugs at her body conscious dress in an attempt to reveal her best assets. Her eyes well. She stops.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FATIMA

Women conceal that which men must reveal.

Fatima grabs her purse and grabs the latch.

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Khadijah wipes her tears, fixes her face and leaves the dresses on the hook.

KHADIJAH

We are the same. You and I.

FATIMA (O.C.)

Are we?

KHADIJAH

We love our husbands and our god.
We honor them with what we have.

Khadijah walks away. Fatima exits, sees herself in the floor length mirror and avoids eye contact with her reflection. She traces the outline of her hijab with her fingertips.

FATIMA

Bless you.

Khadijah leaves Fatima to stare at herself. Fatima takes her time and sees herself.

FADE TO BLACK.