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**MEANTIME**

by

**Nabeela Sheikh**

**A Creative Writing Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research  
through the Department of English and Creative Writing  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts at the  
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**Windsor, Ontario, Canada**

**1997**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### DALIAH

A young woman of Pakistani descent, in her last year of a Chemistry B.Sc. She is about 5'8" or taller with the thick-heeled shoes she often wears. She wears her dark hair long, and is attractive. A little divorced from reality, she is confused as to whether what she wants from life is what her parents want, or what North American pop culture tells her she wants.

### LAYLA

A young woman of mixed heritage: her father is Pakistani while her mother is British. Also studying towards an undergraduate degree, she is a little more balanced than Daliah, since her father does not expect her to adhere to the norms of Pakistani-Canadians. She is of average height, with light-coloured hair and fair skin.

### NAVEED

A young man of Pakistani descent, about 5'6" or 5'7". His hair is shaped to his head, in an unfashionable style. He has a thin frame, and wears clothes that fit him awkwardly. He does not wear the baggy-type style that most of the other boys do. He has a small chin, which makes his face seem to point downwards. He has a serious expression on his face most times, and when he does laugh, he seems to have to force it. Most of his time is spent in libraries.

### YUSUF

A young man of Pakistani descent, 5'7" or taller with an average or better build. He is not as serious about school as the other characters are, and has taken 2-3 years off to travel. He is not as affected by the Pakistani lifestyle, having been brought up in a household that was not strict or concerned with Pakistani culture. Perhaps as a result, he is more in tune with contemporary style: knowing how to dress, the current 'lingo', how to be 'cool'. All of these things create an aura of relaxed confidence; he is laid-back and easygoing.

### OMAR

The son of Auntie Salma. He is into changing his appearance very often, and usually attracts attention however he looks. His hair colour is extreme (green, orange, etc.) and the style changes every once in a while. He gets his lip pierced during the course of the play. He is younger than the others, in First Year at university. He likes to aggravate people, mostly girls, since he has been taught that having been born a male makes him instantly superior. He probably does not believe this anymore, but he enjoys having a little fun at the expense of other people.

#### DALIAH'S MOTHER

A short woman around 45 with fair skin and short black hair. She has about ten extra pounds on her, giving her face a certain softness, but when she is angry, the creases in her face stand out. She concerns herself with what others think. Though she and Daliah's father have been living in Canada for the last 25 years, she still keeps Pakistani values and the Islamic religion.

#### DALIAH'S FATHER

A lot older than his wife, Daliah's father is around 60. He is of medium to dark colouring, slim, and only a tiny bit taller than his wife. He is a little too optimistic and tends to draw out his sentences, taking a long time to tell a short story.

#### NAVEED'S MOTHER

A thin, dried-out, 45 year-old woman wearing big glasses. Her shoulder-length hair is black with a lot of white showing through and the contrast is harsh. Upon meeting Daliah, she is very jumpy, probably because she is afraid her son will say something wrong, or that Daliah will reject him as a future husband and hurt her feelings. Nevertheless, she is very ill-at-ease at times and, when she isn't, her manner towards Daliah is critical and superior. When she speaks, even in English, it is sometimes difficult to make out what she is saying because of her strong accent.

#### NAVEED'S FATHER

An easy-going, heavy-set Pakistani man, around 55, a little too disinterested in the idea of his son's marriage. He seems, at first, eager, since he is over-dressed for the occasion, but the expression on his face and his overall lack of enthusiasm suggest that someone else picked out his clothing.

#### AUNTIE SALMA

A very large woman, a little younger than Daliah's mother, always dressed in heavily adorned clothing and matching shoes and purse. Her hair is shoulder length, big and hair-sprayed, as if she has just been to the salon. Her make-up is so heavy, she looks like a doll. Her eyebrows give her away: they wiggle and dart about to reveal what she's thinking.

#### NADIR

An attractive man, of Pakistani heritage, in his early to mid-twenties. He is the antithesis of the proper young boys Daliah's parents arrange for her to meet, which is probably part of the reason she began a relationship with him in the first place. Nadir assumes that a certain morality will kick in once he enters into the institute of marriage but, until that time, he's intent on having a good time.

#### JANE

A woman, in her twenties, who shares an apartment with Daliah. She is a plain girl, with shoulder-length brown hair and fair skin. She has a thin frame and long limbs. She is well-meaning, though a little too sensitive.

#### ARABIC WOMAN

A woman in her late-twenties who lives in Daliah's apartment building. She is not trendy, wearing clothes that are plain and only made out of lightly-coloured material. Her hair is pulled back in a bun. She is usually pale, very thin and appears fragile.

#### CHRISTINE

Nadir's girlfriend. A cute, vibrant woman with dark curly hair to the shoulder and dark eyes. She is in her early twenties and possibly of European background.

#### TALL BOY

A taller-than-average student who shares a house with Naveed but doesn't actually know him very well.

#### SHORT BOY

A shorter-than-average student who lives in the same house as Naveed though he doesn't seem to know much about him.

#### LIBRARIAN

A fragile-looking woman in her mid-thirties who becomes fed up with having to deal with stressed-out students.

#### BRIDE

An average-looking Pakistani bride in her mid-twenties. She is dressed in traditional Pakistani wedding attire. She appears content and composed.

#### YOUNG MAN

A tall, gaunt-looking twentysomething man with fair colouring. At the time we meet him, he has been drinking and is a little zoned out.

#### GUY

A fair-skinned, light-haired man in his early to mid-twenties. He used to go to high school with Yusuf.

EXT. HOTEL. NIGHT.

A CLOSE-UP ON A GREEN CLOTH-COVERED BOOK. A PAKISTANI DANCE MIX, SET TO A SIMILAR BEAT AS CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DANCE MIXES, PLAYS LOUDLY, REVERBERATING AS IF ITS SOURCE IS SOMEWHERE BEHIND A SET OF WALLS. THE CAMERA PULLS BACK GRADUALLY TO REVEAL THAT THE BOOK IS BEING GINGERLY HELD OVER A DOORWAY BY A SMILING ELDERLY PAKISTANI MAN. THE DOOR, COVERED WITH A WHITE TRELIS IN THE SHAPE OF A DOORWAY, CURVED AT THE TOP, AND DECORATED WITH WHITE AND RED ROSES AND GOLD STREAMERS, OPENS UP TO A LARGE, RED-CARPETED HALLWAY FILLED WITH PEOPLE. THERE IS THE GENERAL NOISE OF A CROWD, WHICH WE BEGIN TO SEE AS THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO PAN DOWN. WE SEE A YOUNG PAKISTANI COUPLE BOWING THEIR HEADS AS THEY WALK THROUGH THE DOORWAY TOWARDS US TO ACCOMMODATE THE ELDERLY MAN AS HE REACHES UP WITH GREAT EFFORT TO HOLD THE BOOK ABOVE THEIR HEADS. THE BRIDE WEARS A TRADITIONAL DRESS IN GOLD AND CREAM AND THE GROOM WEARS A BLACK TUXEDO; BOTH HAVE GARLANDS OF FLOWERS AROUND THEIR NECKS AS WELL AS GARLANDS OF MONEY (THE BILLS ARE FOLDED UP INTO GEOMETRICAL SHAPES AND FANS AND THREADED THROUGH WITH STRING). JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO REACH US, THE COUPLE MOVES QUICKLY PAST TO THE LEFT OF US. THE CHEERING CROWD MOVES IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION TO FOLLOW THE COUPLE; MOST OF THEM ARE EITHER VERY HAPPY OR CRYING, BUT ALL THROW ROSE PETALS AND RICE.

THE CAMERA ALLOWS THE GENERAL FLOW OF PEOPLE TO MOVE PAST FOR A MOMENT; THEN, IT SLOWLY TURNS LEFT AND BEGINS TO FOLLOW THE CROWD'S MOVEMENT. AFTER A SECOND, WE FOCUS IN ON THE BACK OF A WOMAN'S HEAD. HER DARK HAIR IS PULLED BACK FROM HER FACE AND DONE UP IN AN ELABORATE 'DO', INTRICATELY CURLED AND SHAPED ON TOP OF HER HEAD. SHE IS THROWING ROSE PETALS AHEAD OF HER, TOWARDS THE COUPLE, AS WE MOVE TO HER LEFT AND MOVE UP BEHIND THE, PERHAPS, THIRTYISH WOMAN. WE SEE MORE AND MORE OF HER PRETTY OLIVE-SKINNED, BUT HEAVILY MADE-UP FACE; FIRST HER PROFILE, THEN STRAIGHT ON AS WE MOVE DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HER AND BEGIN TO PULL AWAY TO A LONG SHOT OF HER. SHE STANDS A GOOD SIX INCHES OVER MOST OF THE PEOPLE, YOUNG AND OLD, WHO ARE CROWDING HER FROM ALL DIRECTIONS, THE TOP PART OF HER TRADITIONAL OUTFIT IS A LONG SLIM-FITTING 'SHIRT' THAT FALLS BELOW HER KNEES. IT IS MADE OF A SILVER AND ROYAL BLUE MATERIAL, DECORATED WITH SHINY BROCADE, WITH SLITS UP THE SIDES TO HER THIGHS. THE SKIRT UNDERNEATH IS A BIG POUF OF BLUE FRENCH CHIFFON; THE BLUE PIPING THAT LINES THE BOTTOM OF THE SKIRT GRAZES THE FLOOR. SHE SEEMS IRRITATED BY THE CROWD. WE MOVE UP PAST HER FACE TO A HIGH-ANGLE SHOT THAT CONTINUES TO PULL BACK, BRINGING IN MORE AND MORE OF THE LARGE CROWD THAT SPILLS ONTO THE SIDEWALK AS THEY FOLLOW THE BRIDE AND GROOM TO THEIR LIMO. THE BRIDE TURNS FROM THE OPEN CAR DOOR, PREPARING TO THROW HER BOUQUET. A LONG SHOT OF THE WOMAN IN BLUE AS SHE CAREFULLY MAKES HER WAY DOWN THE STEPS, LOOKING DOWN AT HER FEET AND HOLDING THE SKIRT OF HER DRESS SO THAT SHE WON'T TRIP. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM AS THE BRIDE THROWS HER BOUQUET AND THE CROWD YELLS OUT. A LONG SHOT OF THE WOMAN IN

BLUE, WATCHING HER FEET, OBLIVIOUS, AS THE BOUQUET FLIES OVER HER HEAD AND LANDS SOMEWHERE CLOSE BEHIND HER. SHE REACHES THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS AND EXHALES AS SHE LOOKS UP. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE BRIDE AS SHE SAYS GOODBYE TO EVERYONE, HUGGING SOME OF THE PEOPLE NEAREST HER. SHE CATCHES SIGHT OF THE WOMAN IN BLUE.

BRIDE

Daliah!

DALIAH, THE WOMAN IN BLUE, ENTERS THE PICTURE AND THE BRIDE HUGS HER. A CLOSE-UP OF DALIAH.

DALIAH

I'm really--(as if the words are getting stuck)--very happy for you.

A CLOSE-UP OF THE BRIDE.

BRIDE

(knowingly)

Just wait! It'll be your turn next!

A CLOSE-UP OF DALIAH: A HALF-HEARTED SMILE THAT MAKES DALIAH LOOK AS IF SHE'S GOING TO BE SICK. THERE IS A SUDDEN SURGING FORWARD OF THE CROWD SURROUNDING HER AS THE COUPLE GET INTO THE LIMO. THE CAMERA PULLS UP AS DALIAH MOVES AWAY FROM THE CROWD TO THE SIDE WHERE THERE IS AN EMPTY SPOT ON THE CURB. FROM DALIAH'S PERSPECTIVE, WE SEE THE LIMO DRIVE OFF AMID CHEERS AND ROSE PETALS. A LONG PROFILE SHOT OF DALIAH STANDING IN THE STREET: SHE PUTS HER HANDS ON HER HIPS AS SHE WATCHES THE LIMO, ONE FOOT RESTING ON THE CURB. AFTER ONE BLOCK, THE LIMO SUDDENLY TURNS A CORNER; THE CHEERING WANES AND THE CROWD DISPERSES IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH.

DALIAH

(critically, as she crosses her arms)

So. (pause) Another one bites the dust.

LAYLA

(off-screen)

Daliah!

DALIAH LOOKS TO HER RIGHT, TOWARDS THE STEPS. A LONG SHOT OF A FAIR-SKINNED GIRL WITH SHOULDER-LENGTH BROWN HAIR, HELD UP ON ONE SIDE WITH A CHILD'S BARRETTE, A TRENDY FASHION. SHE IS IN HER EARLY TWENTIES AND WEARS A PINK AND GOLD PAKISTANI OUTFIT. A

HIGH-ANGLE VIEW OF THE GIRL AS SHE STRUGGLES DOWN THE STEPS WITH HER DRESS, GOES INTO THE STREET, GRABS DALIAH'S ARM AND PULLS HER ACROSS THE BOTTOM LEFT HAND CORNER OF THE SCREEN, LEAVING THE EMPTY STREET.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF BOTH GIRLS WALKING UP THE CONCRETE STEPS AS QUICKLY AS THEY CAN MANAGE, HOLDING THEIR SKIRTS UP. OTHER PEOPLE BRUSH PAST THE GIRLS ON THEIR WAY BACK INTO THE HALL. THE GIRLS LOOK UP FROM THE STEPS, IRRITATED, FROM TIME TO TIME AS THE END OF A WOMAN'S LONG SCARF FLIES IN THEIR FACES, OR SOMEBODY BUMPS INTO THEM OR STEPS ON THEIR TOES. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH. WE REALIZE THAT DALIAH IS NOT AS OLD AS WE MIGHT HAVE FIRST THOUGHT; HER MAKE-UP AND CLOTHING MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO TELL THAT SHE'S THE SAME AGE AS LAYLA.

DALIAH

Hey, you missed the big send-off.

LAYLA

I was with my mom. She doesn't know anyone here. Some old ladies were playing 'one of these things is not like the others' with the white woman again and since my dad was sitting way over on the men's side, I thought I'd stay with her for a while.

DALIAH

Oh, stop complaining! At least when people ask you why you can't speak Urdu you can say 'Look, I'm only *half-Pakistani!*' You have the best excuse! Biology!

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE LISTENS TO LAYLA.

LAYLA

(off-screen)

Listen, Daliah, some guy's got a serious vendetta against you or something! I just heard him talking about how he saw you out at some club last weekend, dancing on top of the bar! And if I heard it, I don't know who else might have!

A PAUSE; A SLIGHT HINT OF ANGRY PANIC IN DALIAH'S FACE. THE MUSIC IS GRADUALLY GETTING LOUDER AS THEY NEAR THE TOP OF THE STEPS.



LAYLA

(continuing)

If it gets around, especially here... that's not good. Your mother would kill you.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF LAYLA AS SHE AWAITS A RESPONSE FROM DALIAH.

DALIAH

Who's this guy you're talking about?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, TURNING HER HEAD AS IF LAYLA IS POINTING THE BOY OUT. A LONG SHOT OF TWO TEENAGED PAKISTANI BOYS STANDING BY THE DOORS; BOTH ARE DRESSED IN DARK-COLOURED SUITS BUT THE ONE ON THE RIGHT WEARS AN ELECTRIC GREEN TIE, A STUD IN HIS EAR, AND A SKUNK-LIKE BLONDE STREAK IN HIS BLACK HAIR.

LAYLA

(off-screen)

It's the one with the green tie.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH LOOKING BACK TOWARDS THE CAMERA; HER FACE CARRIES A NOTE OF SERIOUSNESS. A SECOND LATER, HER EYES WIDEN AND HER MOUTH OPENS SLIGHTLY IN DISTASTE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF SALMA, A LARGE PAKISTANI WOMAN IN HER EARLY FORTIES WITH AUBURN HAIR, WEARING A VELVET AMBER-COLOURED PAKISTANI SUIT WITH HEAVY GOLD WORK LINING THE NECK AND WRISTS. A SHEER SCARF IS DRAPED AROUND HER SHOULDERS. HER LOUD RED LIPS AND ROUGED CHEEKS GIVE HER A BRASH APPEARANCE.

