

white bitches in delhi

By Ellis Stump & Neeta Thadani

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White Bitches in Delhi was developed in an MFA thesis presentation at Columbia University (2023) and Williamstown Theatre Festival (2024).

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (7)

American college juniors, studying abroad in Delhi:

JAMES (m): Indian-American. From the homeland (Queens). Desi-fuckboi. Simultaneously finance bro-y and hipster, like both a SoundCloud artist and gymrat—the whole American package. Sadboi golden retriever. In India to find Traditional Love.

JENSEN (m or nb): White. From old money conservative New England, thus violently committed to international liberalism. Witty, charming, self-aggrandizing, oblivious twink, who has never held a real job. Underneath his curated aesthetic, lost and lonely. In India to Save the World.

SIENNA* (f): White. From the rural Midwest. Plays up a ditzy persona to be more likeable, but genuinely quirky, socially awkward, and a little slut for knowledge. Does too many bits, and wants to know your birth chart. Queer, but closeted. In India for a Life-Changing Experience. **Note:** The script references Sienna's bad spray tan. She should be noticeably bronzed out, without crossing the line into legit brown face. Think Ariana Grande and Kim Kardashian circa 2015.

Indian family, living in Delhi:

RIDHI (f or nb): South Asian. Senior at Delhi University. Masc-of-center, a “tomboy.” Queer, but not yet aware. Fiercely independent, sarcastic, proud of her intelligence. No time for love. Angry at the world, but maybe a secret softie? Whatever, nevermind. **Note:** The actor playing Ridhi should have a dance background or capability.

PIA (f): South Asian. Ridhi's *Amma* [Mother]. Traditionally motherly and doting, yet playful and silly, in that annoying but endearing fashion. In a financially controlling marriage. Committed to arranging the best possible marriage for her daughter. She also runs an NGO school for orphans that, like herself, are more than meets the eye.

Dancers, who exist in Ridhi's head:

DANCER #1 (nb, femme-presenting): South Asian. Bubbly lovergirl.

DANCER #2 (nb, femme-presenting): South Asian. Career-driven girlboss.

Optional:

DANCE CHORUS: An additional ensemble of performers (2-4, or more if you have access to an eager South Asian dance troupe), integrating traditional Indian dance styles (Bharatanatyam, Kathak, etc.) and contemporary Bollywood fusion, with red fabric representing the Red Thread of Fate.

SETTING

Delhi, India. Early summer. Monsoon season. Present.

Sets include Pia's home, a Delhi University canteen [outdoor cafeteria], dosa restaurant, marketplace, and Hauz Khas bar.

RUN TIME

1 hr 40 min

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 we die, we'll try to keep this play current, but please feel free to freshen up lingo and references. While keeping in mind the audience should span generations, so dialogue should be understandable enough with context clues...pop off.

We're also happy to make these updates for you. Hit us up at theellisstump@gmail.com and neetathadani98@gmail.com.

ACT I

Scene 1: Delhi University Canteen – Sunrise

RIDHI, a driven college senior, sits at a cafeteria table alone, bent over textbooks.

Around the courtyard, the DANCERS, clad in red, are lounging, sipping chai, and low-key chatting about RIDHI, who's obviously within earshot.

DANCER #1

Well, we made it. Our babygirl is graduating tomorrow.

DANCER #2

If she passes. She's an academic weapon, but the bar is high, and LSATs are right around the corner.

DANCER #1

Nerd alert. I thought we were wrapping this up so we could tie the knot already?

DANCER #2

Literally, to who?

DANCER #1

To...the one!

DANCER #2

There's no one! Of all the "ones" *Amma* has brought home...every *ladka*'s been a loser.

DANCER #1

(Suddenly horrified, loudly whispered)

Oh my god, maybe our *ladki* is the loser. Do you think she's inherently unlovable?!

DANCER #2

No, she's just destined to girlboss as a future lawyer.

RIDHI

Can you guys do me a favor, and shut the fuck up?

The DANCERS move towards RIDHI.

DANCER #2

Heyyy queen, how're we feeling?

DANCER #1

Spill the chai.

DANCER #2 massages RIDHI's shoulders, prepping her for the big game, as DANCER #1 scouts the space, determined.

RIDHI

Well, I'm not really loving what you're saying about my future, while I'm clearly trying to focus on the present.

DANCER #1

Exactly! Today is our last chance to meet someone on campus and lock down a love marriage, so we don't have to settle for an arranged one! He'll stride in, straight out of a Bollywood movie...

RIDHI

No thanks. I don't need a musical declaration of love set in the exotic Swiss Alps. Bollywood films are an impractical delusion used to draw unhappy married couples into theaters.

DANCER #2

Period.

DANCER #1

Come on, *yaar*! You can't control when you'll get tangled up in the Red Thread of Fate! Your soulmate could be pulled by the invisible string into this courtyard right now! And it would look like...

A musical flourish!

The DANCERS use their red dupattas to form a Red Thread of Fate, framing the entrance of the courtyard.

Dramatically, they drop their makeshift curtain, revealing...

SIENNA, a quirky girlypop in her *Eat, Pray, Love* era. She basks in the scene, dorkily entranced.

Notably, SIENNA doesn't acknowledge the dancers, indicating they only exist inside RIDHI's head.

For a fleeting moment, RIDHI and SIENNA's eyes meet. Music swells, and...

RIDHI

Nah, not for me.
Plus, it would never be with a *white bitch*.

The DANCERS shrug in agreement, muttering a medley of "fair" "bet" "facts" as they disperse back to their original positions.

With an armful of books, SIENNA shuffles to a nearby table.

JENSEN (o.s.)
(A hungover groan)

Ugh...Bitch...

Summoned by the word *bitch*—the sound of her name—SIENNA blinks over to find:

JENSEN, self-styled in tacky Bushwick twink chic.

SIENNA

Over here! Good morning, sunshine! Look at this place, isn't it magical?

JENSEN

God is not playing with this humidity. The heat index is giving...skin cancer.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

SIENNA

No, totally, that's exactly what I was gonna say...

JENSEN joins his 2nd-in-command White Bitch, cooling his face with a huge, hot pink hand fan that reads "POWER BOTTOM."

JENSEN

It's steamier and slimier than a New York City Pride Parade, meat-packed into Stonewall on a mid-summer's day.

JENSEN slams down two tin breakfast trays, loaded with curry and roti.

SIENNA

Jensen. I told you not to pay for me.

JENSEN

Sienna. Need I remind you. My dad is rich. I don't have to listen to anyone.

(Inspecting the trays)

Wait. Did they forget our utensils? Or is this some sorta Indian hazing ritual? "Welcome to Delhi University!"

SIENNA

No, I think maybe you just scoop it? With your...?

JENSEN

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

Fortunately, JENSEN always comes prepared.

From his Patagonia daypack, he starts pulling out: clorox wipes, industrial-size hand sanitizer, a bag of plastic utensils. He's Mary fucking Poppins. Mary Poppers?

The DANCERS, offended by JENSEN's general vibe, stand up.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

DANCER #1

Protective bubble?

DANCER #2

Initiate the mind palace.

RIDHI

Americans will literally study abroad in India instead of going to therapy.

The DANCERS form a bubble around
RIDHI, so she can keep studying.

Meanwhile, JENSEN doles out plastic
utensils, while wearing an Earth Day t-shirt
that says: "*Love Your Mother!*"

With no concept of irony, throughout the
scene, JENSEN compulsively cleans every
possible surface, using a new wipe every
time.

Whenever SIENNA "contaminates" a
spoon, he replaces it instantly, allowing litter
to accumulate into a trash mountain.

SIENNA

(Making conversation)

So, I already checked out the market across from our hostel dormitory.

JENSEN

Slay. Smash or pass?

SIENNA

Well, did you know, no one really sells tampons here? Only pads. Or what the girls here
call "sanitary napkins."

JENSEN

C'mon, girlies.

SIENNA

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

And their makeup department was pretty limited.

JENSEN

Well it's no Sephora.

SIENNA

Fortunately, for the Instagram grid posts/

JENSEN

Those *will* outlive us.

SIENNA

I hit the spray tan booth pretty hard before we left.

JENSEN

You certainly did not hold back.

SIENNA

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 will! Give me a cold brew and twenty minutes on Canva.

Into the canteen skulks JAMES, an Indian-American, Desi fuckboi sporting a gold chain and Beats headphones, which he uses to listen exclusively to Drake.

Rolling around on his tray is one comically oversized mango.

SIENNA

Jimmy!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

James, my boy!

SIENNA

James, James, and the Giant...Mango?

JENSEN

Girl dinner.

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 veg. When obviously, I'm the opposite: Atheist and /keto./

SIENNA & JENSEN

/Keto./

JAMES

And they confiscated my creatine at security! I'm fucking cooked, man.

(Sniffing his pits)

Shit, do I already smell like curry?

SIENNA

Um, I think that's kind of offensive...

JENSEN

Yeahhhh you do.

SIENNA

(Mitigating)

Okay, so maybe the mangoes don't match your macros, but they're worth a munch! I mean, they're way juicier than the ones covered in cat piss at Key Foods. They burst with this...sweet, slurpy, *soul*, flowing straight from Mother Earth's *womb*...

Cupping the fruit, SIENNA stares into its
“eyes,” so to speak, longing, yearning...

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

Gross...and...

(Pointed)

Gay, question mark?

SIENNA

What? No, no I'm /not—/

JAMES

You can have it. I can't eat.

SIENNA

Oh. Honey...

JENSEN

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

JAMES

Dude, it happened 24 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*.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

When she *knew* you wouldn't have service. Talk about a second plane hitting the tower.

Concerned by their phrasing, JAMES tries
to shush the fools.

JENSEN

Like, pardon me for sustaining fundamental faith in human decency post-9/11! She
should've triggered that disaster before we took off.

SIENNA

Or after we landed.

JENSEN

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

And offered to FaceTime.

SIENNA

Or recorded a voice note.

JENSEN

Hello!

SIENNA

Goodbye. 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, Barbie. She was my SoundCloud muse.

SIENNA

(Overly apologetic)

Oh my god, I'm so sorry. But, your tracks will be just as dope without her!

