

A BROOKLYN STORY

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. BOXING ARENA- EVENING- ESTABLISHING

People are pouring in, excited to see the fight.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the fight we've been waiting for. Los Angeles bulldog Joe Marley fights Brooklyn's best Aakash Dua. The winner of this fight gets a title shot against champ Mario Gonzales in the middleweight division. This is Rick Martin reporting live from the arena.

INT. LOCKER ROOM BATHROOM- SAME TIME

A nervous AAKASH, 22, well built at 165 pounds, is wearing a gown over his boxing shorts. He rinses his face a couple of times before closing the tap. He cleans his face with a towel. He looks up and stares at himself in the mirror. As we gradually zoom into his eyes.

AAKASH (V.O.)

The truth about it is, people don't box to become famous. If you want fame, go to Hollywood, act on reality TV, sing a few songs, or become a politician. We do it to live free. Every boxer has a story. Ever ask yourself, "What makes a boxer? Who is this guy in the ring that people love watching get beat, bruised, cut, and knocked out. What's his story?" Listen.

MAIN TITLE- A BROOKLYN STORY

CREDITS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHN F. KENNEDY AIRPORT- DAY-ESTABLISHING

TITLE- New York City, 1995.

VIKRAM DUA, 35, is hailing a cab as he stands next to his luggage. His son, Aakash, 10, pushes a lady on a wheelchair towards his father. The lady on the wheelchair is his mother. She looks frail and weak. A cab stops. They get in.

CAB DRIVER
(not turning around)
Where to?

Vikram reaches into his pocket and removes a piece of paper. He reads.

VIKRAM
Brooklyn, New York.

As Vikram lays back, his wife gives him a worried look. He kisses her forehead and comforts her. Meanwhile, Aakash peeps his head out the window and enjoys the sights of the charming city.

CUT TO:

INT. JAGDEV'S HOME- LATER

Vikram brings the last of the luggage in. Aakash sits next to his mother on a chair. JAGDEV, 38, Vikram's cousin, aids Vikram.

VIKRAM
(in Hindi)
You've lost weight Jagdev-

JAGDEV
Jack. They call me Jack here. It's easy and it's cool.

They all laugh.

Jack turns his attention to Vikram's wife, MINA.

JAGDEV (CONT'D)

(in Hindi)

The flight must have been tiring.
And this little devil must have
troubled you all the way here,
didn't he.

Jack holds Aakash in his hands.

MINA

(in Hindi)

Not at all.

JAGDEV

Why don't you go into the room to
rest. Us cousins have a lot of
catching up to do.

He puts Aakash on the floor. Mina gets up and takes Aakash
into a room with her.

JAGDEV (CONT'D)

What did the doctors say?

VIKRAM

They have given up there. I have an
appointment with a Dr. Ford
tomorrow-

Amanda, Jack's wife, walks down the staircase. She is
glamorously dressed in an evening gown and is on her way out.

AMANDA

How are you Vikram? It is lovely to
see you. Sorry I have to head out
but I'll catch you some other time.

VIKRAM

Yes please carry on.

Amanda opens the door to leave.

AMANDA

Jack I'll be home late.

JAGDEV

Yes h-

Amanda shuts the door behind her.

JAGDEV (CONT'D)
(to himself)
...honey.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL-NEXT DAY-ESTABLISHING

INT. DOCTOR'S ROOM

DR.FORD reviews Mina's medical records. He takes his glasses off.

DR. FORD
(sighing)
I'm not going to lie to you Mr.
Dua. Your wife has a tumor. And
it's spread to various parts of her
brain. Her cancer has advanced to
the final stage.

VIKRAM
Sir the doctors in India told me
the same. But I came here because I
know there is a treatment offered
by your hospital.

DR. FORD
Mr. Dua the treatment that we offer
has a very small chance to work for
your wife.

VIKRAM
But there is still a chance.

DR. FORD
And the cost of this treatment is
enormous. She doesn't even have
insurance.

VIKRAM
I have sold everything I had. All
my life savings I am willing to
use.

DR. FORD
(sighing)
Well, in that case, lets get her
admitted right away.

He begins to write something on his prescription pad.

DR. FORD (CONT'D)
Go to this room downstairs and
they'll take care of the admitting
procedures.

CUT TO:

INT. JAGDEV'S HOME- EVENING

Aakash plays with some toys. Jack and Vikram are sitting in
the dinning room. They sip on whisky.

JAGDEV
What did they say?

VIKRAM
Chance is small, but there
is still a chance.

Vikram takes in a heavy sip.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
(in Hindi)
Jack, the treatment is going to
cost a lot of money. I have most of
it but I need \$20,000 more. If you
could only help-

JAGDEV
\$20,000! I don't know if I can
Vicky. Don't get me wrong, Mina is
family, it's just that I have to
ask Amanda.

VIKRAM
Of course. I understand.

CUT TO:

LATER THAT EVENING

Aakash and Vikram are sitting on the couch. They can barely hear the CHATTER coming from upstairs. Then the CHATTER turns into a loud argument.

AMANDA

\$20000!!? Is he fucking kidding us?
Does he know how much money that
is? And didn't you tell me shes
dying anyway? Then why waste so
much money?

JAGDEV

Shh! Stop getting so loud!

Vikram and Aakash hear every word.

AMANDA

I don't care! This is my house.
First, they came into our home
uninvited. And then he wants
\$20,000? Next he'll ask you if they
can live her permanently. When is
he leaving anyway?

JAGDEV

Stop creating a scene Amanda!
It's useless talking to you-

Jack opens the door and walks out. He walks into the living room but cannot find Vikram and Aakash.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK TRAIN PLATFORM-NIGHT

Vikram and Aakash sit on a bench on the platform. His luggage occupies the seat next to him. The night breeze forces Aakash in his father's arms. Vikram watches the trains pass by.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL RECEPTION DESK- SAME NIGHT

RECEPTIONIST

(typing)

How long will you be staying with us sir?

VIKRAM

I don't know.

RECEPTIONIST

(confused)

Well it's going to be \$75 dollars a night. Will you be paying cash or credit?

VIKRAM

Cash.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM- DAY

A sick and frail Mina is lying down on her bed. A nurse walks out the room after giving her medicine. She is wearing a hat to cover her bald head. Vikram is feeding her soup. Aakash is sitting on the other side of the bed holding his mother's hand.

MINA

(in Hindi)

Why are you doing this? Why throw away all our life savings? Lets just go back and leave everything to-

VIKRAM

(in Hindi)

Shut up. We're not going anywhere. You're not going anywhere. We'll get through this.

MINA

(in Hindi)

It's been a week. Have you found a place yet?

VIKRAM

(in Hindi)

I just confirmed it last night.
There is a small basement. Enough
to fit me and your son.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN- DAY

Vikram and Aakash get off a public bus and make their way towards their new home. AD LIB chatter on the populated street. The neighborhood is a low class area with several mom and pop grocery stores. There is loud salsa and rap MUSIC playing. Many teenagers, wearing baggy clothes are loitering around the blocks. There are old men playing dominos in front of the bodegas. Trash cans are filled to maximum capacity.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT- LATER

The LANDLORD, an old Russian lady, leads Vikram into the basement. The basement is dark, damp, and small. There only ventilation is the main door.

LANDLORD

So you want it or what?

VIKRAM

Yes it's fine.

Reaches into his pocket for money.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

(giving her the money)

\$400. First month rent. Like we
talked about.

Landlord leaves. Aakash looks around the place.

AAKASH

(innocently)

I liked the motel better.

VIKRAM

Well, I liked it too but that was
someone else's place.

(MORE)

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

This is our own.

FADE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S ROOM- DAY

Vikram, puzzled, is sitting across from Dr. Ford.

DR. FORD

Mr. Dua-

Takes a sip of water.

DR. FORD (CONT'D)

Vikram, I called you here to discuss some upsetting news. The treatment that we tried...

VIKRAM

Tried? What do you mean tried?

DR. FORD

(sympathetically)

The treatment that we tried has failed.

VIKRAM

What are you saying? What does that mean?

Silence.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM- SAME TIME

Mina is petting Aakash. Aakash is sitting to her right.

AAKASH

(enthusiastically)

...and the tap water is not even clean. Papa doesn't know how to make anything. He can make Maggi Noodles.

MINA

Don't worry. Mama will be home soon.

AAKASH

Where we live, I see so many homeless people. Just like India. But here, they collect empty Coke cans and bottles and put them in this machine. Papa says that's how they make their money. 5 cents for every can! Can you believe that Ma? That is 2 rupees for every empty can! Isn't that amazing-

Vikram, looking very hopeless enters. He forces a smile.

VIKRAM

Visiting hours are over. We have to go.

Mina takes one look at Vikram and knows there is something he is not telling her. But she knows...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET-NIGHT-SAME DAY

A tormented Vikram is holding his son's hand and walking down a quiet street. He is consumed by his sorrow. Voice of Dr. Ford keeps regurgitating in his head.

DR. FORD (V.O.)

I am sorry Vikram but we cannot save her. She only has a couple of days to live.

Dr. Ford's voice gets LOUDER and begins to ECHO.

DR. FORD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She only has a couple of days to live. Only has a couple of days to live. Has a couple of days to live. A couple of days. To live.

Vikram consumed by his torment, doesn't notice TWO THUGS who start walking towards him at a rapid pace. The two thugs suddenly push Vikram into an empty alley-

AAKASH

(scared)

Papa!

They pin Vikram against the wall.

THUG # 1

What are you? New to this fucking neighborhood?

VIKRAM

Aakash! Go home! Get out of here!

Aakash runs as fast as he can across the street and hides behind a car.

THUG # 1

Give me all your money! Everything you got.

VIKRAM

I don't have anything!

Thug#1 removes a gun from his pocket and shoves it in Vikram's face.

THUG # 2

Ain't no Hindu god going to save your ass here. If I was you, I'd do what he says.

THUG # 1

Give me your fucking money before I send you back to where you came from.

VIKRAM

I don't have anything!

THUG # 1

This motherfucker-

They both push Vikram down on the ground and start beating him. Thug#1 beats Vikram with gun.

Aakash watches this from where he is hiding.

Thug#2 starts checking Vikram's pockets for money. He gets hold of Vikram's wallet and takes out all his money, which is a couple of \$20 bills.

THUG # 1 (CONT'D)

(still beating Vikram)

How much?

THUG # 2

Enough!

Thug#1 gets up and puts his gun away. Vikram is bleeding from his nose and is bruised.

THUG # 2 (CONT'D)

See if you had given us the money
this wouldn't have been necessary.

THUG # 1

Fuckin immigrants!

He throws Vikram's wallet on his face. They both disappear in the darkness.

Aakash, frightened, comes out of hiding and runs towards his father.

AAKASH

Papa! Papa!

He approaches his father. Vikram makes an attempt to get up.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT- LATER

Vikram is bleeding from his nose. He walks in holding his stomach, which is bruised pretty bad. Aakash sits his father down.

He wets a piece of cloth and cleans his fathers bleeding nose.

VIKRAM

I'm okay son. Don't worry.

Forcing a smile, Vikram kisses his son and sits him on the ground.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

(limping)

You must be hungry. Haven't had
food all day.

He walks towards the refrigerator and opens it. The refrigerator is empty except two slices of bread and a little milk.

He pours all the milk into a glass and puts the two slices of bread on a plate.

