

Competitive Advantage

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. BENSON STREET - DAY

An incredibly average British street. The road is busy with heavy traffic and heavy footfall. Cars sit parked outside terraced houses on both sides of the road.

A butchers, mechanics, electrical store and betting shop await business. People stroll in and out of the stores.

No one can miss "Raj's Superstore" and "Malik's Supermart" standing side by side. The two converted houses stand as a testament to what good newsagents should be.

A GAGGLE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN eye up the stores. A LITTLE RUNT, the joker of the pack, 12, shows off.

LITTLE RUNT
Malik banned me.

A giggle from the gaggle.

MALIK, 40s, plump, worn down by the years, props up the doorway. His face masked with a scowl.

RAJ, early 20s, charming, skinny, inexplicably dressed in a suit, stands in his doorway.

LITTLE RUNT
Am I still banned?

MALIK
Until further notice.

RAJ
Everyone's welcome at Raj's, lads.

He ushers the children into his store.

INT. MALIK'S - CONTINUOUS

Malik walks in, slumps down behind the counter. His store looks lazier than he. It's all a bit haphazard. Bargain bins dot the store, partially blocking the entrance.

The shelves are understocked. AMIR, 12, attends to this problem with methodical shelf replenishment. A chiselled antithesis to Malik, he harks back to his father's former glory days.

MALIK
You're going to have to leverage
your contacts, son.

AMIR
What me what?

MALIK
Get the kids in here. They all go
next door.

AMIR
Well stop banning them!

MALIK
I'll stop banning them when they
stop stealing from me.

AMIR
Then why do you want them in the
store?!

MALIK
Just get on with your work!

INT. RAJ'S - CONTINUOUS

Raj's store equals a beacon of efficiency. Each and every
item priced. Contemporary decor. A mini-mart heaven.

Little Runt and his perpetually bullied near 6 footer of a
friend BIG LAD, 12, ruffle through magazines: football mags,
FHMs, comics. Little Runt eyes the top shelf porn.

LITTLE RUNT
I can't reach.

Big Lad reaches to the top shelf. As he clasps the mag...

RAJ
This is not WH Smith, lads. You
read, you buy. And you're
definitely not old enough for that.

Big Lad relinquishes his grip.

LITTLE RUNT
They're cheaper at Malik's.

RAJ
What's cheaper?

LITTLE RUNT
The ladies selection.

RAJ
As if you can reach to see.

LITTLE RUNT
That's why I've got Lurch here.

Little Runt laughs. He holds a magazine priced at two pounds.

LITTLE RUNT
This is cheaper next door.

RAJ
The price is marked on it.

LITTLE RUNT
I don't have enough.

RAJ
How much do you have?

Begrudgingly, Little Runt places his little mitt in his overly baggy trouser pocket.

LITTLE RUNT
Only got a quid -

Struggles to count out.

LITTLE RUNT
- forty-two.

RAJ
It's 2 quid.

Without saying a word, Little Runt holds out his hand to Big Lad, who obliges with the remaining amount.

Little Runt hands the remaining cash to Raj.

Raj stares at the pair, barely able to take in the role to size reversal.

RAJ
Anything for you?

BIG LAD
No thanks.

Little Runt holds his hand out again, Big Lad furnishes it with more money. Little Runt picks up a pack of gum. Hands over the cash to Raj.

LITTLE RUNT
Ta, motherfucker!

Little Runt hurries Big Lad out the door and unseen to Raj, flips the finger. We now see he has two packs of gum.

LITTLE RUNT
(mutters to himself)
Paki fuck.

EXT. MALIK'S - NIGHT

Malik struggles to pull down his outer shutter. He wrestles with it, and it finally SLAMS down barely missing his feet.

He now battles with the lock.

RAJ (O.S.)
Need some help?

MALIK
(without looking up)
No.

RAJ
Don't be so proud.

MALIK
(not even in the ballpark of
context)
You're a leach. You've no respect
for your elders.

RAJ
I'm offering to help, aren't I?