JENSEN

You're forgiven, Si-Si. And *you're* forgetting you're a frickin' catch, James-James.

SIENNA

At least you know now that she wasn't The One.

JENSEN

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.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

(Slightly suggestive)

I'd probably love you a little bit more.

SIENNA

More than me?!

JENSEN

Never, baby. No way in Hell.

SIENNA

Thank God. And Chappel Roan. And future President AOC. And...the One!

(Explaining)

That's Daoism, the practice of trusting the Universe. "When I release what I am, I become what I might be." The *One*.

SIENNA bites into the dripping mango.

JAMES

Right. Well. That's all I want, too. Just one...one.

Like, you guys know I fuck bitches.

Beat. No one responds.

JAMES (cont'd.)

You've seen my roster! You've witnessed my rizz!

But I'm sick of side pieces.

Even if that qualifies me, in your books, as old school or whatever.

JENSEN

Speaking of books...Siennie, bindi baby? Our introductory group project?

Obediently, mouth full of mango, SIENNA
gives a thumbs up and dives into her books.

JAMES

Yeah, you know, I watched a Bollywood film on the plane. And it kinda made me realize, maybe I *should* be with someone...who can actually *get* me. Someone...*traditional*. She could wake me up and inspire me and shit.

(Annoyed, pessimistic)

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

But the girl-to-guy ratio on campus/

JENSEN

Whooooa, patrol your pronouns, pal!

JAMES

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

JENSEN

Okay, worse. But...new continent, new era! Just migrate to the apps for the summer.

JAMES

Fam. Indians don't use dating apps the way we do. Instead of swiping 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

That's diabolical. Shut up.

SIENNA

That's fascinating. Keep going.

JAMES

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

JENSEN does.

JAMES (cont'd.)

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 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.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

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! They're so humble and authentic.

JENSEN

Way cheaper than Ubers.

JAMES

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

SIENNA

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

JAMES

(Angrily grabbing a plastic spoon)

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

JENSEN

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

JENSEN snatches the spoon back and
continues intensely organizing his stock.

SIENNA

(Still to James, with a sigh)

Jeez, I just...I wish I believed "Being in Love" with you.

JAMES

With me?

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Realizing what he just said, JAMES and SIENNA share a look.

JAMES
And by that I mean...

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

JAMES
I'm gonna go throw up.

JENSEN
Gross, what?

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

SIENNA
(Trying to relate to Jensen, acting "old money white")
Jealous. Everyone here is, like, skin-and-bones, am I right?!

JENSEN
Sienna! What the fuck?!? That's because of the...
(Stage-whispered, gesturing out towards audience)
Poverty....?!

SIENNA
Oh my god, no I *know*, I am so sorry, my brain is /broken, I hate myself—/

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

JENSEN
Mother always comes prepared.

From his sack of supplies, JENSEN presents JAMES with a roll of toilet paper.

JENSEN (cont'd.)
Don't use it all in one go. Because it'll clog the underfunded pipes...and I only have two more IKEA bags packed of this delicacy. Good luck, babe!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

SIENNA

Don't drown!

JENSEN

And if you do, just text us!

SIENNA

Well, text Jensen, because his international phone plan is better!

JENSEN

(Remembering)

Right. Poor.

SIENNA

(To James)

Once I finish our group project, I'll WhatsApp you a list of what you "contributed." Just in case our Sir asks.

JAMES, clutching his gut, nods and goes to leave. SIENNA stops him with:

SIENNA (cont'd.)

(Explaining)

Sir means Professor here. And also...every man.

JAMES tries again, eyeing the bathroom, but SIENNA, oblivious, blathers on.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

(Referring to her book)

The assignment is about Kamala Suraiyya, an Indian-American poet. You two will totally vibe.

JAMES

She sounds hot.

Don't do anything stupid while I'm gone, word?

Finally, JAMES is free to release the beast, but something deep within his gut, even

deeper than his backed-up-bowels, urges
him to warn:

JAMES (cont'd.)

(To Jensen)

Like investing Daddy's trust fund in some child labor factory.

(To Sienna)

Or falling in love with a random local.

(Referring to himself)

You two are fucking lost without your unofficial tour guide.

About to blow out his pants, 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

(Super weird voice, being a little Too Silly)

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

JENSEN

...ha ha.

Okay. Circling back. 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* him that. I mean, I've *tried*. But I just don't like guys. Like him. Like that. And, oh my god, I don't mean not *not-white guys*—I need a *lobotomy*!

JENSEN

Girl. Chill. I was just gonna say we should 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

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. Even my own.

SIENNA

Well...I guess if he's looking for something traditional, this might be his path to everlasting love...?

JENSEN slips out his phone. The following is projected along with text dings:

DING! From: FATHER

DING! Dear Jensen, hope you're having a "slay" first day in India.

JENSEN

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Aww, it's my dad!

These texts are paired with the sound of thunder clapping, and perhaps a dramatic spotlight on JENSEN:

DING! *We've noticed you already ran through your trust fund.*

DING! *We're cutting you off.*

DING! *Use this trip as an opportunity to make your own money.*

DING! *Your international phone plan will only be good for the next two days.*

DING! *Good lick.*

DING! *Lick.*

DING! *Lick!!*

DING! *L u ck*

SIENNA

(Noticing Jensen's discomfort)

What did he say?

JENSEN

He sends his love! Okay, Shaadi.com.

Hurriedly, JENSEN navigates to the website. Overwhelmed, he hands his phone to Sienna, peering over her shoulder.

JENSEN

You can take care of the boring stuff, like his interests and dreams.

SIENNA

What are the moral implications of pretending to be James's parents?

JENSEN

Who cares, it's an app.

SIENNA

(Filling it out)

Financial Status?

JENSEN

Grindr never asks me that.

Well, I know he just bought new Yeezys.

So, just put him high on the cast list.

SIENNA

Caste system.

But, um, okay. I mean, we don't *know* that.

(Feeling like a bad friend & dumb American)

Should we know that?

I'll just leave it blank.

Another message pops up: Income and
Caste details will help us find you
relevant Matches!

SIENNA

Oh, shit. I think it's because of 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.

JENSEN

(This is BIG, seeing his way out)

So, in this case—us?

SIENNA

Hypothetically.

But *you* certainly don't need it.

And the last thing I want is a handout.

JENSEN

(Tense, psychotically locking in)

Aren't your student loans due, like, yesterday?

SIENNA

I mean, yeah, they're low-key strangling me, and not in a hot dom way, but...I'm fine! I have my ways.

JENSEN

Okay, so the dowry's a beautiful bonus we can put towards fixing your unibrow! We can't argue with tradition, Sienna. We're helping James!

SIENNA

(Not fully convinced)

We're helping James....Full send I guess.

SIENNA submits the registration form,
prompting a welcome screen and sitar jingle,
in which "Shaadi" sounds like "shawty."

Shaadi makes you dance!

Shaadi makes you sing!

*Shaadi translates in the end to a Shaadi
wedding!*

JENSEN

The WEDDING! Fuck me with a long, hard mission statement.

(Dangling a carrot)

Sienna, have you ever been to an Indian wedding?

SIENNA

I have not...

JENSEN

You *love* weddings. *And* India! We could wear sarees! And ride elephants! Ambani wedding 2.0?!

SIENNA

(Taking the bait)

Fun fact, brides wear red here, because white is actually reserved for funerals.

JENSEN

Makes sense. White sucks. Death to white.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

(To a student walking past)

Death to white! I see you.

SIENNA

(Mortified, pulling Jens back into their convo)

Jens, you would...

(Experimenting with phrase he said earlier)

“Serve cunt” in a kurta.

JENSEN

I can say that. You can’t. You’re not gay....

Pause. JENSEN searches SIENNA’s face, gauging her reaction. She holds fast. To relieve tension, he pivots:

JENSEN (cont’d.)

Should we be drunk for this?

SIENNA

Okay...

The duo skips offstage, just as...

JAMES returns from the squatty potties.

JAMES

(To himself)

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

RIDHI

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

Upon seeing RIDHI, time slows down, music plays, and a gust of wind flows through his hair.

JAMES

(Turning on the charm)

Hey, that’s where I was sitting.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

Are you...sure? You weren't when I got here.

JAMES

Well...I was here first.

RIDHI

Before anyone else? Ever?

JAMES

(Looks around, then...)

Wait, actually, this wasn't my table.

RIDHI

(Amused)

Hmm. You're an expat, I assume. American?

JAMES

(Flattered)

What gave it away?

RIDHI

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

JAMES

Yeah, no thanks. I study Business. Like an American.

The DANCERS rush in. DANCER #1 is swooning.

DANCER #1

Oh my god we can fix him!

RIDHI

(To Dancers)

Should I want to?

DANCER #1

He's just your type!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

We just met?

Suddenly, raindrops begin to fall, and
RIDHI scrambles to protect her books.

JAMES

Allow me.

JAMES whisks her tray from the table,
flings off 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

You're funny.
Is that how you say thanks in Hindi?

RIDHI

You don't really have to.
There's an unspoken agreement that everyone works together to help the collective.

JAMES

Wow. In the States, people only help people to help themselves.
This place kinda rules for me. I'm trying to pinpoint why...

RIDHI

Well, it has its downsides.
Like no one ever asks me what I want.
They just assume what I need.

As if on cue, JAMES snaps into Bollywood heartthrob mode.

JAMES

I think I know what you need.

RIDHI

And what is that?

DANCER #1

Say less! This is fate. Ladies, get in formation....

Before DANCER #2 can protest:

DANCER #1 (cont'd.)

Let me try something!

The DANCERS initiate a romantic, classical 90's Bollywood dance between JAMES and RIDHI. The choreography is akin to the rain scene from [*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*](#).

At a pivotal moment of the dance, the couple is locked in an embrace.

JAMES

Do you believe in love at first sight?

RIDHI

(Looking to DANCERS)

Uh...

The DANCERS urge RIDHI on, gesturing like "keep going!" RIDHI panics.

RIDHI

Did you know only 7% of marriages here are love marriages?

JAMES & DANCERS

Huh?

RIDHI

(Hurried, tumbling out)

They claim *arranged marriage* works, because our divorce rate is under 1%, but what about the shame that accompanies divorce? Yes, love marriages *are* a recent growing trend here. But they're so recent, that we don't know how they'll end yet—we can't calculate their success rate.

