

white bitches in delhi

by Ellis Abigail Stump
(they/she)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (5)

American college students (juniors) studying abroad:

James (m): Indian-American. From NYC. Tormented, pessimistic, Reddit vibes sadboi. Simultaneously bro-y and hipster, like both a SoundCloud artist and gymrat—the whole American package. Just slightly out-of-touch. Painfully straight. In India to Find Love.

Jensen (m or nb): White. Raised by old money New England conservatives, thus violently committed to international liberalism. Witty, charming, self-aggrandizing, oblivious. Lost and lonely. Self-proclaimed Gay Bestie. In India to Save the World.

Sienna (f): White. From the rural Midwest. Plays up a bubbly ditzy persona to appear more likable and less socially awkward, but deep down genuine, quirky, and a little slut for knowledge. Does too many bits, and wants to know your birth chart. Queer, but not yet aware. In India for a Life-Changing Experience.

Indians living in New Delhi:

Ridhi (f or nb): Senior at Delhi University. Masc-presenting or masc-of-center, a “tomboy.” Fiercely independent, sardonic, career-driven, no time for love. Proudly smart, or maybe just a nerd. Angry at the world, but doesn’t want to be? Whatever, nevermind.

Pia (f): Ridhi’s *Amma* [Mother]. Runs a crumbling NGO school for orphans that, like Pia, is more than meets the eye. Divorced from a volatile, abusive relationship; committed to arranging her daughter in marriage. Motherly and doting in that annoying endearing way.

Optional:

Dance Chorus (any): An ensemble of performers (as small as **2**, or around **4-6**, or more if you have access to an eager dance troupe), integrating traditional Indian dance styles and contemporary Bollywood fusion, with red fabric representing the Red Thread of Fate.

SETTING

Delhi, India. Early Summer. Monsoon Season. Present.

Sets include a Delhi University canteen (cafeteria), dosa restaurant, marketplace, and Hauz Khas bar.

All can be easily achieved with an outdoor table and chairs, and a clothing rack rolled in for the market.

The only fixed set is Pia's living room (which might include a pull-out couch, armchair, and coffee table, upon a rug), which easily becomes James' dorm, by simply striking the table and chair and pulling out the couch.

A clothesline with hanging fabrics and twinkling lights can help backdrop the set pieces and establish the environment.

RUN TIME

1 hr 45-50 min
(plus a suggested 10-min intermission, between acts)

NOTE

[] Translation of language, lingo, or abbreviations (not said aloud)
/ Indicates interruption
— or ... Suggests pause or conversational pivot

ABOUT PACING

Dialogue should be quick, as every character is attempting to cram infinite thoughts and feelings into every line, because all are desperately, neurotically vying to be heard.

& COLLOQUIALISMS

Until the day I die, I'll try to keep this play current, but please feel free to swap out words, phrases, and references for fresher ones. While keeping in mind the intended audience should span generations, so dialogue should be understandable enough with context clues—go off.



←cropped-out ex gf

self-deprecating acknowledgement
of the semester i spent at Delhi University,
as an 18-year-old white bitch :)

****but this is not a true story****

ACT IPrologue: The Red Thread of Fate – Sunrise

A DANCE TROUPE of late teens/20-somethings performs a preface with sparkling RED RIBBON, representing the Red Thread of Fate. This myth refers to the invisible cord, which pulls together mortals destined to meet.

Music and choreography start out quite classical. Graceful, feminine, mesmerizing.

The troupe is rehearsing in a courtyard cafeteria, called the canteen, at Delhi University. Nearby, the early morning light breaks upon a table, where SIENNA ENTERS, with an armful of books and intention to study.

With her indie boho chic aesthetic, she poses an immediate and ridiculous contrast. SIENNA pauses, admiring the dancers, dorkily entranced.

Just then, late and flustered, in rushes RIDHI, muttering apologies. Her fellow Dancers react accordingly, giving side eyes. This bitch.

And with that, the classical vibe morphs into an upbeat, modern, fusion.

A Doja Cat / Bollywood remix, for example. Like. Okay ladies. You better *werk*.

RIDHI sloppily but enthusiastically follows along, counts behind. She locks gazes with SIENNA, in a fleeting yet Big Bollywood Moment, before...

JENSEN (o.s.)

(A hungover groan)

God...Bitch...

A curtain drops over the dancers, or they scatter or strut off. Summoned by the word bitch—the sound of her name—SIENNA blinks over to find:

Scene 1: Delhi University Canteen – Continuous

Eyes shielded behind Ray Bans, cooling his face with a paper fan, JENSEN ENTERS.

He trudges over to the table, to join Sienna, his second-in-command white bitch, who appears slightly bronzer thanks to a spray tan.

JENSEN bears two tin breakfast trays, loaded with a sauce-based dish and roti for scooping.

JENSEN

God is a *Bitch*, am I right? It's so humid here we could literally die.

SIENNA

It's definitely not, like, lay-out-and-tan sorta weather.

JENSEN

Yeah, no, because you'd be mugged.

It's steamier and slimier than a whole Pride Parade meat-packed into Stonewall on a mid-summer's day. I'm half as cute and doubly sweaty.

SIENNA

(Sniffing her sweaty pits)

Jensen, do you think we already smell like curry?

JENSEN

That's offensive, Sienna. You do. I don't.

Ugh, of course they forgot our utensils. Is this hazing? "Welcome to Delhi /University!"/

SIENNA

/No, no,/ I think maybe you scoop it? With your—?

JENSEN

Okay, ew? I don't know where my hands have been.

Fortunately, JENSEN always comes prepared, with a fully stocked Patagonia daypack.

While wearing an Earth Day t-shirt proclaiming “*Love Your Mother!*” he doles out stacks of napkins and plastic utensils.

If Sienna ever drops a spoon or notices a fleck of dirt, JENSEN replaces it instantly, with no concept of irony. Throughout the scene, he should also be cleaning every possible surface with baby wipes.

Allow litter to accumulate into a trash mountain.

SIENNA

(As Jensen distributes utensils)

I was trying to find some bronzer at the tent across our hostel dormitory.

JENSEN

Ooh, she looked decent. Smash or pass?

SIENNA

Well, they *actually* carry pads. What the girls here call “sanitary napkins.” No tampons, though.

JENSEN

Obviously.

SIENNA

But their makeup department was super limited. Fortunately, for the pics that’ll last eternity, I hit the spray tan booth pretty hard before we left.

JENSEN

You certainly did not hold back.

SIENNA

(The punchline)

Because, get this: here, they only sell *whitening cream*. To *lighten* your skin!

JENSEN

That's insane. Being white is the worst.

SIENNA

Tell me about it!

JENSEN

I would! But that Prezi would take, like, over 2,000 years!

Into the canteen shuffles JAMES with a tray
boasting only a single comically oversized mango.

SIENNA

Jimmy! Over here!

JENSEN

James, my boy! James, James, and the Giant...Mango?

JAMES

I didn't ask for it, bruh. The canteen server ladies are, like, fighting to load me up with fruits and veggies. And all the legit spices they don't mix into your guys' meals. Haven't you noticed?

SIENNA
Totally.

JENSEN
Not at all.

JAMES

They assume I'm Hindu and vegan. When obviously, I'm the opposite. Atheist and /keto./

SIENNA & JENSEN
/Keto./

JENSEN

We *know*, you're a *Man*, clogging up your arteries to die young and reap that fame.

SIENNA

You're missing out on the mangoes, though, which are infinitely juicier than anything a cat's peed on at Key Foods. They burst with this, like...

(With obviously homoerotic licking gestures)

Deep, sweet slurpiness, flowing straight from Mother Earth's *womb*. Or—Goddess Radha's? Krishna's Forbidden Maiden of Love?

JAMES

Don't look at me.
And anyway, you can have it. I can't eat.

SIENNA

/Honey.../

JENSEN

/Honey!/ Our tall chai tea with extra honey. Still all broken up about being broken up?

JAMES

Dude, it happened 46 hours ago.

JENSEN

Did you counter in the time difference?

SIENNA

I cannot believe she dropped that *literal BOMB* while we were on the *PLANE*. Over *text*.

JENSEN

When she *knew* you wouldn't have service. Like, pardon me for sustaining fundamental faith in human decency post-9/11. She should've triggered that crash-and-burn before the flight took off, or after we landed.

SIENNA

And offered to FaceTime.

JENSEN

Or recorded a voice note.

SIENNA

Hello!

JENSEN

Goodbye.

SIENNA

The nerve of that slut.

JENSEN

The lack thereof. PSA though, Sienna darling, you shouldn't use derogatory terms like—/

JAMES

Yeah, she wasn't a slut, bimbo. She was my SoundCloud muse.

SIENNA

Shit, for sure, I'm so sorry, I adore your...dope tracks...

JENSEN

You're forgiven, Si Si. And *you're* forgetting you're a frickin' catch, James James. At least you know now that she wasn't The One. Or one of the Ones, if you're considering polyamory or ethical non-monogamy, which would be like—/

SIENNA

So totally cool.

JENSEN

Beyond so totally cool.

SIENNA

We'd love you just the same.

JENSEN

I'd probably love you a little bit more.

SIENNA

Wait, than me?

JENSEN

Never, baby. No way in Hell.

SIENNA

Thank God. And thank Ms. Radha. And the Pope. And Lizzo. And the One. That's Daoism, the practice of trusting the Universe and its unplanned waves. "When I release what I am, I become what I might be." The *One*.

Flowing, vibing, SIENNA bites into the dripping, glistening mango. JAMES—unimpressed.

JAMES

Right. Well. That's all I want, too. Just one...one.
Like, you guys know I fuck bitches. But all I need is just One Thing.
Even if that qualifies me, in your books, as old school or whatever.

JENSEN

Speaking of books—Siennie, bindi baby? Our group proj?

Mouth full of mushy mango, Sienna ushers a
thumbs up and obediently dives into her textbooks.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

And yes, James, correct. You're veering into scarily incel territory right now.

JAMES

I'll buckle my seatbelt.
Honestly, maybe there *is* a chance now, that I could meet someone traditional. To wake
me up and inspire me and shit. But the goddamn girl-to-guy ratio in class—/

JENSEN

Patrol your pronouns, pal!

JAMES

There are far fewer...females...I fantasize about...fraternizing with.

JENSEN

Okay, worse. But—just get on the apps for the summer! With the number of chai breaks
these people take per day, you could roll through a harem of bachelorettes by sundown.

JAMES

Fam. Indians don't use dating apps like we do. Instead of flicking through Tinder and
Hinge, for Netflixing and fucking and then ghosting, they use Shaadi.com, for careful
matchmaking. The profiles are made and run by the parents.

JENSEN

You're lying. Shut up.

SIENNA

That's psychotic. Keep going.

JAMES

Yeah. You'd hear the students talking about it, if you removed your stupid AirPods.

(Annoyed, Jensen does; meanwhile, James rocks way more respectable Beats, looped around his neck)

The shitty thing is, my folks won't even put me up on Shaadi, because they insist they're all contemporary. Cosmopolitan. Western.

SIENNA

Western? They're Wall Street WeWork techies. Mine are legit mid-Western rednecks.

JAMES

That's what I meant, dummy. Western like modern American? It's—doesn't matter. The point is, they refuse to help make my life any easier. Instead, it's *my* responsibility to put myself out there and casually come across a soulmate, among, what, 7 billion options?

SIENNA

8. It's now 8.

JAMES

Well, that's fucking great! 8 billion highly damaged, easily distracted options. As if I don't feel alone, with all of them, always. I'm an Outsider home in New York. I'm an Outsider here in New Delhi. Even around the two of you—I know you're my besties or whatever you think you are—but sometimes, I feel like a pointless third wheel.

SIENNA

That's not true.

JENSEN

Your feelings are valid.

SIENNA

Third wheels can be the best. Rickshaws have three wheels!

JENSEN

They're so humble and authentic.

SIENNA

Way cheaper than Ubers.

JENSEN

You can actually take in the sights, *above* ground, open air, close enough to reach out and grab whatever you pass, as the breeze filters through your gelled hair—/

JAMES

(Brushing Jensen away from his e-boy hair)

/Stop it, asshole, don't mess it up./

JENSEN

(With dance moves, performed to no audience)

As you embrace every bump and trife upon these busy dirt paths we call Life.

JAMES

Yeah, well. It's not as lyrical when you're sitting in the rickshaw *alone*.

SIENNA

Ah, Jimmy. You're such a hopeless romantic.

JAMES

I want to gag myself with a spoon just to feel something.

JENSEN

(Re: the plastic utensils)

While I respect you giving 80s rom com, unfortunately, we're almost out.

SIENNA

(Still to James, with a sigh)

Jeez, I just—I wish I believed in “Finding the One” like you.

I wish I believed in “Being in Love” with you.

JAMES

Yahhh, I fuckin' wish you did, too. And by that I mean...

SIENNA

Oh, um, yeah, by that I meant...

JAMES

I'm gonna go throw up.

JENSEN

Gross, what? Details.

JAMES

It's this goddamned Delhi Belly. I can't keep down a single mouthful.

SIENNA

Jealous. Everyone here is, like, skin-and-bones.

