

Tall, Dark and N.R.I

By

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FADE IN

Typical Sunday morning for the ARORA FAMILY, middle class Punjabi family. It is spring. Brief shots of:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

MR ARORA, mid 50's, TURBANED, happy looking chap, carefully studies MATRIMONIAL SECTION of Sunday paper.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

MRS ARORA, early 50's, thin, content, fashionable housewife cooks rotis.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

RAHUL & SHILPA ARORA, both late 20's, techno-savvy couple, play with their three-month old BABY.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

DAADI, early 70's, widow, clad in white, head covered, in prayer room, murmurs holy words from GURU GRANTH SAHIB holy book.

INT. STUDY - DAY

REEMA, early 20's, intelligent-looking, pleasant, memorizes from PSYCHOLOGY textbook.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

MR Arora grins, then nods, finally likes what he sees. Pencil in hand, circles advert that reads: TALL, DARK AND NON-RESIDENT INDIAN BOY SEEKING INTELLIGENT PUNJABI BRIDE. PHONE 9878228785.

REEMA (V.O)

It is a truth universally acknowledged that if you are an INDIAN unmarried female ...no, actually, allow me to re-phrase that, that if you are a PUNJABI unmarried female, your father is in constant seek of a suitable Punjabi boy for you. Not just any suitable

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

REEMA (V.O) (cont'd)
Punjabi boy, but an N.R.I, a Non
Resident Indian.

INT. LIVING ROOM -DAY

Mr Arora now reaches for the cell phone in his shirt pocket.

REEMA (V.O)
That's all good with me, except HIS
definition of the word suitable may
not be the same as mine.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr Arora, chats on the cell phone, newspaper tucked under
one arm.

MR ARORA
Thank you Mrs Gupta. Looking
forward to our meeting. Of
course...not a problem...yah, yah,
sews and cooks...yah, yah, what
grasp of language she has too, got
first prize in literature. In fact
she knows Jane Austin stuff by
heart almost.

INT. BREAKFAST TABLE - DAY

Rahul and Shilpa wipe the regurgitated SLIME from the baby's
mouth. Rahul lifts him up and baby PEES on his clean shirt.
Shilpa reaches for wipes and a clean nappy.

REEMA (V.O)
Not that I don't believe in the
institution of marital bliss... but
I just feel there is so much more
to life than wiping baby bottoms...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs Arora rolls rotis, stopping mid-way to wipe sweat from
forehead with the edge of her sari.

REEMA (V.O)
...and rolling perfectly round
chappattis.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Board exams are in session. Reema chews onto the end of her pen, trying to remember answers.

REEMA (V.O)

I could do so much more, I'm sure. You know, like become an English teacher, travel the world, maybe write a novel, and then when I am finally ready, I would marry my suitable Mr Darcy. With or without a turban.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

TURBANED SUPERVISOR glances at Reema's work, deliberately reads over her shoulder, walks on further and chuckles to himself. Reema grimaces.

She glances across the room. Pan across to best friend YASMIN, early 20's, head covered in HIJAB (Islamic headpiece), also chewing onto pen, appears frustrated at memory blank.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Through the kitchen/living room CURTAINS enter Reema and Yasmin. They plant their heavy bags and files on the kitchen counter. Immediately Mrs Arora shoves a sweet YELLOW LADDOO in Reema's mouth, then Yasmin's.

REEMA

Thanks, ma. Any food left? We're starving. And what are these for?

YASMIN

Aunty ji, hope you know that the results are yet to be announced. Probably should save these laddoos for when they actually DO come out. You might change your mind. Bloody toughest psychology paper ever!

REEMA

Yah, ma. Even Freud would have cringed. What?...Why are you smiling?

(CONTINUED)

MRS ARORA
(smiling, teasing)
Your father has a surprise for you.

Both girls exchange questioning looks.

INT. YASMIN'S HOME - DAY

Yasmin, sits on the edge of the sofa, whispers into the phone. RAZIA, Yasmin's mother, a youthful woman in her late 40's, head covered in HIJAB, is on her knees on the Persian rug, in the background, doing one of her five ritual prayers.

YASMIN
(frustrated)
You out of your bloody mind? He
could be a real goof for all we
know...

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Reema decorates plate neatly with triangular shaped samosas and oily savories. Simultaneously balances cordless phone between ear and right shoulder.

REEMA
(equally frustrated)
It's not like I have a choice you
know. Why am I even bothering, you
won't understand.

YASMIN
Everyone's got a choice, Reem.
Don't give me that crap. What about
Miranda College, what if you get
accepted? Imagine all the fun we'll
have in Delhi. All girls college,
shopping at Janpath Markets, our
very own campus room...

REEMA
You know something...you ARE crazy!
You think our parents are just
going to hand us our backpacks and
say 'Here you go dear, have fun in
Delhi. All by yourselves.' Meena,
this is Amritsar? Not Amsterdam!

(CONTINUED)

YASMIN

In case you've forgotten, this idiot of yours is Australian. From my geography lessons Delhi is a lot closer to home than Sydney. And besides, since when have you become all pro-marriage? What about your masters?

REEMA

I heard Papa-ji telling Rahul bhaiya that they won't mind me continuing my masters when I get to Sydney...frankly, I'm kind of excited about it. At least he's broadminded, not like the geeks out here...

YASMIN

Are you even hearing yourself? You haven't even met this guy yet! This is crazy. I refuse to be part of this.

REEMA

Listen, I have to go now. They're here. I'll call you after.

Reema hangs up. We hear the HANG UP BEEPING TONE as Yasmin stares at her cell phone. She turns to look at Razia as we pan across and see...

INT.DINING TABLE - DAY

Razia sips her coffee looking directly at Yasmin.

RAZIA

Delhi? Miranda College? Own campus room? Interesting.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Reema's GIGGLING relatives alert her it's time to take the snacks to the prospective groom and party. Reema's mother FUSSES with Reema's VERY DRESSY sari.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Reema's P.O.V on samosas then pan over to AMARJIT'S face. He is a tall, tanned and mid 20's metrosexual guy.

Reema likes what she sees. She serves him the samosa platter. He picks up samosa, gulps it down. She lowers gaze and ACCIDENTALLY looks at his bulge. Quickly looks away.

We see relatives and immediate family members exchange approving glances and nods. Amarjit's parents, MR and MRS BHATIA are in their mid 50's, dressed in EXPENSIVE suit and sari.

MR BHATIA

So, Amarjit beta? Didn't we tell you she was a stunner? Look at him blushing!

MRS BHATIA

(examining Reema from head to toe)

Very pretty. It's a yes from us. Amar beta? What do you say?

Amarjit glances at Reema whose eyes are focussed on the floor. He turns and nods a yes to his parents. All erupt in abrupt cheering.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Mr Arora walks the Bhatia family to their car. Mrs Bhatia and Amarjit get in the car. We see Mr Bhatia SLIP a PAPER to Mr Arora. Mr Arora GLANCES at it, we DO NOT see the contents of the note. A Beat. Mr Arora looks up at MR Bhatia and smiles.

MR ARORA

Anything for my daughter, Sir.

We stay with Mr Arora as he waves goodbye to the leaving car.

INT. ARORA HOME - NIGHT

Ladies singing and dancing (an opportunity to put a Bollywood/Punjabi Bhangra hit number). It's the night before the wedding. Reema is having pre-bridal henna worked on her hands and legs. Loud affair. Punjabi "Jaago" ritual performed where a a tray decorated with lit candles is placed on top of the heads of women relatives and passed from one head to the other.

INT. GURUDWARA SIKH TEMPLE - DAY

Reema and Amarjit encircle the holy book. Family and relatives surround them. Typical Sikh wedding with all the silk and finery, costume and setup wise.

INT. MARRIAGE PALACE - EVENING

Newly married Reema and Amarjit sit on reception lounge chairs, bhangra music blaring. Yasmin stands by Reema's side.

Amarjit gets whisked away by drunk friends.

Yasmin quickly takes the opportunity to show exam results to Reema.

Sheet shows Bachelor of Psychology - First Class honors. ACCEPTANCE letter from Miranda College. Both girls look SADLY at Amarjit's EMBARRASSING effort at BHANGRA, one hand hoisting a bottle of WHISKEY.

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE - NIGHT

Reema and Amarjit sit on the ROSE-PETAL DECORATED bed, arms length apart. Amarjit looks at her. Reema stares at the floor.

He moves closer. She looks at him SUDDENLY, PANICKED.

REEMA

(rapidly, very nervous)

I have my periods...I mean, I just got them. Maybe from all the nervousness. It just came...

AMARJIT

(calming her)

Hey...hey. Relax, okay. It's fine. We don't have to do anything right away that you're not comfortable with. We've got all the time in the world...

REEMA

But I thought you were leaving day after tomorrow.

AMARJIT

Yeah. I'm really sorry about that. Couldn't get any extra leave from work.

(CONTINUED)

REEMA

It's okay.

Silence for a bit. Both stare at the floor. Then they both start to SPEAK SIMULTANEOUSLY.

REEMA

You go first.

AMARJIT

No, please, ladies first.

REEMA

It's quite late. Do you mind if I get changed. The weight of this whole outfit is killing me.

AMARJIT

Sure. I don't mind.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Reema wears a nightie. She admires the solitaire on her ring finger. Picks up the brush to comb her long hair. She can hear Amarjit's cell phone RINGING. We hear him talking. Stay with Reema.

AMARJIT (V.O)

Look it's only a couple more days okay. No big deal, man. I told you my folks don't see it that way. Listen I can't talk right now. I'll call you back.

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE - NIGHT

Reema comes out of the bathroom. Their eyes meet and lock for a beat.

AMARJIT

Oh, hi.

REEMA

Hi.

Amarjit's cell phone RINGS again. He stares at the screen, reluctant to answer. Then relents.

AMARJIT

(to Reema)

Give me a sec.

(CONTINUED)

AMARJIT
(on the phone)
Yeah, hi. Can you hold for 2 secs.
No man, I'm not hanging up, just
hold for me, will you?

Amarjit walks to the door and opens it. Turns to face Reema who is a bit taken aback by the phone calls.

AMARJIT
Work stuff. Pissed off that I've
overextended my leave. I've really
gotta take this. Sorry.

REEMA
Fine. Please. Go ahead.

Amarjit exits room. Closes door behind him. Reema, bored, walks up to bedside table. Gulps down the glass of chilled milk that was meant for Amarjit.

