

# Y2K: Take 2

## Episode 9: Shirin - age 27 - New York - September 2001

### CHARACTERS

SHIRIN - scenes 9.1, 9.7 - 9.9  
ANSWERING MACHINE VOICE - scene 9.1 - 9.7  
EMMA - scene 9.1, 9.7  
YASMIN - scenes 9.2, 9.6, 9.8  
KATARINA - scene 9.3  
CLAIRE - scene 9.4  
JESS - scene 9.5  
NICHELLE - scene 9.9

### Scene 9:0

KARIN

Hello everyone, Karin Heimdahl here, creator of Y2K, with a content warning. This episode takes place in New York, and it starts on September 11, 2001. It does not directly depict the events at the World Trade Center on that day, but it does retell the story of someone who was nearby, and deals with their emotions and reactions. The story also deals with racism. I remember this day very well, and my heart still breaks for all who lost their lives, or their loved ones, on 9/11. I hope this episode will honour them in some small way, but if this story is not for you right now, please skip it and I hope you will come back next month. We have a resource page on the website, where we have tried to list as many hotlines and info-pages and support things we could find. So if you feel you need any resources like that, go to [y2Kpod.com\[slash\]resources](http://y2Kpod.com/resources) and hopefully you will find it there. Please take care of yourself, and if you need to, please, reach out and ask for help.

DIRECTOR

Places, please. We'll try again everyone. Right. Whenever you're ready - Take 2.

*(MUSIC "Welcome to the Year 2000" - instrumental)*

NARRATOR

Episode 9. Welcome to the year 2001. September. New York, USA.  
Shirin is 27 years old.

### **Scene 9:1**

*(dial tone, redirected to voice mail, beep)*

SHIRIN

*(recorded answering machine message, cheerful)* This is Shirin, you know what to do. *(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

*(automated voice)* Message. Received. 9.33 am. *(beep)*

EMMA

*(extremely worried)* Shirin? Shirin! *(anguished sound)* It's Emma. I just heard- Please tell me you're safe! *(mumbles)* Of course you are not at home, this is silly. *(in Welsh)* Beth yffach o'n i'n meddwl! Oh it is all so scary and horrible and... *(lets out held breath)* Shirin, if you hear this, e-mail me, yeah? Love you! Be safe! *(swallows sob)* Bye. *(beep)*

### **Scene 9:2**

*(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 9.49 am. *(beep)*

YASMIN

*(extremely worried)* Shirin? It's Yasmin. Mum and dad are frantic - just saw the news - let us know you're OK, right? *(near tears)* Everyone sends their love. *(beep)*

### **Scene 9:3**

*(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 10.52 am. *(beep)*

KATARINA

*( bad phone line, very tired, very worried)* Holy fuck Shirin, I just heard. It's Kat. Ina. *(short unhappy laugh)* Forgetting my own name. This- I- Can't process- but you \*have\* to be OK. So. I am going to assume you are OK until I hear from you. I- *(someone shouting indistinctly in background, KATARINA turns away from phone, angry)* My friend is in *(emphasis)* New York, give me one minute to check in on her, OK? *(back to phone)* Sorry. Filming. Yeah. So. You

are all right, and that is that. But, you know. Let me know when you can, OK? Love you. *(beep)*

#### **Scene 9:4**

*(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 12.18 pm. *(beep)*

CLAIRE

*(worried and shouty)* Shirin! What the hell is going on over there? Shout me an e-mail or something when you can. It's Claire. Yeah.  
*(beep)*

#### **Scene 9:5**

*(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 1.39 pm. *(beep)*

JESS

Shirin! Jess here. Just woke up to the news. And of course the phones don't work. I'll e-mail you too. And I am \*willing\* you to be all right. You hear that? You, and everyone you care about. *(anguished sound)* But I know it \*can't\* be all right, no matter what. All those people. And- *(distant sound of baby crying)* Oh, that's Liv awake again, I have to go. Get in touch when you can? I love you! *(beep)*

#### **Scene 9:6**

*(beep)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 3.01 pm. *(beep)*

YASMIN

*(still worried, also tired, evening, sighs)* Ah, Shirin. Me again. Yasmin. But you know that. You've never felt this far away before - when you can, get in touch, yeah? *(scared short laugh as she realizes)* Shit. I wonder if I can still come. Apparently all flights are grounded. *(more to herself as she realizes)* Suppose the question is for how long... Should I even try? Is- Never mind, not important now. I know your office isn't in the World Trade Center at least, so... but who knows what meeting you had today, or what else is about to happen *(smothered sob)* Oh, just be OK, yeah? *(like a mantra)* Just be OK. *(faint smile)* Nan says you are. OK that is. Not that she knows any more than the rest of us, but... comforting,

somehow. So prove her right, Shirin, won't you? *(lets out breath)*  
Love from me and everyone. *(beep)*