SALMA

Daliah!

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, FORCING A SMILE.

DALIAH

Assalamualaikum, Auntie. How are you?

SALMA

(off-screen)

Daliah, when we greet an Auntie, we greet them properly!

WE SEE THE BACK OF SALMA'S HAIRDO AS SHE MOVES BETWEEN DALIAH AND US. WE SEE DALIAH'S FACE AS SALMA KISSES HER THREE TIMES, ALTERNATING CHEEKS. DALIAH FORCES A SMILE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF SALMA AS SHE PULLS AWAY, SMILING MECHANICALLY. HER SCARF IS MADE OUT OF SUCH LIGHT MATERIAL THAT IT CATCHES ONTO THE METALLIC PRINT ON DALIAH'S SHOULDER WITHOUT DALIAH OR SALMA NOTICING.

SALMA  
(smugly)

*Na sumuj lurki.*

SUB-TITLE ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN: 'Immature girl.'  
AS IF AN AFTERTHOUGHT, SALMA REACHES A HAND OUT TOWARDS US; A  
CLOSE-UP SHOT AS THE HAND SLAPS DALIAH NOT-SO-LIGHTLY ON THE  
CHEEK AND SHAKES HER HEAD AS IF SHE'S DISAPPOINTED. SHE TURNS TO  
SCRUTINIZE LAYLA.

DALIAH

Uh, Auntie, this is Layla. She goes to Mac  
with me.

AS SALMA TURNS, HER GAUZY SCARF BECOMES TAUT AS SOME THREADS FROM  
IT CLING TO DALIAH. DALIAH OBSERVES THIS WITH EXAGGERATED PANIC.

SALMA

(to Layla,  
I saw you inside. That lady you were sitting  
with--

LAYLA

She's my mother.

SALMA

Uh-huh. (leading) I didn't see your father.

LAYLA

He's here too. His name's Tariq Ahmed.

SALMA

Ahh. (nodding as if suddenly 'getting it';  
she looks Layla up and down condescendingly  
and then turns and leaves without further  
comment)

Daliah

(to Salma's back,  
as if she can hear)

. Charming woman. (she looks at Layla and then  
says, sarcastically) Hard to believe *that's*  
green-tie's mother.

LAYLA

(dryly)

Shocking. I still laugh when I hear you call these people aunties. You sound like a little girl.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE RAISES A HAND, INDICATING THE ENTIRE CROWD.

DALIAH

No blood relatives in Canada have I, other than my parents, yet I get to call all these people 'uncles' and 'aunties' on account of my brown-ness.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH TRYING TO BRUSH AWAY THE THREADS FROM HER CLOTHES. PULL OUT AS SHE AND LAYLA WALK TOWARDS THE DOOR TO GO BACK INSIDE. CLOSE-UP ON DALIAH'S FACE, LOOKING EXASPERATED.

DALIAH

Anyway, that guy, his name's Omar. He bought his first skateboard last year and his lifelong ambition is to one day be a true badass. I think he was supposed to do undergrad at Mac this year, but I haven't noticed him. Anyway, (thrusting a thumb in the direction of Omar and shaking her head decisively) on one hand, I say, who on earth would believe *him*, but then, when is the source ever scrutinized? I don't like his mother; she's so catty, that Salma. She asked for me last year, for her older son. (she looks at Layla) That means she wanted her son and I to get together. You can't just arrange a marriage quick and easy like that. (pause) Ha, that's funny. (ironically) What am I saying, of course you can!

A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA AND DALIAH, STOPPING IN FRONT OF THE TRELIS'D DOORWAY. WE CAN SEE THE CELEBRATIONS CONTINUING WITHIN THE HALL.

LAYLA

(concerned)

Should you be worried?

A SIDE CLOSE-UP OF DALIAH. SHE LOOKS AT US AS SHE RESPONDS. SOMETHING OFF-CAMERA CATCHES HER EYE. A LONG SHOT OF OMAR; HE LOOKS A LITTLE SMUG WHEN HE REALIZES THAT DALIAH IS LOOKING AT HIM. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH: THE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE IS ONE

OF PURE ANIMOSITY.

DALIAH

(to Layla, trying  
to be convincing)

Hey. One believes what one chooses to  
believe.

A SIDE CLOSE-UP OF LAYLA AS SHE GIVES DALIAH A SUPPORTIVE NOD AND WALKS THROUGH THE DOORWAY. A LONG SHOT FROM INSIDE THE BUILDING OF DALIAH AS SHE STANDS BEFORE THE DOORWAY. SHE TRIES TO SMILE AT THE PEOPLE IN THE HALLWAY BUT IT COMES ACROSS AS AN EXPRESSION OF WEARINESS AND PERSEVERANCE; SHE MOVES FORWARD. THE TRADITIONAL MUSIC HITS A CRESCENDO. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF THE BOTTOM OF HER SKIRT: SHE PULLS IT UP TO WALK, AND WE SEE THE FRONT OF A BLACK LEATHER, CHUNKY-SOLED SHOE, WHICH HAS BEEN MOSTLY HIDDEN FROM VIEW BY THE LONG SKIRT.

INT. ON-CAMPUS BAR. NIGHT.

THE PAKISTANI DANCE MUSIC SWITCHES TO CONTEMPORARY ALTERNATIVE ROCK, RADIOHEAD'S 'FAKE PLASTIC TREES'. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF THE SAME SHOE, WEDGED UP AGAINST A BAR STOOL.

WE PULL AWAY FROM THE SHOE TO REVEAL DALIAH, IN BLACK JEANS AND BLACK SLIM-FITTING BLOUSE, SITTING ON THE STOOL AND LEANING BACK AGAINST THE BAR.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I wish I could say I lead a double-life. It would be so much easier then. Having a double-life somehow sounds so productive, busy.

WE BEGIN MOVING FROM THE FAR BACK CORNER THROUGH THE SMALL CLUB, OBSERVING DALIAH. MOST OF THE PEOPLE ARE IN THEIR TWENTIES AND THIRTIES. A BOY PLAYING DARTS STEPS BACK AND IMPEDES OUR VIEW. WE CONTINUE MOVING UNTIL SHE IS IN SIGHT ONCE AGAIN.

DALIAH

(continuing)

But it's really many more than just two; there are too many. And in each, it's never the whole of me, not even just a part of me. It's like I project ghosts into different contexts and let them stand in for me when I'm away, attending to other situations, in mind or in body. One of these ghosts entertains a group of friends, another takes

care of school. Another, my family. One for my parents' Pakistani friends, the aunties and uncles; one for the boys at the dance clubs, the postman, the landlord, the guy at the video store... I suppose you get the picture.

WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS A YOUNG WHITE MAN WITH LIGHT-COLOURED HAIR, WEARING JEANS AND A WHITE SHIRT, AND LEANING AGAINST A PILLAR. HE IS STARING AT THE BAR WHERE DALIAH SITS. A REVERSE SHOT FROM DALIAH'S POINT OF VIEW: HE IS LOOKING RIGHT AT US. A HIGH-ANGLE SHOT FROM THE CORNER OF THE ROOM: WE CAN SEE BOTH THE YOUNG MAN AND DALIAH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA, HOLDING A POOL STICK AND MOTIONING FOR DALIAH TO COME OVER. DALIAH STANDS UP AND BEGINS WALKING FARTHER AWAY FROM THE MAN, TOWARDS THE POOL TABLE.

DALIAH  
(continuing)

Everytime someone looks at me, sees me, another ghost is created. But imagine--I imagine--the unreal possibility of piling these ghosts, with their barely visible cartoon sheaths, one on top of the other, eventually creating from their sheer numbers something visible, something of substance out of myself. I stand in awe of the absolute wonder of that--thing--of that *being*. Imagine the chance. That ghost of a chance. The sheer numbers--they have to add up to something, don't they?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE YOUNG MAN AS WE 'BUMP' INTO HIM AND HE TURNS TOWARDS US.

YOUNG MAN  
(glassy-eyed)

Sorry.

DALIAH MOVES TOWARDS US AS SHE MAKES HER WAY FROM THE BAR TO A POOL TABLE. A GAME IS IN PROGRESS. DALIAH PUTS HER HANDS ON HER HIPS.

DALIAH  
Are you telling me it's my turn already? (she looks around) Who's got my stick?

LAYLA HANDS A STICK TO DALIAH. A HIGH-ANGLE SHOT OF THE FOUR YOUNG PEOPLE PLAYING POOL. NADIR, THE ONLY MALE IN THE GROUP,

STANDS ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE, NEAR CHRISTINE. LAYLA STANDS AT THE LEFT END OF THE TABLE. ALL THREE WATCH AS DALIAH LINES UP A SHOT FROM THE RIGHT END OF THE TABLE. NADIR AND CHRISTINE LIGHT-HEARTEDLY MAKE NOISE TO DISTRACT DALIAH.

DALIAH

I'm not that good that I wouldn't screw up the shot *without* all your yelling, you know. Get a grip, would you?

NADIR

Oh, don't be so modest. You'll make the shot. As long as you don't let your nose get in the way.

ZOOM IN ON DALIAH AS SHE LOOKS UP JUST BEFORE TAKING THE SHOT. SHE SEES CHRISTINE LEANING AGAINST NADIR, WHO, WHEN HE SEES DALIAH'S EYES ON THEM, PUTS AN ARM AROUND CHRISTINE AND PULLS HER CLOSE. DALIAH'S EYES NARROW.

DALIAH

At least I don't look like someone smashed a potato on my face and called it a nose.

NADIR

Ah...

SHOT OF THE BALL HITTING ANOTHER BALL AND INEXPLICABLY FALLING INTO THE POCKET.

LAYLA

(astonished)

God, Daliah, you're becoming a shark.

DALIAH FIRST LOOKS SHOCKED, THEN SHE MAKES A FACE IN A SHOW OF MOCK MODESTY.

NADIR

Doesn't count. You didn't call it.

DALIAH

We're not calling. Where were you when we set the rules?

NADIR

And, besides, you played off one of our balls. You can't do that!

LAYLA  
Children, please!

CHRISTINE  
Come on, Nadir. Just let her have it. Why  
are you being an idiot?

NADIR  
(smiling confidently)  
No, no big deal. Alright, then. Go ahead.  
We'll let you. We're up by enough anyhow.

A SHOT OF DALIAH'S IRRITATED FACE. SHE LEANS OVER TO TAKE  
ANOTHER SHOT.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
(in disgust)  
Unhhhh!

A TWIRLING ROUND AND ROUND ACCOMPANIED BY DISORIENTING FLASHES OF  
DAYLIGHT, FASTER AND FASTER; THEN, A DEFINITE 'THUNK.' THE  
SCREEN IS BLACK.

OMAR  
(voice-over)  
All I'm saying is that there is something  
seriously wrong with this picture, if you  
don't mind me saying....

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF NAVEED'S FOREHEAD, ZOOMING OUT TO REVEAL HIS  
SQUINCHED-UP FACE, HIS EYES SQUEEZED SHUT. HE IS A PAKISTANI BOY,  
ABOUT 23, WITH DARK HAIR A LITTLE TOO FLUFFY ON TOP AND IN NEED  
OF A CUT, AND A CHIN THAT IS A LITTLE SMALL. HIS EYES, WHICH POP  
OPEN NOW, ARE RED-TINGED, AND HIS OLIVE SKIN SEEMS WAN.  
A MEDIUM LOW-ANGLE SHOT OF OMAR, A YOUNGER, DARK-SKINNED  
PAKISTANI BOY, LOOKING OVERLY ANXIOUS, AS SEEN FROM NAVEED'S  
SEATED PERSPECTIVE. OMAR'S HAIR IS BUZZED CLOSE TO THE HEAD NOW,  
AND THE STREAK IN HIS HAIR IS GONE, SINCE HE IS COMPLETELY BLOND.

OMAR  
(irate)  
How could you let that asshole get away with  
what he did? That, I'll never understand, no  
matter what you say. It wasn't right! No  
matter what crap you care to spout about the

human milk of kindness and forgiveness and all that shit.

NAVEED

(calmly)

Is it so difficult to believe that I simply wished to... turn the other cheek?

OMAR PUTS HIS HANDS UP IN MOCK SELF-DEFENSE.

OMAR

Hey! I don't care *what* butt cheek you're talking about. I'm just saying, keep'em both covered before he whumps your ass in the girl department again. Or something similarly despicable.

NAVEED

It's not like he *stole* her away from me exactly.

OMAR

Ohh no? What do people in *your* land call it?

NAVEED

(shrugging)

It just happened. Yes, I'm sorry it happened, but it's no one's fault, *really*. It's not like he was acting out of malice or anything.

OMAR

(snorts)

No, not malice. Lust, maybe, but not malice.

NAVEED

No, no. Truthfully, I'd have to say, *she* was the one going after him. He just didn't--do much to discourage it. But why should he have? We weren't the best of friends or anything.

OMAR

Ohh, stop making excuses for him. I will sincerely hurl if you don't. (pause) So, are you seeing anybody now? You movin' on down the road or what?



NAVEED SHAKES HIS HEAD.

OMAR

Oh my God, you're pining away for her, aren't you? This is so sad, I want to cry, I really do. (he sighs audibly) Well, chin up, buddy-boy! There'll be another one along the way, sooner or later, you can bet your ass! Trust me. There's thousands of brown chicks on this campus alone. And those undergrads! New and improved models every year.

NAVEED

Ah, I'm waiting for the one right one. I truly believe that there's exactly one person, that love of your life, for every one of us and, believe me, that girl wasn't it. If she *had* been, things would have been different. I would have made him pay, I would have--kicked his ass, if it was. Really.

OMAR

(shaking his head, sadly)  
Seeing you suffer like this, it's really making me bitter. (he thumps his chest and grimaces) It's sapping any hope I had for true romance in my future. So sad.

INT. ON-CAMPUS BAR. LATER-THE GAME IS FINISHED.  
A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE FITS THE POOL STICK INTO A RACK ON THE WALL. LAYLA APPROACHES.

LAYLA

Are we going to The Warehouse tonight or what?

DALIAH

(an exaggerated display of enthusiasm)

Yeah, man!

LAYLA

(her eyes lighting up in excitement)

Seriously?

DALIAH  
(suddenly sober)

No.

LAYLA  
(disappointed)

Oh, come on! This is ridiculous! We never go out anymore!

DALIAH

What can I say? I'm going *home* for the weekend.

LAYLA

Does that mean--

DALIAH

Yes.

LAYLA  
(exasperated)

Ohhh...how can you keep *doing* that?

DALIAH  
(sarcastic)

Are you kidding? The hot dates my momma brings me? Wouldn't miss that for the world. Nor do I have the choice.

LAYLA COLLAPSES AGAINST THE WALL, FRUSTRATED.

LAYLA

Oh, for God's sake! Why don't you just get it over with...get married to the man of your mother's dreams! *Then*, at least, you'll finally have your weekends free for going out with your friends!

DALIAH  
(sarcastically; holding Layla's shoulder)

Try to be strong.

SHE TURNS, THROWING HER BLACK NYLON KNAPSACK ONTO HER BACK. AS SHE TURNS TO LEAVE, WE FOCUS IN ON AN EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF THE KNAPSACK. THE MUSIC IN THE BAR THAT HAD BEEN PLAYING SOFTLY NOW INCREASES IN VOLUME. THIS PART IS HEARD DISTINCTLY IN THE FOLLOWING SCENE, ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STOREFRONT GLASS: "*SHE LOOKS LIKE THE REAL THING./ SHE TASTES LIKE THE REAL THING,/ MY*

*FAKE PLASTIC LOVE./ BUT I CAN'T HELP THE FEELING./ IF I COULD JUST BLOW THROUGH THE CEILING. IF I COULD JUST TURN AND RUN, AND IT WEARS ME OUT./ IF I COULD BE WHO YOU WANTED ALL THE TIME."*

EXT. A SMALL STREET. EVENING.