Raj appears staggered at Malik's ineptitude.

Finally, the lock CLICKS into place, allowing Malik a satisfied HUM.

Full of pride, he rises to his feet. Stares down Raj.

RAJ
There's plenty business for us
both, you know. I know you're
second choice. But overflowing
footfall comes your way.

MALIK
 (defiantly)
 I was here first.

RAJ
 You don't own the right to be here
 trading alone. I have as much right
 to be here. Maybe more.

Malik seethes.

RAJ (CONT'D)
 I'll buy you out, then. Expand my
 Superstore. Give the punters twice
 the Raj. How much?

MALIK
 Now you listen here. This is my
 legacy to the family. You have no
 respect for family, or tradition.
 (first thing comes to mind;
 childish)
 How much for yours?

RAJ
 I just asked you that.

MALIK
 Well, now I am asking you. I'll buy
 you out. Give the, uh, customers -

RAJ
 - twice the Malik? That's not
 possible.

SEEMA, 40s, watches from the window above Malik's store.

SEEMA
 Malik?

An old western stand-off between Malik and Raj.

SEEMA
 Malik?

RAJ
 You'd better answer the missus.

SEEMA
 Malik!

MALIK

What is it?

SEEMA

Your dinner's getting cold.

Malik, embarrassed as the day is long, shuffles to the plastic-coated door leading to the flat above the store.

Throughout, he retains eye contact with Raj.

He fumbles with his keys behind his back, blindly attempting to unlock the door.

He drops the keys, pats the floor to locate them.

Raj is a mixture of bewilderment and glee.

Malik successfully opens the door. He paces backwards slowly until his head is sandwiched in the partially open door.

A final stand-off and finally he's gone.

Raj shakes his head, enters the flat above his store.

INT. RAJ'S - MORNING

Raj sleepily enters, rubs his eyes. Switches on the power. The shop lights flicker into action.

INT. MALIK'S - MORNING

Malik, fully dressed, ready for business.

Flabbergasted, he studies a letter.

Seema enters from upstairs with a coffee. Malik quickly places the letter in his pocket.

SEEMA

There you go darling. What was that?

MALIK

What?

Seema smiles.

SEEMA

Oh Malik. You'll never change. You have worry etched on your face. So

SEEMA
 whatever it is you're trying to
 hide from me, you can stop.

She kisses him.

SEEMA
 A family business, remember?

MALIK
 Tonight at dinner. We'll go through
 it. Tonight. Yes.

SEEMA
 You don't have to carry the world
 on your shoulders my love.

MALIK
 I'd carry anything for you.

KNOCK KNOCK. Malik looks to the front door. An IMPATIENT
 NEWSPAPER DELIVERY MAN makes eye contact, and despite the
 eye contact, KNOCKS again. Impatiently.

EXT. BENSON STREET - DAY

SCHOOLCHILDREN congregate outside the stores. A SUPERMARKET
 DELIVERY VAN sits across from Malik's and Raj's.

Amir exits and high fives PETER, 12, a loveable little rogue
 who's been waiting patiently for him.

AMIR
 Why are you waiting outside?

PETER
 Your dad wouldn't let me in. He
 said two kids were already inside!
 Has he changed his mind about the
 club?

They now stroll down the street.

AMIR
 Nah, he won't either. Says it's a
 family business and we all have to
 pull our weight.

PETER
 It's one night a week practicing!
 If you want me to sort it out for
 you?

AMIR

What would you do! Apparently it's all about responsibility.

PETER

What about a job for me?

AMIR

No chance! Why pay you when he can pay me pittance.

Amir checks his watch.

AMIR

Race you.

They scuttle down the road.

INT. MALIK'S - LATER

Raj enters the store. He surveys the competition, a wry smile breaks out.

Malik senses the intrusion.

RAJ

You heard then?

MALIK

What do you want?

RAJ

You got the letter, you heard about the plans.

MALIK

It's none of your business what letters I receive. Why do you want to know?

RAJ

This Tesco's expansion affects us both. Don't be so dogmatic.