JENSEN

Sienna! What the fuck?!? That's because of the...

(Stage-whispered, gesturing out towards audience)

Poverty....?!

SIENNA

Oh...my god. I am so sorry, my brain is /broken, I hate myself, should scoop out my eyeballs with this spoon—/

JAMES

/I'm gonna go/ post up in the Water Closet. Do either of you have any...?

JENSEN

Mama Jensen always comes prepared.

From his sack of supplies, JENSEN tosses JAMES a roll of toilet paper with a cliché terrible throw.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

Don't use it all in one place. Because it'll clog up the underfunded pipes and I only have two more IKEA bags packed of this delicacy. Good luck, sweetie!

SIENNA

Don't drown!

JENSEN

And if you do, just text us!

SIENNA

Well, text Jensen, because I don't have an international phone plan!

JENSEN

(Remembering)

Right. Poor.

SIENNA

(To James)

I'll WhatsApp you a list of your contributions to our group project, in case our Sir asks.

Sir means Professor here. And also...every man.
It's on Indian poetry. Kamala Suraiyya. You two'll totally vibe.

JAMES

Sick. She sounds hot. Just, don't do anything stupid while I'm gone, word?

(To Jensen, then Sienna)

Like invest Daddy's trust fund into some child labor factory.
Or fall in love with a random local.
You two are fucking lost without your unofficial tour guide.

Gripping his stomach, JAMES lurches off, EXITS.

JENSEN

How adorable is it that Indians call bathrooms "Water Closets?"

SIENNA

I know, right? It's like, "Don't mind me, Mom! Just getting dressed for school, picking out my fit from the Water Closet!"

JENSEN

Like, is it a walk-in, or a fall-in Water Closet?

SIENNA

(With a super weird voice, being a little goofy)

Help, I'm trapped in the Water Closet! Let me out, let me out!

JENSEN

...Lmao.

But circling back to our previous topic, we've got to do something about this.

SIENNA

About the Poverty, you mean?

JENSEN

Ew, no. I mean—yes. 100 percent. I'm here to Save the World.

SIENNA

You touch me.

JENSEN

You tickle me. The hot-button crisis I was referring to, however, is our resident sadboi. James deserves affection, or at least attention.

SIENNA

I know, but I just can't *give* that. I mean, I've *tried*, but I just don't like guys, like him, like that. And by that I don't mean, oh god, *not-white guys*—/I need a lobotomy—/

JENSEN

Girl. Chill. I'm not suggesting you take one for the team. Not with your hand-eye coordination. I was thinking we'd make him a profile? On the matchmaking app.

SIENNA

Shaadi!

JENSEN

Not any shoddier than FarmersOnly or Christian Mingle. Or Thursday, the one where you /only message on Thursdays?/

SIENNA

/I meant the site is/ called Shaadi.

JENSEN

Ohh. Yes. Facts. Like, are we not basically his parents, just wiser and more micro-managerial? You'd astound any desperate Indian housewife with your knowledge of astrological compatibility, and objectively *all* parents love me besides my own.

SIENNA

There's also the, um—dowry element.

JENSEN

The who?

SIENNA

It's, like...money? Paid for the daughter's hand, in marriage. From her family, to his. In this case—us? I'm just saying my student loans are casually strangling me, not in a hot dom way, and this would lift serious weight off that debt.

JENSEN

Bb! I forgot you're not upper-class! Love that for you.

(Yes-anding, pivoting)

And, if we match with someone low on the cast list—/

SIENNA

System. Caste system.

JENSEN

Right, like, sharing *that* narrative would *add* serious weight to *my* TikTok!

SIENNA

Oh my gosh, totally! Who *doesn't* fold for poverty or weddings?!

JENSEN

(Having forgotten, smacking forehead)

The WEDDING! Fuck me with a long, hard mission statement. Could we—wear sarees?!

SIENNA

Like Goddess Radha, Bride of Krishna?

JENSEN

And Kathryn “Katy” Perry, Ex Bride of Russell Brand?

SIENNA

Fun fact, the bride actually wears red, because here, white’s reserved for funerals!

JENSEN

Makes sense. White sucks. Death to white.

(To one of the Dancers, passing by, like a crusader)

Death to white! I see you.

SIENNA

(After a beat)

Um. Let’s make change, king.

JENSEN slips out his phone and pulls up a site with a welcome sitar jingle, in which the word Shaadi sounds like “shawty:”

PHONE

Shaadi makes you dance! Shaadi makes you sing!
Shaadi translates in the end to a Shaadi wedding!

SIENNA

Cute...?

JENSEN

Gay. Should we be drunk for this?

SIENNA

(Bouncy, buoyant, “nothing matters!”)

Okay!

The canteen table stays onstage, as the duo frolics off, and lights go down.

Scene 2: Pia’s Household – Meanwhile

PIA sits counting rupees over breakfast, phone set aside. On a small TV, we hear or see a news report concerning the ongoing debate over LGBTQ+ rights in India. While same-sex relations are decriminalized, marriage isn’t legally recognized.

When RIDHI ENTERS, PIA mutes the news and gives her daughter a disappointed onceover.

PIA

That is what you are wearing to University today?

RIDHI

And probably tomorrow, after I’m up all frickin’ night studying.

PIA

You have far nicer fabrics in your closet. Pretty sarees. Not many, but a few.

RIDHI

I’m saving those for a rainy day.

PIA

It’s monsoon season. Every day is a rainy day.

RIDHI

Touche.

PIA

Tea?

RIDHI

I'll take a coffee. Like I've said every morning lately—I prefer coffee—but clearly that goes in one ear and out your nostrils with a scoff—/

PIA

Here. Tea. I made tea.

I expect you'll stop dressing in this fashion after finishing school. Because your fashion, Ridhi dear, is not fashion. You enter the Real World tomorrow, after lingering in-between /long enough—/

RIDHI

Lingering? In-between?! *Amma*, I spent my last four years on full scholarship, crashing here with you, instead of in the hostels like all my peers! I survived on Maggi instant noodles, boiled myself as dinners for one, instead of with friends after late-night thrashers. Could that get any lamer or sadder?!

(After a pause, sarcastic)

Nope, don't argue that. Just agree I lost us no money.

PIA

Made none, either. Now is your chance to secure Stability, don't you agree?

RIDHI

I do.

PIA

By saying "I do!" And getting married.

RIDHI

Or by getting a job, as was the whole point to my education! I'm top in my *batch* [class]. I could pursue school further.

PIA

You don't even know what you like to study.

RIDHI

And yet I should commit to another human being? Now, forever?!

PIA

I can see your path better than you can. I'm considering both our best interests—/

RIDHI

Ha! Could we even afford an arrangement right now?! A dowry, a wedding, are you joking? Look at us, living rupee to rupee! Flimsy, grimy, rupee to rupee.

Your nonprofit is going under faster than...

(A slight Earth-is-doomed aside)

Uttar Pradesh, in the floods thanks to climate change, if we don't act now.

(Anyway...)

But maybe, if you considered honestly speaking out, about the specific demographic of children you're housing, giving second chances to...

(Eyeing the TV)

You'd make conversation.

PIA

We'd make controversy.

RIDHI

All press is good press. That's business.

PIA

(Tongue-in-cheek)

You're the expert, huh?

RIDHI

I'm out.

PIA

Arranged marriage—

PIA

It's an investment, you understand.

We take out a loan, gift it to the family, and exploit their fortune until we die.

RIDHI

(With a scoff she learned from Pia)

How romantic.

PIA

(With an original trademark scoff)

You don't believe in true love. So you say. If you say it you, you mean it.

RIDHI

It's an unrealistic, impractical delusion used to draw sheltered neurotic empaths into Bollywood films. Plus, I saw how it worked for you and Dad.

With that insult, launched from a place of stress and insecurity, RIDHI lingers in the doorway.

RIDHI (cont'd.)

Are you going to wish me luck or not?

PIA

Ridhi, you manifest your own luck. You rise to every challenge and occasion. I have full faith you'll make your last day worth it.

RIDHI

Oh. Um. /Thank you?/

PIA

Go meet us a wealthy, light-skinned, city husband, before it's Too Late.

RIDHI

Amma! Whatever. Don't waste your breath.

But, don't hold it either! Romantic pickings on campus are pretty slim over summer. It's all these foreign-exchange-program idiots. Blinking at everything with eyes wide as elephants—which they'll travel outside the city to ride, at some sham sanctuary.

Snapping their Instagram clicks [pics] inside Sikh temples, only to drop their phone into a sacred pool, blame the water damage on some innocent beggar, and then post a photo of a starving child captioned: "life-changing experience."

PIA

You've always had much to say about Americans, for claiming to hate them.

RIDHI

They fascinate me. Like subjects. Or actors on scripted reality TV.

On that note, PIA's phone chimes. Loudly.

RIDHI (cont'd.)

But dear God, mom, *you* worship your phone worse than any Elon Musk disciple.

PIA

For you, Ridhi. You deserve love and money, like in the scripted reality TV.

RIDHI

I'll believe it when I see it.

Slinging on her backpack with a sigh, RIDHI EXITS. Alone, PIA returns her attention to the TV for a moment, thoughtful. Resolved, she then taps her phone, which sings...

PHONE

New match! New match! Could be the One! Check out this catch!

PIA scrutinizes the profile, brow raised, then...

PIA

Come to Mama.

Lights down.

Scene 3: Pia's Household / Delhi University Canteen – Later Morning

Outside Pia's door, SIENNA and JENSEN huddle, wearing "adult" clothes and rudimentary old-age stage makeup, likely learned in an undergrad theater class. Both are tipsy. Sienna is rattled with nerves.

SIENNA

Okay, so maybe we shouldn't have stopped for that round of local *apong* right before this.

JENSEN

What other choice did we have?!

There are literally zero brunch spots in the city for bottomless mimosas.

SIENNA

I'm afraid we'll slip up! Turn tongue-tied and say something humiliating...

JENSEN

No one expects us to be Hindu gods. We're only American humans.

SIENNA

Therein lies the Shakespearean tragedy.

JENSEN

Babe. You have done The Most amount of research. You've read more articles in *The Times of India* than any of our classmates have ever *pretended* to read in *The New York Times*. And we're on the same page about what we're scouting for James.

SIENNA

Jignesh.

JENSEN

Bless you.

SIENNA

No, no, we—we used his non-Anglicized name on the profile, remember?

JENSEN

Right. Copy. We know what we're scouting for "Jignesh."

SIENNA

Someone he can talk candidly with, and also joke with, forever. Hold accountable, but also hold up, together defying the urge to indulge the dark void, because they prioritize vulnerability, and both understand how HARD it is—/

JENSEN

(Perhaps snapping or clapping along)

/Say lesssssssss./

SIENNA

To be a WOMAN!

JENSEN

Elaborate?

SIENNA

I've got this. We've got this. This'll be fun.

JENSEN

Umm, okay, now we're squawking! I guess.
Game face on, Si Si My Playmate, and let's sashe into—/

SIENNA

About that. I was thinking. You may want to...

JENSEN

What? Tell me what I want, what I really, really want.

SIENNA

Just—turn down the...

JENSEN

/Speak up and spit it out!/
/

SIENNA

/Sparkle!/
Turn down your sparkle!

JENSEN

Bitch. Are you suggesting I *haven't* been? Drastically dulling my glisten-and-glow, from my usual sequin-in-the-sunshine to a tacky rhinestone?

SIENNA

Be serious, Jens, folx are staring! Since we left the campus bubble. They're /judging—/

JENSEN

/They're/ jealous! If anyone ever stared at you, you'd understand.
Plus, the haters here are literally *so* Anti-Gay they wouldn't even recognize a Pro, if one were shoved under their /nose—/

PIA swings open the door, boasting a tray of chai.
Her face lights up, as she sees through their muse
right away. Because...duh. She was prepared for
fair-skinned elites, not white morons. Jackpot?

Pia plays the bitches like a sitar.

SIENNA

/Namaste!/
/

PIA

Namaste! Please, make yourselves at home, by kindly freeing your bare feet.

(Off Jensen's disgust)

The house is a temple. Do you not regard yours as Holy?

SIENNA

I mean, mine has mouseholes for the rats, but that's as Holy as it gets.

JENSEN

It's sacrilegious nasty. My pad's nicer, obvs, and when the dishwasher overflows—when I pour in too much soap, as liberal and overambitious as myself—the kitchen floods and becomes a Sikh temple, until my cleaning person mops it up.

PIA

You two live separate?

SIENNA

Oh—uh, no! We—/

JENSEN

Own multiple homes.

SIENNA

Multiple mansions! Like Barbie doll houses! From the...Greta Gerwig movie.

PIA

How very impressive! Please, sit.

Grateful, SIENNA plops upon the carpet or sofa, pulling in her legs half-lotus-style or otherwise oddly. (Bc queers can't sit straight in chairs! It's a Thing!) Meanwhile, Jens absorbs the living space—the ideal amount of poor. Perf.

PIA

(To Sienna)

You demonstrate...extreme flexibility and agility. And both exude such youth.

(To Jensen)

And you, such whiteness.

Crystal as a ghost china doll, long forgotten in an attic.