### **Scene 9:7**

*(INT Shirin's small studio apartment. Low regular beep from answering machine, door unlocks, opens, slow tired footsteps in moderate heels, dropping large handbag, sitting down on bed)*

SHIRIN

*(deep sigh, wince of pain from blistered feet when removing high-heeled shoes) Ahh... (exhausted, to herself) What \*is\* this sound? (slowly gets up, few footsteps, click on answering machine)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

*(beep)* You have. Twenty-seven. New messages.

SHIRIN

*(exasperated sound)* Of course.

ANSWERING MACHINE

*(beeps)* Inbox is at capacity. Delete messages to receive new voicemail.

SHIRIN

Mum *(small sob)*.

*(lifts phone off hook)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Inbox is at capacity. Delete messages to receive-

SHIRIN

*(jabs answering machine button to shut it up)* Aargh.

ANSWERING MACHINE

*(beep)* You have. Twenty-seven. New messages.

SHIRIN

*(frustrated, jabs button)* What the-

ANSWERING MACHINE

*(beeps)* Inbox is at capacity. Delete-

SHIRIN

*(jabs button again) (clicks hook again, listens, repeats twice, finally dial tone, mutters) Righty-ho... (dials number, after 7 digits there is a busy tone) What? (clicks hook again, listens, dial tone) O-K... (dials number, after 2 digits there is again a busy tone, throws phone down on hook in frustration) Gah! (gets up, few*

*steps, sound of modem starting, but it is stuck on 'calling-up' phase.) Course. (turns off, clicks on modem again, same result, quietly) Useless piece of junk. (sits down on bed again, sad sigh, very softly) So... I can't tell anyone, but... I am all right. (pause, corrects herself) Physically all right. (small sob) Did you hear that mum? I am OK. (deep breath) Or I will be. (sigh) Suppose I'll listen to the (incredulous) Twenty-seven messages... (gets up, presses answering machine button)*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message. Received. 9.33 am. *(beep)*

EMMA

*(start of previous message) Shirin! (SHIRIN starts quietly sobbing.) It's Emma. I just heard- Please tell me you're safe!*

*(Fade out)*

### **Scene 9:8**

*(INT. SHIRIN's small studio apartment. SHIRIN unlocks front door and YASMIN and SHIRIN walk in.)*

SHIRIN

Here it is. Welcome to my place, Yas.

YASMIN

*(footsteps)* Oh Shirin, this is nice! *(sets down suitcase on floor)* Tiny, but nice.

SHIRIN

Yeah, I was really lucky to get it. You want some tea? Have to keep you up until bedtime so you don't get too jetlagged.

YASMIN

Yes please. *(SHIRIN starts making tea)* And I'll stay up, all right. Too much adrenaline after that flight. *(sits down on couch)*

SHIRIN

Can imagine. How was it?

YASMIN

More security than usual, but also... Everyone seemed so stressed. The airport staff all seemed... scared. Don't think I've ever seen that before.

SHIRIN

In a way I think they wanted to ground the flights forever, but can't do that, so...

YASMIN

Maybe. *(sighs)* Everyone at home tried to talk me out of going. Kept saying 'She's coming home in a few months, you can see her then'.

SHIRIN

Maybe they were right. *(beat)* But I'm really glad you're here.

YASMIN

Well, I had my ticket already, so...

*(SHIRIN sobs a little)*

YASMIN

*(gets up, walks few steps to SHIRIN, continues)* Oh sis. I'm so sorry. *(They hug, some rustling)*

SHIRIN

*(small sob)* I'm... I'm mostly all right. I was so lucky, you know?

YASMIN

I know. Hey, I'll finish the tea, you sit.

SHIRIN

All right. *(shaky smile, sits down on couch)* Bossy as ever.

YASMIN

Isn't that what big sisters are for? *(finishes making tea, brings two mugs, hands SHIRIN one)*

SHIRIN

*(smiles)* Probably. *(takes mug)* Thanks.

YASMIN

*(sits)* So. How are you, really? *(sips tea)*

SHIRIN

I... I'm good. *(beat)* That's a lie. *(beat)* Not good. *(controlled breath)* Very not good.

YASMIN

*(gently)* Want to tell me about it?

SHIRIN

I... I don't know where to start.