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE GATE - DAY

Amarjit with parents. Reema with parents and extended family members. Customary goodbyes being exchanged. Amarjit touches Mr Arora's feet in the expected traditional manner. He looks at Reema then to Mr Arora and says:

AMARJIT
I'll come for her in a few months.
Till then, please take care of her.

MR ARORA
You're a good boy, my son.

A very emotional Mr Arora taps Amarjit on the shoulder. Then he pulls Reema closer as they watch the Bhatias walk through the departure gates.

EXT. SKY - DAY

Shot of plane taking off.

MONTAGE BEGINS

Music up.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema emailing. We see her OPENING NEW EMAIL from Amarjit. She's happy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Reema and Yasmin on the rickshaw. Reema on the phone, chatting happily. Yasmin flipping through magazine, covering one ear to block out Reema's squeals.

INT. SMOKEY BAR - NIGHT

Amarjit with many Western friends. His cell phone buzzes, REEMA displays on the SCREEN. He finds a quiet spot to chat. Smiles.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema at the computer, typing away. We see CU of the cursor on the send button on the computer screen. Pull back to show Reema click on mouse, smiling happily.

END MONTAGE

INT. ARORA HOME - NIGHT

Dinner time. Reema sets the table. All in a happy mood. Baby is little bigger now and demands attention. Gets it too.

DAADI

Not long before another baby will
be heard cooing in the home. Reema
beta, tell your Amarjit ji to hurry
up. My time's running out soon.

MRS ARORA

Shubh shubh bolo, Ma-ji. Tell me
Reema beta, has Amarjit said
anything about your visa yet? Is he
coming over soon?

REEMA

He's a bit busy with work, Ma, but
I'll email him tonight about it.

(CONTINUED)

SHILPA

Maybe he wants to surprise you.

MR ARORA

The romantic firangi type, our
son-in-law.

Reema gets shy.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see the cursor on the computer screen hovering over the
send button. CLICK, pop up on screen says MESSAGE SENT.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

ALARM BUZZES. CU on hand as it TAPS alarm off.

Reema lazily drags herself from bed, yawns and stretches.
Turns computer on.

We see the screen displaying message NO NEW MAIL.

INT. ARORA HOME - DAY

We see the wall clock displaying time EVERY HOUR and

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema checks email, gradually becomes agitated to find NO
NEW MAIL each time.

INT. ARORA HOME - NIGHT

Wall clock now displays ELEVEN pm. Reema can't wait any
longer. Hasn't heard from Amarjit for 48 hours now. Decides
to call him.

We hear the Australian operator's voice as we stay on Reema.

AUSTRALIAN OPERATOR (V.O)

Your call could not be connected.
Please check the number and try
again. Your call could not...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Reema's family all gathered by the phone. Everyone is tensed. Mr Arora dials a number on the cordless phone. We hear it RING. Beat.

MR ARORA

Gupta Ji...sorry to disturb you at this odd hour, Gupta ji . It's Rajiv Arora from India. Gupta ji, we're having trouble connecting to my son-in-law's number. Yes, yes, Amarjit Bhatia...no, no, we haven't heard from him all day yesterday nor today.

Beat.

MR ARORA

I see...I see

Longer beat.

MR ARORA

Right. I see...Thank you Gupta ji.

Pan over to Reema. Stay with her.

REEMA

(becoming hysterical)

What is it, Papa ji. Is he okay? Is Amar okay? Please say something.

Mr Arora flops on the sofa, in shock. He gazes at Mrs Arora.

MR ARORA

He's gone. Amarjit's gone.

MRS ARORA

What do you mean gone? Gone where?

MR ARORA

They don't know. He left a note to his parents telling them he couldn't take this anymore and said he was leaving. He ran away, Savitri. Oh dear God, our daughter has been abandoned.

INT. TRAVEL AGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Reema and Mr Arora sit in the waiting area of a BUSY travel agent's office. Through the GLASS PARTITION we see the DODGEY LOOKING AGENT on the phone making promises to people about visas.

Five or six unemployed youth surround his table, hope in their eyes for that ticket to Dubai/Canada/UK.

Agent SPOTS Reema from his cabin. SIGNALS them to come in. Father-daughter duo walk in. Agent signals others to move away and give them privacy. They continue to linger in the background, LEANING against the walls and listening...no sense of privacy.

DODGEY AGENT
(shakes Mr Arora's hand)
Sir ji, your daughter?

MR ARORA
Yes. We hope you can help us. We have a bit of a situation. You see, my son-in-law is in Australia--

DODGEY AGENT
Accha! Bhai, that's very good. Simple case, not hard. NRI son-in-law...very good, very good.

MR ARORA
Actually, it's not as simple as that. The thing is he has disappeared and we need to find him. But my daughter needs a visa to go there first.

DODGEY AGENT
Accha! Okay. No problem, no problem. Show me her passport.

Reema demurely hands passport to agent. He studies the blank pages with wrinkled-forehead concern.

DODGEY AGENT
Not so simple. In fact, bit difficult. You see, if your son-in-law has disappeared, then it will be hard to give the Embassy people proof of genuine marriage. Correct?

Mr Arora and Reema nod with concern.

(CONTINUED)

DODGEY AGENT

So...

Long pause.

MR ARORA

So?

DODGEY AGENT

So...Sir ji, normally I would say I am sorry I cannot help you. But because your daughter is like my daughter I will try and help you. Correct?

Father-daughter nod, elated at this.

DODGEY AGENT

I will need an advance of two lakhs, correct? Followed by three lakhs when visa is granted.

Father-daughter jolted at this new revelation.

MR ARORA

But...but she is married to him. We have the legal marriage certificate. Surely there is no need for so much fees.

DODGEY AGENT

Sir ji, you obviously don't understand how difficult this will be. Your NRI son-in-law has disappeared. Correct? Who is going to sign the sponsor paper? Who will show bank statement, phone bills? Have you thought about all this?

MR ARORA

I see. Isn't there another way? Can't we explain to the embassy what all has happened?

Dodgey agent lets out a RUDE LAUGH. The spectators JOIN IN for good measure.

Reema becomes uncomfortable. Mr Arora holds her hand to comfort her.

DODGEY AGENT

Sir ji...if we can't get your son-in-law, we'll get someone else

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DODGEY AGENT (cont'd)
to act his part. Correct? And for
me to organize all that, there is a
cost involved. Now, it is up to
you. Take it or leave it. Simple.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr & Mrs Arora sitting on their bed. Mr Arora has lost all hope, plants both palms on his forehead in despair, almost crying. Mrs Arora tries to console.

MRS ARORA
You know what they say...good
things always happen to good
people. We are good people, Raju.
This is just a big test from Baba
ji. Everything will be fine.

MR ARORA
Five lakhs, Savitri. How am I going
to arrange that? First Rahul's
wedding. Then all the expenses for
Reema's wedding. The bastards had
the audacity to ask for fifteen
lakhs. Still I gave. That was from
my pension fund. I thought, my only
daughter, I'll do anything for her.
And now we have nothing left to
help her with. Nothing...Savitri,
I'm finished.

He sobs uncontrollably now.

MRS ARORA
Please Raju, control yourself.
There has to be another way. I'll
speak to Mrs Gupta.

And we pan across to show:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Outside her parents bedroom, Reema overhears their conversation. It hits her for the first time that they gave fifteen lakh dowry for her marriage.

She walks, stumbles, falls. Gets up then runs towards her room.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see her reach for the WEDDING PHOTOS and one by one she RIPS them to pieces. Incessant tears roll down her face.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema lies in foetal position on her bed. She clutches onto a small DARK BOTTLE. Room is DARK, all curtains drawn. We hear VOICES outside her door followed by POUNDING on the door.

YASMIN (V.O)

Reem, please! This is no way to behave. Now open up.

MRS ARORA (V.O)

Beta Reema. Please open the door. Your Daadi is getting very upset.

YASMIN (V.O)

I command you in the name of our friendship to open this bloody door right now!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Yasmin, Shilpa, Mrs Arora and Daadi knock on Reema's bedroom door.

SHILPA

(to Yasmin)

She's been there all morning. Hasn't eaten a thing.

YASMIN

Reema Arora. I'm going to count to three and if you don't open this bloody door I'll kick it open, I swear! One, Two ...

Yasmin walks a few paces back and braces herself to launch on the door when it CREAKS open slowly.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Shredded photographs and used tissues are scattered on the floor. Reema sits on the bed, her back against the wall, hugging her knees. Yasmin draws open the curtain to let the light in. She sees the DARK BOTTLE on the bedside table and DASHES for it.

(CONTINUED)

YASMIN

Oh you silly silly girl! How could you?

REEMA

(sobbing like a little girl)
What else is left for me to do?
Huh?

Yasmin paces the room, fuming. Then calms down, takes a deep breath. Turns the TV on. We see the Bollywood movie BLACK (based on Helen Keller's life) playing on screen. It's the scene where actor Rani Mukherji gives her graduation speech. Reema begins to watch.

Yasmin climbs on the bed and sits next to Reema. She pulls her knees up to hug them, almost in a child like copy-cat manner.

YASMIN

Helen Keller was blind, deaf and mute. You, my dear, have all your senses intact to know better than thinking that swallowing rat poison would solve anyone's problems.

REEMA

Why me?

YASMIN

Why not?

A beat.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

Helen Keller said, 'Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in this world.'

REEMA

Stop being so preachy. You won't understand my suffering here.

YASMIN

(adamant to make a point)
Helen Keller also said, 'All the world is full of suffering. It is also full of overcoming.'

Reema smiles. She hits Yasmin with a pillow. The girls erupt into a friendly pillow fight.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Reema and Yasmin sit on the swing. The morning sun rays fall on their faces.

YASMIN

You have to find him. You can't sit here and pretend this was how life was meant to be for you. It's not over till it's over.

REEMA

There's no way I can go all the way to Sydney to find him. And god knows where he is. How can I get him back if I don't even know where to find him?

YASMIN

Who said anything about wanting him back? You're going to go over there and get your money back. They can't just come here pretending to marry you and take off with your family's money. No bloody way!

REEMA

And how do you propose I do that?

Yasmin purses her lips, deep in thought.

YASMIN

I have a plan.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. YASMIN'S ROOM - DAY

Yasmin is on the phone to her mother. Reema is on Yasmin's computer reading up on something. She appears concerned.