JENSEN

Erm, yes. 'Tis my cross to bear...

PIA

No, Sir, your hue is remarkable! Your James is Half? Father white?
And you, *Amma*...from here?

SIENNA

Oh—um. You're making me blush an even deeper shade of siena, my—totally natural skin tone. But that's my name. Sienna.

JENSEN

And you can call me anything except late for Happy Hour. It's Jensen.

PIA

Well, Mr. and Mrs. Jensen, I—Pia—thank you for selecting my daughter.
Your child is Immaculate.

SIENNA

Well, thank you, but nobody's perfect...

JENSEN

Made him ourselves.

PIA

Your son blew me.

JENSEN

(Choking on chai, imagining blowing James)

Come again?

PIA

How do you say...your son blows me?

SIENNA

(Like playing charades)

Away! Blows you away!

PIA

That's the expression? A force is so intense, you're pushed in the *opposite* direction?

JENSEN

Avoidant attachment, luv. That's the American way.

SIENNA

So we've seen in shows, Mr. Jensen means. So Ridhi?

PIA

Her name means "Fortune."

JENSEN

Like wealth, or what you find inside a cookie?

PIA

To begin with Vedic zodiac signs—she is a fiery, intelligent, determined Leo. What is your son's birthdate?

JENSEN

Oh, I know this one! It always sneaks up around Saint Patty's, so we can loop his celebration in with the citywide bar crawl. So, March 18th.

PIA

Holi.

JENSEN

Cow.

PIA

The holiday. Festival of Love?

SIENNA

(To Jensen, tensely, kind of impressing Pia)

When together we dance, forgive, and rejoice the forbidden yet crackling connection between Radha and Krishna? I've mentioned them. Darling.

JENSEN

Doi! Love those two. Just—heard you wrong the first time. Circling back?

SIENNA

Jignesh is a Pisces. Unfortunately, /a total Pisces./

JENSEN

/This kid. Highkey Pisces./

PIA

Broody? Sensitive? /Romantic?/

JENSEN

/Romantic./ Obsessive-not-healthily so.

SIENNA

I try telling him how many fish there are in the sea. Three and a half trillion, to be exact. But he insists the ocean is polluted beyond saving grace. Any good-looking guppy out there is just—floating dead.

JENSEN

He's a...cynical romantic.

Lights up on...

The canteen table, back on campus, where RIDHI has assumed James' spot. Bent over textbooks, she sits like Sienna, not ladylike. Queer coding! JAMES returns from the squatty potties.

JAMES

That's where I was sitting.

RIDHI

You weren't when I got here.

JAMES

Where are my friends? Why are they always deserting me?

RIDHI

I dunno, dude. These sound like questions for a therapist.

JAMES

I was here first.

RIDHI

Before anyone else? Ever? Are you sure? You're an expat, I assume. American?

JAMES

What gave it away?

RIDHI

We don't need to delve into the history and politics.

JAMES

Yeah, no thanks. I study Business. Like a motherfucking American.

Raindrops begin to fall, and RIDHI scrambles to protect her books.

JAMES whisks her tray from the table, flings off all the food, and holds it overhead.

RIDHI

Oh, um... You didn't have to do that.

JAMES

When it rains, it pours, or chivalry isn't dead, or whatever.

RIDHI

I meant, you didn't have to fling off all that food. There are starving children in America.

JAMES

Is that how you say "thanks" in Hindu?

RIDHI

Hindi. But you don't really have to. There's an unspoken agreement that we're all grateful because we could all use the help.

JAMES

Weird. It's different in the States. There, everyone thinks everyone *else* needs help, but they're too proud to admit *they* need any. Everyone's God's gift to the fucking Universe.

RIDHI

I don't believe in God. At least not one God.

JAMES

Me neither. 'Cause he doesn't believe in me.

RIDHI

Nice.

(Beat, stuck, awkward conversation)

Do you, uh...believe in the Universe? Things happen for a reason?

JAMES

Like heartbreak, and 9/11, and Taylor Swift's stupid 10-minute songs?

RIDHI

Um, no? Like—rain? Crossing paths with people? And feeling...whatever.

JAMES

Nah, that shit's lame. Oh! Fuck. It's time to BeReal.

Meanwhile, back at Pia's, JENSEN is consoling
SIENNA, who's staring off in shock.

JENSEN

I know this is a lot, babe, but it honestly makes more sense for you.

SIENNA

No, it's chill, I just kind of built my personality off being a delicate, desirable Virgo, then Vedic astrology enters the picture, and boom, suddenly I'm an unhinged Libra?!

JENSEN

You contain multitudes, and balance—/

SIENNA

My sole supportive foundation has crumbled.

JENSEN

Hey, you always say everything happens for a reason. Now, you can go off with your optimistic little sayings and blame it on being a little Libra freak.

PIA

You and Ridhi will align like chakras, as a match among the most complementary. Likely better than she and I.

SIENNA

That's true. Cosmic /soulmate potential./

PIA

/Soulmate potential./ I will attempt to restrain my Resentment.

SIENNA

Ha, ha, um...Does that make you /an Aries?/

PIA

/I am an Aries./

JENSEN

Bitch. I'm screaming. Same. It's like, you can *feel* the hot air circulating right now.

SIENNA

Uh, thankfully, our water-sun-son Jignesh can extinguish the flames!

JENSEN

Bet. What about your partner, P? Fingers crossed they're an Earth sign, as clearly this group could use a little grounding.

PIA clears her throat, fidgeting with her teacup.

SIENNA

Jeez, we're...so sorry. They're not, like...passed along?

JENSEN

Or worse, a Gemini?

PIA

Worst of all. An American.

JENSEN

Big yikes.

SIENNA

Where is he now? Like, away on business, or...?

JENSEN

Out for Marlboros? Left 10 years ago?

Probably still commiserating with my own father at the cash register?

PIA

(Moving on)

Next topic. Our professions. What do you do, Mrs. Jensen?

SIENNA

Me? Oh, I'm—nothing interesting. Just your everyday juggler of odd jobs. Right now I'm mainly focusing on—surviving? On my scholarships? Because I kind of feel like I should know myself, before pursuing a lifelong career impacting others...

(Because, by this, Pia is unimpressed)

But I teach yoga on the side.

PIA

Wonderful. What Practice?

SIENNA

Oh, the, um—fat-burning genre? It's super relaxing. We don't allow anyone to keep their phones on volume during salutations. Only...vibrate.

PIA

(Uninspired, hoping for something more lucrative)

And you, Mr. Jensen? You do—?

JENSEN

I actually prefer to reframe work as not something we *do*, but rather who we *are*.

I, for instance, am a multi-hyphenate:

(Accompanying each role with a gesture)

Social activist–conversation starter–media humanitarian–justice of social peace.

For a total of...four hyphens.

It's like your concept of Reincarnation, but where I'm just continually reiterating into the best version of myself. The utmost Me, over and over and over again.

PIA

(Like, that's ridiculous, but it'll do?)

That sounds quite...prolific.

JENSEN

All in a day's work. And to swivel the spotlight upon you, pretty lady, *who are you?*

PIA

(Having rehearsed this answer)

Oh, how generous of you to wonder.
 I run—or, I *am* the founder of an NGO—a nonprofit—school and home outside the city.
 My sweet, poor residents learn skills, make crafts, and sell their art at the market.

JENSEN
 (Having Seen the Light)

You're kidding.

PIA
 Paving a path for India's neglected youth is no joke, Sir.

JENSEN
 No, I meant. Girlboss. That's amazing.

SIENNA
 Transcends amazing.

JENSEN
 Have you ever considered expanding? Aggrandizing?

PIA
 Oh, my, no. I am far too humble, Sir. Quiet old lady.
 However, I must stress the seriousness of this endeavor, as an everlasting bond.
 This is no shoddy Western Love Marriage.
 No screaming over dinner, then kissing in the rain.
 Overseas, first they catch Passion, then they attempt to contain it with Commitment.
 But caged lust becomes Resentment, no? And what happens when, inside, it dies?
 Here, we establish Commitment first, and find Passion *in* Promise.
 To that, do you agree?

JENSEN
 Um. That's pretty intense fine print.

PIA
 It's not fine print. It is extreme verbalization.
 Let us put ink to paper, to seal the deal.

JENSEN
 (Suddenly smol nervous)
 Keeping receipts. A vibe. Me and my...

(Referring to Sienna)

Honey Boo Boo child...? Might need to chitter-chatter amongst ourselves first.

PIA

Excellent. I'll replenish our chai, before we broach the subject of dowry. Meanwhile, as is custom—Mr. Jensen? Might I kindly review your bank statements?

JENSEN

(Handing over his phone)

Uh, thousand percent. Here's my Venmo?

SIENNA

His captions say it all.

PIA moves aside, into another room, gleeful. Once she's out of earshot, the Bitches confer:

JENSEN

Okay, so deadass. Pia has me *quaking* in a constructive way. Like, hear me out: should I invest my entire trust fund into her NGO? Vote yes or no.

SIENNA

Jens! That's brilliant!

JENSEN

I know, right?! I'd finally stick it to my stick-up-his-ass, finger-puppet-excuse for a "father figure." He'd be enraged.

SIENNA

I'd be proud.

JENSEN

It's definitely not a child labor factory, like James and UNICEF warned us about.

SIENNA

I sincerely hope not!

Meanwhile, PIA calls RIDHI, who can notice her phone buzzing, but ignore it.

PIA

Ridhi. Pick up your cellphone.

PIA glances over her shoulder, considering using a hushed tone for the voicemail, but plays it safe by proceeding in Hindi. Translation is projected:

PIA (cont'd.)

Hamari toh lottery lag gayi! Full Jackpot! Sun, Shaadi.com pe do bewakoof gore amrikee mile hain. Pata nahi kyun desi hone ka naatak kar rahe hain. Khair, mujhe lagta hai, yeh do ullu bahut maaldar hai. Main anaathasharm ko bacha loongi. Inko hum pata ke, laakhon ka daan karwaenge. Aur tum, jitna ji chahe, marate dam tak padh sakti ho. Pyaar vyar par time barbaad karane kee koi jaroorat nahin! Ham ek chhoti si dahej denge, aur badle meing unke sare paise le lenge. Main tumhari mummy bol rahi hoon.

TRANSLATION

(Onscreen)

We hit the jackpot. We won the lottery.
 On Shaadi.com, we matched with a couple of
 White American idiots.
 They are pretending to be Indian, I don't know why.
 Regardless, the dummies will financially provide for us, forever.
 I can keep the orphanage; they'll donate millions.
 And you can keep studying until you drop dead!
 No need to waste your time on Love!
 We'll offer a meager dowry, then take them for all they've got.
 This is your Mother.

JENSEN

(Distanced from Pia, out of earshot)

But on the flipside, we've got Pia's pure little fixation on Commitment. Like, I have commitment issues. James has—many issues. Should I just go float the idea by him first?

SIENNA

You can rickshaw over right after this. But you know at this point he'd greenlight anyone.

JENSEN

True. Like you.

SIENNA

Um. True. So, do this for me. Please. So I can pay rent and relax once in my life. Grab yourself by your Democrat-blue balls, turn those sneaky Aryan eyes to green cha-ching dollar signs, and be a motherfucking American.

PIA

(Calling)

Mother...?

JENSEN

(Both taken aback and reverent)

Fucker...

PIA

And Father?

SIENNA & JENSEN

(Scrambling themselves into a couply pose)

Mhmm?

PIA

(ENTERING again)

Have you reached your decision? So we can proceed with next steps, and arrange for Mother Sienna to meet your daughter-in-law Ridhi?

JENSEN

We believe so. Could I just sneak a peek at your nonprof later?

PIA

(Concealing delight, melodramatic)

Of course, Sir. You must merely brace yourself, for the darkest depression and worst misery imaginable—/

JENSEN

(With zero hesitation)

Done.

PIA

Alright, then. It will be a pleasure doing business with you.

SIENNA

From one Mother to another...

(Becoming a bit uncertain)

I suppose we're sold.

Lights dim on their scene, as focus shifts back to...

RIDHI

Four missed calls from my Mother. Gets so old.

JAMES

Dude, count yourself lucky. The only person who calls me that much is...

(Checking phone—it's not his ex)

Yup. Jensen, my Gay Best Friend. Who acts more like my dad, though, you know?

RIDHI

I don't have one of those.

JAMES

A dad or a best friend?

RIDHI

Neither.

JAMES

Fuck. Awkward.

RIDHI

Tale as old as time. But it was for the best. They battled it out the American way, in a Love Marriage, until he just up and left.

JAMES

That's what my folks want for me.

RIDHI

No way. It's rare here. Only 5%.

They claim arranged marriage works because our divorce rate is under 1%, but that doesn't take into account the shame that accompanies divorce.

JAMES

I'm gonna be sick.

RIDHI

I know, right? Society...

JAMES

No—stomach. My stomach. I'm about to literally puke out my guts.
Your empty carbs are overloading my system.

RIDHI

My empty carbs?

JAMES

You know what I mean.

RIDHI

No, I think maybe *you* should callous up your sensitive system!
Can't upchuck a gut if you don't have a gut.

