

Look Into My Eyes
Synopsis
By
Abdallah El Ali

Act 1 - Desert

Opening scene - Night:

Enter the city of Dubai. We first get a glimpse of a panoramic view of the city, with all its lighting and advertising. We close in into the window of a prestigious building. We see a dressed up, good-looking, man in his mid-20's lying on a bed on his chest, eyes wide open. We zoom in further into his eyes, and we see a faint image of the city of Ubar in each of his eyes, both of which are constricted. He says faintly "For want of meaning, life was lost. I can't look into your eyes, for I have merged with the myth", and a city in his eyes collapses. We zoom out to find that he is in fact lying on the sand in a vast desert, the Rub El Khali. He then slowly drowns in the sands, and only the Rub El Khali desert remains.

Enter Sidetrack Café, an old, quiet coffee shop in Dubai city. We see Lila, a pretty, 24-year old girl, who is subdued, quiet, and polite having a conversation with Ameera, a sexy, extroverted, brunette in her mid-20's. Chatter in the background, they both order tea, and Ameera starts telling Lila about her latest love affair. Ameera tries really hard to impress Lila with her life stories and her sexual experiences, but Lila has only a blank half-listening expression on her. Ameera guzzles down her tea and tells Lila she has to go see her new love after having received a phone call by him. Ameera leaves, and a smell of incense begins diffusing throughout the café. Lila begins biting on her nails, while sipping her unfinished tea. The smell it seems affected her, and she appears pale, apprehensive, and confused. Unable to identify the smell, she walks up to the café owner and politely asks him what the source of the smell is. He tells her it is called "frankincense"—he tells her it is a kind of Arabian incense. She thanks him, and goes back to her seat when she begins to feel slightly dizzy but calm. She decides to leave, leaving her tea unfinished. She pays the owner, and walks out into the street expecting to see the mid-day traffic, but instead all the cars have turned into ancient wagons. She gasps, and starts walking, looking around her in a paranoid fashion and notices people's normal everyday expressions are unchanged. She begins to feel very dizzy, and collapses to the floor. Immediately, the people on the road pick her up and inquire. She tells them she's

not feeling well, and immediately excuses herself. She looks at the road, and everything is back to normal.

Without saying a word, she goes to her car, a grey Peugeot 307, gets in, and drives to a mall. Almost running, and feeling excited, she goes to a reputable incense shop "Bakhoor Kingdom". She scans the place, avoiding eye contact with all the people in the store. She goes up to the shopkeeper, nervously, she asks for frankincense. The shopkeeper looks confused, and tells her he doesn't understand what she wants. He begins telling her about the different kinds of incense and takes out this expensive incense and puts it near her nose. She backs off, thanks the shopkeeper, and takes off. In the same mall, she goes to another reputable incense shop "Bakhoor Al Arabi". She enters, and walks up to the shopkeeper and asks him about frankincense, with despairing eyes. He tells her he has no clue what she is talking about and proceeds to advertise other types. She sighs, and walks out of the store. She exits the mall and goes to her car. She enters her car, and switches on the radio. The radio softly sings oriental music. Feeling disquieted, she decides to go back to her apartment. She parks her car, and enters a semi-old building. She presses the elevator button, waits anxiously biting her nails, and finally enters the elevator. She notices sand in the elevator floor, barely gasps and presses 7. She takes out her keys, and unlocks the door. Entering the one-bedroom apartment, she hauls herself on the couch, reaches for the air-conditioner remote and places her laptop on her lap. She switches on the air-conditioner but it isn't working. She ignores it and immediately opens her web browser. In the search engine she types "frankincense". No hits. She then types in www.frankincense.com, but all she gets is an offer to buy the domain name. We zoom in on to her glazed eyes, and in her eyes we see the vast desert Rub El Khali. In her constricted eyes, we see Lila walking.

