



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

A Woman Is No Man: A Read with Jenna Pick

by Etaf Rum

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79 Highlights | 9 Notes

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 59

Where I come from, voicelessness is the condition of my gender, as normal as the bosoms on a woman's chest, as necessary as the next generation growing inside her belly.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 61

Where I come from, we've learned to conceal our condition. We've been taught to silence ourselves, that our silence will save us.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 64

To tell them to the outside world is unheard of, dangerous, the ultimate shame.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 128

A daughter was only a temporary guest, quietly awaiting another man to scoop her away, along with all her financial burden.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 139

Isra had learned from a very young age that obedience was the single path to love.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 185

Isra didn't feel she belonged in Palestine either, where people lived carefully, following tradition so they wouldn't be shunned.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 198

"Soon you'll learn that there's no room for love in a woman's life. There's only one thing you'll need, and that's sabr, patience."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 214

“There is nothing out there for a woman but her bayt wa dar, her house and home. Marriage, motherhood—that is a woman’s only worth.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 272

We don’t want this American family to go around saying we raised a sharmouta. That’s what men do, you know. Always put the blame on the woman.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 325

She wondered if the guests understood what was happening, if they realized she was only a few hours away from boarding a plane with a man she barely knew and landing in a country whose culture was not her own.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 340

Perhaps she was too sad to dance, Isra thought. Or perhaps she was afraid to send the wrong message. Growing up, Isra had often heard women criticize the mother of the bride for celebrating too boisterously at the wedding, too excited to be rid of her daughter. She wondered if Mama was secretly excited to be rid of her.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 392

“Because that’s how things are. How they’ve always been done. You ask anyone, and they’ll tell you. Marriage is what’s most important for women.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 463

Would you love me? Would you own me? Would you beat me?

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 464

she knew people only told you what you wanted to hear. That to understand someone, you had to listen to the words they didn’t say, had to watch them closely.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 660

In Deya’s memories, they rarely spoke to each other, and she couldn’t remember ever seeing them touch. She used to think they were being modest, that perhaps they loved each other when they were alone. But even when she watched them in secret, she never saw them show affection.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 896

She tried to ignore the burning sensation between her legs, as if a fist were punching through her, tried to forget that she was in a strange room with a strange man, her insides being forced open. She wished Mama had warned

her about the powerlessness a woman feels when a man puts himself inside her, about the shame that fills her when she is forced to give herself up, forced to be still. But this must be normal, Isra told herself. It must be.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 989

“That’s the price of coming to this country,” he said. “Abandoning our land and running away. Not a moment goes by when I don’t think of what we’ve done. Maybe we should’ve stayed and fought for our home. So what if the soldiers had killed us? So what if we had starved? Better than coming here and losing ourselves, our culture . . .” His words faded out.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1061

She knew he must have slept with other women before marriage. Even though the Qur’an forbade the act for both genders, Mama said that men committed zina all the time, that they couldn’t help themselves.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1075

Your father mentioned you were a good cook when we came to ask for you.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1079

There’s nothing worse than coming home to a woman whose voice never stops.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1086

Maybe that was all she had to do to make Adam love her: erase all traces of resistance from her face. She had to give him what he wanted and enjoy giving it to him, too. And she would do that. She would give him herself if it meant he’d give her his love.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1112

Isra wanted to be safe, wanted to win her love.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1134

She wondered how Mama and Fareeda had come to suffer the same lonely fate, to have both lived a life without love.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1142

“Learn this now, dear. If you live your life waiting for a man’s love, you’ll be disappointed.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1159

Palestine or America. A woman will always be alone. Had Mama been right all along? No, Isra told herself. That couldn't be true. She just needed to earn Adam's love.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1215

When she was done, she placed the stuffed leaf in the pot and looked to her mother's face for approval.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1223

"The word Islam means tawwakul," Brother Hakeem said to the class. "Submission to God. Islam is about peace, purity, and kindness. Standing up to injustice and oppression. That's the heart of it." Deya rolled her eyes. They couldn't possibly be Muslims, if that's what it meant.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1228

after thinking about it more, she had realized that most of the rules Fareeda held highest weren't based on religion at all, only Arab propriety.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1356

But Isra would spend her life with Fareeda. She needed her love, and she would do what was necessary to earn it.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1381

It's time you grew up and learned this now: A woman is not a man."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1415

Listening to Sarah, Isra wondered if this was what it meant to be an American: having a voice. She wished she knew how to speak her mind, wished she could've said those things to Mama: that girls were just as valuable as boys, that their culture was unfair, and that Mama, as a woman, should've understood that.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1475

she'd had no choice. Or had she? Had her mother had a choice all along?