What if they ALL end in divorce?! Sending your kids to two Diwalis every year?? I—I can't operate without evidence. Trusting my intuition?! Is *crazy*!

And with the pace at which the planet's heating up, there's no guarantee we'll even live long enough to find out for ourselves!

JAMES

I'm gonna be sick.

RIDHI

I know, right? Society...

JAMES

No—my stomach. I'm about to literally puke out my guts.

RIDHI

Oh my god, are you okay?

JAMES is about to run out of the canteen.

DANCER #1

Fix him!!!

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

RIDHI

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.

JAMES turns again.

DANCER #1

Wait! You have to see him again!!

RIDHI

Oh shit. Uh hey! What are you doing tonight?

JAMES turns back around, really trying to hold it together.

JAMES

Whatever you're doing!

RIDHI

(Attempting to act American)

Great, um. There's a *groovy* grad party at Hauz Khas tonight...that's bound to be a *rockin good time*! Uh. See you there?

JAMES

If fate allows.

Smirking, JAMES EXITS, unrolling Jensen's toilet paper in preparation.

RIDHI smiles to herself. Hm.

Scene 2: Pia's Household – Morning

PIA, RIDHI's mother, sits with breakfast and her phone, watching the news.

On the TV, we see or hear a news report, concerning the ongoing debate over LGBTQ+ rights in India. **Note:** While same-sex relations have been decriminalized, gay marriage still isn't legally recognized.

When RIDHI ENTERS, PIA shuts off the news and snaps into her playful persona.

PIA

That is what you wore to University today? You have far nicer fabrics in your closet. Pretty sarees.

RIDHI

I'm saving those for a rainy day.

PIA

It's monsoon season, Ridhi. Every day is a rainy day. And each storm is followed by a rainbow...of opportunities to find a husband! Chai?

PIA EXITS into the kitchen.

RIDHI

I'll take a coffee. Like I've said every morning lately, I *prefer coffee*. But clearly, that—oh, and you're gone.

PIA returns, cheerful and oblivious, with a tray of chai and Parle-G biscuits.

PIA

Here. Chai. I made chai.

PIA

So I've been thinking.

RIDHI

So I've been thinking...

PIA

Oh, nothing good ever comes from that, Ridhi.

The DANCERS emerge from behind the couch, in an acrobatic fashion. Throughout their convo, as PIA and RIDHI make points, the DANCERS sway back-and-forth between them. RIDHI clocks their reactions, but ignores them.

RIDHI

I know we agreed if I didn't find anyone at school, you could start arranging my marriage. So, what if I just...keep going to school?

PIA

For what, Ridhi?

RIDHI

More...Gender Studies?

PIA

(To herself)

How much more gender is there to study? There's only three.

(Beat)

Well, with a strong case like that, you should have studied law, like your father.

He's the one you need to convince, not me, and we both know he won't budge.

I'm considering both of our best interests...

RIDHI

No, all you're considering is what's going to keep *Baba* happy.

Maybe, if you tried expanding your business, beyond just a passion project, you could leave him.

PIA

That is out of the question.

RIDHI

We don't need to depend on him.

A stand off.

PIA

Arranged marriage is an investment, you understand.

RIDHI

How romantic.

PIA

Once you get married, you can have all the freedom you want, to do whatever you want.

RIDHI

Is that what you have now? Freedom?

With that insult, launched from stress and insecurity, RIDHI retreats.

RIDHI

Well, obviously I can't study here.

Regretting her harsh words, RIDHI lingers in the doorframe.

RIDHI (cont'd)

Are you going to wish me luck or not?

PIA

Ridhi, you manifest your own luck. You rise to every occasion.
I have full faith you'll make your last day worth it...
And bump into a wealthy, light-skinned, city husband, before it's too late!

RIDHI

Arre, Amma!

PIA

But in case you don't...I signed you up for Shaadi.com.

PIA proudly holds up her phone.

RIDHI

We'll unpack that later. I have an exam.

RIDHI exits.

PIA taps her phone, which sings: *New match! New match! Could be the One! Check out this catch!*

PIA scrutinizes the profile, brow raised.

PIA

Come to Mama.

PIA starts typing, as the lights go down.

Scene 3: Outside Pia's House – Late Morning

Outside PIA's door, SIENNA and JENSEN huddle, wearing rudimentary old-age stage makeup, learned in an undergrad theater class, and a kurta and sari.

Both are tipsy. SIENNA is already guilty, rattled with nerves.

SIENNA

We shouldn't have stopped for that round of *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

We should've deleted the app the second someone asked to meet IRL.

JENSEN

Babe. You've seen every episode of *Indian Matchmaking*. You've read more articles in *The Times of India* than anyone's ever *pretended* to read in *The New York Times*. And this girl I picked for James/

SIENNA

Jignesh.

JENSEN

Bless you.

SIENNA

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

JENSEN

Copy. This girl for “Jignesh”...you’ll fall in love with her, you’ll be obsessed. I know all your green flags and icks.

While SIENNA rants, JENSEN pulls out his phone and types, which we see projected:

SIENNA

Right. She has to be someone he can expose his authentic, always-evolving self to.
And trust. And also banter and shop with.
They’ll hold each other accountable, but also hold up. They’ll acknowledge the dark void—

JENSEN (texting)

Hey, Dad! No need to worry about little old me! I figured out a quick, easy way to make some \$\$\$;) ;) ;)

DING! Text from Dad: *Sex work???*

JENSEN

NO!

SIENNA

—But defy it! Because they prioritize vulnerability, and understand how HARD it is to be a fucking woman!

JENSEN

YES!

SIENNA

Wait—why are *you* being so adamant about this?!

JENSEN

(Whipping face up from phone)

I JUST REALLY CARE ABOUT JAMES, OKAY?!

(Projecting)

And...you! I care about you! If you can’t pay your loans, you won’t be able to pay your rent, and you’ll wind up on THE STREETS, sticking your dick into any hole for heroin!

SIENNA

What?

JENSEN

WHAT!?

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

SIENNA

Okay...Listen. If we're committing to this bit, I think you might need to...

JENSEN

Hm?

SIENNA

Sorta turn down your...

JENSEN

Speak up and spit it out!

SIENNA

Sparkle! Turn down your sparkle!

JENSEN stares at SIENNA, not understanding.

SIENNA

Folx are staring...

JENSEN

They're jealous. If anyone ever stared at you, you'd understand.

SIENNA

This isn't Bushwick. I know what it's like to live somewhere you can't be yourself. It's dangerous.

JENSEN

What do you mean? It's so colorful here. You've seen Bollywood.

SIENNA

Life isn't a Bollywood—/

PIA

Namaste!

As if on cue, PIA swings open the door.

Her beaming face drops, as her expression turns to: “what the fuck.” She was prepared for fair-skinned elites, not white morons.

Puzzled but intrigued, she decides to play the Bitches like a sitar.

SIENNA

Namaste!

PIA

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

(off Jensen’s disgust)

The house is a temple, and the guest is God. Do you not regard your home as Holy?

SIENNA

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

JENSEN

My pad’s nicer, obvs.

PIA

Oh? You two live separately?

SIENNA

Oh—uh, no! We—/

JENSEN

Own multiple homes.

SIENNA

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

PIA

(Amused)

How very impressive! Please, sit.

SIENNA and JENSEN take a seat on the couch, attempting a hetero couple pose. Forced arms around each other.

SIENNA pulls her legs into lotus position.

Meanwhile, JENSEN inspects the room,
calculating how steep the dowry will be.

PIA

(To Sienna)

You demonstrate...extreme flexibility.

(To both)

And youth.

(To Jensen)

And you, such whiteness.

(Grave)

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

JENSEN

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

PIA

Your James is...Half? *Baba*...white?

And you, *Amma*...from here?

Oh. Shit. This game-changer is emphasized
by a sound effect from the [1 hour mark of
Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham](#), symbolizing the
Bitches caught in their lie, having to think
on their feet.

In time with the sound, they look at each
other. SIENNA is reeling, about to confess,
when JENSEN locks in:

JENSEN

Yes.

PIA

Well. Thank you for selecting my daughter. Your child is Immaculate.

SIENNA

JENSEN

He's adopted!!!

Made him ourselves.

The *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* sound effect happens once again. JENSEN glares at SIENNA, exasperated.

PIA

(Now just fucking with them)

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!

JENSEN

Oh...

SIENNA

(Getting back on track)

So, Ridhi?

PIA

Her name means "Fortune."

JENSEN

Like wealth, or what you find inside a cookie?

SIENNA

What's Ridhi's sign?

PIA

She's a fiery, determined Leo. From your profile, I saw your son's birthdate is March 4th. Around Holi.

JENSEN

Cow.

PIA

The holiday. Festival of Love?

SIENNA

(To Jensen, tense)

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

JENSEN

Doi! Love those two.

At least towards Sienna, PIA is impressed.

SIENNA

Jignesh is a Pisces.

JENSEN

This kid. Highkey Pisces.

PIA

Sensitive? /Romantic?/

JENSEN

/Romantic./ Obsessive.

SIENNA

He's a...passionate romantic.

PIA

...He's an Aquarius. In Vedic astrology.

Oh, I must go strain the chai. I'll be right back!

PIA exits, grinning behind their backs.

Alone, SIENNA begins to spiral:

SIENNA

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Jensen, is my spray tan actually giving brown face?!!

JENSEN

Well it's not Justin-Trudeau-bad but...

SIENNA

I know NOTHING. I didn't even know there's a difference between Vedic astrology and normal astrology!

JENSEN

(Cringing)

....Normal?

SIENNA

See what I mean?! I'm an IDIOT.

JENSEN

ENOUGH! That's my best friend you're talking about! This is your chance to redefine yourself. From a people-pleasing Virgo, to a balanced, accountable Libra!

PIA enters behind them. SIENNA and JENSEN jump and scramble back into "couple mode."

PIA

(Excited)

A Libra?! You and Ridhi will align like chakras.

SIENNA, unenthused.

PIA (cont'd.)

Cosmic soulmate potential. I will attempt to restrain my Resentment.