Vikram sits down next to his son with a glass of milk and the plate. He dips the bread in the milk and feeds it to Aakash, who forcefully, takes a bite.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
We don't have anything
else right now but I
promise we'll eat your
favorite tomorrow.

Vikram gets up and goes into the bathroom. He unbuttons his shirt and finds a black and blue bruise on his stomach. The agony of life is overwhelming for him and he quietly cries in the bathroom.

CUT TO:

THE NEXT MORNING

Aakash wakes up at 4:00 A.M. He opens a cabinet and pulls out a big black plastic bag. He then puts his shoes on and leaves without waking his father.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK-EARLY MORNING

Aakash begins picking out empty cans and bottles from the garbage. He picks up some from the ground. He searches every trash can in the park and begins to fill his bag up with empty cans, and bottles.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUPERMARKET-LATER

Aakash approaches a soda can deposit machine and begins depositing all his cans and bottles.

When he is done, the machine reads TOTAL- \$8.55

He prints out a ticket and walks into the Supermarket.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT- LATER

Aakash enters with grocery bags in his hand. He brought with him milk, eggs, bread, and noodle packs.

Vikram, with bruises on his face from the night, approaches him angrily.

VIKRAM
(angrily-in Hindi)
Where did you go!?? You know how
worried I got!

He glances at the bags in his hands.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
And what is all this? Where did you
get it from?

AAKASH
From the store Papa.

VIKRAM
(angry)
Don't get smart with me Aakash! How
did you get all this? Where did you
get the money from?

AAKASH
(innocently)
I worked for it Papa. I collected
cans and took them to the store.
The machine gave me money.

He walks past his father, who is shocked upon hearing this.

AAKASH (CONT'D)
And that is how I got this all.

Vikram is dumbfounded. His anger morphs into affection.

AAKASH (CONT'D)
(looking at his father)
And please Papa, today I will make
the noodles.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM- DAY

Jagdev, also known as, Jack, is sitting on a bench outside Mina's room.

IN MINA'S ROOM

Aakash is lying next to his mother with teary eyes. Vikram is sitting next to her. Mina's head is covered and she is tearing immensely.

MINA

(crying-to Aakash)

Make sure you don't harass your father too much. This time I won't be there to save you.

Aakash hugs his mother hard and hides his face in the comfort of her chest.

Vikram gets up and looks away controlling his tears.

Mina kisses her son all over his face. She knows, this is the last time she will see her son.

She grabs Vikram's hand and sits him down next to her.

MINA (CONT'D)

(tearing-to Vikram-in Hindi)

If he makes a mistake, don't hit him. And let him be whatever he wants to be.

Vikram cannot look at his wife. He nods his head.

MINA (CONT'D)

And please learn how to make kheer. It's his favorite.

VIKRAM

(looking away)

I will.

Silence.

OUTSIDE MINA'S ROOM

Aakash and Vikram walk out saddened and sit down next to Jack. Aakash sits on Vikram's lap with his head resting on Vikram's shoulder. Vikram stares into blank space.

JAGDEV
 (placing his hand on
 Aakash's head)
 I am really sorry Vicky.

Silence.

JAGDEV (CONT'D)
 So, what are you going to do now?
 Go back to India?

VIKRAM
 What am I going to go back for? I
 have nothing left. Everything I had
 is gone. I have my son. Whatever I
 have is here. There is nothing
 there for us.

Silence.

Vikram gets up, takes Aakash's hand and walks through the lonely hallway of the hospital towards the exit.

As they walk away-

AAKASH (V.O.)
 I didn't see my mother after that
 night. She didn't open her eyes the
 next morning. My father loved her
 very much. He never cried in front
 of me, though I knew he cried.

FADE TO:

INT. BASEMENT- DAY

Vikram has a newspaper in his hand. Holding a marker, he is marking all the potential job opportunities in the classified section. He picks up the phone to dial.

AAKASH (V.O.)
 We were broke! All the money my
 father had was used to pay for my
 mother's bills.
 (MORE)

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Going back to India was out of the question. He said there was nothing to go back for. A better future is here, in Brooklyn. I think he meant America, but I only knew Brooklyn.

Vikram on the phone-

VIKRAM

Yes sir-degree-no-but I can-hello?
Hello?

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Vikram gets rejected by another.
- B) Vikram cancels another posting that he circled.
- C) Vikram picks up the phone to dial another number.
- D) He pleads, but gets rejected.
- E) He pleads continually.
- F) He cancels the post that he circled.
- G) In his frustration, Vikram throws the newspaper on the floor.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

AAKASH (V.O.)

My father became desperate. After many failed attempts, he finally took up a job in a restaurant.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT-DAY/NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Vikram, wearing an apron, cleans the tables with a rag.
- B) He picks up the plates from the tables.
- C) He washes the plates.
- D) He mops the kitchen.

E) The clock displays 11:00 at night

F) Vikram cleans the tables and puts the chairs on the tables.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

AAKASH (V.O.)
Even I got a job.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING/WORKOUT GYM- DAY

A 1960s style boxing gym located in the heart of Brooklyn. There are four full size rings and 10 heavy bags.

The walls looks like they haven't had a paint job for decades. The lockers look rusted.

The ceiling fans don't work so portable fans are placed at all corners of the gym.

The walls are decorated with photo frames of many famous fighters including many pictures of Muhammad Ali.

Everyone is sweating including people sitting on the bleachers just watching people train.

Trainers move around the rings, work their fighters, some whisper and some yell. There is an African drum RHYTHM created by all the boxers training.

Some boxers work the heavy bag. Some work the speed bag, some work the double end bags. Some jump rope, and some just practice their combinations and movements in front of the mirror.

WE FIND Aakash , mopping the floor. When he is done, WE FOLLOW him as he takes the mop into a room and throws it in there. We continue following him as he picks up the gloves and wraps from the floor and open a rusted old closet.

AAKASH (V.O.)
It was my first job. I was paid 3 bucks an hour. I was a 10 year old kid. I didn't care. I don't know what it was. I just liked being around all those fighters.
(MORE)

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They seemed fearless, and yet there was so much pain. I wished I could be like them.

THE CLOSET is stuffed with all kinds of boxing gear. All types of gloves, hand wraps, first-aid kits, head gear, body gear, etc.

Aakash shuts the closet as PAULIE, Italian, late 40s, the manager of the gym, yells-

PAULIE

(yelling from the other side)

Hey kid! Aakash!

Aakash turns around to find him-

PAULIE (CONT'D)

(to Aakash)

Come here-

Aakash hurriedly runs towards Paulie's office.

Paulie sits in his office. From his office he can see everything going on in the gym because of the glass panes. He wears a round hat, an undershirt and an unbuttoned silk shirt over it. He is a little chubby.

He is talking to someone standing in front of him with his face down.

PAULIE

(to the man-yelling)

What's the matter wid you? You fucking mutt! I told you to make that drop, and you fell asleep on the wheel. You cocksucking no good son-of-a-jew! You know how much money you cost me. Get the fuck outta here. Get the fuck outta here!

Paulie throws a newspaper on his face.

TILT UP and FREEZE on PAULIE'S face throwing the newspaper.

AAKASH (V.O.)

Paulie. He manages the gym. Paulie is from Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. If you know any good, you don't fuck with Italians from Bensonhurst. You messed with them, and your mother would have to file your name under the missing people category. I mean you were either found in a dumpster somewhere in Staten Island, or resting at the bottom of the Hudson.

UNFREEZE and

CUT TO:

The man walking out embarrassed.

Aakash opens the door and approaches Paulie-

PAULIE

(to himself)

Fucking Mutt-

AAKASH

Yes Paulie.

PAULIE

Get me my regular kid.

As Paulie gives Aakash some money-

AAKASH (V.O.)

Paulie's regular, an Italian Hoagie sandwich. Salami, prosciutto, mortadella, cappicola, and provolone cheese, extra cheese.

EXT. ITALIAN DELI-LATER

Aakash runs out the deli carrying Paulie's sandwich. As he runs-

AAKASH (V.O.)

I did it because I loved being there. Felt like I belonged there.
(MORE)

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I would even skip school to hang
around the gym. Going there was
like going to school for me.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT-NIGHT

Aakash walks in and puts his book bag on the floor. He calls
for his father, but Vikram isn't home.

AAKASH (V.O.)
My father was never home. It's not
because he didn't want to be. He
worked till late night. After a
while, I kind of got use to it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT-DAY

Aakash and his friend TONY, 10, Italian, are playing
basketball. Tony teaches Aakash how to shoot the ball.

AAKASH (V.O.)
I met Tony in school. We would
always hang out together. We'd play
basketball together...

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL-DAY

Aakash and Tony, wearing their bookbags, walking towards
school.

AAKASH (V.O.)
...go to school together...

LATER

Aakash and Tony walk out of school in the middle of classes.

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and cut school together.

CUT TO:

EXT. DELI-LATER

Aakash and Tony stop outside a deli.

TONY
Hey you hungry?

AAKASH
No.

TONY
Yea I am. Can I borrow 5 bucks?

AAKASH
(hesitating)
Why?

TONY
I want to buy some food.

AAKASH
You don't have money?

TONY
I...I left it at home. I'll pay you
back tomorrow.

Tony smiles from ear to ear. TILT up and FREEZE on TONY'S
smiling face.

AAKASH (V.O.)
Tony always borrowed money. He
never paid back. But I didn't care.
Everyone has a friend like Tony. It
didn't bother me 'cuz he was my
best friend.

UNFREEZE and

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- DAY

Aakash is sitting on the bleachers.

AAKASH'S P.O.V

WE SEE the gym is packed with many fighters training.

There are some boxers sparring in the ring.

Many work the heavy bag, sweating profusely.

Some are putting their hand wraps on.

The trainers are sitting in a circle and discussing among each other.

Paulie is in his office on the phone.

WE SEE an Indian boxer, ABDUL ALI, 28, well built and tall at 170 pounds, sparring in the ring with another fighter. Both boxers have their head gear and body gear on while sparring.

AAKASH (V.O.)

That was the day when I saw him.

Abdul Ali spars in the ring. His trainer yells instructions from his corner.

Abdul moves about swiftly getting away from punches to his face. He moves around like a snake.

Aakash watches him in awe.

AAKASH (V.O.)

His name was Abdul Ali. He was the first Indian boxer I seen. I had never met an Indian who boxed! They use to call him Abdul "the snake" Ali. Cuz he was known to move around the ring like a snake. Tire his opponent before attacking. Sorta like Muhammad Ali.

All fighters around the ring begin watching Abdul Ali in action.

He begins to dominate his opponent with various combinations.

He continues to attack while moving away from his opponents punches.

He throws in a combination and finishes it with a power right uppercut to put his partner on the floor.

Everyone watching begins clapping.

Abdul looks rock solid moving around the ring.

Aakash gets up and claps the hardest.

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That was the time when he was preparing for his big fight. Can you believe it? An Indian boxer actually got a title shot. He was good. No doubt. But many didn't believe in him. They didn't think he would make it. They said he didn't belong. Made fun of the fact that an Indian thinks he could make it into boxing. But I was a fan. I thought he was the best fighter I met.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- NIGHT

Not many fighters are training in the gym

Two-three are lifting free weights in one corner.

Two-three are spread out; some hitting the heavy bag and some practicing their combinations.

Only Abdul Ali is training with determination. His t-shirt is soaked in his sweat.

His trainer is watching him.