WHEN WE PULL BACK FROM HER KNAPSACK, DALIAH IS ALREADY OUTSIDE, WALKING PAST THE LITTLE SHOPS THAT LINE THE STREET TO HER RIGHT. WE SEE HER NEXT AS IF WE ARE ON THE INSIDE OF ONE OF THESE SHOPS; IT IS A SMALL, INDEPENDENTLY-OWNED ATHLETIC-TYPE STORE. NAKED MANNEQUIN HEADS AND ARMS PROTRUDE GROTESQUELY FROM THE TOP OF SOME OF THE RACKS. WE SEE DALIAH THROUGH THE LARGE STORE-FRONT WINDOW AS SHE COMES TO A STOP IN FRONT OF IT; ONE OF THE STORE LIGHTS PRODUCES A SIGNIFICANT GLARING EFFECT ON THE WINDOW, SOMETIMES MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO MAKE HER OUT. SHE DOESN'T LOOK AT THE DISPLAY (MORE BALD MANNEQUINS, NONE OF WHICH POSSESS A COMPLETE SET OF LIMBS) AND HASN'T NOTICED IT SINCE HER PURPOSE IN STOPPING IS TO GET HER CIGARETTES FROM HER KNAPSACK. SHE PROPS THE KNAPSACK AGAINST THE WINDOW AS SHE DOES THIS. A DIFFERENT VIEW; FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WINDOW, INSIDE THE STORE. WE SEE OMAR, PROPPING HIS OWN KNAPSACK AGAINST THE WINDOW AS HE ATTEMPTS TO STUFF A PAIR OF RED AND WHITE CROSS-TRAINERS INTO IT. HE DOES NOT LOOK FURTIVE OR ANXIOUS ABOUT IT, BUT SIMPLY PUTS THE SHOES IN HIS BAG AS IF IT'S HIS RIGHT, AND ZIPS UP HIS BAG. AT THE SAME TIME, DALIAH IS LIGHTING THE CIGARETTE, TRYING TO CONCEAL IT FROM ANYONE THAT HAPPENS TO BE PASSING BY IN THE STREET. AT THIS MOMENT, OMAR'S ATTENTION IS CAUGHT BY DALIAH'S REFLECTION IN A MIRROR THAT LOOKS OUT INTO THE STREET. HE GAZES INTO THE MIRROR FOR A MOMENT BEFORE HE REALIZES WHERE THE IMAGE IS COMING FROM. HE SWIVELS HIS HEAD TO LOOK AT DALIAH THROUGH THE PLATE-GLASS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF HIM AND THEN SWIVELS BACK AROUND TO WATCH HER THROUGH THE MIRROR, SIMULTANEOUSLY MOVING BACK SLIGHTLY TO AVOID BEING SEEN BY HER IN CASE SHE LOOKS UP.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF OMAR, FROWNING AS HE TRIES TO ASCERTAIN WHAT IS IN HER HANDS. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE CIGARETTES. A MEDIUM SHOT OF OMAR, SURPRISED AND INTERESTED. WE SEE DALIAH AS SHE IS BEING OBSERVED BY OMAR: HE WATCHES HER REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR; THE MIRROR SHOWS HER BEING FRAMED BY THE STOREFRONT WINDOW AS SHE TAKES A DRAG FROM THE CIGARETTE, REPLACES THE PACKAGE IN HER KNAPSACK AND THEN MOVES OUT OF VIEW, ALL THE TIME OBLIVIOUS TO OMAR'S PRESENCE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF OMAR, A SMILE STRETCHING HIS SMALL LIPS ACROSS HIS FACE.

INT. FRONT FOYER OF APARTMENT BUILDING. DAY

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH FROM THE BACK; IN FRONT OF HER ARE ROWS OF MAILBOXES. OVER HER SHOULDER, WE SEE A NUMBER OF ENVELOPES IN HER HAND, HER KEYS DANGLING FROM ONE FINGER. PULL BACK TO A LONG

SHOT OF HER FROM THE SIDE. SHE GIVES EACH ENVELOPE A CURSORY GLANCE, THEN DEFTLY FLICKS THEM ONE BY ONE INTO THE TRASH BIN OVER WHICH SHE STANDS. AFTER A MOMENT, SHE HOLDS HER HANDS OUT, VAGUELY SURPRISED THAT THEY ARE EMPTY. CLAPPING HER HANDS TOGETHER ONCE, SHE TURNS TO LEAVE.

A LONG SHOT FROM BEHIND OF DALIAH STANDING WITH THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE AS THEY WAIT FOR THE ELEVATOR. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE SAME GROUP; WE SEE ALL OF THEIR FACES, MOSTLY MIDDLE-AGED AND WHITE, IN A LINE, TILTED UPWARDS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DALIAH, THEIR EYES ARE FIXED ON THE DIGITAL NUMBER DISPLAY. ALTHOUGH HER HEAD IS TILTED UPWARDS AT THE SAME ANGLE, HER EYES, TIRED, GAZE STRAIGHT AHEAD UNDER DROOPY EYELIDS.

INT. ELEVATOR IN APARTMENT BUILDING. A MINUTE LATER. WE SEE, FROM THE INSIDE OF THE ELEVATOR, THE SAME PEOPLE STEP TOWARDS US, TURN AROUND AND FACE THE ELEVATOR DOOR. JUST AS THE DOOR BEGINS TO CLOSE, A HARRIED-LOOKING ARABIC WOMAN, IN HER LATE-TWENTIES, RUSHES IN. SHE IS A SMALL, FAIR-SKINNED PERSON, WEARING A LONG SKIRT, WITH HER HAIR SMOOTHED BACK IN A BUN AND NO MAKE-UP.

DALIAH  
(her face lighting up)

Hi!

ARABIC WOMAN  
(smiling)

Hello.

DALIAH  
How've you been doing?

ARABIC WOMAN  
Good, I'm doing good. Look!

ARABIC WOMAN EXTENDS HER LEFT HAND, UPON WHICH SHE WEARS AN ENGAGEMENT RING. DALIAH GRABS HER HAND TO LOOK AT THE RING.

DALIAH  
Wow! I'm so happy for you!

ARABIC WOMAN  
(beaming)  
You should come Friday night to my place. My mother is giving a party for me and my friends. But the wedding is not until next month. My husband is not coming from Saudi

until then.

THE ELEVATOR DOORS OPENS ON DALIAH'S FLOOR. SHE FOLLOWS ARABIC WOMAN INTO THE HALL, THEN LOOKS FOR HER KEYS AS SHE GOES TO HER OWN APARTMENT DOOR.

DALIAH

I'd like to, but I'm not sure if I can. But congratulations, really!

ARABIC WOMAN

(unlocking her door)

Even if it's just for a short while. The party will go on until late at night. You can come whenever you like.

DALIAH

(trying a second key on her bunch)

I'll try. I will.

ARABIC WOMAN

(as she closes her door)

Good! I will see you.

A CLOSE-UP SIDE VIEW OF DALIAH, LOOKING STRAIGHT AHEAD, AN INCREASING LEVEL OF STRESS EXHIBITING ITSELF IN HER EXPRESSION, AS SHE CONTINUES TO TRY UNLOCKING THE DOOR. AFTER A MOMENT, SHE CEASES, ALLOWING HER ARMS TO FALL TO HER SIDES. SHE SIGHS, THEN WEARILY LOOKS DOWN AT THE KEYS IN HER HAND, ABOUT TO TRY AGAIN, WHEN THE DOOR OPENS WITH A SUDDEN VIOLENCE THAT SURPRISES DALIAH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH'S ROOMMATE, JANE, A GIRL IN HER EARLY TWENTIES, FROWNING AT DALIAH QUIZZICALLY. DALIAH WAVES OFF THE REQUEST FOR AN EXPLANATION AND WALKS INTO THE APARTMENT. A SHOT OF THE DOOR CLOSING.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN. EARLY EVENING.

DALIAH STANDS BY THE COUNTER, WATCHING HER MOTHER, WHO IS IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING DINNER. DALIAH WEARS JOGGING PANTS AND A T-SHIRT; HER MOTHER WEARS WHITE LINEN PANTS AND A YELLOW SWEATER. SHE IS ABOUT A HEAD SHORTER THAN HER DAUGHTER. HER STYLISH SHORT HAIR IS DARK BLACK, WHICH CONTRASTS AGAINST HER LIGHT-COLOURED SKIN. SHE IS STRESSED. THERE IS A DEEP VERTICAL CREASE BETWEEN HER EYES.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

Too bad because, just lately, I'd been feeling like I've finally got a grip on who I am. I finally like the way I *think*. But the disheartening thing is that the way I think completely opposes this whole marriage dilemma. Not disheartening in a sad, sentimental way. I mean disheartening literally, like disembowelling. It guts the heart out with a spoon, so that all that's left is the bones of my rib cage, bones that house a hollowness. All it takes is a breath, no, the threat of a breath... and I'll implode. I will.

DALIAH'S MOTHER GIVES HER AN IMPATIENT LOOK AND HANDS HER THE PLATES. DALIAH TAKES THEM AND SIGHS, RESIGNED, AS SHE GOES INTO THE DINING ROOM. SHE REMOVES GLASSES FROM THE HUTCH AND CUTLERY FROM THE DRAWER AND GOES ABOUT THE PLACE SETTINGS.

INT. DINING ROOM.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

The point is, if they wanted to marry me off this way, if they had really intended it, they would have caught me when I didn't know what was up and what was down. When I'd had the urge to anchor myself to someone else, to stabilize myself, out of that normal fear and insecurity everyone feels when they're growing up; that's when I would've been an easy-out. When I would've gone along quietly. But I don't think they wanted it either. If my parents did do anything wrong, it was to let me squeeze through those years; it was to let me choose. Because, really, maybe I wasn't supposed to choose.. make my own decisions. Who's to say? Maybe I was supposed to just do what they told me, all those aunties that don't know much, but know that I should be getting married. And quick. Because those are the people I came from, aren't they?

HER EYES REST ON A COLLAGE OF FAMILY PICTURES THAT HANGS FROM THE WALL.

Sometimes, I wish I could just see the resemblance... that the Bermuda Triangle of the gene pool didn't somehow disguise where I came from. My mom says I look like her mother, but I don't see it in the pictures. I wish I could see it. Somehow, I think that if I had that documentation ... plain visual evidence that would prove to me, yes, my blood comes from over *there*, then maybe I would be able to accept this without question --give into it. Desist. Maybe it'd be easier then.

DALIAH'S MOTHER ENTERS THE DINING ROOM IN A SUDDEN RUSH TO REMOVE A CASSEROLE DISH FROM THE HUTCH.

DALIAH

I wish you didn't go to so much trouble for these things. I feel like these feasts you cook *make up* for me or something. Aren't you afraid they might think there's something terribly wrong with me, if you try to please them so much?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(busy with the dishes)

Don't speak to me like that. Nobody's pleasing anyone.

DALIAH

I just feel like we're trying to sell me--

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(rushed)

Don't be stupid. (she exhales) Daliah, don't give me more to worry about, alright. This is the way it's done. This is the way we do these things.

DALIAH

(indicating the table)

Okay, fine. I hope you remember it *right*, that's all. (pause) How's this?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(barely glancing at the table)

You don't have time to be perfect! (clapping her hands twice) Go on! Go get ready!

DALIAH

Yes, mommy dearest.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

I caught that.

DALIAH

(a surprised smile, as  
if she's been caught)

I know! I meant for you to! I was just  
joking!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(squinting as she  
scrutinizes Daliah's face)

Hey...come here. What's the matter with you?  
(pause) Have you been crying?

DALIAH

(clucks her tongue in disgust)

No! I'm fine.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(upset)

Did you stay up all night again? How stupid!  
Why the heck...

DALIAH

(in a cheerful panic)

Mom! It doesn't matter! I'm so used to it,  
it doesn't matter. I feel great! Besides, I  
*did* sleep a little.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

No. You didn't. Didn't even sleep a minute,  
did you? (angry, she resumes gathering dishes  
together) You're so used to it! You think it  
doesn't affect you? You think you're not  
human like the rest of us? (sigh) God! You  
knew you had to see them today. Why would  
you stay up all night, knowing that? I don't  
ask you to cook or clean. Just to set the  
table, for God's sake, and show up! And look  
at you, you can't even keep your eyes open!

DALIAH

I'm awake, Mom! Completely. Wide awake.



DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(exasperated)

Please, Daliah, just go change, will you?

DALIAH  
(sheepishly)

Alright, alright. I'm going.

(voice-over)

Ding, ding! (bitterly) Stay tuned for Round  
Two: what to wear.

DALIAH BEGINS MAKING HER WAY THROUGH THE DINING ROOM, CAREFUL NOT  
TO MAKE ANY PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH HER MOTHER.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

Okay, she's right. I didn't have to put off  
sleep until 6 am. I just wanted to. I don't  
drink. This is how I get inebriated. Punch-  
drunk on my own. And ready to roll.

INT. FRONT FOYER.

DALIAH ENTERS THE FOYER AND THEN WALKS UP THE STAIRCASE, ONE  
DELIBERATE STEP AT A TIME.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
(exasperated)

I do trust in my parents' wanting the best  
things for me, wanting me to be *happy*. They  
used to say 'Things are going to work  
themselves out.' And I think I believe in  
that still. A little. But... ha! That's  
where I got this from, this weird, floating  
feeling, where things happen to me and I just  
float along for the ride. This inability to  
make choices. In that... faith. Faith.  
Yes, I do have faith in God, I do have faith  
in believing things will 'work out.' I can't  
lose that. And I won't. But to put that  
faith...in some other human being ...just  
some guy! That's what I don't get. I can't  
do that. I can't just place the life my  
parents gave me; my life, my career, my...

children, into the hands of some other person.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY.

THERE IS A HORIZONTAL LINE OF ROOMS THAT MEETS THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. THE BATHROOM IS SLIGHTLY TO THE LEFT; DALIAH'S BEDROOM IS ON THE RIGHT, AT THE END OF THE HALL. SHE CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF HERSELF IN THE FULL-LENGTH MIRROR ON THE WALL AND DOUBLE-TAKES. SHE RUNS A HAND THROUGH HER HAIR, PULLING IT INTO A PONYTAIL AS SHE ENTERS THE WASHROOM. THEN, AS SHE EXAMINES HER FACE, SHE SECURES HER HAIR WITH A SCRUNCHIE.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

That's just irresponsible. That's just blind. If I make the choice myself and it doesn't work, at least I can take responsibility for it. I couldn't stand to be unhappy and have my parents feel like it was their fault.

SHE BEGINS BRUSHING HER TEETH AND WASHING HER FACE WITH A VIOLENCE IN HER MOTIONS OF WHICH SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE AWARE.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

How useless is this! Dinner after dinner, and nothing gets proven one way or the other. Just that my mom can whip up a nice spread given an hour or two and her magic freezer. Fuck. I don't think I can even cook. Why would I even try, really? Just another plus-point on the checklist of what makes a good wife, and that's not a term I'm comfortable with, at this point. And I'm not sure if that's all my fault, either, otherwise they would have raised me to know when to serve tea without having to ask them, Now?; to speak Urdu in that quiet girl whisper, or speak it at all for that matter; and to cook.

