

TRANSCRIPT:

**The Jinn in Me
By Mariem Omari**

A women's workshop at a women's centre on the Southside of Glasgow. A group of about seven women plus a facilitator have just returned to the room after a tea break. They are carrying cups of tea and eating biscuits.

The workshop is being recorded. It sounds like it has been recorded on a low-quality Dictaphone.

FACILITATOR: Ok ladies...are we ready to start again?

There's a murmur of women's voices and cups of tea clinking on saucers.

FACILITATOR: So, we got to some important areas of mental and emotional health for us. And we started to talk about Jinn and black magic, and how this can impact on a family or someone's wellbeing. So, we're going to open up to the group, to see if anyone would like to share a story, or an experience you've had of Jinn.

More murmuring of women's voices, and cups of tea clinking on saucers.

FACILITATOR: There is a lot of pressure on women in our cultures. Arab, Asian, African...we have very similar pressures on us because of beliefs... And this can have a really big impact on women's health.

The women are talking over each other agreeing.

FACILITATOR: Please, if you could speak one at a time...remember I am audio recording.

The women's voices quiet down.

FACILITATOR: So is there anyone that feels comfortable sharing a story of Jinn and what's happened to them?

WOMAN 1: As Muslims we can't deny the existence of Jinn. It's in the Q'uran.

WOMAN 2: My sister had one that came as a kid. She moved into a new house, and a young boy Jinn would come play with her children.

WOMAN 1: Last year, on the bus, I saw a Jinn and I was deep in the recital of prayer. He was annoyed about my worship and he quickly surrounded me and threw me off the bus!

The women's voices are raised, some laughter and other murmurs of disbelief.

WOMAN 1: Its hands were like snakes all over me.

WOMAN 2: Did you see its face?

WOMAN 1: It was a man.

FACILITATOR: Ok Sisters, thank you for sharing that. We know that...ahh...

A woman starts crying. She is old and her English isn't very good. She is trying to muffle her sobs, as she starts speaking in Urdu to the younger woman next to her.

FACILITATOR: *(to the old woman)* Are you ok Sister? *(to the younger woman)* What's wrong? What is she saying?

WOMAN 3: *(anxious)* My mum...My mum's upset about...She's talking about my cousin Safa. She's trying to explain what happened to her.

FACILITATOR: It's ok. You are safe here. Do you want to tell us what happened?

The old woman's sobbing becomes louder as the women try to comfort her.

OLD WOMAN: *(in Urdu to the young woman)* You tell them. You know...

The murmur of voices and the sobs get quieter.

WOMAN 3: The story that I want to tell is very different to what some of you have spoken about.

A hush falls.

WOMAN 3: When she was young Safa started having these fits and doing strange things. My mum's sister and her family, the way their mentality is, they kept thinking it is a Jinn. They thought that she fell asleep under a tree at night and got a Jinn in her.

Pause.

Some of the family said, "Take her to a doctor. She needs help." She was about 18 at the time. But her mum kept saying to her, "It is definitely a Jinn, I am telling you it is a Jinn", and she kept taking her to all these so called religious scholars, and they'd do all these things to her, and...

Suddenly we are transported inside a flat in a tenement on the Southside of Glasgow.

A bedroom door closes, and a key turns in the lock. Safa's Mum has locked her in her bedroom from the outside.

SAFA: No, Mum. Nooo! You can't do this to me.

SAFA'S MUM: We have to Safa. It's what the Shaykh said to do. To keep you safe –

SAFA: The walls aren't going to keep it out!

SAFA'S MUM: This is the only way.

SAFA: Expensive exorcism giving that Shaykh five gold bangles for no result. You can get them done for sixty pounds in Birmingham you know.

SAFA'S MUM: You have to do what he says. Drink the water with the paper, Beta.

SAFA: Do you honestly think it's going to care about a bit of paper with soggy verses from the Q'uran on it –

SAFA'S MUM: *Stuffilallah*. May Allah take this Jinn out of you. May Allah heal you.