YASMIN

Ammi, don't worry. We'll be fine. We'll order pizza or something...well, sounds good then. We'll heat the biryani up then. Okay, see you soon. Enjoy the meeting.

She hangs up. She reads what Reema had been reading.

(CONTINUED)

REEMA

You have to read this. Is Aunty okay?

YASMIN

She'll be a bit late. The NGO meeting is on tonight. They're organizing a rally for Muslim Women's Rights. What have you got here?

A beat. Yasmin murmurs as she reads the screen.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

This is excellent. See, you don't need an agent for this. You can fill out the forms and apply on your own without that ass.

REEMA

I know, but...

YASMIN

But what yaar? C'mon Reems, it's not like it's rocket science.

REEMA

What about the money? The University tuition fees is too much. Where will I get all that money from?

CU on Yasmin. She looks at the computer screen but her mind is somewhere else... and dissolve to:

FLASH BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - DAY

A ten year old Yasmin sits on her father's lap. MR KHAN reads to her something from the QURAN. Later, he places the holy book on the table and cups Yasmin's face in his palms.

MR KHAN

Happy Birthday, my angel.

YASMIN

Happy Birthday, Abbu.

He bursts into a hearty laugh at his daughter's innocence. Then he hands her an envelope.

(CONTINUED)

YASMIN

For me?

She opens it, is very excited. She pulls out a tiny booklet akin to a bank deposit book.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

What's this, Abbu?

MR KHAN

It's called a fixed deposit account. It's for you to use when you become a big girl and want to buy something special...like a house.

FLASH FORWARD TO:

BACK TO SCENE

Yasmin whirls around to face Reema, startling her.

REEMA

What?... You have that cheeky look in your eyes again?

MONTAGE BEGINS

Music up.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Printer on the desk spits out pages. Yasmin and Reema put them in order. Reema fills out the forms. Yasmin helps her.

INT. COURIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Both girls pack a stack of documents in an envelope. Reema writes the Australian Embassy address on it. Hands envelope to the courier officer.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Yasmin's front lawn. Postman arrives. Letter from Australian Embassy. She calls Reema on the cellphone, excited.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Reema arrives on her scooter. Grabs Yasmin, they hug. Opens letter. INTERVIEW REQUEST from Australian Embassy.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Panel of three people, one of them white, others are Indian. Reema on the other side of the large wooden desk. Q & A session. Interviewers listen, nod, mark something on paper. Finally shake her hand and nod.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Yasmin and Reema sit on Yasmin's front porch steps. Yasmin looking at her watch, Reema chewing her nails. Postman arrives on bicycle. Hands them a package. Reema tears it open. We see the VISA STICKER on her passport. They hug and jump around in celebration.

END MONTAGE

INT. ARORA HOME - NIGHT

Everyone gathered at dinner table. Baby demanding attention. Reema looking for the right moment to break the news.

MR ARORA

Rahul beta, did you hear back about that call centre job? Savitri, pass me the pickle please dear.

RAHUL

Ma, me too please. Next week, they'll send out the email announcing it. The last voice and accent coach apparently went to US for a holiday and hasn't come back.

MR ARORA

Must be practicing his Yankee accent in full swing. Another roti please beta Reema...

MRS ARORA

Mrs Gupta called this morning.

Silence. Just the baby cooing.

(CONTINUED)

MR ARORA

What do they want now? Tell her I'm looking for a good lawyer. We won't let them get away with this?

MRS ARORA

She mentioned the Kapoor boy. Said he had recently lost his wife to breast cancer. She was only thirty two. They have twin sons.

Another beat. Shilpa POURS water from a jug. Rahul's cutlery CLINKS and baby COOS.

MRS ARORA (CONT'D)

The family is looking for an educated girl. Someone who can help with the boys. After all Melbourne is a nice city too, don't you think, Reema?

Reema stares at her barely touched meal. Mr Arora CLEARS his throat.

MR ARORA

Savitri, perhaps we should let Mrs Gupta tell Reema all about it. What do you think, beta?

Time to drop the bomb.

REEMA

Papa ji, Ma, I was going to tell you this earlier but didn't know how...

MRS ARORA

Oh dear God, are you pregnant?

REEMA

Ma! Of course I'm NOT pregnant!

MRS ARORA

Then what is it?

REEMA

I'm going to Australia.

MRS ARORA

What do you mean going to Australia? How? Who with?

(CONTINUED)

MR ARORA

What are you talking about, Reema?

REEMA

I've got a student visa. I'm leaving next week.

MRS ARORA

What? Will someone please explain to this Madam here that she needs to stop daydreaming. There is no way we can afford to put you on the plane to Mumbai even let alone Australia.

REEMA

Why? Because you paid Amar's parents fifteen lakhs in dowry when you could have used it to send ME overseas to study three years ago when I desperately wanted to go.

MRS ARORA

Don't you raise your voice young lady. You're not going anywhere. You need to stay here. You are a married woman now. What will people say?

REEMA

I'm going , Ma. It's all sorted. I applied for a scholarship and I got it. It's only for a year. I don't need your money. And what marriage? As far I'm concerned, there wasn't ever a marriage, it was just a cash transaction.

A long beat.

MR ARORA

(guilty)

Well, that's great news then..I mean your visa. But beta,you could have at least discussed this with us. Surely, you know we can not send you half way across the world by yourself?

REEMA

Why not?

(CONTINUED)

MRS ARORA

Because you're a girl. Beta, good girls from good families don't go off on their own like that, *nah?*

REEMA

I don't believe this.

Reema stands up to leave, flustered. Suddenly, the voice of the matriarch:

DAADI

Reema will go. Not because I AM saying so but because she has every right to. Topic closed. Shilpa, pass me the chutney.

Everyone is dumbfounded at the old lady's tone. Even Reema.

INT. YASMIN'S HOME - DAY

Reema hugs Yasmin.

REEMA

They bought it. Told them I got a scholarship. How will I ever repay you?

YASMIN

In monthly installments whenever you can afford to.

REEMA

I'll miss you sooooo much.

YASMIN

Miss you too. Now, go before I cry like a hopeless moron.

EXT. SKY - DAY

We see a PLANE TAKE OFF.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Reema presses the LIGHT button on the armrest. Light turns on. She turns it off. She then presses CREW button which makes a DING DING sound.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIFT - DAY

DING DING sound as lift stops. We see a finger press the OPEN DOOR button impatiently.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

We see FELICITY DARNELL, mid 20's, hippy, very new-age, hurry out of the lift. It's a small office in a University Administration area.

The sign on the wall says INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SECTION. Several Asian students are filling out forms and chatting in their language amongst themselves.

OFFICE CLERK, early 20's Asian girl, looks up from her desk and smiles familiarly at Felicity.

OFFICE CLERK
Morning Felicity.

FELICITY
Morning Amy. How are ya, mate?

OFFICE CLERK
Great. Who have you got this term?

She hands Felicity a paper. Felicity studies Reema's PHOTO and a brief BIO DATA.

FELICITY
Looks like she's a PUN-JAA-BEE girl... shit, it says the flight's arriving at eleven am. What time is it?

They both look at the clock. It's Ten- Forty-Five.

FELICITY
Oh Holy Cow! I'm so late for her.
I'll see you soon, Amy, stay cool.

Felicity rushes out the door, almost knocking over a pair of Asian guys entering through the office doors.

FELICITY (V.O)
Oops! Sorry!

INT. PLANE - DAY

Reema wakes up. Yawns. Opens the window blinds. Closes eyes from the brightness, but then suddenly realizes what she has just seen. Looks again, in awe this time. Below is the magnificence of SYDNEY HARBOUR.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR - DAY

Amazing shots of the Sydney Harbour, Opera House, Luna Park.

INT. SYDNEY AIRPORT - DAY

Reema lugs her trolley to the security x-ray checkpoint. CUSTOMS OFFICERS give her a once over. She appears nervous.

One OFFICER looks at the arrival card, shakes her head.

OFFICER

Ma'am, did you pack your own bags?

REEMA

(feeling faint with nervousness)

Yes. Why?

OFFICER

Are you carrying any food items with dairy products in them?

REEMA

No.

OFFICER

Please open this bag.

Officer points to her cabin bag. Reema isn't enjoying this at all. Some other INDIAN PASSENGERS STARE at her. She is uncomfortable.

Reema opens the bag. Officer rummages through it. Takes out HALDIRAMS SWEETS BOX. READS label. Fine. Takes out JAR OF PICKLES. READS label, fine.

OFFICER

That's fine. You're right to go.

INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS - DAY

CU of a SHINY WELCOME balloon, then pan down to Felicity holding placard displaying REEMA ARORA.

INT. ARRIVALS RAMP - DAY

Reema lugs her trolley down the ramp, searching for her name on the ocean of placards in the arrivals lounge.

Finally sees it. Hurries to it.

INT. ARRIVALS - DAY

Felicity spots Reema. Confirms by looking at REEMA'S PHOTO on the printout she collected earlier from Amy the office clerk.

FELICITY

Reema right? Hi, I'm Felicity
Darnell. Call me Flic.

REEMA

Hi. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands. Reema shyly and Felicity confidently.

FELICITY

(handing balloon to Reema)
Welcome to Sydney.

REEMA

Thanks so much. Here, this is for
you. From my family.

Reema hands Felicity the JAR OF PICKLES. Felicity doesn't know how to react.

FELICITY

Gee thanks. This is great.

Beat.

REEMA

Chillie Pickles.

FELICITY

(very unsure)
Yum.

INT. CAR - DAY

Felicity drives as Reema observes the smooth flow of traffic.

REEMA
Is the horn broken?

FELICITY
Sorry?

REEMA
Not working? Your car's horn?

FELICITY
Oh yeah, it's working. Why do you ask?

REEMA
It's just that you haven't honked even once. In India, everybody honks.

Felicity isn't enjoying this for the moment.

FELICITY
Right.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

It's time for the new flatmate to learn the rules of share accommodation.

Reema sits on the stool by the kitchen counter while Felicity pours BOILING WATER from kettle into two mugs.

FELICITY
So, like I said, I prefer if you didn't smoke in the house. Outside is fine, it's just that I'm a bit of a clean freak.

REEMA
Oh, I don't smoke.

FELICITY
Good on you. It's an awful habit. I'm down to 10 a day. I used to do a pack of 20 a day.

Felicity hands a mug to Reema.