MALIK

I'm no Spaniel, boy!

RAJ

That makes no sense.

MALIK
I don't care.

RAJ
What are you even talking about?

MEGHA(O.S.)
Ooo! Look what the cat dragged in.

MEGHA, 18, Bollywood-queen-in-the-making breezes into the store from the flat above.

She's an obvious chink in the Raj armour, and she knows it.

RAJ
Megha.

MEGHA
Rajster.

Malik emerges from the counter to chaperone Megha - she doesn't need it.

He escorts her out the store.

MEGHA
Bye Raj.

EXT. MALIK'S - CONTINUOUS

Malik gives his daughter a full and fatherly hug - she glows, reciprocates. She unlocks her car. Opens the door.

MALIK
What time do your lectures finish?
Wait a minute, haven't they already
started?

MEGHA
It got cancelled, but good
timetable memory, Dad.

MALIK
I'm your father, I know everything.

He produces a goofy smile.

MEGHA
Bye Dad.

She gets into the car, drives off.

Raj, who's been watching the whole time, sharks over.

RAJ
We need to talk.

MALIK
We need to do nothing of the sort.

Malik slaps Raj's face with a quick one-two.

MALIK
I've got a business to run and
mouths to feed.

INT. SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - DAY

A spruced up British school. The product of the huge school rebuilding projects, it glistens with hope and possibility.

SARAH, 12, an adorable little girl without an ounce of knowledge of it, walks with KATE and STACEY, both 12.

They enter into a -

INT. SCHOOL - LARGE HALL

- where tables accommodate groups of children eating lunch.

They settle onto a spare table, unpack their lunchboxes.

Amir sits with Peter and a FEW FRIENDS across the hall.

The girls take notice of them.

SARAH
He's gorgeous.

KATE
Which one? Joe?

SARAH
As if!

STACEY
Paul? Peter?

KATE
Nah, she means the new kid - what's
his name? Steven, I think.

SARAH
Amir! And he's the best by a mile.

KATE
He's brown!

Sarah brushes off the comment with a shake of her head.

Amir and Peter clock the girl's eyes but lack the courage to maintain eye contact.

PETER
They're definitely looking over. We
have to join that drama club.

AMIR
Agreed. About the drama club.
They're not looking over.

Peter's eyes dart back over to the girls and immediately lower when he is clocked by Sarah.

PETER
She is looking at you. I swear!

AMIR
Just eat your dinner!

SARAH
Hello Amir.

Amir looks up. Completely dumbfounded. Neither of them saw her coming.

AMIR
Hello!

PETER
Hey.

SARAH
Hey Peter. So I was wondering if
you guys were going to join the
drama club. One night a week
rehearsal. One show a month.

AMIR
Umm -

PETER
You bet we are! Is, uh, is Stacey
joining the club?

SARAH
Yeah. Amir, you joining?

Amir nods his head repeatedly. But doesn't speak.

SARAH
Cool. I think you walk home through
the park, yeah?

Amir still nods. Still doesn't speak.

SARAH
You want to walk home together?

Amir still nodding, still not speaking.

A LOUD BELL RINGS. Lunch over in 10 minutes.

SARAH
I'd better go eat my lunch. I'll
see you later?

You got it, he still nods.

AMIR
(faintly)
Yeah!

EXT. MEADOW'S PARK - LATER

Amir and Sarah walk through the large park.

Amir's a walking tomato. Each word he speaks builds another
level of shyness.

Sarah's shyness manifests instead in a flurry of words.
Opposite attract.

SARAH
Do you read horoscopes?

AMIR
Nah.

SARAH
What star sign are you?

AMIR
Dunno.

SARAH
When were you born?

AMIR
August.

SARAH
When in August? There are two star
signs in August.

She grins at his lack of knowledge.

AMIR
22nd.

SARAH
Leo!

AMIR
Ah, right.

SARAH
I'm an Aries. March 28th.

AMIR
Cool.

SARAH
My mum believes in all this stuff
but my dad thinks it's crap. What
about your parents?