SHE UNDOES HER PONYTAIL AND BRUSHES HER HAIR ROUGHLY. LOOKING AT HERSELF FACE-ON IN THE MIRROR, SHE SUDDENLY BRINGS HER HANDS TOGETHER SHARPLY ONTO THE SIDES OF HER FACE; THEN, SHE PINCHES THE APPLES OF HER CHEEKS AND SLAPS THE LIGHT SWITCH OFF AS SHE EXITS. AS SHE WALKS THROUGH THE HALLWAY, SHE FLIPS HER HEAD OVER

AND DOWN, IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET SOME COLOUR INTO HER FACE. UPON ENTERING HER BEDROOM, WE HEAR SOME LIGHT ALTERNATIVE MUSIC ALREADY PLAYING ON HER STEREO. HER BED, WITH WHITE-PAINTED WOODEN POSTS, IS IN THE LEFT-HAND BACK CORNER. THERE IS A WHITE WOODEN BOOKSHELF ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE WALL, AND THE CLOSET IS IN THE RIGHT-HAND FRONT CORNER. DIRECTLY AHEAD OF US SITS A HUGE WHITE FRENCH PROVINCIAL BUREAU, ITS RECTANGULAR MIRROR TAKING UP MUCH OF WHAT WE CAN SEE OF THAT WALL. THE ROOM IS IN PERFECT ORDER; THE BED IS MADE, THE MAGAZINES ARE STACKED ON THE NIGHT-TABLE AND HER NAIL POLISHES, LIPSTICKS, AND ALL DIFFERENT SIZES OF BOTTLES ARRANGED ON THE DRESSER. THE ROOM IS PREDOMINANTLY PINK AND WHITE AND 'LITTLE GIRL-LIKE'. SHE GOES STRAIGHT TO THE CLOSET AND OPENS THE DOOR WIDE.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

Ding, ding. Round Two.

SHE BEGINS FLIPPING THROUGH THE HANGERS, TOSSING A FEW DRAB CHOICES ONTO THE BED. WE SEE HER AND THE REST OF THE BEDROOM ONLY THROUGH THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

This is still weird, after so many. Somewhere over ten, if I ever sat down and tried to count. Though that'd be hard to do; there's a few faces I'm sure I've already forgotten. And that word. Suitor. It reminds me first of Portia and Bassanio. Same problem. Only she got her Prince. Ha! Suitor. Suit her. My ass. A girl doesn't have a choice when none of the contenders even make the shortlist in the first place. The nerve. Suit her? Fuck him, I say. Enough of this. Futile. There's loads of girls going through the same thing; I'm sure there's nothing different going on here. Twenty-six or twenty-two or, hell, even nineteen, cause it's only a matter of opinion isn't it? Doesn't matter how old; we're all teetering on top of that hill they told us to climb as fast as we could...though they smack us with every step up.

SHE CHANGES QUICKLY INTO A PAIR OF BLACK FLARES AND A SNUG, SHORT-SLEEVED BLACK SWEATER.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

Geez, but I'm a little over-dramatic.

SHE MOVES TO THE RIGHT AND GETS HER KNAPSACK FROM WHERE IT SITS ON THE CLOSET FLOOR. SHE PLOPS IT ONTO THE DRESSER, REACHES INTO IT AND PULLS OUT A SMALL WHITE BOX. A CLOSE-UP ON THE BOX: A COLOURFUL ROOSTER SITS BENEATH THE WORDS 'WAKE-UPS CAFFEINE PILLS'. A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER POPPING TWO PILLS FROM THE CELLOPHANE WRAPPING AND SWALLOWING THEM.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
(as if she's responding  
to an admonishment)

I know, I know!

SHE BEGINS APPLYING MOISTURIZER, CONCEALER, LIPSTICK, MASCARA. A SIDE SHOT OF HER PROFILE ON ONE SIDE AND THE PLANE OF THE MIRROR ON THE OTHER. THE DOORBELL RINGS; IT IS A CLIP OF 'STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER'. A SLIGHT PANIC REGISTERS IN HER EYES.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

Here we go. Ding, dong. Round fucking three.

SHE TURNS THE VOLUME DOWN ON HER STEREO AND RETURNS TO THE DRESSER MIRROR. SHE CHECKS TO MAKE SURE HER DIAMOND STUDS ARE SECURELY FASTENED TO HER EARLOBES. HER HAND WANDERS TO HER THROAT AS SHE SIGHS AUDIBLY.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

We are facing an in-your-face ground assault so gutsy and self-assured it will announce itself by a simple knock on the door. Daring us to look a gift horse in the mouth. Because what would that make us? Stupid?

SHE PICKS UP THE BLUSH JUST AS HER BEDROOM DOOR OPENS. WE SEE HER MOTHER STICKING HER HEAD THROUGH THE DOORWAY BY THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR. DALIAH DROPS THE BLUSH BRUSH WITH A CLATTER.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Don't put too much make-up on. (her tone changes as she sees what Daliah's wearing)  
Oh! (she slaps her forehead) Don't you have

anything that's not black? You better buy yourself some clothes that are.... Are you trying to make the boys scared of you? Is that your point? (shaking her head; easing up) I wish you'd get your act together.

A SHOT OF THE DOOR CLOSING; DALIAH'S MOTHER EXITS JUST AS ABRUPTLY AS SHE HAD ENTERED THE SCENE. REVERSE SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE TOSSES THE BLUSH BRUSH ONTO THE DRESSER. WE MOVE UP ON HER AT AN ANGLE SO THAT WE SEE HER FROM BEHIND, BUT ARE STILL ABLE TO SEE HER FACE THROUGH HER REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR. HER FACE IS A MIXTURE OF AGONY AND SELF-PITY. SHE PICKS UP A LIPSTICK AND APPLIES ANOTHER COAT WHILE WE CONTINUE TO LOOM UP ON HER FROM BEHIND.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE DALIAH'S BEDROOM DOOR.  
A LOW-ANGLE SHOT OF THE WOOD-PANELLING WALL-CLOCK FROM WHICH THE DOORBELL SOUNDS JARRINGLY LOUD. THE DOORBELL IS AN EXTREMELY SHORTENED VERSION OF 'ROLL OUT THE BARREL'. A REVERSE SHOT OF DALIAH'S CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR. THE DOOR SUDDENLY BURSTS OPEN; DALIAH SHOOTS OUT. THE CAMERA SWIVELS TO FOLLOW HER PROGRESS DOWN THE HALLWAY AND THROUGH ANOTHER DOOR.

INT. FAMILY ROOM. SECONDS LATER.  
DALIAH RUSHES TOWARDS THE TV, PUTS A TAPE IN THE VCR, PICKS UP THE REMOTE AND PRESSES 'PLAY'. SHE THROWS THE REMOTE ONTO THE FAR COUCH AND RUNS BACK THROUGH THE DOOR, THE WAY SHE CAME IN, OUT OF VIEW OF THE FRONT DOOR.

INT. HALLWAY. DALIAH'S BEDROOM DOOR.  
DALIAH OPENS THE DOOR AND WALKS IN, STEALTHY.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

The one thing I cannot stand is dead air.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF THE TV SCREEN IN THE FAMILY ROOM. A LONG-HAIRED SEAN CONNERY, WEARING AN ORANGE PRISON UNIFORM, SMASHES HIS ELBOW THROUGH A TWO-WAY MIRROR. A SHOT OF HIM AS HE STICKS HIS HEAD THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE GLASS INTO THE CONNECTING OBSERVATION ROOM TO SEE WHO HAS BEEN WATCHING HIM.

SEAN CONNERY

Womak! Why am I not surprised, you piece of shit!

INT. FRONT FOYER.  
A SHOT OF THE FRONT DOOR AS DALIAH'S PARENTS OPEN THE DOOR TO GREET NAVEED AND HIS PARENTS. NAVEED'S FATHER IS A TALL, HEAVYSET DARK MAN, WITH BLACK WAVY HAIR, A LITTLE IN NEED OF A

CUT. HE APPEARS A LITTLE OVERDRESSED, IN A GREY SUIT, WITH BURGUNDY TIE AND POCKET SQUARE. HIS MOTHER WEARS AN OFF-WHITE PAKISTANI DRESS WITH A GREEN LEAF PATTERN ON IT, AND A WHITE CHIFFON SCARF AROUND HER NECK. HER BLACK HAIR IS STREAKED WITH WHITE AND DONE IN AN 80s STYLE BOB. DALIAH'S MOTHER HAS CHANGED INTO A PEACH-COLOURED PAKISTANI DRESS WITH PEACH CHIFFON SCARF AROUND HER NECK AND HER FATHER IS WEARING BLACK PANTS AND A BROWN SWEATER. OF THE OLDER GENERATION, BOTH FATHERS SEEM MELLOW, OR MAYBE THIS IS BECAUSE THEY ARE BOTH OLDER THAN THEIR WIVES, WHO POSSESS A WIRY STRENGTH THAT REVEALS ITSELF WHEN THEY HUG EACH OTHER. DALIAH'S MOTHER PUTS HER HAND TO NAVEED'S HEAD, A LOVING GESTURE AN OLDER PERSON PERFORMS ON A CHILD, AND DALIAH'S FATHER SHAKES HIS HAND. AFTER THIS INITIAL HELLO, THOUGH, BOTH SETS OF PARENTS AVOID LOOKING AT NAVEED OR SPEAKING TO HIM. NAVEED IS DRESSED CASUALLY IN KHAKI PANTS AND A BLUE GOLF SHIRT. HE'S PROBABLY ABOUT 5'6, A LITTLE THIN, BUT STILL TALLER THAN BOTH THE MOTHERS, AND ABOUT THE SAME HEIGHT AS BOTH THE FATHERS.

INT. FAMILY ROOM. AFTER DINNER.  
THERE ARE TWO COUCHES LINING ONE CORNER OF THE ROOM. DALIAH SITS IN THE COUCH AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM. NAVEED SITS IN THE COUCH ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE. BOTH COUCHES FACE THE TV IN THE OPPOSITE CORNER, FROM WHICH GUNSHOTS BLARE.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
I try to be nice--  
(to Naveed)  
Have you seen this before? It's 'The Rock'.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED'S BLANK SMILE. HE SHAKES HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH'S FACE, INTRIGUED.

DALIAH  
(suspiciously)  
Sean Connery... Nicholas Cage...you know,  
Alcatraz...came out just last summer. (pause)  
Sean Connery?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED SHAKING HIS HEAD MORE VIGOROUSLY. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH, IRRITATED.

DALIAH  
(aggressively)  
James Bond, Sean Connery?

THE CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH'S FACE PULLS OUT SLIGHTLY AS SHE SITS BACK ON THE COUCH AND EXHALES. HER FACE SCRUNCHES UP. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED.

NAVEED

I don't watch many movies.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH SMILING AND NODDING HER HEAD.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

This worries me, to some extent. So this was a huge blockbuster, but that was last summer, a lot of people wouldn't remember, no big deal. But Sean Connery? An icon so permanently fixed in my culture that even my dad, who can't sit through one hour of television, appreciates him as an actor... and he doesn't even ring a bell with *this* guy? Something's awry in the state of Denmark. But-- (she shakes her head and sits forward) I'm striking this off as being due to a language barrier, some miscommunication, because I cannot believe that. It just doesn't make sense to me.

NAVEED

So, what are your hobbies?

DALIAH

(voice-over)

Oh my God. Why not ask me what my sign is?

(to Naveed)

I don't know, I, uh, I do stuff.

(voice-over)

Oh, that's beautiful. At least I know what my sign is.

(to Naveed; angered at her own awkwardness)

How about you?

NAVEED

Oh, I don't get much free time--

A SHOT OF DALIAH, SMILING BLANKLY.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

(in dumb Tarzan voice)

No, of course not. Boy busy man. Girl paint nails.

NAVEED

(continuing)

I like to say I play squash. But I guess the last time I've played was about a year ago.

INT. FAMILY ROOM. ABOUT A HALF HOUR LATER.  
NAVEED AND DALIAH. SAME SET-UP.

NAVEED

It will be nice that you'll graduate this year. Works out nice and neat. Most Pakistani girls just go until they find a husband and then quit. It will be nice to have the degree. You never know when you might want to use it for something.

DALIAH

Nice? I look at it as a necessity. (leaning towards him) Do you know how many people without degrees can't get jobs? And how many with degrees can't either?

NAVEED

But it's not like you'll be looking for work. (he flushes suddenly when Daliah raises her eyebrows)

DALIAH

You're content with the prospect of a single-income household?

NAVEED

Well, the plusses outweigh--

DALIAH

Do you have any idea what things cost? Boy! (pause) But I may not be working as soon as I think. I may not be finished with school yet.

NAVEED

(looking at her sharply)

Really?

DALIAH

I mean, if I get the opportunity, I'm sure I



would regret it if I threw it away and I never got another one.

NAVEED

(laughing softly)

Well! You're an only child right? You don't have any brothers or anything?

DALIAH SHAKES HER HEAD, CONFUSED.

NAVEED

(continuing)

Because that makes sense then, considering not a lot of people would bother to pay for a girl's schooling. I mean, I didn't mean to say *bother*, but--(he stands) where's the washroom?

DALIAH

(stands and gestures)

It's the one at the top of the stairs, a little to the left.

BOTH NAVEED AND DALIAH TURN THE CORNER OF THE LIVING ROOM. THEY GO IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

WE SEE A LONG SHOT OF THE LIVING ROOM: THE TWO MOTHERS SIT ON THE COUCH, AND THE FATHERS SIT IN TWO OVERSTUFFED CHAIRS AT THE FAR END. A MAHOGANY COFFEE TABLE SITS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE COUCH. A CRYSTAL ASHTRAY, WITHOUT A SPECK OF ASH IN IT, SITS ON THE GLEAMING TABLE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER AS SHE JUMPS UP FROM HER SEAT, HOLDING HER HANDS TOGETHER IN FRONT OF HER.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

Oh! So you're done? You're finished? Is Naveed ready to go?

DALIAH

(lifting her eyebrows)

Uh, he's just in the bathroom.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

(holding her hands together, looking around anxiously)

Oh, oh...

NAVEED'S MOTHER WALKS OFF SUDDENLY INTO THE DIRECTION OF THE FAMILY ROOM. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH. SHE LOOKS AT HER MOTHER WITH A DISGUSTED EXPRESSION.

DALIAH  
(whispering to Mother)

Am I done?

MOTHER SHAKES HER HEAD AT HER DAUGHTER.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(defensively)

She thinks you don't want to talk to her son anymore, that you left him over there because you're not interested. Be nice. She's just a little protective of her son's feelings.

DALIAH

I wish you were a little protective of my feelings.

A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER AS SHE ENTERS THE LIVING ROOM. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH'S MOTHER'S FACE: EYES WIDE AND A BIG SMILE, AN EXAGGERATED EXPRESSION OF A GRACIOUS WELCOME. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER, CHUCKLING UNCOMFORTABLY, A LITTLE EMBARRASSED. SHE SITS DOWN ON THE COUCH AGAIN AND CLASPS HER HANDS IN HER LAP.

NAVEED'S MOTHER  
(happily, as if confirming)

He's in the bathroom.

A SHOT OF DALIAH SMILING PLEASANTLY. A SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER CLEARING HER THROAT AND LOOKING AT DALIAH'S MOTHER. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH'S SARCASTIC EXPRESSION OF SURPRISE. DALIAH SITS BACK AS IF SHE'S DISCOURAGED. PAN LEFT TO WHERE DALIAH'S FATHER IS GIVING A PROLONGED AND SOMEWHAT PEDANTIC EXPLANATION, IN A LOW-PITCHED VOICE, TO NAVEED'S FATHER, OF HOW MAC MEDICAL SCHOOL'S GROUP-BASED LEARNING METHOD IS BEING REPRODUCED AT MEDICAL SCHOOLS EVERYWHERE. NAVEED'S FATHER, QUIET, LOOKS DOWN AT HIS SHOES, NODDING METHODICALLY.

INT. BATHROOM. AT THE SAME TIME.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF NAVEED. HE HAS JUST SPLASHED HIS FACE WITH WATER AND PATS IT DRY WITH A TOWEL. HE LEANS AGAINST THE SINK, HIS BACK TO THE MIRROR AND STARES AT THE DOOR, BITING HIS LOWER LIP.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM.  
A SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER, LOOKING AS IF SHE WANTS TO MAKE  
CONVERSATION BUT DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. SHE TURNS TO DALIAH.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

Jub aap school pa raiteeho, aap kya pakateeho?