SIENNA

(Anxious as fuck)

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

PIA

/I am an Aries./

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

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

PIA

What do you do, Mrs. Jensen?

SIENNA

Me? Oh, I'm...nothing interesting. Right now I'm mainly focusing on—surviving?

(Pia is unimpressed, so Jensen elbow nudges)

But I teach yoga on the side.

PIA

Wonderful. What Practice?

SIENNA

The, um...fat-burning genre? It's super relaxing. We don't let anyone keep their phones on volume during salutations. Only...vibrate.

PIA is thinking: "As long as their 'son' is nice, maybe Ridhi will luck out? Maybe it's worth maintaining the charade?"

PIA

And you, Mr. Jensen? You do—?

JENSEN

Oh, I actually prefer to reframe work as not something we *do*, but rather who we *are*. I, for example, 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...it's me. Rebirthing into the best version of myself, 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?

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

PIA

Well, first and foremost, I'm Ridhi's mother.

JENSEN

Noble. But for money?

PIA

(Genuinely bashful)

Well, I do run a nonprofit. It's a passion project. Nothing special...

SIENNA

Pia, that's amazing. What's it for?

PIA

Um, it's for unhoused individuals to learn skills to make a livelihood for themselves. We repurpose old saris and give them a second life. The money earned goes straight back into the facilities. I just wish I could do more for them.

SIENNA

What would you need?

PIA

Well, I suppose I'd need an investor.

SIENNA

We have money!

JENSEN

(Trying to get her to shut up)

Oh???

SIENNA

Yeah, he has so much money! He could invest in your business!

JENSEN

(fuck, fuck, fuck!)

Uh...yes! I *could*. That is definitely something I *could* do...

PIA considers: Wow. Could this be our ticket?! Let's find out!

PIA

Potential family members. I must simply, briefly, stress the seriousness of this endeavor...We are initiating an everlasting bond. This is no shoddy Western love marriage, where they catch passion first. Then they attempt to contain it with commitment. Here, we establish commitment first, then find passion *in* the promise. To that, do you agree?

Speechless, for different reasons, SIENNA
and JENSEN nod.

PIA (cont'd.)

Excellent. I shall fetch the legally-binding documents.

(Playing them)

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?

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

SIENNA

Maybe things are looking up! Maybe the whole reason we got into this mess is so you can save Pia's NGO.

JENSEN

Oh, I'm not doing that.

SIENNA

Wait, what?

JENSEN

Don't be stupid. That is deadass a child labor factory, like James and UNICEF warned us about.

SIENNA

Oh, I really doubt that. And you just promised her you would!
I don't feel comfortable starting this marriage off on a lie...

JENSEN

(Referencing themselves)

Well, we wouldn't wanna do that now, would we!?

Meanwhile, PIA calls RIDHI.

PIA

Ridhi. Pick up your cell phone.

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

PIA

Humari toh lottery lag gayi! Full jackpot! Shaadi.com pe do bewakoof Amriki mile hain Pata hani kyun, desi banne ka natak kar rahe hain! Khair, jo bhi ho, in buddhuon ko hamare rasam'o rivazon ke bare mein kuch nahi pata. Yeh shadi ke baad tumpe koi pabandhi nahi dalenge. Idhar sindoor lagi, aur udhar woh meri NGO mein paise daalen. Main, tumhare papa to chhod paoongi. Main zindagi bhar hum dono ka khayal rakh paoongi. Aur tum, jitna ji chahe, martey dam tak padhti rehna! Pyar vyar pe time barbad karne ki koi zaroorat nahi hai! Tum kehti ho na, pyar kuch nahi hota. This is your Mother.

TRANSLATION

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, these dummies don't know our customs. They won't force you into a restrictive marriage. You say "I do," and they'll invest in my NGO. I can leave your father. I can financially provide for us, forever. And you can keep studying until you drop dead! No need to waste your time on Love! As you say, it's not real! This is your Mother.

Lights down on PIA, as we refocus on the Bitches.

SIENNA

Also, like, it's one thing to set your friend up on a date. It's another to *marry him off*!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

I'll rickshaw right over to James after this. But at this point, you know he'd greenlight anyone. Like you.

SIENNA

Um. Sure. But Jens...

JENSEN

UGH, FINE. If it makes you feel better, I will personally go check out this "NGO," to prove to you it's a Shein shit show. Right now, our objective is to line your wallet and help our friend.

PIA enters again, and SIENNA and JENSEN scramble themselves back into their spousely positions.

PIA

Mr. and Mrs. Jensen?

SIENNA & JENSEN

Mhmm?!

PIA

Are you ready to arrange for our children to meet?

JENSEN

That's when, um...you'll be bringing the rupees to the function?

PIA

I'll run to the bank and get the cash right now.

(To Sienna)

You.

Must dress better. More traditional.

I'll direct you to my stand at the market, so you can model all the pretty sarees for your husband. And my new investor!

SIENNA

It will be a pleasure doing business with you.../

JENSEN

(Anxiously correcting, forced chipper)

Discussing business!

If it meets my standards! The conversation is on the horizon!

But...our children come first! Family first!

Dowry second? Business third!

Ha...ha...um.

As JENSEN spurs nervous laughter among the trio, he sends his dad another text, projected onscreen:

Not sex work. Even better. Xoxo

Scene 4: Marketplace – Early Afternoon

Vibrant, colorful textiles are hung from clotheslines and folded, stacked on tables.

Through a tiny dressing room curtain, SIENNA is handed a pile of saree fabric by a disembodied hand.

Alone, she talks to this unseen individual running the tent.

SIENNA

Wow, thank you—*dhanyavaad*—these are beautiful. I wish I could afford all of these...

SIENNA checks a price tag. Yowza.

She folds it neatly and places it on a stool beside her. Whenever SIENNA takes off a piece of clothing, she does this.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

Or even one of these, um...

It's kind of flattering that you think I can.

(Awkward, embarrassed)

Usually, I'm the one constantly asking "How can I help you?" I'm the one waiting on customers hand and foot.

A handful of kurtas is passed through the curtain. SIENNA takes them.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

Uh, yeah, exactly like that. *Dhanyavaad*, again.

Like, it's crazy to be walking into stores or just down the street and treated like a queen—or a *maharani*, if you will, like...

(A horrified realization)

Wait, is it because I'm...white?

Honestly, I'm relieved you noticed.

(Flustered)

Not because, like...being white is a relief....Well, I mean, it *is* a relief, because, of, like, everything all of the time, um...I just meant it's a relief because I have this questionable spray tan...

(Anyway, referring to the expensive saree...)

Do you take credit?

No response.

At this point, SIENNA is standing alone, in a gorgeous red saree—potentially, the Red Thread fabric.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

Hello?

(Realizing she's alone, confessing)

I think I'm an accomplice in a literal crime, because I can't stand up to my best friend...He wears power so well. And I just don't think that fits right on me.

Now, RIDHI enters, searching for PIA, when she overhears SIENNA's musings. They stop RIDHI in her tracks.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

Between you and me, deep down? I kinda worry that, no matter what I accomplish in my life, what I contribute to the world, I'll never be more than a...walking inferiority complex. And I'm not even good at walking! I trip over everything!

So, "how can you help me?"

I honestly don't know. But it's not really your job—/

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

No, it's not. I don't work here.

SIENNA

Oh my god, I'm so sorry, Yap City. I'll be out in a minute, just wrapping up a little existential panic attack.

RIDHI

I get those.

SIENNA

Oh. I'm sorry.

RIDHI

That's okay. You aren't responsible for my brain chemistry.

SIENNA

(Mad scientist type voice)

As far as you know.

RIDHI

(Returning to prior sentiment)

What you were rambling about, though...I get it. Sometimes *I* worry I'll never be more than someone's wife. I actually met someone this morning. He was kind of sweet, but I could tell he was only evaluating me as a potential marriage prospect.

SIENNA

Yeah! Doesn't it kinda feel like, even in real life, we're evaluating everyone like we're on a dating app? It's like:

(Robot voice)

"HeLLo, I aM AgE aNd HeIgHt."

RIDHI

(Regal, British-Indian Accent)

"I am Degree and Caste."

SIENNA

Oh, yikes. Those sound harder to lie about.

RIDHI

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

You'd be surprised.

SIENNA

I lie about a lot of stuff on my profile.
To be more attractive...to, like, men.
Learned that from my mom.

RIDHI

Don't get me started on moms.

SIENNA

(NPR voice)

What's your take on moms?

RIDHI smirks, amused, then grows
sentimental, as she browses the racks.
Touching the fabrics. Proud.

RIDHI

Mine put herself in a box.
I see how desperately she wants to break out of it, but she won't let herself.

SIENNA

Leaving the box is terrifying.

RIDHI

Uh huh!
Just strolling out in the open?? You're asking to get hurt!
And knowing you're the one who walked into that hurt...?

SIENNA

Top 5 worst kinds of hurt.

RIDHI

Because after everything...all the courage and rebellion and pain...What if someone
shoves you right back in? It's why I save them the trouble and do it myself.

SIENNA

Genius.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

I'm smart.

SIENNA

And I bet you're nothing else!

RIDHI

Besides my age and height!

SIENNA

Ok I don't want to sound crazy—/

RIDHI

Too late.

SIENNA

Maybe, just maybe, the most life-changing discoveries happen when we leave the box?

RIDHI

The cost benefit analysis of leaving the box.

SIENNA

I'd love to see the inside of your box.

RIDHI

I'd love to see the inside of *your* box.

Both freeze, realizing the sexual innuendo
they just exchanged in earnest.

SIENNA

I just meant I'd love to see your box. Like, your *box* that's not your *box*—/

RIDHI

Do you need help?

SIENNA

Please, I'm short-circuiting.

RIDHI

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

I think you want to see me come out...of my box?

SIENNA

I'll come out of mine if you come out of yours. On three?

Feeling something, freaking out, RIDHI
calls to her DANCERS offstage.

RIDHI

Hey, um, guys? Can you come in here? I think something's happening...

Ridhi's DANCERS enter, not seeing why
they were summoned.

Meanwhile, SIENNA mutters to herself, to
her own internal voices:

SIENNA

I just wanna leave my box and be accepted as my true self.

