

Going Bollywood

by  
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INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, "THE LATER THAN LATE SHOW" - NIGHT

Talk show host TREVOR BAYRIDGE is interviewing RAJA PATEL, a handsome Indian-American movie star dripping with charisma.

RAJA

...and then Apu's wife says, "How do you expect me to cum again if you won't stop thanking me?!"

The AUDIENCE bursts into LAUGHTER.

RAJA (CONT'D)

(Indian accent)

Thank you come again!

TREVOR

Oh Raja that is just...so wrong!

RAJA

I am sorry effendi! I know not what I do!

More LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE.

TREVOR

As you know, I'm here with Raja Patel. You loved him in "Bombay Sapphire" and "Dude Where's My Carpet?" But he's here tonight to talk about his new film, "Slurp Dog Sitar Playa."

RAJA

That's right Trevor, and when I say "Playa" I'm talking about the guy who pulls in the pretties with titties, you know what I mean? Not "La Playa," like a Mexican beach or anything. 'Cause you know how Indians are about sand...

TREVOR

No Raja, how are they?

RAJA

They hate how it gets all over their dirt!

The audience LAUGHS again.

TREVOR

Raja, you are one of the most hilarious, off-the-wall guests that we've ever had on this show. But I have to ask, don't you ever worry that some of your Indian fans might be offended by your humor?

RAJA

No. Ha! Not a chance Trevor. If there are three things I know about Indians, it's that they have too many kids, not enough toilets and way too much love for Raja Patel.

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER, INDIA - DAY

A room full of Indian TELEMARETERS look up at Raja's interview being broadcast on an overhead monitor.

TELEMARETERS

Fuck off Patel!

CUT TO:

CREDITS. MUSIC -- Indian Hip Hop -- plays over the following images, leading to the title card.

FLASH IMAGE: A NEWSPAPER shows Raja in a head wrap, holding a microphone. The headline reads "INDIAN COMIC ENCOURAGES AUDIENCES TO 'TAJ MA-HOLLA BACK.'"

FLASH IMAGE: A COLOR PHOTO of Raja winking at the camera as he accepts a "TEEN CHOICE AWARD."

FLASH IMAGE: An ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY COVER featuring Raja wearing a bindi and the headline "THE DOT IS HOT."

FLASH IMAGE: A MOVIE POSTER featuring Raja and ROB SCHNEIDER - "INDIAN JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF PUNJAB."

FLASH IMAGE: Raja on the cover of US WEEKLY with JESSICA BIEL and the headline "RAJA PATEL CONFESSES: 'I'M THE SNAKE CHARMER OF HOLLYWOOD!'"

FLASH IMAGE: Raja on an ALBUM COVER, wearing headphones and singing into a studio microphone. The title is "RAJA PATEL - BROWN ON BOTH SIDES."

FLASH IMAGE: Raja on the cover of HIGH TIMES holding a bong. The headline reads "THAT GANJES GANJA."

FLASH IMAGE: Raja on the cover of PLAYGIRL wearing a tiny piece of cloth and the headline "IT'S SARONG BUT IT FEEL SO RIGHT!"

FLASH IMAGE: Raja on the cover of OUT wearing a smaller piece of cloth and the headline "RAJA PATEL: 'I'M INTO WHATEVER.'"

FLASH IMAGE: TITLE CARD - A NEWSPAPER featuring a smiling Raja and the headline "EVERYBODY'S GOING BOLLYWOOD."

MUSIC ENDS. ZOOM IN on Raja's face.

BACK TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

TREVOR

...and with four number one films in the last three years, there seems to be no lack of love for you in America either.

RAJA

It's the dimples.

More audience LAUGHTER.

RAJA (CONT'D)

No man, seriously, Americans love me because I show them what real Indians are like. I give them India by an Indian. You see Trevor, I know India. I was born there, I grew up there, and I make it back there every couple of years to visit my grandparents. See this?

He pulls a LOCKET from underneath his shirt.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I always wear this locket that my grandmother gave me. Inside it has a picture of me as a baby...see? Even then I was a little heartbreaker...

CUT TO:

INT. CALL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

HARISH, one of the Indian employees from the previous scene, watches this moment on the monitor. He fingers a similar locket around his own neck, shaking his head in disgust.

TREVOR (O.S.)

Awww...

HARISH

You bloody liar.

BACK TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

RAJA

...and then on the back it has the phone number of their farm in India. My Grandmother told me it was "In case I ever lost my way." 'Course I said, "Grandma, that's why I have a chauffeur!" And she's like, "What's a chauffeur?" And then we laughed and hugged.

The audience SIGHS appreciatively.

TREVOR

Well...that's very touching Raja.  
(to camera)

My guest tonight is Raja Patel. His new movie "Slurp Dog Sitar Playa" premieres this weekend in LA...

RAJA

An exclusive event...ladies two-for-one!

TREVOR

Now I understand that you've brought a clip from the film. Do you want to tell us a little about what we're going to see?

RAJA

Ah, yeah. See Trevor, this movie was a real labor of love for me, and I mean that in a very sexual way.

More LAUGHS.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Not only did I write, direct and produce this bad boy, I play about fourteen different characters...and only half of them have these dimples! Now that was a stretch.

TREVOR

(cracking up)

Raja, you are just...

RAJA

Word. Anyway, this is the scene where Akbar is getting interrogated. Hit it!

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A scene from "SLURP DOG SITAR PLAYA." AKBAR, a kid from the streets, is tied to a chair and being interrogated by a THUG wearing an eye patch. Raja plays both characters, each with a goofy, overdone Indian accent.

THUG

How did you know all the answers?  
You must have been cheating!

AKBAR

No, I swear!

THUG

Liar! How could you know all those things? The components of a drive shaft? The periodic table? The boiling point of cheese-whiz?

AKBAR

It is destiny! My father was a cab driver, my mother was a doctor and my uncle worked in 7-11!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

The movie is playing on a large screen in front of a packed house. It is the night of the premier. As the movie progresses, we pan across the faces in the crowd and see chuckles fading into polite smiles. Raja sits front row center, grinning broadly the entire time.

ON SCREEN the thug hits Akbar again, then turns his back on him and speaks into a walkie-talkie.

THUG

He won't talk boss. I just don't get it...it's not like someone was feeding him the answers...

Akbar's BINDI starts flashing red. A GARBLED VOICE emits from his forehead.

VOICE

Akbar...come in Akbar...are you all right?

THUG

What was that?

AKBAR

Nothing!

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - LATER

The audience is less amused, slumping in their chairs. A few people have left. We see one AUDIENCE MEMBER lean over to another.

AUDIENCE 1

Is this guy serious?

AUDIENCE 2

I saw him do these jokes on "Ellen" three years ago!

ON SCREEN Akbar and his brother SANJE, also played by Raja, are facing off in a dirty apartment.

AKBAR

So it has come to this. Please, do not stand in my way Sanje. I must find Hashisha, my true love. Call off your snake. Let me take my magic carpet and go.

CLOSE ON a SNAKE IN A BASKET sitting in the corner, repeatedly biting a ROLLED-UP CARPET leaning next to it.

SANJE

You always had it so easy, didn't you brother? Well not anymore. I challenge you to...a yoga pose-off!

The two begin doing ridiculous poses.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - LATER

More audience GRUMBLING. A few more people get up to leave.

AUDIENCE 3  
This is bullshit.

AUDIENCE 4  
Yeah, this guys just makes the same  
movie over and over.

ON SCREEN Akbar has found the veiled HASHISHA. They stand on a balcony holding each other close. The TAJ MAHAL looms in the background.

HASHISHA.  
I knew you would find me Akbar! But  
how did you know the answers?

AKBAR  
It was destiny!

His bindi beeps and flashes. He takes it off and throws it away as the carpet flies by in the background.

HASHISH  
Well Akbar, now that you have me  
alone, what are you going to do  
with me?

AKBAR  
We're going to write the sequel to  
the Kama Sutra together. We'll call  
it...the "I'm 'a Do Ya."

SOFT MUSIC.

LIGHTS DIM ON SCREEN. Hashisha slowly peels away her veil, revealing Raja's face superimposed on a woman's body.

AUDIENCE 2  
Damn.

AKBAR  
You're even more beautiful that I  
imagined.

As Akbar moves in to kiss her, several audience members recoil in horror.

AUDIENCE 4

Man, this is messed up.

Raja makes-out with the female version of himself.

SLOW FADE into a SEX MONTAGE. Raja makes love to himself on silken pillows in every position imaginable, both of his faces contorting wildly in pleasure.

AUDIENCE 1

I'm out of here.

AUDIENCE 2

I am so sick of this fucking guy.

The remainder of the audience walks out leaving Raja alone in the front row.

ZOOM IN on Raja's face, still smiling, unaware of his film's failure.

RAJA

Raja Patel...you ARE India.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S OFFICE - DAY

Raja sits in a small office across from his manager, BOBBY SHAH, a short, middle aged Indian man wearing a maroon track suit and several gold chains.

BOBBY

Raja Patel...you're broke.

RAJA

The market's over saturated.

BOBBY

Your movie was the biggest flop in twenty years. It made "Pluto Nash" look like "Coming to America."

RAJA

Everybody has a rough patch.

BOBBY

Raja, sweetheart, you can't afford to buy a pair of shoes. And you like cheap shoes.

RAJA

(hurt)

Dude.

BOBBY

I warned you Raja. You hit at a good time, but you would never show any diversity! I begged you, do a romantic comedy, a psychological thriller, even a bloody horror movie, but no! Always with these goofball, semi-racist comedies.

RAJA

Semi...! Man, what the hell are you talking about?

BOBBY

If you make fun of your own people too much, eventually everyone will turn on you. Look at Pauly Shore!

RAJA

Bobby, Indian people love me! If I wanted to go Bollywood I could rule that country in a heartbeat!

BOBBY

So how come you've never done an Indian film in your life?

RAJA

Because India's a shithole! They have no flat screens! They have no golf courses! And they sure as shit don't have any white women!

BOBBY

How would you even know that? You haven't been there in years, and the last time you did go it was for one photo shoot and I practically had to kidnap you! You've forgotten how to speak Tamil and you never visit your family...despite going on and on about that bloody locket...

RAJA

Dude bro, that's the authentic shit! I thought that was what you wanted!

BOBBY

Look, Raja, I don't know how else to say this to you...you're box office poison. That movie flopped so bad the bloody extras got blacklisted. No producer in Hollywood will work with you. You spent all your money on that publicity tour. You can't work, you can't go out, and you can't bloody well pay me.

RAJA

Oh what, are you gonna abandon me now?

BOBBY

Sweetheart, you know I don't want it to come to that...

RAJA

You've been with me since the beginning!

BOBBY

I know.

RAJA

I bought you a house!

BOBBY

I know.

RAJA

Shaped like a baby grand!

BOBBY

I know!

CUT TO:

EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Bobby is sitting by a pool sipping a martini, listening to FRANK SINATRA, his piano-shaped house in the background.

BOBBY

I am a rat pack of one.

BACK TO:

INT. BOBBY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RAJA

Plus I'm the only client you have!

BOBBY

I know I've been a little lazy. I thought you would follow my advice!

RAJA

Alright, so what do you advise now?

BOBBY

The way I see it you have two options. Number one: Look for a job in India. I know a producer there. When I was younger we used to...work together.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK ALLEY, INDIA - NIGHT

A YOUNG BOBBY and another YOUNG INDIAN MAN are severely beating a THIRD. They stop and look at each other. We hear the beginning of a POIGNANT SOUND CUE.

BACK TO:

INT. BOBBY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RAJA

Whatever.

BOBBY

Not whatever. He's a big deal in the Indian film industry. He runs a studio in Puducherry, not far from where you were born. I'm sure I can get us a meeting. We can go whenever you want!

RAJA

To India?

BOBBY

No, to bloody Bangkok! Don't be an ass Raja, we haven't got the time. You can't do a Bollywood movie without going to India...

RAJA  
...which is out of the fucking  
question. What's option numero dos?

BOBBY  
You remember that standing offer we  
received right after you did  
"...Temple of Punjab?" From that  
Japanese company?

RAJA  
(paling)  
Yeah.

BOBBY  
That gig you swore you would never  
take no matter how low you sank?

RAJA  
Uh huh.

BOBBY  
That project you said was an  
affront to human dignity which you  
wouldn't let your disfigured corpse  
appear in?

Bobby hands him a mysterious BLACK BUSINESS CARD.

CLOSE ON the card. It reads "RISING PHOENIX."

RAJA  
Um...yes.

BOBBY  
That's option number dos  
sweetheart.

Raja grimaces.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

CLOSE ON Raja and Bobby's faces.

SLOW ZOOM OUT through the following dialogue.

RAJA  
I can't believe we're doing this.

BOBBY  
Relax, you're going to love it.