JAMES

I hope your major isn't Medicine or Anatomy, because that is *not* how that works.

RIDHI

You mean my stream? Your path is called your Stream. As in, when you fall into a stream, you try it, you trust it, you don't resist the current, like an American, always fighting or flighting, and—are you flighting right now?

JAMES

To the Water Closet, as you call it.

RIDHI

You mean the restroom? We just say restroom.
Have you not been paying attention to anything around you?

JAMES

(Not listening, busy being painfully emo)

So I'll probably never see you again.

RIDHI

I hope not.

JAMES

Psh. Agreed.

RIDHI

Because I'm praying I'll pass out instead. On my finals. Pass out to graduate?

JAMES

These goddamn India-isms! It's like we're not even speaking the same language! But, for sure, you go do that. I'm gonna go pass out myself, between my churning stomach and empty heart. Peace.

RIDHI

Wait! Here.

From her stack of books, RIDHI passes over an anthology of poetry. Kamala Suraiyya.

RIDHI (cont'd.)

It's not for your stomach. Please don't use the pages as toilet paper. It's for your heart. It might—sit well.

JAMES

Oh, I know Kamala Suraiyya. I read books. She's dope.

RIDHI

You know, you think you're an American fuckboi. But you're a *Desi* fuckboi.

JAMES

Thanks. Or—forgot. I don't need to say it.

Smirking, genuinely believing this interaction has gone really well, JAMES EXITS, unrolling Jensen's toilet paper in preparation.

RIDHI hesitates, blinking, like “well that was fun.” Then, recalling, she takes out her phone and puts it to her ear, listening to Pia's voicemail. Odd...

Scene 4: Marketplace – Early Afternoon

Lucious fabric, folded over clotheslines and garlands, hangs overhead. (Or if these exist as a fixed backdrop, now, additional clothing racks are rolled on by the DANCERS.)

At a tent, within a makeshift dressing room, SIENNA tries on a red saree—potentially, the Red Thread fabric.

She wears it incorrectly, the cloth draped across her face like a heavy veil, attempting to conceal her identity. She's about to meet Ridhi.

Alone, SIENNA talks to the unseen individual running the tent. Still bubbly, but not as bimbo, she reveals intelligence she stifles around Jensen.

SIENNA

In New York, all everyone wears is black. Gray, on a cheery day, when we wake up on the right side of the mattress on the ground. Suits ties and—streetwear, whatever the hell that means. All *andhera*. Darkness. Like, I guess looking jaded feels sexy, but it can't feel *good*? Just a sad method of self-protection.

RIDHI ENTERS the tent, on the other side of the dressing room or rack, listening, curious.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

What's hilarious is how colorful our shows are. Everyone's dressed like a crayon box, and loud and proud. When in reality, if you'd fly one of those—um, robotic helicopter things?—to the exec boardroom? It's all white old-money conservatives wearing *Andhera*, because they mean *Vyaapaar*. Business. It's kinda like how Bollywood depicts India as so vibrant and festive, but that's just the BJP painting over real shit?

RIDHI

Drone.

SIENNA

Jeez, I am droning, aren't I? Sorry, let me just pop outta here and let you in—/

RIDHI

The remote-controlled aircrafts. They're called drones.

SIENNA

Oh! Of course. You're right. Thanks, I...

(Emerging)

Didn't mean to harp on dark clothes. It really brings out your eyes. That...t-shirt.

RIDHI

Appreciated. I might say the same, if I could see your eyes.

You're wearing this incorrectly, though.

SIENNA

I know. Sorry. About the...saree.

RIDHI

Red, huh? You're a bride-to-be?

SIENNA

I wish! And by that I mean, no, I'm an independent woman.

And by that I mean, no, I'm just...very alone.

RIDHI

(“Referring to the saree,” initially)

Do you want help...? /With the loneliness?/

SIENNA

/With the loneliness?/ I'll just...let it dangle in front of my face, for now.

(Flipping up the veil)

You're wet.

RIDHI

Excuse me?

SIENNA

From the—rain. Um. Do *you*—want help?

(“Referring to the clothes”)

Picking out something new?

RIDHI

As evidenced by the t-shirt situation, I'm not a model.

SIENNA

Oh, please. You're, like, disarmingly beautiful, actually.
I'd say "inside and out," but I'm not really familiar with your insides yet. So. Um.

RIDHI

That sounds...awful murder-podcasty.

SIENNA

(NPR voice)

And this is only episode one. For further discomfort, tune in.

As they converse, SIENNA browses the racks,
pointing out options.

RIDHI

Okay. This is weird, but your voice sounds so frickin' familiar. Do you sing?

SIENNA

Only to my plants.

(Another cringey accent/voice)

And my victims, before skinning them alive and eating their hair.

RIDHI

Busted. I was recording that confession, but I'll water your plants while you're in prison.

SIENNA

That's—okay, really thoughtful, actually.

RIDHI

Wait, shit. I think I've got it. I'm—in a dance troupe actually, kind of embarrassing—/

SIENNA

/Not embarrassing, that's amazing./

RIDHI

/Well, thank you, but/—do you go to DU? I could swear I've heard you /sing.../

SIENNA

Me? Oh. Um. God, no, no, /uh—/

Finally realizing who this person is and what's happening, SIENNA stumbles backwards, chaotically toppling into a clothing rack.

RIDHI

/Oh, Jesus, dude—/

SIENNA

/I'm fine, I'm fine!/ I just wanted to...peruse our options.

RIDHI

Thoroughly.

SIENNA

Extremely thoroughly.

RIDHI

Are you.../okay?/

SIENNA

Always!

RIDHI

Really?

SIENNA

Nope. Rarely. That was a blatant lie. Are you? Like, what do you want?

RIDHI

You have no idea how long I've been waiting for someone to ask me that. *Are baap re* [oh my god]. You were /referring to the clothes—/

SIENNA

/No, I wasn't, actually./ I meant from, like, a relationship? And liiiiiiiiife.

RIDHI

Well, that's a tougher question than any on my study guides.

Which, honestly, I should probably be returning to. While this was a lovely distraction, I stave off nihilism with Hard Work, so.../was nice meeting you!/

SIENNA

/Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait,/ breathe. I didn't mean to make that sound, like, a right-or-wrong question. This isn't a Scantron. Maybe it's...open-ended.

RIDHI

Okay. Um. Honesty. Would be nice.
And unconditional support, and Joy, and, well, *chemistry* sounds cliché.

SIENNA

Everything's cliché. Saying "everything's cliché" is /cliche./

RIDHI

/Cliche./ Touche.
But "passion" doesn't sound right, either. That's a buzzword thrown around by adults and couples' counselors, clawing to rekindle something long gone.
What I mean is—you know those tingles?

SIENNA

That make you swallow a giggle and forget how to...
(Actually choking on breath/spit)
Oxygen?

RIDHI

It's like, "Who are you smiling at, inside your cell phone?"
"I'm playing Solitaire, *Amma*. I just won Solitaire."
Except, it would be prompted by a real text.

SIENNA

Or a highly specific meme.

RIDHI

Exactly. I just—I feel exhausted. All the time. I don't want to fuck around with attractive strangers who'd rather pine after fantasies than see a therapist. I want to assemble a vegan cheese board and nap with someone kind. That probably sounds pretty queer.

SIENNA

No, no, it sounds *ridiculously* queer. But I get it. Really. I do.

With that, the DANCERS prance in, trailing their red fabric. They dance and twirl each other,

romantically, like Kama Sutra embodiments of Love, reflecting the girls' wandering imaginations.

Meanwhile, during this choreo, possibly behind a clothing rack, SIENNA helps RIDHI slip into a satin *dhoti*, a robe typically worn by men.

The Dance number concludes, and RIDHI and SIENNA step out, gazing into a mirror.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

How do you feel?

RIDHI

Like myself. Seen, or whatever. Um. Are you hungry?

SIENNA

Almost always! I'm super skilled at fighting it, though.

RIDHI

Why?

SIENNA

The usual reasons? Social institutions...?

RIDHI

Let's add *that* to our list of identity-forming discussion points. There's a cozy dosa spot around the corner?

SIENNA

Those comically enormous crepe burritos from down South?!

RIDHI

Size of a toddler, if you're lucky.

SIENNA

I love babies!

RIDHI

I like—dogs.

SIENNA

Same!

RIDHI

And babies in theory.

SIENNA

Shweet! Um. Could I just say something real quick?

I've...always found it easier to play a flat bitch than a well-rounded woman, but...

RIDHI

You don't have to play dumb around me.

And I hope I don't need to show off as smart.

I mean, I can be smart. I *am* smart. But I don't have to rub it in.

SIENNA

Yeah, no, you're a person. We're people.

RIDHI

Full disclosure, I was actually supposed to meet another person here.

But fuck them, right?!?

SIENNA

(Frenzied-awkward)

Uh, yeah! You should absolutely fuck them! When the time is right!

RIDHI

Um.

SIENNA

Um.

Cough. Uncomfortable moment, as the realization dawns on RIDHI. Meanwhile, SIENNA's dummy soul plummets through the floor, as she figures...there's no way outta this.

RIDHI

Wait. There's no way. You're not...Are you Mrs. Jensen?

SIENNA

(Immediately adopting a “monthly” persona)

Hiya...Sport. Champ. Kiddo. Buddy Boy?

RIDHI

(Not believing it)

You’re a...mother?

SIENNA

I have...been with child. Yes.

All those silly questions I was rambling? Were on my /son’s behalf—/

RIDHI

/Of course they were!/ Who would actually care about /what I have to say?!/

SIENNA

/Let me go snatch my adult lady purse! Lunch is on me!/
/Yup, you go—you do that!/
The DANCERS swirl about the stage, flourishing their Red Thread, as SIENNA crosses back to the dressing room. BOTH turn inward, anguished:

RIDHI

/Yup, you go—you do that!/
The DANCERS swirl about the stage, flourishing their Red Thread, as SIENNA crosses back to the dressing room. BOTH turn inward, anguished:

The DANCERS swirl about the stage, flourishing their Red Thread, as SIENNA crosses back to the dressing room. BOTH turn inward, anguished:

RIDHI

Madarchod.

SIENNA

Motherfucker.

Lights out. The DANCERS might help smooth the transition, as Pia’s House temporarily becomes:

Scene 5: D.U. Hostel (James’ Dorm) – Midday

Pia’s pillows and coffee table are swapped out for a dorm-style comforter, plain pillow, and waste basket. The fold-out couch has become a bed.

Sprawled upon it, JAMES is using his laptop and Beats to record a new SoundCloud track.

He beatboxes. He raps. He spits fire. He... begins choking up, trying to push through, until...

He collapses into sobs, crying.

From outside: *knock, knock, knock.*

JENSEN

(From outside, entertaining himself)

Knockity knock! Girl Scout cookies for sale! Are you a “Caramel deLite” or a “Samoa” stan? Tag yourself. Tag-*along* yourself—get it? Tagalong cookies?

I, for future reference, am a Thin Mint. Thin and worth a Mint.

JENSEN cracks himself up. JAMES cracks the door, deadpan.

JAMES

Are you done.

JENSEN struts into James’s pad, wincing in distaste. It’s a wreck, tornadoed with emotion.

JENSEN (cont’d.)

Being dumped is no excuse for living like a Transformer that turns into a Dumpster. Someone call Queer Eye...

JAMES

Shouldn’t you be in class?

JENSEN

I’m busy learning *outside* the classroom, Dad. Beyond the borders of buildings and books. I’m performing Grassroots Work, as a matter of fact. And I’m allergic to grass. And work. So [that says something].

JAMES

Do you even know what NGO stands for?

JENSEN

I know what *I* stand for.

JAMES

What's the name of the org? They've probably mentioned it in one of my MBA seminars.

JENSEN

Well, they—we—make textiles.

High fashion, so you likely aren't familiar. It's called:

(Proudly, with again a gesture for each word)

Fabricating Rich Educational Enterprise, Loving Abandoned Baby Orphans Residence.

JAMES

Dude. That's a child labor factory.

The acronym literally spells FREE LABOR.

JENSEN

No. No...No. See. It's like—Free People? But...Not-Indentured Children.

JAMES

You need to burn that operation to the ground.

JENSEN

You know my pyro era was more freshman year.

JAMES

Never too late to regress, man.

JENSEN

(Just saying what James wants to hear)

Uh, yeah, if you insist. Who knows. Maybe I will.

JAMES

Alright, hell yeah! Yeet.

JENSEN

(Repulsed)

...Yeet? Okay, no. Get up.

JENSEN tugs a reluctant JAMES up off the mattress, initiating a secret handshake. It'll look familiar to the audience, because it's:

JENSEN

Parent Trap. Always works.
So you've been crying.

JAMES

Tears are the body's way of expressing itself, bro, when your mouth can't find the words.
It's speaking from the eyes, from the soul, into those external windows.

JENSEN

Into what? These blurry scraps of Tumblr poetry?
Which aren't half bad, but when thrown in the trash, just looks like your eyeliner's been
running. Pull these out, Brendan Urie, and pull yourself together.

JAMES

For who? What's the point? No one'll ever love me enough to listen.

JENSEN

Why, au contraire...

JAMES

What did you do?