DALIAH

(amiably)

My mom cooks food for me to take, since where I live at school  
isn't very far from here, but I end up ordering in a lot. I mean, I  
don't cook very much. Too much trouble.

A SHOT OF DALIAH'S MOTHER, HER EYES WIDENING. NAVEED'S MOTHER LOOKS  
AT DALIAH ODDLY.

DALIAH

But I do make crepes really well. Better than any creperie I've  
been to.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

(to Daliah's mother)

Isko Punjabi nai aati?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(to Naveed's mother)

Isko sumuj aati mugher....

DALIAH'S MOTHER LOOKS AT DALIAH TENTATIVELY.

DALIAH

I understand it a lot better than I can actually speak it.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

You can't speak Punjabi?

DALIAH

Urdu or Punjabi, I can't tell the difference. I know one's  
considered better than the other, one's a slang version or  
something, but I can never remember which one is which.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(to Naveed's mother)

We're Punjabi-speaking.

DALIAH

(after a pause)

But you know how easy it is to pick up when you're actually there. I'm hoping to brush up the next time I visit Pakistan.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

Oh, you've been to Pakistan?

DALIAH

Oh, yeah. Well, I've been there three times but the last time was 9 years ago, so it has been a while.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

How are you going to raise your children if you don't know how to speak your own language?

DALIAH

(shifting in her seat)

Well, I guess I'll raise them to be Muslim and let whatever else happens, happen.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(to Naveed's mother)

We didn't really speak Punjabi in the home.

NAVEED'S MOTHER

(abruptly)

Why not?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

It's just something that happened. Even her father and I rarely speak Punjabi when it's just the two of us.

NAVEED'S MOTHER LOOKS AT DALIAH'S MOTHER AS IF WAITING FOR MORE. NAVEED ENTERS THE LIVING ROOM. A SHOT OF DALIAH, THEN OF THE MEN SITTING BEYOND HER, LOOKING BORED, THEN OF HIS MOTHER. HE WALKS THROUGH THE ROOM AND SITS WITH THE MEN, WHO LOOK HAPPY THAT HE'S COME TO SIT WITH THEM AND, PERHAPS, BREAK THE MONOTONY. A SHOT OF NAVEED'S MOTHER, WORRIEDLY LOOKING AT HER SON, THEN AT DALIAH. A SHOT OF DALIAH'S MOTHER, SMILING AT DALIAH. A SHOT OF DALIAH: SHE GLANCES AT HER MOTHER, NAVEED'S MOTHER, THE MEN, AND THEN STARES OUT THE WINDOW AT THE SUBURBAN STREET BEYOND IT.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE-FAMILY ROOM. THE NEXT DAY.  
DALIAH, HER MOTHER AND HER FATHER ARE EACH SITTING IN SEPARATE  
CORNERS, ON SEPARATE COUCHES, LOOKING ANXIOUS.

DALIAH

I just don't *like* him! What am I, supposed  
to *marry* him, even though I don't like him?  
(pause) I don't want to be one of those  
Pakistani couples that gets married only  
because you all think 'younger is better',  
and then ends up getting divorced. I just  
don't want to get married to the wrong guy  
and have to live with it for the rest of my  
life. What if I meet the guy I'm meant to be  
with *after* I marry someone else just because  
he happened to be here right now, *on time*,  
because *you* think it's time for me to get  
married now?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

When is it time, then? There's *no boys*. And  
the few suitable ones are getting married to  
white girls. There are a lot of girls just  
like you--

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, ANGRY AND HORRIFIED AT THAT STATEMENT.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

You've got to stop being so high and mighty!

DALIAH

(ironically) Oh, *that's* funny. (pause) I can  
make myself do anything for you. But this is  
the *one thing*--I can't just follow orders.  
In one way, I think I might just get married  
to any idiot who walks in the door but, no, I  
can't, because after that, once I've--  
*completed* this requirement, this last task  
you've set out for me to fulfill, my life  
reverts back to me, and I'm the one that has  
to live with it.

DALIAH'S FATHER

We're not the ones with the power here. You  
are. *You're* the only one that can say,  
'Okay, I'll get married in *this* family'. (he  
shrugs) We're not going to force you to do  
anything. It's whatever you want.

DALIAH

You know that's not true. I don't know what you did--put some computer chip in my head and I could never override your programming! Here I am, thinking about it the way you do on the inside and pretending I don't on the outside.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

You shouldn't do that. That's not a way to live.

DALIAH

Somehow I wouldn't feel right doing it any other way. (she stands, sighing) I can't get over looking at someone the way you would, evaluating in terms of career, family reputation, money, looks....

DALIAH'S MOTHER

We're just doing what's right for you! If you don't like it, then tell us to stop! We'd be glad to! You think we're enjoying this?

DALIAH

(miserably)

Sometimes I wonder. (pause) Can't you just accept that I didn't like Naveed's personality?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

How can that be? You hardly even know him.

DALIAH

From what I do know!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

No. I cannot understand what it is about him that you dislike that much, so much that you won't even see him again.

DALIAH

I'm telling you.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Go ahead, I'm listening.

DALIAH

(confused)

No, I just *told* you!

DALIAH'S FATHER

I don't know why you're making this so hard for yourself.

DALIAH

(exasperated)

Fine, then. It's his clothes, the way he talks, the music he listens to, the fact that, in high school, I wouldn't have talked to him! Or even known him! How's that? Is that enough?

A LONG SHOT OF HER STANDING IN FRONT OF HER SEATED PARENTS. WHEN SHE GETS NO RESPONSE, SHE BEGINS TO LOOK UNCOMFORTABLE AS THE FOCAL POINT OF THEIR ATTENTION.

DALIAH

And I think he's shorter than me, too!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(adamant)

He is not shorter than you!

DALIAH

And what about this: I'm trying to get into med school, and this guy says he's not *ambitious*. Figures he's going to work in a lab for the rest of his life! (reaching) That's something right there, isn't it?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

So now it's the money-factor? I thought all this time you've been telling me that isn't everything!

DALIAH

Oh, alright, whatever! Say he's shorter than me, then, I don't care! Though I don't think it should be something personal like that. Just say I... I don't know, this is *your* job. I don't know how it works!

A PAUSE. ALL THREE ARE TIRED AND FRUSTRATED.

DALIAH'S FATHER

Maybe the one meant for you isn't this one, but tomorrow, another day, believe me, he will be here.

DALIAH

I have heard that far too many times! Do you realize it's become a refrain? Things aren't just going to work themselves out--this isn't a magic show! I just don't believe it anymore--and I doubt whether you do. Why else do you get all moody every once in a while, and refuse to talk about what's bothering you? As if you think I'm to blame, like there's something wrong with me otherwise I'd have found someone to get married to by now.

DALIAH'S FATHER

(chuckling weakly)

Marriage is a natural stage in life. It's nothing to be scared of.

DALIAH

You're right. So maybe the fact that I'm not just scared, but that, at this point, (louder) I hate the whole concept of it, means that there's something wrong!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(critically)

You hate it?

DALIAH

(carefully)

No, of course not. I just don't see the point of discussing it to death when it's not the institute of marriage that's the problem, it's the absence of a Pakistani guy that's Muslim enough that I like enough!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Maybe the problem is that you're too picky.

DALIAH

Why not try pinning the problem on somebody else for a change?



DALIAH'S MOTHER

(sighs)

So then I'll tell them you're not interested.  
You're sure?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH MAKING AN EXASPERATED FACE.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(calmly)

Maybe we made things too comfortable for you.

DALIAH

(sarcastically)

I wouldn't worry yourself about that.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(continuing)

You know you can't just stay here for the  
rest of your life. You're going to want to  
have your own place. You wouldn't be happy.

DALIAH

That is not my plan, believe me. Do you  
think this is me being *happy*?

DALIAH'S MOTHER SHAKES HER HEAD WEARILY, AS IF EXASPERATED. SHE  
TURNS TO DALIAH'S FATHER. A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER PARENTS IN  
DISCUSSION.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

The laser beam of my mother's focus had  
already moved on to the issue of what she  
should tell the match-maker lady who'd sent  
over Naveed in the first place. I cannot  
imagine the conversations this lady must be  
having, trying to hook all these people up.  
I think it's like a hobby for her.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH, EXPRESSING HER DISTASTE.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I say, lady, flick on the telly once in a  
while. Good fun, that.

DALIAH, HANDS ON HER HIPS, TURNS TOWARDS HER PARENTS. SHE STARES  
DOWN AT THEM, BUT THEY DON'T PAY HER ANY ATTENTION.

DALIAH

And will someone please change the music on  
the stupid doorbell?

SHE GIVES A DEFINITE NOD AS IF SHE HAS GIVEN A COMMAND AND STALKS  
OUT OF THE ROOM.

INT. A HALLWAY IN DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE. EVENING.  
A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH COMING UP THE HALLWAY; SHE APPEARS ANXIOUS.  
ALL INDICATIONS OF DALIAH'S NERVOUSNESS ARE REVEALED THROUGH  
SMALL GESTURES AND CRINKLES IN HER EXPRESSION: HER FEET MOVE  
UNSURELY, HANDS AT HER SIDE, FINGERTIPS RUB THE INSIDES OF HER  
PALMS, AS IF CHECKING FOR SWEAT; HER MOUTH IS PARTED SLIGHTLY, IN  
A MIXTURE OF DISTASTE AND RESIGNATION. SHE TAKES A DEEP BREATH  
BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH; HER EYEBROWS JUMP UP AS HER THROAT CATCHES.  
A HAND GOES TO HER THROAT AS IF TO BRUSH SOMETHING FROM IT, THEN  
MOVES TO HER HAIR TO SMOOTH IT DOWN.

A LONG SHOT OF HER MOVEMENT OCCURS IN SLOW-MOTION AS SHE TURNS  
THE CORNER INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND CONTINUES UNTIL THE END OF  
THE DINING ROOM SCENE; FROM HERE ON, SHE HAS FULL VIEW OF THE  
PEOPLE CONGREGATED AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE, AS THEY DO OF HER.  
WE SEE HER EYES TAKE IN THE SCENE BEFORE HER.

A SHOT FROM HER PERSPECTIVE: WE SEE THE LIVING ROOM FURNITURE IN  
THE FOREGROUND AND THE DINING ROOM TABLE LIT UP BY THE CHANDELIER  
HANGING DIRECTLY OVER IT. AT THE END OF THE TABLE, FACING US, IS  
DALIAH'S MOTHER, WHO SEES DALIAH AND SMILES. ON THE RIGHT OF  
DALIAH'S MOTHER SIT NAVEED'S FATHER AND NAVEED. ON THE LEFT OF  
DALIAH'S MOTHER SITS NAVEED'S MOTHER AND DALIAH'S FATHER. UPON  
NOTICING HER ENTRANCE, EVERYONE LOOKS UP AT HER. NAVEED CONTINUES  
TALKING, BUT FALTERS NOTICEABLY.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

That's the worst part. Because all during  
that, and before, they're wondering, they're  
*hoping*, and it's at that specific time that  
they look up at you and the embarrassing  
knowledge of whether or not you've lived up  
to their expectations transfers to you in  
that very instant. (pause) So it's hard for  
me to be all *smiley* like they want, when it's  
pretty much stop or go from then on,  
depending on how I look to them. Sizing up  
the opposition, for me, takes a bit more than  
that.

REVERSE SHOT (FROM THE TABLE, OF HER)

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF HER FOOT STEPPING FORWARD. A REVERSE SHOT OF

HER FROM THE TABLE, THEN RAPID TRACKING MOVEMENT (THROUGH THE ROOM) TO A CLOSE-UP ON HER FACE, EYES.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

It's never just the one thing. The hair, for example.

REVERSE SHOT (FROM HER PERSPECTIVE), THEN RAPID TRACKING TO HIS PROFILE. REVERSE SHOT (FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE), THEN RAPID TRACKING SHOT TO HER HAND RUNNING THROUGH HER HAIR.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

The way he talks.

REVERSE SHOT, THEN RAPID TRACKING TO A CLOSE-UP ON HIS MOUTH, MOVING QUICKLY AS HE NERVOUSLY CONTINUES A CONVERSATION WE CANNOT HEAR. REVERSE SHOT, THEN RAPID TRACKING TO HER PROFILE, CLOSE-UP ON THE CORNERS OF HER MOUTH TURNING UP.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

The way he's dressed.

REVERSE SHOT, THEN RAPID TRACKING TO A CLOSE SHOT OF HIS CHAIR LEG, THEN UP THE CHAIR LEG TO HIS SHOULDER. REVERSE SHOT, THEN RAPID TRACKING TO A CLOSE SHOT OF HER CHUNKY-HEELED BOOT, BLACK WIDE-LEGGED FLARES; THE SHOT MOVES UPWARDS QUICKLY; WE SEE HER HAND HANGING AT HER SIDE, AND THEN GRAZING UP HER THIGH, UNTIL IT RESTS CONFIDENTLY ON HER HIP.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

The way he looks--at me.

REVERSE SHOT, RAPID TRACKING TO A CLOSE-UP ON HIS EYES, DARTING A LITTLE, AWARE OF HER APPROACH. REVERSE SHOT, RAPID TRACKING TO A CLOSE-UP ON HER EYES, STEADY BUT NARROWING; AN EYEBROW LIFTS VERY SLIGHTLY. MEDIUM SHOT OF HER AS SHE PUTS A HAND ON TOP OF ONE OF THE EMPTY HIGH-BACKED DINING ROOM CHAIRS.

INT. UNIVERSITY - CAFETERIA

A SHOT OF DALIAH AND LAYLA SITTING ACROSS FROM EACH OTHER. THEY LEAN IN, THEIR ARMS STRETCH OUT TOWARDS EACH OTHER ACROSS THE TABLE, AS IF THAT MIGHT KEEP THEIR DISCUSSION CONFIDENTIAL FROM THE PASSERS-BY AROUND THEM.

DALIAH

And because I knew that this was a no-go situation --

LAYLA

Just like that, you already knew?

DALIAH

Just like that. But because I knew he wasn't a contender, everything that was holding me in just fell away, and I was back to myself again.

LAYLA

Just a sec, I don't understand. Based on the way a guy *looks*--

DALIAH

Based on the way he *is*.

LAYLA

--you know exactly whether or not he's the one for you?

DALIAH

Truthfully, in that instant, I know at least if he's *not* the one. In the case of... I can't say about that.

LAYLA

And this guy, Naveed, was--

DALIAH

Not the one.

LAYLA

--not the one. (pause) Did you ever think of the possibility that while you're not-the-one-ing right and left, you may have not-the-one'd *the right one*?

DALIAH

Not at all.

LAYLA

(unconvinced)

Oh-kay.

DALIAH

(ironically)

I sense that you've come to some undisclosed conclusion concerning myself.

LAYLA

Well, Daliah, do you think you might be acting a bit... superficially? Don't you think you should give a *couple* of these guys who come over to your house to meet you, at least a second try?

DALIAH

You don't understand. Look around. Face it, there's maybe a handful of guys in this place that you'd even *think* about going out with, let alone marry! And that falls to much less for me, cause maybe you forget, no matter what they say, my parents tend to hand out the old V.I.P. pass to guys with at least a hint of Pakistani extraction. Considering you don't have that number one gun to your head, I *would* be quick to judge if I stopped to consider why you're still playing only-the-lonely right along with me on weekends.

LAYLA

Relax, will you!

DALIAH

(picking up a napkin  
from the table)

Look, if *this*...is everybody--

LAYLA

Everybody where?

DALIAH

I'm not aspiring to be representative. Just pretend! (she rips the napkin in two and drops one half) These are the guys. (she rips one-fifth off and drops the rest) These are the Pakistani guys. (she continues to rip off pieces) These are the ones that weren't born here; you *know* I couldn't get along with someone who wasn't. These are the ones that want their women to wear a scarf on their head and stay in the house. These are

the ones who, all their lives, aspired to marry white women. This piece is for all that absolute nerdage out there. This is for the ones that can't tie their own shoelaces...