RAJA  
(shouting to a stewardess  
off-screen)  
Miss? Could you please turn the air  
on? It's a little bit stuffy in  
here.

STEWARDESS (O.S.)  
You just turn the nob!

RAJA  
I mean what kind of food are they  
going to have on an Indian flight  
anyway? This had better not be  
vegetarian. If I don't get some  
meat I'm going to be really cranky.

BOBBY  
I wonder what that will be like...

We start to see the other passengers sitting around them.  
They are all Indian, glaring intently at Raja.

RAJA  
And the other thing is...these  
pillows! I asked for down. Does  
this feel like down to you?

BOBBY  
You know I sleep in a water bed...

RAJA  
And you can't tell me that they ran  
out of blankets. How am I supposed  
to get by with just two blankets?  
There must be other people that  
like to sleep with their legs  
covered by two different blankets.

Raja gestures to his legs, then shivers.

BOBBY  
You might be surprised.

We now see that the entire plane is glaring at Raja.

RAJA  
I tell you man, I hate flying with  
Indians...they're the worst  
passengers ever!

He looks at the WOMAN to his left who is holding a small  
CHILD on her lap.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Is that kid gonna get sick on me?

WOMAN

God I hope so.

EXT. PUDUCHERRY, INDIA - DAY

HARISH is walking his bike through the city. He stops outside of a store and watches a BBC NEWS PROGRAM playing on the TV in the window.

NEWSCASTER

...the biggest Hollywood flop in twenty years. Several major studios have issued statements saying that they will never produce another of Raja Patel's movies. It is unsure what is next for the disgraced star, but a cryptic press release from his manager, Bobby Shah, announced his plans to "see what this Bollywood thing is all about," strengthening suspicions that Patel has left America to pursue a career in his homeland. How he will be received by the people who have been the butt of his jokes for most of his career is still very much in doubt. This is BBC world news...

HARISH

You finally went too far, didn't you Raja?

HARISH climbs on his bicycle and rides off into the crowd.

EXT. PUDUCHERRY AIRPORT TAXI LINE - DAY

Raja and Bobby stand by the dusty, crowded street, trying to hail a cab. Raja has many bags, including a guitar case.

BOBBY

Ah, it's good to be back! I already feel twenty years younger! It's something in the air I think. Do you feel it Raja?

RAJA

(coughing)

Oh yeah, I can feel it.

BOBBY

You see my lovely boy, India is going to be great for you. You've got to get back to your roots.

RAJA

Bobby, I left this place when I was five years old, right after I booked that PSA.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

A FIVE YEAR OLD RAJA is filming the PSA. He is dressed like the cartoon character HADJI. Next to him is another young actor dressed like JOHNNY QUEST.

JOHNNY QUEST

Well Hadji, do you remember what to say if Mr. Bannon touches you again in the "Uh Oh Place?"

FIVE YEAR OLD RAJA

No means no!

BACK TO:

EXT. PUDUCHERRY AIRPORT TAXI LINE - MOMENTS LATER

RAJA

I've been back here once since then and I got so sick I barely left the bathroom. I've got no roots here.

BOBBY

Whatever you say my friend. Just don't drink the water this time, alright? You'll be fine.

RAJA

All I know is that this guy had better have air-conditioning.

The woman from the plane walks by carrying the toddler. Just as a cab pulls up the child leans over and pukes all over Raja's shirt.

INT. C.G.'S OFFICE - DAY

A SECRETARY ushers Bobby and Raja into the office of C.G. BASHYAM, a wealthy Bollywood film producer.

SECRETARY

Please make yourselves comfortable.  
Mr. Bashyam will be with you in  
just a moment.

RAJA

Wow, you weren't kidding about this  
guy Bobby. Looks like he's b-b-b-  
ballin'!

BOBBY

Oh C.G. has always been on top of  
the bloody heap. A real man's man.  
We met in the slums of New Deli,  
thirty years ago. I always knew  
that when the shit hit the fan,  
C.G. would have my back. We almost  
went into the Bollywood business  
together, before I left for  
America.

RAJA

Why did you leave? What happened?

BOBBY

I slept with his wife.

RAJA

Oh.

BOBBY

Many, many times.

RAJA

That would have been good to know.

C.G. (O.C.)

There's probably quite a lot that  
your manager hasn't told you about  
himself Mr. Patel.

C.G. stands in the doorway. He is a well-dressed, attractive,  
middle-aged Indian man.

BOBBY

Good thing neither of us is in the  
business of selling secrets, right  
C.G.?

C.G.

Right you are old friend. It's good to see you again.

They embrace.

RAJA

Hey Seege! Great to meet you. Raja Patel of the Raja Patel franchise, maybe you've seen some of my work.

C.G.

(shooting Bobby a look)

Unfortunately yes. Seeing as you were Bobby's pet project in the states I've taken a particular interest in your career, including its latest tragic turn. I understand that you're here looking for work.

RAJA

Never that! I'd say more like a collaboration. I'm bringing you some fresh ideas from the other side of the world C-diddy!

BOBBY

Raja...

RAJA

It's like this: I lend you my star power, help you gross...what, back home it was like 100 million a flick...here there are way more people but the money's worth nothing so...I don't know, you do the math. A shit-ton of rupees or whatever.

BOBBY

Raja, stop...

RAJA

And in return you let me add a little flair to the Indian film scene.

BOBBY

Raja, seriously...

RAJA

For starters...let me just throw something at you...less Tamil, more titties.

BOBBY

Raja!

RAJA

Titties are the international language!

BOBBY

RAJA!

RAJA

What man?

BOBBY

For God's sake shut up!

C.G.

I think I'm beginning to see why your career followed the course that it did Raja. You never listen to your manager.

BOBBY

Didn't I say that? What did I say?

C.G.

Raja, I want to show you something.

He pushes a button on the desk activating a large TV on the opposite wall. It begins to show CLIPS of Raja playing various stereotypical Indian characters.

C.G

Raja, I believe that your films have single-handedly set the South-Asian subcontinent back at least fifty years. In terms of national tragedies, you're pretty much neck and neck with the British occupation.

RAJA

Hey now...

C.G.

You claim to show the American people "Real Indians," but all you do is exploit the stereotypes that have plagued us for generations.

(MORE)

C.G. (CONT'D)  
 Where is this self-proclaimed  
 "authenticity"?

He pauses on a clip of Raja in a minimalist stage production.

C.G. (CONT'D)  
 Remember this? Three years ago you  
 had to opportunity to perform  
 "Waiting for Godot" at Lincoln  
 Center. Do you know how many actors  
 would have killed for that chance?  
 It could have been a ground-  
 breaking piece of theatre,  
 contrasting Becket's abstract  
 masterpiece with the displaced  
 nature of modern Indian-American  
 life. Instead...

He fast-forwards to a close-up shot of Raja's face. He is  
 wearing brown make-up.

C.G. (CONT'D)  
 ...you chose to do the production  
 in brown-face. What...even is that?  
 brown-face? Really? It's so  
 offensive, and it doesn't even make  
 sense!

BOBBY  
 I remember being very against that  
 at the time.

RAJA  
 Hey man, that whole run was sold  
 out!

C.G.  
 So was "Beverly Hill's Chihuahua."  
 So was Paris Hilton's concert tour.  
 Americans are idiots. It doesn't  
 let you of the hook.

BOBBY  
 C.G., listen...the kid's made some  
 mistakes. But he's got talent, you  
 can't argue with that. And I think  
 we both know that I wouldn't have  
 come to you like this if we weren't  
 desperate. Can you help us? Please?

C.G.  
 Bobby, you know I love you like a  
 brother.

(MORE)

C.G. (CONT'D)

You got me out of that Opium den in Afghanistan and put me back on my feet.

RAJA

Wha...?

C.G.

You took a bullet for my youngest son. You rescued my wife from the Indian sex market.

BOBBY

(hanging his head)

I did not intend for her to find me so attractive while I was doing so.

C.G.

I know old friend. And I would love to help you if I could, but this one...I can't do anything with him. He can't sing. He can't dance or speak Tamil, let alone Hindi. He doesn't know the first thing about his own people. Raja, have you ever even seen a Bollywood film?

RAJA

Does "Bend It Like Beckham" count?

C.G.

Let's say that it does.

RAJA

Then no.

C.G.

Raja, if I made a movie with you I would be thrown out of this country. Until you can show me some shred of genuine Indian values I'm afraid there's nothing I can do for you.

Raja turns away to face the window, letting it sink in.

RAJA

Fine. You know what? Fuck you. And fuck this place. I was doing fine without you and your little fledgling film industry and I don't need you now!

C.G.

Raja, Bollywood is the largest film industry in the world.

RAJA

Oh what, now you're just gonna make stuff up? Can you believe this Bobby?

BOBBY

It's true sweetheart.

RAJA

Well...how am I supposed to believe you anyway? You always told me you were a tailor back in India! You took a bullet for his...what? Stay here if you want Bobby, but I'm catching the first plan home.

He storms out, slamming the door behind him. Bobby and C. G. stand in awkward silence for a moment.

BOBBY

So...how is the sex market these days?

EXT. PUDUCHERRY STREET - DUSK

Raja emerges into the bustling street as dusk is falling. He clutches his bags and mumbles angrily. He no longer has the guitar case.

RAJA

Don't know shit about India?  
Motherfucker I AM India! I've done so much for these fucking people! The first Indian to have a VH1 special! The first Indian slimed on Nickelodeon! Set the Indian people back...what the hell have you done that's so fuckin' great? Sittin' here in this fuckin'..this fuckin'...

He looks around.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Where the fuck am I?

He spots two young KIDS playing in the street.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Kids! Hey kids! Could you...uh...do  
 you know a motel around here or...?

The kids stare at him and giggle.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 (gestures)  
 Hotel...motel...Holiday Inn?

The first kid nods and picks up one of Raja's bags, walking off down the street with it.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Hey, wait up!

He follows the laughing children through the city, almost starting to enjoy himself in the growing twilight.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Big strong guys, huh? You kids run  
 this town?

They giggle. One jogs in circles around him.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 You probably think I'm Indian  
 Jones, right? From the movie? You  
 know...

He strikes a pose.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 You remember, like this, but with a  
 whip and a hat? Hey, you know what?

They stop in a small ally. The children smile up at him as he reaches into his pocket.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 I think I have some pens left over  
 from the promo tour...they've got  
 my picture on them and you can peep  
 the technique...

He pulls out an INDIAN JONES PEN and holds it up to his face.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 You see? Remember how I found all  
 that treasure? Fought that German  
 dude? Made it with that white lady?

The kids laugh and begin to fight over the pen.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Hey now! I think I've got another  
 one, lemme see.

He reaches into his coat and fishes out another pen.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Here you...go?

Raja holds out the pen and half-a-dozen small hands reach out to grab it. The two kids have been joined by MANY MORE.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Hey there you  
 little...whipper...snappers...

He turns around. The street behind him is clogged with more SMILING CHILDREN.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Well now...I've only got a few more  
 pens, but I've got a whole bunch of  
 "Slurp Dog" slap bracelets in my...

The kids rush him and begin joyously tearing at his clothing, stealing his luggage and valuables.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 AAAAHHHHHHH!!!!

We PAN AWAY. A silhouette on the wall of the ally shows Raja being robbed blind by dozens of tiny assailants.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Bobby enters a dimly-lit bar. The air is thick with smoke and there are only a few customers huddled in various furtive conversations. One end of the room contains an empty stage with a microphone in front of a tall, red curtain. Bobby recognizes the bartender, ANAND, an intimidating character with bad teeth.

NOTE: Bobby's scenes without Raja should be shot in a "Bollywood Noir" style, contrasting the rest of the film with increasingly stylized lighting, music and performances.

BOBBY  
 Anand! Sweetheart! How the hell are  
 you?

ANAND  
 Bobby! You've returned.

BOBBY

Of course I have! How's business?  
As good as ever?

ANAND

Oh, you know how it is...we do all  
right as long as the police stay  
clear. How's Hollywood? Managed to  
sneak in a visit to your old  
friends eh?

BOBBY

This visit may turn out to be a  
long one indeed Anand. Do you  
remember Raja?

ANAND

Hmmm...

BOBBY

Skinny kid? Face pretty like a  
girl? I brought him through here  
several years ago.

ANAND

Oh yes, the one who spent the whole  
time in the bathroom. How could I  
forget? His groans almost brought  
the law down on us. You said he had  
done quite well for himself as a  
film star...you know I don't go in  
much for the entertainment.

BOBBY

Except for the cockfighting.

ANAND

Yes...except for the cockfighting.

BOBBY

Well as it happens he did have a  
bit of success in America. But his  
head got too big. He lost it all.

ANAND

Sounds familiar.

BOBBY

Yes I know. But I'm not looking to  
repeat my mistakes!

ANAND

So...I shouldn't tell her that  
you're here?

BOBBY  
 (shocked)  
 You mean...she's alive?

