

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE (3 Person Scene)

Interview

EPISODE 1 (Scene 1)

Mira: Hey I'm just gonna check on her..
Hi. Im Mira— Its nice to meet you.

Danielle: Nice to meet you too, Im Danielle.

Jonathan: Everything ok?

Mira: Mhm

Danielle: Should we get started?

Danielle: I believe Jonathan told you about my study, in general?

Mira: Uhm..

Danielle: Well its for my PHD in Gender studies and Psych at Tufts

Mira Okay..

Danielle: Im looking at how evolving gender norms affect monogamous marriages.

Mira: Okay.

Danielle: Okay, so to complete the formalities, just confirming your pronouns?

Jonathan: He, him, his

Mira: She uhm..

Jonathan: She , Her, hers

Danielle Great, mine are she/her, too
—Uhm.. ok soo yea the first question is pretty open, its for either one of you.
How would you define yourself?

Mira and **Jonathan**
“Oh, define.”

Jonathan: Like describe

Danielle: Well define

Jonathan: Right

Danielle: Im—Im actually interested in the.. Elements

Jonathan: Mhm

Danielle — That constitute your self-definition

Jonathan: The element that constitute..

Mira: Go first..

Jonathan: That's uhm

Danielle: Well you could think of it like this. What uhm attributes couldn't you imagine yourself without?

Jonathan: That's interesting.. Uh okay let me think.

Danielle: Actually just say whatever comes to your mind.

Jonathan Okay, Uh Im a man. Im Jewish. That's weird, right?

Mira: That's weird **Jonathan** that's strange

Jonathan: I went blank and that's the first thing That came into my head.

Danielle Great, yes. That's exactly the idea.

Jonathan: Yes. Right. Okay. Uh, a father to Ava.. Who's 4 years old as you know. Um... Im an academic. Uh I should have said that first. That's a big part of my life- Self definition. I teach in the philosophy department at Tufts. Um..What else Im uh 41 Im a Democrat, Im an asthmatic.

Mira: Whoa. You feel your asthma defines you?

Jonathan: Yeah, well if you go through your whole life threatened with the possibility of. Suffocating, then yea, you know, it becomes part of your self-definition.

Mira: Okat.

Jonathan: What?

Mira: No, nothing, babe.. It's — Its interesting.

Jonathan: is it really

Mira: Yes!!

Jonathan: ok cool

Danielle: And Mira, how would you.. uh

Mira: Right, I — Okay. Me. Im a woman. Im married.

Jonathan- Correct

Mira: Im a mother Im 40, I —Not quite but that's definitely my self definition, 40 Im, uh.. in tech. Im , uh, VP of product management at Horizon. I know that doesn't mean much to most people, but you know—

Jonathan she's a big shot. Trust me.

Mira: Um, okay, what else? .. Im a mother, obviously.

Jonathan: you said that, don't worry.

Mira: Oh good. Is that enough?

Danielle: uhm, unless there's anything else you'd like to add?

Mira: Oh, no. Im good.

Jonathan: Yeah

Danielle: I wonder for instance you'd like to add something uhm , about how you divide household and caregiving responsibilities..

Jonathan Right. Yes. Um

Danielle ... In that context?

Jonathan So I forgot to mention she's interested in couples where the woman is the primary provider.

Danielle Yea. Well, Um

Jonathan Right? Is that what...-

Danielle Well, yea put it that way..

Jonathan Im not im not — im not trying to give away your thesis

Danielle that's that's fine

Jonathan Uhm anyway, yes I do take care so for the most part I do take care of Ava during the week uh..Well being in academia as you know I have very flexible hours and I can work from home.. Mira she works long days and has to travel for work.

Mira And I make it up to them on the weekends,

Jonathan Yeah and you make it home for bedtime when you can

Mira Yeah

Danielle And has this always been your arrangement in terms of childcare ?

Jonathan Yea pretty much

Mira Well I had to take an extra long maternity leave — and

Jonathan Yes

Mira And umm you know I'm still paying for it at work

Jonathan Of course ..

Mira And my company is going public later this year so that's why there's so much extra travel

Jonathan And yea I'm not making a big ugly heroic sacrifice or anything

Mira No..

Jonathan We have a babysitter, Veronica, and. She does extra hours uh on the you know on the days I'm underwater at work

Danielle Sure

Jonathan And look it'd be great if academia paid as well as tech does but it doesn't

Mira it doesn't no..

Jonathan so this arrangement makes perfect sense

Mira Yea

Danielle mmhmm

Mira It sounds like we are apologizing for it. Maybe

Danielle No nor at all.

Jonathan Yea we're proud of it!

Mira Babe, don't.

Danielle Ok so at this point I'd like to hear a little bit about your history I know that you've been married for almost ten years.

Jonathan yes

Danielle How long were you together before that?

Jonathan It's like 2 years and some change

Mira mhm Yea.

Jonathan 12 years in total

Danielle how did you meet?

Jonathan You should be the one telling the story its way more entertaining. Come on

Mira noo.. —Is— Can you tell me how this is part of the study?

Danielle Um. Well, Its valuable in the context of the gender perceptions you had at the beginning of the relationship.

Mira Okay. I just— Ive ..I was under the impression that this is gonna be more like multiple choice

Danielle Sorry.. no..