RIDHI

(to Sienna)

Uh. Yes. On three.

(to Dancers)

Just...try anything.

Uncertainly, for RIDHI, DANCERS form a
tunnel by the dressing room.

DANCER #1

One...

DANCER #2

Two...

RIDHI

Three...

SIENNA opens the curtain. The
DANCERS' faces and poses drop.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

DANCER #1

A white girl?!

DANCER #2

With a 2015 Ariana Grande spray tan?!

DANCER #1

We do not have choreography for this number.

SIENNA and RIDHI confront each other.

SIENNA

(Awkward)

Helloooo.

Flustered, RIDHI holds out a textile she
picked up while perusing: a *sherwani*,
typically worn by men.

RIDHI

(Nervous)

Um. I found this. Not sure if it's what you're looking for.
It's...kind of chaotic? And I think, a little torn, but—?

SIENNA

It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

(Going off previous convo)

But I don't want to judge a fabric by its pattern! Let's get to know it first.

Doing a dumb bit, RIDHI leans in to the
fabric to ask:

RIDHI

("Speaking" to the fabric)

What are your hopes and dreams?

They listen.

SIENNA

"No you can't get into fracking!"

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

“I don't care if Ru Paul supports it!”

SIENNA

“If Ru Paul jumped off a bridge, would you jump off a bridge?!”

They laugh. RIDHI hands the fabric to
SIENNA.

SIENNA (cont'd.)

And now, for my next trick...

(Retail voice)

“How can *I* help *you*?”

RIDHI

Uh, I don't know. No one ever asks me that.

SIENNA

They should.

And you don't need to know. You can try on everything!

SIENNA begins rifling through options,
giddy.

RIDHI

(Bashful)

Oh, I do *not* need a cliché heroine makeover...

SIENNA

But do you want one?

(Being cheeky)

Just remove your metaphorical glasses.

DANCER #2

Girl, what is this? We have to study!

RIDHI

Right. Yeah. Um...

(Flustered, to Sienna)

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

While this was a lovely distraction, I stave off nihilism with hard work, so—/

RIDHI rushes to leave, handing SIENNA
the fabric, but it snags on SIENNA's earring.

RIDHI

/Oh, shit, um—/

SIENNA

/I'm so sorry—/

RIDHI tries to spin out, but ends up
face-to-face with SIENNA. A musical cue.

The DANCERS search for the source,
bewildered.

RIDHI

(To the DANCERS)

Guys what is going on?!

DANCER #1

We have no idea! We had nothing to do with this!

Indeed, the music exists in reality, streaming
from the store radio.

RIDHI gingerly untangles SIENNA. They
gaze into each other's eyes, until...

RIDHI

(Still frantic)

Welp guess I'll be on my way!

Close, but no! In her haste, now her bangle
gets caught, unraveling a red thread.

RIDHI

/Jesus Christ—/

SIENNA

/Okayyyy/ so I'm not the *best* at picking up social cues. But this might be a sign to try something on? Something new?

Hesitant but trusting, RIDHI cues the DANCERS, who begrudgingly enact a Bollywood Quick Change™.

When RIDHI is revealed, she's wearing the *sherwani*.

RIDHI, with SIENNA behind her, gazes into the mirror:

SIENNA

How do you feel?

RIDHI

Like myself.

SIENNA

Would you say this is...what you're looking for?

RIDHI

Jury's out. Wanna "deliberate" over lunch?

Lights.

Scene 5: Delhi University (James' Dorm) – Afternoon

Sprawled out on his bed, JAMES is passionately, romantically beatboxing.

JAMES

That one goes out to my new muse. She's gonna love it.

A knock at the door.

JAMES (cont'd.)

It's open!

Before JAMES can finish, JENSEN struts in, turning up his nose at the mess of vape cartridges and black t-shirts.

JENSEN

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

JAMES

What do you mean?

JENSEN

Oh, so you just live like this?

JAMES

Shouldn't you be in class?

JENSEN

I'm busy learning *outside* the classroom, cutie. Beyond the borders of buildings and books. I'm performing miracles, as a matter of fact.

JENSEN preps himself to give JAMES the best news he's ever received.

JAMES & JENSEN

I've got great news!

JENSEN

You first.

(Before James has a chance)

Wait, no, I'll go. We—your mother, Sienna—and I went on Shaadi. And arranged you with a little shawty.

JAMES

WHAT?

JENSEN

Sienna dabbled in brown face, I wordsmithed a bit, and boom! You're engaged.

JAMES

Say sike right now.

JENSEN

I would never say sike about brownface. It's actually kind of insane Sienna did that, and we'll hold an intervention after your wedding.

(Being a hype man)

So...are we "down bad" or what?!

JAMES

Uh, yeah, man. That's actually the problem. I already fell in love, homie. Like, an hour ago. It blew me like a gust of wind, from an industrial-size fan in a Bollywood movie.

JENSEN

(Face falls, grave)

Big yikes.

JAMES

(Truly conflicted)

Yeah, dude, it's Problem Central up in here!

Because, man to...

(About to say "man-to-man," hesitates)

You.

I don't know what to do about Sienna.

We all know we had a will-they-won't-they, best-friends-to-lovers, slow-burn, endgame thing going. But then, about an hour ago, I met my star-crossed, enemies-to-lovers, Desi dream girl! And now, you're throwing down a brand new wild card?!

This love triangle just turned into a love square.

JENSEN

...Okay. I'm gonna hold your hand while I ask this.

And no, I'm not trying to make this a love pentagon.

...Has Sienna ever indicated she *likes* you?

Ouch. Harsh. But also, JAMES has never considered this.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

And this new girl. What *about her* did you fall in love with? Did she explicitly *tell* you she's interested?

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JAMES

She didn't have to. There was so much unspoken.
And I could barely hear her over the musical cue in my head.

JENSEN

Think fast. What's her eye color?

JAMES is silent. While they chat, JENSEN
might compulsively tidy up the room.

JENSEN (cont'd.)

(Projecting)

James. I can see that you need help right now.
I know you haven't told anyone what you're going through. I know you received
life-altering news at the beginning of this trip. And you're afraid. You're afraid to talk
about it, because then it will become real, and soon, you'll look like the before picture of
Slumdog Millionaire.

JAMES

I think that's a little racist—/

JENSEN

And I know you self-sabotage in an effort to vye for your parents' attention. And I
KNOW you didn't mean to crash their yacht! You should've tested that Molly you found
on the streets of P-Town and that's on YOU!
...James.
Meet this girl. I promise, I won't let you get hurt again.

JAMES

I just kinda wanna start fresh on my own terms.

JENSEN

You think you just fell out of a mango tree? You exist in the context of all in which you
live and what came before you!

JAMES

What does that even mean?

JENSEN

I don't think Kamala even knew.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JAMES

No, I think I get it. Maybe I *should* take this trip to get...introspective...To reflect on myself and how I got here. Read that poetry. Touch that grass. Learn to love myself before I let anyone else in.

JENSEN

Nooooo, I definitely think the key to your happiness will be external validation from the girl I found for you!

Beat.

JAMES

Does she have cute feet?

JENSEN

Umm...yes? Here's her pic.

He looks at RIDHI's picture on Jensen's phone.

JAMES

Oh my god!!

JENSEN

Stop, James, don't make fun of her.

JAMES

No, no, that's her! That's the girl from the canteen!

JENSEN

The one you fell in love with?!

JAMES

What's that thing that Sienna's always on about? The red string theory?

JENSEN

I thought that was a period thing.

JAMES

Jensen, this is fire! You finally did something right! Who says you're a useless friend I should've dumped years ago?!

JENSEN

I don't know, are people saying that?

JAMES

I feel like I'm in a Bollywood film.

JENSEN

Go ahead, strike a pose!

JAMES strikes a [pose](#) that emulates Shah Rukh Khan falling in love. Lights.

Scene 6: Dosa Restaurant – Late Afternoon

At a restaurant, RIDHI and SIENNA sit with a massive dosa between them.

The DANCERS hang out at tables nearby, some eavesdropping.

RIDHI

You know Kamala Suraiyya?!

SIENNA

She's our first assignment. The text is so rich. The way she captures the /cognitive dissonance of the South Asian diaspora!/
/Cognitive dissonance of the South Asian diaspora!/
You took the words right out of my mouth.

RIDHI

/Cognitive dissonance of the South Asian diaspora!/
You took the words right out of my mouth.

SIENNA

Want 'em back?

RIDHI

You can keep them.

SIENNA

(“Chewing” the words)

Yum. As scrumptious as this dosa.

So, what are *your* hopes and dreams?

RIDHI

This is a hard thing to share with a stranger.

SIENNA

Oh. I’m sorry, you don’t have to—/

RIDHI

This dosa I mean.

SIENNA

Oh. I know. It’s awesome. Like, do we *Lady and The Tramp* it?

RIDHI

What the hell, why not?

Together, they pick up the dosa, and take
bites from opposite ends.

SIENNA

(Mouth full, mumbled)

You’re really passionate about gender parity.

RIDHI

Yeah, but that’s not a career.

(Doing a bit, acting like a Business Person)

Clocking in at the Gender Empowerment Factory!

SIENNA

The Glass Ceiling wants to connect on LinkedIn!

...Fun fact, though. It *can* be. A career.

Sex and Gender Discrimination Law, for one thing.

RIDHI

My dad’s a lawyer, and I don’t want to be anything like him.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

SIENNA

Well, you don't have to be. You are your own person.

RIDHI

I'm curious. Um. Do you like chai? Or do you prefer coffee?

SIENNA

Oh. Chai, definitely. All the spices mixing and mingling.

RIDHI

Right. It's beloved for a reason. But...I'm so used to chai. It's been pushed on me my whole life. And I've never been asked if I even *like* chai.

SIENNA

Well, you *can* drink coffee.

RIDHI

But it's not... socially acceptable for me to...drink...coffee...

SIENNA

...Are we still talking about drinks?

They sit in the silence, before SIENNA decides to announce, point blank:

SIENNA (cont'd.)

I *know* I like coffee. But I'm scared to tell anyone.

DANCER #1

Literally what are they talking about?

