

"Breaking the Code"

SHOOTING SCRIPT

Written by

Sabrina Mahfouz

BBC TASTER SHORTS - THE BREAK

"Breaking the Code"

1. INT. DAY. LAB, LONDON

Close up on the hot pink, smooth fabric of a hijab, the woman wearing it has her head bent down to her chin.

As the head lifts up, we CLOSE UP to reveal face of MUSHEERA (29, British Egyptian, Muslim, standard London accent). She has eyeliner flicks on the top of her big eyes and immaculate face make-up as well as a shiny lipgloss on her lips which she is biting, evidently nervous.

MUSHEERA takes a deep breath and nods to herself, addresses directly to camera.

MUSHEERA

Mum, I love you. But I've been lying to you for the last three years.
There's a few things you haven't been told about me by me and so now seems to be the right time to tell it well it has to be, before you find out from someone else or say from the news or TV -

MUSHEERA breaks away again, aside.

Way too scary, all foreboding like I'm a murderer or some shit and don't mention the bloody news, Musheera, Right. Right. Just stick to the facts, no emotion, no pussyfooting about, just straight in there like swimwear get right down to the bone, facts facts facts, that's what you live for.

(TO CAMERA)

Mum, I love you. And the reason I have lied to you for three whole years is cos you didn't give me any other choice cos

(quickly)

the way you look at the world since dad left is completely and utterly FUCKED up -

MUSHEERA shakes her head.

Too sweary, Musheera, this isn't a Scorsese film, let's bring it back a bit, go for more of a diplomatic approach, yep, okay -

MUSHEERA faces back to direct camera address.

Mum, I love you to the moon and back,
you know that.
You are so important -
I'd both be lost without you. Um.
But...

With renewed energy, MUSHEERA launches into direct camera address.

And because I love you,
I have lied to you.
You need to know the truth.
About me.
I have to tell you as soon
it'll be made public.
Don't panic, mum,
this is not the same sort of public
that you felt so shamed by, you know
when, er, Fatima got filmed smashing
windows in Cairo -
Sorry, look, back to the point,
to the facts.
I, Musheera Karim,
your youngest daughter,
I am, I am what you could call -
I am what is called -
what is commonly called a -
scientist.

CUT TO TITLE: BREAKING THE CODE

PAN OUT to reveal MUSHEERA is wearing a white lab coat. The background is now revealed to be a scientific lab. There are computers and microscopes and shelves of test tubes and similar equipment. A stereo with a stack of CDs lying around.

BEAT.

MUSHEERA now lovingly touches the bits and pieces around the lab as she talks, it is obviously very much hers and where she feels at home. She is half still rehearsal-talking to her Mum here and also half to herself as she's so proud of her achievement. Fiddles with a stereo. Distracted, trying to find a track.

A geneticist, to be exact.
And I know you said to me,
at graduation 'Musheera, I am proud of
you. But now marry, be a mother, a
housewife.' And I was sad that you
were sad about Dad and I wanted to
make you happy so I lied and said I
would. And I did keep sort of half the
promise,
cos I'm married aren't I

and Ashraf is just the best isn't he
but -
(TO CAMERA)
Mum, calm down, look,
what we've found, my team,
what we've found,
it's something great,
world changing, mind bending,
history making, life saving
and so you can give me your blessing
or you can, you can,
you can piss off!!

MUSHEERA shakes herself out of her frustration. To herself, fiddles with stereo, stabbing at buttons, a track starts to quietly play - Yazz, The Only Way Is Up.

The woman is fragile. Don't break her heart, Musheera. Try again.

MUSHEERA direct address to camera, guilty.

There's a few things of course,
that you don't know about me.
I'm not a housewife. At all.
I don't use the recipes you give me
for Ashraf's dinner, he, er,
he uses them to cook for me and
he...he cleans and I tell him to tell
you all that stuff about my kitchen
and decorating skills, in fact I beg
him to, so don't hate him, please, he
didn't really want to, but anyway,
but it's even more than that,
it's that I - with my team - at work,
in the lab, as a scientist,
yes I am a scientist,
a bloody good one Mum.
And I might not have a baby yet but -
Mum. I've cracked a genetic code
for a terrible disease,
after years of peering at millions of
DNA mutations,
rearrangements, insertions and
deletions of sequencing which -
too technical, sorry.
Basically it all means it's likely
I'll be a bit famous for a while,
which I don't mind at all
cos it'll be good for girls
to have a woman in this sort of world
to look up to and -

MUSHEERA puts her head down, shakes it, breathes out, she'd been talking at speed.

And I'm supposed to say this, whilst
looking at your broken face.

(WORRIED)

Mum. I love you so much and you know that. You know so much about me that is really what makes me me, you know?

(Re - track now playing, nervous)

Like how I love to sing 1980s pop songs whenever there's a party or a shower or a -
Yazz - ha, that was always a favourite in our house hey? I got that love from you. I got so much good stuff from you.

She needs to get really stuck here.

Lost and badly stuck, she considers the music as it kicks in.

(To HERSELF)

Ha, suppose the only thing for it, times like this, is to sing, yeah just like Mumtee taught me...face the music...

(Has an idea. Direct to camera, to her mum)

Close your eyes and sing...

MUSHEERA begins to hum 'The Only Way Is Up'. She smiles and now starts to sing along to 'THE ONLY WAY IS UP' by YAZZ, getting louder as things go into a FANTASY - Musheera's hijab becomes sequinned, the lab goes dark and there is a disco ball overhead. As the music plays without words (it is also shortened so we get to the chorus quicker), MUSHEERA speaks over it, in a performer-type style:

(TO CAMERA)

Mum, I love you.
Dance with me like you used to.
Forget that hip that hurts,
forget that broken heart,
throw it all to the wind,
let it blow itself dry,
as we dance circles around tomorrow
and join me now, Mum, as I say -

Starts to sing (well, but in an amateur way)

The only way is UP, baby, for you and me now, the only way is UP, baby for you and me now woooooh yeh -

SHOOTING SCRIPT

There is a knock at the window partitioning the two labs where she works. She is shocked back into normality as she sees her ASSISTANT staring at her through the window, looking totally stunned at her behaviour. She coughs and looks embarrassed. She slowly looks back at the camera and half smiles as she takes a breath. She knows what to do.