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY
Wana sit outside?

REEMA
Sure.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Balcony overlooking crowded beach. Typical Sydney beach atmosphere.

REEMA
Wow, this is so beautiful. Yasmin would love this. My best friend.

FELICITY
You miss her?

Reema nods. Becomes a bit sad. Felicity realizes this and attempts to lighten the mood.

FELICITY
So, what do you like to do?

REEMA
Well, I love reading, writing. I love watching movies.

FELICITY
Bollywood stuff? I love 'em too! We should go get some. The lady at the spice shop has plenty of 'em.

REEMA
You know Bollywood? Wow, so what else do you like?

FELICITY
I love dancing. Oh, and my absolute favourite...I love surfing...

REEMA
(all excited)
Me too, me too!

FELICITY
You surf? I wouldn't have guessed. Wana hit the beach this arvo? Got your wet suit?

(CONTINUED)

REEMA
(confused)
Beach? Wet suit?

FELICITY
I thought you said you liked
surfing.

REEMA
I do like surfing. The internet.

MONTAGE BEGINS

Music up.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alarm clock BLARES. Reema jumps up from the bed.

Reema does Yoga asanas.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Felicity shows Reema the bus and train timetables.
Highlights the routes.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Reema puts coins in the ticket vending machine to buy train
ticket. Runs to her platform to catch train. Misses, waits
for the later one.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Crowded train, peak hour rush. Reema finally gets a seat
when someone gets up for their stop.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

From another carriage of the same train that Reema in on, we
see Amarjit coming out. They don't see each other. Stay on
Amarjit as he walks out of the train station onto...

EXT. STREET - DAY

the street. We see him stopping and HUGGING a MAN, 30's, white, seedy looking.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

Reema checks her student diary for where she needs to be. Runs towards a building. Stops, looks in the diary again. Starts running in the opposite direction. Lost.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

Reema, finally in class. Gets engrossed in the lecture. Lecturer cracks a joke. Everyone laughs. Reema looks around, spots a few Indian faces. Smiles. Begins to feel she's finally fitting in.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Reema chats on the phone, smiling widely.

INT. YASMIN'S ROOM - DAY

Yasmin in her nightie, still in bed. We see her HAIR for the first time, she doesn't have the hijab on. Chats on the phone as she examines time on her watch.

END MONTAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Reema gives the cafeteria food the once over. Goes to the Coffee bar instead. She looks around for Felicity then spots her.

Felicity joins her at the table, unloads her hippy bag with a THUD!

FELICITY

Hey! So sorry...had all this stuff
I had to do for the law society.
How's your day going?

(CONTINUED)

REEMA
(unconvincingly)
Great...so far so good. You doing
law?

FELICITY
(getting the drift)
Yup. Right. Hmmm....had lunch yet?

Reema shakes her head No.

Felicity looks at her watch.

FELICITY
You got a class this afternoon?

REEMA
Not till six. Why?

Felicity grabs her bag and hands Reema's bag to her who looks at her unsure of what's coming next. Felicity begins to walk, Reema follows as Felicity talks.

FELICITY
I know this great place. Excellent
curry. You'll love it. And guess
what, it's free.

INT. ISKCON TEMPLE - DAY

Reema is over the moon to find a Krishna Temple in the heart of metropolitan Sydney. She pays her respects. Felicity tries to copy her.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Temple has a separate room with table and chairs for devotees and visitors to eat the meal offering. We see both girls ladle their plates with rice, lentil, curries.

INT. AT THE TABLE - DAY

Sitting at the table, eating. Reema hasn't been this happy in days.

REEMA
Thanks so much for this. You don't
know how much this means to me.

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY

Oh, anytime. I know it's a bit hard living away from family for the first time huh? I got like that when I was in Germany on my student exchange programme years ago.

REEMA

Your parents...do they live here in Sydney?

FELICITY

Mum does. Lost my dad couple of years ago, he had prostate cancer.

REEMA

So sorry...

FELICITY

That's alright...it happens. Life's a real bitch sometimes. Are you close to your folks?

REEMA

(brightens at the mention of her family)
Very. Especially me and my father.

FELICITY

You're daddy's girl too then huh?

REEMA

Yes. So how come you don't live with your mum?

FELICITY

(very casually)
Oh, she's quite independent and I moved out when I was seventeen. I got my own life, she's got hers. Works out alright like that. Besides, she's not too fond of John all that much.

REEMA

John, your boyfriend?

FELICITY

Yeah. I don't know what she hates about him. He's a gorgeous guy but a real westie. We've been together couple of years now but mum has this thing about westies. She'd

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY (cont'd)
much rather I was dating a north
shore boy. What about you? Got a
man in your life?

A beat.

REEMA
Not really.

Reema takes all this in. New culture, new perceptions of
life.

She remembers something. A look of concern appears on her
face.

Felicity notices it.

FELICITY
You okay?

REEMA
I need a job. Will you help me?

INT. MACDONALDS RESTAURANT - DAY

Reema at the counter. We see the TRAINEE BADGE on her
uniform. MANAGER shows her how to enter the customer's order
on the computer.

She greets a customer, smiles widely.

REEMA
Welcome to Macdonalds...how may I
help you?

INT. DIFFERENT MACDONALDS - PUNJAB - DAY

Yasmin picks her tray of food and walks back to her table.

She opens the EMPLOYMENT SECTION of the NEWSPAPER and begins
circling jobs while shoving chips in her mouth.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Yasmin and Razia relax at home watching TV. We see Razia
with towel wrapped on her head. Yasmin with a FACE MASK,
sits on the floor as Razia gives her a scalp massage. Their
eyes are glued to the TV.

(CONTINUED)

YASMIN

Ammi?

RAZIA

Hmm...

YASMIN

Ammi, I've decided not to go to
Miranda.

Razia stops. Yasmin turns around to face her.

RAZIA

Why? You were so keen *baba*...what
happened?

YASMIN

Nothing really. It's just I really
want to be of service to the
community. I mean what good is a
psychology degree if I don't use it
for the right purpose.

RAZIA

I see...have you thought about
other options?

Yasmin grins and nods with child-like excitement, FLAKES
from her face mask fall off.

YASMIN

I have an interview with an NGO
tomorrow. For their in-house
psychologist position.

Razia breaks into a wide, proud smile.

RAZIA

That's my girl.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Reema's books are scattered on the table. She reads from a
text book and makes notes. Glances up to watch TV every now
and then. SEX AND THE CITY is on.

We hear a KNOCK on the door.

Reema opens the door. It's MENAKA GNANAPRAGASAM, Sri Lankan,
mid 20's, dark, tall, streaked hair.

(CONTINUED)

REEMA

Hi.

MENAKA

Hey.

She invites herself in. Reema bit stunned. She opens her mouth to say something but closes it again.

Menaka goes straight towards Felicity's room, yelling for her.

MENAKA

Fliiiiic! I'm in so much shit you won't believe it, man!

We stay with Menaka as she walks back to the living room. She suddenly realizes she's being rude.

She extends her hand, Reema shakes it.

MENAKA

I'm Mini, short for Menaka.

REEMA

I'm Reema. Just Reema.

MENAKA

That's right...I remember Flic mentioning you. You're the Punjabi chic.

REEMA

You Indian too?

MENAKA

Sri Lankan. Careful when cricket's on. I don't take defeat too kindly from you lot...just kidding...listen, any idea when Flic's back?

Just then the door opens and we see a TIPSY Felicity and JOHN, Felicity's boyfriend, late 20's, very Aussie, slightly shorter than Felicity, enter, laughing hysterically about something. They hug Menaka, happy to see her.

MENAKA

Oi, John...howya mate?

JOHN

Ay gorgeous. TGIF!

John hold up a WINE BOTTLE mid-air.

(CONTINUED)

MENAKA

TGIF!

Felicity gives Reema a hug and translates the acronym.

FELICITY

Thank God It's Friday.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

PIZZA BOXES on the table. Everyone's in a bit of party mood, except Reema. She appears a bit out of place, but smiles alot at Aussie jokes she can't fully grasp.

MENAKA

So, Reema. It's really cool you're out here, you know. I mean with our folks being so traditional and all.

JOHN

What? Look who's talking? Since when are your folks so traditional? Get this Reema, try saying this in one breath...Menaka
Na-na-pra-ga-sum.

Everyone cracks up, even Reema enjoys a hearty laugh.

MENAKA

Oh, sod off Mr Johnathan
Acidophilus or something or rather.

FELICITY

(amidst uncontrollable
giggles)
Papadopoulos!!!

Reema giggles and joins in the fun.

REEMA

I got one, I got one...We used to have a South Indian professor at College. His name was...(coughs)..Chinpadam
Chinpunampunam Putramalayam
Pilbalakrishnan.

The rest try and copy the head wobbles and that typical Indian accent that Reema has. Hysterical laughter all round.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

Psychology lecture is on. Reema takes notes. Her cell phone VIBRATES on her table. We see MEENA displayed on SCREEN.

Reema hurries out the back exit.

INT. FOYER - DAY

She answers the phone.

REEMA

Meena!!! Oh my god, how are you?...I miss you so much...

YASMIN (V.O)

(over the phone)

I miss you too... listen I can't talk long. I have something for you. Write it down.

REEMA

Hang on...I have to get a pen...

Reema checks a pocket, shit no pen. Looks around for someone. Finally sees a student by the water cooler. Runs to her and asks for a pen. She gives.

REEMA

Okay, tell me.

She begins writing on her hand.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF MANSION - DAY

We see a HAND KNOCKING on the door. Pull back to reveal Reema, nervous.

Door opens. We see Mr Bhatia, shocked to see Reema.

INT. MANSION - DAY

Reema sitting on sofa. Opposite her on another sofa are Mr & Mrs Bhatia. Reema observes the posh and expensive deco and photo frames. Amarjit's CHILDHOOD PHOTO. There are several FAMILY PORTRAITS.

The air is thick with tension. Finally, we see Mr Bhatia SIGNAL to Mrs Bhatia to speak.

(CONTINUED)

MRS BHATIA

We are sorry Reema. Our hands are tied.

REEMA

Where is he?

MR BHATIA

Beta, even we don't know where he is.

REEMA

(calm and soft toned)

So that's it then? Your apology is supposed to undo everything?