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1577

She could feel them observing how scared she was standing there, how unassuredly she moved, the garb she wore, and deciding instantly that they knew everything about her. Surely she was the victim of an oppressive culture, or the enforcer of a barbaric tradition. She was likely uneducated, uncivilized, a nobody. Perhaps she was even an extremist, a terrorist. An entire race of culture and experiences diluted into a single story. The

trouble was, regardless of what they saw, or how little they thought of her, in her own eyes Deya didn't see herself much better. She was a soul torn down the middle, broken in two. Straddled and limited. Here or there, it didn't matter. She didn't belong.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1635

Deya was her naseeb, Isra told herself. Motherhood was her purpose. This was why she had married Adam, why she had moved to America. Deya was the reason. Isra felt at peace. She had always imagined love as the kind she read about in books, like the love Rumi and Hafiz described in their poems.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1658

Children are the glue that keep a husband and wife together.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1670

She knew that the suffering of women started in the suffering of men, that the bondages of one became the bondages of the other.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1751

as if Fareeda's words had ignited a fire in the room. The women began crackling with conversation, chatting about how exhausted they were, how there was nothing more to their lives than scurrying around the house like cockroaches.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1757

“What's the point of marrying off our sons if we are going to help their wives? The point is to lessen our burdens, not add to them.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1786

She didn't know where she was going, couldn't even look a man in the eye without turning into a bright red crayon.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1830

Maybe a son would make Adam love her. She closed her eyes and recited another prayer, asking God to grow love in Adam's heart. She had failed to earn his love despite her many efforts. She had learned to recognize the patterns of his behavior, to anticipate his shifting temperament, to better please him.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1863

“I'm doing the best I can to support this family! What more do you want from me?”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1880

She was only nineteen, she reasoned. Adam must be afraid for her safety. Surely he would give her more freedom when she got older. And then a new hope occurred to her: perhaps his overprotectiveness was out of love. Isra wasn't sure if that was one of the things love made you do, possess someone.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 1988

"I won't shut my mouth unless you stop drinking," she said, unwavering. "If you don't, I'll tell your children the truth! I'll tell them that we barely have enough food because their father is an alcoholic. I'll tell everyone! Your reputation will be ruined, and your children will never respect you."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 2034

Isra wanted to be angry at him for not seeing how much she had given up, but instead she found herself pitying him.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 2099

pretending nothing's wrong is not protecting yourself. If anything, it's much more dangerous to live pretending to be someone you're not."

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Location 2176

You had to finish a story to know all the answers, and life was no different. Nothing was ever handed to you from the start.

Deep

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 2201

Nadine squinted her bright blue eyes and laughed. "Don't worry, Fareeda," she said, tracing her fingers across her slim belly. "Inshallah you'll have a little Khaled sooner or later."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 2223

How could she tell Sarah that she was afraid of adding tension to her marital life? That she couldn't handle any more blame for the family's unhappiness?

Note | Location 2271

No real choice doesn't have conditions. The real choice is free.

Highlight (Blue) | Location 2274

“A real choice doesn’t have conditions. A real choice is free.”

Note | Location 2338

What good head obedience Dantor. She had been so good for so long and now she was more miserable than ever.

Highlight (Blue) and Note | Location 2339

She had been so good for so long, and where was she now? More miserable than ever.

What good had obedience done her?

Highlight (Blue) and Note | Location 2539

What are you so afraid of?” “Everything!” Deya heard the sound of her voice before she knew she was speaking. “I’m afraid of everything! I’m afraid of letting down my family and culture, only to find out that they were right in the end. I’m afraid of what people will think of me if I don’t do what I’m supposed to do. But I’m also afraid of listening to them and coming to regret it. I’m afraid of getting married, but I’m even more afraid of being alone. There’s a thousand voices in my head, and I don’t know which one to listen to! The rest of my life is staring me in the face, and I don’t know what to do!” She willed herself to stop talking, but the words spilled out. “Sometimes I think I’m so scared because of my parents, but then I wonder if it’s my memories of them that make me sad, or if I’ve been sad all along, before my brain could even make memories. And then there are days when I’m certain I’ve remembered everything wrong, and there’s this horrible feeling inside me, and I think maybe if I remember something good, I’ll be cured. But it never works.”

What are we afraid of

Note | Location 2859

Husband resentment after long life can kill you

Highlight (Blue) and Note | Location 2859

she knew that burying her feelings in food was unhealthy—that it could kill her. But there were other things that could kill her, too, things like failure and loneliness. Like growing old one day and looking around to find a husband who resented you, kids who no longer needed you, who despised you despite all you’d done for them. At least eating felt good.

growing old to find a husband who resents you can kill you

Highlight (Blue) and Note | Location 2949

not once in my entire life has anyone ever asked me that question. What makes Adam happy? No one cares what makes Adam happy. All they care about is what Adam can do for them. Yes, yes," he said, slurring a little. "How much money can Adam bring home? How many businesses can he run? How much can he help his brothers? How many male heirs can he produce?" He paused, looking at Isra. "But happiness? There's no such thing as happiness for people like us. Family duty comes first."