YASMIN

You told me some of it over the phone, but I was just so relieved you were all right after all that worry... I don't think I listened properly.

SHIRIN

(*sad smile*) I probably wasn't very coherent. Talking to you, and to Mum, and Nan, and Dad, and everyone, finally, it was... yeah.

YASMIN  
(*sad smile*) Yeah.

SHIRIN  
Thanks for coming.

YASMIN  
Of course.

SHIRIN  
I know. These past few... weeks, is it now?

YASMIN  
(*gently*) Two weeks and two days.

SHIRIN  
Feels like more. And less. Feels like I am not quite in sync with time.

YASMIN  
That's fair.

SHIRIN  
I've been so busy, getting everything on track at work, and volunteering, and letting everyone know I'm all right, and just...  
I've been *\*doing\** and not *\*feeling\**.

YASMIN  
Have you talked to anyone about that day? Your colleagues, maybe?

SHIRIN  
Not really. Except for. On the day. When... yeah.

YASMIN  
What's it like at your office now?

SHIRIN  
In a way, it's... friendlier. Like we've all been through this together, and we are... closer, somehow. Feels like everyone in New York is... caring more about each other, after. Those of us that are (*voice breaks*) left. (*deep breath*) Yes, I... I saw... (*unable to finish sentence*)

YASMIN  
Oh dearest. I can't even...

SHIRIN  
I know.

YASMIN

You can tell me. *(smiles)* Or we can drink tea and talk about the weather.

SHIRIN

*(smiles)* Tea is good. *(sad laugh)* And weather. *(breat)* It was such a glorious day, Yas. Bright blue skies over Manhattan. And I was happy - I love this city so much and that morning, like every morning, I was feeling so grateful to be here. So glad my contract was extended and I got to stay an extra six months. I was looking up at the skyline walking from the subway to the office, like I do every day, and I... I didn't know it was going to change. Buildings are such permanent-looking things, aren't they?

YASMIN

*(gently)* They are.

SHIRIN

And these were so huge and... Like they'd always been there. And would always be there. *(breathes to collect herself)* I got into work around 8. There was a meeting at 8.30, so I started answering some e-mails and then I was working on a design that was due the next day. That got delayed, of course, later... Anyhow. Meeting started, and we were in the middle of going through the brief from a potential new client when we heard this... sounded like an explosion... like a sound effect from a film, you know? Don't think I've ever heard an explosion in real life before. But we thought it was just a tire blowing from a truck or something. Not sure how we thought that, looking back, but... We didn't know. So we continued. A little later, someone rushed in and yelled that the World Trade Center had been hit by an airplane. It seemed so... unlikely, even then. Everyone ran out of the conference room and over to the windows. Our office looks out over... or used to. So we had a *(hard to get words out)* pretty good view. We just stood there, and there was smoke, and fire, and it didn't feel in any way real... I remember thinking over and over, there are people in there. There are people in there, *(voice wavers)* dying. And it just didn't compute. No-one said anything. Think we were all in shock. Then someone said "There are people jumping"... And I saw - there were people falling from the building... *(hyperventilating slightly)* Such a long fall. It was far away but I could see them. I felt tears on my face but couldn't remember crying. Someone I barely knew was panicking, saying her husband was in there. People started making calls, but I couldn't move. And then... There was a sound like a... missile? Again, with the film effects... And the other tower was hit. Huge fire. Black smoke. I think that's when it hit us all. This wasn't an accident. *(shaky breath)* People were flying airplanes into buildings. And we were standing in just such a building. Our fire marshal yelled to evacuate, and we all got moving. I grabbed my handbag from my desk, but didn't think to change my shoes. Would regret that later. We swarmed into the

elevators, against all protocols, obviously, but no-one was thinking clearly.

YASMIN  
Of course.

SHIRIN  
Street was... chaos. Smell was awful. Mix of people just standing, mouths open, watching, and others moving, north, away. Cars stuck in traffic. Sirens. I lost my colleagues pretty much immediately. Didn't know what to do, so I followed the crowd north. I did think maybe I should try to get closer, see if I could do something to help, but... I didn't. I should have, of course. Feel so guilty that I didn't, but also... If I had, I could have died, too. Who knows. *(breathes)* I followed the stream of people. Everyone's face was... So much pain. I started talking to this woman. Nichelle. Turns out she lives just around the corner from here. She's a bank teller, worked much closer to the towers than me. Her manager had said they should all keep working but she'd snuck out. Said she didn't feel safe. We stuck together. She offered me her cell phone to call, but turned out her plan didn't allow international calls, so I couldn't call you. And pretty much everyone I knew here had been in my office. I knew you'd all be so worried but I thought I'd better just try to get home as soon as possible. *(shaky breath)* I didn't know the phone lines would be down once I got here...