Aakash is mopping the floor around him but he is really just paying attention to Abdul Ali training.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Abdul works the heavy bag.
- B) He jumps rope in front of the mirror.
- C) He works the speed bag.
- D) He goes back to working the heavy bag.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Abdul sits on the bench and begins unwrapping his hands. He is profusely sweating and looks very worn out.

Aakash is still mopping the floor.

ABDUL
(tired-to Aakash)
Hey kid. Can you get me some water?

Aakash drops his mop and runs to grab some water for Abdul.

He comes back with a bottle filled with water and walks over to Abdul.

AAKASH
Here.

ABDUL
(taking the bottle)
Thanks.

He drinks the water while Aakash watches him.

ABDUL
What are you doing here?

AAKASH
I work here.

ABDUL
That's good. Where you from?

AAKASH
Bombay. India.

ABDUL
Really? That's where I'm from!

AAKASH
I know.

ABDUL
 (plays with Aakash's hair)
 Thanks for the water.

He puts the wraps and gloves in his gym bag and gets up to leave.

AAKASH
 You have a big fight tomorrow.

ABDUL
 You going to watch it?

AAKASH
 No. I don't have T.V. at home. But
 I'll listen to the radio.

ABDUL
 Good. You like boxing?

AAKASH
 (excited)
 Yes!

Abdul removes his gloves from his bag.

ABDUL
 Here is a little memento from me.

He gives Aakash the gloves.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
 When your hands get bigger, maybe
 you can use them.

Aakash tries to put them on.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
 Ah! Don't put them on now. They're
 sweaty.

AAKASH
 Thank you Mr. Ali!

Abdul walking away-

AAKASH (CONT'D)
 Good luck Mr. Ali!

Abdul turns around and smiles. He walks out the gym.

Aakash begins to mop again.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET-DAY

A wall is filled with posters of the fight between ABDUL "the snake" ALI v/s THOMAS MOORE.

WE SEE Aakash and Tony are the ones taping the posters on the wall. One holds the poster while the other tapes it.

While they put the posters on the wall-

WE HEAR a radio commentator and THOMAS MOORE, the champion, on the radio.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Welcome Champ! Big fight against Abdul Ali. How you feel?

THOMAS MOORE (O.S.)

What's up Brooklyn!!! I feel real good man. I'm the peoples champ and I know that ain't changing.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

There is a lot of rumors that Abdul Ali will take this fight and the title from you. Any comments?

THOMAS MOORE (O.S.)

(laughing)

That's why they are rumors! He's a fake and I'm whoop his Hindu ass like I never whoop anyone before.

RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

He's Muslim.

THOMAS MOORE (O.S.)

It don't matter what he is. Ain't no Indian ever made it in boxing and ain't no Indian ever going to make it. And I'm make a mockery of that fool tonight.

WE ZOOM into the poster. DRUMS.

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA-LATER THAT NIGHT

The arena is filled with people there to watch the fight.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT- SAME TIME

Aakash is listening to the fight on the radio. The ANNOUNCER gets on the microphone.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome to 12 rounds of extraordinary boxing. To my left is the contender, weighing at 170 pounds, Abdul "the snake" Ali!

The arena doesn't sound excited but Aakash jumps up in excitement.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...and to my right is the reigning champion, weighing at 171 pounds, Thomas Moore!!!

The crowd goes wild.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...and the official referee, Gordon Mitchel!

Aakash joins his hands and closes his eyes and looks up. He murmurs a prayer.

WE PAN away from Aakash and ZOOM IN to THE CLOCK on the wall that displays 7:30 P.M.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE CLOCK is shown again. Time has lapsed and this time it's 8:25 P.M.

WE PAN to Aakash, who is still listening to the radio. He looks discouraged and unhappy. Then the radio-

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(excited and loud)

Ladies and Gentlemen! That's it!
The fight is over! The fight is
over! Abdul Ali isn't getting up.
The referee has called it! Abdul
Ali has been knocked out by Thomas
Moore. Ali has been knocked down
with one minute remaining in round
7. That's it. The fight is over!
Thomas Moore still reigns as the
champion of the world!

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT- LATER THAT NIGHT

The radio is now heard very faintly in the background.

The gloves Abdul gave Aakash are hanging on a door.

Aakash is lying down on his bed in a corner. His face is half lit.

As we ZOOM on Aakash's face-

AAKASH (V.O.)

Abdul "the snake" Ali was knocked
out in the 7th round. They said he
couldn't even get up. Had to have a
stretcher take him out. He never
came into the gym again. I didn't
see him for years. He just
disappeared. Maybe he couldn't bare
the embarrassment. He failed. The
weird thing is even though my hero
failed, I wasn't discouraged. In
fact I think it was then, that I
felt it. I think that was the
moment. When I made up my mind. To
become a boxer.

PAN AWAY from Aakash's half lit face to the hanging GLOVES
behind the door.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on the gloves.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE SAME GLOVES ARE HANGING BEHIND A DOOR.

Pull back to reveal:

A DIFFERENT ROOM. An older Aakash, now 20 years old, is sleeping in bed. A faint sunlight enters through the window above his head.

His walls are decorated with posters of Muhammad Ali, and many other famous boxers.

His room is untidy but there is hardly any furniture.

A picture of his mother adores the bedside table.

A stack of boxing magazines lie around; some on the floor and some on the table.

WE ZOOM in one on the magazine titled: ON THE ROPES. The DATE of the issue reads FALL, 2005.

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL ALARM clock is placed right next to the bed. It displays the time as 11:59 A.M.

As time soon changes to 12:00 P.M., a LOUD alarm bell.

Aakash wakes up suddenly.

He hits the snooze button and the alarm shuts off.

He gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT-DAY

AAKASH walks out and locks the door to his apartment. He is WEARING a polo that has the logo of a BOWLING ALLEY and underneath the logo it reads: BOWLING ALLEY

He carries with him a gym bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY-DAY

Aakash works at this bowling alley. He makes his way through the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY-DAY

The place is filled with many bowlers. Teenagers and adults, both groups are spread out on different lanes. They eat and drink and place their garbage on the tables behind them.

WE SEE

Aakash in an empty corner loading the balls from the lanes on to the racks.

He wipes the seats with an old rag.

He sprays an anti-bacterial and wipes the tables.

He moves around with a garbage can on wheels by the tables of the bowlers.

He picks up their garbage and dumps it in the garbage can.

THE BASEMENT

Aakash brings in the heavy deliveries and sets them in a corner.

He takes a gallon of soda and loads it in a machine that supplies the soda from the canteen.

THE ALLEY

A wild bunch of teenagers are done bowling. Popcorn and potato fries accompany the stains on the carpet. Pieces of gum are stuck to the carpet as well.

Aakash brings his broom and sweeps the area clean.

He has trouble getting the gum off the carpet.

He tries and tries but it wont come off using the broom.
He puts on his plastic gloves and pulls it with his hands.

THE BATHROOM

Aakash cleans the toilets with a mop.
He replaces the toilet paper.
He checks the paper rolls by the hand wash and replaces it.
He takes out the filled garbage bag and replaces it with a new one.

BACK TO THE ALLEY

He begins unloading all the garbage cans and replaces it with new bags.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY-LATER

Aakash walks over to the huge dumpster behind the alley and begins to dump all the filthy, and heavy garbage bags into the dumpster.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY-LATER

Aakash enters his MANAGER'S office. His manager is writing something in a book. He wears a similar polo shirt as Aakash. His name tag reads : MANAGER

AAKASH
You called for me?

MANAGER
(looking up)
Yes Aakash. Sit down. How you doing?

AAKASH
All right I guess. Same shit.
Different day. Why? What's up?

MANAGER

I'm guessing you haven't heard.

AAKASH

Heard what? I'm getting fired?

Aakash grins.

Beat.

MANAGER

No. Actually all of us are getting fired.

AAKASH

(confused)

What do you mean?

MANAGER

We're shutting out business here at this location.

AAKASH

What you mean shutting out?

MANAGER

(sarcastic)

This alley hasn't been making enough money to ensure it's survival.

AAKASH

What!?? Even with all us underpaid employees?

MANAGER

(distressed)

Anyway, I don't want to discuss it. I want you to finish your work today and pick up your check on your way out.

AAKASH

What are you going to do?

MANAGER

Me? Well they got something lined up for me in Flushing. Same duties. I was thinking.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I know you're going to need work. I could hire you there if you want.

Aakash gets up to walk towards the door.

AAKASH

Nah man. I'm cool. That's in Queens right? I'll find something around here in Brooklyn. Thank's anyway.

MANAGER

How's your boxing going?

AAKASH

Same old man. Just self training. Should come by, maybe we'll get a sparring session on.

MANAGER

(laughing)

You kidding me. I'll huff and puff in the first round.

AAKASH

(laughing)

I'll catch you later man. Good luck.

Aakash leaves.

Manager continues to write something in a book.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC BUS- EVENING

Aakash sits in the back of the bus staring out the window. His gym bag occupies the seat next to him.

He removes his check from his pocket. He opens to read it.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING/WORKOUT GYM- NIGHT

It's the same gym. Some younger teenagers are working out in one corner with free weights.

Some are working the heavy bag.

JAMAAL is in the ring with his trainer.

CUT TO:

LOCKER ROOM

Looks very old with rusted metal lockers.

AAKASH begins to wrap his hands.

There aren't many people in there.

Some boxers, in their towels, walk into the showers.

No one talks to Aakash and Aakash minds his own business.

JAMAAL, 25, walks in after his workout. He spots AAKASH sitting and wrapping his hands. He has a habit of harassing people because he is the best fighter in the gym.

Jamaal sees an open locker past Aakash. He removes his sweaty t-shirt and THROWS it at Aakash's face.

Aakash, angrily looks at him.

JAMAAL

(snickering)

Oh my bad man. Didn't mean to do that. Meant to throw it in that locker right there.

Aakash knows he meant to hit him.

Aakash takes the t-shirt and throws it back at Jamaal.

JAMAAL (CONT'D)

So what's good playa? Man how long you been training up in here? You been in here since before I been the champ around here. What? Can't get no trainer?

Aakash continues to wrap his hands quietly.

Beat.

JAMAAL (CONT'D)

(almost rapping)

Man you needs to learn from the best!

(MORE)

JAMAAL (CONT'D)

Who put all these other chumps to rest. The last one I fought, I made him blue. This is boxing, you don't belong here HINDU.

Aakash picks up his gloves and leaves the LOCKER ROOM.

JAMAAL (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Fuckin' punk.

CUT TO:

IN THE GYM

Aakash works the heavy bag. He is surprisingly really good. He moves around continually jabbing.

He sweats.

He begins jumping rope in front of the mirror. He jumps rope like a pro. Like he's been doing it for years.

He practices some combinations in front of the mirror. He moves and pivots and throws a couple of jabs before it finishes with a POWER RIGHT hand.

THE HEAVY BAG is being pounded by a worn out, tired and sweaty Aakash. He keeps punching hard pounding it with his left and right hook till he finally gives up.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT-NIGHT

An older VIKRAM is sitting on the dining table writing some checks. His age shows. His hair is grey, and his skin a bit wrinkled. He has developed bags under his eyes. He is now 45.

Aakash enters the apartment and drops his bag on the floor.

He opens the refrigerator and picks up a bottle of water.

As he drinks-

VIKRAM

(not looking at Aakash)

Why are you late today?