Safa bangs on the door. Then pauses. Then breathes against the door.

SAFA: (*quiet, imploring*) Mum please...please...

SAFA'S MUM: I will read *Ayat-UI-Kursi* for your protection.

The sound of footsteps walking away from the door.

SAFA: You know you can't keep locking me up in here. I'll get vitamin D deficiency. I need some sun!

Pause.

(*to herself*) Not that there's sun in Glasgow in fucking November...

Safa hammers on the door hard.

(*yelling*) Mum!

Angry, Safa yells at her phone.

Ahhhhhhhhhh! Siri play Punk playlist.

Loud punk rock music plays and Safa starts to yell. Loud thumping as she slam dances around her bedroom bouncing off the walls.

As her dancing gets more frantic she calls out to the Jinn.

SAFA: (*yelling over the music*) Yaaaaaaaaaaaah! You did this. They all say it's you! It's all you.

Where are you....? Where the fuck are you?!

The Punk music dies down. Safa goes quiet and listens. Her breathing starts to calm.

Safa hears a sound, an ethereal, almost eerie sound that represents the Jinn to her. She catches her breath.

SAFA: (*soothed by the presence she hears*) You're here...Finally...

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: Yes. But you are like air. They know you are here, but they can't catch you.

She pauses.

They sent me to that Shaykh again, (*sound of a girl being hit*) and this time he hit me with a cane across my hands and feet, but you still didn't come out.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: No, I'm not afraid of you. People and what they do to you are much worse. That's why I'm trying to get it right...to get myself right. So, my parents won't keep me in here...But you destroy everything.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: You bring the others and they all peck, peck, peck in my head, and then I'm in the kitchen this morning smashing plates on the ground and turning up the radio and screaming at Mum's stupid Hindi songs.

Safa laughs.

Did a good job of it though...I pogoed on her chapatis. Stomped them all into the floor!

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: You see! It's your fault. She's afraid of you. That's why she locks the door from the outside...

The sound moves around the room getting closer to Safa.

SAFA: (*laughs*) Either that, or they are worried about what the neighbours will think. 'Oh, look at Naima and Ali's daughter. She's a weird one. Bet she's got a Jinn in her!'

Sounds of the neighbours laughing.

Or it could be because if people find out my marriage prospects are stuffed! They'll never get rid of me...

SAFA: Yeah, I think my parents think it's better if it's you...(*mock sinister sounding*) cause they can take you outta me, and then I'll be cured!

Safa moves across the room and picks up a book, and flicks through the pages.

SAFA: I got told to pray more, you know...read *Namaz*. Because my parents think I don't follow the faith properly, because I shaved my hair off and tried to pierce my own eyebrow. There was blood splattered everywhere on the bathroom sink. Mum said it was you.

She pauses.

Every time I'm bleeding she says it's because I'm not praying enough to protect myself from forces...like you.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: I don't want to be a bad Muslim. But the Shaykh said bad Muslims become hopeless and sad...you know, when you lose all hope...and then Jinns can possess you.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: Maybe...because I don't want to go outside. I can't breathe outside.

The sound of sirens and footsteps in the street.

There's a million hands around my throat outside all of them grabbing and grasping and...

Safa panics, and starts moving around the room.

SAFA: Ah!...No...I can stop this. I'll get rid of you. I'll write *Surat Al Fathiha* one hundred times a day starting today.

She pauses.

SAFA: Yes, that's a **great** idea. I'll write it on the walls, (*excitedly*) then I am surrounded by Allah's protection.

Safa is rustling things on her desk. She finds a pen. A pen squeaks down the wall as she writes on it.

SAFA: (*Speaking the words aloud as she writes*) *Authu billahhe mina shatan ara...*

Footsteps come towards the bedroom door.

SAFA'S MUM: (*through the door*) Beta, are you praying...?

Safa gets down on the floor quickly next to her bed, and whispers to the presence.