BRIEF OMINOUS MUSIC. Bobby whirls around to face the stage, just as the curtains part.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
 (Under his breath)  
 I love India.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Raja lies in the gutter, broken and beaten. He screams to the heavens.

RAJA  
 I HATE INDIA!

He struggles to his feet and limps along the street, freezing in terror as he hears the LAUGHTER OF SMALL CHILDREN.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Shit!

He breaks into a stumbling run, hugging the sides of the buildings, finally finding a pay-phone. He fumbles in his pockets for anything the thieves might have left, eventually pulling out the mysterious "RISING PHOENIX" business card. He considers it for a moment, then grimaces and stuffs it back in his pocket. Remembering, he pulls the locket from under his shirt, turns it over and reads the back.

CUT TO:

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A phone rings on a bedside table. Raja's Grandmother, NITYA, a small woman with a round face and kind eyes, picks it up.

NITYA  
 Hello? What? Raja? Is that really  
 you? You're where?

She leans over to her husband, Raja's Grandfather ASIT, a stoic man with a deeply lined face and weathered hands.

NITYA (CONT'D)  
 Asit! It's Raja! He's in India.

ASIT  
That's nice.

NITYA  
He sounds upset. He's asking us to  
come get him.  
(listens for a moment)  
He says he needs our help.

ASIT  
Tell him to help himself.

Nitya looks imploringly at him.

NITYA  
Asit...he's our grandson. He wants  
to come home. Please.

A long pause.

ASIT  
All right I'll think about it. In  
my dreams. I'll dream about it.  
(rolling over)  
I need to have some dreams about  
this before I can make a decision.

NITYA  
Asit...

ASIT  
Fine!

He gets out of bed and begins putting on clothes.

ASIT (CONT'D)  
God woman, you could nag the dead  
from their graves.

She smiles at him.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

Raja sits against the side of a building. His clothes are in tatters, his head is in his hands and his shoe is in front of him like a beggar's hat. A PASSERBY spits into it. Suddenly a shadow falls over his face. It is Asit leading a DONKEY tied a small cart.

RAJA  
You came!

Raja stands and embraces him.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I knew you would come for me!

Asit pries him off.

ASIT

I did not come for you. I came for the market. You just happen to be here.

He begins to walk away. Raja runs after him.

RAJA

Wait! You have to take me with you! I can't stay here!

ASIT

You can't come with me. You have nothing to offer me. Unless...

RAJA

What?

ASIT

No...a big movie star like yourself would never be interested in something like that.

RAJA

Please Grandfather, I need your help! I'll do anything you ask.

His grandfather smiles.

ASIT

Do you know what I came here to sell?

RAJA

What?

ASIT

This donkey.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD OUT OF TOWN - DAY

Raja pulls the cart along the road, backlit by the rising sun. Asit rests comfortably in the cart.

ASIT

In India, everyone must pull their own weight, and sometimes you must help to pull the weight of others.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN.

Bobby lounges in a luxurious bed with SHANTI, a beautiful Indian femme fatale.

BOBBY

You remembered just how I like it.

SHANTI

All these years haven't dimmed your flame Bobby Shah.

BOBBY

What can I say sweetheart? You make me feel like I'm bloody 25 again.

SHANTI

Do you miss those days?

BOBBY

Sometimes...when I'm feeling reckless. What about you? Do you see much of the old gang anymore?

SHANTI

Not really. After you left for America and C.G. started making films, Kal pretty much took over. The other founders just sort of disappeared. I keep quiet about it, but...I think Kal did something to them. All of them. Jameel, Mohan...your brother.

Bobby grabs her.

BOBBY

My brother? Kal said he was killed by the police ten years ago!

SHANTI

Kal says a lot of things! All I know is that right before your brother went missing it seemed like he was stepping on Kal's toes an awful lot.

BOBBY  
You don't think he would...?

SHANTI  
I don't put anything past Kal,  
Bobby. Not anymore.

Bobby rises and pulls a pack of cigarettes from his jacket pocket. He takes one out and lights it.

BOBBY  
Get dressed baby. It's time to make  
India remember Bobby Shah.

FADE OUT:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Raja pulls his Grandfather down the dusty main street of his home town. A few PEOPLE walk by, staring curiously at the newcomer. CHICKENS wander freely through the streets. Suddenly, three smiling SCHOOL CHILDREN run up to Raja. He screams and recoils in horror.

RAJA  
AAAAHH! Not in my face!

His Grandfather leaps from the cart as the children scatter.

ASIT  
You bloody fool! What are you  
trying to do? You've been here not  
three minutes and you're scaring  
the children? Get a hold of  
yourself!

Asit starts down the street on foot. Raja struggles to regain his composure.

RAJA  
(calling after him)  
No, it's just...last night...all  
these kids...their tiny fists...

ASIT  
(ignoring him)  
I'm sure you don't remember, but  
our house is around this corner.  
Leave the cart out back. We should  
be just in time for lunch.

Raja starts to follow him, then stops as a small CHILD'S BALL rolls ominously across the street in front of him. His eyes dart back and forth.

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Raja opens a door and enters a modest two-story house. The walls are covered with PHOTOGRAPHS and Raja quickly spots a few of himself as a small child. Nitya sits at the dining-room table busying herself by folding napkins, trying not to look as if she was waiting for them to arrive.

NITYA

Raja...you've come home.

She crosses to him and hugs him warmly.

RAJA

Hello Grandmother.

NITYA

Please, make yourself comfortable.  
Our house is your house now.

RAJA

(shooting Asit a look)  
Thanks Grandma. You won't believe all that's happened to me. First I got puked on. Then I got ridiculed. Then I got robbed and left for dead. I'm tired, I'm hungry and I smell like a donkey.

ASIT

The donkey smelled better. It was a bad trade.

Asit exits to a room in the back of the house.

RAJA

Whatever. I'm just glad to finally be here. All I want to do is take a shower, crack a beer and watch "Lost," is that cool?

NITYA

Oh, "Lost!" Did you hear that Jack?

RAJA

What?

NITYA

I said did you hear that Jack?

ASIT (O.C.)  
I'm not listening!

RAJA  
We love "Lost!" I call him Jack and he calls me Kate.

ASIT (O.C.)  
I'm Sawyer!

NITYA  
(conspiratorially)  
He's such a Jack.

Raja smiles awkwardly.

NITYA (CONT'D)  
Raja, I'm sorry to tell you that our television hasn't worked in some months.

RAJA  
So how do you watch "Lost?"

NITYA  
Netflix of course. We're on season three.

Raja purses his lips in frustration.

NITYA (CONT'D)  
Also, we don't have any beer, but I did get you some bottled water from the market because I know the tap water here will make you sick. You're welcome to use our shower...it's upstairs, first door on the left. Our housekeeper, Saraya, has laid out fresh towels for you. Our toilet is out behind the house. I know you might not be used to how we do things here, so I got you this.

She hands him a roll of toilet paper.

RAJA  
Um...thanks. So...no "Lost," no beer...what exactly do you guys do to relax around here?

HARISH (O.S.)  
We sell slushies.

Raja turns to see Harish walking down the stairs, his face stern, his voice full of scorn.

HARISH (CONT'D)

We drive cabs. We ride flying carpets and we wear turbans. A lucky few of us are doctors. We talk in funny voices and we do magic tricks and all the Americans laugh at us. Isn't that right Raja?

RAJA

(Raja smiles hesitantly)  
Harish. I didn't know you were still living here.

HARISH

I split my time between here and the city. I work in a call center. Someone has to help take care of our grandparents. I heard about your movie. I'm sorry.

Raja stares at him. His smile fades.

RAJA

No you're not.

HARISH

You're right, I'm not.

RAJA

Bro...you grew up and turned into kind of an asshole.

HARISH

At least I grew up!

NITYA

Boys! Please! We haven't seen Raja in years. Can we try to show each other a little courtesy? Please, sit, all of you. Lunch is ready.

They sit around a small table. Nitya serves them, spooning a thick stew from a pot on the stove onto steel plates. Asit sits in silence. The brothers regard each other with distrust. They eat awkwardly for a few moments.

NITYA (CONT'D)

It's nice to have the family together again.

HARISH

Raja doesn't need a family. He made that clear a long time ago.

RAJA

Oh, I get it. I'm the bad guy because I'm successful, is that it? Because I left? Because I made something of myself? We were both at that audition man, just because I look a little more like Hadji than you do...it could have been either one of us!

HARISH

I would not have done what you did!

ASIT

I told you we should not have brought him home.

NITYA

Asit...

RAJA

What...made a movie? Cut an album? Won a Teen Choice Award? I've got action figures that look like me! Kung Fu grip!

NITYA

Raja...

ASIT

What does that even mean?

HARISH

I would never have missed our parents funeral.

A silence falls over the room.

RAJA

Harish, you don't know...

HARISH

No, Raja, you don't know. And you never even bothered to ask.

They stare at each other for a long moment. Raja stands.

RAJA

I'm gonna go upstairs and wash up. Thanks for the meal Grandmother.

He heads toward the stairs.

HARISH

Thank God. You smell like urine.

RAJA

Yeah well guess what? At least it's not my urine!

He stares at Harish for a moment, considering this.

RAJA (CONT'D)

See... 'cause there were these kids like I said, and I think one of them... you know what? Forget it.

He exits.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Raja washes his face and torso in the small shower. There is a window next to him overlooking the street. He watches a few locals walk by. Across the street he spots a beautiful woman, CHILANI, glancing up at him in the window. As she looks in his direction, he begins washing his body in a more seductive way. He closes his eyes as he gets caught up in the moment, massaging his muscles and splashing water on himself. He hears a LOW MOAN and opens his eyes. Out of the window he can see that Chilani has vanished. He turns around and sees SARAYA, an old woman with intense eyes, standing two feet away from him holding out a stack of towels.

SARAYA

I didn't say stop.

Raja slaps his hand down to cover his crotch.

RAJA

You must be Saraya.

SARAYA

I'll be whoever you want me to be.

RAJA

Wow. That's awesome. Um... I'm gonna take a little walk now, I think.

He grabs his clothes off of a towel rack and slowly, painfully inches around her and out of the tiny bathroom. She doesn't move, but turns her body to follow him and tilts her head to watch him go.

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Raja walks along straightening his clothes, occasionally looking warily over his shoulder. He spots a small STREAM running through the village and lays down at its bank to examine his reflection.

RAJA

Good to know I've got some fans here. I've certainly looked better though. Guess I'll have to rely on my rugged charm...

He begins making sexy faces at himself.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Kind of like a pirate. Like a sexy pirate thing. Arrr! Heh. Hey ladies, stand by to be boarded! What's that you say? You want to baton down my misen mast? With your...

He hears a GIGGLE and turns his head to see a small boy, DES, lying with his face inches from Raja's.

RAJA (CONT'D)

AAAHHHHH!

Raja screams and rolls away from the boy. He loses his balance and falls headfirst into the river, emerging a moment later sputtering and wiping his eyes. He yells up at the child.

RAJA (CONT'D)

You little bastard! Sneaking up on a man like that! Didn't your mother teach you anything? When I get up there I'm gonna...

The boy giggles again and runs off.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Hey! Get back here! I'm not done with you!

Raja drags himself out of the river and removes his shirt and pants.

RAJA (CONT'D)

The kids in this country! Thank God I got out when I did.

He sets his clothes out to dry and lays down in the sun,  
closing his eyes.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
Thank god I stayed out.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A TEN YEAR OLD RAJA sits at a table over a plate of untouched  
food. His eyes are on his meal. A TWELVE YEAR OLD HARISH sits  
next to him. Their PARENT'S VOICES can be heard coming from  
either side.

RAJA'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
This is his chance! This isn't  
about us, it's about our son.

RAJA'S FATHER (O.S.)  
This is about our home.

RAJA'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
It's about our family! Maybe you  
need to take a look at your  
priorities.

RAJA'S FATHER (O.S.)  
Maybe you do! You're the one who  
thinks it's so important that Raja  
becomes a movie star!

RAJA'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
It's what he wants!

RAJA'S FATHER (O.S.)  
He's ten, he doesn't know what he  
wants.

RAJA'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
Well he should have the right to  
choose! And here, with the  
opportunities he has, he can do  
just that!

RAJA'S FATHER (O.S.)  
At what price? We're doctors, we  
took an oath.

RAJA'S MOTHER (O.S.)  
We'll go! We'll go back to India.  
But Raja stays here.

The boys look at each other.

FADE TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Raja opens his eyes. He props himself up on his elbows and squints into the sunlight.

RAJA

That kid is stealing my pants.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Des sprints through the village, flying Raja's pants behind him like a flag. He dodges between obstacles with Raja hot on his heels.

RAJA

Get back here you little shit!

Des ducks into a building. Raja follows close behind.