Enter the Rub El Khali. We see Lila walking on the sand dunes until she comes across a huge well, carrying a backpack with all the necessary gear required to survive in the desert. She comes across Ameera. Ameera, clad in expensive jewelry is wearing fashionable clothes, and has no desert gear on whatsoever. Ameera talks to Lila as if she hasn't seen her for some time, and begins telling her about a new mall that opened, and how tomorrow after she gets paid she will go buy new clothes from Gucci. She begins to tell Lila her views on love. Lila, surprised but simultaneously indifferent and passive, interrupts her and tells her we're in a desert—how could you be so casual about it? Ameera continues as if Lila had never

spoken and begins telling her again about her new boyfriend, how he comes from a foreign country and all the hot sex they're having lately. Abruptly, Lila tells her she doesn't believe her and Ameera shrugs, and tells her to believe what she wants. She starts to leave but Lila stops her and asks her how she can go back. Confused, Ameera tells her "go back to what?" and continues walking away. Lila again anxious now, bites on her nails, and in a fit of frightened aggression screams "What is wrong with everything? What the hell is happening?" Tears fall from her eyes, but she immediately sweeps them off. Ameera looks back and realizes what is happening to Lila. She comes back to Lila, and offers her to go shopping. Lila agrees. They walk together in the desert and then we see several people carrying brand bags, some who are standing looking at nothing as if they are window shopping. Ameera tells Lila to lighten up, and offers to drive her home if she wants. Lila agrees. Fade out.

Enter Lila's apartment. She removes the laptop off her lap and decides to call her cousin Maya. She first asks her if she knows anything about an incense called "frankincense". She tells her how since she first smelt that incense things haven't been right, and her cousin brushes her off laughing and tells her how she always takes things too seriously and gets affected. Lila listens, and submissively agrees. Her cousin tells her to go get laid and then dismisses herself because she's got an interview at a high-end design company. She hangs up the phone, and leaves the house. She presses the elevator button, enters and notices there's no more sand. She walks to her car, gets in and the radio is also no longer singing oriental music, but some oldies song. Blank expression on her face, she drives back to sidetrack café to inquire about frankincense. She parks her car and goes in.

Enter Side-track café. She notices a very good-looking man sitting, sporadically sipping his coffee and reading the newspaper. He notices her and smiles. She immediately turns her head and approaches the owner. She tells him she was here earlier and when she tried to find the frankincense that he told her about, no one had any idea what she was talking about. He asks her if she's okay and if he could get her tea. She gets a little angry but politely asks him again about the frankincense. He apologizes and tells her he doesn't know what she's talking about. She fixes her gaze at the owner in disbelief. She is about to say something when someone touches her back. We see the good-looking man next to her and he introduces himself as Sam. Looking at him, she

rubs her eyes and tells him her name. The owner turns around and occupies himself with the staff. Lila taking a glance in disbelief at the owner, realizes that he has become a scorpion that's communicating with the staff, which are now also other scorpions. Sam asks Lila if she wants to sit down with him for a short while. She agrees. From Sam's speech, we see that not only is he extremely good-looking, but intelligent, verbose, charismatic, witty—a full-fledged personality. They sit down and Sam asks Lila what she would like to order. She tells him, and he orders her tea. Sam lights a cigarette and looks her in the eyes. She looks at him and sees a city in his eyes, turns her head, feeling anxious. She tries not to bite her nails, and instead begins playing with her hair.

End of Act 1

Act 2: City

She then asks him about frankincense waiting impatiently for an anticipated response. He then asks her why she's so interested in this particular incense. With nothing to hide, she tells him her story. Listening curiously, he proceeds to explain the frankincense in his own eloquent way. He tells her about the history of the incense, emphasizing the forgotten city of Ubar. He explains to her the trade routes, quotes the Qura'anic verses that tell of the people of Ad. He mentions to her the pride and wickedness of King Shaddad and how in the Qura'an, it is supposed that Allah collapsed the city into the sand because of the wickedness of the people. He tells her about how the frankincense in those days was equivalent to gold, and the Arabian name of the incense is 'Olibanum' which comes from the word "milk". As Sam speaks, Lila is mesmerized by him, and fixated on his eyes, the city in his eyes.. She turns her head, and he asks her what the matter is. She doesn't say anything, and when she looks back into his eyes, she no longer sees Dubai but Ubar, fully erected from the sands. He asks her if she'd like to leave this old café and go somewhere else. She agrees. They pay their bill and head out of the store. He asks if she'd want to go for a ride in his car, and she agrees. Sam uses his keys to unlock his BMW 750i, and they both get in. She then asks him why the frankincense, if it has such a deep history, is forgotten. She asks why there are no traces of the incense anywhere, even on the internet. Surprised, he tells her that there is most definitely frankincense everywhere in the city. Changing the subject, he asks if she would like to go over to his place, in hopes of getting laid. She has a thoughtful look on her face, and starts playing with her fingers. She agrees and they take