JENSEN

We—your Mother Sienna and I—went on Shaadi.
And arranged you with a little shawty.

JAMES

What? The fuck?! Jesus Christ, you fucking psychopath, that's probably illegal!

JENSEN

We just want you to be happy.

JAMES

I don't want to be happy!

JENSEN

Everyone deserves help.

JAMES

Not from you! No one deserves your mayhem and menace! You assume you know what

everyone wants. But you're oblivious to what anyone needs. It's a concept you'll never understand, you—fucking joyful fairy, patron saint of privilege.

JENSEN

Fair. No, I cannot comprehend.
But I do know, if life seems truly hopeless, there's the window.
Jump, bitch.

JAMES

After you, asshole.

JENSEN

Been there, tried that. Remains my only failure to date.
Who are you writing your poems for, anyway?
They're to better understand yourself, right?
So you can be understood by everyone else?

JAMES

She understood me, before shattering my heart of glass.
That *slut*. Like, she *was* kind of a slut, right?

JENSEN

Total whore.

JAMES

And Sienna understands me.

JENSEN

But has she ever indicated she likes you?
...Remember earlier, when we were all hungover at breakfast?

JAMES

You were hungover at breakfast? My guy. You need help.
Like, serious psychiatric help.

JENSEN

(“Whatever,” moving on, compulsively cleaning)

She's working through her own process.
Bitch is due for a long look in the Water Closet mirror.
To examine and fix herself, and her flyaways.

JAMES

Indians don't actually call it the Water Closet, apparently.

JENSEN

No kidding.

JAMES

Just facts.

JENSEN

Anywho. I know it's hard to bounce back, so bombard me with your but-but-butts, /but—/

JAMES

But...does she, though? Have a nice butt?

JENSEN

Uh...huh?

JAMES

Cute feet?

JENSEN

Um, sure...

JAMES

Like, she's hot I mean?

JENSEN

(Bro-ing it up)

Uh...doi, bro-ster. Major GILF: Girl I'd Like to Fuck. If I liked to fuck girls. And yah, this is a humongous heterosexual ask—even thicker than this snack's ass—but we organized a chill hang tonight at Hauz Khas...?

JAMES

(After brief consideration)

Fine. I'll go out on a limb.

JENSEN

Eeeeeee! He said yes!

JAMES

I'll even pay for the first date, and never show up late, or ask about her weight, or complain about the girly trash pop music we all hate.

JENSEN

Well, that's a sexist overgeneralization, but impressive rhyme scheme—/

JAMES

Fuck, I'm about to meet my Soulmate!

JENSEN

God, you're such a Ross. And you assume Sienna's a Rachel, when she's a total Phebes.

JAMES

Who's Phoebe end up with again?

JENSEN

Paul Rudd, that blind date. Don't act like you don't know.

JAMES

"How you doin'?"

JAMES taps his phone, cuing canned sitcom laughter. It's an app.

JENSEN

...Ew.

But as for *your* character arc, tonight is *The Blind Date*.

"The One That Reveals to Everyone What They Want and Need."

(Backtracking, speaking to literally no one)

Wait, sorry, I issue a formal apology for abusing the "blind" in blind date.

JAMES

Um. Do you—think these invisible blind people...can hear you?

JENSEN

They're blind, not deaf.

JAMES

Just text me this girl's number so we can link up.

JENSEN

No need. As your trusty steed, I'll be beside you to point her out.

JAMES

Yeah, except you won't. No fucking way. That's where I draw the line.

I'm being, like, hella vulnerable here. I'm trusting you. But if you can't relinquish the slightest bit of control over me, your puppeteered date is "hashtag canceled."

Yup, look at me! Speaking your language!

Jens, I *do* want to go out, and wash away my feelings with Pabst Blue Ribbons, and take home a sculpted chick with toned feet like a motherfucking American.

But I can't have you being downright offensive in public, in front of some innocent unsuspecting Indian girl!

Or worse—toting your self-righteous liberal bullshit.

It's embarrassing. Or as you'd put it, "*cringe*."

You have to understand that, right? You know yourself.

JAMES guides JENSEN towards the door.

JENSEN

Oh. Yeah, no, totally.

I've also got, like, my whole funding-the-orphans-thing to attend to, so—/

JAMES

For real though. Swear to me you won't show up, with one of your stupid trademark schemes, like incognito as a janitor or some shit.

JENSEN

I promise. No janitor costumes.

(Sincerely, while passing the wastebasket)

As long as *you* don't let a janitor chuck your trash-can poetry.

And, read a book. And go outside. And text me.

JAMES

Nah, I'll post on my story. *My* story, not yours.

With that, JENSEN exits, feeling a little down and dejected. This leaves JAMES alone, to eventually flip through the Kamala Suraiyya anthology.

Meanwhile, lights up on:

Scene 6: Dosa Restaurant / D.U. Hostel / Streets of Delhi – Early Evening

At a Dosa Restaurant, RIDHI and SIENNA sit—in lotus position, one foot upon the booth, or otherwise askew—with a massive dosa between them, shared from opposite ends, awkward Lady and The Tramp.

RIDHI does not believe Sienna, and SIENNA knows it, but both are uncomfortably maintaining the facade, knowing addressing it will end the “date?” Tables turned, RIDHI is grilling Sienna.

RIDHI

It’s funny. You seem so progressive. For an *Amma*.
Yet you’re arranging me with a husband. Bending to *dharma*.

SIENNA

Conformity to custom, duty, or one’s own character.

RIDHI

Do you spend all your Friday nights alone on Quizlet?

SIENNA

Honestly, kind of obsessed. Underrated social media.

RIDHI

Keeping up with the Youths?

SIENNA

Right. Yes. I love...Facebook. Memories. So what’s your *dharma dealio*?!

RIDHI

(Eyes on the platter between them)

This is a difficult thing to share with a stranger.

SIENNA

Your life story? Your dreams beyond /expectations—/

RIDHI

This dosa. [Is a difficult thing to share with a stranger.]

SIENNA

I was /kidding—/

RIDHI

/I just/ feel like it's easier to overshare.

SIENNA

It definitely is. But so?

RIDHI

You met my mother. She's burdened for both of us, on a crusade for my benefit. She's stiffer than a—dosa shell, and less warm and buttery. Yours?

SIENNA

Oh, my parents had no hopes for me, besides to stay inside my—dosa—my hometown, which I refused. So I always assumed the way past *Dharma* was with *Artha*.

RIDHI

Money and Prosperity.

SIENNA

Boom. But now, it's like—I find myself in restaurants, okay? Fancy boujee ones?

RIDHI

Have heard of those.

SIENNA

They're real. It's nuts. Anyway, I'm sitting with wealthy men in multi-thousand-dollar suits, and someone covers my check, and I feel nothing.

RIDHI

Shit. Adulthood.

SIENNA

Adulthood. Um. As an Emerging Adult, do you have a less mortifying gig/lifestyle?

RIDHI

(Deadpan)

I tutor English to Indian kids whose parents wish they were white.

And to keep their attention and endear their parents, I dress up as Disney princesses. Like Snow... White. Or Pocahontas, which feels worse? Or Jasmine! Whose movie title isn't even her name. But there isn't a single frickin' Indian princess! The closest role model is Tiana, maybe, who's not white, but also, for most of the film, a frog.

SIENNA

How'd that make you feel, growing up?

RIDHI

Like I'd have to earn it. Work for the right to live in a fairytale.

(Bringing it back to the elephant in the room)

Do you let your children be themselves?

Take risks and make their own mistakes?

SIENNA

I want to. But motherhood is painful as fuck.

And then you release what you made out into the world.

And maybe it'll thrive. Or maybe...

RIDHI

Your creation will be run over by a rickshaw.

SIENNA

Or cure cancer.

RIDHI

Or shoot up a kindergarten.

SIENNA

Or grow the first basil plant on Mars.

RIDHI

Or become overlord of GPTchat robots who feed on—Bitcoin.

SIENNA

(Like, "that's not even how that works")

Or learn to love themselves and other human beings.

RIDHI

And therefore lose faith in you.

SIENNA

Are we still talking about motherhood? Or God? Or, like, Daoism...?

RIDHI

Daoism is actually more like...events happen, good and bad, that change the course of our lives. That's /Fate./

SIENNA

/Fate, right./

RIDHI

And then your "Destiny" is how you respond to said Fate.
And it might involve paying karmic debts.

SIENNA

Right. Which actually implies—we're not doomed. We just have centuries of generational screw-ups to undo.

RIDHI

The Universe can only chaotically fuck us up...

SIENNA

Or benevolently help us out...so much.

RIDHI

Right. So when good things happen, for a reason...?

SIENNA

I...do want to be a better person.

RIDHI

I want to be a happier one.

SIENNA

Do you feel deserving of that happiness?

RIDHI

Do you feel capable of that change?

(Beat, it's getting Real)

/I'm going to run to the—/

SIENNA

/Why don't, quiz you, I could?!/

So we can...hang your report card on the fridge.

After a beat, like, "...nice." RIDHI EXITS, either offstage or to a spot designated as the bathroom. Into a mirror, she stares down her reflection, trying to sort out tingles towards...

SIENNA, who, after back-and-forth deliberation, snatches Ridhi's phone from the table and dials a number she knows by heart (or doesn't? she has to check her own contacts?), belonging to...

JENSEN, who ENTERS, power-walking down the street, when his ringtone blares. Yes, he's got a ringtone in 2023. Shania Twain. Icon.

PHONE

"No inhibitions, make no conditions, get a little outta line!

I ain't gonna act politically correct, I only wanna have a good time!

The best thing about being a woman, is the prerogative to have a little fun and..."

Only just noticing passersby disgusted stares,
JENSEN turns red and fumbles to silence it.

PHONE (cont'd.)

"Oh, oh, oh, go totally crazy! Forget I'm a lady!

Men's shirts, short skirts, oh oh oh!

I wanna be free, yeah, to feel the way I feel.

Man! I feel like a woman!"

JENSEN

(To passersby)

It's English. You literally wouldn't understand.

(To phone)

Siri, dear? Turn off. Turn. Off.

PHONE (SIRI)

You request a "Turn Off," Sweet Prince?

I will read your notes document titled Turn-Offs.
 “Sweatiness. Noses that look like mine. Intimacy.”

Finally feeling alone, receiving negative attention *alone*, JENSEN briefly retreats inwards, directing his embarrassment at Siri.

JENSEN

Ew! No! Shut up! I mean—sorry. Sorry I yelled at you. Sorry I’m such a little bitch. I fucking hate my unholy schnoz...

(Picking up, snapping back into character)

If you’re an Indian telemarketer, I’ll have my father collapse your pyramid scheme quicker than you can cry “Cleft Lip.”

SIENNA

Jens. It’s me. Undercover.

JENSEN

Si Si, my little gulab jamun! That’s a dessert, for special occasions like *weddings*, Pia gave me the scoop. They’re these sweet balls of dough, like the sweet dough we’ll be sucking on soon, but soaked in *rose* water. Like rose gold! Talk to me.

He flags down a rickshaw, like hailing a taxi.

SIENNA

Look at me. It’s FaceTime. I’m using a phone with actual data.

JENSEN

Whose? Are you in danger? Blink twice if you’ve been kidnapped.

SIENNA

You aren’t even watching me! You’re swinging me around, making me sick...

Around now, JENSEN climbs into the back of a rickshaw. The vehicle could be represented by three DANCERS with wheels.

Sitting in the carriage, JENSEN bounces and flails, absurdly, jostled about.

JENSEN

I'm racing the storm en route to P's NGO. How's R?
Don't tell M the darling's a dud and P is full of hot air? M stands for me.

SIENNA

I know. Yeah, no, Ridhi is...breathtaking.

JENSEN

That could just be the smog. Does equivalent damage to your lungs as smoking five cigarettes a *day, at least*, for your entire life. Which I've tried and don't recommend. It's why I switched to vaping.

SIENNA

Thank you, Surgeon General Jensen. I actually need to ask you something serious.

The rickshaw swerves, causing JENSEN to almost fall out and drop his phone.

JENSEN

(To the Driver)

Two stars!

(To Sienna)

Go for Jens.

SIENNA

Okay, so, um, how did you know you were...different? Sexually?
No pressure to share. I realize I hate how we label every conversation a "Safe Space," as if that's all it takes, for everyone to feel healed enough to spill.

JENSEN

It's okay. You can call me BP 2010. Because, like oil, I love to spill.

SIENNA

Well, then, you can consider me your dolphin.

JENSEN

Your spirit animal!

Knowing Jensen loves it, SIENNA makes a dolphin sound. Like, a mating call screech. *Eee-ee-eeee.*

Delighted, JENSEN holds his phone out towards the driver, giddy.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

Do you hear that?! THAT'S MY BEST FRIEND!

Anyway. Well, we met far from home, where we had no choice but to drop our guards, be acutely aware of our feelings. They say "when you know, you know?" But I didn't know what being Gay felt like. Just what Love felt like. When I felt it. And...that Awakening just happened to be prompted by a boy.

The rickshaw suddenly halts; the driver is uninterested in carrying this passenger any further.