INT. BUILDING - DAY

Raja chases the boy down a long hallway, following him through a door at the end of it.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja bursts into a small classroom. Des backs into the corner of the room, still tightly clutching the pants. Raja bears down on him, sputtering with rage.

RAJA

You kids! You're everywhere! You're like roaches...these adorable roaches with big eyes and you think that because you're cute you can push bigger people around and that nobody will do anything about it, is that it? Well...I'm through you little asshole! I don't give a fuck how cute you are...you do not steal a man's pants...while he's laying in the sun...having a moment! Your ass is mine!

Raja leaps at the boy, but is stopped by a FEMALE VOICE from behind him.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
What do you think you're doing?!

RAJA  
I'm getting my damn pants back from  
this holy-shit-it's-a-white-lady.

Raja turns and sees SOPHIE POPE, a British missionary, surrounded by MANY SMALL CHILDREN, all of whom are staring at Raja in shock and terror. Some of the children are wearing costumes; they appear to have been rehearsing a play. Sophie is covering as many of their ears as she can and glaring at Raja. He stares back at her, opening and closing his mouth.

SOPHIE  
Mr. Patel, I can't imagine why  
you're half-naked and screaming at  
this poor boy, but I must insist  
that you leave my classroom before  
I have to call security and have  
you escorted from the building!

Raja strikes a pose, trying to recover as much of his dignity as possible, hindered by his lack of pants.

RAJA  
Well, thank god that somebody in  
this town seems to recognize me!  
But...ah...you seem to have me at  
something of a disadvantage.

SOPHIE  
My name is Sophie Pope. I'm the  
headmistress here and that's all  
I'm prepared to divulge to a  
pantsless pervert in a room full of  
eight-year-olds! Get out!

RAJA  
Well I'd love to gorgeous, but you  
see this lad here...

He turns back to Des who smiles broadly. Raja's pants are nowhere to be seen.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
What did you do with my pants you  
little so...

Sophie shoots him a look.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 ...samosa...mango.

He looks back at the kids and realizes he's beaten.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Alright Ms. Pope, you win! See, I'm backing out the way I came in. If you'd like to maybe meet up later and debrief...uh, discuss this incident, I'm staying with some people up the road. It's the brown house, it's...well, it's a small village so I guess I'll just see you around...so...take care!

He waves to the children as he backs out the door.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Bye kids! Fun times today! Have a blast with those pants! And hey, thanks for making me look good in front of the nice white lady, right? Way to get the brown folks workin' together. Solid. Okay.

Sophie slams the door in his face.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - DUSK

Bobby kicks open the door of a crowded brothel. It's a rough crowd; men fight and women dance on tables. In the back, a LARGE THUG abuses a beautiful PROSTITUTE.

BOBBY  
 Hello boys. Keeping it classy I see.

The thug stands and approaches Bobby brandishing a bottle.

THUG  
 Bobby Shah. America finally gave up on you, eh?

BOBBY  
 More like I gave up on America my friend. But let's skip the small talk, shall we sweetheart? You know who I am, you know what I can do and you know why I've come. Where's Kal?

THUG

Come on Bobby, you know that Kal doesn't see anybody, least of all has-beens like you. Now you're gonna turn around and walk right out the way you came in.

BOBBY

No, I'm gonna pry that bottle out of your hands and shove it up your ass. Tell me where Kal is.

THUG

Bobby, Bobby...stubborn as always. Just like your brother.

Bobby's eyes narrow. In a flash he pounces on the thug, swiftly disarms him and punches him across the jaw, dropping him to the floor. All of the other patrons stare at Bobby. He locks eyes with the prostitute in the back of the room.

CUT TO a WIDE SHOT of the whole bar with everybody frozen in shock. Suddenly, loud DANCE MUSIC kicks in and the entire room begins an elaborately choreographed Bollywood dance number. We see only a few seconds of this.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DUSK

Raja enters a dimly lit Indian bar with a few scattered CUSTOMERS. He is wearing a white sheet tied around his waist like a sarong. He approaches JASHA, the thin, deadpan bartender.

JASHA

Hello. What can I get you?

RAJA

Something strong.

JASHA

I've got a little whiskey. Ice?

RAJA

No. And make it a double.

Jasha gets the whiskey for him. Raja takes a long drink, then looks around the bar. He sees Chilani emerge from a back room and settle at a table in the corner with a large stack of papers.

JASHA  
Anything else?

RAJA  
Yeah, another one of these and a little info on the T and A in the back there.

JASHA  
I assume you're referring to our bookkeeper, Miss Chilani. She is very beautiful isn't she? It's quite sad. Her husband was killed several months ago in a tragic...

RAJA  
(interrupting)  
Sweet! Don't wait up.

Raja grabs his drink and swaggers across the bar to Chilani, taking a seat next to her.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
You don't need to stare from across the room. Raja Patel is here in the flesh to take you on his magic carpet of love. Care to ride?

CHILANI  
Are you being serious right now?

RAJA  
You've been eye-humping me for the last five minutes. I just wanted to work out some of this sexual tension.

CHILANI  
I was trying to see where the smell of urine was coming from, and you've just confirmed it.

RAJA  
(smelling himself)  
Still? I mean naw baby, that ain't me. Come on girl, this is India!

CHILANI  
What do you mean by that?

RAJA  
Look at this place! There's piss everywhere!

(MORE)

RAJA (CONT'D)

I've been here for less than forty eight hours and your face is the first thing I've seen that hasn't made me want to throw up.

CHILANI

I wish I could say the feeling was mutual.

Pause.

RAJA

Let me back up: I want to put my dick in you.

CHILANI

No!

RAJA

On you?

CHILANI

No! What? No!

RAJA

Come on baby, stop playing like you don't recognize me.

CHILANI

I recognize you. You're Raja Patel, the Indian Uncle Tom. You're a disgrace to your own people, your movies aren't funny and you're hitting on me wearing a tablecloth.

RAJA

There was an incident by the river and this little ba...uh...ball...of cuteness pilfered my pa...

CHILANI

I couldn't be less interested. If you'll excuse me it's getting late and I have to pick up my son.

RAJA

You've got a kid? That's cool. Just one? Because I hear the stretching really starts after...

CHILANI

You're disgusting. Good night.

She storms out of the bar.

RAJA

(addressing the whole bar)  
 What the hell is wrong with this  
 country? Does no one fuck movie  
 stars over here? I'm Raja Patel God  
 damn it! I AM India!

All the customers turn to him and respond in unison.

CUSTOMERS

Fuck off Patel!

Raja slowly stands, walks to the bar and signals to Jasha.

RAJA

How much to get that bottle to go?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Raja stumbles down the street, clutching the whiskey bottle  
 in one hand.

RAJA

Motherfuckers tellin' me to fuck  
 off. Fuck them in the face! I'm  
 Indian Jones for shit's sake! You  
 hear me! INDIAN JONES!

A shoe flies from a nearby house, hitting him in the head.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Fuck! Ow! Where the hell did that  
 come from?

He looks around, seeing no one. He coughs.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Damn...fucking country...air all  
 full a' dirt and fuckin'...shoes  
 and shit.

(coughs again)

Man I don't feel so good. Cheap  
 fuckin' whiskey...ah!

He spots a water pump across the road, crosses to it, turns  
 on the spigot and cups his hands under it, drinking greedily.  
 He stops mid-gulp and stares straight ahead.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Fuck.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTHOUSE - NIGHT

Raja's moans of agony can be heard emerging from a small wooden building behind his Grandparent's house.

RAJA (O.S.)  
OH GOD! OH GOD WHY?!

CUT TO:

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Asit and Nitya lie in bed. RAJA'S CRIES echo faintly in the background. Asit smiles quietly to himself.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - DAY

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - SAME

Asit, Nitya and Harish eat breakfast at the table. Raja enters cautiously from outside, his hands clutching the seat of his pants.

ASIT  
Have courage boy.

NITYA  
You're never going to feel any better if you don't eat something.

RAJA  
Sometimes I think I'm strong enough...and then it starts to slip.

HARISH  
The great Raja Patel...scared that he'll shit himself.

RAJA  
Your water has the plague in it!

HARISH  
We're sorry it's not the mineral water you're used to!

RAJA  
Mineral water?! I've got Satan in my asshole!

NITYA

Raja, language! Sit. Have confidence.

He sits. Saraya enters and serves him. She stares at Raja intently as she sets his plate in front of him. He smiles at her awkwardly and begins to eat. They are silent for a beat.

RAJA

So Harish, anything going on up on the tower this morning?

HARISH

What?

RAJA

You know, the tower? The tower of judgement from which you shoot hateful vibes at your brother all day?

HARISH

You're an ass Raja.

NITYA

Harish is going into the city today Raja. He has to go to work.

HARISH

Yes, some of us still have jobs.

RAJA

Great, 'cause I hear there's this old lady in Scranton who's having trouble with her cable box and would love to talk to you...

NITYA

Raja, I thought it might be fun for you to spend the day working at the village farm with your Grandfather.

ASIT & RAJA

(sarcastic)

I can't wait.

RAJA

Hey!

HARISH

(to Asit)

Good luck. He'll be milking the chickens and collecting shit from the cows.

Raja's stomach GURGLES ominously.

RAJA

Dude...

EXT. ROAD OUT OF TOWN - DAY

Raja pulls Asit in the donkey cart.

RAJA

I can't believe you sold your only donkey.

ASIT

What, did you think I was making a point with that or something?

EXT. FARM - DAY

Raja and Asit arrive at the village farm. It consists of a chicken coop, a small barn and a fenced-in area with a few COWS wandering around. Nearby, some other WORKERS from the village are doing their chores.

RAJA

Please let this all be the worst "Punk'd" ever.

(to Asit)

Alright, so what's the plan? You want me to hop over the fence and milk those cows real quick or what?

ASIT

You wish. I'll deal with the animals. Today you're on landscaping duty.

RAJA

What does that mean?

ASIT

Well, do you see that field over there?

He points to a vast expanse of open land.

RAJA

Yeah...

ASIT

And do you see that plow there?

He gestures to a very small, very rundown hand-plow.

RAJA

Yeah...

ASIT

Do you see what I'm getting at?

Raja looks back and forth between the plow and the field.

RAJA

Not so much.

ASIT

You drag the plow along the ground making rows for our crops.

Pause.

RAJA

Still not getting it.

ASIT

(sighs)

Fine. Say that plow right there is a razor blade. And all that land out there is cocaine. You're going to take that blade, and you're going to cut that cocaine into rows, so that you and some blond reality-show hussy can snort them off of a framed photograph of yourself.

Raja stares at him.

RAJA

Word.

He goes to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARM - LATER

Raja is plowing the field. The sun is blazing down on him and he pours sweat as he stumbles along, forcing the plow into the hard earth.

RAJA

This is bullshit.

He looks towards the neighboring field where Asit is milking a cow.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I said this is bullshit!

ASIT

Heard you. Trying to pretend this isn't happening.

RAJA

I mean what is this really but slave labor? I'm down on my luck, I ask you for a place to stay for a few days, you're my own goddamn family and you put me to work like a...

ASIT

Like a goddamn family should! Family is work Raja. Caring about people takes effort. Loneliness is the coward's way out.

RAJA

Wow, do you hold a hunger strike with these proverbs, Ghandi? Because my stomach can't take solid food right now anyway so...

ASIT

Go.

RAJA

What?

ASIT

Drop that bloody plow and walk off this field. Get out of my house and get out of this bloody town. I don't care what your grandmother says.

RAJA

Man, you guys can't take the Ghandi jokes around here can you?

ASIT

You guys? Listen to yourself Raja! You are an Indian person! We are all Indian people! Real Indians! The only thing that sets you apart is that you are the most useless one that I've ever met!

(MORE)

ASIT (CONT'D)

You have nothing to add to this community. You have nothing to add to this family. Your parents would be ashamed of you.

RAJA

(cold)

Don't you tell me about my parents.

ASIT

How do you ever expect to learn about them? You can't keep pretending like they never existed.

RAJA

Listen, it's bad enough that I'm stuck in this fucking country where I'm constantly reminded of...

ASIT

India didn't kill your parents.

RAJA

If they hadn't come back here they would still be alive. Are you going to argue with that?

A long silence.

ASIT

Raja...

RAJA

You're right. I'm done.

He drops the plow and walks off the field.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I'll be out by tonight.

Asit watches him go.

INT. PALACE - DUSK

Bobby strides down a marble hallway with Shanti on one arm and the mysterious prostitute on the other.

BOBBY

Show yourself Kal! You can't hide from me forever!

KAL emerges from behind a pillar. He is well-dressed, handsome and over-the-top sinister. They pause for a moment, both slowly lighting cigarettes.

KAL

You're a fool Bobby Shah. A fool to return here. You seek answers but you will find only death.

BOBBY

I seek justice Kal. I seek vengeance. And the only fool here is the one who raised a hand against my brother.

KAL

You're old Bobby Shaw.

