

BROTHERHOOD

Screenplay

By

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Midi La Nuit Productions
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1. EXT. ROLLING HILLS, TUNISIA- MORNING/ DAY

RYAN (6), an energetic little boy with flaming red hair and freckles, stands on a foot of a hill staring up in wonder at a massive wind turbine.

Ryan's father MOHAMED (45), a shepherd with a weathered face and kind eyes, stands a few meters away overseeing his large flock of sheep. Mohamed carries a rifle for protection from wolves.

MOHAMED

Ryan!

RYAN doesn't register his father's call.

MOHAMED walks over and tenderly places his hand on his son's head. RYAN looks up at his father.

RYAN

What are they dad?

MOHAMED

They turn wind into electricity.

RYAN

How?

Mohamed smiles at Ryan.

MOHAMED

I'll draw you a picture and show you when we get home.

CHAKER (15), a redheaded teenager, tall and gangly like his father, comes running from the distance.

CHAKER

Dad! Dad! I found it.

2. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- MORNING/ DAY

SALHA (38), MOHAMED's wife, a slightly overweight women with a gentle demeanor, sits in their modest one room house sorting through grains. She doesn't wear the veil and there are no objects in the house to indicate that she or her family are strict Muslims.

On one end of the room are floor mattresses for sleeping and two old battered dressers. A dozen makeshift chimes made by Ryan out of broken spoons, sea glass and bottles hang from the ceiling and the two windows.

(CONTINUED)

Salha raises her head at the sound of an approaching vehicle.

A young man enters the house followed by a woman wearing a floor length black niqab, which covers her face except for her eyes, and black gloves to cover her hands. The young man has flaming red hair and stubble. His hair is disheveled and eyes are red from lack of sleep.

3. EXT. ROLLING HILLS, TUNISIA- MORNING/ DAY

Mohamed, Chaker and Ryan reach a ditch where one of their sheep lies injured from an attack by a wild animal.

Mohamed pulls out knife and hands it to Chaker.

MOHAMED

Here, you're going to do it this time.

Chaker's jaw tenses but he complies with his father's order and cuts the sheep's throat.

JUMP CUT:

In a field nearby, Mohamed, Chaker and Ryan guide their herd of sheep over a hill in view of their modest house.

Mohamed carries the dead sheep on his back, it's blood dripping on his shirt. Mohamed see a weathered pick-up truck parked in front of the house and his expression transforms to worry.

MOHAMED

Let's hurry.

4. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- MORNING/ DAY

Mohamed enters the house, his shirt covered in blood and sees Malik (18), his eldest son, seated next to Salha. Salha's joy is uncontrollable, she kisses her son and thanks god repeatedly for his return. Malik stands up when he sees his father.

MALIK

Father.

Mohamed stands motionless by the door. Ryan runs past Mohamed and Chaker and jump into Malik's arms excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Malik! Malik! Is that your truck?
Can we go on it?

MALIK

(laughs)

Of course. Let me rest first.

Chaker glances up at his father to read his expression then walks over to Malik and shakes his hand.

MALIK

How are you?

CHAKER

Good.

SALHA

Mohamed this is Reem, Malik's wife.

Mohamed notices the woman in niqab for the first time. He exchanges a quick disapproving look with Salha and remains silent and distant from the celebrations.

CHAKER

When did you come?

MALIK

An hour ago.

5. EXT. BACKYARD, FAMILY HOUSE, TUNISIA- MORNING/ DAY

Salha sits backyard skinning and gutting the dead sheep. She moves quickly with practiced precision. Mohamed, still in his bloodied shirt, paces next to her in agitation.

MOHAMED

Where did they get the car?

SALHA

He bought it when they crossed the border.

MOHAMED

Where did he get the money?

SALHA

I don't know Mohamed. It doesn't matter. They made it here without being stopped by the police. They're exhausted.

(CONTINUED)

MOHAMED

We can't even see her face with that thing on. We don't know anything about her.

SALHA

She's Syrian... Maybe she'll take it off once she gets comfortable with us.

MOHAMED

(sarcastically)

She'll have to ask her husband's permission to take it off.

Salha clenches her jaw and remains silent.

MOHAMED

They can't stay here.

Salha pauses from gutting the sheep to look directly at Mohamed.

SALHA

She's pregnant.

Mohamed paces silently.

MOHAMED

You're not going to question him at all?

SALHA

...I've had one year of not knowing...I thought we lost him.

Mohamed's expression softens and looks away. He sighs and looks back at Salha.