Covering his phone, shielding Sienna, JENSEN might mime negotiating. But with no other option, he ultimately climbs out.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

(Calling after them)

Wait, I—I don't know where I am!

ONE STAR!

SIENNA

(After a beat)

That was at your Jew camp?

JENSEN

Conversion camp.

SIENNA

Fuck, I did it again.

JENSEN

Yeah, Little-Miss-Toxic-oops-I-did-it-again-Free-Brittney, why are you interrogating?

SIENNA

I'm asking for a friend.

JENSEN

Me or James? We're your only two.

SIENNA

My only real two. I want to make more.

JENSEN

Kudos, kitten, shall I sign you up for Girl Scouts?

SIENNA

Ha. Been there, done that. My mom sent me, back in the day. But jeez, my troop made me shaky, with their friendship bracelets and watermelon LipSmacker. They were so *cool*, I just...oh my god. Have I *always* been—?

JENSEN

My gay best friend, as much as I'm yours? Yahhh, you're Si Si my Gaymate. Mazel for self-admitting it. Right now, however, we've gotta hustle. I'll catch you at Hauz Khas. Don't get hung up critiquing your reflection. It makes you late.

JENSEN hangs up and eyes the stormy skies, considering his situation.

Out over the audience, across the street, unseen men shout slurs, which echo in Jensen's head:

STRANGERS' VOICES

Baylya! Chakka! Meetha!

We don't need to understand these slurs; clearly, they're not compliments. The sounds ring out, anxiety-inducing.

JENSEN stumbles to a wall—an alley, maybe even outside the Dosa Restaurant—leaning, covering his ears, taming a panic attack.

Meanwhile, RIDHI returns, observing Sienna's shook state.

RIDHI

Uh, what's up? They out of cold brew?

SIENNA

Yes. No. I'm a compulsive pathological liar.
 Or, I lie to myself. To reflect what others want. Like a disco ball of delusion.
 Clearly, I've got shit to unpack, and not from a bougie Chanel suitcase but a
 hand-me-down baseball duffel. And I don't want to weigh you down. But I haven't been
 honest, which is all you asked for.

RIDHI

It was. Yeah.
 You should know, I'm carrying around ugly old luggage, stuffed with dirty laundry, too.
 It's not folded. It's bunched up in balls. And it includes a Gryffindor pajama set, in, yes,
 our post-JK landscape.

SIENNA

Such a Leo. Hope I'm not about to ruin my chance to see them. *Accio* PJs.

Outside, thunder rumbles. Heavy skies indicate rain.

RIDHI

It's the monsoon. It's about to burst. Well?

In his dorm, JAMES reads a poem aloud, attributed
 onscreen to Kamala Suraiyya. *Introduction*.

When the others join, they're not reciting poetry;
 they speak to their scene partners or themselves.

Like, this is their "Save Me" by Aimee Mann scene
 from *Magnolia* moment.

The DANCERS ENTER, with ankle bells, to
 perform *kathak*.

Each assigned to a character, they act out the
 individual experiences, telling the stories.

JAMES

(Reading)

"Don't write in English, they said.
 English is not your mother-tongue.
 Why not leave me alone, critics, friends?
 Why not let me speak any language I like?
 The language I speak becomes mine.
 It is half English, half Indian.

Funny perhaps, but honest.
As human as I am human.”

In the Restaurant, RIDHI and SIENNA converse:

SIENNA

“I was a child who asked for love,
not knowing what else to ask for.
The weight of my womb crushed me, and I’ve shrank.”

RIDHI

“I wore a shirt and trousers, cut my hair short,
ignored my ‘womanliness.’
‘Dress in sarees,’ they said, ‘be girl, be wife.’”

Along the streets, JENSEN self-soothes by scrolling
his phone (reading James’ content?).

JENSEN

“‘Belong,’ cried the categorizers.
Fit in. Choose a name, a role.”

At home, in her chair, PIA is watching the news,
again devoted to a recent instance of homophobia or
movement on the debate front.

PIA

“The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and everywhere, in this world.”

JENSEN

“I who drinks lonely drinks at twelve...”
(An aside, joke to self)

In the afternoon.
“I who laughs...”

SIENNA

“Who makes love, then feels shame.”

JAMES

“Who have lost my way, and now begs at strangers doors
to receive love in small change.”

RIDHI

“I have no joys that are not yours.”

PIA

“No aches which are not yours.”

“I am sinner. I am saint.
I am Beloved and Betrayed.
I too call myself I.”

JAMES

PIA gazes in the general direction of...

RIDHI and SIENNA, who stare into each other, searching, as the candles on their table flicker.

JAMES grips the book, considering finally leaving his dorm—either through the door, or the window.

JENSEN clutches his seizing chest.

Until, on cue: *Bzzzzzz!*

Jensen’s, James’, and Ridhi’s phones vibrate with an alert. ⚠ Time to BeReal. ⚠

Genuinely guiltily, SIENNA passes back Ridhi’s phone, which she was hiding behind her back.

SIENNA

It’s...time to BeReal.

SIENNA and RIDHI remain frozen, locked in this stalemate, as...

JENSEN and JAMES hastily wipe the tears from their eyes and smile for selfies, so they “Can See What Their Friends Are Up To!™”

Photo-bombing their respective characters, the DANCERS also pose, throwing up peace signs.

Blackout.

End of Act I.

ACT II**Scene 7: NGO Orphanage School – Evening**

We open on a DANCE number, to set the tone for Act II. It's intense, extreme, bold. Act II is hella quicker, with way shorter and slightly more naturalistic scenes. Shit's getting serious.

Concluding the choreography, the DANCERS become the residents of Pia's NGO.

Spread out across the stage, they leisurely wash, dye, block print, hang, and mend fabrics.

JENSEN, refreshed and revived and Totally Fine, ENTERS with PIA, upon a hilltop (probably a balcony), overlooking the valley cradling her NGO.

The two peer out over the DANCERS and AUDIENCE; when referencing the residents, they gesture to both.

JENSEN

It's horrifying. It hurts. They're hideous.

PIA

Excuse you.

JENSEN

When was the last time they got a break?!

PIA

(A meta reference to Intermission)

30 seconds ago.

If they weren't here, they could be trafficked.

JENSEN

Worse than Midtown during Rush Hour.

PIA

No parent *wants* to detach from their offspring. Surrendering them, they feel, is the only option. To assure their children will survive.

As a laborer or young bride, at least the growing bodies will rest nourished in beds, not toss and turn empty-bellied among stray dogs.

JENSEN

The parents are that desperate...

PIA

Held under the Poverty Line. 1,059 Rupees.

Equal to, in Western dollars, 62 a month.

Over a third of our population lives beneath.

JENSEN

Lives beneath?! That's not living. 62 a month wouldn't even cover my ads-free streaming service subscriptions. 62 is less than I pay at Trader Joe's a *week*, for only one, when I'm not restocking big-ticket items like sunflower butter and trade-free coffee.

PIA

You're fortunate.

JENSEN

(Big Realization)

I am.

PIA

Gifted with the power of arithmetic.

JENSEN

Ha. As if. My brothers were Gifted, according to the school system. I only learned enough to get by with the calculator on my phone, operated by Siri, scolded by Alexa.

PIA

It is a pillar of mine, teaching Math, and English, Media and Financial Literacy. If they were carried down their stream of birth, they might not even attend school.

JENSEN

School. I used to love leaving for school, because it meant I wasn't home. But I hated being there. Kids are cruel.

PIA

(Gesturing across audience)

Not mine. Not them. For they prioritize Purpose. They cannot afford to bicker, or bully, or bitch. Or soak like sponges in your psychotic entertainment on the TV screen. The will-they-won't-they relationships. "We were on a break!"

JENSEN

P! You're a fan of Friends?

PIA

"Could I be a *bigger* fan?!"

JENSEN

That's hilarious! Because you're a major Monica. I'm a Rachel. Obv.

Remembering, trying it out for himself, JENSEN takes out his phone and taps it, cueing canned laughter, which Pia finds amusing.

PIA

What's that?

JENSEN

It's an app.

Beat. JENSEN studies the scene below, deep in thought sobered, connecting dots. Onwards, PIA meets him on honest ground, one Aries to another.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

How do you find them?

PIA

Along the streets. I approach unhoused women and boys. And inquire if they like fashion.

JENSEN

Natural how-do-you-do.

PIA

If they're interested, I propose they live here, and learn to sew. With no forced work or quotas. They can leave their grief inside seams, and onto sketch pads pencil their dreams.

JENSEN

The boys are young, some of them.

PIA

The women, who fled undesired marriages, take them under wing, like sons. The young boys in particular demonstrate an innate knack for fine design.

JENSEN

Well, yeah. Duh. Because...
They're queer, so.

PIA

No. No, they're not. This is not that.

Finally, PIA's stance on the subject is revealed.
Fearful, she vehemently shuts this down.

JENSEN

Wait, what? It's a selling point—/

PIA

They are not for sale.

JENSEN

No, I mean—I know that. I never presumed they were.
I just feel like—my generation is warned to be sus, of everyone's motives.
But I keep on hoping for the best.
Not that *this* is the best. This is—really fucking tragic.
But between my trust fund and access to social entrepreneurship demographics, I can *actually* help. Like, Williamsburg hipsters would slurp up these lewks with their breakfast iced coffee. And we could gift your artists *everything*.
Gel pens. And AirPods. And tampons and a ball pit. And bookclub hardbacks on queer identity and women's rights, and corporate sponsorships, and TOILETS!

PIA

Lower your voice, you simple-minded fool.
We don't want your fucking toilets. Who's ever dreamt of a shiny American bowl of shit?

I wanted your money. I don't want your agenda.

JENSEN

Agenda? This isn't—/an agenda...?/

PIA

Go Home, dear. You don't belong here.

Nothing else to say, JENSEN backs off. Lights.

Scene 8: Dosa Restaurant / Around New Delhi – Continuous

Still at their table, RIDHI and SIENNA stand, tense.

RIDHI

Let's get this straight.

You lied, and utilized me as a pawn, to help your friend, in a way he didn't ask for, and legitimately believed you were passing for a middle-aged Indian mother with your high-school-play-level stage makeup, because...why? Indians are dumb?

SIENNA

No! No. *I'm* dumb. This was all dumb.

RIDHI

It was a shitty stab at saviorism, that's for sure. You're a textbook example of:

(Re: a flashcard)

“Extending power and dominion to control other people?”

SIENNA

Imperialism. I feel mortified, and ashamed—/

RIDHI

I'm not obligated to forgive you.

SIENNA

I know. I've played the Manic Pixie Dream Girl to so many—*Sirs*, who expected me to surface their best and cherish the opportunity.

RIDHI

Yeah? Try not being white.

Or, I guess you did, didn't you? You took that out for a spin.
 And you didn't enjoy it much, did you?
 I only met you in the first place because my mom said you're rich.

SIENNA

Well, spoiler, that was an assumption.

RIDHI

You said it yourself! You wine-and-dine with tall powerful businessmen who buy you
 vegan steaks!!

SIENNA

As an escort! Because I'm desperate and pathetic!
 That's how I afforded this whole...I don't even like them.

RIDHI

To my face, direct quote, you said: "I have been with child."

SIENNA

I have been. I drove across state lines for an abortion. We've all got shit—/

RIDHI

Why should I believe that?
 We...we don't even know each other.

SIENNA

Yeah, no, we don't, so, I'm just going to clean up this mess I made, get out of your life,
 and go put work into bettering mine.

SIENNA scoops up the splayed-out flashcards and
 hands the stack to RIDHI.

RIDHI

I'm so fucking mad—/

SIENNA

I'm so fucking sorry—/

Beat. Neither says anything. Solemn, RIDHI nods
 and EXITS. SIENNA stands, following her outside.

There, alone, SIENNA cries.

JENSEN ENTERS, outside the city, en route back from Pia's NGO. Projected or merely implied, he's observing real poverty. Finally, he gives into his pent-up emotions, and weeps.

Meanwhile, JAMES ENTERS, in a temple, also indicated by projection.

The DANCERS ENTER, filing around him, embodying the temple itself, or statues.

To sweeping music like *O Re Piya*, they "catch" and "deliver" an idea to him, as Muses.

Eyes wide, JAMES welcomes the spirituality, breaks out his journal, and writes.

Meanwhile, SIENNA and JENSEN scrub off their makeup with baby wipes.

JAMES

(An abridged Hindu prayer)

"The more water, the greater tranquility of body and mind.
Anguish of the heart unites, separates, and bestows true greatness.
Without, the ego cannot be washed away.
And Love cannot be reborn."

The Americans inhale. Exhale. A Life-Changing Experience *is* what they came for. At long last, the monsoon bursts, and water falls upon all.

Scene 9: Pia & Ridhi's Household – Dusk

PIA sits in the same spot as she did at the top, Scene 2. This time, she rests her head in her hands, perturbed by anxiety, fixated on her phone. When RIDHI ENTERS, curt and damp, PIA stands.

PIA

Where have you been? *Mainne kol kiya*. I called /many times./

RIDHI

My phone died.

PIA

I thought you died.

RIDHI

Some random FaceTime zapped the battery. Figure I was hacked, because what idiot insists on FaceTiming when calls work just fine? Maybe the piece of junk's finally broken.