BOBBY

Like a fine wine sweetheart. Let's do this.

Bobby and the girls strike three sharp poses accompanied by three BLASTS OF MUSIC.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Raja slams an empty glass of whiskey down on the bar. The room is empty except for him and Jasha.

RAJA

One more please my good friend.

As Jasha moves to get him the whiskey, Raja absently reaches into his pocket and pulls out the same black "RISING PHOENIX" business card. He turns the card over a few times, then glances at a phone sitting on the bar. After a moment he shakes his head and puts the card back in his pocket. Jasha hands him his drink.

JASHA

Something on your mind this evening?

RAJA

Ah. I feel like I don't belong here, you know what I mean?

JASHA

I think I do.

RAJA

I'm not cut out for this. I mean you grow up with everybody knowing your name, everybody thinking everything you do is gold, and then all of a sudden you're invisible. I'm here with my own people and I'm a stranger. If someone does notice me it's only to give me a dirty look.

JASHA

Perhaps it is your choice of attire my friend.

He gestures to the now-filthy white sheet around Raja's waist.

RAJA

What, this? What are you talking about? This is a sarong. Traditional Indian dress.

JASHA

It looks very much like one of our tablecloths.

RAJA

Yeah...it's the new American style.

JASHA

One of the tablecloths that we had drying out back.

RAJA

Uh...

JASHA

One of which went missing yesterday.

Pause. Raja stares at him, then hangs his head.

RAJA

Come on man, I'm dying here.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Through the lit windows we see the shadows of many people.

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - SAME

The house is filled with workers from the farm and other members of the community including Sophie and Chilani. They talk loudly among themselves until Asit moves to the center of the room.

ASIT

All right, all right! I know that none of you are very happy about our new house guest.

FARM WORKER 1

Happy? Asit, half of our chickens are missing because your idiot grandson left the gate open!

FARM WORKER 2

He plowed under a whole field of wheat because he thought it was dead grass. Half the crop is gone!

SOPHIE

He hit on me with no pants on!

CHILANI

Me too.

SARAYA

Me too.

Chilani looks at her incredulously.

SARAYA (CONT'D)

(whispered)

It was amazing.

SOPHIE

He screamed at my students! I...I just can't teach under those conditions!

FARM WORKER 1

He's got to go Asit.

ASIT

You're right. You're all right. He's been nothing but trouble since I brought him here. I'll take him back to the city tomorrow.

NITYA (O.S.)

You'll do no such thing!

Nitya joins Asit in the center of the room.

NITYA (CONT'D)

Asit, this is your grandson you're talking about. Your own flesh and blood. He needs us. When his parents...when my Sasha...came back here with her husband to help our village...when they got sick and died from the same disease that touched everyone in this room, our Raja lost his way. He cut himself off from the people he loved because it was too painful to do otherwise. And now that he's come home, now we're going to cut him off again, because it's not convenient for us? It's true, he's a terrible farmer. He's never farmed a day in his life! But he's not useless. He does have a skill.

She turns to Sophie.

NITYA (CONT'D)

Sophie. I know that you're struggling with the school play.

SOPHIE

What are you talking about?

NITYA

Darling, everyone knows that directing just isn't one of your strengths. Remember your production of "South Pacific" last year?

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The school children that we saw earlier are performing "South Pacific" for a small audience of community members. The set consists of a few wooden palm trees and some sandbags. A few of the children are dressed as islanders and others are sailors brandishing squirt guns. A CHILD center stage bursts into song.

CHILD 1

*There is nothing like a...*

He stops and looks at the other kids around him, unsure of the right word. Sophie leans in from the wings.

SOPHIE  
 (stage whisper)  
 Dame!

CHILD 1  
 (loudly)  
 What?

A SECOND CHILD in the back of the ensemble bursts into song.

CHILD 2  
*Some enchanted evening!*

SOPHIE  
 No, not yet!

A THIRD CHILD shoots her in the face with his squirt gun.

BACK TO:

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

SOPHIE  
 I don't even like musicals.

NITYA  
 Exactly darling, it's not your fault. You're a wonderful teacher, but entertainment just isn't your thing! But for Raja...it's all he's ever known.

She turns to address the whole room.

NITYA (CONT'D)  
 Raja is an entertainer. He has a gift. We might not approve of some of his humor, but he knows how to make people laugh. He's entertained the Americans for many years and I think he can teach our children how to put on a good show.

FARM WORKER 1  
 Nitya, you must be joking. You want to leave him alone with our kids?

FARM WORKER 2  
 You're going to let him make one of his sick, racist comedies with our children?

FARM WORKER 1

Did you hear about that play he did  
in brown-face?

FARM WORKER 2

Yeah, what even is that?

NITYA

No, it's not going to be like the  
movies he used to make. It's going  
to be a real Bollywood musical. I  
know that he can do it. And we have  
to let him try. Please. For my  
Sasha. Please.

Everyone in the room exchanges uneasy looks.

INT. BACK ROOM OF THE BAR - DAY

Raja struggles into consciousness. He is laying on a pile of  
laundry in the back room of the bar. As his vision comes into  
focus, he sees Saraya folding tablecloths across the room. He  
looks down at the one around his waist; it is light-pink,  
different than the one he had on last night. He looks back at  
Saraya in terror.

SARAYA

Your cloth was...so...dirty.

Before he can respond, the door opens and the room floods  
with light. Jasha and Nitya stand in the doorway.

RAJA

Ah! What...where am I?

NITYA

You're in the back of Jasha's bar  
Raja. He was kind enough to let you  
sleep off your drinking.

RAJA

Oh...thanks.

JASHA

Don't mention it.

Saraya grabs a basket of cleaning supplies and exits, giving  
Raja a wink. Nitya helps him to his feet.

NITYA

It's time for you to get up dear.  
You're starting your new job today.

RAJA

Job? No Grandma, I'm done working on the farm. I told Grandpa yesterday...I'm no use to you guys. Let me get my stuff and I'll be out of your hair.

NITYA

You're not going back to the farm Raja, but you're not leaving either. We've found something a little more suited to your talents.

Sophie steps into the doorway. Raja blinks at her.

RAJA

You heard about my talents?

NITYA

You're going to work with Ms. Pope at the school.

Raja blinks again, then catches on.

RAJA

Oh! Right. Work with the kids. I gotcha. I'm pretty good at that too...I guess.

SOPHIE

I swear to God...

NITYA

Just give him a chance.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON Raja's terrified expression.

REVERSE SHOT of the room full of children staring at him from their desks. Sophie clears her throat from the doorway.

SOPHIE

Alright Raja. Every day at one o'clock you'll be here for drama class. You and the children will work on creating a short, original, tasteful Bollywood musical to be performed for the community in six weeks. To be honest we haven't been able to accomplish much yet this year...but I'm sure you'll come up with something.

(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
We've got a few props and costumes  
in the closet over there...

CLOSE UP on an open closet containing a pitiful collection of cheap costumes and plastic props.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
Some instruments over there...

CLOSE UP on the far corner of the room, where a hand drum and a rundown, beat-up guitar sit collecting dust.

She turns to the children.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
Kids, if you need me I'll be in my  
office right down the hall okay?  
And remember...

She mouths the words "no means no" as she backs out of the room, closing the door behind her. Raja stares at the kids.

RAJA  
All right. Raja's Rules: Number  
One.

He points to the door.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
I am going to make out with that  
woman. This is not a threat. It's a  
fact. Let's have everybody do their  
best to try and hurry it along,  
okay? This means no more stealing  
my pants, no more making me look  
kind of like a sex offender, no  
more making me look bad in general,  
all right? Rule number two...I had  
a bad experience with some children  
recently, so I'm going to have to  
ask you not to make any sudden  
movements.

ISA, a girl sitting in the back of the class, raises her hand abruptly. Raja dives behind his desk.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
AH! Motherf...uh...falafel.

All the children giggle. He slowly peaks out his head.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
Um...yes? You have a question?

ISA

What kind of play are we going to be doing this year?

RAJA

Ah! Good question!

He emerges from behind the desk and goes to the blackboard.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Last night, as I was lying in a pile of dirty tablecloths on the floor of a bar, most likely a recent victim of sexual assault, I realized something. There really is a silver lining to this whole terrible situation. Quite simply: it makes a great story.

He writes "THE RAJA PATEL STORY" on the blackboard.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I'm talking about a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions. A handsome, misunderstood film star who loses everything and returns home to build himself up from rock bottom.

A boy in the front row raises his hand. It is Des. Raja flinches slightly when his hand moves, then glares as he recognizes him.

DES

Mr. Patel?

RAJA

Oh, it's you. The pants thief. What's your name?

DES

Des.

RAJA

What do you want Des?

DES

How does it end?

RAJA

What?

DES

How does the story end?

RAJA

Well...he builds himself up of course! The people who turned on him eventually realize the error of their ways and he climbs back on top where he belongs, bigger and better than ever!

Pause. The boy stares at him.

DES

Do you think that's going to happen?

RAJA

Des, I'm about to give you the only acting lesson you'll ever need: fake it 'til you make it.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sophie approaches the small window in the classroom door and peers through.

SOPHIE'S POV of Raja directing several students in a scene. Des is on his knees in front of another boy, TAJ. Sophie cannot hear them but they appear to be having a good time.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME

DES

But Trevor, why don't they understand me? I just want to make them laugh!

TAJ

You're through you Indian clown!

RAJA

Wait...could you say, "two-bit Indian clown?" I don't know exactly what it means but it sounds better. And could you do it a little more evil? Trevor Bayridge is much more evil in person.

TAJ

(much more evil)  
YOU'RE THROUGH YOU TWO-BIT INDIAN  
CLOWN!

RAJA  
This is good stuff.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Raja watches through the window as the kids meet their parents after school. Sophie stands next to him.

SOPHIE  
How was your first day?

RAJA  
Pretty good! Some of these little dudes have real talent. I thought the kid who played me was especially moving.

SOPHIE  
The boy who played...?

RAJA  
That one right there, see?

RAJA'S POV out of the window. He watches as Des runs to meet his mother. It's Chilani.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Des...you sly devil.

SOPHIE  
Oh yes, Chilani's son. She's beautiful isn't she?

RAJA  
Yeah...in an Indian sort of way. So, what does the faculty do to unwind around here?

SOPHIE  
(smiling)  
I'm going to go work on my lesson plan for tomorrow. You're going to go home to you family and tell them how much fun you had today.

RAJA  
I did have fun didn't I?

ISA suddenly presses her face to the window. Raja ducks behind Sophie.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 AHHHHoooh hey there.  
 (to Sophie)  
 It's a little game that we play.  
 (to Isa)  
 See you tomorrow!

Sophie moves to the door.

SOPHIE  
 And I'll see you tomorrow Mr.  
 Patel.

RAJA  
 (shouting after her)  
 Not if I see you first, "Teach!"  
 (to himself)  
 Nice.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Raja is walking home. He spots Chilani and Des arguing in front of the bar and walks over to them.

RAJA  
 Up to his old tricks again?

CHILANI  
 What? What are you talking about?

RAJA  
 Your son here stole the pants right off me the other day. I...uh...have no idea where he gets it from.

CHILANI  
 Not now please Mr. Patel. I'm trying to have a serious talk with my son.

RAJA  
 Well maybe I can help. I'm the new drama teacher at the school there so...I know a few things...about drama.

CHILANI  
 I heard.

RAJA  
 Ol' Des and I bonded a little bit today.

(MORE)

RAJA (CONT'D)

He's been doing a great impression of me, isn't that right Des? Hey buddy, you want to show your mother how Raja Patel deals with a problem?

Des bursts into tears and runs away down the street.

RAJA (CONT'D)

That is not entirely accurate.

CHILANI

Are you happy now? It's bad enough that you're making him do ludicrous impersonations at school, but you have to stick your nose into our family's business as well?

She runs off. Raja sighs and walks in the other direction.

RAJA

That kid is in serious danger of breaking Raja's Rule Number One.

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - LATER

Raja enters the house to find Nitya cooking.

NITYA

Raja! How was your day?

RAJA

Not bad I guess. I'm starving. Where's Grandpa?

NITYA

He's still up at the farm. They have a lot of work to do replanting the crop.

RAJA.

The dry season?

NITYA

Yes dear. Would you like something to eat?

RAJA

Anything.

She serves him a steaming bowl of food.

NITYA  
How was school today?

RAJA  
This is weird.

NITYA  
How is it weird?

RAJA  
Well...I mean I'm coming home to my family...in India...and my grandmother is asking me how school was. It doesn't feel wrong exactly, it just feels...late...you know? My childhood was never like this.

He begins eating hungrily, but stops when he glances at his grandmother and sees tears in her eyes.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
Grandma?

NITYA  
It's my fault.

RAJA  
What are you talking about?

NITYA  
I was the one who got sick.

RAJA  
No, Grandma...