Mira Okay.

Jonathan Ill tell it. Its actually — Its a good story
And uh (to Mira) You can just interject when I get melodramatic

Mira Sure

Jonathan So we met at Columbia Um we went there we were in a seminar together English lit. So um we spent three hours a week in a tiny little room uh but at this point there was no way that we would ever have.. I should mention that I was still orthodox at the time. I uh grew up in a modern orthodox Jewish family. So up until that point up until college my education had been mostly single sex id never touched a woman.. SO the whole thing was pretty overwhelming um me with my black yarmulke and white button down shirts and all these young woman in their little tank tops.. and Mira specifically was like a campus celebrity. She was dating a member of a big rock band at the time that needless to say Id never heard of.

Mira No they were .. They weren't really rock.. and they weren't big

Jonathan You've probably heard them, Saraband? Lucas McRae?

Danielle Oh wow

Jonathan I just thought — I thought of Mira as kind of a

Mira What? Tell me! No I wanna —

Jonathan Yea it was — its just that you were as far away from my world as it got you know.. And anyway I was already engaged to a girl that I grew up with near Long Island

Danielle oh, So how did it happen?

Jonathan Uh well she just walked up to me one day and uhm... This part you should tell

Mira Um okay. So I was in a um theatre group in school and we were doing this one play by Bashevis Singer and

Jonathan an adaptation of Enemies, A love story

Mira right and so um I was doing all this research on orthodox jews I was very serious about acting in college and so I just went up to him one day after class and I asked if I could talk to him and he just seemed —completely horrified — Jonathan I was , yeah , paralyzed.

Mira, Yea. But I was very committed to this role.

Jonathan Absolutely so committed she got completely naked halfway through the play.

Mira NO! Not completely.

Jonathan And id already started the process of uh leaving my religion. But uh that show was definitely a milestone.

Danielle Mm. You mean you actually started dating?

Mira oh no no not Not until years later.

Jonathan Yea I was over here in Boston and I was uh creeping around on her myspace page and I saw she was moving here and that she was looking for an apartment share so we became roommates and from there it progressed.

Danielle and who initiated that?

Jonathan I think the both of us?

Mira Yeah

Jonathan Right?

Mira Yeah..

Jonathan Both

Mira I had just came out of a series of relationships which were borderline abusive and I guess I was addicted to that. And I ... I was... stuck. Uh I had a hob that I could care less about. And Jonathan was the complete opposite Uh he was everything that I wanted to be. He had values and purpose.. Its true.

Jonathan Yea well yea I - Its ironic because at the height of my existential dread. After I left my religion I just had these years of loneliness and

Danielle So.. When did it happen?

Mira Well It happened.. thanks to the asthma actually

Danielle The asthma?

Jonathan Yeah. There was this one time we were coming back from the ER, I had a vert severe attack and the um the doctor he mistook us fro a married couple and uh .. we liked it and we came home and we kept playing at it and uh... and then it happened.

Danielle Thats great that's perfect.. So .. Alright.
Now id like to hear a bit about the in your opinion what is the primary factor contributing to the successor your marriage?

Jonathan Hmm interesting

Mira Ill let you take this one

Jonathan Interesting.. Could you actually tell us what the definition of success is that you are working with ?

Danielle Well uh first of all, it means that you are still together.

Mira that's a lowball

Jonathan Yeah.. yeah well does out ten years make us statistical outliers?

Danielle Well if we ignore all the socioeconomic and race parameters , then yes.
The average marriage un the US is 8.2 years.

Jonathan ok well then.. Shouldn't you ask first if subjectively that—if we perceive our marriage to be a success at all?

Danielle uhm sure, yea you can

Jonathan Yeah Im only saying that because I feel like that word "Success"
Is kind of emblematic of a larger cultural misconception about marriage.

Mira Yeah

Jonathan Its become this project ,right? This thing that you work on. "Were working on our marriage" Its this multibillion dollar industry. Theres self help books and couples therapy workshops and podcasts.. and apps and TV shows. Its a huge business

Danielle Right mm and you see that as a problem?

Jonathan Look maybe its cause of my background but I just think its so obvious that - that Western culture the consumer culture has very purposefully created these completely irrational expectations that marriage must at all times be based on passion on sex on relentless emotion when its so obvious that these things stem from novelty, so the whole concepts a complete fallacy

Danielle Right ok so then well what is — what's your concept?

Jonathan I think we both see marriage as a means its not an end Right? I think we see it as a platform where we both can uh that allows us to develop as individuals. We're both very passionate about the work we do and our partnership gives us the safe ground to do it and to raise a daughter and have a family.

Danielle Yeah.. Mira What about you ?

Mira uh sorry what wa the —

Danielle The question was about the your perception—

Mira Right. Our success...Um Well I agree with what Jonathan said I mean we — I think that in marriage there is this very delicate equilibrium and that um you have to maintain it together, Danielle What do you mean by equilibrium? Well, you know at the beginning of a relationship everything is thrilling and its new and you feel as a couple that nothing can hurt you and the you gradually start to realize that actually anything can hurt you .

Danielle Id like to hear about your attitudes towards monogamy
Um to what extent do you see yourselves committed to each other exclusively?

Mira Well what do you mean?

Danielle I mean sexually