AAKASH
Was working out.

Vikram pulls out a set of keys from his pocket and tosses it at Aakash.

Aakash catches them.

VIKRAM
(still not looking at
Aakash)
Be back by sunrise. And don't
forget to fill up the tank before
you come back.

Aakash finishes drinking water.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
(still not looking)
And stop all this boxing nonsense.
It's not going to get you anywhere.

Aakash shuts the door behind him ignoring his father's last comment.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET-NIGHT

Aakash approaches A CAB. He opes the door and gets in.

He fixes the mirrors and adjusts his seat.

He starts the CAB and pulls out.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB-NIGHT

Aakash drives into MANHATTAN over the BROOKLYN BRIDGE.

Aakash stops to pick up passengers.

A BLACK MALE gets in.

AAKASH
Where to?

BLACK MALE
23rd and Park

Aakash drives off.

IN THE CAB-

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) The BLACK MALE is reading a magazine in the backseat.
- B) An ASIAN COUPLE argues in Chinese.
- C) A YOUNG COUPLE kiss and feel up on each other passionately.
- D) Aakash looks from his rear view mirror.
- E) An INDIAN FAMILY is peeping out the window.
- F) A PROFESSIONAL woman on her blackberry.
- G) WHITE GIRLS dressed in sexy outfits fixing their make up.
- H) GAY COUPLE making out.
- I) An OLD COUPLE discuss among each other.
- J) A HONEYMOON COUPLE cuddle and enjoy the city.
- K) MEXICANS are talking about the immigration laws.
- L) A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN say, "53rd and 6th"

END SERIES OF SHOTS

The CAB drives away.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET-EARLY MORNING

An exhausted Aakash parks the cab and gets out.

Not many people are on the street.

As Aakash walks away from the cab towards his apartment-

AAKASH (V.O.)

My life was fuckin' shitty! I graduated high school but didn't want to go to college. I wasn't made for college. My father drove the cab in the day times and I drove it in the nights. I was desperate. To get out. But I didn't know where I wanted to go.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT-DAY

AAKASH is sleeping in his bed.

VIKRAM comes in and wakes him up.

VIKRAM

Get up you useless idiot-

Aakash still sleeps.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

(shaking Aakash)

Get up! Come outside!

Vikram leaves.

LIVING ROOM

Aakash, looking like he woke up, walks out.

Vikram throws some papers on the table in front of him.

Aakash picks them up.

AAKASH

(yawning)

What's this?

VIKRAM

Applications.

AAKASH

For what?

VIKRAM

Colleges! Around here.

AAKASH

What!?

VIKRAM

I picked them up this morning.
Brooklyn College, C.U.N.Y., Borough
of Manhattan Community College-

AAKASH

You're kidding me right.

VIKRAM

No I am not! And it's time you stop
kidding too!

AAKASH

Papa! How many times have I told
you I don't want to-

VIKRAM

You telling me doesn't mean
anything.

AAKASH

(throwing the applications
on the table)

I can't go to college. I can't. I
don't have time for it.

VIKRAM

You don't have time!?? What you
don't have is a job.

AAKASH

I drive the cab-

VIKRAM

(angry)

That's not a job Aakash!

Beat.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

I mean don't you want to be
something. Be somebody.

AAKASH

I want to be a boxer.

VIKRAM

That is not a profession ! It's a one way ticket to ruining your life. From where I'm standing I see a young man who doesn't have an aim.

Beat.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Now fill out those applications and mail them.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT-DAY

An older TONY, now 20, and AAKASH are playing basketball.

They have been best friends for 10 years now.

Both are sweating. They've been playing for hours.

Aakash dribbles the ball, then a crossover.

Aakash lays up the ball into the basket.

AAKASH

What's up Tony? Lost the defense?

TONY

(throwing the ball to
Aakash)

It's funny how people forget who
taught them HOW TO PLAY BASKETBALL!

Tony checks the ball.

Aakash shoots over Tony's hands and misses.

Tony grabs the ball. Now Tony has the ball.

He dribbles but cannot get through Aakash's defence.

He makes a last attempt before shooting the ball in a hurry.

It's an air ball.

AAKASH

Lets go! I got point game.

Tony, tired, checks the ball.

Aakash fakes a jump shot and crosses Tony for a game winning lay up.

TONY

Fuckin' A!

AAKASH

(tired)

That's 3-0 Tony. You should be ashamed!

Tony lies down on the basket court.

TONY

(huffing and puffing)

Ah man! I need to quit smoking!

Aakash grabs the ball and makes an attempt to throw it at Tony.

Tony flinches.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK-MOMENTS LATER

Tony and Aakash are sitting on a bench looking at DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN. Huge glass buildings that reflect the sunlight in the waters of the EAST RIVER.

AAKASH

(pointing at the buildings)

You see those buildings?

TONY

(drinking water)

Yea.

AAKASH

Now imagine living on the top floor, a duplex, huge bedrooms, many bathrooms, expensive leather sofas, game rooms, a gym-

TONY

(dreaming)

...and gold plated Jacuzzis,
swimming pool, glass terrace, where
you can see the moon, and just me
and Carmen-

AAKASH

Carmen?

TONY

(still dreaming)

Carmen. Carmen Electra.

AAKASH

She would choke herself twice if
she had to be with you.

TONY

And neither are you getting a
duplex with huge bedrooms and
bathrooms and leather sofas in
Downtown.

AAKASH

Yea I know. But I mean just think
about it. The people that own these
buildings, they were just like you
and I. Not enough money. Living
like we do. What did they have that
we don't have?

TONY

What they had were rich parents or
wealthy uncles that put em through
Harvard business school. What I
have is two bags of weed I got to
sell by tomorrow. Oh and that
reminds me-I need to borrow some
money.

AAKASH

Again. How much?

TONY

300.

AAKASH

For what!??

TONY

For something I need to take care of. Come on man.

AAKASH

Man! I'm real tight on cash right now. If you really need it I can only do 100 bucks.

TONY

Hey. Anything helps. I'll pay you back.

AAKASH

(sarcastic)

Like you have been since we were 10.

Beat.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

Pick it up later this evening by the gym.

TONY

Thanks man.

Beat.

AAKASH

Old man wants me to go to college.

TONY

(laughs)

You should. Learn some finance or math or accounting. Be like your people. Maybe I'll let you do my tax returns.

AAKASH

You don't pay taxes Tony.

TONY

Well I will. Eventually. I think.

Beat.

TONY (CONT'D)

So you going to do it or what? I mean what about boxing?

AAKASH

I don't know.

WE SEE the backs of TONY and AAKASH sitting on the bench. In front of them an unconquerable world.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- DAY

A half packed gym. Many are working out. Many are loitering around. Some older trainers are sitting discussing their fighters.

An OLDER PAULIE is sitting in his office with someone we cannot really see because his back is faced towards us.

JAMAAL is working out by the free weights with his trainer.

He notices AAKASH walk into the locker room.

Jamaal and his trainer-

JAMAAL

(working out)

So what did they say?

TRAINER

They want to give you the fight. Jermaine Smith. Bedford Arena.

JAMAAL

(working out)

They better. I'm the best fighter here. Shit, I'm the best fighter in Brooklyn. Ain't nobody here that could touch me. Soon enough we going to be rolling in some serious dough. I'm gonna fight Smith, win the bout by KO. Then they gonna give me Lazio, who I'm gonna knock out in the 1st round. Give it a year and we looking at the title baby-

TRAINER

Yea don't get too cocky on me son.
Titles a long shot.

AAKASH walks out the locker room ready to workout.

As AAKASH walks towards the heavy bags, JAMAAL watches him.

In order for Aakash to get to the heavy bags, he has to pass Jamaal.

JAMAAL trips him on purpose. AAKASH falls.

JAMAAL

(to Aakash)

Watch your step bitch!

Aakash gets up in rage but cannot do anything about it.

TRAINER

(to Jamaal)

What's the matter with you?

JAMAAL

(to his Trainer)

Don't worry bout it. Just showing
him his place.

CUT TO:

THE HEAVY BAG

Aakash punches the heavy bag hard. He smashes his left hook followed by his right hook into the bag.

AAKASH (V.O.)

In all honesty, I didn't know if I
had it. The heart. The heart to
fight. It's easier punching a bag
that isn't punching back.

AAKASH'S POV

WE SEE the man sitting in Paulie's office get up.

He looks familiar...

He turns around to leave.

CLOSE UP on his FACE and FREEZE.

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And that was the day I saw him
 again. After 10 years. The Snake
 was back!

UNFREEZE and

CUT TO:

An OLDER ABDUL ALI, now 38, unshaven beard, walks over to the bleachers.

He doesn't look that fit anymore. Has put on some weight.

He lays down his bag and takes out his hand wraps and begins wrapping his hands.

Aakash looks at him in amazement.

Aakash turns his attention to Paulie, who is about to close the door to his room-

AAKASH (CONT'D)
 (running towards Paulie)
 Hey Paulie! Wait.

Paulie looks older now. His style of dressing is still the same but you can see his grey hair on the sides and his slightly wrinkled face.

PAULIE
 What you want kid?

AAKASH
 Who was that guy?

PAULIE
 What guy?

AAKASH
 (pointing at Abdul Ali)
 That guy.

PAULIE
 Which guy?

AAKASH
 (pointing at Abdul Ali)
 That guy right there!

PAULIE
 Who? That guy?

Paulie looks. He can't see anything beyond a certain distance.

PAULIE (CONT'D)
 Kid I don't have my glasses on. So
 stop fuckin' pointing at that guy
 'cuz I can't see the distance.

AAKASH
 The guy that was just here. You
 were sitting with him.

PAULIE
 Which guy? The first guy or the
 second guy?

AAKASH
 The guy! Who just left your room.
 Was that Abdul Ali?

PAULIE
 Oh that guy! Yea. Kid's back into
 Brooklyn. Hasn't boxed in years. So
 just wants to come in to work out.

AAKASH
 So he's going to box again?

PAULIE
 No! Now stop eating my fuckin'
 brains.

Paulie shuts the door.

Aakash looks on.

CUT TO:

THE RING

Jamaal hits the mitts with his trainer. AD LIB trainer's instructions.

TRAINER
 (moving around with
 Jamaal)
 Guess who just poked his head in
 here?

JAMAAL
 (punching away)
 Smith?

TRAINER
 You won't be able to guess. Abdul
 Ali.

Jamaal stops hitting the mitts. He is sweating. He looks up
 and around.

He finds ABDUL ALI hitting the speed bag. Abdul has lost
 speed.

Jamaal announces-

JAMAAL
 (announcing)
 Wow lookie lookie here. If it ain't
 Abdul "the snake" Ali...

Everyone in the gym looks up to see who Jamaal is talking
 about. They notice ABDUL ALI in a corner hitting the speed
 bag.

Abdul continues hitting the bag.

JAMAAL (CONT'D)
 ...back from his 10 year exile.
 What's up man. How'd you lose your
 way back here? You lost or
 something.

Abdul looks up at Jamaal but doesn't respond.

Aakash stops his work out and is angered by Jamaal's mockery.

JAMAAL (CONT'D)
 Hey come on in here man. Teach me
 some of your moves from back in the
 day. When you believed you was the
 champ. Come on man. Glove up, get
 in the ring with me.
 (MORE)

JAMAAL (CONT'D)

I ain't going to hurt you. Teach me something. Teach me how to dance like a faggot-

Before Abdul could even react-

AAKASH

(angered-stepping up-to
Jamaal)

Why don't you shut the fuck up?