Suddenly, RIDHI swallows and bursts out JAMES's question from earlier:

RIDHI

Do you believe in love at first sight?!
...Pretend that is a not-loaded question I asked in a normal way.

SIENNA

Uh. I'm an optimist, not an idiot.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

I believe in getting to know someone over time....

(Remembering PIA's line)

I want to find "the passion in promise."

The DANCERS rush over to intervene.

DANCER #2

Okay, who ordered a side of emotional intimacy with this dosa??

DANCER #1

Ridhi, is this...something you're into?

RIDHI is in shock.

DANCER #2

Earth to Ridhi? Hello?

SIENNA

Um. Anywayyyyy. Moving on.

Can I tell you something that I feel really shitty about?

DANCER #2

Oh, here we go! White girl sob story incoming!

SIENNA

I kind of got...roped into something today...

DANCER #1

Ridhi, are we seriously about to entertain this?

DANCER #2

Look at her.

DANCER #1

She will *never* understand us.

DANCER #2

She's just a basic, unaware, privileged...

ALL DANCERS

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

White. Bitch.

RIDHI

I have to go.

SIENNA

What? Are you okay?

RIDHI rises suddenly and starts to leave,
before turning around with parting words:

RIDHI

Thank you.
I hope you find your way out of your box.

RIDHI steps out of the restaurant, calms
herself, and takes out her phone.

Stunned, SIENNA picks up her own phone
and calls:

JENSEN, who is riding on a rickshaw.

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

JENSEN

Si-Si! My little gulab jamun! Guess my locaysh?

SIENNA

Not jail, not another DUI...

JENSEN

Close! I'm on a rickshaw!
They're so silly! Kind of bumpy. I'm gonna give it two stars.

SIENNA

How generous. Jens, I have to tell you something.

Meanwhile, JAMES and PIA join the others on stage, in their own respective spaces.

PIA picks up her phone. JAMES is getting ready to meet his bride-to-be.

PIA

Ridhi? Did you get my voicemail?

RIDHI

Yeah. I tried to find you at your stand, but then I got distracted. Dumb side quest...

SIENNA

I'm gay.

JENSEN

I know—I mean yay!

SIENNA

And I think I'm in love?

RIDHI

I'm ready to meet Jignesh.

Thunder clap. The monsoon is brewing.

Until, on cue: *Bzzzzzz!*

Everyone's phone vibrates with an alert.

JAMES

Oh shit! It's...time to BeReal.

Each photo-bombing a character, the DANCERS hop in and pose, throwing up peace signs.

Blackout.

End of Act I.

ACT II

Scene 7: Pia's Household – Early Evening

Lights up on the whole big, happy family, painfully silent and uncomfortable, in PIA's living room, for the arranged meeting.

JAMES and RIDHI are placed on the couch next to each other.

RIDHI is staring daggers into SIENNA, who is mortified.

JENSEN and JAMES remain oblivious.

The DANCERS are absent, because RIDHI feels as though she's lost her mind.

JAMES, with heart eyes for Ridhi, breaks the silence:

JAMES

So, I think I speak for all of us when I say...this is fate.

PIA

We could not agree more!

JENSEN

It sounds like we're all on the same page! So, is it dowry o'clock?

PIA gauges RIDHI's palpable energy.

PIA

How about we let the lovebirds get to know each other? Their happiness *is* key to this arrangement. Their commitment must last seven lifetimes, after all.

JENSEN

Jignesh is good for seven. We can even go for eight, nine? Jignesh?

JAMES

(Recited, yet earnest)

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

My dedication will last however many lifetimes I am blessed to share with you, until my last breath and even after.

JENSEN

Wow! Shakespeare could never! Right, Ridhi?! You appreciate...words. We saw that on your Shaadi profile. Your picture doesn't even do you justice. James' usually goes for girly girls.

PIA

Ridhi, can you thank Mr. Jensen for that compliment?

RIDHI

What compliment?!

JENSEN

(Whispers)

Sienna, you know compliments aren't my love language. Help?

SIENNA

(Whispers)

I do know that, sorry, but I actually really need to talk to you—/

JENSEN

(Whispers)

About your gay awakening?

SIENNA

(Whispers)

Kind of....

JENSEN

(Whispers)

We'll binge The L Word later. Right now, we have a bag to secure. So lock in.

RIDHI

Is he adopted?

JENSEN

(Enthusiastic)

He's adopted!

SIENNA

(Fight or flight response)

Made him ourselves.

Again, the sound effect from *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, as JENSEN and SIENNA catch that they switched stories.

JENSEN
(Feeling cuckoo)

Okay. What *is* that sound?!

PIA
Oh, that's my cuckoo clock my husband got me in Schleswig.

JENSEN
(Forced)
What a quirky present!
So, Ridhi. Just following up. I can tell you're head over...sneakers for Jignesh, but what questions can we clear up to speed this along?

PIA
Well, my daughter would like to continue school indefinitely. Would you approve?

JAMES
I would worship my lifelong-learning queen.

RIDHI
I have a question. For Mrs. Jensen.

The whole room turns to RIDHI.

RIDHI
As a *white* mother raising an Indian child, how did you keep Jignesh connected to his culture?

SIENNA
I...I...

JAMES
I know that Ridhi will raise our children, the right way, with all the traditional Indian values I didn't get growing up.

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

I can speak for myself.

SIENNA

She can speak for herself.

SIENNA is short-circuiting. RIDHI is fuming. Clocking this, PIA offers:

PIA

Chai?

RIDHI

Amma, you know, I keep saying I prefer...

RIDHI looks at SIENNA.

RIDHI (cont'd.)

(Pointed)

You know what? Yeah, I'll take the chai.

One more question, *Mrs. Jensen*.

What exactly did you get "roped into" today?

SIENNA, deep red, wants to die. RIDHI gets in one last insult:

RIDHI (cont'd)

And, by the way, your spray tan is staining my couch.

PIA

Ridhi! That is not how you speak to your future mother-in-law—/

RIDHI

I agree to the marriage.

JENSEN

Oh, um, okay!

JAMES

Sick.

PIA

Delightful!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

JENSEN

Dowry?

PIA

Done. To the NGO we go!
Ridhi, do you mind...?

RIDHI

Not at all. I'm actually *dying* to spend some quality time with my new mother-in-law.

PIA and JENSEN are stunned but
overjoyed, as she passes over an envelope.

JENSEN

We love a hard launch.

(Whispered, to Sienna)

Can't wait to see this sorry excuse for a sweatshop.

(To James)

Take care of your mother for me. You're the man of the house now.

PIA and JENSEN EXIT. Beat, then...

JAMES

Okay ladies, don't start fighting over me.

RIDHI

(To Sienna)

What the fuck are you doing here?

JAMES

Whoa! You guys can work it out on the remix!

RIDHI

So what? Is this a scam? You're con artists?

SIENNA

I wasn't in it for the money, that was Jensen!

JAMES

(Slowly realizing)

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Wait a minute. No one cares about me finding love?

SIENNA

Ridhi, I'm so fucking sorry—/

RIDHI

I don't care.

You're just a basic. Unaware. Privileged. White. Bitch.

Get out of my house.

JAMES

(Puppy dog eyes)

Do I have to go, too?

RIDHI

YES.

JAMES

Vibes received. I'm gonna go get introspective.

Lights.

Scene 8: Pia's NGO – Evening

JENSEN and PIA overlook the valley
cradling Pia's NGO.

They're peering out over the AUDIENCE,
gesturing at them.

JENSEN

Oh my god. They look so...sad.

It's like we're *in* Slumdog Millionaire. This is real poverty.

PIA

(Taken aback)

Um. Respectfully, Mr. Jensen, no it's not.

Everything PIA shares onwards is serious,
honest, and true.

PIA (cont'd.)

These are up-to-code buildings, in which we provide these individuals—who have been rejected from their homes—with comfortable beds, current textbooks, and food-pyramid balanced meals.

JENSEN

I bet they eat and leave no crumbs.
Because of the...hunger.

PIA

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

JENSEN

Worse than Midtown during Rush Hour.

PIA

This isn't "real poverty."
Take a walk outside, a mile beyond these grounds, and you'll find real poverty.

JENSEN

Paint me a picture.

PIA

Well, our poverty line is 1,059 Rupees.
That's equal to, in Western dollars, 62 a month.
And over a third of our population lives beneath.

JENSEN

Wait—*lives* beneath?! That's not living. 62 is less than I pay at Trader Joe's a *week*, for one, when I'm not restocking sunflower butter and trade-free coffee.

PIA

You're fortunate.

JENSEN

(Big Realization)

I was...

Finally, JENSEN meets PIA eye-to-eye, in a more grounded, somber place.

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

A 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

Some of the boys are pretty young. Their parents kicked them out?

PIA

Tragically.
But on the bright side, they display an innate knack for style and design.

JENSEN

Well, yeah, because they're...

Instead of saying the word "gay," JENSEN
does a limp-wristed, "gay hand" gesture.

PIA doesn't understand, so she just sorta
shrugs.

JENSEN (cont'd)

P. This is perfect.

PIA

Thank you. I've worked very hard to build this haven.

JENSEN

It's a goldmine! Like, this is really fucking tragic!
Williamsburg hipsters would eat this up, for their intermittent fasting breakfasts.
If we just created a website, added a livestream, incentivized donations—/

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

PIA

Livestream?

JENSEN

\$5 gets you a repurposed mug cozy! \$10 gets you...a branded tote bag!!

PIA

The last thing we need is exposure.

JENSEN

But, queers love exposure.

PIA

(Panicked, trying to shut him up)

Oh, Jensen, they're not—/

JENSEN

It's a selling point—/

PIA

They are not for sale!

JENSEN

Woah...I never thought they were. I think we're misunderstanding each other.
I just want...to broadcast a universal sob-story, connect with Sarah McLachlan, and
launch a queer focused campaign next Pride Month.

PIA

Lower your voice, you simple-minded fool.
Don't you understand why they're here?
This place is safe for them. Out on the streets, they could be killed.
I wanted your help raising wages, not awareness.

JENSEN

But awareness is the first step to acceptance.
And is it truly a safe space, if they can't be themselves?

PIA

We don't need your selfish American agenda.

JENSEN

This isn't an agenda! And it's not selfish!