MRS BHATIA

(sarcastic)

Well, what do you want us to do, Reema? It's not like we wished for this to happen. You're a young girl, you can re-marry a nice chap, I'm sure. Mrs Gupta was saying she was already inquiring for you. So there you go. Life goes on, my dear.

REEMA

It's not that simple. The ways of the west, I'm afraid, I have not yet grasped.

A beat.

REEMA (CONT'D)

I would however appreciate it if you returned the fifteen lakhs dowry that my father paid you.

Mr & Mrs Bhatia exchange baffled looks.

MRS BHATIA

(defensively)

How dare you! We never took a single *paisa* from your middle class father.

REEMA

(standing up to leave)

Is that so? Fine...then I believe I shall have to see you in court about this.

(CONTINUED)

MRS BHATIA

You don't know who you're dealing with, you bloody whore! You think we didn't know you were here? We knew everything. Remember Mrs Gupta? You middle class filth, living with goras. You are worse than dirt of my son's shoes. I can have you thrown out of this country before you even realize what's hit you. Now Get Out.

CU on Reema. Her eyes are bloodshot with hurt and anger. She walks up close to Mrs Bhatia, almost in her face.

REEMA

(really angry, stressing on each word)

You will pay for this and how!

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Reema lies on the bed, head down, sobbing. We can hear Menaka, John and Felicity chatter in the living room. Another Friday night get together.

There is a KNOCK on the door.

FELICITY (V.O)

Oi, Reema, you comin' or what?
We're ready.

INT. BEDROOM DOOR - NIGHT

Reema opens door. She is a total mess, puffy eyes from crying.

FELICITY (V.O)

Oh sweet Jesus, you alright, hun?
What's wrong?

Reema bursts into hysterical sobs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

They know her story now. Felicity, John and Menaka comfort her with tissues and a bottle of water.

(CONTINUED)

REEMA

(amidst sobs)

I can't even take them to court.
I'm just a student...and I don't
have the money...they're so rich
and powerful...I'm just a nobody.

MENAKA

Ssh...it'll be fine, babe, don't
you worry.

FELICITY

Why don't we try and locate this
asshole first, okay? You're not
alone, Reema, we're here with you.

REEMA

But I don't even know where to look
for him. His parents won't tell me
anything about him.

JOHN

Bastards. Like hell they don't
know. He was probably hiding in his
room.

REEMA

Fifteen lakhs, they took fifteen
lakhs from my father.

FELICITY

Jesus...But you know what hun, it's
only money, you can earn it back.

REEMA

Not from my wages I can't.

JOHN

Look, if it makes you feel any
better, I'll put in a good word for
you at the factory. I heard they
were looking for night shifters.
It's good money. You can save up
and get a good lawyer to sue this
jackass.

MENAKA & FELICITY

Great!

REEMA

Mmm hmm.

More sobs.

(CONTINUED)

MENAKA

Ok listen here, you. You can either cry all night and make yourself sick or you can get it together and find a solution to all this. Reema, put your coat on girl, we need to go out. Now.

They huddle her up, determined to take her out for a good time.

INT. NIGHT CLUB/BAR LOUNGE - NIGHT

Reema sips her COLOURED FRUIT COCKTAIL. She watches Menaka, John, Felicity boogieing on the dance floor.

Pan across to the bar. JAG, late 20's, handsome, fair, sits on the bar stool. We see him WATCHING Reema. Reema doesn't see him yet. He gets up to approach her.

CU on Reema. She is startled at a stranger's hand as the hand places a drink on the table. She looks up to see Jag.

JAG

Mind if I join you?

REEMA

Actually, I'm saving these seats for my friends.

She points towards the dancing trio. They look at her. They like what they see. Jag lifts his drink to them. They give him a thumbs up.

Reema is a bit embarrassed.

JAG

Well, I guess they don't mind. I'm Jagjit...call me Jag.

He extends his hand. Reema shakes it.

REEMA

Reema. Just Reema.

JAG

Ok.

Awkward silence. Reema fidgets, finishes her drink. STIRS ice with straw.

(CONTINUED)

JAG

Can I get you another drink? What would you like?

REEMA

No, thanks, I'm fine. I mean, I'll get it myself.

JAG

Great, get me one while you're there.

REEMA

Sorry?

JAG

Just kidding. So Reema, what do you do?

REEMA

Why?

JAG

Just asking.

Reema ignores him. Eyes on the dance floor.

Jag shifts in his seat.

JAG (CONT'D)

I'm an engineer.

REEMA

That's good.

JAG

Right, so, maybe I'll go. I'm sorry, I thought you might have liked some company. Obviously not.

He's about to leave, when...

REEMA

No, please...I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to be rude. I've just had an awful day.

JAG

Alright. Shall we start again then? Hi, I'm Jagjit Singh, call me Jag.

(CONTINUED)

REEMA
(finally looking at him)
Reema Arora. You have an Indian name.

JAG
My dad's Indian. He came here when he was teenager. Mum's English. They were pen friends. Yeah, I know, it's sick.

REEMA
Wow, so romantic.

JAG
So where in India you from?

REEMA
Amritsar...it's in the North of India, a state called Pun--

JAG
Punjab, I know. My dad's from Patiala.

REEMA
You like Punjab?

JAG
Never been. Never really felt like it. Maybe I'm too much of an Aussie.

A beat.

JAG (CONT'D)
Now can I get you a drink?

REEMA
Sure. Lemon, lime and bitters please.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Reema, Jag, Felicity, John, Menaka walk towards parked cars, past OUTDOOR CAFES and PUBS.

We see Amarjit and his mates in one of the pubs they walk past. Amarjit thinks he saw someone familiar just then.

CU on Amarjit.

(CONTINUED)

MATE (V.O)
You alright?

AMARJIT
Yeah, thought I saw someone I knew.
Maybe I've had too much to drink.

He shakes his head and dismisses the possibility.

EXT. CAR PARK - NIGHT

Jag holds door of Felicity's car open for Reema to get in.
Real gentleman. Reema's enjoying the attention.

REEMA
Thanks, I'll see you then.

JAG
Where?

REEMA
Around?

JAG
Listen, will you give me your
number? I can vouch for me, I'm a
nice guy.

Reema smiles radiantly. Totally rapt.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Next morning. Reema's fast asleep. Her cell phone BEEPS. She
picks it up from the floor with a zombie's composure.

Screen displays ONE NEW MESSAGE. She opens it to read. CU on
phone screen: HOW ABOUT SOME COFFEE? JAG.

EXT. CIRCULAR QUAY - DAY

Glorious Sunday morning at Circular Quay. Outdoor cafes
infested with locals and tourists having brunch. Ferries and
jet skies on the water. Gorgeous. Reema and Jag lean on the
sea wall overlooking the Harbour Bridge. Opera House in the
background.

REEMA
This has to be the second most
beautiful place in the whole wide
world.

(CONTINUED)

JAG
Really? What's the first?

REEMA
The Golden Temple...

FLASH BACK TO:

EXT. GOLDEN TEMPLE - DAY

Pan view of the golden domes of the temple, water pond glistens from the sun's reflection. Pilgrims having holy baths, soft lullaby-like sound of holy *kirtan* songs.

REEMA (V.O)
It's where I am totally at peace with myself. Where I know I can do anything in life, achieve anything I want to. It's heaven on earth.

FLASH FORWARD TO:

BACK TO SCENE

JAG
Wow. You really miss it, huh?

REEMA
You'd have to see it to believe it.

JAG
Someday...maybe. Nothing against India or anything, but I don't think I'd be able to handle all the poverty stuff. I like things clean and neat and organized properly, know what I mean?...Guess not.

REEMA
You've been watching too much Discovery Channel. India's not just poverty you know.

JAG
I know, I know, I just need time, I guess.

Reema closes her eyes and breathes deeply, taking in the beauty of the moment. We see Jag looking at her. He draws closer. She feels his face very close to hers and opens her eyes. They kiss softly. Romantic kiss. Reema's first.

MONTAGE BEGINS

Music up.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Reema and Jag having a candlelight dinner.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

Lecture in progress as Reema reads message on cell phone and smiles.

EXT. ATM MACHINE QUEUE - DAY

Jag waits for his turn to get cash from machine. Types message on cellphone, smiling.

INT. MACDONALDS RESTAURANT - DAY

Reema on her shift, really busy serving customers. Suddenly looks up from the till and finds Jag in front of her as her next customer. They both smile.

INT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Reema in work uniform. Looks at clock, knock off time. Hurries out to...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

...Jag, waiting for her. They hug and kiss. Love is in the air.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Reema has a birthday hat on. She blows on the candles on the cake. Jag, Felicity, John and Menaka sing HAPPY BIRTHDAY and POP party poppers.

EXT. OFFICE - DAY

Yasmin blows a candle on a cupcake as she chats on her cellphone as we

SPLIT SCREEN WITH:

Back to Reema's birthday dinner scene...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Reema chats happily on her cell phone then passes it to Jag. We see the phone being passed from Jag to Menaka to John to Felicity...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Against the closed bedroom door, Jag kisses Reema on her neck. His hand finds the light switch and he FLICKS it OFF. Reema flicks it BACK ON. He turns it off again and she turns it on again. On, off, on, off, and then she opens the door and pushes him out, playfully. He obliges.

END MONTAGE

EXT. NARROW ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Reema comes out through the back door of Macdonalds Restaurant. She drags a heavy garbage bag behind. The store is now closed.

She places the bag in the oversized bin. Suddenly we hear screams in the background.

Reema dashes a few meters up the alleyway.

Behind a JUNK CAR lies PAUL, mid 30's, white, shaved head, tall. He moans with pain. He covers his eye with his palm as blood drips from his lips.

REEMA

Oh my God! Are you alright? Who did this to you?

PAUL

Help me...please.

Reema helps him up and slowly walks him towards Macdonalds.

INT. MACDONALDS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is deserted except for Reema and Paul. Reema hands Paul a glass of water.

PAUL

Thanks sweetie...you're a darling.

Reema's first encounter with a REALLY GAY guy. She smiles weakly.

REEMA

It's okay.

A beat.

REEMA (CONT'D)

What happened?

PAUL

Gay-bashers...happens all the time. I never thought I'd be a victim too.

REEMA

That's awful.

PAUL

This is nothing. I lost my ex-partner this way. A gang of teenage boys stabbed him.

REEMA

I'm so sorry.

PAUL

Yeah. It was years ago. Still freaks me out. But we're strong...my partner, my current partner, bless his heart. Yeah, him and I get really worried sometimes. It's an ugly world out there for us.