Everyone in the gym looks over to Aakash.

They all muffle and whisper.

Jamaal, realizing that he was just insulted by Aakash, smiles.

He takes off his gloves and gets out the ring and make his way towards Aakash.

Aakash and Jamaal, both only have their wraps on.

Jamaal steps up to Aakash's face.

JAMAAL

(aggressively)

What'd you say?

AAKASH

I said shut the fuck up.

Every one looks at them.

JAMAAL

You curry smelling Hindu mothafucka-

Aakash snuffs Jamaal's face. Jamaal falls back.

In his anger, Jamaal comes forward and with all this power SWINGS his left hook to connect to Aakash's face.

AAKASH quick on his feet, goes under his left hook and pulls back his right hand.

In a quick moment, without Jamaal realizing, Aakash steps up and with all his power SWINGS his POWER RIGHT HAND, which CONNECTS to Jamaal's jaw.

JAMAAL spins around once before he goes down hard! As soon as he hits the ground, his bleeding mouth spits out a tooth.

Everyone rushes in to stop the fight-

TILT UP and FREEZE on AAKASH

AAKASH (V.O.)

I don't know where the right hand
came from, but it sure knocked the
lights out of him.

UNFREEZE and

CUT TO:

PAULIE who runs across and comes in looking over at Jamaal.

PAULIE

What the fuck? Ah! Take this son-of-
a-bitch inside.

Aakash just stands there dumbfounded.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

(to Aakash)

That's my fighter you roughed up
there.

Aakash has no reaction. But he fears Paulie.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

(to Jamaal's trainer)

Take him inside and get him fixed.

Jamaal's trainer and another person drag Jamaal onto the
bleacher. Jamaal can hardly walk.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

(to Aakash)

I didn't think you'd grow balls
this big. That was one helluva
right hand kid. I gotta tell ya, I
need to get you a trainer and get
you fighting around here...

Aakash looks over Paulie's shoulder and notices Abdul Ali
packing up and exiting the gym without anyone noticing.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

...so what you say kid. I could get
you a good trainer and see how you
do.

AAKASH
(almost walking away)
I think I just found a trainer
Paulie.

Aakash rushes out the gym.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOXING GYM- DAY

As soon as Abdul Ali makes his way out, Aakash catches onto him.

AAKASH
(approaching)
Mr. Ali!

Ali stops.

AAKASH (CONT'D)
How you doing?

ABDUL
What you want kid?

AAKASH
You don't remember me?

ABDUL
No.

AAKASH
Remember. The kid. 10 years ago. In
the gym. I worked here. You were
training for your title fight.

ABDUL
I don't remember kid. Sorry.

Abdul tries to walk away but Aakash gets in front of him.

AAKASH
Aakash. From Bombay, just like you.
You gave me your gloves. As a
memento. Told me to use em when my
hands get bigger.

ABDUL

That kid. That was you? That's good. You been training I see.

AAKASH

No sir. Just been teaching myself. Haven't actually had anyone interested in training me.

ABDUL

Well good luck kid.

Abdul walks away.

Aakash follows him.

AAKASH

Where'd you go all this time?

Abdul doesn't respond.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

I was a big fan of yours. I mean I still am. You know, even though you don't fight. I admired you as a kid.

ABDUL

I'm glad.

AAKASH

I want to fight.

ABDUL

That's good.

AAKASH

I need a trainer.

ABDUL

I'm sure you won't have a problem finding one after that show you put on in there.

AAKASH

I want you to train me.

Abdul stops. Looks at Aakash.

ABDUL

Look kid. I'm yesterday's story. I came here to work out. And I don't really care about boxing. I stopped long time ago. And I don't want to waste my time training a kid who probably doesn't belong in this sport anyway.

AAKASH

They said you didn't belong either.

ABDUL

And I didn't. So if you're smart enough, back off right now and pick up some books and study science before it's too late.

Beat.

AAKASH

You don't mean that.

Beat.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

You're afraid aren't you? You're afraid people are going to talk smack. Look, I ain't never wanted to do anything else but box. My father don't believe I could do it. These people don't believe I could do it.

Beat.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

And maybe there are other trainers. But you, you've been through it. I respect you. And I know that if you train me, I'll be a better fighter.

Beat.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

(discouraged)

I know your answer.

(MORE)

AAKASH (CONT'D)

But just incase you decide to, I'll be in the gym. Maybe you want your gloves back.

A discouraged Aakash walks away.

Abdul walks the other way.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- NIGHT

There are hardly any people in the gym. Maybe one or two other people.

Aakash is hopelessly hitting the heavy bag. His punches are not powerful at all.

WE SEE Abdul Ali standing behind Aakash. Aakash doesn't notice him.

ABDUL

Your jab is weak. You don't bend you knee right. And you don't use your body strength.

Aakash, surprised, turns around.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

You got to use your body.

AAKASH

What do you mean?

ABDUL

(walking towards Aakash)

When you punch someone, you get your power through your feet, up your legs and through your hips.

AAKASH

I'll remember that.

Beat.

ABDUL

Look kid. I haven't trained anyone-

AAKASH

It doesn't matter. I haven't fought before.

ABDUL

Well then I guess we have a lot of work to do. Tomorrow. 6 a.m. sharp.

AAKASH

Oh I can't do mornings. I drive a cab in the nights. How about 6 in the evening?

ABDUL

That's doable.

Abdul turns around to leave.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

(not looking at Aakash)

And I want my gloves back.

Abdul leaves.

Aakash smiles to himself.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- EVENING

Aakash begins training with Abdul Ali.

It feels like there is only Abdul and Aakash in the gym, but in reality there are more people.

Abdul holds the heavy bag while Aakash punches some combinations. Abdul stops him-

ABDUL

(demonstrating)

Your stance should be; chin tucked, lead shoulder slightly shrugged, elbows in, hands up, knees slightly bent, feet shoulder width apart, nearly parallel. And groin not open.

Aakash listens.

Then Aakash takes the stance that Abdul just demonstrated.

He begins punishing the bag with his right hand and left hook.

Abdul stops him.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

No wonder you got such a power right hand. All you do is keep making your right stronger. Ever heard of a jab?

Aakash nods.

Everyone into boxing knows what a jab is...

ABDUL (CONT'D)

Make your jab stronger. The jab helps to make you a good boxer. Without one, you're just a puncher.

Aakash listens and follows his instructions.

He jabs. He continues jabbing but then gets mixed up and throws in a right hand.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

Just jab! There's a saying in boxing that your jab is a can opener, and your cross is a spoon. The opponent is a can of meat. You've got to use your can opener to open the can BEFORE you can use your spoon to dig out the meat. You get it? See you got a good jab, what you need to do is use it more.

Aakash begins jabbing. He continues to jab...

INT. BOXING GYM- LATER

Aakash is jumping rope in front of the mirror. Abdul watches him.

While Aakash jumps rope-

ABDUL

Focus on breathing in through the nose more than through the mouth. Get into that habit.

INT. BOXING GYM- LATER

Aakash is hitting the speed bag.

As he hits the speed bag, Abdul watches him.

ABDUL

Shift your weight. Rock-Rock from left to right. It's like making music.

Abdul demonstrates. He takes the stance and begins hitting the speed bag in a slow pace. He shifts his weight. From left to right-

AAKASH

(smiling)

Dejavu.

ABDUL

What?

AAKASH

(laughing)

This just reminded me of that movie. Million Dollar Baby. Clint Eastwood and-

ABDUL

Well this isn't a movie. So drop down and give me 20.

AAKASH

What!?

ABDUL

Make it 30.

Aakash gets in the position to do pushups. He begins.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- LATER

Aakash is lying down with his knees bent. Abdul has his knees pressed down on Aakash's feet.

Abdul is wearing mitts in his hands.

Aakash does sit-ups. As he comes up he punches the mitts.

Aakash sweats profusely. He is slow in coming up.

ABDUL
(counting as Aakash
continues)
97...98...99....100...

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- LATER

Aakash is shadow boxing as Abdul watches.

Aakash dances and moves around too much.

ABDUL
Don't dance around, or bounce up
and down. Stay mobile. Preserve
your energy.

Aakash stops dancing around too much.

His chin is high up as he shadow boxes.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
The chin is the magic button. Tuck
yours, exploit your opponents.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK-LATER

Abdul pulls out a pair of CONSTRUCTION BOOTS from a box.

ABDUL
(giving the boots to
Aakash)
Here, put these on.

AAKASH
For running?

ABDUL
Yea.

AAKASH
(hesitating)
But- I mean why? Why run in
construction boots?

ABDUL
'Cuz when running it's a good idea
to wear them. They have the high
top to keep ankle support, and if
you can run your route in
construction boots, you'll be
walking on air in the ring.

Aakash begins taking his sneakers off and wears the
construction boots.

He begins running.

ZOOM IN on the boots.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE SAME BOOTS

Pull back to reveal:

Aakash running by the river wearing the same boots.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Aakash hits the heavy bag while Abdul watches. He keeps
jabbing. But he throws in his right hand a couple of times.

B) Aakash's right hand is tied by a string to his neck. His
right hand covers his face. He cannot move his right hand. He
continually jabs.

C) Aakash works the speed bag shifting his weight correctly.

D) Abdul demonstrates some combinations and how to get away from the opponents punches.

E) Aakash shadow boxes moving correctly. He doesn't dance around too much. But he knows when to move and pivot.

F) Aakash, begins doing one handed push-ups. Abdul counts as Aakash goes up and down. You can see that it's tough for him.

G) Aakash drives the cab. He has a passenger in the back. He moves side by side, as if in a ring, not aware that he looks weird driving like that.

G) Aakash hits the mitts with Abdul in the ring. AD LIB Abdul's instructions.

H) Aakash hits the mitts as he comes up while doing sit-ups. You can see that he is getting tired. He slows down.

I) Aakash runs by the East River wearing the construction boots.

J) SLO-MO as Aakash hits the heavy bag. His sweat pours down from his forehead down to his face. The heavy bag goes flying back and comes right back.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- DAY

IN THE RING

Aakash spars with another boxer. Both are wearing their body and head protection gear while sparring in the ring.

Abdul, from ringside, yells instructions to Aakash.

ABDUL

...study your opponent. Don't let him hit your weak spots...

Aakash makes his opponent miss his power punches. He continues jabbing...

ABDUL (CONT'D)

...don't take your eyes off him...you got to breath right...

Aakash moves away from his partners left hook. He follows up with a combination of jabs, followed by some body shots, a left hook, and then his signature POWER RIGHT HAND.

His opponent goes down.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
That's it boy. That's it.

As the fighters gets up to continue sparring-

WE SEE a man, dressed in a leather jacket and sleek back hair, call him CHARLIE, in his mid 30s, walking towards the ring.

He stands right next to Abdul.

He watches Aakash in the ring. He is impressed.

CHARLIE
(to Abdul)
Abdul. The great Abdul Ali. How you doin'?

ABDUL
I'm all right.

CHARLIE
(putting his hand forward)
Charlie. Charlie Rosenstein.

ABDUL
(shaking his hand)
What can I do you for?

CHARLIE
Got a good fighter there. He fight yet?

ABDUL
Not yet. Got a long way though.

WE SEE Aakash getting caught up on the ropes. He gets hit with some body shots.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
(to Aakash)
Get out of there. Get away from the ropes.