NITYA  
Asit was so sick already. The doctor said he had only weeks to live. And then I got sick...too sick to take care of him. That's when I called your mother. I broke down and I begged her to come home and take care of us. And she did. Your mother and father saved our lives. They left you with Bobby and came here with your brother to take care of us...and I got better and they got sick. I lived, God help me, while my own daughter died.

RAJA  
Grandma...you know that's not...you know I could never blame you for what happened to my parents.

NITYA

But you need to blame somebody  
Raja! You're so full of anger. I  
can feel it seeping out of you  
everywhere. And you lash out at the  
country they died in. And you lash  
out at your brother for leaving  
you. But I'm the one you should  
lash out at Raja. I'm the reason  
they left.

Raja takes his Grandmother's hand.

RAJA

Grandma...my parents didn't come  
back here because you made them.  
They came back because they were  
doctors and they saw a chance to do  
some good...and...I know that they  
did the right thing.  
(breaking down)  
I've spent half my life hating them  
for that decision.

NITYA

Raja, your parents were the most  
generous people I've ever known.  
It's in you too...it's always been  
there. Don't bury it under your  
grief.  
(whispering)  
You have a gift Raja. You can make  
people better, just like your  
parents. Don't be afraid of that.

She embraces him and hurriedly exits to a back room. Raja  
stares down at his meal.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja enters the rowdy classroom.

RAJA

Hey kids! All right, all right  
quiet down. Okay, who remembers  
where we left off yesterday?

Isa raises her hand. Raja points at her.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Yes, the little girl that keeps  
scaring me. What's your name?

ISA

Isa.

RAJA

And where were we Isa?

ISA

You were fighting off Trevor Bayridge.

RAJA

Very good! All right, today's lesson: forget all that.

ISA

What?

RAJA

The Raja Patel story is played out. Seriously, that guy is old news.

The kids look at each other and mumble nervously.

ISA

So what's our play going to be about?

RAJA

You.

He points to another kid.

RAJA (CONT'D)

And you.

Another.

RAJA (CONT'D)

And you over there.

He points to TAN, a boy in the far corner with his finger up his nose.

RAJA (CONT'D)

And even you in the back, wrist-deep in your nostril, it's about you too. When was the last time somebody listened to what you kids had to say, huh?

No one moves.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Exactly. And it's not like you have boring lives. I've had some very exciting run-ins with kids in just the past few days! Let's focus our experiences into something more positive than stealing a man's pants. Let's tell people about it! Let's sing about it! Alright, who's got a story to tell?

The room is silent for a long beat. Finally Tan takes his finger out of his nose and speaks.

BOY

My father wants us to move to the city, but my mother doesn't want us to go.

RAJA

Alright! Okay. What's your name?

TAN

Tan.

RAJA

Tan, Isa, come up to the front of the class please.

They join Raja at the front of the room.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Now, Tan. Why does your father say that you should move to the city?

TAN

Because that is where he can get work.

RAJA

OK, and Isa, what do you think might be a reason that Tan's mother wouldn't want to make the move?

ISA

How should I know?

RAJA

Just take a guess.

She considers this for a moment.

ISA

Maybe because her family is here?

RAJA

Great! So Tan, you play your dad.  
Look at Isa and tell her that, and  
then Isa you respond with your  
reason.

Tan and Isa look at each other.

TAN

Wife, we have to move to the city  
so that I can get work.

ISA

But husband, all of my family is  
here.

RAJA

Brilliant. So this is what we call  
conflict and it's the beginning of  
all great drama. But in order to  
make this fun for people to watch  
we have to give it a little more  
uhh! Double up uh uh! So, Tan...why  
don't you say something like, "I  
need a job, so we're going to the  
city."

TAN

I need a job so I'm going to the  
city.

RAJA

Good! Now, Tan...let's see...does  
your mother have any pets?

TAN

We have a cat.

RAJA

Perfect! So Isa, you come back at  
him with "Don't make me leave my  
Mom and my Dad and my kitty."

ISA

Don't make me leave my Mom and my  
Dad and my kitty.

RAJA

Awesome! Now say it together.

TAN

(to Isa)

I need a job so I'm going to the  
city.

ISA  
 (to Tan)  
 Don't make me leave my Mom and my  
 Dad and my Kitty.

Raja applauds. All the children join him.

RAJA  
 Alright! And that, my friends, is  
 how we make a musical. Now we just  
 need to add the instruments.

He pulls the dilapidated guitar from behind the desk and  
 strums it. It is ridiculously out of tune.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Okay, this is going to be fun. If  
 anyone knows where we can get a  
 better guitar...I left mine with my  
 idiot manager, wherever he is.

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE - DAY

We hear TRIUMPHANT DANCE MUSIC and see about five seconds of  
 an elaborately-choreographed dance routine involving Bobby,  
 Shanti and many extras. Kal is tied up at Bobby's feet. After  
 a few seconds of dancing, all freeze and Bobby pulls Raja's  
 guitar from behind his back. He starts to strum a Bollywood  
 ballad.

BOBBY  
*Revenge...*

JUMP BACK TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME

RAJA  
 I'm sure he's lost it by now. So,  
 do you kids see what I'm getting  
 at? Does anyone else have a story  
 they'd like to tell?

Des raises his hand.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Yes Des?

DES  
 My mother is lonely.

Raja is taken aback.

RAJA

Yes...well, so, I guess you could say something like, "I am looking"...er..."who will"...um... well I can't seem to come up with a good rhyme for that one right now, but you get the gist.

He looks over and spots Sophie in the doorway.

RAJA (CONT'D)

(hitting the rhyme)

And for now...that's class dismissed.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Raja and Sophie walk along the dusty road.

SOPHIE

You seem to be getting along better with the children. No more fainting spells.

RAJA

To be fair they were more like panic attacks.

She laughs.

SOPHIE

Do you think you're finally overcoming your fear?

RAJA

Which one? Kids? Musicals? Hard work? This is all breaking new ground for me.

SOPHIE

Come on, I saw your movies. All those characters? That had to be a lot of work.

RAJA

That...I'm beginning to think those movies were like mulimillion dollar masturbation sessions.

SOPHIE

Raja...

RAJA

Sorry. Missionary. Right. What I mean is I was using a lot of effort but it was just feeding back into myself, you know?

SOPHIE

You made people laugh. Even if I don't condone your sense of humor, you must see that as a public service.

RAJA

There are two ways to make people laugh Sophie. One cracks people's minds open and the other mushes them up. I know the difference, I just never cared.

SOPHIE

And now you do?

RAJA

I don't know. Maybe.

They walk in silence for a moment.

RAJA (CONT'D)

What about you, "Teach?" Why India? Why this life?

SOPHIE

Nothing much more glamorous than boredom I'm afraid. I grew up comfortably in the suburbs of London.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOME - DAY

A YOUNG SOPHIE sits in an ornate bedroom surrounded by many stuffed animals. She heaves a deep sigh.

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SOPHIE

Everything was so...available to me.

(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
I had wonderful parents, they would  
have let me do anything with my  
life.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

YOUNG SOPHIE and her FATHER exit a fancy toy store. Her  
father is struggling to carry an enormous teddy bear.

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SOPHIE  
But I had so many options that I  
didn't know which one to take!  
Sometimes too many choices can be a  
bad thing.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Close up on TEENAGE SOPHIE. She takes a deep breath, then  
puts on a large Teddy bear head and turns to face her bed  
where a YOUNG MAN wearing a bunny costume is tied up. You see  
that she is wearing a full stuffed animal costume as she  
moves toward him.

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

SOPHIE  
I lost my way for a little while. I  
started to feel decadent, and  
selfish. So I signed up with the  
church and came here to help. My  
parents call it "Angelina Jolie  
Syndrome."

RAJA  
Ah! The White Guilt Study Abroad  
Program.

She laughs.

SOPHIE

I've been here for two years now...and it doesn't feel like that at all. To be honest I just feel lucky to be a part of this community.

RAJA

Yeah...

They come to a stop in front of Raja's Grandparent's house.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Well...thanks for walking me home.

SOPHIE

My pleasure. It's good to know that there's more to Raja Patel than just some lunatic in brown-face.

RAJA

Did everybody see that?

SOPHIE

It was on the news a lot.

RAJA

Awesome. Alright Teach, see you tomorrow.

SOPHIE

Not if I see you first.

She walks off down the road.

RAJA

(yelling after her)

Ha! Right, 'cause that's what...nice!

(to himself)

Not if I see you first...she likes me!

He walks across the street to the water pump, fills his hands with water and splashes it on his face.

RAJA (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Sophie loves Raja / Cause he's good  
with kids / And he cares about  
other people. / Sweet!*

He takes a long drink, then stops and looks down at his hands.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
Wow. Really?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTHOUSE - NIGHT

Raja's screams can again be heard coming from the outhouse.

RAJA (O.S.)  
OH GOD! OH PLEASE! IT'S LIKE  
THREADING A NEEDLE WITH BARBED  
WIRE!

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - DAY

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - SAME

Raja wakes groggily on the living room couch. He squints at the room around him.

RAJA'S POV of the room. Harish comes gradually into focus, playing a guitar.

RAJA  
Harish...?

HARISH  
Good morning.

RAJA  
You're back from the city?

HARISH  
I have the day off.

Raja stares at him for a long beat.

RAJA  
You still play?

HARISH  
Every now and then.

RAJA  
I haven't seen you with a guitar  
since Mom had us duet at that  
comedy club. Remember?

CUT TO:

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Ten Year Old Raja and Twelve Year Old Harish sit on the stage of an almost-deserted American comedy club. Each has a guitar. They strum awkwardly and sing into microphones.

TWELVE YEAR OLD HARISH

*Turn around...*

TEN YEAR OLD RAJA

*Every now and then I get a little  
bit lonely and you're never coming  
around...*

TWELVE YEAR OLD HARISH

*Turn around...*

BACK TO:

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

HARISH

Yeah, I don't think that went as well as Mom hoped.

RAJA

You were phoning it in.

Harish smiles and strums the guitar. Off his playing:

MUSIC -- Upbeat Indian Pop

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja directs while several kids act out a scene.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Raja is collecting eggs from the henhouse. He blocks some chickens from escaping with his body and an intimidating glare (playing "chicken" with them).

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja is sketching out the set of his play on the blackboard for Sophie. She smiles and laughs.

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - DAY

Raja sets the table as Nitya serves dinner.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja coaches Des on a performance.

We ZOOM to the window, revealing Chilani standing in the street outside the classroom watching them, a sad smile on her face.

We PAN RIGHT to reveal Saraya standing next to Chilani, licking her lips.

INT. ASIT AND NITYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Raja and Harish perform a duet for their Grandparents. Harish plays the guitar while Raja bangs on a hand drum.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Des is changing into costume. He looks around for his pants, then turns to see Raja holding them and smiling playfully. Des laughs and chases him around the room.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION shot of Raja walking through Jasha's bar. The customers turn and smile at him as he passes by.

SPEED UP to normal as Raja approaches the table in the back where Chilani sits alone working her way through a stack of papers.

RAJA  
May I join you?

CHILANI  
I don't see why not.

Raja sits next to her. They are silent for a moment.

RAJA  
You know Des is a very talented boy.

CHILANI  
I expect you're going to say he reminds you of yourself.

RAJA

Not at all. I think he reminds me more of my brother. Des doesn't rush into anything. He takes his time. When I was a kid I acted on every stupid impulse...always getting stuff stuck up my nose.

CHILANI

That happens to every child.

RAJA

Not as frequently. I think they named a hospital wing after my left nostril. The right one's always been jealous.

She laughs.

CHILANI

I suppose I owe you an apology Mr. Patel. While your manners leave something to be desired, I haven't seen Des coming home happy after school in a long time.

Pause.

RAJA

I'm sorry...about your husband.

CHILANI

Why? It's not your fault.

RAJA

Every child deserves a family.

CHILANI

I am his family.

RAJA

Can I ask how he died?

Chilani sighs deeply.

CHILANI

He had diabetes. Type two. And we didn't have the money to treat it. Des has it too. It's only a matter of time before it develops.

Pause.

RAJA

I wish there was something I could do to help.

CHILANI

You distract him. That's blessing enough.

Chilani returns to her paperwork.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Raja sits on the desk rehearsing with three identical girls, TARA, TESSA and TASHA.

RAJA

Girls, listen, calm down. This number has a lot of potential, but it's still a little unclear what your message is. So just tell me...what's this song about?

All three girls giggle violently.

TASHA

Boys.

More giggling.

RAJA

Right...okay. But what are you saying about boys? You've got to have a point of view. How do you feel about them?

The girls look at each other.

TESSA

I...we...don't know.

TARA

With boys...it's like sometimes their nice...but sometimes they're mean.

TESSA

They're good and bad.

Raja hangs his head.

RAJA

(to himself)

Damn. They really do mature faster.