Malik sits on a chair in the doorway of the house. He holds a broken shard of a mirror and shaves off his beard with a razor and soap. Ryan sits on the ground next to him pretending to shave using a stick as razor.

RYAN

Is Reem a ghost?

Malik smiles.

MALIK

No, she's a woman like mom.

RYAN

But why does she look like a ghost?

MALIK

She wears a niqab because it protects her.

7. EXT. HILL TOP, NEAR HOUSE, TUNISIA- SUN SET

Reem stands alone on top of a hill overlooking a green valley, her niqab blowing in the wind. RYAN (V.O) From what?

MALIK (V.O)

...from getting hurt.

RYAN (V.O)

I want one too.

MALIK (V.O)

It's only for women.

RYAN (V.O)

Why?

Malik walks up the hill towards Reem.

MALIK

We have to go back for dinner.

Malik reaches for Reem's gloved hand and looks at the view with her. Silence. No. REEM

REEM

It's so quiet.

MALIK

I saw the way my father looked at you when he walked in...do you think you could take it off? I know him... It's going to be a problem.

Reem shakes her head.

MALIK

We're going to have to...

REEM

(aggressively)

I said no.

7. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- NIGHT

The family is gathered on the floor for dinner. Malik sits across his father next to Reem. Mohamed won't look at Malik and Reem's direction. Ryan is seated Malik's lap. Everyone is eating except for Reem.

SALHA

(to Reem)

You don't want to eat my dear?

MALIK

She prefers to eat alone after we're done.

SAHLA

Whatever makes her comfortable.

MALIK

(To Mohamed)

I saw that the fence needs repair.
I can fix it with Chaker tomorrow.

MOHAMED

Leave it as it is.

MALIK

We could be done by noon if we start at dawn.

MOHAMED

I said leave it as it is. I don't see why you care all of a sudden.

CHAKER

one of the sheep escaped last night...

MOHAMED

Quiet boy. Who told you to speak.

Malik stops eating and looks directly at his father.

MALIK

I had a duty to my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters suffering in Syria. I could not drown out their cries of need.

MOHAMED

How about your Muslim brother Ryan who had to fight off wild dogs alone because Chaker was too busy

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MOHAMED (cont'd)
helping me in your place? How about
your Muslim mother who didn't eat
for weeks when you left and almost
died from grief? Are they not
worthy of your Muslim duty?

Chaker and Reem keep their heads bent down as the tension rises.

SAHLA
Enough Mohamed. He is back, we must
count our blessings.

MALIK
Maybe I would have stayed if you
had treated me as a man instead of
your mule.

MOHAMED
You think killing other men has
made you one? I hope to god that
you didn't butcher any women or
children for your mother's sake.

Malik, shaking with fury, remains silent.

SAHLA
Please let us finish this meal in
peace.

MALIK
I didn't.

MOHAMED
(sarcastically)
Of course you didn't.

SAHLA
Mohamed please.

MALIK
I did paperwork.

MOHAMED
(chuckles)
Why would they trust an idiot like
you to do paperwork? You wouldn't
even finish high school.

Malik stares at Mohamed, shaking with fury.

SAHLA
(yells)
Enough Mohamed.

8. EXT. ROLLING HILLS, TUNISIA- MORNING NEXT DAY

Mohamed, Malik, Chaker and Ryan lead the sheep over the hills to graze. Mohamed and Malik keep a physical distance from each other. Malik carries Ryan on his back.

JUMP CUT:

The boys wrestle under an olive tree.

JUMP CUT:

Malik, Chaker and Ryan nap under the tree. Chaker and Ryan are nestled close around Malik. Mohamed sits nearby finishing his lunch and looks disapprovingly at Malik. He stands, walks over to the boys and forcefully nudges Malik. Malik wakes up surprised and registers his father's cold expression. Malik holds his father's gaze, unintimidated.

MOHAMED
We have to go.

9. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- AFTERNOON

Salha clears the lunch table and leaves the room.

Malik and Chaker play a game of checkers with a very weathered checkers board.

Ryan sits in Malik's lap, playing with Malik's touchscreen phone. Ryan has never seen a touch screen phone and is fascinated with how it works.

Reem sits nearby watching the game while Mohamed prepares his nightly shisha. The sound of Salha washing the dishes outside permeates into the room. Reem stands up and walks towards the door.

10. EXT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- AFTERNOON

Salha is washing the dishes. Reem arrives.

REEM
Can I help you?