Aakash gets into a clinch.

CHARLIE

I'm a promoter. Promote fights here, in Brooklyn and around. Got some good venues and good fighters lined up. Here is my card.

Charlie gives Abdul his card.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Listen. I'm going to cut to the chase. Heard about the little incident the other day here. How your boy knocked down Jamaal Brown. He's a tough son-of-a-bitch. I became interested. Maybe I got something I could offer the kid.

ABDUL

Cut to the chase.

CHARLIE

I had a fight lined up for Jamaal against Jermaine Smith. Bedford Arena. Legitimate. Winner gets to fight Lazio, and if Lazio is beaten then it wouldn't be a problem getting more fights. Out of Brooklyn.

ABDUL

What you mean you HAD a fight lined up for Jamaal?

CHARLIE

After I heard what happened that day, I wanted to come check out your fighter myself. People around here seem to be talking. I could give those fights that I had for Jamaal to your fighter.

ABDUL

Why would you do that? What's the catch?

CHARLIE

Aakash fights Jamaal. Right here.
In this ring. Amateur fight.

ABDUL

How's that going to work?

CHARLIE

10 rounds. 2 minute each round.
Winner gets to fight Smith.

ABDUL

Why would Jamaal put his fight on
the line to fight Aakash?

CHARLIE

(smiling)

Ego. Ego is a man's biggest enemy.

WE PULL BACK as Charlie and Abdul are standing and Aakash spars in the ring.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING GYM- NIGHT

Many people, young and old, are crowded around the ring.

It feels like we are witnessing an exciting fight at MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, but it's taking place in the gym.

AD LIB chatter among the excited crowd.

NOTE: Every boxing audience lusts for pain and blood.

WE SEE both fighters in their corners.

IN AAKASH'S CORNER

Abdul Ali applies Vaseline to Aakash's face. Tony massages his arms.

ABDUL

(to Aakash)

Remember what I told you. Get away
from his hook, don't get caught up
in the ropes. Dance, but don't
dance too much.

Aakash, nervous, nods his head.

Charlie stands by ringside waiting for the fight to start.

Some neighborhood newspaper journalists are also among the crowd.

IN JAMAAL'S CORNER

His trainer and his hood friends are around him. Jamaal stares at Aakash. He cannot wait for the fight to start. Cannot wait to break Aakash's face.

IN THE RING

Paulie, with a cigar in the mouth, is going to referee the fight.

PAULIE

(to the crowd)

Everyone shut the fuck up! What's the matter wid you guys? Now listen up, there'll be ten rounds of boxing. 2 minutes each round. Both fighters come center ring.

Both fights come to center right.

They are face to face with each other.

Jamaal looks like he is ready to kill Aakash. Aakash reciprocates Jamaal's emotions.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Now you cocksuckers gotta listen to me. When I say something, you listen. I say break, and you break. I don't want no fuckin' head butts. Shorty over there...

SHORTY, in his 50s, sits with a bell on the table in front of him. He has a timer in his hand.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

...Shorty will ring the bell when the round ends. No exchanging punches after the bell. And try to avoid the low blows ah. Now shake gloves like good boys.

Aakash puts his hands out. Jamaal doesn't.

JAMAAL

(angry)

I'm gonna fuck you up.

They both walk away to their corners.

As we ZOOM IN on Aakash's face-

AAKASH (V.O.)

Every boxer fights for something. I don't remember what I was fighting for. I guess I was fighting for respect.

Aakash's feet float, waiting. There's the BELL for ROUND ONE.

INT. THE RING-ROUND ONE

It starts.

JAMAAL

Begins throwing his fury right away. He goes in with a huge left arm that misses Aakash. He gets on the offense right away. He throws a combination of seven punches that puts Aakash on the ropes. He throws some hard body shots but cannot hurt Aakash on his face because Aakash cautiously gets away. Aakash moves around but walks right into Jamaal's right hand, which lands on Aakash's chest. A powerful punch that could stop one's heart...

AAKASH

...is off balance from the impact of that punch. He almost goes down to the floor. He gets back into the fight.

THE CROWD becomes loud for that one instance.

JAMAAL

Pushes Aakash back onto the ropes and begins to attack his face. Aakash covers his face with his gloves. Jamaal gets in some good body shots.

ABDUL

(from Aakash's corner)

Get away from the ropes!!!

AAKASH

Goes under Jamaal's right hand and gets away from the ropes.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
Keep jabbing!

JAMAAL

Moves furiously towards Aakash. His face not protected.

AAKASH

Protecting his face with his right, and moving around Jamaal, keeps jabbing. His jabs connect to Jamaal's jaw and chin. Jamaal swings his left and right and misses both times. THE BELL RINGS.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Aakash sits down and breaths hard. Abdul comes in and throws water on his face and gives him water to drink. Abdul then applies Vaseline above his eyes and on his cheeks.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
What's the matter with you? You're not moving around. You're not jabbing. You gotta keep jabbing. And then when you see him open up land your left hook and follow it up with a right.

JAMAAL'S CORNER

Jamaal's trainer gives him water.

TRAINER
He knows how to move about. Stay away from his right and keep attacking his body.

Jamaal spits water in a bucket.

JAMAAL
He ain't shit. I'm gonna break his fuckin' jaw.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Abdul wets his head and puts Aakash's mouthpiece in his mouth.

ABDUL
...now go on and don't get tangled
in the ropes.

BELL RINGS.

INT. THE RING-ROUND TWO- AAKASH+JAMAAL

WE SEE them come center ring. Aakash sizes up Jamaal with his jabs. It keeps Jamaal at a set distance.

JAMAAL

Comes hard with his right hand. Aakash goes under and they get into a clinch. Jamaal punches Aakash's head while in a clinch.

PAULIE

Comes in between them and warns Jamaal not to do that again.

AAKASH

Continues to jab. He follows his jab with a left hook that connects to Jamaal's jaw, and then continues with some body shots. Jamaal feels pain and gets on defense. Aakash sees the opportunity and begins throwing in more punches. He unsuccessfully throws his left hook and right hook. He sees Jamaal's open chin and throws a heavy uppercut between Jamaal's hands to connect to his chin.

JAMAAL

Feels the impact of the uppercut and grabs Aakash's hands. They clinch. Jamaal puts him in a headlock and slams his shoulder with his elbow.

PAULIE

Separates them and pushes Jamaal away from Aakash. He warns Jamaal for the foul.

AAKASH

Gets away as Jamaal charges him. Jamaal goes to the ropes. Aakash jabs him and goes to his body. Jamaal grabs Aakash's hands. They clinch again. THE BELL RINGS.

JAMAAL pushes Aakash after the bell. Aakash, in rage, charges at Jamaal but Paulie gets in between them.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Abdul taking out his mouthpiece, gives Aakash water and washes his body with a sponge.

ABDUL

That's good. Keep fighting him. He puts his hands down, you throw in your hook. Keep jabbing and maintain a distance.

THE BELL.

INT. THE RING-ROUND THREE-AAKASH+JAMAAL

JAMAAL'S LEFT

Comes in like a freight train as Aakash merely leans away from it.

AAKASH

Circles around Jamaal and throws in a hard right hand to Jamaal's face. He opens a cut under Jamaal's left eye.

THE CROWD goes crazy as blood drips down Jamaal's cheeks.

JAMAAL

Rubs his gloves on his cheeks and is shocked to find blood under his eye. He gets mad. He comes in with hard left and right hands. Aakash makes him miss as he keeps leaning away and ends up on the ropes. They clinch.

THE CLINCH

Their heads keep butting. Jamaal's head ends up right under Aakash's eye. In his fury, Jamaal purposely lifts his head up hard, which hits Aakash right above his eye. The head butt cuts Aakash. Blood starts dripping from above Aakash's left eye.

PAULIE

Separates them and pushes Jamaal into his corner. He warns him for the last time. He then comes to Aakash and checks his cut above his left eye. Blood drips from the cut, so Paulie asks Abdul to clean it up. THE BELL RINGS.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Aakash breaths heavy. Abdul tries to stop the blood from his bleeding eyebrow.

AAKASH

(breathing heavy)

I've got him. I felt it. He's tired. He is drained.

ABDUL

Listen just stay away from the clinches ok.

JAMAAL'S CORNER

His trainer whispers something that we cannot hear. Jamaal just stares. He is tired and breathing heavy.

TRAINER

(cleaning Jamaal's wound)

Charlie don't look happy with you. You better stop horsing around. This kid ain't a fool. He's dominating.

THE BELL RINGS

INT. THE RING-ROUND FOUR

AAKASH

Leans back and throws a heavy right hand right to Jamaal's head. Jamaal keeps coming in Aakash's punching range. Aakash takes advantage of it and keeps leaning back and throwing jabs.

JAMAAL

Pushes Aakash to the ropes and they flurry.

They clinch and break.

EXTREME CLOSE UP on Aakash's eyes. His eyes are sharp. Looking dead at Jamaal as he moves around.

AAKASH

Moves forward. He jabs and then throws a combination. He jabs and follows it up with a right hook that gets Jamaal off balance and reaches for the ropes. Aakash doesn't waste any time and throws in heavy body punches as Jamaal takes support of the ropes.

CLOSE SLO-MO: AAKASH

Throws a combination: an uppercut that forces Jamaal's head up and follows it with a right hook that connects.

JAMAAL

Pushes Aakash away to center ring.

SLO-MO: AAKASH'S

right hand is extended behind him. As his right hand pushes forward, it pick ups all power from Aakash's body. His right fist crashes into Jamaal's jaw. The punch is so hard that Jamaal's whole body feels the impact. Jamaal's head snaps around and he makes a circle around Aakash and goes crashing down.

OVERHEAD: JAMAAL is down.

SLO-MO: Aakash is pushed back to his corner by Paulie.

TOTAL SILENCE

WE HEAR Aakash breathing heavy.

Everyone surrounding the ring are in complete shock.

Tony, Abdul, Paulie, Jamaal's trainer, Charlie, all stare down at Jamaal and look up to Aakash in shock.

Jamaal cannot get up.

TILT UP and FREEZE on AAKASH'S bloody and bruised face

AAKASH (V.O.)
My first knock out. And it happened
in round 4.
(MORE)

AAKASH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I'll never forget that silence. It
 was the best noise I ever heard.

UNFREEZE and

FADE OUT:

FADE IN TO:

EXT. STREET-NEXT DAY

Vikram is walking home after parking his cab. A MAN, call him JAGJIT, 48, approaches Vikram. Jagjit is very hyper and obnoxious.

JAGJIT
 (loudly-in Hindi)
 Vikram! How you doing? What's going
 on?

VIKRAM
 Hey Jagjit. Just going home. How
 are you?

JAGJIT
 (in Hindi)
 Everything all right. You didn't
 tell me? That our Aakash is a
 boxer!

VIKRAM
 (confused)
 What are you talking about?

Jagjit pulls our a local Brooklyn newspaper.

JAGJIT
 See! I read it thing morning. He
 beat some black guy.

VIKRAM
 (grabbing the paper)
 What are you talking about?

Vikram looks at the paper.

The headline reads, " AAKASH DUA KO'S JAMAAL IN AMATEUR
 FIGHT."

Vikram is in rage.

JAGJIT

(in Hindi)

Tell us when his next fight is! We
all will come. With family!

VIKRAM

Jagjit. I'm going to take this with
me if you don't mind.