(MORE)

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 (back to the students)  
 Exactly. Both good and bad. So...I  
 wish I could say that it gets less  
 confusing as you get older.

Suddenly he stands, inspired.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 But you know what? Men and women  
 have been writing songs about how  
 much they confuse each other for  
 centuries. It's nothing new. I take  
 it back...you don't have to know  
 what to say...just how to say it.

The kids look at him, confused.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Don't worry, that didn't make sense  
 to me either...I just went over my  
 own head. Okay, girls...give me  
 that thing that Tara just said  
 about boys being both good and bad.

The girls look at each other, then intone in awkward unison.

TARA, TESSA & TASHA  
*Boys are good and boys are bad.*

RAJA  
 Okay, see that? Not a lot of  
 information in that. But try giving  
 it some flavor. You know how you  
 flavor meat to spice it up? The  
 seasoning makes the dish. So try  
 this...Tasha, Tessa: hold one note.

They hit a high note in unison.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 (holding his ears)  
 Lower.

They switch to intoning a low note.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Okay, now Tara...how are boys? Sing  
 it over this note.

TARA  
 (singing hesitantly)  
*Boys are good...*

RAJA

OK, now Tessa and Tasha, take it down a little farther...and Tara, tell me something else about boys.

The two girls lower their pitch as Tara sings over it again.

TARA

*Boys are bad...*

RAJA

Awesome! Now all together. And girls...please don't tell Sophie I had you do this...but sway. Just sway for me a little bit.

The girls sway in unison. Terra and Tessa intone the notes softly while Tasha sings over them. The effect is that of a female Motown group.

TERRA, TESSA AND TASHA

*Boys are good / and boys are bad...*

RAJA

Yes! Now, everybody, does that make any more sense than the first way they said it?

The students shake their heads.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Word. And do you know how they feel about boys now?

Everyone nods.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Booya. That's enough for today.

The kids murmur in acknowledgement as they pack up their belongings.

ISA

(to Des)

I really liked that song you sang today.

DES

(mumbling)

Thank you.

ISA

Do you want to come over after dinner and work on our scene?

DES

Um...I can't tonight. It's my  
mother's night off.

ISA

Oh. Okay, well...I guess I'll see  
you tomorrow!

DES

Okay.

Raja watches as Isa leaves to room.

RAJA

(whispering to Des)

Dude!

DES

(looking around)

Yes?

RAJA

Dude! Des! She totally likes you!

DES

So?

RAJA

So!? So you gotta...you know, make  
your move! Carry a book here and  
there. Maybe pass a note or two,  
it's cool, I'll allow it. And if  
you fold them just right I can  
guarantee you'll be holdin' that  
girl's hand all the way home!

DES

What's the point?

RAJA

Des my friend, I think it's time we  
had a little talk about the  
pretties and the...

DES

(cutting him off)

She'll go away! And I'll be lonely  
like my mother. I'm never falling  
in love Raja.

(he moves to leave)

See you tomorrow.

Raja watches Des go, then sighs and leans against the  
blackboard.

He pulls a pen from behind his ear and puts it into his shirt pocket. In doing so he discovers the black "RISING PHOENIX" business card. He takes it out and stares at it. Sophie enters.

SOPHIE  
How was it today?

RAJA  
Hm?

SOPHIE  
How are the rehearsals going?

RAJA  
Great.  
(he thinks)  
Hey Sophie...I'm gonna need a couple of days off.

INT. BAR - DAY

CLOSE ON the phone sitting on the bar.

RACK TO Raja behind it, regarding it fearfully, holding the business card in his hand. In a burst of courage he picks up the phone and dials.

RAJA  
Hello, this is Raja Patel.

He sighs deeply.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
(Indian accent)  
Thank you come again!

Pause.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
Yeah. Uh huh. The offer's still good?

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

We see a plane taking off.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sophie is trying to control the room full of rowdy children. Some are half in costume and a few carry props.

CAPTION: Three days later.

SOPHIE

Children! Children please! Just keep going over your scenes together! Mr. Patel will be back soon and he can coach you then!

ISA

But Ms. Pope, we need help now!

BOY

I don't know where I'm supposed to stand!

BOY 2

I lost my pirate hat!

BOY 3

I feel feelings!

DES

And we don't have any music!

SOPHIE

Children! I'm sorry I just...I wouldn't know where to begin! Can't you just keep rehearsing you parts until...

The door opens and Raja enters with a suitcase. He walks directly to the front of the class and sets it down.

RAJA

Okay! Sorry I'm late...

DES

Three days late.

RAJA

You...you know what Des? I don't even wanna hear that from you right now, alright homie?

SOPHIE

(whispered)

Where have you been?!

RAJA  
 (whispered)  
 Sophie, I had some deeply...deeply  
 personal business to attend to.

Sophie gestures to the class around her.

SOPHIE  
 Fix this.

RAJA  
 Right.

Raja grabs the dilapidated guitar leaning against the wall.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 From the top! And please, for the  
 love of God, let's make it  
 adorable! Teacher needs some happy  
 thoughts!

INT. SOPHIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sophie's office is small and cluttered, the walls lined with bookshelves and inspirational posters.

POV from her desk as the door opens and Raja enters.

RAJA  
 I'm sorry to do that to you Sophie,  
 I got back as soon...

REVERSE SHOT of the high-backed chair behind Sophie's desk spinning around to reveal Bobby. He is wearing a beautiful white suit and several glittering rings.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Bobby!

BOBBY  
 Sweetheart...

RAJA  
 What the hell are you doing here?  
 What did you do with Sophie?

BOBBY  
 I sent her down the block to get me  
 a bottle of water. I'm not even  
 thirsty, but I just had to watch  
 that girl leave the room. You hit  
 that yet buddy?

RAJA  
Bobby...she's a missionary!

BOBBY  
Give me a week and I'll have her  
doing any position I like.

RAJA  
What...you...how did you find me?

BOBBY  
Come on Raja, don't be bloody  
thick! I copied that number off the  
back of your locket years ago,  
right after I lost you at Disney  
World.

CUT TO:

EXT. DISNEY WORLD - DAY

Ten Year Old Raja eats cotton candy. Bobby flirts heavily  
with someone in a MINNIE MOUSE costume.

BOBBY  
Your shift is almost over? You  
wanna go where? I can barely hear  
you...that's so sexy. Shall we,  
madame?

He yells over his shoulder to Raja.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Don't go anywhere!  
(to Minnie, as they leave)  
No sweetheart, I don't think you  
need to change...

BACK TO:

INT. SOPHIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

BOBBY  
I see why Mickey stays with her...

RAJA  
Bobby where the hell have you been?  
Where did you get those clothes?

BOBBY

Oh, you know...I had to spend a little time in the city. Just a few things that needed clearing up...

Pause.

RAJA

That's...I mean...you're hinting at, like, murder and sex slaves and stuff right?

BOBBY

Yes I am.

RAJA

It would probably upset me to hear about it right?

BOBBY

Yes it probably would.

RAJA

Alright, so...we'll just skip to...

BOBBY

Let's skip to where the hell were you? I got into town yesterday! I've been killing time with your family, and let me tell you, your grandfather is not an easy man to work for.

RAJA

Tell me about it...let's just say that I had to...

BOBBY

(cutting him off)

You're going to feed me the same bullshit I fed you aren't you?

RAJA

Pretty much, yeah.

BOBBY

Alright, well...where we've been isn't important. What matters is where we are...and where we're going. Home.

RAJA

What are you talking about?

BOBBY

Raja, look at me. I'm doing alright for myself now, you know? I did what I was always telling you to do: I diversified. And it worked out. With the kind of money I have now I can set us up at any studio in Hollywood. I could get a distribution deal on a three hour shot of you sleeping...in brown-face!

RAJA

You know, you would be surprised how much that comes up around here.

BOBBY

It's all anybody mentions when I talk about you. But fuck them, right Raja? Take that tablecloth off and put some pants on! We're going back to America.

He rises to leave.

RAJA

Bobby...

BOBBY

Baby?

RAJA

I'm not going.

BOBBY

...I'm sorry?

RAJA

I've got a good thing going here Bobby. These kids need me. We're making a show together.

BOBBY

Making a show?! Last year you walked out of the Star Wars remake two week into filming!

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Raja stands in the corner of a busy film set reading a script. He is wearing a white tunic reminiscent of LUKE SKYWALKER and wears a lightsaber on his belt.

RAJA

She's my sister? Oh fuck this!

He throws the pages in the air and storms off the set.

BACK TO:

INT. SOPHIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RAJA

This is different Bobby. This is actually...for the first time I feel like I'm really helping somebody, you know? Like you helped me and my brother...like you helped C.G. and his wife...

BOBBY

I hope not exactly like that...

RAJA

No, that would be gross...but you know what I mean. I feel like I'm home Bobby. I've got nowhere to go.

Bobby looks at him for a long moment, then smiles and moves to the door.

BOBBY

Alright Raja. But if you ever change you mind, here's my new number.

He reaches into his jacket, pulls out a business card and hands it to Raja. Raja reads it.

RAJA

Wow. Do you really think it's a good idea to have a business card for something like this?

BOBBY

I don't give it out that much.

As he exits he bumps into Sophie, returning with a bottle of water.

SOPHIE

Oh! Excuse me. Here's your water.

BOBBY

You keep it sweetheart. You look in need of lubrication.

He leaves. Sophie turns to look at Raja, then slowly closes the door behind her.

SOPHIE

I heard everything.

RAJA

You did?

She pounces on him and begins kissing him fiercely. Raja resists.

SOPHIE

I knew you couldn't leave! That was so brave of you...so generous! Think of all you're giving up!

RAJA

Hey, easy Sophie!

SOPHIE

Call me Paddington!

RAJA

What? What's gotten into you?

SOPHIE

I...I don't know, I'm just...so hot for you right now!

RAJA

Sophie wait...I don't think this is a good idea.

She stops and looks at him.

SOPHIE

What?

RAJA

Yeah, what? I'm drunk. Come here.

He grabs her and starts to kiss her again, but then stops himself.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Wait...no...I'm not drunk. I'm  
sorry Sophie I just...respect you  
too much to rush into anything.

Pause. He bites his lip.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Is this Tamil? Am I speaking Tamil  
right now? Because I do not  
recognize what's coming out of my  
mouth.

Sophie backs away, smiling at him.

SOPHIE

You're growing up Raja. That's all.  
Take as much time as you need.

She exits. Raja looks down at his crotch.

RAJA

I am very disappointed in you!

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

LONG SHOT of Raja leaving the school, smacking himself on the  
forehead over and over.

REVERSE SHOT of Bobby leaning against a tree watching him go.  
He walks a few feet to a car idling in the street, opens the  
door and gets in.

DRIVER

Back to the city Bobby?

BOBBY

Yes please, and let me know as soon  
as we have cell phone service  
again. I have some calls to make.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Raja enters. Chilani sees him from her desk in the corner.  
She smiles and waves him over.

CHILANI

I knew you were back because Des  
was smiling again after school  
today.

RAJA

Naw, he was smiling because he just rocked his solo! I'm serious, that kid is like Robert Plant mixed with...I don't know...Willow.

CHILANI

(smiling)

I assume that's sweet.

RAJA

It's meant to be sweet.

Pause.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Chilani, I'm going to give you something, and I need you to accept it.

Her smile fades.

CHILANI

What?

RAJA

Don't worry, it's nothing bad.

Raja pulls an envelope out of his pocket and slides it across the table to Chilani. She opens it and looks at the check inside.

CHILANI

Raja, I can't take this.

RAJA

What did I just say?

CHILANI

But this is too much, this...

RAJA

Chilani, look. I've had money. I don't need money right now. What I need is for you to let me do this for you. Please?

CHILANI

Why?

RAJA

Well...honestly I want Des to have a future.

(MORE)

RAJA (CONT'D)

Selfishly I want to know what it feels like to help someone else for a change. And realistically...

(he trails off and looks away)

...I've done some things...that I need to...justify.

He looks away.

CLOSE ON a hand covering Raja's own.

VOICE (O.C.)

I accept you.

Raja turns back with a smile to see Saraya standing by the table, her hand on his. Chilani is looking at her quizzically.

SARAYA

Don't go changin'.

Raja pulls his hand away.

RAJA

Ah! What are you doing here? What is your job anyway?

SARAYA

(gesturing to the corner)  
I'll be right over there.

RAJA

Fine, whatever.  
(turning back to Chilani)  
Look, just do me a favor and take this...please? And take that kid to the doctor tomorrow.

She looks at him for a moment before making up her mind.

CHILANI

Alright. Thank you. Can I at least buy you a drink?

RAJA

When do you get off?

She pushes the papers off her desk and into her handbag.

CHILANI

Now.

They smile at each other.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

It is the opening night of the children's play. All the villagers are filing into the school auditorium.

CAPTION: One Week Later.