LAYLA

I still believe there's a reasonable percentage of men who would be capable of swooping in and saving the day, along with your ass.

DALIAH

(holding up the tiny scrap that's left)

What you're so eloquently saying, from what I gather, is that it can't be that hard to find this guy right here? (she blows on the scrap lying in her palm and it immediately disappears from view)

LAYLA

Okay, alright. So, fine, you win. Today's feel-sorry-for-Daliah day, then. As long as I get my day, too. Because, I have to say, at least you've got guys who are considering marrying you. The guys I go out with are just thinking about right here, right now. Nobody's thinking long-run.

DALIAH

Call it a draw then. (pause) We are so sad-making, I could die.

LAYLA

(sighs) So have you sent off your med school application or what?

DALIAH

Y'know, it's not really very wise of you to bring me down even more when I'm already languishing in my own private pit of despair.

LAYLA

Do you need help with it? I've seen those applications forms. They require a lot of bullshit. (pause) It's not wrong to let people help you out sometimes, you know.

DALIAH

I think I'm doing okay with it so far. I *should* go work on it, I guess. I've been sticking to a work schedule, you know.

LAYLA

Oh really?

DALIAH

I'm a week or two behind, but I've still got it on the mind.

LAYLA

And you started it when?

DALIAH

Oh, a week--

LAYLA

Or two ago. Right. Get crackin', will you please! Go, go!

DALIAH

(getting together  
her knapsack)

I'm going then! Later, babe!

LAYLA

Go with grace, my dear.

DALIAH STANDS UP AND THROWS THE HEAVY KNAPSACK OVER HER SHOULDER. SHE IMMEDIATELY LEANS AGAINST A CEMENT PILLAR AND EXHALES.

DALIAH

(breathlessly)

I don't seem to be able to (pause) leave.

LAYLA

Such is life. (she frowns) Are you ok?

DALIAH

Yeah. Breathing. Such tiring work.

LAYLA

For God's sake, take your iron, would you!

DALIAH

Don't worry, it's nothing. Anxiety.

Psychosomatic.

LAYLA  
Not because you don't eat?

DALIAH  
I eat.

LAYLA  
I meant, eat *right*. What are you, on a sugar diet? All you eat is sugar.

DALIAH  
(weakly)  
Sugar, sugar, everywhere...

LAYLA  
And cigarettes.

DALIAH  
(having regained her strength,  
she's slightly irritated)  
Yes, I eat cigarettes.

LAYLA  
Are you sleeping any better than the last few weeks?

DALIAH  
Sleep has decided to have a little fun with me. But I should have expected it. I'd been snubbing it for so long during exams, I deserve the backlash.

LAYLA  
Daliah, aren't you ever going to talk about what's wrong with you?

DALIAH  
Nothing is what's wrong with me.

LAYLA  
I meant what's making you *think* that there's something wrong with you.

DALIAH  
I don't know--I don't like talking about my problems, if they are problems and not just



concerns. If I have to hear the thing, re-worded and then re-contextualized by other people, from their own different perspectives again and again, I begin to believe those echoes. When that happens, I lose the truth of the thing, of whatever it should have meant to me in the beginning. And then I lose myself. Better to keep a lid on it, a grip on it, or believe that I have.

LAYLA

You need different perspectives..contexts. To figure out which one you're most comfortable with.

DALIAH

Except that the right or wrong context is never a simple matter of comfort for me. If it were, I think I might be ready to get married at something like 35 and never have a second thought about it. The fact is I'm 23 and worried about it now, not as much out of the fear that I'll never get married as for the potential guilt of leaving my parents with an unmarried daughter on their hands. Seriously, that's a Pakistani parent's absolute worst nightmare. (pause) I can't go on like this.

LAYLA

That's what you think. You've been doing this for as long as I can remember--5, 6 years?

DALIAH

No, I mean it--

LAYLA

Don't worry. If we don't find you a husband by the time you're thirty-five--

DALIAH

Well, twenty-nine just *sounds* so perfect.

LAYLA

Then we'll hang ourselves the next day. How's that?

DALIAH

Honestly? Seems a little harsh. And what if he does show up?

LAYLA

Then let's hope he's got a brother for me.

DALIAH

No, I mean, I don't believe in the happy-ever-after. And all this waiting in the meantime, maybe it's not worth it after all. Maybe one guy isn't all that different from another. Maybe it's the act of getting married to someone and sharing your life that makes the marriage. Maybe the actual two people don't even matter that much. You sign a contract, give your word, and then try your best. Maybe that's all it takes and I'm the one in the wrong, expecting some crackling flash of lightning that'll let me know if I choose right. Could be true--that all this waiting around isn't bringing me closer to finding the perfect mate, it's just wasting time. I've got to stop talking. I'm getting a headache.

LAYLA

There's no reason to keep going around in these furious circles of yours, you know. When he comes around, when you actually meet him, you'll know it.

DALIAH

And in the meantime, nothing happens. This whole thing is so absurd.

EXT. HIGH-ANGLE VIEW OF CAMPUS. DAY.  
WE SEE MANY PEOPLE WALKING ABOUT. NAVEED RUNS UP TO YUSUF, A TALL COFFEE-COLOURED GUY AROUND 25 YEARS OLD. THEY BOTH STOP ON THE SPOT. THEY SEEM TO BE TALKING. AFTER A MOMENT, YUSUF CONTINUES WALKING. NAVEED HOLDS OUT HIS HANDS AFTER HIM.

NAVEED

(yelling after Yusuf)

But I'm serious!

NAVEED RUNS TO CATCH UP WITH YUSUF.

YUSUF

Oh, c'mon now!

NAVEED

I truly do love her.

YUSUF

(skeptically)

Isn't this all a little premature? You only met her once, for God's sake!

NAVEED

That's all it takes to know. I can tell! I can tell she's the one!

YUSUF

(ironically)

Ahhh.

NAVEED

I am so serious, there's fireworks in my head.

YUSUF

In your head?

NAVEED

I love her to death already!

YUSUF

Be reasonable, man.

NAVEED

Oh, you poor guy! Once you meet her, once you meet the one for you, you'll know it absolutely, too! (pause) And it's funny, because, to be honest, when I first got to her house and actually met her, I don't think it clicked for me right at that instant. I mean, she's pretty and cool and all that, but I remember thinking, *hmm*, I don't know, and then I remember thinking--right during dinner--thinking, how she wasn't really my type--more yours, actually--just for a tiny second. But by dessert, I knew she was the one. Somehow, I knew.

YUSUF  
Naveed, you're a raving maniac.

NAVEED  
I know. It's a nice change.

INT. A COFFEE SHOP. DAY.  
A PILE OF PAPERS, BILL STATEMENTS, SIT ON THE TABLE AS DALIAH AND LAYLA SIP COFFEE AND SMOKE CIGARETTES. LAYLA LOOKS INCENSED.

LAYLA  
(distressed)  
I am so maxed out, it's incredible! And here I am with zero income!

DALIAH  
(ironically)  
You need to get married, that's all. Joint bank accounts. A sudden infusion of monetary funds. Your bills'll disappear.

LAYLA  
If I had the option to marry money right now, believe me, I would. (ironically) As long as I'd be able to maintain my life according to the manner to which I have become accustomed.

DALIAH  
(interested)  
You would?

LAYLA  
(definitely)  
No, I wouldn't.

DALIAH  
(after a moment)  
I'd say that's fair, though. Realistically, if it came down to me marrying some guy I wasn't totally enthralled with, I think I'd be deserving of some considerable disposable income.

LAYLA  
Oh really?

DALIAH

If someone *promised* it would be there one day--

LAYLA

True love?

DALIAH

Then I'd leave it at that. I would be happy enough. I wouldn't make myself neurotic like this. But no one can tell me for absolute sure. So... If I can't have that security, that knowledge, then I deserve *some* form of stability... financial.

LAYLA

If that were true, you would be married to that cardiac resident from last year. Putting out his short-sleeve button-down shirts every night. Making breakfast in your robe and then going back to bed after he goes off to work.

DALIAH

I know, I know. I'm just trying to make things neat'n tidy. (sigh) Can't you just pretend that there's some logic to the way I work? Some rational... *something*?

LAYLA

Don't worry. You'll find the right guy. Just wait.

DALIAH

And if I did... the right guy... that would change everything. Truly being in love would be better than money. *Then*, then the financing of the whole deal just falls away. (she shrugs) I'd struggle.

LAYLA

(cautiously)

And in the meantime, Nadir's back-up? Just in case?

DALIAH  
(offensively)  
What do you mean by that?

LAYLA  
Daliah, Nadir's already got a girlfriend.

DALIAH  
(ironically)  
Yes, I am fully aware--

LAYLA  
Technically, maybe, but you don't seem to let it sink in. I don't know what's really going on, but... the way you guys act, really! I just don't think it's right. You're letting him think.... You're keeping him on the side! For your own convenience!

DALIAH  
Convenience! I don't have the luxury of convenience. It's a matter of acting out of desperation, in case things get... to a certain point. When they do, I want to make sure I, at least, have him around.

LAYLA  
To make things easier on you?

DALIAH  
(happy Layla understands)  
Yes!

LAYLA  
That's the definition of convenience!

DALIAH  
(sighs) You really should apply to law school, you know. (pause) It's just, I don't believe I'll be able to pick the right one. I don't think the right one will ever be around. So I want to at least be sure that I've done my best to pick the least wrong one.

LAYLA  
I still don't get you. The fact that his girlfriend happens not to be Muslim doesn't

*discount* her. Look at my parents.

DALIAH  
I don't think that!

LAYLA  
No?

DALIAH  
That may be what *he* thinks but--

LAYLA  
That doesn't make it right. Or even okay.

DALIAH  
I know, I know!

LAYLA  
Phew, then. I mean, really! I was beginning to think you were losing your sense of conscienceness.

DALIAH  
That's not fair, it's not my fault--

LAYLA  
Completely--

DALIAH  
That he's diverting his attentions from her to me. (pause) What did you say?

LAYLA  
It's not your fault completely but, be realistic, some of it *is* you.

DALIAH  
I didn't mean for anything like this to happen.

LAYLA  
That's crap.

DALIAH  
(startled)  
Layla!

LAYLA

Good intentions are just fine, but how you react to situations as they happen counts, too, you know.

DALIAH

(discouraged)

I can't believe you're blaming me.

LAYLA

You have to take responsibility for some of it, admit it.

THERE IS A PAUSE IN THE CONVERSATION. DALIAH IS UNCOMFORTABLE; SHE LOOKS AT THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM. SHE CONSIDERS FOR A MOMENT, THEN SETTLES BACK INTO CONVERSATION.

DALIAH

(conspiratorially)

It's this thing I have.... All your life, they tell you it's not right to date, no fooling around, not right to get too close...so naturally, I'm at the point where I'm too aware of it myself, when there's guys around. Not all guys--

LAYLA

(smiling)

No, of course not.

DALIAH

Just certain Muslim guys. But it's a Muslim guy I'm supposed to end up marrying. See how this is all...

LAYLA

A catch-22?

DALIAH

Screwed up. Exactly! I'm most ill-at-ease with the very type of guy I'm supposed to (she makes a childish face) fall in love with. So naturally I'm more comfortable, more myself, with off-limits guys... white ones, black ones, Italian ones, whoever else. And also, brown ones that are taken, in one way or another, because they're off-limits, too. In my mind, anyway.



LAYLA

In your idealistic mind, that is. And what is it? Your charming personality that, when unrestrained, wins over the very guys you have no romantic interest in?

DALIAH

You are correct, sir.

LAYLA

That still doesn't explain why you're encouraging--

DALIAH MAKES A DISGUSTED TSK NOISE.

LAYLA

*Encouraging* Nadir.

DALIAH

Layla, this is going to sound callous and awful and like I'm a crazy nutcase, but he's the only guy that I've ever let get close to me only because, he was the first Pakistani guy I met on my own and not in some parentally-controlled situation and, the way things are going, if I had to, yes, I'd marry him. At least I know what he's capable of. And what he's not capable of.

LAYLA

Oh, for God's sake! You can't even call that *settling*. That's...(trying to think of the word) that's decomposing...degenerating.

DALIAH

Slumming?

LAYLA

Yes, slumming.

DALIAH

Unbelievable as it sounds, no other brown guy I've met... and you know I've met quite a few--

LAYLA

Oh, yes.

DALIAH

(ironically)

None of them would I be able to get along with personality-wise. I do not know why this is.

LAYLA

You're a very personable kind of chick.

DALIAH

(ironically)

Thank you. But it isn't *me*, of course.

LAYLA

Ah, there are a lot of guys. You haven't even met a fraction--

DALIAH

*Oh*, I think I've met a fraction.

LAYLA

Okay, not a large percentage of the total population, then. Just wait--

DALIAH

(sarcastically) I would love to wait. I love waiting. With that parental pressure over your head. (she shakes her head) I think they're getting into a tizzy, seeing some of their friends' kids get married. If it was just *me*, I wouldn't care. I think I have divorced myself from the idea of it, as it pertains specifically to *me*. When I'm talking about it, it's in my head like it's happening to my parents' kid. It's not exactly *me*, so much. The *idea* of *me*.

LAYLA

Hey, at least your parents are screening prospectives for you. I wouldn't mind that amenity.

DALIAH

(smiling)

Layla, there's a hole in the screen the size of Vancouver. And there's more than just flies getting through.

INT. NAVEED'S BEDROOM. DAY.  
THE BEDROOM IS NOT WELL-LIT, BUT WE CAN SEE THAT IT IS UNUSUALLY NEAT, TO THE POINT THAT IT APPEARS UNFURNISHED OR, AT LEAST, UNLIVED-IN. NAVEED SITS AT HIS DESK, TELEPHONE RECEIVER HELD TO HIS EAR.

NAVEED

Too short? Really? I can't believe they said that. But then that's what it came down to--money? (pause) Nah, don't worry, Mom. If it's not meant to be... Right. Ok. I'll call you tomorrow. Bye.

NAVEED REPLACES THE RECEIVER AND SHAKES HIS HEAD, CONFUSED.

NAVEED

Not a professional? What the--

INT. LARGE LECTURE HALL. DAY.  
A SHOT OF THE BIOLOGY PROFESSOR AS HE LECTURES. THEN, HIS PERSPECTIVE; WE WATCH AS SOME LATECOMERS INCH TOWARDS EMPTY SEATS IN THE CROWDED HALL. WE REALIZE THAT NAVEED IS ONE OF THESE STRAGGLERS. HE SEEMS TO BE MAKING HIS WAY TO A SPECIFIC SPOT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LARGE GROUP OF SEATS, PASSING BY A FEW MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE SEATS. WE BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT HE HAS BEEN AIMING TOWARDS YUSUF, WHO LOOKS SURPRISED WHEN HE SEES NAVEED APPROACHING, BUT REMOVES HIS JACKET FROM THE SEAT BESIDE HIM, NEVERTHELESS. NAVEED SITS.

INT. LARGE LECTURE HALL. ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES LATER.  
AGAIN, THE PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE. THIS TIME, HE IS TRYING TO INITIATE DISCUSSION WITH THE STUDENTS AS HE INDICATES SPECIFIC AREAS ON A DIAGRAM OF A CELL HE HAS PUT ON THE OVERHEAD. THE LIGHTS ARE APPROPRIATELY DIMMED, AND WE CAN SEE AND HEAR THAT THIS ALLOWS FOR A LESS ATTENTIVE CLASS. A GENERAL HUM EMANATES FROM THE LARGE GROUP.  
A SHOT OF NAVEED AND YUSUF ALTERNATING BETWEEN SCRIBBLING NOTES AND CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION.

YUSUF

(looking up from his notebook)  
What the fuck does that mean?

NAVEED

I suppose it means someone with big bucks.