Reema pats him on the back. He hands her the empty cup.

REEMA

I'm so sorry but I'll have to lock up now or else I'll get into trouble.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Oh, honey, that's fine. Listen, lets do dinner sometime. My boyfriend and I love Indian food. I know this great place in Newtown.

REEMA

(non-convincingly)

Sure.

INT. SUPERMARKET AISLE - NIGHT

Reema and Jag lug a trolley full of groceries. Reema picks up items, ticks them off the list and Jag pushes trolley. They're enjoying this and laughing alot.

Reema finds Jag checking out the condoms section.

She looks at him, eyes wide.

REEMA

In your dreams, lover boy.

JAG

Oh come on! I was just checking out what was hot in the market that's all.

REEMA

Yeah right!

She turns her trolley around and then BANG! Trolley COLLIDES with another trolley.

Reema freezes. It's Paul sporting a black eye and bruised lips. With him is Amarjit. Amarjit lets go of the tray of EGGS as it CRASHES on the floor. Amarjit is out of the closet and how!

Paul recognizes Reema.

PAUL

Oh, hey! Ohmygawd...how are you gorgeous? Aims, this is the girl I was tellin you about. She so saved my life!

A beat.

Jag notices the STUNNED look on Amarjit's and Reema's faces. Their eyes are locked. Paul notices it too.

Finally,

(CONTINUED)

JAG
Do you guys know each other?

REEMA
Yeah. Jagjit, this is Amarjit...My.
Husband.

JAG
Husband?

PAUL
Husband? What the?

AMARJIT
(big nod)
Husband.

PAUL
(as gay as one can get)
Uh oh, this is not going to be
good. I need a vodka.

Jag stares hard at Reema.

JAG
Right. I guess I'll go then..

Jag starts walking away quickly. Reema still shocked.
Realizes what's happening. Runs after Jag.

REEMA
Jag. Wait. I can explain.

JAG
Too late.

He's gone.

Reema turns around fuming and gives Amarjit the filthiest
look.

INT. AMARJIT'S AND PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Seedy looking apartment. Erotic deco, very gay influenced
for sure.

Reema sits opposite Amarjit. Paul sits on a chair in the
middle almost like a mediator.

Awkward silence for few seconds and then...

(CONTINUED)

REEMA

You could have told me about you.

AMARJIT

You reckon? I couldn't even tell myself for a long while, Reema.

REEMA

Do your parents know?

AMARJIT

Are you kidding? They'll kill me, man!

REEMA

So, what now? What am I meant to tell MY parents?

PAUL

Get it nulled. It's easy. The courts can take care of it.

Amarjit and Reema both give Paul the "butt out, it's none of your business" look.

PAUL

Just a suggestion.

REEMA

Not such a great suggestion though.

Amarjit sighs, evidently upset and confused about the whole thing. Gets up and starts pacing the room.

AMARJIT

This isn't easy for me either goddammit! You wouldn't know what it's like being Indian and GAY at the same time.

REEMA

Look, I really don't care about you and your friend here. Just give me my money and I'll leave. I'll forget this ridiculous wedding ever happened.

AMARJIT

Hang on a second? You want me to pay you to get out of this marriage? Pathetic...why the fuck would I wanna do that?

(CONTINUED)

Now Reema gets up and STORMS towards Amarjit, in a fowl mood. She grabs him by his collar. Paul runs to save his lover boy.

PAUL

Jesus girlfriend! Relax okay. Just calm down.

REEMA

(hysterical)

No, you calm down. What did you guys do with my family's money, huh, go on a bloody carnival cruise to Rio?

PAUL

We wish!

AMARJIT

Shut up, Paul.

PAUL

What? She started it!

The trio calm down. Reema, still angry but non-attacking. Reema begins crying. Amarjit sees Reema wipe tears off her cheeks.

He moves closer and hugs her in a brotherly manner.

AMARJIT

I'm really sorry, Reema. I never meant to hurt you like this. I wish I had the courage to tell you the truth from the start.

REEMA

(sobbing now)

Just give me back our money. That's all I want.

Amarjit steps back, confused.

AMARJIT

What money? What are you going on about?

REEMA

The dowry money. Your parents demanded fifteen *lakhs* from my father. My Papa ji is left with nothing now.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
(frivolity at it's best)
Wow, how much is fifteen lax?

Amarjit frowns at Paul. But loves him too much to ignore him fully so:

AMARJIT
About sixty grand australian.

PAUL
Holy cow's shit! Oops sorry,
forgot, it's sacred. Sorry Krishna.

Paul does a Namaste to the ceiling then a cross across his chest.

AMARJIT
(looking at Reema)
Are you serious?

REEMA
Don't act like you don't know!
You've made enough of a fool of me
already, okay.

AMARJIT
I swear I had no clue. I don't know
what to say.

Amarjit's femininity hits him. He walks to the sofa, sits down and starts bawling. Reema and Paul try to calm him down.

AMARJIT
(amidst very girlie sobs)
I'm so fucked. This is all so
fucked.

PAUL
It's okay sweetheart, we'll get
through this.

Amarjit suddenly regains composure. Takes Reema's hands in his and looks straight into her eyes with conviction.

AMARJIT
I don't know how I'll do it, but I
promise to get you back your money.
I need you to trust me. Will you
trust me? Please?

Reema remains silent.

PAUL
(to Reema)
He won't let you down, we've been
together four years now. He's never
let me down.

Reema smiles at Paul's sincerity. She's beginning to trust them.

REEMA
I trust you.

A group hug.

EXT. BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Reema sits on a huge rock watching Felicity and a few other people surf. The golden beach stretches for miles. CU on Reema as she remains deep in thought. All is quiet but confusing in her world. Waves are calmer. The sounds of playful children and twitter of birds in the background.

Gradually it becomes darker and we see her get up and walk on the beach. Zoom back and show Felicity running up to join her.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Reema on her bed. Cell phone in hand, dials number.

INT. JAG'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jag lies on his bed with cell phone in his hand. Incoming call, REEMA is displayed on SCREEN. He doesn't answer. Instead, he switches it off. Turns the bedside lamp off.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A tear rolls down Reema's nose. Stares at her cell phone. Turns to her side, hugs a pillow, then turns the bedside lamp off.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Amarjit and Paul come out of a taxi. They stand outside Amarjit's parents' MANSION. Paul's jaws drop.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Tell me you'll inherit this when
they fall of the perch!

AMARJIT

(shaking his head in
disbelief)

Stop it, alright. This is fucking
scary. My bawls have shrunk to the
size of prunes, I swear.

Paul hyperventilates.

PAUL

Just breathe honey. You'll be fine.
I promise.

They give each other a quick hug.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mr Bhatia reads a book, sitting on a rocking chair. Mrs
Bhatia files her nails as she watches INDIAN CABLE TV. Door
bell RINGS.

Mr Bhatia looks at his wife. She doesn't move, eyes fixed on
the TV screen.

Door Bell RINGS again.

MRS BHATIA

(eyes on TV still)

For god's sake Punkaj...just get
the goddamn door, will you?

Mr Bhatia obliges though unwillingly.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mr Bhatia opens door. Sees Amarjit and Paul. He is shocked
and pleased at the same time.

MR BHATIA

Anjali...quick, look who's here!

INT. DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Amarjit, Paul, Mr & Mrs Bhatia at a barren dinner table. Two mugs of coffee in front of Amarjit and Paul.

MRS BHATIA

She was here. That bloody middle class whore...

MR BHATIA

Anjali. Please. He doesn't need that right now.

Mrs Bhatia winces but keeps quiet.

Paul is in awe of the expensive deco. Looks around alot.

Mrs Bhatia eyes him suspiciously.

Amarjit sips drink.

MR BHATIA

Beta, we sent her away. She was becoming too difficult. We told her there was nothing we could do. Do you want to meet her? Maybe see if you can work things out--

MRS BHATIA

Punkaj? What are you saying? Are you mad? There is no way she is fit enough to be our daughter-in-law. That filthy bitc--

Bang! Amarjit thumps his fist on the table. The other three jump in their seats from total shock. Paul jumps slightly higher.

AMARJIT

Enough is enough. You never told me you took money from her father. You guys are disgraceful--

MRS BHATIA

Watch your mouth--

AMARJIT

No, you watch your filthy mouth, mum! I met Reema. She's the nicest girl ever. I can't believe you guys would stoop so low and ask for sixty grand from her dad. Haven't you got enough already? All this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMARJIT (cont'd)
opulence shit you surround
yourselves with--

MR BHATIA
(trying to remain calm)
But beta, dowry is customary...it's
part of our culture.

AMARJIT
Oh BULLSHIT! If I don't get that
money back soon from you hypocrites
I'm taking you to court and that's
a promise.

MRS BHATIA
Don't talk to your father like
that, Amar.

AMARJIT
I'm sorry dad, it's not your fault.
She probably forced you into it.
Like she forced me to marry Reema.
All my life... ALL.MY.FUCKING.LIFE.
All she's done is FORCE me to do
things. Her way! Well, I tell you
what MOTHER, it's not happening
anymore. I'm with someone else.

MRS BHATIA
Someone else? Who?

MR BHATIA
It's okay, beta. We don't mind.
Your mother and I will accept her.
It doesn't matter if she's not
Indian.

MRS BHATIA
Punkaj! We haven't even met her.
God knows what background she's
from!

MR BHATIA
(to his wife)
I don't really care, Anjali. I just
want our son back home okay. He's
right, you've gone too far. Our son
is a grown man now not a Mummy's
Boy!

A beat. Mrs Bhatia looks away, defeated finally.

(CONTINUED)

AMARJIT

I've found someone whose great. I need your blessings. And we're getting married.

CU on Paul, he's jaws have dropped like never before. He's fanning himself with his girlie fingers unable to believe what Amarjit has just said. He didn't see the proposal coming.

AMARJIT

Mum, Dad, I can't believe I'm about to do this...I hope someday you'll understand...

Amarjit turns to face Paul

AMARJIT (CONT'D)

Paul...will you marry me?

IMMEDIATELY Paul plants a PASSIONATE KISS on Amarjit's lips.

The room SPINS for Mrs Bhatia...she can't believe this is happening. FAINTS on the table, flat on her face with a huge THUD.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Amarjit and Paul chased out of the mansion by Mr Bhatia.