Salha smiles at Reem, reaches for a stool and places it next to her for Reem.

(CONTINUED)

SALHA
I'll scrub and you can rinse.

Reem removes her gloves and begins rinsing the dishes. They work silently but are comfortable in each others presence.

Mohamed comes outside carrying his shisha and a mattress. Reem hides her hands between her legs from Mohamed. Salha notices this.

SAHLA
Go inside Mohamed until we finish the dishes.

MOHAMED
(surprised)
Why?

He sees that Reem has hidden her hands but continues setting up his mattress and shisha next to them. Mohamed sits and starts smoking.

SAHLA
Did you hear me Mohamed?

MOHAMED
I've only loved one woman in my life and that is you. She is out of her mind if she thinks her bare hands are going to make her desirable.

SALHA
Didn't you speak your mind enough last night.

MOHAMED
I will continue to speak until they understand that guests in my house abide by my rules.

SAHLA
He's your son.

Malik comes out.

MALIK
What's wrong?

MOHAMED
I don't accept cockroaches into my house.

Reem stands to go into the house but Malik stops her.

(CONTINUED)

MALIK

Your talking about my wife father.

MOHAMED

Maybe your wife can't see well with that thing covering her eyes. If she hasn't noticed we live in one room that I built with own hands. I will not be moved around every time she decides to take her gloves off.

Malik whispers in Reem's ear. She shakes her head but Malik is insistent.

Reem slowly removes her niqab and turns to Mohamed and Salha, her eyes away from them. She is fourteen years old.

Mohamed and Salha are shocked into silence by her age.

Mohamed looks hard at Malik who turns his face away to avoid looking at his father.

11. WOODS, TUNISIA- LATE AFTERNOON/ SUNSET

Mohamed walks into the woods carrying his rifle. He kneels down and gingerly moves away leaves from the forest floor to look for wild boar tracks. He hears cracking of twigs behind him and quickly turns around raising his rifle. He finds nothing. He hears the snorting of a wild boar behind him and turns around but again sees nothing. Sounds of broken twigs and snorting boars multiply, Mohamed keeps turning frantically with his rifle raised looking for the source of the sounds.

12. EXT. FIELD, TUNISIA- MAGIC HOUR/ SUNSET

Reem sits in a field on the edge of the woods making a crown out of flowers. She no longer wears a niqab but a thick scarf around her head that makes her face look tiny. She still wears her black gloves, trying to cover every inch except her face.

She hears a cracking of twigs and looks in the direction of the woods but sees nothing. She looks back at her flower crown. Malik approaches and sits next to her.

MALIK

Are you ok?

Reem nods. Malik places his hand on her belly.

(CONTINUED)

MALIK
I can feel it kicking.

Reem smiles meekly at him then looks back at her hands.

REEM
I'm scared.

13. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- SUNRISE

Mohamed lies awake next to Salha, Chaker and Ryan unable to sleep. He gets up. He stands in front of a curtain where Reem and Malik are sleeping and watches them.

Mohamed stands alone on a hill top with the blanket around his shoulders watching the sunrise.

15. INT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- MORNING

Malik puts on a sweater.

He walks towards where Chaker and Ryan are sleeping and sees Mohamed's rifle hanging on the wall.

He stops and stares at it, his breathing elevates.

Chaker's eyes open, he sees Malik standing in front of the gun. Malik turns towards his brothers. Chaker closes his eyes to feign sleep. Malik nudges Chaker and Ryan.

MALIK
(whispers)
I'm taking you to the beach.

16. EXT. WOODS, TUNISIA- MORNING

Malik, Chaker and Ryan walk through the woods. Malik carries Ryan on his back.

CHAKER
What was it like there?

Malik is taken off guard by the question and answers robotically.

MALIK
It was good.

(CONTINUED)

CHAKER
Why did you come back?

MALIK
I missed you guys.

17. EXT. WOODS, TUNISIA- MORNING

Malik, Chaker and Ryan walk through the woods. Malik carries Ryan on his back.

CHAKER
What was it like there?

Malik is taken off guard by the question and answers robotically.

MALIK
It was good.

CHAKER
Why did you come back?

MALIK
I missed you guys.

(CONTINUED) CONTINUED: 13.

CHAKER
Can you take me next time?

Malik's eyes dart away from Chaker's gaze to hide his emotions.

MALIK
I'm not going back.

CHAKER
But if you do?

MALIK
Okay.

Malik turns to Chaker.