YUSUF

(resuming his note-taking  
with no further emotional  
investment)

You're going to be doing alright.

NAVEED

Well, bigger bucks than *me*, I presume. I  
don't know. A doctor, I suppose. How these  
Pakistani women love those doctors! (a pause  
as he chuckles) Wouldn't it be funny... (a  
smile forms as an idea seems to occur to him;  
he leans towards Yusuf) You should go.

YUSUF'S EXPRESSION REMAINS BLANK.

NAVEED

You should go, say you're a doctor, no, just  
in med school, or maybe interning. Prove  
just how superficial she is--

YUSUF

Uh, listen, I don't want to get involved in  
your girl-stuff. (abruptly) I meant, I, uh, I  
still feel bad about... (he isn't sure how to  
phrase it, and Naveed doesn't help him)

NAVEED

(after a moment; simply)

Forget about it.

YUSUF

...when I think about it.

NAVEED

(waving dismissively)

It was so long ago.

YUSUF

(confused by Naveed's  
lack of concern)

Not *that* long ago.

NAVEED

Ages!

YUSUF  
(a pause)  
It's not like now, you know. We weren't  
really... friends then.

NAVEED  
(abruptly, as if he can't  
help himself)  
No, just housemates!

YUSUF  
(conceding)  
But not close.

NAVEED  
No, not close. (pause) Heck, if you think  
you've found the girl of your dreams, you  
shouldn't let some guy-thing, some stupid  
feeling of loyalty, get in the way.

YUSUF LOOKS AT NAVEED, WAITING TO RECEIVE SOME HINT AS TO WHETHER  
HE IS BEING SARCASTIC OR NOT.

NAVEED  
I mean it. A man's got to do what a man's--

YUSUF  
(abruptly, as if irritated and  
confused at the same time)  
Yeah!

NAVEED  
What, you don't agree with me?

YUSUF  
I'm just glad we're over it.

YUSUF SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY IN HIS SEAT, THEN FLIPS A PAGE IN HIS  
BOOK.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM AT SCHOOL. NIGHT.  
THIS ROOM IS AT THE OPPOSITE EXTREME OF DALIAH'S BEDROOM AT HER  
PARENTS' HOUSE: IT IS SO MUCH SMALLER THAT IT WOULD BE  
CLAUSTROPHOBIC, EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT THE ROOM IS SO NEAT THAT  
THERE IS REALLY NO FEELING OF BEING CRAMPED. A SHOT OF A DIGITAL  
TRAVEL ALARM-CLOCK. IT IS 4:27. ACID JAZZ PLAYS SOFTLY ON THE

STEREO. THE ROOM IS DARK; THE LOW-QUALITY CURTAINS HAVE BEEN DRAWN SO THAT A LITTLE LIGHT GLOWS THROUGH THE LARGE, OPENED WINDOW FROM THE STREET-LAMPS. DALIAH'S ROOM IS DARK EXCEPT FOR A SMALL DESK LAMP WHICH IS ON NOW, ILLUMINATING LITTLE BUT THE CIGARETTE IN DALIAH'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND; SHE HOLDS IT OVER A CRYSTAL ASHTRAY, ITS ASH LOOKING AS IF IT MIGHT FALL AT ANY SECOND. THE ASHTRAY IS A COPY OF THE ONE THAT SITS ON THE COFFEE TABLE IN DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE. DALIAH SITS AT HER DESK, POSITIONED RIGHT BESIDE THE WINDOW. SHE EASES BACKWARDS, TEETERING PRECARIOUSLY ON THE BACK LEGS OF HER CHAIR, HER OWN LEGS CROSSED ON TOP OF THE DESK. THE BACK OF HER CHAIR SOMETIMES RUBS AGAINST THE MATTRESS OF HER BED, WHICH IS THE ONLY UNTIDY ELEMENT IN THE ROOM, DUE TO ITS PULLED-BACK DUVET. SHE BALANCES A STEAMING MUG ON HER KNEE; AN OPEN TEXTBOOK SITS JUST BELOW IT, IN HER LAP. SHE GAZES OUT THE WINDOW, AT THE NIGHT-SKY, JUST AT THAT POINT WHEN DEAD BLACK BREAKS OPEN TO A SUGGESTION OF INKISH DEPTH.

INT. DALIAH'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM. A LITTLE LATER.  
A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE BATHROOM MIRROR: WE SEE DALIAH SPLASHING HER FACE WITH WATER. SHE PATS HER FACE DRY. PUTTING HER HANDS ON HER HIPS, SHE LOOKS AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR FOR A MOMENT. THEN, SHE OPENS THE MEDICINE CABINET, OBSERVES ITS CONTENTS FOR A MOMENT, REMOVES AN UNOPENED BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS, EXAMINES THE PACKAGE AND THEN WASHES ONE DOWN WITH A GLASS OF WATER. SHE FLICKS OFF THE LIGHT.

INT. CRAMPED AND DIMLY-LIT HALLWAY. DAY.  
TWO BOYS, IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES, STAND OUTSIDE THE CLOSED DOOR OF A BEDROOM. THE TALLER OF THE TWO HOLDS THE DOORKNOB TENTATIVELY. THE OTHER HOLDS A PALM UP AGAINST THE DOOR. THEY ARE WHISPERING IN FRANTIC TONES.

INT. A SMALL BEDROOM. DAY.  
NAVEED'S BEDROOM IS COMPLETELY DARK. WE CAN JUST MAKE OUT THE OUTLINES OF BED, DESK AND CLOSET. ALL IS STILL, EXCEPT FOR SOME MOVEMENT ON THE BED, WHICH IS NOTICEABLE BECAUSE OF THE HINT OF DAYLIGHT PERSISTING THROUGH THE WINDOW BLIND. THE DOOR CRACKS OPEN, THEN WIDER. LIGHT FROM THE HALLWAY INSTANTANEOUSLY EXPOSES NAVEED, WRITHING ON THE BED; PILLOW, ALARM-CLOCK, BOOKS AND CLOTHING LITTER THE FLOOR.

NAVEED  
Turn it off! Get out!

SHORT BOY  
Naveed, what's wrong with you? You've been  
holed up in here for three days!

NAVEED  
(growling)  
Nothing! Leave me a-lone!

THE BOYS STILL STAND IN THE DOORWAY, UNSURE AS TO WHETHER THEY  
SHOULD FOLLOW THEIR BETTER INSTINCTS OR NAVEED'S ORDER. SHORT  
BOY PLACES A FOOT INSIDE THE ROOM.

NAVEED  
I said, put out the light, God damn you!

SHORT BOY  
What happened?

NAVEED  
And then close the fucking door!

SHORT BOY  
Naveed!

NAVEED  
And then put out the fucking light!

TALL BOY  
Jesus!

TALL BOY GRABS SHORT BOY'S SHIRT COLLAR FROM THE BACK AND PULLS  
HIM BACK AS HE RETREATS. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

NAVEED  
(a violent roar)  
Hey!

THE DOOR OPENS FOR A SECOND, ENOUGH FOR A HAND TO SLIP IN AND  
FLICK OFF THE LIGHT SWITCH IN ONE DEFT MOVEMENT. IT ESCAPES AND  
THE DOOR SHUTS.

INT. HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY. NIGHT.  
A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED FROM THE SIDE, SITTING IN A CARREL, AS IF  
HE'S TALKING TO US.

NAVEED

(ranting)

If it were only something else.... If I were an asshole, a thief, a drug lord, a hit man.... I mean, if it was something *real*, I mean, it's not like she hated me as a person, my personality.... I mean, *money*? Is it true--is that how people really are?

A LOW-ANGLE SHOT OF AN ANXIOUS LIBRARIAN IN HER MID-THIRTIES. HER HANDS GRIP THE HANDLE OF THE BOOK-CART IN FRONT OF HER.

NAVEED

But you just don't care, do you? That's the problem with girls nowadays.

LIBRARIAN

Look, I hope things work out for you but--

NAVEED

But you don't give a shit.

LIBRARIAN

I'm not saying that. It's just that I have to--

NAVEED

You didn't have to say it. It's in the cartoon bubble above your head.

LIBRARIAN

(indicating the books on top of Naveed's carrel)

Look, the library's closing soon. Are you done with those books or not?

NAVEED

(hyper)

No, no, I'm not! (he makes a clumsy grab at the books, causing some of them to fall into his lap and onto the floor). Maybe I'll never be done with them and *then* what'll you do?

LIBRARIAN

(fed up)

You medical students really oughta be made to take a course in Interpersonal Relations.



There's more to life than just books, you know!

THE LIBRARIAN PUSHES HER CART AWAY.

NAVEED

(calling after her)

I'm no damn med student! Ha! They wish! I'm too smart for them!

SOMETHING OCCURS TO HIM. AFTER A MOMENT, HIS EXPRESSION SOFTENS.

INT. DALIAH'S LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH'S ROOMMATE, JANE, SITTING ON THE COUCH, WATCHING TV. SHE HAS BEEN CRYING; HER ARMS ARE CROSSED AND HER JAW CLENCHED.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, BLEARY-EYED AND LETHARGIC AND IN HER PYJAMAS, RIFLING THROUGH HER DESK. SHE FINDS A PACKAGE OF WAKE-UPS AND POPS TWO.

INT. DALIAH'S LIVING ROOM.

WE SEE DALIAH ENTERING FROM THE HALLWAY, YAWNING.

DALIAH

I've crossed over again. Nocturnal me, playing day for night. (pause) Are you alright?

JANE

(after a moment)

We have to talk.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

How amazingly parental. I felt like I was in trouble, like the wayward kid in a made-for-TV movie.

(to Jane)

What's the matter?

JANE

Kevin, that guy I was supposed to see again tonight....

DALIAH

(on-guard)

What did he do?

JANE

He came over earlier. We were going to set a time for a second date and.... he saw the pictures of us on the fridge and he wanted to know what your background was and, and--he's a bigot!

A SHOT OF JANE, WAITING FOR DALIAH'S REACTION. A SHOT OF DALIAH. SHE'S WAITING FOR MORE; SHE PUTS A HAND ON HER HIP, AND THEN LETS IT FALL TO HER SIDE.

DALIAH

(relaxes a little)

Well, what do you mean, what did he say?

JANE

(a pause)

I don't want to give air to his words... repeat them. But I told him that if he doesn't respect you as a person, then I can't respect him as a person, and that I wouldn't be able to see him again.

DALIAH

You *did*?

JANE

(begins crying again)

And he got really upset, really *mad*, and he said our relationship has nothing to do with you, so why was I taking it so badly? (she looks at Daliah) Why I was taking it so badly! (she scoffs) I can't believe that there's still people like him around!

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I was beginning to feel inconsiderate, like I should be going over to her and comforting her or something. I'm just not a huggy-type of person. But I try...

DALIAH MAKES HER WAY TO THE COUCH AWKWARDLY, THEN SITS BESIDE JANE AND SQUEEZES HER SHOULDER. JANE TURNS SUDDENLY AND HUGS HER. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH: HER EYES WIDEN AS SHE SUPPRESSES A GIGGLE. SHE PATS JANE ON THE BACK.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
For a split second, I almost thought I  
should've said, thank you.  
(to Jane)  
What an asshole. Don't worry about it.

JANE  
(muffled)  
It's just that--he was so *perfect* otherwise!  
I really believed something would come out of  
our relationship!

A SHOT OF DALIAH'S FACE, HARDENING.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
It was the sense of injustice in her voice  
that hit me, pulling sympathy from my bones.  
And I admit, I felt myself fighting the urge  
to simply allow it to happen. Because I  
realized her anguish had begun to remove  
itself from him and was now hovering over my  
head; the flawed, and irrational, logic that,  
if *Jane's roommate* had been white then,  
somehow, Kevin wouldn't have been prejudiced.  
*My fault.* That Jane was pinning me down and  
expecting, *drawing* the emotional response she  
wanted from me, that...irked somehow.

A SHOT OF DALIAH, HER EYES TEAR-FILLED, PULLING AWAY FROM JANE.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
I made my eyes tear up, because that was what  
she needed.  
(to Jane, smiling)  
Want to go for some fries?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF JANE, WIPING HER TEARS AND NODDING.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
And I made my escape into the wide-open  
emotional landscape of my McWorld, because  
that was what *I* needed.

EXT. A BUSY CITY STREET. NIGHT.

A LONG SHOT FROM BEHIND OF DALIAH AND JANE FALLING AGAINST EACH OTHER AS THEY LAUGH HYSTERICALLY. CARS, MANY OF WHICH ARE FILLED WITH ROWDY STUDENTS, ZOOM PAST THEM IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, SOMETIMES HONKING AT THE GIRLS. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE TWO GIRLS: JANE SUDDENLY GRIPS THE SHOULDER OF DALIAH'S JACKET, HER EYES WIDE.

DALIAH  
(smiling)

What?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH'S FACE; SHE APPEARS AMUSED AND BEWILDERED AT THE SAME TIME. A LONG SHOT: JANE PULLS DALIAH FROM THE SIDEWALK, PARTWAY ACROSS THE FRONT LAWN, AND BEHIND A SIGN. A MEDIUM SHOT: THE SIGN READS "ST. ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. SUNDAY 10:30 AM WORSHIP: WE CAN HELP YOU DISCOVER A POSITIVE FAITH." THE FIGURES OF THE TWO GIRLS CAN BE SEEN CROUCHING BEHIND IT.

DALIAH  
What are you *doing*?

JANE  
(worried)  
I think I saw Kevin in that car that just honked!

DALIAH  
I'm sure it wasn't.

JANE  
I swear it was!

DALIAH  
And even if it was, what's the big deal? What do you think he's going to do?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF JANE, APPREHENSIVE.

JANE  
What if he turns around and comes back?

DALIAH  
For what? You think he cares so much about the whole thing that he's going to come back and attack us or something?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF JANE, FRETTING.

JANE

He drinks a lot.

DALIAH

(pulling Jane back onto the sidewalk)

Alright, that's enough, come on! I want my fries!

A LONG SHOT FROM BEHIND OF THE TWO AS THEY WALK TOWARDS THE NEON FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT UP AHEAD, LESS ENERGETIC THAN THEY'D BEEN EARLIER. DALIAH GLANCES ONCE BEHIND THEM. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AND JANE EATING FRIES IN THE RESTAURANT, TALKING AND LAUGHING.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I put it out of my mind, like when someone does something that embarrasses themselves and you pretend it never happened. It was nothing, really. But I'd picked up some kind of negative energy from the whole thing. Something rotten had turned over inside and then I realized the rotten feeling was a tiny bit of fear she'd given rise to, as well as resentment, because even though I'd never met Kevin, she'd put a face on hatred... one that I was incapable of recognizing, and that only she could point out to me and then tell me to hide.

A LONG SHOT: WE SEE DALIAH AND JANE WALKING AWAY, BACK HOME, HEADS DOWN AGAINST THE NIGHT CHILL.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

For the first time, the thought went through my head that some of these people were not my people.

EXT. CAMPUS. DAY.

A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF WALKING TOWARDS COMMONS.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED, AS HE SPOTS YUSUF.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED STEPPING INTO YUSUF'S PATH.

YUSUF

Oh, hey, how ya doing?

NAVEED

You know, I've been thinking about that thing we were talking about the other day.

YUSUF

(giving Naveed a blank look; he is more surprised than irritated)

Look, I took that as your attempt at humour, guy. (a pause as Naveed waits for more; then) No way! I swear, you're a nut! Get a hobby, wouldja? You've got too much free time on your hands.

NAVEED

Yeah, sure, it was just an idea. Really. A stupid one. You don't owe me anything. Honestly.

YUSUF

(confused)

Alrighty, then. (he nods amiably)

NAVEED

Are you going to the caf? Come on, I'll buy you lunch.

YUSUF

(drawn out)

Freee foood?

NAVEED

Just to show... no hard feelings, right? You're not going to hold a grudge against me, are you?

YUSUF

Grudge? Why would I have a grudge against you?

INT. COMMONS. NOON.