PIA

Being yourself, and not caring about the consequences, is.
Go home, dear. You don't belong here.

Nothing else to say, JENSEN backs off, and
exits. Thunder claps. The monsoon is here.

Scene 9: Around New Delhi – Sunset

The rain has come upon Delhi. Imagine, if
you will, the following montage riddled with
dramatic Bollywood choreography to the
theme of "self-discovery."

Lights up on JAMES, in his dorm room,
reading the book of poetry. Kamala
Suraiyya's poem, *Introduction*:

JAMES

"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."

As JAMES reads, we spotlight each
character in their own introspective moment.

The DANCERS interweave between them,
connecting all characters with the Red
Thread of Fate.

First up. PIA, in her home. She's watching
the news again, a recent instance of
homophobia or movement on the debate
front, discouraged and scared.

JAMES (cont'd.)

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

Now, RIDHI joins onstage, back at the
marketplace, wearing the outfit Sienna
picked out for her, reflecting in the mirror.

The DANCERS comfort her.

JAMES (cont'd.)

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

Now, JENSEN joins, stumbling along the
street, taking in the “real poverty”
referenced by Pia.

JENSEN sends a text, projected onscreen:

U up?

He awaits a response.

JAMES (cont'd.)

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

JENSEN’S phone rings. He answers:

JENSEN

Hey, dad.

At the same time, SIENNA walks out, also
alone in the city, already on the phone.

SIENNA

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

JENSEN

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

No, yeah. India's actually... been kind of beautiful?

SIENNA

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

SIENNA is embarrassed to be answering
these questions from her parents:

SIENNA & JENSEN

No malaria mosquitoes. No ISIS terrorists.

SIENNA

No, I'd rather not wait until half-time...

SIENNA & JENSEN

I'll make this quick.

SIENNA

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

Cheering is heard on the other side of her
phone. SIENNA is euphoric.

SIENNA

I wasn't expecting that.

JENSEN

Thank you for cutting me off.

SIENNA

Thank you for...

Oh. You were cheering for a touchdown? Gotcha.

Um, yeah. I said I'M GAY.

JENSEN

I've learned a lot, and...thank you for accepting me. I've come to realize, not all parents
are so accepting...Who'da thunk?

SIENNA

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

SIENNA, JENSEN, RIDHI, and PIA all
take a deep breath. They exit. Leaving
JAMES to close with:

JAMES

“I who laughs.
Who makes love, then feels shame.
Who have lost my way, and now begs at strangers doors
to receive love in small change.
I have no joys that are not yours.
No aches which are not yours.
I am sinner. I am saint.
I am Beloved and Betrayed.
I too call myself I.”

JAMES steps into the light. The monsoon
breaks. He takes a deep breath.

The DANCERS conclude their sequence.

Scene 10: Pia & Ridhi's Household – Dusk

RIDHI ENTERS, curt and damp, still in the
outfit from the marketplace.

PIA

Where have you been? *Mainne kol kiya.*

RIDHI

My phone died.

PIA

I thought *you* died.

RIDHI

You never worry about me like this.

PIA

And you never...look like this.

RIDHI

Lucky for you, I'm here to change. For my graduation party.

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

PIA

I too have undergone a change. Of mind.
You don't have to get married. You're welcome.

RIDHI

Wait, what?

PIA

You were right. Education is of utmost importance—/

RIDHI

No, *Amma*, it's okay, I'm actually—/

PIA

It fell through with Mr. Jensen.

RIDHI

Yeah, I figured. I know this marriage with Jignesh—or James or whatever his name
is—was a sham. But I actually am ready to get married. I think things will just...be easier
that way.

PIA

Come. Sit. Can I get you something?

RIDHI

...Chai's fine.
I'm sorry you can't expand your passion project.

PIA

It's fine. Milk?

RIDHI nods.

PIA prepares the tea, then sits in silence next
to her daughter. Something's bothering PIA.
Something she's scared to ask.

PIA

Ridhi?

My children, at the NGO.

Do you believe they, as you say, “drink coffee?”

Beat.

RIDHI

Yes. Your children are sipping what society says we shouldn’t drink.

Both grow emotional.

PIA

I’m scared to let...them...live a life considered shameful.

It can be lonely, and painful.

RIDHI

I know, *Amma*. I know.

PIA

Okay, Ridhi. I...

Neither knows what to say. Eventually, the tension is broken by...

Knock, knock, knock.

JENSEN arrives at the back door, rapping on the glass.

PIA (cont’d.)

Mr. Jensen? You are a back door man?

JENSEN

Well, *that’s* an accurate preface to this conversation.

RIDHI

What are you doing here?

With a dramatic “shhhh,” JENSEN produces posters, like in [*Love, Actually*](#).

To soundtrack this 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 knew?!

PIA

(Almost impressed)

I expected you to break earlier, but you really are Greed and Manipulation incarnate.

JENSEN

Why'd you let me go on for so long?!

PIA

You were our potential golden ticket to independence.

But alas. Beat.

JENSEN

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

This is going to sound crazy. But, I think I had this preconceived notion of India. Get this—it's not a Bollywood movie! Or Slumdog Millionaire!

RIDHI

No shit.

JENSEN (cont'd)

You don't have any reason to believe me, because I *have* been lying this entire time, but I really do want to help.

But...plot twist: I don't have money. Anymore.

Apparently, investing in OceanGate's titanic submersible was a bad idea. So, my parents are teaching me a lesson or something.

RIDHI

I guess it worked?

JENSEN

I guess so. Who knew being financially dependent on someone else kinda blows?

RIDHI and PIA share a knowing look.

JENSEN (cont'd)

Oh, that reminds me.

JENSEN hands back the dowry. PIA looks down at the money, then back at JENSEN.

PIA

Jensen? Do you know of the Red Thread of Fate?

JENSEN

The period thing?

RIDHI

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

(To herself)

Even when they're a basic, unaware, privileged white bitch...

(Back to Pia)

I'm headed to the party.

JENSEN

Oooh, I love a party, where at?

RIDHI

No. Don't follow me. Either of you. I've had enough of your antics. Please just let me be miserable among my peers one last time.

RIDHI exits. After a moment:

JENSEN

Pia. Can I just say...you're kind of a queer icon.

PIA

What?

JENSEN

You're housing children whose parents foresaw their sexualities and kicked them out. You don't force help. You *ask* if they like—fashion?! Come on, queen. You know what you're doing.

PIA

I do...I think.

But your pronouns, and your orientations of sexuality...
Sometimes, it's hard for me to follow.

JENSEN

All that's just language.

PIA

Language.

JENSEN

But, even if you keep it hush-hush here, I think you can safely signal your cause to a broader audience.

You may not have an investor. But you have the internet.
And you know who uses the internet?

(Gesturing to himself)

Trend-chasing twinkies with savior complexes!

PIA

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

I can't believe I'm saying this, but...

I've got to try, no?

If this can create a financially sustainable future for all of us, and protect my kids...

Jensen, what do you say to being my business...assistant?

JENSEN

OMG, P. That is only my highest honor and dream. I'll root all my practices in holistic approaches and decolonize my mind daily. I won't be your white-in-shining-armor, but I will be your white hand man. Oh, help, was *that* racist?

PIA

We'll work on the language.

JENSEN

Language.

(Beat, recalling)

WAIT! Hold up. Did Ridhi say "basic, unaware, privileged white bitch?"

Pia! Can the Red Thread of Fate be like...a rainbow thread?

PIA

Umm...sure?

JENSEN

Where's Ridhi's graduation party?

PIA

Hauz Khas.

JENSEN

I'll meet you there!

PIA

But she doesn't want us there! How do we go without her seeing us?

JENSEN

Right...

Hmm. Scratching their heads and chins, they think...and think...and think...Until!

PIA

Jensen! I have a beyond brilliant plan! Do you like disguises?

JENSEN

SAY. LESS.

They run off, and the space morphs into...

Scene 11: Hauz Khas Village – Night

Electric lights flash and music pulses.

At a Hauz Khas bar, in the outskirts of Delhi, RIDHI stands alone on the dance floor, drink in hand. She's, like, really going through it.

Her inner thoughts are back and more alive than ever! The DANCERS are grooving, tossing back shots, living their best life. RIDHI dodges their sharp moves.

DANCER #1

Oh my god, this party is so FUN!

DANCER #2

Maybe we should've made an effort to make more friends here!

RIDHI

Can't you guys see I want to be alone?!

DANCER #2

Babes, you came to a party full of people.

DANCER #1

Yeah, because she's looking for Jaaaames!

RIDHI

I am not!

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

DANCER #1

I mean, maybe James makes sense now? If you play your cards right, you could get your love marriage after all!

DANCER #2

He'd be chill.

RIDHI

But would I be happy?

JAMES ENTERS, toting his poetry
book...and some new reading glasses.

DANCER #1

There he is! Don't fuck this up for us!

DANCER #2

Are those...glasses? Growth maybe?

DANCER #1

Maybe this is life, Ridhi. Sacrifice. Even in love.

JAMES

Hey!

RIDHI

Hi! You came.

JAMES

You invited me.

RIDHI

I remember.

Awkward pause. What do they say?

JAMES

Remember when we were almost married?

RIDHI

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Yup...

JAMES

But, good news! I finally met The One...It's me.

DANCER #1

Damn, we've lost him to self-love.

JAMES

I've been reading the poetry book you gave me. Even finished my group project. By myself. I just can't get over how Kamala Suraiyya unpacks the cognitive dissonance of the South Asian diaspora...

DANCER #2

Ah, what the hell.

RIDHI

You want a drink?

JAMES and RIDHI move aside to get a drink at the bar.

The following sequence happens entirely on the dance floor, as the DANCERS dart in and out, bust moves, and heighten the chaos, to a Bollywood dance number.

JENSEN and PIA enter, in disguise! PIA is dressed as a janitor, wheeling a trash can, with JENSEN inside. He is wearing a trash bag, with holes for his head and arms.

JENSEN places a fake mustache on PIA, completing her fit. He gives her a thumbs up, then runs offstage.

Then JENSEN re-enters, pushing a dazed, despondent SIENNA.

SIENNA

Jens, stop, I don't want to do this...