PIA

I was broken, Ridhi. I was worried sick.

RIDHI

You never worry about me like this.

PIA

And you never...look like this.

RIDHI

What a kind compliment. Fortunately for you, I'm here to change.

RIDHI passes in-and-out of the room, switching from the *dhoti* back into jeans and a t-shirt.

PIA

Why change? You don't /need to change./

RIDHI

/I like/ being comfortable.

PIA

For studying? I suppose that's... /Good./

RIDHI

For going out. To Hauz Khas.

PIA

Oh. No. Ridhi? I too have undergone a change. Of mind.

You should stay home tonight. To prepare for your exams.
You're welcome.

RIDHI

Wait, what?

PIA

You were right. Education is of utmost importance.
These marks will determine your placement, in your career, and life—/

RIDHI

(Offended, upset)

Amma! For once, I'd actually gotten excited!

PIA

School excites you, remember? I won't steal that from you. You should follow your heart, but not dishonor your head. Come. Sit. I'll prepare you tea.

RIDHI

I don't want tea.

PIA

Milk or honey?

RIDHI

I said I don't want tea!
I mean I do when I get back, of course, with honey please, but—/

PIA

(Going to pour it)

You like milk. Tea with milk.

RIDHI

Well, maybe tonight, I want coffee with sugar!

PIA

This late? To help you study?

RIDHI

Or maybe *always*, for no reason at all! Maybe I simply like coffee *and* tea. *Both*. All

hours of the day! Or maybe, even if it's terrifying, I want...*only coffee*...for the rest of my nights and mornings, even after a lifetime of Society insisting I prefer tea. Because maybe, earlier today, I flirted with a...*traditional turmeric chai*. Just to see. But, as always, felt nothing. Then suddenly, as if it were delivered from the sky, by a—drone, I got to taste a...*flat white frappe*. Which, okay no, doesn't necessarily sound appealing. But for me, it was an epiphany. And now, I'm frickin' hooked. Does that make sense?

PIA

...It does not.

RIDHI

Fine. I need a better innuendo.
Just—ask me what I want.
Instead of telling me what you *think* I want.

PIA

I want what's best for you.

RIDHI

Oh, don't be such a cliché. Like, why do we feel compelled to play these—simplified versions of ourselves? To impress, or put at ease, an earth full of idiots?!

(Off Pia's look, explaining)

A cliché is like a stereotype. Like dharma.

PIA

(After a beat, with difficulty)

Ridhi? While we are addressing this...matter.
My children, at the NGO.
Do you believe they—as you say—“drink coffee and tea?”
Or—*only* coffee, if that represents...?

RIDHI

Yes. I've been implying that for years, and not subtly.
Your children are sipping what Society says we shouldn't drink.
Which, stereotypically speaking, explains their self-expression skills and fashion sense.
And *that's* what we call a cliché.

(Almost a question, confirming approval)

I'll be back?

PIA

I'm scared to let you live a life considered shameful.
It can be lonely, Ridhi, and painful.

RIDHI

I know, *Amma*.

PIA

Okay, Ridhi.
I will be here.
With tea *and* coffee.
Always.

The two embrace, in a long, accepting hug. RIDHI then EXITS, out the front door, just as...

JENSEN arrives at the back, rapping on the glass. Though still cold towards him, PIA lets him in.

PIA (cont'd.)

Mr. Jensen? You are a back door man.

JENSEN

Well, that's an accurate preface to this conversation.

With a dramatic sigh, from behind his back, JENSEN produces posters, like in *Love, Actually*.

To soundtrack the moment, he presses play on his phone: *All Too Well (Taylor's 10 Minute Version)*.

The signs read:

LET ME SAY. WITHOUT HOPE OR AN AGENDA.
BECAUSE IT'S MONSOON SEASON—
(AND DURING MONSOON SEASON, YOU OUTPOUR THE TRUTH.)
PIA, I LIED TO YOU :(
SIENNA? NOT MY WIFE.
AND I'M SO NOT SLAY RN.

PIA

And I'm not an American idiot.

One more sign, before JENSEN double-takes:

TO ME, YOU ARE PERF.

JENSEN

Wait—you know?!

PIA

(An impression of Jensen)

“Obviously.”

I expected you to break. But, although you revealed cracks, you maintained your foolish facade. You are Greed and Manipulation incarnate. Not fit for family or a friend. But you hold all the...cards...of a ruthless business partner.

JENSEN

Damn. I've received that exact assessment from numerous BuzzFeed quizzes, but coming from you, it kinda stings.

Pia, you're housing children whose parents foresaw their sexualities and kicked them out.

You don't force help; you *ask* if they like—fashion?!

And the women you're giving second chances, and agency.

PIA

I know all that. I've always known.

But none of this is...Legally, I cannot say. Personally, I don't know how.

Your pronouns, and orientations of sexuality...

JENSEN

It's just—language.

PIA

Language.

JENSEN

But, even if we keep it hush-hush here, American consumers will catch on and support.

PIA

Thank you for speaking these words.

JENSEN

Speaking accomplishes nothing. You're *doing*. You're freeing lives to pursue their destinies. I'm continually interfering with them, like a bored deity.

The DANCERS trickle in, drawn by PIA and the conversation, rippling the Red Thread. After a beat, as PIA pours tea:

PIA

Jensen? Do you know the Red Thread of Fate?

JENSEN shakes his head no.

PIA

It's a cord. Invisible to mortal eyes. That ties us up, tangles, but never breaks. It pulls together souls destined to meet.

JENSEN

Like Kabbalah.

PIA

Bless you?

JENSEN

No use. I'm Jewish.

Kabbalah's our word for a similar thread, which you rope around your left wrist—our feminine receiving side—to ward off The Evil Eye.

(After a thoughtful beat)

God. I need to stop being so destructive.

Pia. I have an impending marriage to go break up.

With that, from offstage, stashed outside the doorway, JENSEN retrieves a ginormous check, offering "MY ENTIRE TRUST FUND" to "PIA [LAST NAME?]" at "FREE LABOR"

JENSEN (cont'd.)

Cash it for—whatever you see fit.

And if you ever want to talk again, you know who to call.

PIA

(After a pause, accepting the check)

Anyone but Late for Happy Hour.

Thank you. Son.

JENSEN

Dhanyavaad [thank you]. Mom.

Lights down.

Scene 10: Hauz Khas Village – Night

Electric dance club lights flash and music pulses.

At a Hauz Khas bar, in the outskirts hub famous for Western-style clubs and pubs, the DANCERS enjoy a drunken good time, tossing back shots.

We included a dance number here, to a Hindi remix of *Unholy* by Kim Petras and Sam Smith, lol. Crowd pleaser.

SIENNA ENTERS, searching for cell reception on her shitty phone, finally making a phone call:

SIENNA

Mom? Dad? Could you turn down the TV, please?

No, I'm not watching "the big game." I'm in India, remember? In Asia?

No malaria mosquitoes. No ISIS terrorists.

No, I'd rather not wait until half-time—I'll make this quick.

Someday? I might want to marry...not a boy.

From the corner, the bar area, for an unrelated reason, the DANCERS hoorah! Like, more shots?!
Woooooo!

Cheering is heard on the other side of Sienna's phone, too. SIENNA is euphoric.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

Wow, jeez, I wasn't expecting that. Thank you, um...

Oh. Touchdown? Cool.

Um, I said I'M GAY.

Now, the DANCERS boooooooooo!

SIENNA (cont'd.)

...Yeah, no, I won't call again. Sorry to bother...

JENSEN ENTERS, flaunting a trash bag as a rain poncho and lurking, eyes out for James.

JENSEN

Hihi, I got held up modeling for the white stans.

The locals are loco to prove they met a bonafide white person, as if we're celebrities.

SIENNA

Or notorieties.

JENSEN

They asked if I know Jennifer Aniston or Obama, isn't that endearing?! The only folk who still care about those oughts-era names live under literal rocks. Or straw huts.

SIENNA

Okay but did that actually happen, or were you suffering a streetside panic attack because we're drowning in self-inflicted chaos while most people have real problems?

JENSEN

We are pretty fucking privileged.

SIENNA

No "*doi*," dipshit.

JENSEN

Let's cut to the chase. James doesn't want me here.

SIENNA

So, naturally, you're here!

JENSEN

To tell you you're right and we have to come clean.

SIENNA

That Staten Island Ferry's already sailed. I told Ridhi. Where's our boy?

JENSEN

(Surprised by Sienna's gall, but continuing on)

Feeling queasy. So he's at the bar, shooting more tequila. Where's your girl?

SIENNA

(A bit too defensively)

Ridhi's not my girl.

Indeed, at the bar, JAMES is shooting more tequila,
when PIA sidles up, incognito as a janitor.

JAMES

(Tipsy, giving a onceover)

'Sup. You *are* hot.

PIA

You must be Jignesh.

JAMES

Who?

Are you Ridhi?

PIA

I am her mother.

JAMES

(Unfazed)

Sick. I'm a writer. You're also a janitor?

PIA

Presently, a spy.

(After a beat, investigating)

What do you write about, my dear?

JAMES

Oh, just, *Love*. How much it can fucking suck.
But you wouldn't understand. Indian songs and poems are all about...water.

PIA

For the same reason Americans' are about Love.
We write about what is scarce. What we're desperate for.

JAMES

Like, literally thirsty for?

PIA

Indeed. But, much like water, has Love not existed inside of you—?

JAMES

All along...? Well. Mindfuck.

Meanwhile, continuing conversation:

SIENNA

Ridhi's no one's girl. And she's not coming. Because I destroyed something rare.
So, honestly, it's fair, totally fair, even if—inside her eyes—I could see reflected our
unborn children at nature camp, unboxing our care packages at sunrise—/

JENSEN

Okay, hold that—repulsively lesbian thought. Fuck.

JAMES

Um, Mrs. Ridhi? Hold that hella deep thought.

Spotting JAMES turning around, to come back from
the bar, with no other potential hiding spot...

JENSEN dives into a nearby trash can.

SIENNA

Jensen!

JAMES

Sienna...

SIENNA

Jignesh...

JAMES

Who the fuck is Jignesh?!

(After a beat)

This Page. Today. Opens a New Chapter. My Future.
My Past was... You, Sienna. And, well, a couple other girls, sure.
Like four named Kate, two Nicoles, and six Emilys, but...
You. For way too long, I was in love with you.

SIENNA

I'm aware.

JAMES

No. You're not aware. You are blissfully unaware.
You claim you're woke, but you're sleepwalking through life.
But, that's on me, too. I liked you, even though I never knew you.
Even though—bruh. *You* don't know you.

SIENNA

You're right. That's why I'm here, I guess.
In India. On Earth.
To figure it out.

(Humbled beat)

I'm sorry I couldn't love you.

JAMES

I'm learning to love someone else I never knew.
With even better hair. *Me*.

(Proud beat)

Kamala Suraiyya is dope. Words are dope.

SIENNA

You're excellent with them.

JAMES

I know. Maybe I'll write this story someday. About you morons.

SIENNA

Okay, that's actually hilarious.

JAMES

All the characters would kind of suck, though.
And think they're the main character.
And there wouldn't be, like, any clear message or takeaway.

SIENNA

I mean, that's pretty realistic.
The theme *could* be, like—self-discovery? Unhealthy attachment to identity?

JAMES

Gay.

SIENNA

Literally.

JAMES

Yo, that reminds me. Has Jensen mentioned his lowest scheme yet? His casual
KickStarter for orphan labor?
He hit me up an hour ago, completely disrespecting my boundaries /but—/

SIENNA

Um, no, what?

Unable to restrain himself, JENSEN pops upwards
from his trash can, to defend Pia's mission.

JENSEN

It's an incredible organization! Just an unfortunate, accidental acronym!

JAMES

Are you fucking kidding.

JENSEN

Usually! As a coping mechanism! Not right now!

(Talking fast)

FREE LABOR—which, yes, I'm suggesting we rebrand—makes space for boys who like
boys, girls whose parents wanted sons, and women who couldn't get divorced. The “child
labor” narrative is a stereotype constructed by Americans—/

JAMES

Can you shut the fuck up for once?! I hope someone comes to take out this trash, because like Ross with Rachel, I need a breeeeaaaak! Janitor!

PIA

(Strolling over)

I'll handle him.

JENSEN

Hi, Pia. Nice disguise.

JAMES

Yo, what.

JENSEN

How'd you beat Ridhi here?

PIA

Sorcery. And I predict she's outside, having an "anxiety attack."

JENSEN

Bet.

JAMES

Aw, fuck, she's one of those girls?

JENSEN

Just Sienna's type.

SIENNA

Ridhi's not coming! Because /I'm an idiot!/
/You're an asshole./

JAMES

(To Jensen)

/You're an asshole./

JENSEN

(To James)

Go write a play about it.

JAMES

Go off...yourself.

JENSEN

Line crossed.

JAMES

You are inside a trash can! There are NO LINES NO CAP.

SIENNA

You guys? Have we all picked the *worst* identities to make our whole personalities?

On cue, RIDHI ENTERS, shaking out the umbrella.