off to his apartment, not saying a word throughout the car ride and listening to popular music. They arrive at Sam's apartment, which is set in a prestigious area. He unlocks the garage door with a remote control, and parks the car. They get out and enter the building.

Enter Sam's apartment. Sam, being the gentleman, opens the door and invites Lila to go in first. We see an apartment with tinted glass windows with an ultra-modern coffee table and matching seats. Above the table, there is a photograph of the dusty city of old Dubai in the night taken in black-and-white. Each sofa blends in with the wealth of the house. The house has three bedrooms, each with tinted glass windows. He invites her for a drink of expensive single-malt whiskey. She politely refuses, and seats herself on the expensive sofa, feeling a little discomforted. Sam fixes himself a drink, and sits next to her, both not saying a word to each other. Sam then puts his drink down and puts his arm around her. Right now she is gazing firmly into his eyes. They start making out, and he starts caressing her body. Sam then slowly takes off her shirt, while she unbuttons his. She then holds his hands and asks him "you brought me here so you can fuck me, right? That was your intention, am I right?" Surprised at her question, Sam presents her with a circumlocutory response that ultimately says no. She tells him she doesn't believe him and he tells her to believe what she wants. She smiles and puts her arms around his neck and kisses him voraciously. Removing all their clothes, Sam goes on top of her and penetrates her. Both of their eyes constricted, he goes in and out of her. Looking in his eyes Lila again sees Ubar, this time with people walking around. Sam looks into her eyes, and sees the vastness of the Rub El Khali in her eyes. Nearly at the point of orgasm, we see a desert with Dubai rising from it superimposed on the sex scene. Fade out.

Fade in. Lila and Sam are sitting cuddled next to each other. Lila smells the frankincense and immediately starts biting her nails. Sam tells her he prepared some because she likes it. Lila kisses him on his neck and whispers that she loves him. Sam tells her she doesn't know what love is. Sam, very conscious and aware of things, then explains to her his views on love, presenting her with a complex understanding of why she can't love him just yet. Barely listening, she asks him if he's ever loved someone so much he'd sacrifice anything for. Sam, feeling uneasy, immediately tells her that it's none of her business. She smiles and kisses him again. He looks into her eyes, and he tells her that when he was having sex with her, he saw a desert in her. He tells her she is empty. She doesn't say anything and

starts French kissing him. She then asks him what he does in life, and he doesn't give a direct answer. He tells her he is retired now, but he used to be in the real estate business. Sam doesn't ask her what she does, and she seems fine with that. Fade out.

End of Act 2

Act 3 - Ubar

Next day – Afternoon. Enter Lila's apartment. She picks up the phone and dials Sam. She asks him if she can see him tonight, and he nervously replies yes. She tells him to come over to her place and is about to give directions, when he interrupts her and nervously tells her he'll call her back soon. They hang up the phone, and Lila starts biting her nails. She decides to browse the internet and check for frankincense and Ubar. She types in Ubar and hits the search button. She receives hits all related to Dubai, from guides to culture to lifestyle. She then tries frankincense and she receives hits about financial banking and commerce. She feels confused and decides to leave the internet alone. She decides to take a shower, and starts stripping. Right before she enters the shower, she receives a phone call. It's Sam. He apologizes for hanging up quickly earlier, and takes directions to her place. She hangs up and enters the shower.