MR BHATIA

Don't you ever show us your sick faces again you bloody homoos.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs Bhatia with a BANDAGED NOSE, sobs. She lies on the bed, head propped on a pillow.

Mr Bhatia paces the room.

MR BHATIA

Dressing him up in frilly frocks when he was little...it's all your fault. You've made a bloody poof out of him.

Mrs Bhatia erupts into MELODRAMATIC SOBS.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Reema on her way to bus stop after factory job. She stops, smiles and begins running.

Pan across. We now see Jag. Reema runs up to him and stops, reluctant at first. Jag then opens his arms and she grabs him into a tight hug.

JAG

I'm so sorry. Flic told me everything. You should have said something.

REEMA

I didn't want to lose you.

They kiss.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR - NIGHT

Reema and Jag at their usual romantic spot. Walking hand in hand in Circular Quay. The harbour is even more alive at night. A saxophone player plays a romantic tune.

JAG

I told my parents about you. They wanna meet you.

Reema undecided, happy but undecided.

JAG (CONT'D)

No pressure, whenever you're ready.

REEMA

It's not that. It's just...so much has happened in the last year that I haven't even had a moment to breathe. I really want to make something out of my life but I feel like every time I open the door it closes itself on me.

JAG

I'm still here, aren't I?

REEMA

I have a huge debt to repay, Jag. My biggest priority right now is to save every scrap of dollar I can.

Jag cups his hands around Reema's face.

(CONTINUED)

JAG
I love you.

They kiss.

Reema's cell phone RINGS. She answers.

REEMA
Hello?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT - GAY BAR - NIGHT

Amarjit and Paul drunk as hell. Both SCREAMING into the phone together.

AMARJIT & PAUL
Hey Reema! We're engaged! We're getting married!

Another DANCING gay couple boogie straight into them causing them all to fall down. All drunk and on the floor.

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR - NIGHT

Jag and Reema laugh at Paul's and Amarjit's news.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Mrs Bhatia, BRUISED NOSE, opens the letterbox. Just then a MAN IN A SUIT walks up to her.

MAN IN SUIT
Are you Mrs Anjali Bhatia?

MRS BHATIA
(not impressed)
I am. Who are you?

He hands Mrs Bhatia a sealed envelope.

MAN IN SUIT
Mrs Bhatia, this is a summons from the courts.

The man leaves.

Mrs Bhatia, bewildered, runs back inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs Bhatia heads to the phone. She holds a letter in her hand and mumbles.

MRS BHATIA
 Bastard...suing his own parents.
 Bloody homo. I'll show them. I'll
 show them all.

She picks up the phone, dials. A Beat.

MRS BHATIA
 Yes, hello. Can I have the number
 for the Immigration Doblne please?

MR BHATIA (V.O)
 Stop it, Anjali. Enough is enough.

Mrs Bhatia turns around and sees Mr Bhatia's fuming face.

MR BHATIA
 Haven't we done enough to ruin both
 their lives?

She grimaces then relents. Puts the phone down. Anger and defeat in her eyes.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

MR SINGH, mid 50's, modern and smart looking TURBANED man and his wife MRS SINGH, mid 50's, WHITE, posh, chat at the table.

We see Jag and Reema walking towards them. Jag holds Reema's hand to stop her from fidgeting.

JAG
 (whispering into her ear)
 You'll be fine. They'll love you,
 trust me.

We see Jag introduce his girl to his parents. Reema does the traditional NAMASTE.

Music up.

We see the four have a good time. Wine, food, coffees.

We see Reema and Jag exchange happy glances.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Reema on the phone. She smiles as she listens to

MRS ARORA (V.O)
We miss you so much beta. Can't you
forgive us and come home?

REEMA
Ma...I miss you all too. But I have
to do this.

MRS ARORA (V.O)
How much longer, beta? You're not
getting any younger--

REEMA
Ma. I'm not coming back yet
alright. I've applied for another
years extension.

MRS ARORA (V.O)
What? Another year?--

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. ARORA HOME - DAY

Mr Arora snatches the phone from Mrs Arora.

MR ARORA
Reema, beta, listen to your mother.
You've made your point. Please come
home, beta.

REEMA (V.O)
I can't Papa-ji. I'm sorry.

We hear the hang up BEEPS. Reema's gone.

MR ARORA
Beta...hello...hello?

Mr Arora slams the phone down in frustration.

INT. OFFICE - PUNJAB - DAY

Yasmin sits at her desk with her two women CLIENTS, also in
HIJAB HEAD COVER. She flips through some papers as she
counsels them.

(CONTINUED)

CU on one of the ladies, we see a BRUISE on her CHEEK and one arm in SLING.

Yasmin SIGHS then looks into the victim's eyes with concern.

YASMIN

Four years.

The ladies nod in unison.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

Why didn't you do something about it earlier? But anyway, I'm pleased and proud of you that you have finally taken action. Happiness is your birthright. Don't ever forget that.

WOMAN WITH BRUISE

Thank you Bibi ji.

YASMIN

No need. Now promise me that you'll never put yourself in this situation again. I've spoken with the refuge centre. They have a job for you in the kitchen. Zareen will take you there now. See if you'll like it.

Yasmin rises from her seat. The ladies also rise. She shows them out.

Yasmin walks back to her desk, looks at her watch, picks her handbag up.

YASMIN

(to her colleague)

I'm just going to get some lunch.
You need anything?

COLLEAGUE

(typing away)

No thanks. Have fun.

YASMIN

I'll try.

EXT. STREET - PUNJAB - DAY

Yasmin crosses the street with SHOPPING BAGS in hand. Her cell phone RINGS. She juggles with the bags to answer it. Just then we see a RICKSHAW drive carelessly past her and the SMALL CAR from oncoming traffic COMING STRAIGHT FOR YASMIN. She looks up terrified...as we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

HEAVILY INJURED Yasmin on a STRETCHER being wheeled away to ICU.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Reema at the security door. Jag waves from his car. She waves back, waits for car to leave then lets herself in the building.

INT - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Reema is alone. We see a NOTE on the FRIDGE that reads PASTA IN FRIDGE. HELP YOURSELF. XXX FLIC

Reema goes through the PILE of ENVELOPES on the table and randomly picks out a few addressed to her.

She walks towards answering machine, RIPPING one of the envelopes, pulls letter out. DOES NOT READ, PUTS LETTER on the table.

Turns answering machine on. She walks to the fridge and pours herself a glass of JUICE.

RAZIA (V.O)

Reema Beta, this is Aunty Razia,
Yasmin's ammi. Beta, I have some
bad news...

We do not hear the rest of the message. Dramatic score up as we see the GLASS slip from Reema's grip and SMASH on the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - DAY

Yasmin lies unconscious on the bed. A white BANDAGE stained with BLOOD SPOTS around her head. Wires, monitor, drips on and around her. Razia, Mrs Arora and Shilpa sit on plastic chairs around the bed.

Razia touches Yasmin's BANDAGED forehead and sobs silently. She looks up to the heavens...

RAZIA
(pleads)
Allah, please save my child.

MRS ARORA
Razia, she'll be fine. Have faith.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema's suitcase lies open on the bed. She haphazardly packs.

She hears Felicity enter the front door.

FELICITY (V.O)
Hey! I'm home!

REEMA
(urgency in her tone)
Oh hi...listen, I need to talk to you. You got a minute.

FELICITY (V.O)
Give me two seconds? Paul called. Him and Amar are joining us tonight. We still going, yeah?

Reema continues packing. Shoes, clothes, books.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Felicity strolls into kitchen, grabs a glass of water. Switches the stereo on and mimes along to the song. Notices envelopes on the table, picks them up and sorts them. Sees letter on table, picks it up and begins to read it.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Felicity enters, still reading the letter. Looks up and stares at Reema and her half packed luggage, biting her lips.

FELICITY
They're kicking you out?

REEMA
I have to go. My best friend's had an accident. She's in a coma, she needs me. I'll be back as soon as she's okay.

Felicity shakes head No.

FELICITY
You haven't read this, have you? The letter from Immigration? Says here your application for extension has been unsuccessful due to insufficient funds. Honey, they ARE kicking you out.

Reema sits on the bed with a loud THUD.

REEMA
Shit!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Reema, Felicity, John and Menaka sit around the coffee table. TV is on MUTE.

MENAKA
Surely, there's gotta be a way. Just tell them you need to leave for a couple of weeks till Yasmin's better. Then you'll come back.

REEMA
It's not that easy. I'll have to re-apply.

JOHN
This is crazy. But I guess you gotta do what's right for you.

FELICITY
Have you told Jag yet?

Reema shakes her head NO.

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly,

Intercom BUZZES. Felicity jumps to answer.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Amarjit and Paul at the security intercom.

AMARJIT & PAUL

It's us!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Amarjit and Paul look gloomily at others. Not happy with the new revelation about Reema.

Suddenly, Menaka gleams with hope...

MENAKA

Amar, you can save her! You guys are married right?..I mean legally married...just tell the Immigration people that. Bingo, she'll be fine to get a re-entry visa.

Amarjit shifts uncomfortably in his seat. The rest (except Paul and Reema) look at him with hope. Paul stares at Amarjit.

AMARJIT

Well. Actually Reema, it's just that...

REEMA

It's okay, Amar. I don't expect you to...

PAUL

(cuts in)

We would if we could, you know that right?

Reema nods. Felicity, Menaka and John exchange looks.

The intercom BUZZES again.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Reema and Jag stand close together, leaning on the balcony handrails.

JAG
Tomorrow morning? That's too soon.

REEMA
She's my best friend, Jag. She needs me.

JAG
What about us? They won't let you back in. It'll be ages before you get a new visa.

Reema looks at him, bites her lip, fights back tears. We see a glint of it in her eyes. Then she SHRUGS. He looks away.

JAG
(still not looking at her)
Mum and dad really liked you.

REEMA
I really liked them too.

A beat. She walks around to his other side where they can be face to face. She looks into his eyes.

REEMA
Come with me.

Jag closes both his eyes and holds.

JAG
I can't.

REEMA
Why not? I want my parents to meet you too. But more than that I want you to appreciate where I come from.

JAG
(snaps)
I can't, alright! I'm not cut out for it.

Reema looks away. A tear rolls down her cheek.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

JAG

Look I'm sorry. I've gotta go. I guess I'll see you around...when you get back...maybe.