JAGJIT

Oh take it. I already read it.

Vikram leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT-DAY

Aakash is sitting on the dinning table eating cereal and
watching a boxing match on T.V. His cut is visible above his
left eye. He has a bruise on his cheek.

Vikram enters in rage.

VIKRAM (O.S.)

Aakash!

AAKASH

Papa. I'm here.

VIKRAM

(throwing the newspaper on
the table)

What's this nonsense! I told you to
stop this boxing. And you are
fighting these days?

AAKASH

Relax Papa. I told you I didn't
want-

VIKRAM

(angry)

And I told you you don't have a
choice!

AAKASH

(angry but not raising his
voice)

(MORE)

AAKASH (CONT'D)

And I told you I didnt want to go to college. I want to box papa-

VIKRAM

You look at your face? Is this what you want to do? Box? And ruin your life? I am not going to stand by watching you destroy your life!

AAKASH

I'm not destroying my life dad. I love boxing. And I got a promoter now to get me more fights.

VIKRAM

Aakash I don't want to argue with you!

AAKASH

And I don't want to argue with you either.

VIKRAM

Are you going to leave this nonsense or what?

Beat.

AAKASH

No.

VIKRAM

Then leave my house.

Silence.

Aakash gets up and walks away from his father towards the door, angry.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Only if your mother was alive.

Aakash stops before leaving.

AAKASH

(regretting)

Yea. Only if she was.

He leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK-LATER

Aakash and Abdul Ali sit on a bench.

They are in middle of a conversation-

ABDUL

...and your father. He practically raised you on his own. Of course he is going to react this way. He still looks at you like his 10 year old boy.

AAKASH

And he's always known that I was never smart to go to college. He knows that I've always wanted to box. And now when I'm getting a chance to-

ABDUL

He is a father. He's afraid that you will fail. But you have to convince him that you have the heart.

Beat.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

If you want, you can stay at my place.

Beat.

AAKASH

You never told me.

ABDUL

What?

AAKASH

Where'd you go? All those years.

Silence.

(ALT: WE COULD END SCENE HERE OR...)

ABDUL

I went back.

AAKASH

Back? India?

ABDUL

After that fight, I lost the most important thing, respect. All those years of sweat and blood I put in. And then. In a flash. It was all taken away from me. I was made to be a joke. An Indian that thought he could be middle weight champ.

AAKASH

So you ran away. Ran away from here.

ABDUL

I didn't want to stay. Had nothing to look forward to. Gave up on the sport I loved the most. And then one day, I decided to come back.

AAKASH

Why'd you come back?

ABDUL

This is my home. I grew up here. In Brooklyn. Couldn't fit in anywhere else.

Beat.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

I see myself in you. The heart. The fire. I don't want you to end up like me.

Beat.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

And don't worry about your father. He's your father. He'll be looking out his window and waiting for you to come home.

AAKASH

Yea.

ABDUL

So cheer up and get ready to "fly
like a butterfly and sting like a
bee."

CUT TO:

INT. BEDFORD ARENA, BROOKLYN- DAY

TITLE: Jermaine Smith v/s Aakash Dua, December 2005.

WE ARE in the middle of the fight. Round 5.

The arena isn't full. Not many spectators there.

Aakash and Jermaine are in a clinch. Both fighters tired.

THE BELL RINGS.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Aakash sits breathing heavy. He has a cut on his cheek. Abdul
cleans his wound.

AMONG THE CROWD

Many newspaper journalists are writing something in their
note pad.

Charlie and Paulie are sitting next to each other.

PAULIE

...kid's got a power fuckin right.
It connects and that Smith kid is
going down hard.

CHARLIE

How much money you got on him?

PAULIE

2 grand.

IN JERMAINE'S CORNER

Jermaine is breathing heavy. He looks tired and has a swollen
eye.

JERMAINE
(to his trainer)
He's got a heavy right.

THE BELL RINGS

Both fighters jab. Aakash leans away from Jermaine's left hook and smashes his right hand into his chin. Jermaine goes down.

CROWD IN CHAOS

The Referee pushes Aakash back to his corner and does a 10 count. He then raises Aakash's hand.

CUT TO:

INT. SOME ARENA- ANOTHER DAY

TITLE: Kid Lazio v/s Aakash Dua, March 2006.

The fight is in Round 2. The crowd has increased from the previous fight.

Lazio is on the ropes covering his face. Aakash hammers away his left hook and right hand to Lazio's face and body.

ABDUL
(from Aakash's corner)
That's it boy. That's it.

Lazio lets his hands down and in comes Aakash's POWER RIGHT to knock Lazio down.

CROWD is on their feet.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE OF DIFFERENT NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

A) The Brooklyn Chronicles- ABDUL ALI'S FIGHTER KO'S KID LAZIO

B) Boxing News- AAKASH DUA FIGHTS LIKE A CHAMP

C) The Daily- INDIAN FIGHTER KO'S BROOKLYN'S BEST

D) The Brooklyn Times- NEW CHAMP OF BROOKLYN IS INDIAN

E) Newsday- BROOKLYN FIGHTER GOES TO THE BRONX

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT. SOME ARENA- ANOTHER DAY

TITLE: Bronx, June 2006.

WE SEE a crowd on their feet.

Aakash blocks his opponents jabs and then works his combination: two jabs, followed by a right hook, then two left hooks, an uppercut and finishes the combination with his signature POWER RIGHT right crushing to his opponents head.

CROWD IN CHAOS.

IN THE CROWD

Paulie, with a cigar in his mouth, claps the hardest. Charlie accompanies him.

PAULIE

(clapping hard)

This fuckin kid. I tell you. The way he's going, he is making me a rich man. Where is the next fight?

CHARLIE

(clapping-smiling)

Jersey.

CUT TO:

INT. SOME ARENA- ANOTHER DAY

TITLE: Jersey City, August 2006.

SLO-MO: Aakash goes under his opponents right hand and crashes his left hook to the jaw of his opponent.

His opponent goes down hard. The Referee raises Aakash's hands.

CUT TO:

INT. SOME ARENA- ANOTHER DAY

ABDUL
(from Aakash's corner)
Dance around kid. Dance around him.

TITLE: Chicago, November 2006.

WE SEE Aakash in the ring with another fighter.

Aakash leans back away from the punches.

AAKASH'S CORNER

Abdul applies Vaseline to his cheeks and gives him water.

ABDUL (CONT'D)
Just float like a butterfly champ.
He's tired. He nothing. Slam your
right and he's done.

BELL RINGS.

AAKASH

Gets up and charges towards his opponent. His opponent is already bleeding from his nose. Aakash gets in an effective jab and pushes his opponent off balance. As soon as his opponent is off balance, Aakash knocks him to the ropes with his POWER RIGHT and down goes his opponent.

CUT TO:

INT. SOME CORRIDOR-ANOTHER DAY

Reporters, both TV and newspaper, crowd around Aakash as he makes his way into the arena. Charlie and Abdul Ali walk with him.

AD LIB reporters chatter. Many microphone are pushed to Aakash's face.

REPORTER
Aakash they say you could be a
contender for the middle weight
title.

CHARLIE

(pushing the microphones
away)

Title is far fetched for us. Right
now we are here in Atlanta so lets
see what happens.

REPORTER

(to Abdul Ali)

Mr. Ali any comments about your
disappearance from the sport after
your knockout?

ABDUL

No comments.

Aakash, Charlie, and Abdul make their way into the arena past
the reporters.

IN THE ARENA

TITLE: Atlanta, January 2007.

A filled arena.

WE ARE in the middle of the fight.

Referee separates the fighters from a clinch. THE BELL RINGS.

IN AAKASH'S CORNER

Aakash is bleeding from his nose.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

Come on Champ. Last round. You're
ahead on the score cards. But I
want a knock out.

BELL RINGS.

AAKASH

Jabs his opponent to the ropes. His opponent covers his face.
Aakash, with all his power, throws a right hand to his
opponent's ribs.

EXTREME CLOSE UP X-RAY: Ribs cracking.

BACK TO SCENE

Aakash's opponent grabs his stomach and in that moment-

SLO-MO: Aakash throws in a left hook knocking his opponent down.

TOTAL CHAOS

Photographers snapping pictures.

WE SEE constant flashes on Aakash's face.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET-DAY

Vikram get's chased by INDIAN REPORTERS.

He walks fast towards his apartment.

OUTSIDE HIS DOOR-

REPORTER

(in Hindi)

Your son is a hope for many Indians here. Any comments?

ANOTHER REPORTER

Aakash has beat many good fighters. Would you be proud if he went all the way?

Vikram walks in and locks the door behind him ignoring all questions.

CUT TO:

INT. SOME ARENA- ANOTHER DAY

TITLE: Los Angeles, March 2007.

ALMOST TOWARDS THE END OF THE FIGHT- AAKASH

Looks swollen. Blood dripping down from his eyebrows. His opponent breathing heavy. His opponent has a bleeding nose and swollen eyes. Aakash connects two solid jabs and a right hook. Both fighters clinch.

THE BELL RINGS.

BOTH FIGHTERS hug and return to their corners.

Commotion in the ring.

THE ANNOUNCER gets on the microphone-

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen. The winner by
unanimous decision. BROOKLYN
UNDERDOG AAKASH DUA!

ABDUL raises Aakash's hands.

The crowd in TOTAL CHAOS.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM- DAY

Aakash still has some bruises on his face. Charlie and Abdul
sit beside him.

Reporters are seated across them. Microphones are piled up on
the table. All the sports press is in there.

REPORTERS raise their hands.

Charlie points at one.

REPORTER

Rick Smith. ESPN. Aakash, how does
it feel to be in place where Abdul
Ali was once?

AAKASH

It feels great. Abdul is like my
big brother. I've been training for
the last 10 years but after Abdul
decided to train me, I became a
fighter. All credit goes to him.

REPORTER

Yea that's very modest of you.
People are talking. No offense to
Abdul Ali but they say you got more
heart and better skills.

AAKASH

Heart comes from passion. Skills
I've learned from him.

CHARLIE

Next.

ANOTHER REPORTER

Your next fight is scheduled in
Brooklyn, your hometown, against
Joe Marley. How do you feel about
that?

AAKASH

It feels great to be going back to
my hometown and fighting. And
Brooklyn is where it all began. So
I can't wait.

ANOTHER REPORTER

Joe Marley is the top contender for
the middle weight title, currently
held by Mario Gonzales. You think
you'll make it past Joe Marley?

AAKASH

I guess we'll just have to find
out.

CHARLIE

The fight is scheduled four months
from now in Brooklyn Arena. We'll
see you then.

All reporters shout questions as Aakash, Charlie, and Abdul
make their way out.

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS OFFICE-DAY

IN FOCUS: a newspaper headline- BROOKLYN'S UNDERDOG AAKASH
FIGHTS JOE MARLEY FOR TITLE SHOT.

We pull back: to reveal a well dressed MARIO GONZALES, 25,
sitting across from a promoter. His manager is with him.

Mario throws the paper on his promoter's desk.

MARIO

I gotta fight this chump? There are no other fighters that I gotta fight this Indian chump-

PROMOTER

If he wins.

MARIO

What if he does?

PROMOTER

Then we give him a title shot against the champ, you.

MARIO

You kidding me? I'll knock this kid out in first round. Find a worthy fighter. Isn't that your job?