A white limo pulls up and Bobby gets out. He gestures up and down along the road and half a dozen black town cars pull up near him. An EXECUTIVE in a suit gets out of each car. BEN, a young producer's assistant, approaches Bobby.

BEN

Are you fucking kidding me Bobby? Where are we? I lost reception in there like an hour ago. How am I supposed know who Ray Jay sends home tonight?

BOBBY

Trust me Ben, this will be worth it.

BEN

It fucking well better be.

BOBBY

Listen you little shit, I paid off half your student loans to get you out here. If I brought you to the desert to watch a yak give birth you'd bloody well applaud. Now come on, let's try not to make a scene.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The kids are frantically preparing to go on stage. Raja rushes around fixing costumes and giving last minute adjustments.

RAJA

Suraj, don't worry about that high note tonight, you totally got it. Kisha, don't make that face during the finale, alright? It's creepy. Oh, hey Tara! Tessa! Tasha! Remember...less giggling on the "Cooties" piece tonight, okay? We need to hear your words.

The girls GIGGLE O.C. Raja peaks through the red curtain and sees the auditorium filling with people.

His grandparents are taking their seats in the front row. Asit is wearing a tie, which Nitya straightens fussily.

NITYA

You look so good in a tie, I don't know why you never wear them.

ASIT

Some say tie, some say leash.

NITYA

What?

ASIT

I said woof woman!

NITYA

Oh Jack...

ASIT

(softening)

Kate...

She kisses him on the cheek. Raja smiles. He hears a voice behind him.

HARISH (O.C.)

Raja.

Raja turns with a start.

RAJA

Harish! You made it! I though you had to be at...

HARISH

I took a personal day. Here.

Harish hands him his guitar.

HARISH (CONT'D)

I want you to have this.

RAJA

What? No man, you don't have to do that. Look, I have the one from the school, it's fine.

Raja picks up the run-down guitar from the classroom and strums it. The pick guard falls off.

HARISH

Raja, don't be an idiot. Take it.

Raja hesitantly reaches out and takes the instrument.

RAJA

You always were the smart one  
Harish. You got Mom's brains and  
Dad's morals and I got...

HARISH

You have talent Raja. That's from  
God. Use it.

He turns to go, almost bumping into Sophie as she rushes up  
to Raja.

SOPHIE

Raja, it's time to start. Are you  
ready?

RAJA

Yeah...I think I am.

SOPHIE

So get out there...say something!

RAJA

Me? But I don't have anything...

She smiles at him.

SOPHIE

You'll do fine, "Teach."

RAJA

Yeah. Heh.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Raja steps through the red curtains. The entire village is in  
the audience. His grandparents and Harish sit in the front  
row. Chilani is behind them. Bobby and his associates stand  
in the back. Raja smiles nervously at the crowded room.

RAJA

Um...hey guys.

NITYA

Go Raja!

RAJA

Hi Grandma.

NITYA

Woo!

RAJA

Tonight, um...tonight I'm pleased to bring you something very special. This is a bit of a change for those of you who know my former work...as the Indian Uncle Tom.

A few titters of LAUGHTER. Chilani smiles.

RAJA (CONT'D)

Yeah. So anyway, I would just like to say how much it's meant to me to be welcomed into your community. And thank you for trusting me with the young artists of tomorrow, who stole my heart just as sure as they stole my pants.

More LAUGHS. Raja moves to a stool downstage right and picks up a guitar.

RAJA (CONT'D)

I'm going to be sitting right here accompanying them on the guitar. And I'm sure everyone is hoping that I play a lot better than I plow.

HEARTY LAUGHTER fills the room. The suits in the back exchange looks of interest.

RAJA (CONT'D)

And so, without further ado, I give you...your sons and daughters in..."The Mind of a Child."

The curtains part. Isa stands center stage, dressed like a schoolgirl. Raja accompanies her on the guitar as she begins to sing.

ISA

*It's morning in town / good girls  
go to school / I never talk back /  
I follow the rules / No one ever  
asks what goes on in my head / And  
I never tell them / I'll show you  
instead.*

Suddenly a chorus of boys and girls similarly attired join her onstage. They form lines and begin to sing in up-tempo harmony.

## CHORUS

*In the mind of a child / Each day  
is a journey / 'Cause the world is  
a wide and wonderful place / When  
you're still under five foot three.*

TWO SOLOISTS break away from the group.

## GIRL SOLOIST

*We've got our imaginations...*

## BOY SOLOIST

*And we've got each other...*

## GIRL SOLOIST

*I can be a damsel or an evil  
witch...*

## BOY SOLOIST

*(hitting the high note)  
I can be a Jonas Brother!*

The audience LAUGHS. The executives in the back look at each other again, smiling. Bobby whispers to himself.

## BOBBY

*This is bloody adorable.*

Des and Isa step forward from the group. Raja continues to play under their dialogue.

## DES

*Hey Isa!*

## ISA

*Yeah Des?*

## DES

*What are you doing after school  
today?*

## ISA

*Um...I don't have to be home for a  
while. What did you have in mind?*

## DES

*Oh I don't know, maybe we could  
hang out...IN OUTER SPACE!?!*

All the children simultaneously put on space helmets.

## CHORUS

*Rockin' out...in space!*

CLOSE ON Raja, playing hard and singing along.

RAJA & CHORUS  
*Come on and get...a taste!*

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

Raja plays while Tan and Isa sing a somber ballad.

TAN  
*I need work, so I'm going to the city.*

ISA  
*Don't make me leave my mother, my father and my kitty.*

TAN  
*In the city I will be a jet setter.*

ISA  
*My mother is sick, and I don't think she's getting better.*

In the back, Ben leans over and whispers to Bobby.

BEN  
Damn.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

Tara, Tessa and Tasha, all dressed like flowers, sing in harmony and dance in unison, occasionally breaking into fits of giggling. Across the stage, Tan and Des hide behind each other in mock terror.

TARA  
*Boys.*

TESSA  
*Boys?*

TARA, TESSA & TASHA  
*Do we love 'em do we hate 'em?*

TASHA  
*Too old to tease 'em and too young to date 'em.*

TARA, TESSA & TASHA  
*Oh which one will it be? / I think  
 cooties are starting to grow on me.*

Fits of giggling. The audience loves it. Raja shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

Des is alone onstage, dressed like a private detective. Several audience members are crying openly.

DES  
*And I will find a way / I will make  
 things right again / and Mother  
 won't need to pray / cause she'll  
 always have me as her best friend.*

CLOSE ON Chilani's tear-stained face.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER

All the kids are on stage. Some are dressed as cowboys, some as pirates, some as space men. They hold hands and sing with all their might.

CHORUS  
*Our minds are made for imagination  
 / but we're aware of the situation.  
 / We wanted to thank you for all  
 that you do / And when you need us  
 we'll be there for you too.*

Raja strums the final chord. The audience breaks into wild APPLAUSE. Raja sets down his guitar and joins them. All the children bow, smiling and waving to their parents. Suddenly a loud, gruff voice speaks from the back, silencing the room. It is one of Bobby's associates, MELVIN, a short, fat, middle-aged movie producer.

MELVIN  
 I'll take it!

All heads turn to look at him as he strides down the aisle.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

It's brilliant! It'll be the biggest celebrity come back of all time! Raja Patel, disgraced in the American media, returns to his homeland to direct a feel-good children's musical!

(to Raja)

You're back baby! This is brilliant! This is, like, Joaquin Phoenix level showmanship!

RAJA

Um...hi. I'm sorry, who are you?

Bobby steps forward.

BOBBY

That's Melvin Feldstein Raja, one of the most powerful producers in Hollywood. Last year you passed out in the bouncy house at his daughter's Bat Mitzvah.

RAJA

Oh yeah...

BOBBY

I invited him Raja. I invited representatives from all the major studios out here to see your show, because I never lost faith in you. You've done it Raja! This is your ticket back to the top sweetheart! We'll be shattering the bloody box office together again in no time!

RAJA

Bobby...?

Ben steps forward.

BEN

What can I say Bobby? When you're right, you're right.

(to Raja)

And you, my friend...this is gonna be bigger than if all the American Idol winners from every season did a sex tape together wearing stuffed animal costumes.

CLOSE ON Sophie, biting her lip.

CLOSE ON Bobby, raising his eyebrows.

MELVIN

You've gotta be kidding me...

BEN

(referring to Melvin)

But not if you listen to this asshole! Raja, if you let this guy make your movie he'll fuck it up so bad you'll never get out of this shithole! My company on the other hand...the people I work for...we'll tell this story the way it should be told. The story of a man who went too far. The story of a movie star who lost his way...and found himself again in the most terrible, disgusting surroundings imaginable. A story where cute kids sing but partial nudity is also acceptable.

MELVIN

Don't listen to him Raja. There's no way he can come up with the kind of money that this project needs. Think about it. We've gotta film out here in the middle of nowhere!

Another executive in the back, a fit, attractive older man named DAVIS, steps forward.

DAVIS

They're both wrong Raja. Only my company can give this riches to rags and back again tale the telling it deserves. That kid is a pathological liar, and Melvin made "Van Helsing."

RAJA

(disgusted)

Dude...

BOBBY

Take you're pick Raja. Every man here is dying to make you a star again!

Raja looks at Bobby. He looks at his family in the front row. He looks at Chilani behind them. He looks over at Sophie in the wings and the kids standing awkwardly on stage. Finally he turns back to the suits in the aisle.

RAJA  
 (fake accent, little bow)  
 Thank you, come again!

He turns and walks upstage. Everybody looks at each other, confused.

BEN  
 What the fuck does that mean?

Raja whips around.

RAJA  
 It means thanks but no thanks my good friend. I appreciate the offers, and Bobby, thanks for looking out for me, as always. You are a redwood in a field of saplings.

Bobby holds a peace sign up over his heart.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 But I'm going to have to pass. My life finally means something. The last thing I want to do is make a movie out of it. Besides...  
 (gestures to the kids around him)  
 ...did you see that? These kids have talent. We've got a whole season to plan.

He starts to leave the stage, then turns back.

RAJA (CONT'D)  
 Now...this play on the other hand...if you wanted to make that into a movie, then we could talk.

The kids look at each other excitedly. Melvin and Ben exchange a glance.

DAVIS  
 Musicals are fuckin' dead.

BEN  
 Children's musicals are dead and buried.

MELVIN  
 Indian children's musicals are mummified.

BEN  
Who would ever make that movie?

C.G. (O.C.)  
Bollywood.

C.G. emerges from a dark corner of the auditorium.

RAJA  
C.G.?

BOBBY  
Here?

C.G.  
You're not the only one who's been keeping tabs on our young friend Bobby. I tracked down Raja's family the minute he left my office and hired their housekeeper to keep an eye on him for me.

Saraya stands up next to C.G.

SARAYA  
Best job ever.

C.G.  
I never wanted to see you starve Raja. I just wanted you to find out what this country is really like.

RAJA  
Well...how do you think I did?

C.G.  
(smiling)  
Raja Patel...you ARE India.

MUSIC -- Indian Hip Hop

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

A MONTAGE of C.G. and his crew filming the children's movie.

QUICK SHOT: The kids in costume, acting out scenes on expensive sets.

QUICK SHOT: Raja coaching them.

QUICK SHOT: C.G. arguing with Asit. Nearby, Nitya shakes her head and smiles.

QUICK SHOT: Bobby hitting on the make-up girl.

QUICK SHOT: Raja playing with a group of the kids. A PHOTOGRAPHER is trying to organize them. He motions Raja to get closer to the group.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S POV of Raja respectfully shaking his head and backing out of the shot. The photographer takes several photographs of the kids posing, then pans right to where we see Raja leaning in to kiss Chilani. Des giggles and runs over to them. Raja notices the camera and moves toward it, holding out his hand as if to block the shot, as the MUSIC FADES.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Harish strums his guitar by the side of the river.

HARISH

*Once upon a time I was fallin' in  
love...*

SOPHIE (O.S.)

*But now I'm only fallin' apart.*

We PAN LEFT to reveal Sophie sitting next to him holding a teddy bear. She smiles.

CUT TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS

INT. STUDIO - DAY

CAPTION: Two Weeks Earlier

Under the credits we see Raja at the shoot for the mysterious Japanese company. A sign on the wall reads "RISING PHOENIX." Raja sits in front of a camera surrounded by a Japanese FILM CREW. He is naked except for a frilly bonnet and a diaper with a frowny-face on the crotch.

RAJA

(to the camera)

Hi, I'm Raja Patel.

(MORE)

RAJA (CONT'D)

Even movie stars need a little help  
in the bedroom sometimes. That's  
why I use Rising Phoenix Natural  
Male Enhancement Pills. They put an  
extra kick in my pocket, and a big  
smile on the face of my life-  
partner.

DIRECTOR

Cut!

RAJA

(under his breath)

That kid better be a god damn rock  
star.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END