Amir shrugs his shoulders.

SARAH
Your parents run the newsagents,
yeah?

AMIR
Yeah.

SARAH
Mine don't work.

AMIR
Why?

SARAH
'Cos my mum has problems with her
heart and my dad - I'm not sure
what's wrong with him.

AMIR
I'm sorry.

SARAH
Yeah, she's alright, she just can't
move around too much. But I do this
Drama Club 'cos I'd love to be an

SARAH
actress. Maybe one day I can earn
enough to give my mum the best
care.

They arrive at the main road. They're going in opposite
directions. They stand awaiting the other to say something.

SARAH
Do you want to meet here in the
morning?

AMIR
Yeah. I usually walk with Peter if
that's cool.

SARAH
Sure.

AMIR
See you tomorrow.

Amir starts off. Sarah belatedly follows suit.

INT. MALIK'S FLAT - KITCHEN/LOUNGE - NIGHT

An open plan kitchen/lounge, contrastingly contemporary and
plush to the below store.

Malik and Amir watch TV, they impersonate frozen mannequins
with uncannily similar posture.

Seema ricochets between the diner table and stove.

SEEMA
Malik, can you give me a hand,
here?

Malik murmurs an indecipherable "no".

She rolls her eyes, continues with the meal prep.

The front door closes loudly O.S.

MEGHA (O.S.)
Sorry!

MALIK
You're late.

Megha appears. Ruffled, breathless and slightly red-eyed.

MEGHA
And that is why I said sorry.

SEEMA
Come help.

MALIK
Where have you been?

INT. MEGHA'S CAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Marooned amongst the trees sits Megha's car. Raj fiddles with the radio.

MEGHA
Why do you always try to fix that thing?

Raj shrugs.

She leans in, lightly kisses his lips. Holds him tightly.

Raj closes his eyes, appreciates the moment.

MEGHA
Soften him up. Softly, softly, remember?

RAJ
He'll never accept me. He hates me.

MEGHA
He doesn't hate you, he just needs time. And you have to stop winding him up. You know he bites every time!

RAJ
He won't accept me as a man, let alone your man.

MEGHA
Just be patient and be nice.

RAJ
Dating you behind his back is the worst thing I can do.

MEGHA
Just be glad he gave up on the arranged marriage thing.

She slaps his arm for acknowledgment of her obvious funny.

RAJ

Wow.

MEGHA

Don't be like that. You know he'd never do that to me.

RAJ

Don't be like what? I love you and I can never love you in public 'cos your dad will pour acid down my throat if he finds out.

MEGHA

He's not a fucking terrorist, Raj. And don't go saying things like that. He's just a simple man who loves his family. Why do we have to have this fight every time we see one another?

RAJ

When else are we supposed to have it? Every time I see you and he's there, I have to pretend like you're just somebody, anybody - just not the person I want to spend the rest of my life with.

A smile achingly breaks through Megha's tears.

MEGHA

You mean that?

RAJ

You know I do.

As they lean in for a kiss, the radio CRACKLES into action.

They both jump, burst into laughter.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MALIK'S - CONTINUOUS

Megha sets the table, avoids eye contact.

MEGHA

I studied extra with Jen.

MALIK
 (to Amir; beaming)
 You follow her example.

Megha winces, she doesn't enjoy deceit.

Seema hauls a large pot over to the dining table.

SEEMA
 Dinner's ready.

Megha finishes laying out the plates. Malik heads over, kisses Megha's head. Amir follows, slaps her head.

She turns, mock slaps him back.

Everyone settles. In turn they dish out their food.

MALIK
 Now that everyone is finally here,
 I need to raise a very important
 issue. It's with great regret that
 I do this.

MEGHA
 You're not addressing Parliament,
 dad. Don't be so dramatic.

MALIK
 OK, OK! Tesco's is planning on
 opening a store, over at Meadow's
 Park. I received the notification
 today. They've applied for planning
 permission and next week they'll
 send over one of their
 representatives. They want to chat
 with us and to introduce themselves
 to the community. That's nice of
 them, they didn't have to do that.