JENSEN leaps from his trash can, pirouetting over.

JENSEN

Ridhi! You're real! And not a catfish or figment of Sienna's imagination!

Call me Dad. Or chosen family.

PIA

And call me...obligated family. Or...*Amma!*

With that, a grand reveal, PIA rips off her fake mustache.

SIENNA and JENSEN share a look like, "well, yeah, obviously," but decide to generously indulge Pia. They fake GASP, which Ridhi finds ridiculous.

RIDHI

Oh, don't encourage that! Stop acting like you can't see through everyone's bullshit!

SIENNA

What are you doing here? I thought you'd given up.

RIDHI

Unfortunately, not yet.

I don't even know what I'm here to say.

I just know I had to come see...

Finally, amidst all the commotion, RIDHI registers and recognizes JAMES.

RIDHI & JAMES

You?

Outlining the love triangle with their Red Thread, the DANCERS strike poses, maybe death drop.

Blackout.

Scene 11: Wedding – New York City – One Year Later

An outdoor park, backdropped by the iconic NYC skyline, is decorated for an Indian wedding ceremony. Flower garlands and string lights hang from a tent called the mandap—which, in this case, is an umbrella, on one post instead of four.

Alone, PIA gazes out across the audience until SIENNA ENTERS wearing a red saree, this time correctly, with less makeup and anxiety.

PIA

Our guests are arriving! Dressed to the nines.

(Unimpressed aside)

Out of 100. But they're only American.

They're growing restless for the grand finale, but we cannot begin the ceremony without your James! Where is your James?!

SIENNA

Breathe. We'll find him. Look, he left a trail for us to follow!

PIA

I thought these were American streamers.

SIENNA

It's toilet paper. Turns out, he wasn't dealing with Delhi Belly abroad. He just had IBS the whole time.

PIA

Isn't that a Jewish condition?

SIENNA

I guess we're all transcending our stereotypes.
Is Ridhi still getting ready?

PIA

My Ridhi was born ready.

SIENNA

We're right on schedule, then.
Pia? If we were following *all* traditional customs, not just most, isn't this when the groom would be arriving on horseback?

PIA

Indeed. Fortunately, we saved that cost and hassle.

On cue, JENSEN ENTERS, upon a horse (even if it's just a plush hobby horse), dressed in his rendition of a Hindu Rabbi.

PIA (cont'd.)

You are not the groom-to-be.

JENSEN

But am I not as groomed as can be?
I know this is extra, but it was too tempting.
He's one of my family's. They won't even notice he's gone.
Si Si and P—*chamak* [sparkle]! You're both glowing.

PIA

It's the oily artificial American food.

JENSEN

You're not wrong.

(To the horse)

Woah, Nelly! Deposit your Prince!

(Jumping off)

I can endure a few days here, but then I look forward to heading home to Delhi.

SIENNA

What'll you do with the horse?

JENSEN purses his lips. He hadn't considered that.

JAMES ENTERS up the theater aisle, cleaned up nicely. His presence quiets Jensen.

SIENNA

Jimmy! You don't look a bit like you were just upchucking apps.

JAMES

I'm gonna pass out.

PIA

Merely restrain from locking those knobby knees, and you might not.

JAMES

Might not?

PIA

And my mandap will shield the sun.

JAMES

Yeah, *that's* the mandap? Isn't it supposed to have four pillars? One for each parent?

PIA

Ridhi has solely me. But I can uphold the house and raise the roof.

As PIA fixes Sienna's flyaways, JAMES finally acknowledges JENSEN, polite and reserved.

JAMES

Hey, Jensen.

JENSEN

Hi, James. It's nice to see you.

JAMES

It's...not the worst thing in the world to see you.

JENSEN

You look—muscular. And at peace.

JAMES

Day-to-day, I'm not bad.
Right now, though, I was about to go grab another champagne lasse.
You want some booze?

JENSEN

Oh. Um. I'm sober now, actually.
And on Zoloft.
And Keto.
Just kidding, that would be, like—/

JAMES

My guy, don't be ridiculous.
You almost gave me a heart attack.
You know, because of /all the red meat./

JENSEN

/Because of the red meat./

JAMES

Right.

Tentative, they share a chuckle. Not yet on good terms, but getting there. "They were on a break!"

Hair slicked into place, SIENNA goes to the duo.

SIENNA

Be honest, do I look washed out?
I've given up spray tans, so I face a lifetime of fading from here.

JENSEN

You're only shining brighter, babe.
Why don't you take five? Grab a mango from the artisan fruit bar.
If you spot any KeyFoods stickers, peel 'em off and eat the evidence.

SIENNA salutes and EXITS. PIA regards JAMES.

PIA

James! Congratulations on recently “going viral.”
I’ve heard you’re now an...Instagram Poet–FitTok Gym Rat–Short Form Substack
Storyteller–Cross-Cultural Comedian–General Artistic Persona?
That’s...five hyphens? Says my assistant, Jensen.

JAMES

Jens! *Assistant* Jens! Are you jealous?

JENSEN

You two have tons to rant about. Like sunshine and romance.
Or you could trauma-bond over Friends.

PIA & JAMES

I hate Friends.

JENSEN

I’ll leave you perpetual pessimists to it.

JENSEN heads upstage, rehearsing with notecards.
Is JAMES going to flirt with PIA? Probably.

JAMES

So how lonely was your rickshaw ride here? The traffic?

PIA

I’d rather complain about work, if that appeals to you.

JAMES

Fair trade.

PIA

Mine *is* fair trade, indeed. In fact, we have rebranded.
We are now FREE PPL. People is spelled P-P-L.

JAMES

Like a knockoff Free People?

PIA

If by knockoff, you mean affordable. It stands for:

(With a gesture for every word, adopted from Jensen)

“Fashioning Radical Empathy and Equality with Personal Purpose. Literally.”

So it goes, you Gen Zs and Millennials are quite taken by societal rejects.

You rejoice the right to happiness and success, no matter one’s identity.

JAMES

So this event was a power move.

PIA

My brand ambassadors are proud to be of service.

JENSEN

Bitches! I just got a text from Ridhster: “the fortune is ready to be shared!”

Fortune equals Ridhi, meaning—it’s go-time, people!

JAMES EXITS, back up the aisle. PIA strides to the single-post mandap and hoists it overhead like a beach umbrella. JENSEN sweeps about the stage, speaking to the audience/wedding guests, eventually settling beneath Pia’s canopy.

The DANCERS ENTER, lining the aisle with their red fabric, a Tunnel of Love.

JENSEN (cont’d.)

We open with a Land Acknowledgment.

We are currently standing upon sacred Indian land.

Indian, like—India! Like, we’re imagining we’re in India! Not, Indian like...

Restart. Today, we weave together two parallel threads.

Into a fabric as beautiful and durable as FREE PPL’s wedding collection.

Traditionally, the bride would be escorted by her brother. But because her family cut ties...we’re stringing along...this guy.

Down the aisle step JAMES and SIENNA, adorned with flowers and her veil from the market.

JENSEN (cont’d.)

Now, I know what you’re thinking—could this kid move any further into the Friend Zone?! But hey. In this potentially barren universe, with so few suns not yet burnt out, and planets strong enough to harbor insecurity, vulnerability, and love...

There floats this ball. Of Earth, Wind, and Fire.

PIA

And Water.

JENSEN

And Water.

And upon it, with all the Safe Spaces we've polluted into Toxic Air Zones or roped off into literal War Zones...is the Friend Zone the worst place to be?

JAMES takes his place beside Jensen, shoulder to shoulder, as joint officiants.

JAMES

(To Jensen)

You're absurd.

(Now to audience, explaining)

First, as the stand-in for Sienna's family, I shower her with rice. To represent our years of nourishing together. If not for the late-night dining hall runs and hungover brunches, we might not emotionally or physically be here today.

(To Sienna)

Brace yourself, loser. Contrary to popular belief, carbs are not the devil. In fact, with time, they've kind of grown on me.

SIENNA

Same. Purpose helps.

JAMES

Jens? The rice?

JAMES extends his hand. JENSEN whips out an opened packet of steaming, freshly microwaved...

JAMES (cont'd.)

This is quinoa.

JENSEN

(To audience/camera, beaming Orbit smile)

No cap! Today's absolutely *snatched* wedding is sponsored in part by: Natural Roots All-White Quinoa Medley! Pardon the, um, All-White part...

JAMES

Dude. You had one job.

SIENNA

It's fine, Jimmy. Just sprinkle it over my head, like a flurry of special little snowflakes.

JAMES

(Plopping the clumpy grains over her head)

Close all your eyes, including your third.

SIENNA

Ow, damn it, some got in my /cornea—/

JAMES

I fucking just told you to—/

JENSEN

Language, ladies!

PIA

If you wish to swear, do so in Hindi.

SIENNA

Is my mascara running?

JENSEN

Not even power-walking. If it were running, you'd have to go catch it! Ha!

Annnnnnd what else is hard to catch but will change your life?

Not malaria. Not a sports-ball. *Love*. Gliding up the aisle now.

JAMES

And not upon a high horse, like this goon entered.

(That's a jab at Jensen)

Because, well, she's above that.

ENTER RIDHI, dressed in red, the *dhoti*. When the brides see each other...deep complex emotions are surfaced, lol. But they're putting on a show:

SIENNA

“Love is the strongest force the world possesses,
and yet the humblest imaginable.”
That’s, um, Gandhi.

Both snort, sealing their lips, holding in laughter.

JENSEN

(Hushed, to only the couple)

Keep it together, kids! Give the people what they want!
It’s sweet, and to a lot of your followers, genuinely empowering.
Look. Your Insta is *blowing* up, and FREE PPL is *flying* off the shelves right now.

JENSEN tilts his watch or phone towards them.

SIENNA

Whoa, that’s actually nuts.

(To Ridhi, kinda doing a bit)

We can pretend for a cause, right?

RIDHI

(Acting very serious and determined)

Let’s perform for the greater good.

(Aloud again, to Sienna)

Ahem. I’d also like to share a quote by a famous figurehead.
One who reigns over your land, blonde and fierce.

SIENNA

T-Swift! You didn’t!

RIDHI

I refuse to sing, but...“Isn’t it just so pretty to think, all along, there was some invisible string tying me to you?”

SIENNA

“Hell was the Journey...”

RIDHI

The flight from Delhi? That’s just the struggle of living bi-continental, babe.

SIENNA

No, no, that was magical! We got to catch up on Bollywood movies and crush some bussin' snacks, thanks to:

(Out towards the audience, a sponsorship)

American Airlines and Air India.

Everyone salutes, with broad smiles.

SIENNA

I mean, longer than that. "Hell was the journey, but it brought me Heaven."

RIDHI

Right. True. And it'll be a long road onwards.

SIENNA

With ups-and-downs, for sure. But in this moment, we're together.

RIDHI

And that makes me *want* to believe in a future. In.../Forever./

SIENNA

/Forever./ I think it's worth it. Optimism.

You really do?

RIDHI

I do. You too?

SIENNA

I do.

JENSEN

(Choked up)

Okay slay moms

JAMES

(Also touched)

Hell yeah, dudes. Now, last but not least, we tie a knot.

JENSEN

(To audience)

To symbolize—tying the knot.

JAMES

I think they gathered that much.

Here. We take—your sash, and—your veil. And now, you race each other. To the throne.

Whoever wins, according to tradition, holds the upper hand in the relationship.

Kinda old school, but...

JENSEN

(Eye roll)

Just kind of. Ready, babes?

JAMES

Teen, do, ek...Go!

JENSEN

Three, two, one...Go!

The tied-together newlyweds maneuver to a single chair beneath the mandap. But to conclude the recurring gag, neither can “sit straight.” Because they’re, you know, Gay™ lol!

RIDHI

Guess we’re Equal.

SIENNA

Hella Proud in FREE PPL!

Everyone freezes, posed, with radiant smiles.

PIA

And...CUT! Excellent work, fam [family].

We got the drone shots, yes? *Dhanyavaad* [thank you].

Cast and crew? Take tea. Then let’s reset for our next livestream.

JAMES & JENSEN

Thank you, Tea.

JAMES, JENSEN, and PIA bustle off, leaving RIDHI and SIENNA alone.

Okay, so they’re in love, obvi, but far from married. They’re maybe...newly dating, taking things slow? Regardless, riled up from this all sponsored/

money-making “wedding” business, they’re currently feeling nervous giddy Tingles.

RIDHI

Hello, collaborator.

SIENNA

Hey, you.

RIDHI

So, how do you think we did?! It was a little over-the-top, but—/

SIENNA

You were amazing! I mean, like—it felt real to me.

RIDHI

Yeah, it—felt real to me, too.

And it’s working! The people with too much money are giving us some!

SIENNA

We’ve accomplished so much.

RIDHI

While developing a relationship the Desi way!

Commitment first. Security as the endgame.

SIENNA

Jeez. Yeah. What a rush a year ago, huh?

Falling into something major, over the length of, like—a play?

Doing the Work day-to-day is way more meaningful.

RIDHI

Exactly. Thanks for letting me be myself.

SIENNA

Thanks for letting me improve myself.

RIDHI

Damn, these should’ve been our vows.