MALIK
... what did dad say when I left?

Chaker hesitates to answer but Ryan answers nonchalantly not registering the significance.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

He said we had to forget you.

Malik, Chaker and Ryan run across a deserted beach nestled in between majestic mountains and jump into the ocean.

JUMP CUT:

Malik and Chaker stand on some rocks fishing while Ryan collects shells and sea glass from the beach.

MALIK

I want to tell you something...It was a mistake to go. I don't want you to ever think about going.

Chaker remains quiet.

MALIK

(aggressively)
Promise me.

Chaker nods.

Ryan finds a long fishing line buried in the sand and begins making a wind chime for Salha.

Malik and Chaker walk over holding a spiked sea urchins tenderly in their hands. Ryan, helped by Malik, splits open one of spiked sea urchins with a rock and they feast on its blood red interior. Staining their hands with the red juices.

19. EXT. ROAD, TUNISIA- DAY

Mohamed walks down a dirt road towards a small cluster of houses. He reaches a makeshift corner store in a small garage and nods in greeting at the store clerk.

MOHAMED

Two cigarettes please.

The clerk hands him the cigarettes. Mohamed is distracted and slow to respond.

MOHAMED

Do you think I could borrow your phone?

(CONTINUED)

CLERK
Of course brother.

20. EXT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- DAY

Salha is in the garden salting the sheep skin in order to dry it. She hears someone approaching and looks up and sees Mohamed.

SALHA
Where have you been?

MOHAMED
Where are the boys?

SALHA
Malik took them to the beach.

MOHAMED
It's the last time he takes them
without my permission.

Salha is exasperated.

CUT TO:

Inside the house, Reem stands by the window hearing Salha and Mohamed arguing.

SAHLA (O.S.)
They're just going to the beach.

MOHAMED (O.S.)
How can you still trust his
judgment? He brought back a child
for a wife.

SAHLA (O.S.)
How old was I when we married?
Wasn't I 15? or have you forgotten?

CUT BACK:

MOHAMED
She's 13.

SALHA
14.

MOHAMED
How do we even know that's true?

(CONTINUED)

Salha turns her head and finds Reem standing before them.
Reem struggles to speak.

SAHLA
What is it my dear?

REEM
It's not Malik's baby.

SALHA
It's not Malik's?

Reem shakes her head.

SAHLA
Who's..Who is?

REEM
...I was forced to marry a fighter
but...there were many of them. I
met Malik after I ran away...He
thought if you knew the baby wasn't
his you wouldn't help us.

Mohamed is visibly disturbed by this revelation. There is an
awkward silence.

MOHAMED
Take her to your sister's house.

Salha stands motionless and confused.

SAHLA
What?

MOHAMED
Take her to your sister's now.

SALHA
Why?

Silence.

SALHA
What did you do?

21. WOODS, VILLAGE- DAY

Mohamed runs frantically through the woods.

22. CLIFF OVERLOOKING BEACH- DAY

Mohamed runs frantically on a cliff that overlooks the ocean. He bends over catching his breath. He scans the beach but it's empty.

23. INT. ROAD, TUNISIA- DAY

Malik, Chaker and Ryan are walking back from the beach. Ryan carries the wind chime he has made for his mother. Malik is playing an Arabic rap song from his phone.

Malik and Chaker start rapping and grooving to the music. Ryan attempts to follow his brothers which makes them laugh.

As they near the house Malik stops suddenly. In the distance police cars make their way to the house.

Chaker looks at Malik, understanding the gravity.

Malik stares at the police car, trying to hold back his emotions, knowing that the future he envisioned is over.

24. INT. POLICE CAR- LATE AFTERNOON

Malik sits in the back of the police car defeated as it drives away from the house.

MOHAMED (V.O)

Salha, please...

SALHA (V.O)

You think you are so much better than him.

Salha stands by the window red eyed from crying. She turns to Mohamed who stands across the room hidden in the shadows. Her eyes are cold and hollow, his eyes plead for forgiveness and understanding.

26. EXT. HOUSE, TUNISIA- LATE AFTERNOON

Ryan lies on the sheepskin in front of the house, curled up on his side. His eyes have a glazed, empty expression. Chaker approaches him.

(CONTINUED)

CHAKER

Ryan get up.

Ryan is unresponsive and continues to be unresponsive with Chaker.

CHAKER

Come on, get up...

Chaker lies next to Ryan and wraps his arm around him.

The sound of the wind turbines from the first scene begins softly then grows louder and louder.

End.