MEGHA
 Stop with the blind loyalty, Dad!
 They don't have to bloody open up a
 store in an area that's served by
 not one but two excellent stores -

MALIK
 - One! Just the one excell -

MEGHA
 - Oh my God! Do you ever stop?
 Can't you leave him alone? He's a
 bloody orphan, Dad. Can't you give

MEGHA

him just a moment's thought? We're here having dinner as a family, enjoying ourselves and he's probably on his own over there.

Seema observes, keeps her thought to herself: mother's intuition.

MALIK

I tried to welcome him in. Don't you forget that. I let him work shifts here - do you forget that? He learned his trade here and then opened up a store next door! Next door! I bet he's gallivanting out with some bloody floozies right now.

MEGHA

Dad!

INT. RAJ'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Raj's flat exhibits none of his store's flash interior. He lies on the sofa watching TV with a TV dinner.

The Tesco letter sits on a stack of unopened envelopes.

INT. MALIK'S FLAT - KITCHEN/LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Malik lifts another scoop of curry, places it down on his plate. He does this with the volume cranked up.

Megha fiddles with her food.

SEEMA

Come on you two. Not at dinner, please.

MEGHA

We have to get the community involved. Start the opposition. Every window can have a 'NO to Tesco's' poster. Facebook, Twitter. I'll get the university involved. The lecturer's love a good cause. The council will have to listen. They can block planning permission. If the community don't want them involved, they'll have to listen.

SEEMA

I don't think it can be stopped.

MEGHA

Mum, this isn't right.

SEEMA

They're opening up everywhere now.

MALIK

(incongruously changing tune)
She's right, Seema. We have to
fight this thing. Not only do we
have him next door, but now we have
Tesco's.

AMIR

If Sainsbury's can't keep up with
them, Dad, then how are we supposed
to?

MALIK

Did Gandhi back down to the
British, son? No, he stood up
against the might of an empire. Now
it's our turn.

Silence descends upon the group. Just the sounds of cutlery
clashing with the plates.

MALIK (V.O.)

Let's get this show on the road.

INT. MALIK'S FLAT - KITCHEN/LOUNGE - LATER

Malik buttons up an obviously ill-fitting '70s style parka.
Amir stands waiting, watching him.

MALIK

We won't be back too late, my
lovely ladies. Bye.

SEEMA

Bye.

MEGHA

See ya.

Malik carelessly SLAMS the door on his way out.

MALIK (O.S.)

Sorry!

Seema and Megha methodically wash and dry the dishes.

SEEMA

Extra studying tonight. I'm impressed.

MEGHA

I'm really enjoying it. Maybe I'll have to stay later more often now to get this 'NO to Tesco' campaign going.

Seema raises an eyebrow. Smiles.

SEEMA

You're more like your father than you'll ever know.

Megha smiles.

SEEMA

You were very passionate defending Raj tonight.

MEGHA

I just don't want to see the community lose its identity.

SEEMA

I see.

MEGHA

Mum?

SEEMA

Megha, I saw your face when you came in. And I saw your passion when you were talking about Raj. What's going on?

MEGHA

Don't be silly. Why would you even think that?

SEEMA

Megha.

MEGHA

You're over thinking this!

SEEMA

If you are doing something, your father will be furious that you kept it from him, but more importantly, he'll be angry because you lied.

She allows her words to sink in.

SEEMA

So?

MEGHA

You've got an overactive imagination.

OVERLAP: We hear a bowling ball rolling down a lane and SMASHING into -

MALIK (O.S.)

Bloody hell!

INT. SKITTLE ALLEY - NIGHT

- PINS!

Malik stands at the end of the lane watching. He stares down the STRIKE.

This is an offbeat, Big Lebowski-style bowling arena.

Malik plays doubles. He and his partner, BARRY, 50s, union man slash shop steward-type both wear jerseys sponsored by "Malik's Supermart".

Malik dances back towards the seating area and high fives a thoroughly bored Amir.