SAFA: Shhhh, quickly. I don't want her to know you are here. She will take me back to the Shaykh again and he will beat us.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA'S MUM: *(through the door)* Beta? Alhumdulliah.

Silence a moment, then the footsteps are walking away. Safa speaks quietly.

SAFA: Yes, the knife is for when I need it.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: I need it at night when I can't sleep...

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: I do trust you...

She pauses. Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

I use it to make these little patterns in my skin...Even when my body is screaming...I make them all the way up my thighs, and they look beautiful. But no one knows ok? Just me and you.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: Because I get to be in charge...I get to be the boss of us all.

She pauses.

Anyway, when I do this Mum says, "Oh, the Jinn is doing it."

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: Come under the bed with me. It's safe in this corner.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: It's ok. I don't mind if you are close to me. Come on....come in.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: It's easier for Mum to believe it's you doing this, not me doing this to me.

As the presence moves closer there are sounds coming from it. It almost sounds like wheezing.

SAFA: The sounds that are coming from you. I can hear...It's like voices...

The sound of the presence gets louder.

SAFA: They are women's voices.

The voices of other women start to come out, rolling out, one voice to the next, all chopped up together.

VOICE 1: I keep things inside, but keeping things inside gives birth to diseases. I had good health, but I started to feel sad... Last year my daughter said I had a Jinn in me, but how could this be? I have read the Quran 200 times. I always try to be in worship...

VOICE 2: You imagine things that are not there. You think that it's there though, that this is going to happen, and that is going to happen. But you are just imagining things in your mind. Negative things, such negative, bad things...

VOICE 3: No matter what I do, no matter where I go, it's not good. I cannot relate to people easily. I try my best to push away the thoughts. I try so many things, but I am still the same. My condition is still the same. In here there is no going anywhere. I can hide my face from people, my dark circles, but in here it's like hell...

The voices quickly dissipate, and there is a silence.

SAFA: It feels like all these people within me are waiting for a door to open, to let them out. For them to be free...free of me...

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: You can't free me...

The ethereal sounds moves in very close to Safa.

SAFA: *(calmly)* Are you going to kill me?

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: I don't understand.

Ethereal sounds signify a presence.

SAFA: If I want to live I will live. And if I want to die, I will...

The sound of the presence is swallowed up and disappears. Safa lays down on her bed and breathes.

SAFA: *(calling out)* The Jinn is gone.

SAFA'S MUM: *(calling from the corridor)* What are you saying, Beta?

Safa's Mum knocks then speaks through the door.

SAFA'S MUM: Safa, are you ok?

SAFA: I'm fine now Mum. *(pause)* I'm fine.

Silence, except for the ebb and flow of Safa's breath.

Transported back to the women's workshop at the women's centre in the Southside of Glasgow.

WOMAN 3: Finally, her parents took her to get medical treatment. She got diagnosed with schizophrenia. But her mum, she didn't want to believe that her daughter had a mental illness. So even though they started giving her the medication she was supposed to be taking, they kept on doing the exorcisms and she started getting really ill...

FACILITATOR: They want to say it's a Jinn...because they don't want people to say, 'Awe that girl went crazy' or whatever, and then point at the family –

WOMAN 1: But as Muslims you must believe in Jinn.

WOMAN 3: I do believe in Jinns, but I don't think you can blame them for things like schizophrenia.

WOMAN 1: No, no, no...she must keep in prayer, saying her *Namaz* and keep going to the Shaykh to get the Jinn out of her. This is the way. This is –

WOMAN 3: This is not possible.

Pause.

Two months ago, Safa died. *(pause and sigh)* She was so ill that she passed away...

The old woman sobs softly.

OLD WOMAN: *(in Urdu)* All of this because of what her mother believed.

FACILITATOR: What did she say?

WOMAN 3: All of this because of what her Mum **wanted** to believe.

The women in the group speaking in hushed tones saying, how terrible that is, 'Oh, what a shame', and as the voices trail off, the audio recording device is switched off.

THE END