YASMIN  
You couldn't have known.

SHIRIN  
No. After that, it's all a blur. Kept thinking, what if they fall over, how far away do we need to get to be out of danger, they were so tall... Then we heard the towers collapse, one after the other, but we were much further away at that point. Saw the cloud of smoke, and dust, and debris... We ended up far enough north east that the Williamsburg Bridge seemed our best option to get home. I didn't even think to take the subway. *(beat)* Pretty sure it was closed, anyway. As we got up on the bridge we got a view of the skyline, and it was... It looked so empty. Big pillar of smoke rising up from where the World Trade Center used to be. I still find it hard to understand. *(sighs)* And then we walked home, Nichelle and I. It took hours, and I had the most enormous blisters. We hugged and exchanged business cards outside her building, and then I... came back here.

YASMIN  
That is... I am so sorry you had to go through all that, sis.

SHIRIN  
*(lets out big sob)* Yas. All those people. I can't... I've \*been\* there. We had a client lunch at the restaurant a few months ago. We had clients with offices in the north tower. Most of them made it

out, but... And all my feelings are nothing compared to everyone who lost someone, who's suffering so much. People who don't know where their loved ones are, but know they must be gone. I can't...

YASMIN

Of course, But... You have a right to your feelings, you know? Just because there are so many others in worse pain, doesn't make your reactions invalid.

SHIRIN

I know. I know... But there is so much to do. What little I can, anyway. You'll see tomorrow. The city is full of \*missing\* posters.

People hoping against hope that their loved ones are safe, somewhere, somehow. And... It's still burning. They call it Ground Zero.

YASMIN

I heard. I'm glad you signed us up to volunteer.

SHIRIN

*(shaky smile)* Least we can do.

YASMIN

Yeah. But when all this has calmed down a little, you need to find some sort of counselor or therapist or something, yeah?

SHIRIN

I just don't want to take up anyone else's spot. Someone who really needs it.

YASMIN

Are you sleeping?

SHIRIN

Not great.

YASMIN

Nightmares?

SHIRIN

Oh yeah. *(shudders)*

YASMIN

Hard to relax?

SHIRIN

*(reluctantly)* Yes.

YASMIN

Flashbacks?

SHIRIN

*(reluctantly)* Sometimes.

YASMIN

Then *\*you\** really need it too. *(gently)* I know what I'm talking about, remember? Promise me.

SHIRIN

All right. *(small smile)* Bossy boots.

YASMIN

*(small laugh)* That's right.

SHIRIN

*(smiles)* I'll let you get away with it. This time. *(beat)* It's been... So much. Feel better now you're here though. More grounded.

YASMIN

Good. And if you can't find someone here, I'll schedule you in with someone at my practice once you get back to London, all right?

SHIRIN

Yeah. About that.

YASMIN

What?

SHIRIN

Not sure if I can, but... I want to stay here.

YASMIN

*(a little worried)* All right, but... What's happening at your company? I heard many are letting people go.

SHIRIN

My company is actually doing surprisingly well. We already had offices in New Jersey, so they could move everyone there. It's a bit crowded, but it's fine. And only a few of our clients were actually New York-based, so... Doing better than most, I suppose.

YASMIN

That's really great. Do you think there's a chance they'd be able to take you on permanently?

SHIRIN

I don't know. Trying to get up the courage to ask. But now is not exactly a good time.

YASMIN

No. But there won't really be a good time for a while.

SHIRIN

You are probably right.

YASMIN

So have you talked to that woman - Nichelle was it? - after that day?

SHIRIN

No. We e-mailed the day after but nothing after that. I keep thinking I am going to see her around this neighbourhood, but so far I haven't.

YASMIN

Seems like you made a connection.

SHIRIN

Yeah. We did.

YASMIN

Another thing. (*sighs*) On my way over to the baggage carousel at the airport, this man yelled "It's all your fault" as he passed me by. It happened so quickly, I didn't have time to react before he was gone. The people around me looked sort of apologetic but no-one said anything. Has anything like that happened to you?

SHIRIN

(*beat*) A few times. People who can't see the difference between Indian and Middle Eastern, I suppose. There is so much fear, so much hatred. And I can understand that. Not that that makes it OK. (*sighs*) Not that it would be in any way OK if I was Middle Eastern either, of course. It's really unpleasant, but not sure what to do about it. And most people in New York are really lovely. Much friendlier than before.