He then extravagantly high fives Barry.

Their OPPOSITE NUMBERS, a FATTY and a SKINNY shake their heads, ready themselves for Skinny to bowl.

BARRY

STE-RIKE! Talking about strikes... I'll grab a bunch of lads, get this rebellion going. At the plant we ousted the manager for not listening to the workforce. Big no-no. I'll Bazza him.

AMIR

Bazza him?

BARRY

Kind of like I'll batter him, but
with my name. Geddit?

AMIR

Yeah, I think so.

Barry digs in his pocket, hands Amir a few quid.

BARRY

Go get yourself a drink, son.
Malik?

Malik shakes no.

Amir heads off. Barry leans in to whisper to Malik.

BARRY

How far do you want me to go?

Malik smiles a crooked, unsure grin.

MALIK

What do you mean?

BARRY

I know a few lads, you can call
them professional activists - they
like to get involved in these sort
of things. I'd manage it all. Keep
a civil head on things.

MALIK

Megha's printing up a bunch of
signs to start.

BARRY

With all respect, that's
codswallop. Student bollocks. It
won't get you anywhere. Sometimes
you got to get the heavies in. You
know what I mean? I'm not a radical
man, Malik, you know that. I'm not.

MALIK

What about the time with the postal
strike?

BARRY

What about it?

MALIK

Well you picketed those houses for days on end. It'll look bad for me. We'll see how it goes.

We hear a CRASH of pins.

FATTY

YEAH!

Skinny moonwalks, badly, to his teammate's applause.

BARRY

And what about that little bastard. Raj.

Malik contemplates.

Skinny high fives Fatty, mimicking Malik. Sarcastically.

MALIK

He's not that bad. His store is pretty well sorted.

BARRY

He's a fucking traitor. He's forcing you out of business. You grew a monster! You welcomed him in and he shat on your face. SHAT on your face.

MALIK

Ahh, come on, his adoptive parents gave him the money for the store. Why wouldn't he give it a go?

BARRY

Well, like I say, if you want to see to it that he gets a little behind with stuff, I'm there for you.

FATTY

Are you going to bowl or what, pal?

EXT. MALIK'S - DAY

Malik stands observing a freshly placed 'NO to Tesco's' sign.

MALIK
Is it too big?

MEGHA
It's just right. I'll take one next door.

MALIK
Wait. What are you doing?

MEGHA
We need to strengthen the voice, Dad. We got to get the word out there.

MALIK
Let him print his own!

Megha rolls her eyes.

MEGHA
Come on. That's not the spirit.

She enters Raj's -

INT. RAJ'S - CONTINUOUS

- Raj stands at his counter, reading a newspaper.

RAJ
You've got about 30 seconds before he races in with the lifeboat.

MEGHA
I've got something for you to put up.

RAJ
What is it?

She places the 'NO' sign in front of him.

RAJ
No thanks.

MEGHA
What?

RAJ

What difference will it make?
They're opening up and one of us is
going down. Your dad needs to look
beyond the shop.

MEGHA

You arrogant -

RAJ

- I need to see you tonight. I miss
you. I love you.

Malik enters. Raj's heartfelt expression switches off.

Malik looks around the store, strolls around with his hands
behind his back.

He spots a few loaves of bread missing from the shelf.

MALIK

You need to fill up the bread.

He feels the bread, tests freshness.

MALIK

Not sure you have the best
supplier.

He inspects the date tags on the bread.

MALIK

Looks like it's not your top
seller.

He laughs heartily. He takes Megha by the arm.

MALIK

Well, this is enough dancing with
the devil. Pop over the printing
costs when you have a minute.

Malik whisks Megha out. She leaves the 'NO' sign.

EXT. RAJ'S - CONTINUOUS

They pace the few feet to Malik's store.

MEGHA

Dad! What did we say last night?
You don't need to be so harsh on
him. Why is that?

MALIK
 (petulant)
 It's not our problem.

MEGHA
 Dad!