JENSEN

(Over the music)

WHAT?! You said you want Ridhi to give you a kiss?!

From PIA's trash can, JENSEN pulls out chocolates, flowers, and notecards, forcing them upon SIENNA.

SIENNA

No, this is ridiculous...

JENSEN

Yes, Ridhi! Kiss!

RIDHI and JAMES return, as JENSEN leaps back into the trash can.

SIENNA is left standing there, lifeless, arms full of unsolicited gifts.

JAMES

(To Sienna)

Well, well, well...look who came crawling back.

RIDHI

Are you fucking kidding me?

SIENNA

(Reading from the cards, dazed)

I...I'm just a girl. Standing in front of a girl. Asking her to... love... me?

RIDHI

/WOAH./

SIENNA

/FUCK THIS!./

SIENNA chucks all the items to the floor.

JENSEN peers over the trash can:

JENSEN

(Whispers)

Si Si, you dropped the notecards.

SIENNA

(To Jensen)

I AM MY OWN PERSON!

(To Ridhi)

I am my own person, and I'm not here to profess my love. Or ask for forgiveness. I just want to talk.

DANCER #1

Maybe we should hear her out...

DANCER #2

Nah, you should hit her!

DANCER #1

No, don't hit her! But Ridhi. Let. It. All. Out.

RIDHI

Yeah, sorry, "Mrs. Jensen," but I've reached my white guilt quota for the year. I watch versions of you every semester, eat-pray-loving your way through my country. You come here to make a difference. And you do! You make it worse. Maybe you're drawn to suffering, because you've never known it.

SIENNA

Ha! I've never known suffering?!
How do you know? You've never asked.

RIDHI

Because I don't care! Just go back to where you came from, and spend your days sipping matcha lattes at hot yoga.

SIENNA

Hot yoga?! I can't even afford cold yoga! That's why I teach. I'm poor. And not, like, "I shop at Goodwill for fun" poor, but like "I skip meals for 3 days" poor.

RIDHI

You want to talk about hunger? Your people starved my people for 300 years!

SIENNA

Oh, please, I've seen your house. Your kitchen is the size of the trailer I grew up in. What caste are you even in?

RIDHI

(Defensive)

That's irrelevant...

SIENNA

Is it?

RIDHI

That money is my dad's. That house? Is my dad's. And when I get married? That house will be my husband's. And you wanna know why? BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN.

SIENNA

So am I!

RIDHI

NO! I am not competing in some kind of minority olympics with you! You don't get it! And you never will!

And you know what sucks?! I liked you. I really liked you.

I had these voices in my head, saying this was wrong, and I ignored them. I didn't even know I could feel this way, for so long, and I opened up to you, I trusted you...

(Realizing)

And my mom...what am I going to tell my mom?

"Surprise! I'm queer!?"

Everyone freezes.

Slowly, PIA strips off her mustache.

Surprise, indeed! PIA walks to RIDHI and places her hand on Ridhi's shoulder.

PIA

I don't know the right thing to say.

JENSEN

Pia, it's just language.

PIA

(Deep breath)

I love you, and I'm sorry.

And I will always be here, with chai *and* coffee, for all of you.

Beat, until...

JAMES

Uh...now what?

RIDHI

Well, this isn't a Bollywood film.

This isn't going to cut to "1 year later" and everything's perfect—/

BLACKOUT.

Projection screen reads:

Scene 11: 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 the *mandap*—a tent with four posts.

JENSEN and PIA bustle about with clipboards and earpieces, looking out over the audience, our wedding guests.

PIA

Our guests are arriving! Dressed to the nines...

(Unimpressed aside)

Out of 100. But in their defense, they're only American.

(To Jensen)

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

They're growing restless for the grand finale, but we can't begin the ceremony without James! Where's James?!

JENSEN

Bathroom.

PIA

Here? What's the equivalent to Delhi Belly?
Brooklyn Belly? Manhattan Tummy?

JENSEN

Oh, turns out, he wasn't dealing with Delhi Belly abroad.
He just had IBS the whole time.

(Receiving a text)

Ah! Text text from the Ridhster... "The fortune is ready to be shared!" And her name means "fortune," which is code for... it's go-time, people!!

PIA

(To Audience)

Look alive!! Laugh! cry!

(To Jensen, serious and hype)

Mr. Jensen. Let's fucking go?!

JENSEN

Pia, thank you for matching my freak.

PIA and JENSEN take their places beneath
the canopy, with JENSEN as the officiant.

JENSEN

Ahem.

We open today with a Land Acknowledgment. We are currently standing on sacred Indian Land. Indian, like—India! Like, we're imagining we're in India! Not, Indian like...

Okay. Restart.

We've all been pulled here today, by the Red Thread of Fate.

And why exactly...are we all here?

You...can decide that for yourselves.

Let's begin.

JAMES, RIDHI, and SIENNA all enter from different directions and aisles.

RIDHI is wearing her outfit from the market. SIENNA is dressed in red.

All three step slowly to the front. Dramatic pause, and then...

SIENNA

(Reciting, like an actor, awkward)

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

RIDHI

(Also rigid and unnatural)

And now I will share a quote by a famous figurehead, who reigns over *your* land.
“Isn’t it just so pretty to think, all along, there was some invisible string tying me to you?” That’s, uh, T-Swift.

Facing each other, both snort, holding in laughter.

JENSEN

(Hushed, to only the couple)

Keep it together, kids! It’s working!

PIA

(Showing her phone)

Our viewer count is blowing up...

RIDHI and SIENNA contain themselves.

JENSEN nods to JAMES, who strides to the couple.

JAMES speaks out to the audience, talking in the same contrived manner.

JAMES

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

First, as the stand-in for Sienna's family. It is my duty. To shower the couple with rice.
Contrary to popular belief, boys, carbs *can* fit into your macros!

JAMES poses and kisses his bicep, then extends his hand towards Jensen.

JAMES (cont'd.)

Jens? The rice?

JENSEN whips out a packet of steaming, freshly microwaved...

JAMES (cont'd.)

This is quinoa.

JENSEN

(To audience, 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

Close all your eyes, ladies, including your third...

JAMES plops clumpy grains atop both their heads.

JENSEN

Cute.
And finally, we join Pia, our CEO.
Our... "SHE-E-O" ...under the mandap.

PIA

Typically, the mandap is held up by four people, each of the newlywed's parents.
But Ridhi has only me now.

RIDHI

Thank God for that!

PIA

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

And for all my children, I can uphold the house and raise the roof.

PIA hoists the entire tent overhead.

SIENNA

(Continuing the “script”)

To finish this era, “Hell was the Journey...”

RIDHI

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

SIENNA

No, that was magical! We got to catch up on Bollywood...and crush some bussin’ snacks! Thanks to...

RIDHI & SIENNA

American Airlines and Air India.

EVERYONE salutes, with broad smiles.

RIDHI

(Finishing the line)

“Hell *was* the journey, but it brought me Heaven.”

And I don’t know if I believe in eternal happiness.

But I enjoy this moment right now.

SIENNA

You do?

RIDHI

I do. You too?

SIENNA

I do.

JENSEN speaks into an earpiece.

JENSEN

Cue dancers...

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

The DANCERS prance in, twirling their
Red Thread of Fate and...

Modeling Pia's upcycled sarees in rainbow
colors!

RIDHI

(To Sienna)

Oh my god. Those dancers look just like the annoying voices in my head.

SIENNA

Do you still see them a lot?

RIDHI

Not really. Not anymore.

SIENNA and RIDHI smile at each other,
earnest.

EVERYONE else freezes, posing, beaming.

PIA

And...CUT!

Let's reset for our next shot.

Cast and crew, take tea.

ALL

Thank you, Tea.

The actors disperse. JAMES and JENSEN
pair off to catch up.

JENSEN

James, my boy. I'm so proud.

JIGNESH

I actually go by Jignesh now.

JENSEN

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

Slay.

JIGNESH

I can't believe you guys live in India now. Do you hate it?

JENSEN

I love it.

I bought a rickshaw!!

What's new with you?

JIGNESH

Well. Life update.

I'm a writer now.

You know, the "SoundCloud rapper to poet prodigy pipeline."

JENSEN

I always knew you had it in you.

JIGNESH

I'm actually writing "a piece" right now, about you guys.

JENSEN

Omg, flattered!

JIGNESH

It's called... White Bitches in Delhi.

JENSEN

Wait. Is this fucking play about us?

Aside, RIDHI and SIENNA come together.

RIDHI

Well, that was fun. Pretending to be a couple.

SIENNA

We're really good actors.

RIDHI

Naturals.

SIENNA

I know that whole shebang was...pretty absurd and extra...

RIDHI

Sure, but hey, everybody wins!

We're all coming together, to uplift and financially support our communities.

SIENNA

While you and I get to continue negotiating the dynamics of our relationship, day by day.
Over coffee.

RIDHI

If you think about it, it's kind of like an arranged marriage.

SIENNA

Call it a...marriage arrangement.

RIDHI

That should be an option on Shaadi.com.

The not-couple-couple laughs.

RIDHI (cont'd)

Thank you for letting me be myself.

SIENNA

Thank you for letting me better myself.

RIDHI

I wouldn't be fighting to legalize gay marriage in India with a law degree if it weren't for you.

SIENNA

I wouldn't be okay with the fact that I'm still figuring it out if it weren't for you.

RIDHI

Damn, these should've been our vows.

SIENNA

They could be! Someday! I mean, like, if you'd ever even *want* that—/

WHITE BITCHES IN DELHI

RIDHI

No, yeah, that could be—cool someday—/

SIENNA

Someday!

RIDHI

If the planet hasn't combusted by then.

SIENNA

Yeah, no, we're doomed.

RIDHI

New York is so frickin' humid now.

RIDHI and SIENNA smirk, then turn away,
blushing. Until...

PIA rushes in, waving her phone.

PIA

Family! It's time to BeReal!

PIA corrals the cast in for a selfie, capturing
the AUDIENCE in it, too.

Music kicks in—something upbeat and
festive, like *Subha Hone Na De*, a wedding
classic.

The DANCERS and CAST break into a
Bollywood™ dance finale, as we celebrate,
in this dark world, a relatively hopeful...

End of Play.