PROMOTER

What are you afraid of? IF he mistakenly wins against Joe, we get a well promoted fight at the Garden, you win by KO, and we make more money. What's the problem here?

MARIO

This better be worth it.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKLYN BAR-NIGHT

Tony and Aakash are sitting by the bar celebrating. People in the bar look over in admiration towards Aakash. Many young women eye Aakash.

TONY

(toasting-half drunk)

This is to the new champ. My best friend and the best fighter bred in Brooklyn. Aakash Dua!

Aakash and Tony, and some people at the bar drink up.

Two young ladies walk over to where Aakash is sitting.

TONY (CONT'D)
(grabbing one of the
girls)
I want you to meet my girlfriend,
Jasmine.

JASMINE
(to Aakash)
I've seen some of your fights. I'm
really excited for you. Oh. I want
you to meet my friend, Julie.

Julie comes forward, smiling. She is smokin' hot.

AAKASH
(flirtatiously smiling)
How you doin' Julie?

He kisses her hand.

TONY
(grabbing his girl)
Hey! We don't do that European shit
here in Brooklyn. This is how we do
it baby-

He dips Jasmine, and passionately kisses her.

Julie blushes as Aakash admires her.

TONY (CONT'D)
(to the bartender)
Eh how about a round for all of us
hah? Get us a round of shots here.
We're celebrating here.

They drink up.

TONY (CONT'D)
(to Jasmine)
Come on baby. Lets leave these two
to get to know each other better
hah.

They both walk away.

AAKASH
He's fuckin' crazy. Don't mind him.

JULIE

Oh not at all. You're real hot right now. Everyone is talking about you.

AAKASH

I haven't gotten use to it. But hopefully it'll settle.

They both smile at each other.

CUT TO:

LATER IN THE NIGHT

The bar isn't populated with many people.

A nerdy guy approaches THE BATHROOM holding his crotch. He really has to pee but there is only one bathroom. He knocks hard on the door.

IN THE BATHROOM

Aakash and Julie are making out real passionately. Aakash, aggressively picks her up and puts her on top of the platform. Both begin to take each other's clothes off while passionately kissing.

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM

The nerdy guy is desperate. He keeps knocking hard on the door. No response.

IN THE BATHROOM

Aakash and Julie, young, wild, drunk, and passionate, are making love.

Julie moans.

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM

The nerdy guy, along with two other guys have their ear on the door. They can hear Aakash and Julie from inside.

INSIDE THE BATHROOM

Aakash pulls up his pants and Julie buttons her top.

They open the door.

OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM

Both lovers walk out smiling. The guys just stare at them as they walk out smiling.

AAKASH
 (walking away-to the nerdy
 guy)
 All yours boss.

IN THE BAR

Aakash and Julie make out as they walk.

Tony, looking very nervous, walks up to Aakash-

TONY
 (scared)
 We need to get the fuck outta here.
 Lets just get outta here. I'll tell
 you outside. Lets go.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE BAR

There is hardly anyone of the street. It's late night.

Tony walks really fast away from the bar. Jasmine, Julie, and Aakash lag behind.

TONY (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Come on guys. Hurry the fuck up!

AAKASH
 What's the matter with you? We were
 having a good time in there.

TONY
 Look man! I'll be in some serious
 trouble if we don't get away from
 here.

AAKASH
 (stopping Tony)
 Whoa! What do you mean?
 (MORE)

AAKASH (CONT'D)
 What's the matter? You're not
 going to tell me?

TONY
 (almost whispering to
 Aakash)
 Look man. I got into some trouble
 with some guys. I borrowed some
 money and-

WE HEAR tires screeching. A CAR pulls over where TONY and his
 friends are standing.

FOUR HOODS get out the car. They look pissed.

TONY (CONT'D)
 (scared)
 Oh fuck! Oh fuck!

Aakash is confused.

The HOODS approach TONY.

HOOD # 1
 You running away bitch?

AAKASH
 Whoa guys. What's going on here?

Aakash comes in between the Hoods and Tony.

HOOD # 1 pushes Aakash away. The other HOODS get a hold of
 Aakash.

The girls run away and hide behind a car across the street.

HOOD # 1
 (to Tony)
 You know who you fucking with. I
 want my fucking money. And I want
 it now.

TONY
 Look man. I don't have it right
 now. But I can get it to you later.

HOOD # 1
 Now why you going to treat me like
 I'm a jerk.
 (MORE)

HOOD # 1 (CONT'D)

Motherfucka, you've been dodging me
for months. Now you going to give
me my \$10000-

TONY

Look man. I ain't got that kind of
money right now but-

Hood # 1, in his anger, punches Tony, who goes down on the
ground.

Aakash, seeing this, breaks away from the other HOODS and
punches the HOOD that punched his friend.

A BRAWL.

Aakash is grabbed by the other hoods. They pin him down on
the ground and beat him.

Hood # 1 goes back to Tony. He takes out his GUN.

HOOD # 1

Give me my fuckin money-

He jams the gun in Tony's face. He continually jams the GUN
in Tony's face.

Tony's face is bloody. His nose broken.

AAKASH

Leave him the fuck alone! You want
your money. I'll get it to you.

HOOD # 1

(turning away from Tony-to
Aakash)

Motherfucka you want to die?

He points his GUN to Aakash's face.

HOOD # 1 (CONT'D)

Keep your fuckin' mouth shut.

As we ZOOM IN on Aakash's face, the voice of the HOOD begins
drowning out. He is seeing something behind the HOOD.

AAKASH'S POV

SLO-MO:

As Tony, with his bloody face gets up, pulling a KNIFE out of his back pocket.

WE LOOK up at the HOOD who is pointing his GUN at Aakash and cursing at him. But we don't hear him.

As TONY, aggressively, makes his way towards the HOOD, the HOOD turns around and in that moment, FIRES his GUN.

WIDE SHOT: TONY is still standing on his feet. THE HOOD has his gun pointed at Tony. THE GUN has smoke coming out of the it like it's just been fired. TONY falls on his knee. THE HOODS leave Aakash and run away.

ZOOM IN and FREEZE on AAKASH'S shocked face

AAKASH (V.O.)

Tony got shot because he couldn't pay up the \$10000. His life was worth nothing more than that. Welcome to Brooklyn.

UNFREEZE and

CUT TO:

AAKASH

As he runs and gets a hold of Tony.

Tony is now bleeding from his stomach. Aakash is in chaos.

AAKASH

Tony! Tony! What the fuck! Ah fuck!

Aakash looks around for help.

AAKASH (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Somebody help! Somebody call 911!!!

WIDE SHOT: People began to approach the scene.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT-DAY

Aakash, unshaven for almost a week, sits motionless on the sofa.

As we ZOOM IN on his expressionless face-

AAKASH (V.O.)

I was done. I didn't know how to
take it. I didn't want to step out.
I didn't want to see anyone. I
didn't want to fight.

His phone rings.

THE CALLER ID reveals the name, ABDUL ALI.

Aakash doesn't pick up.

He gets up and walks out the door. We don't know where he is going.

INT. APARTMENT-LATER

Vikram walks in and finds no one is home. THE PHONE RINGS.

Vikram picks up-

VIKRAM

Hello?

ABDUL

Hello. Vikram. Abdul here.

VIKRAM

Yea.

ABDUL

Where is Aakash?

VIKRAM

I don't know. He isn't home.

ABDUL

Hows he doing?

VIKRAM

Tell you the truth, not good. He hardly eats. Hardly does anything. Just sits around.

ABDUL

I can understand.

VIKRAM

You talk to him?

ABDUL

He doesn't answer. Listen Vikram, if anyone can help right now, it's you.

Beat.

ABDUL (CONT'D)

I know where he must be. You must go and walk him through this.

Vikram, realizing something, hangs up.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK-LATER

AAKASH sits on the bench where Tony and him once sat, facing the city.

Tony's voice echoes in his head.

TONY (V.O.)

...and gold plated Jacuzzis, swimming pool, glass terrace, where you can see the moon, and just me and Carmen...You should. Learn some finance or math or accounting. Be like your people. Maybe I'll let you do my tax returns.

His eyes fill up.

Vikram comes and sits next to him.

They both stare at the city in front of them.

VIKRAM

When you were born, it was the happiest moment in my life. If your mother was around, she would've told you how I distributed sweets all over the city.

Aakash has no reaction.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Before your mother passed away, she told me to let you be whatever you wanted to be. But I had expectations. I wanted you to become a big doctor, or an astronaut.

Aakash looks away.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

I didn't even realize when my little boy became a man. I never got a chance to tell you. Tell you how proud I am of you

Vikram's eyes begin to water.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Today, I am sitting here as a proud father.

Tears roll down Aakash's eyes as he listen to his father.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

(tearing)

And this proud father doesn't want his son to stop. Not like this. Don't leave the battleground in the middle of a war. If not for me, fight for your friend, fight for your mother.

Both, father and son, tear.

They stare out into the city.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE-NIGHT

Aakash waits outside Abdul's house.

Abdul walks over to Aakash.

He looks into his eyes and smiles.

Abdul then walks past Aakash, petting his hair.

ABDUL
(opening his door)
Tomorrow morning. 6. a.m.

AAKASH
Hey Abdul. Thanks for everything.

Abdul enters his house. Without turning around-

ABDUL
I'll see you tomorrow morning. At
6.

He shuts his door behind him.

Aakash walks away. Content.

CUT TO:

THE TRAINING

EXT. PARK-EARLY MORNING

The sun rises.

SLO-MO: Aakash runs with speed and determination.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP on his EYES reveal how fearless he is.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Aakash hits the heavy bag while everyone in the gym watches.

B) Aakash works the speed bag perfectly.

C) Aakash shadow boxes with determination.

D) Aakash does one handed push-ups. We can see that it's very easy for him to do them.

E) Aakash hits the mitts with Abdul in the ring.

F) Aakash hits the mitts as he comes up while doing sit-ups. You can see that he doesn't get tired at all. He comes up with full force and continues without stopping or slowing down.

G) Aakash runs by the East River.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

CUT TO:

EXT. BOXING ARENA- EVENING- ESTABLISHING

People are pouring in, excited to see the fight.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the fight we've been waiting for. Los Angeles bulldog Joe Marley fights Brooklyn's best Aakash Dua. The winner of this fight gets a title shot against champ Mario Gonzales in the middleweight division. This is Rick Martin reporting live from the arena.

INT. ARENA-LOCKER ROOM BATHROOM-NIGHT

A LOUD KNOCK on the door.

WE SEE Aakash's trip down memory lane is disturbed.

ABDUL (O.S.)

Come on out kid. Gotta wrap ya up.

IN LOCKER ROOM

Aakash sits while Abdul wraps him up.

Vikram is standing behind Abdul getting the first aid kit together.

A KNOCK on the door. Charlie comes in.

CHARLIE
(to Aakash)
You're on kid.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR- MOMENTS LATER

WE HEAR a LOUD and CHAOTIC arena.

SLO-MO:

WE SEE Aakash being followed by his entourage. Aakash's face is set in stone.

AS THE NOISE from the arena begins to drown-

AAKASH (V.O.)
Now I know what I'm fighting for.
Every boxer has a story...THIS IS
THE BEGINNING OF MINE.

WE HEAR the crowd getting LOUD.

As he opens the doors to the arena , AAKASH and his entourage are drowned in a white flash.

WE HEAR a wild and chaotic audience.

FADE TO BLACK.