Reema inhales and looks at the moon above the dark ocean. Helpless.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jag is about to get into his car when

AMARJIT (V.O)

Jag! Wait!

Jag turns around and sees Amarjit running towards him.

He tries to ignore him and pushes his car keys into the keyhole.

AMARJIT

Look, man, I know you're all pissed off with me for screwing Reema's life like this but it's not like I had a choice.

JAG

(furious)

Like hell you didn't.

AMARJIT

I'll say it a thousand times if I have to and I'll mean it each time. Mate, please believe me...I'm really sorry, okay. I never knew she'd turn up in Sydney like this. I never knew I'd have the guts to admit about Paul to anyone--but you can't punish Reema for all this, man, it's not her fault.

JAG

It's none of your business.

AMARJIT

(pleading)

Be a man, Jag. Do the right thing.

JAG

What the fuck?...know what? In case you haven't noticed, I'm not the poof here.

(CONTINUED)

A beat. They finally see eye to eye.

AMARJIT

(truly hurt)

At least I've got the balls to be
proud of who and what I am.

Amarjit turns around and storms off towards Reema's apartment. Jag KICKS his car. hates how rude he was to Amarjit.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark except for the street light pouring through the glass windows. We see Jag KICK BOXING.

AGGRESSIVE kicks, drops of sweat falling from his wet hair.

Pan across to Mr Singh in his night pyjamas, un-turbaned, hair tied back in a pony tail. He watches his son, shocked.

EXT. POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Jag and Mr Singh sit by the GLEAMING, CLEAR, BLUE swimming pool. They hold a CAN of BEER each. A typical father-son late-night chat.

MR SINGH

Did I ever tell you your mother
almost left me?

Jag, surprised, looks at his father and shakes his head NO.

Mr Singh nods, reaffirming.

MR SINGH

Yes. Your grandfather sent me a telegram saying he'd found a wife for me. He wanted me to fly back to Punjab as soon as I could. It was all arranged.

JAG

Are you serious?

A beat.

MR SINGH

Maggie saw me in my weakest state. She'd traveled all the way from England to be with me and here I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR SINGH (cont'd)
was, didn't even have the guts to
tell my parents that I was in love
with her. That I wanted to marry
her.

A beat. They sip their beers.

JAG
What happened?

MR SINGH
She asked me to close my eyes and
look within...to find the
truth...to find happiness. She was
right because every time I closed
my eyes I could hear my father's
threats but all I could see was
Maggie's eyes. But it was too late.
Your mother was on the plane to
Birmingham already. I had to take
an emergency leave from work and
catch the next flight out.

He chuckles at the memory.

MR SINGH (CONT'D)
Women love that sort of thing.

JAG
How come you guys never told me all
this?

MR SINGH
Everything reveals itself in time,
my son. Don't give her up. She's a
decent girl.

JAG
Maybe I'm not as strong as you dad.

MR SINGH
Maybe you're yet to see how strong
you really are.

They sip their beers, staring at the still water.

EXT. PARK BENCH - NIGHT

Pitch dark and dead silence as we see a figure seated on the bench. He wears an anorak with its HOOD covering his head.

We hear the RUSTLE OF LEAVES and someone WALKING. Another figure approaches the bench. Pull in slowly to reveal Amarjit and Mr Bhatia.

AMARJIT

What is it?

MR BHATIA

No need to be so rude. I'm still your father.

AMARJIT

Well, what is it...DAD?

A beat.

MR BHATIA

Amar, this isn't how I planned your life to have taken its course.

AMARJIT

(sarcastically)

Sorry to disappoint you, DAD, but if you're here to give me another lecture on how I should be living MY life then honestly you're waasting your time. You'd rather be home polishing mum's nails.

CU on Mr Bhatia. He is hurt. A beat.

AMARJIT (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry, Dad, I didn't mean it that way--

MR BHATIA

I owe you an apology my son. It's just that I never thought something like this could ever happen in my own home...to my own boy.

AMARJIT

Dad, it's not your fault, okay. It's no one's fault. Things happen and we have to accept it and move on with life, you know. We can't force something or someone to change. That's not how it's supposed to work.

(CONTINUED)

MR BHATIA
I guess you're right.

A beat.

Mr Bhatia takes a deep breath and attempts to cheer up. He takes an ENVELOPE out of his pocket and gives it to Amarjit.

MR BHATIA (CONT'D)
Here, take this. It's the least I can do to make up to you.

AMARJIT
Dad, what's this?

He begins to open the envelope but Mr Bhatia stops him.

MR BHATIA
Not here son...open it at home.
It's a little something for you
and...and Paul.

A long beat.

AMARJIT
Do you hate me Dad?

MR BHATIA
I love you more than you can ever
imagine, my son.

Suddenly Amarjit breaks into very girlie sobs and hugs his father.

EXT. STREET - DAY

John and Menaka load the boot of a taxi with Reema's luggage.

INT. REEMA'S ROOM - DAY

Reema looks around her room with nostalgia.

She rings Jag's number on her cell phone. No answer, we hear the phone RING OUT.

Felicity walks in with a wrapped present. She gives it to Reema.

(CONTINUED)

FELICITY
Go on. Open it.

REEMA
You didn't have to.

FELICITY
I wanted to.

It's a wet suit. The card reads: FOR WHEN YOU COME
BACK...XXX FLIC

FELICITY
Don't keep us waiting for too long.

Reema nods. The girls smile and hug. Tears.

We hear the taxi horn honking and Menaka yelling.

MENAKA (V.O)
Today would be good!

EXT. STREET - DAY

The four of them get in the taxi. Reema gets in last, all
the while her eyes search for Jag.

As the taxi leaves we see Jag pull over outside Reema's
apartment. He buzzes the intercom, no answer. Panic sets.

Music up.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

We see the taxi enter the freeway, on its way to the
airport. Pan across a fair way behind is Jag's car stuck in
traffic.

EXT. AIRPORT KERBSIDE - DAY

Reema fishes for her passport etc while we see the others
lugging her bags onto the trolley.

EXT. HIGHWAY TOLL GATES - DAY

Jag pulls his cell phone out of his pocket. He holds the
cell phone in the same hand that he uses to put coins into
the toll machine. Accidentally DROPS his phone. He sees his
phone break into pieces.

Drivers behind him are furious and honking at him to get on with it.

INT. AIRPORT CHECK IN - DAY

Reema and the others hurry to the check in counter.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jag's close to the airport. We see planes in the far background. Just then,

We hear a POLICE SIREN. Jag checks his rear view mirror. Yup, the cops are behind him.

We see him mouth FUCK!

He pulls over.

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE - DAY

Reema hugs Felicity, John and Menaka. She holds back tears. So do the others.

JOHN

You hang in there mate. We'll come visit you.

MENAKA

Yup, we sure will. Take care Reems.

FELICITY

(with a big bear hug)
Oh, I'll miss you so much.

REEMA

I'll miss you guys too. Don't forget me.

FELICITY

Are you crazy...course we won't.

She's about to go through the Passenger Only door when we hear YELLING. They all turn to see.

We see Amarjit and Paul running towards them, out of breath.

Amarjit hugs Reema tightly. Reema is elated to see them.

(CONTINUED)

AMARJIT

Oh, thank GOD! Thought we missed you.

PAUL

(a tad melodramatic)

Darling! I can't believe you're actually going.

Amarjit takes an ENVELOPE out of his pocket and hands it to Reema.

Reema opens it. It's got a BANK CHEQUE for \$60000.

REEMA

Amar...this? Ohmygawd, I don't know what to say.

AMARJIT

(suddenly all macho)

It's the least I can do for you babe. You're the best wife anyone could ever ask for and I've been a prick to you all along.

REEMA

This is unbelievable. I don't know how to thank you...

AMARJIT

No! Thank you, silly.

They hug tightly.

AMARJIT (CONT'D)

(back to his gayism)

I'll always be here for you.

PAUL

(joins in for good measure)

Yes, darling. You've always got us. You're like a li'l sister to us.

Amarjit and Reema give Paul 'THE LOOK', then they all break into a giggle.

They all wave Reema goodbye as we see Reema walk through the PASSENGER ONLY entrance to customs check.

Paul hugs Amarjit now and starts BAWLING his eyes out.

EXT. AIRPORT KERBSIDE - DAY

The police car drops Jag outside the airport. He hugs the officers.

JAG
Thanks guys.

POLICE OFFICER
Get out of here lover boy, before
we change our mind.

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE - DAY

Jag sprints through the crowd of people. He is out of breath when he finally reaches Felicity and the others. Amarjit sees him first.

AMARJIT
Dude, your timing sucks, man.

Jag drops on his knees, out of breath.

JAG
Shit!

INT. PLANE - DAY

Reema leans back on her seat, sighs, looks out the window as the aircraft TAXIS. We hear the flight attendant welcoming people on board.

Reema glances at the person sitting next to her, a MIDDLE-AGED MAN, and smiles weakly. Reema turns back to her window gazing.

We see a flight attendant kneel next to this passenger and tell him something. We see him nod, unbuckle his safety belt, get up and leave.

Reema continues looking out.

The seat next to her becomes occupied again. Stay CU on Reema, gazing out.

JAG (V.O)
So I thought what the hell...if I
get put off by the poverty thing,
I'll just get on the next flight to
Dubai or something.

(CONTINUED)

We see Reema's eyes widen as she recognizes the voice. She whirls around in her seat, ELATED. They kiss passionately as we ZOOM BACK.

End credits roll in.

Music up.

MONTAGE BEGINS

INT. HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - DAY

Yasmin propped on a pillow. Reema feeds her soup, Jag sits close. They laugh and chat.

EXT. GOLDEN TEMPLE - DAY

Reema and Jag have a holy dip in the temple pool.

INT. SIKH TEMPLE - DAY

Reema and Jag, in their wedding outfits, encircle the HOLY GRANTH. Parents and relatives from both sides look on.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A year later in Sydney.

Amarjit and Paul getting married on the beach.

Amarjit in a skimpy WHITE LYCRA BIKE SHORTS, frangipani GARLAND around his neck.

Paul wears a hot skimpy PINK LYCRA UNDERWEAR, bikini cut. GARLAND around his neck.

Reema, now PREGNANT, Jag, John, Felicity and Menaka with NEW BOYFRIEND all raise champagne glasses in the air to toast the newly married couple.

THE END

FADE OUT

PRINCESS REINEETA LAKSHMAN ©