MALIK
 OK! I won't charge for the sign,
 but if he wants more -

MEGHA
 - You know that's not what I meant!

MALIK
 I'll be nice.

He strokes Megha's hair.

MALIK
 You go on in and continue the
 fight. I'm proud of you. You've got
 a good heart. Thank god for your
 mother!

Another hearty Malik laugh.

Megha kisses Malik's cheek, heads into the store.

MEGHA
 Let's fight the good fight, yes?

Malik nods, watches after her as she heads into the store.
 Paces back to the entrance of Raj's store, pops his head in.
 A prolonged beat. Raj and Malik just stare at one another.

RAJ
 Yes?

Another beat.

MALIK
 Uh, make sure you put that bloody
 sign up. And it's on me.

Malik gives a thumbs up and his head exits.

MALIK
 (from outside the store
 through the window)
 Let's fight the bastards!

Another thumbs up. Both thumbs this time.

INT. MALIK'S - LATER

Amir sits on a small stool stocking the lower shelves.

MALIK

No son. We've had this conversation over and over.

AMIR

You make me sit all night with you when you go bowling.

MALIK

You love the bowling nights.

AMIR

No, I don't. I hate them.

MALIK

Then why do you come?

AMIR

'Cos you make me!

MALIK

That's not true.

AMIR

Then I'm not coming next week.

MALIK

You bloody well are!

AMIR

No.

MALIK

Yes.

AMIR

NO!

MALIK

YES!

Seema watches the childish confrontation from the flat entrance.

SEEMA

Amir, can you go upstairs and fix up the washing, please.

AMIR

I'm stocking shelves.

SEEMA

I'll do them, pop upstairs.

Malik watches the exchange with an arched eyebrow, fully aware of what's about to happen.

Seema sits on the stool. Silently fills the shelves.

Malik stares at her back. He works through some calculations. Keeps breaking away to look at her.

MALIK

What?

SEEMA

Nothing.

MALIK

You think I should I let him go?

SEEMA

Better than letting him waste his evenings at the bowling club with you and Barry.

MALIK

I'm teaching him the value of obedience.

SEEMA

Obedience? What do you think him stocking the shelves when boys his age are out playing is if it's not obedience?

Malik returns to his calculations.

Amir hides on the stairs leading to the flat, listens in.

SEEMA

Malik.

MALIK

Why am I dealing with all these things! Fine! He can go to the bloody drama club.

Amir smiles, silently moves upstairs.

INT. RAJ'S - BACKROOM - DAY

Raj sorts and counts his stock.

MEGHA
Hello beautiful.

Megha stands at the back door, which is ajar.

She gives him a kiss.

RAJ
Can you come back? I have to get
this done.

MEGHA
No, I cannot come back.

She eases the clipboard out of his hand, kisses him again.

MEGHA
I miss you.

INT. RAJ'S - SHOP FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Malik enters the store. He spots Amir's buddy Peter behind the till. He double takes, snorts.

MALIK
When did you start here?

PETER
Today.

MALIK
(to himself)
Traitor.
(to Peter)
And he left you at the till by
yourself?

PETER
No he's out the back right now.

INT. RAJ'S - BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Raj and Megha kiss.

RAJ
Can you get away tonight?

MEGHA
No.

RAJ
Can't you "be studying"?

MEGHA
Not again.

RAJ
I'm going mad up there by myself.

MEGHA
Maybe tomorrow. Anyway, stop
worrying about later and worry
about now.

RAJ
Where's your dad?

MEGHA
He's next door, don't worry.

RAJ
I have little Peter out front, we
don't want him to pop in.

MEGHA
He won't. Why would he.

MALIK (O.S.)
Raj?

They stare at one another masked in fear.

MALIK (O.S.)
RAJ!

His voice is now very close.

INT. RAJ'S - SHOP FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Malik eyes the store. He's alerted by a CRASHING out back.

MALIK

What the bloody hell are you up to?

He reaches the door leading to the backroom, pokes his head O.S into it.

MALIK (O.S.)

What the hell is going on here?

FADE OUT