Nobody cares what makes Adam happy. Only what he can do for them . Family duty always came first

Highlight (Blue) and Note | Location 3604

"You know," Fareeda said after a moment, "Arabs use the term majnoon to mean madness, but if you break the word apart, what do you see?" Deya only looked at her. "The word jinn," Fareeda said, settling back in her seat. "Madness is derived from the jinn, an evil spirit inside you. Therapy and medicine can't fix that."

Majnoon is from the words JINN

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3770

Fareeda knew her granddaughter could never understand how shame could grow and morph and swallow someone until she had no choice but to pass it along so that she wasn't forced to bear it alone.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3798

Running away is cowardly,

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3818

passing of time brought a panic to Fareeda that no amount of food was able to bury.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3902

"Hannah told him she wanted a divorce," Fareeda said, her voice cracking. "He says he doesn't know what happened. They found him standing over her body with a knife."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3906

What if some man kills me? Would you even care? Or would you just be glad that I was no longer your balwa?"

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3910

A woman must endure. And Isra had understood why Fareeda said it. Just like Mama, she believed silence was the only way. That it was safer to submit than speak up.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3966

“It isn’t Sarah’s fault I can’t forgive her, it’s mine. My pride won’t let me forgive her. In this her crime is less than mine, much less. In this I have failed her. I have failed all of you.” “You talk as though it’s too late, Seedo, but it’s not. You can still forgive her. There’s still time.” “Time?” Khaled said. “No amount of time can bring back our family’s reputation.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 3996

the fear that circled her brain in endless loops: that she would do the same thing to her daughters that Mama had done to her. That she would force them to repeat her life.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4014

she secretly resented her daughters for being girls, couldn’t even look at them without stirring up shame.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4047

I don’t want to put my daughters through that. I don’t want to uproot them—snatch them from home and force them to grow up alone, without a family, in shame.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4169

Would you help me, Mama? Tell me, what would you do? Only I know what you would do. You’d tell me, Be patient, endure. You’d tell me that women everywhere are suffering, and that no pain is worse than being divorced, a world of shame on my shoulders. You’d tell me to make it work for my kids. My girls. To be patient so I don’t bring them shame. So I don’t ruin their lives. But don’t you see, Mama? Don’t you see? I’m ruining their lives anyway. I’m ruining them.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4176

But writing was the only thing that helped. With Sarah gone, she didn’t have anyone to talk to anymore.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4260

“People were different back then, you know,” Khaled said, placing the dirty skillet in the sink. “If you ran out of milk or sugar, then you walked next door and asked your neighbor. We were all a family back home. We had a community. Nothing like here.”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4288

Deya finally saw how much she resembled Isra. She, too, had spent her life trying to please her family, desperate for their validation and approval. She, too, had let fear of disappointing them stand in her way. But seeking approval had not worked for Isra, and Deya could see now that it would not work for her either. Alongside this

realization, an old voice that had lived in the back of her head for as long as she could remember—so long she had never before seen it for the fear that it was, only as the absolute truth—rose up inside of her. The voice cautioned her to surrender, be quiet, endure. It told her that standing up for herself would only lead to disappointment when she lost the battle. That the things she wanted for herself were a fight she could never win. That it was safer to surrender and do what she was supposed to do.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4304

Could she ever achieve her dreams if she remained dependent on pleasing her family?

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4306

It was more important to honor her own values in life, to live her own dreams and her own vision, than to allow others to choose that path for her, even if standing up for herself was terrifying.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4513

to be clear—not all Arab women are abused or go through this. One of my biggest fears in writing this story is that although one part of me wanted to speak up about these issues because they're present today, another part of me didn't want to stereotype a culture that's already stereotyped, outcasted, condemned, and scrutinized.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4529

my father-in-law told my husband, "If you let her get educated, she's going to walk all over you. If you let her get educated, she's not going to stay with you."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4562

censoring myself out of fear would have resulted in a story that didn't reflect the realities of my world.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4566

I finally understood Lorde when she said, "Your silence will not protect you."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4582

I had written this story despite the cultural pressure to remain quiet, to keep shameful truths about our community buried deep.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4606

Shame had taught me that my experiences as a woman were illegitimate and unworthy.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4608

When a woman is shamed and devalued in her community, she learns that the most traumatic events of her life will never be recognized as legitimate, and with that she learns there is no reason to speak them, that to do so might even be dangerous. Instead of reaching out, she is taught to reach in, conceal, pretend. When she internalizes this experience, she begins to enforce this silence in the women around her, teaching her daughters and granddaughters to do the same, a passing down of silence.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4621

as shame researcher Brené Brown teaches, speaking up about my vulnerabilities was the only antidote to it.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 4627

I can no longer give fear control over my life. I can no longer let shame be my story, nor my children's story. Because in the end, that is what I care about most: teaching my daughter not to look for safety in silence and submission, and my son to never use shame to devalue women.