YASMIN

I just want you to be safe.

SHIRIN

I know. Not sure anywhere's safe right now.

YASMIN

That's probably true. (*sips tea*) My tea's gone cold. OK if I make more?

SHIRIN

Of course. Make some for me too.

YASMIN

Absolutely. (*gets up*)

SHIRIN

Thanks Yas. For everything.

YASMIN  
(smiles) Always.

(Fade out.)

### **Scene 9:9**

(EXT. Pavement in Brooklyn, early evening. SHIRIN is walking quickly home, she's in a good mood.)

NICHELLE  
(catching up from behind) Hey! Shirin!

SHIRIN  
(turns around) Nichelle!

(BOTH silent for a beat, filled with emotions, then-)

NICHELLE  
(same time as SHIRIN) It's so good to see you again-

SHIRIN  
(same time as NICHELLE) So happy to see you again-

(BOTH stop and laugh happily)

NICHELLE  
Hug?

SHIRIN  
Yes please!

(They hug, rustle)

SHIRIN  
How are you? I've been meaning to get in touch, but-

NICHELLE  
Me too! But there's so much going on. (beat) I am OK. Well as much as can be expected.

SHIRIN  
Know that feeling. I keep starting with 'great' and then going downhill from there.

NICHELLE  
(brief laugh) Oh yeah - starting with that automatic "Doing good!" to fine - to OK - to "Are you sure you want to know?"

(BOTH laugh)

SHIRIN  
So good to see you.

NICHELLE  
You too. How are your feet?

SHIRIN  
*(small laugh)* Much better now, thanks.

NICHELLE  
Good. Those ridiculous shoes of yours. *(small laugh)* Pretty, though, I'll give you that.

SHIRIN  
*(smiles)* So how have you *\*really\** been?

NICHELLE  
So-so. Like everyone else I guess. Feeling guilty as hell for not being dead, you know?

SHIRIN  
*(surprised sob/laugh)* Yeah. I do know.

NICHELLE  
Lost my job.

SHIRIN  
Shit! Was it-

NICHELLE  
No, not over walking out that day. They're not quite that evil. *(sighs)* They had to let a bunch of people go.

SHIRIN  
Are you- will you be OK?

NICHELLE  
Think so. My sister is moving in with me, and together we should be able to scrape by 'til I've found a new job.

SHIRIN  
Good. *(smiles)* *\*My\** sister is here too, actually.

NICHELLE  
So she made it all the way from London? That *\*is\** nice.

SHIRIN  
It is.

NICHELLE  
You going back in a few months, right?

SHIRIN

*(joyful)* No! I just found out today that I can stay for another year.

NICHELLE

*(warmly)* That is wonderful, congratulations!

SHIRIN

Thanks. Feel bad being this lucky when so many others-

NICHELLE

*(interrupts)* You stop that right there. You be happy. We need \*more\* happiness right now, not less.

SHIRIN

*(touched)* Thank you. Hey... Are you doing anything now?

NICHELLE

I was just on a grocery run, but I could do that later...?

SHIRIN

*(quickly)* Want to come up and meet my sister? Have some tea, maybe?

NICHELLE

*(smiles)* I'd like that. Thank you.

SHIRIN

*(smiles)* Great. It's this way.

*(BOTH start walking)*

NICHELLE

Mark my words, you won't leave next year either.

*(SHIRIN laughs a little)*

NICHELLE

*(continues)* You've got New York in your bones now, it'll never leave you.

SHIRIN

You might be right. I do love this city.

*(opens door to apartment building, they enter, door closes)*

*(Scene ends)*

## **Scene 9:10**

NARRATOR

Thank you for listening to Y2K: Take 2. This episode was written, produced and directed by Karin Heimdahl. Our intro and outro music is created and recorded by Jake Haws, listen to his podcast "Making Music with Jake Haws" to hear more. This episode featured Anjali Kunapaneni as Shirin, Danyelle Ellett as the answering machine voice, Robin Howell as Emma, Sakshi as Yasmin, Janis Westin as Katarina, Maddy Searle as Claire, Karin Heimdahl as Jess, and Journee LaFond as Nichelle. The drama school director was Sarah Golding, and the narrator Emma Laslett. For more information, please go to Y2Kpod.com or find us on social media @Y2Kpod If you enjoy the show, please consider supporting us on Patreon.com/Y2Kpod Please join us again next month when we meet Bri (Bree) in 2008.

DIRECTOR

*(claps hands)* All right, thank you everyone. That's a wrap for today!

(OUTRO MUSIC)