Evening. Enter Lila's apartment. Doorbell rings and Lila excitedly opens the door. Sam comes in, and Lila jumps on him to hug him. They French kiss each other, and then Lila starts taking off her clothes without saying anything further. Sam also starts removing his clothes. They haul themselves on the bed and Lila tells him "Fuck me, Sam". Sam, with the city of Ubar in his eyes, is about to penetrate Lila but he isn't getting a hard-on. Lila asks him what's wrong, and Sam, sweating and nervous, tells her he just can't do it now. He puts on his clothes and gets ready to leave. Lila tells him to wait, as she puts on her clothes. Lila notices that the floor of her apartment is covered with sand, and realizes that Sam is trying to avoid any eye contact with her. She asks him if he's embarrassed, and he fiercely replies that he isn't and goes on to explain how such situations happen to everyone, and starts giving her a forest of reasons. Lila appears not to comprehend anything he is saying. They then both exit the apartment.

Enter the city of Ubar. Sam, having stopped his complex reasons, asks Lila if she'd like to go have dinner with him at this high-class restaurant "Le Micasso" which is

within walking distance from Lila's apartment. Lila nods, puts her arm around his waist, and asks him where they are. Sam confused, replies with slight apprehension 'Do you mean in life, our relationship, or what?'. She shrugs and tells him to relax. A little angry now, he tells her we're in Dubai. Lila is silent, and has worrisome look on her face. They walk in this ancient city, traders and the smell of frankincense everywhere, but nothing seems unusual to Sam. They enter Micasso, and the waiter assigns them a seat. They look at their respective menus; Lila orders wine and a plate of salad, and Sam orders single-malt whiskey and French pastry. For the first time, Lila initiates conversation. She tells him that she believes he's cheating on her. He tells her that what she's saying is absurd, and that even if he was, he never established that this was a committed relationship. She again inquires on why he approached her, because of his altruistic nature to help someone or to simply fuck her. He tells her that things are never that simple, with only two choices. Feeling nervous, she begins bombarding him with questions and statements. She asks him what he thinks about when he is about to fuck her. She asks him what it means to him when a girl tells him she loves you. She asks him why he even bothered to come see her today when he can go fuck someone else. He tells her she is empty and vast. He tells her she is simple-minded and someone like her can never understand the sophistication of an intellectual like him. She asks him what it means to forget something. She then violently asks him why everybody knows nothing about frankincense or Ubar. She lastly asks him why the myth is forgotten. Finishing off his whiskey, he shouts at her asking why she cares so much about the frankincense, Ubar, and the whole myth. He then tells her he doesn't understand why he couldn't get an erection in her apartment. Lila looks straight into his eyes, and she sees Ubar. He tells her that she is jealous. She begins to feel even more anxious, and she turns to look at the other customers. She notices that everyone is Sam, and each Sam has Ubar in their eyes. She gasps, faints, and falls off her seat to the floor. All the Sams get up from their seats and stand around her. The scene slowly fades into Dubai city skyscrapers, with the streets covered in sand, and ancient wagons carrying frankincense instead of cars.

The next day – evening. Enter Sam's apartment. Lila and Sam are sitting on the same sofa they had sex on earlier. Lila tells Sam that she knows that he doesn't believe anything she's saying. For the first time, Sam gives Lila direct, honest answers by telling her the truth – he tells her he didn't before. He tells her the reason why he couldn't have sex with her at the apartment is because

he kept on seeing the Rub El Khali in her eyes. He tells her that he couldn't accept the emptiness in her. He then tells her how it is becoming harder for him to separate the world of fiction from the world of facts. For the first time, Lila actually listens. Both their eyes are now constricted. They start making out and stripping off their clothes, and start to have sex with Sam on top. We zoom out and we see Sam and Lila having sex in the desert, with the ruins of Ubar all around them. He penetrates her and sees the Rub El Khali in her eyes. They orgasm, and Sam says "For want of meaning, life was lost". Lila says "Look into my eyes".

End of Act 3