YUSUF AND NAVEED SIT EATING PIZZA AT A TABLE BY THE WINDOWS. SOMETHING OVER YUSUF'S SHOULDER CATCHES NAVEED'S ATTENTION. HE

PUTS AN EMPTY FIST UP TO HIS EYE, AS THOUGH HE WERE LOOKING THROUGH A TELESCOPE.

YUSUF

*What* are ya doing?

NAVEED

There's the lady that caught my eye.

YUSUF

(turning slightly to look behind him)

That's her?

NAVEED

Uh-huh.

YUSUF

(watches her movement; then, he turns back to Naveed who is still consumed with watching Daliah)

I've seen her around before. (pause) I didn't know she was Pakistani.

NAVEED

(continues his tracking Daliah's movement through his "telescope")

Uh-huh.

A SHOT OF YUSUF; THINKING, NOT EATING, AND WATCHING NAVEED.

YUSUF

Okay! Quit it, will you?

NAVEED

(drops the hand at his eye; turns his attention back to Yusuf)

Okay, what?

YUSUF

Okay, I'll do it. Just the one night, right? And after that, that'll be it, right? You won't... I won't owe you--

NAVEED

Please. It's not a matter of owing me or not. Just do it as a favour--for a friend.

YUSUF

Yeah. A friend.

NAVEED

And, hey, free food!

YUSUF

(not as light-heartedly  
as earlier)

Yeah. Free food.

A SHOT OF YUSUF LOOKING OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF WHERE THE GIRLS HAVE SEATED THEMSELVES. YUSUF'S PERSPECTIVE BECOMES OUR OWN AS WE MOVE FROM YUSUF AND NAVEED, THROUGH THE CAFETERIA, TO AN EMPTY CHAIR AT THE GIRLS' SQUARE-SHAPED TABLE AND DOWN, AS IF WE HAVE TAKEN A SEAT WITH THE GIRLS. DALIAH SITS TO OUR LEFT; LAYLA DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF US, PEERING OVER OUR SHOULDER TO TAKE A LOOK AT NAVEED.

LAYLA

The one with the fluffy hair?

DALIAH

Yeah. Don't make it obvious.

LAYLA

Who's the guy with him?

DALIAH

I don't know, I can't tell from here. Okay, stop looking. I might have to go and say hi if he knows I've seen him.

NADIR APPROACHES WITH A CHOCOLATE BAR AND SITS IN THE REMAINING SEAT, TO OUR RIGHT.

NADIR

What are you girls talking about?

DALIAH

Global warming. Where's your girlfriend?



NADIR  
(irritated)

On cloud *nine*.

LAYLA  
What do you mean?

NADIR  
The girl's so in love with me, it's infringing on my personal life. Her clinginess is beginning to grate, if you want to know the truth.

DALIAH  
We don't.

NADIR  
(he picks up Daliah's lighter and plays with it)  
I thought you chicks liked talking about emotions and all that crap?

DALIAH  
You're supposed to talk about it with *her*, not with us, you moron! I don't think she'd appreciate us knowing her business. I wouldn't if I were her.

NADIR  
You *wish* you were her!

DALIAH  
(sarcastically)  
With all my heart.

LAYLA  
(to Daliah)  
Elvis is gonzo, if you get my drift.

A SHOT OF NAVEED WALKING THROUGH THE GLASS DOUBLE DOORS OF THE CAFETERIA.

DALIAH  
(taking a pack of cigarettes from her knapsack)  
Good. Because I feel like a smoke and I don't need him finding out about that. His extortion fee could mean having to marry him.

NADIR

(continuing)

You're very aggravating, as a species, that's all I got to say.

THE GIRLS GATHER THEIR KNAPSACKS AND BOOKS AND STAND.

NADIR

You going to leave me all alone?

LAYLA

I thought we were giving you an ulcer with all our complexities.

NADIR

(looking around furtively)

I promised I'd-- Wait for me!

INT. IN BETWEEN THE TWO SETS OF GLASS DOUBLE DOORS, WHERE THE SMOKERS CONGREGATE IN CHILLY WEATHER. THE BACK OF A RED NO-SMOKING BULL'S EYE CAN BE SEEN ON EACH OF THE OUTSIDE DOORS. NOW, AS PER USUAL DURING PEAK LUNCH HOURS, THE AREA IS PACKED. DALIAH REMOVES TWO CIGARETTES FROM THE PACK, HANDS LAYLA ONE, AND RUMMAGES IN HER POCKETS.

DALIAH

I just *had* the thing in my hands!

NADIR HOLDS UP THE LIGHTER, AS IF TO ASK, 'IS THIS WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?'

DALIAH

(frowning)

About done with that?

NADIR FLICKS THE LIGHTER HIMSELF, INSTEAD, AND HOLDS IT UP TO DALIAH. DALIAH LEANS TOWARDS HIM.

NADIR

(jerking the lighter back)

Hey, hey! That is so unladylike, don't you know that? Never lean in when a guy's lighting your cigarette!

DALIAH

What the hell would you like me to do?

LAYLA, EXASPERATED, ACCEPTS A LIT CIGARETTE FROM A GIRL STANDING NEXT TO HER AND LIGHTS HER OWN.

NADIR

You shouldn't have to move at all. Let the man move in and hold the lighter right under your cigarette.

DALIAH

I suppose if I'd noticed a man in close proximity, I might've clued in.

NADIR

Ha ha. (assuredly) Really, it's the classy way.

DALIAH

Don't you know it's *déclassé* to call attention to something and refer to it as *being* classy? (pause) Hand it the fuck over.

NADIR TRIES TO WITHHOLD THE LIGHTER. DALIAH LOOKS AT HIM STERNLY AND THEN DEFTLY SNATCHES IT AWAY FROM HIM.

NADIR

(to Daliah)

Why, exactly, are you so mean? Didn't your mother ever tell you that you can attract more flies with honey than--

DALIAH

(defiantly)

I'm not looking to attract anything

NADIR

Why can't you just be nice?

DALIAH

*Nice* is frosted flakes without the flakes. Being nice can make anyone like you. I don't want just anyone to like me.

NADIR

You know, I always had reason to believe you were a little cuckoo for CocoaPuffs.

DALIAH

Honestly, if someone said they liked me

simply because I was nice--I don't know, I'd have to question my whole reason for being.

LAYLA

C'mon, Daliah. We've got to get to Chem.

NADIR

Oh God! Don't leave me now! (he ducks to avoid being seen by someone who is about to come through the doors) It's Christine. Ohhh! (he groans)

DALIAH

You are seriously pathetic.

LAYLA

(smiles and waves)

Well, she's looking right at me.

DALIAH

(beginning to push her way through the people between the two sets of double doors to get outside)

Stand up straight, Nadir, or you're going to end up with a question mark for a spine.

NADIR

(smiling in the direction of the doors)

Well, there she is and here she comes. Remind me to thank you darlings at a later time.

WE SEE DALIAH AND LAYLA WALKING AWAY FROM NADIR'S PERSPECTIVE; THEY YELL 'HEY' TO CHRISTINE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NADIR AS HE SLUMPS AGAINST THE WALL. HE BEGINS TO SMILE AS HE WATCHES CHRISTINE APPROACH.

INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE DALIAH'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AND JANE STANDING BY THEIR FRONT DOOR. DALIAH, AN ELABORATELY-WRAPPED PRESENT IN HAND, LOCKS THE DOOR. BOTH GIRLS APPEAR A LITTLE NERVOUS AS THEY WALK ACROSS THE HALL TO THE YOUNG ARABIC WOMAN'S APARTMENT. FEMALE LAUGHTER RESONATES OVER THE ARABIC MUSIC THAT PLAYS ALL THE WAY INTO THE HALLWAY. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE KNOCKS, THEN ROLLS HER EYES AT HERSELF AS SHE REALIZES THAT NO ONE IN THE APARTMENT CAN HEAR

HER. A LONG SHOT OF THE GIRLS FROM BEHIND AS THEY ENTER THE APARTMENT TENTATIVELY.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF DALIAH'S APARTMENT BUILDING.  
LATER.

A LONG SHOT FROM THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING, REVEALING THE BUSHES THAT LINE THE MAIN PATH TO THE FRONT DOOR. WE SEE TWO FIGURES: ONE CROUCHES NEAR THE GROUND, UNMOVING; THE OTHER, CURVED OVER WITH HIS HANDS GRIPPING HIS THIGHS, SKULKS ACROSS THE GRASS AS HE MAKES HIS WAY TOWARDS THE FIRST. A MEDIUM SHOT OF OMAR AS HE REACHES NAVEED AND THEN DROPS TO A CROUCH AS WELL. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF OMAR LOOKING AT NAVEED, SUSPICIOUSLY. A CLOSE-UP OF NAVEED, UNPERTURBED BY OMAR, HEAD TILTED UPWARDS. A LOW-ANGLE SHOT OF A SCREEN DOOR LEADING OUT TO A BALCONY ON THE THIRD FLOOR. DURING THE DAY, THE BOYS WOULD HAVE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO MAKE OUT A SMALL PART OF THE CEILING WHERE IT CONNECTS TO THE WALL. NOW, THE LIGHTS ARE OFF SO THAT ALL THEY SEE IS BLACKNESS, EXCEPT FOR A CRESCENT MOON, SMALL PLANETS AND STARS, ADHESIVE PRE-CUT IMAGES MADE OUT OF FLORESCENT YELLOW MATERIAL AND MANUFACTURED FOR CHILDREN'S ROOMS.

OMAR

(whispering emphatically)

What are we doing? You said we were going to go to your friend's to watch the game!

NAVEED

(calmly, with no attempt to lower his regular speaking voice)

Why watch the whole drawn-out game? You can get the highlights on Sportsline later.

OMAR

(perplexed)

What are you--stalking this chick?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF NAVEED TURNING TOWARDS OMAR WITH A SLIGHT AIR OF EXASPERATION. HE DOES NOT REPLY AND RESUMES HIS WATCH WITH NO CHANGE IN HIS EXPRESSION OTHERWISE.

OMAR

I don't understand.

NAVEED

(smiling at Omar)

It's the moon--it makes men mad.

OMAR

Yeah, well. (pause) Just that, I thought you were hung up on that other chick, the one Yusuf stole from you a while back. Ya go and have dinner with another one and all of a sudden *she's* the one you're obsessed with? (he snickers) You could, at least, be loyal to the one you stalk!

A MEDIUM SIDE SHOT OF NAVEED, BITING HIS LIP.

OMAR

I'm sorry, buddy, but forget you and forget this. I don't want to be around when all this negative energy boomerangs back at ya. Man, I thought *I* had unhealthy karma problems.

A LONG SHOT OF THE TWO; AS OMAR STANDS, NAVEED GRABS AT HIS SHIRT, THROWING HIM OFF-BALANCE. HE PULLS OMAR DOWN SO FIERCELY THAT OMAR COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND BESIDE HIM. NAVEED FIXES HIS GAZE ON THE WINDOW ONCE AGAIN.

NAVEED

(maintaining his grip)

There's no such thing as karma, believe me. And how did you expect I'd get back once you'd motored off in that car of yours?

OMAR

Somehow, I didn't think you'd consider being stranded here a negative. (a pause; then, a sigh) She could be out, you know.

NAVEED

(confidently)

She's sleeping.

EXT. A STREET CORNER. DAY.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED BEHIND A MAILBOX. HE STRUGGLES TO HOLD ON TO THE ONE-TOO-MANY ITEMS HE IS CARRYING. HE GRIPS HIS WALLET BETWEEN HIS TEETH AND A NOTEBOOK THREATENS TO SLIP FROM BENEATH HIS ARMPIT AS HE SEARCHES THROUGH THE KNAPSACK HE HAS WEDGED INTO THE MAIL SLOT TO KEEP IT OPEN.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF, STANDING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MAILBOX, SMILING AT THE SCENE BEFORE HIM.

YUSUF  
(ironically)  
You don't need a hand, do you?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED; HE LOOKS AS IF HE HAS BEEN SURPRISED IN THE MIDDLE OF DOING SOMETHING WRONG. THE WALLET DROPS FROM HIS MOUTH AND FALLS INTO THE MAILBOX. NAVEED CATCHES HIS BREATH. A MEDIUM SHOT INSIDE THE MAILBOX. THE WALLET SITS ON THE LITTLE LEDGE. NAVEED'S HAND REACHES IN AND PICKS IT UP.

NAVEED  
(laughs, relieved)  
Shit, that was close.

YUSUF  
(laughing)  
You really oughta relax.

NAVEED  
What's the point? I'd have nothing to do otherwise. So, listen, I called up that matchmaker-lady--

YUSUF  
You *did*?

NAVEED  
Of course. How else did--

YUSUF  
I don't know. I never thought about it, but I guess I didn't think it would be so, so--

NAVEED  
(impatiently)  
What?

YUSUF  
I mean, pulling off a little joke-kinda-thing with someone is one thing, but actually *lying* to... adults, *real people*. That sorta verges on terribly rude. (pause, then he cocks his head to the side) Me mum wouldn't be too proud.

NAVEED  
I'm sure the time your mother allots to

contemplating how much she's ashamed of you is already quite full. I doubt she'd have the time to take something else on.

YUSUF  
(irritated)

Screw you.

NAVEED  
I didn't mean it that bad.

YUSUF  
What do you know about me anyhow? So we shared a house once, by some kind of fluke. I had a separate entrance. I never saw you! And I *hardly* know you now!

NAVEED  
I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You have no idea how much stuff I'm going through. Look, I have no neck, my shoulders are so full of knots.

YUSUF  
(absent-mindedly)  
You should get to the gym once in a while. Working out'll fix that up.

NAVEED  
(a pause; then, soberly)  
It's seven o'clock, next Saturday.

YUSUF  
(eyes widening)  
Jesus.

NAVEED  
Look, it's all set. It would look worse to call it off now. They know your name and that you're in med school here at Mac--

YUSUF  
Oh my God.

NAVEED  
It's nothing to you; you just go, partake of the good eats, then say thank you and get out of there. They'll never know you wasted a couple of years finding yourself and you're



only an undergrad still. But *I'll* know; when they hook onto you because of the doctor thing, they'll call up the match-maker lady and she'll call me. That's how it works. In *this* case, because I told her you had no parents--

YUSUF

What!

NAVEED

And that's why *I* was calling on your behalf.

YUSUF

Whoa. (pause) Won't that look weird, that you're setting me up with her, even though you were just set up with her?

NAVEED

(waves this off, as he leans onto the mailbox)

Nah. Happens all the time.

YUSUF

(uncomfortable)

I just keep getting this bad feeling. Are you sure you want to do this? I mean, you may prove she's superficial and all that but what kind of satisfaction are you going to get out of it?

NAVEED

I'll be satisfied when I prove to myself that she really did ditch me so quickly only because she was after money. Because that's what they said... and if that wasn't true....I just want to prove to myself that it's not *me* that's lacking. (he looks up at Yusuf) And can't keep a girl.

YUSUF

(holds his breath, looks at Naveed)

I never stole that girl away from--

NAVEED

Noo, no! I never meant--

YUSUF

When I met her, she wasn't seeing you at the time. At least, that's what she told--

NAVEED

Yusuf, I didn't mean to make you feel *bad*.

YUSUF

I don't feel *bad*. I just keep having this feeling of guilt, but I know, back then, I didn't do anything *wrong*.

NAVEED

Yusuf, her and I weren't meant to be together, so that's that. What did it ever have to do with you? Really, I didn't want to make you feel like you *had* to do this for me, because you don't, I want you to know that. I'm not forcing you to do this.

YUSUF

(brusquely)

Yeah, yeah, I know. (after a breath) Fine. Shit. Alright. Dinner, that's all it is. (he laughs, nervously)

NAVEED

(smiling)

Absolutely. Good. So from now on, I don't think we should hang out together--

YUSUF

(confused)

Us hang out?

NAVEED

Because it would be best if Daliah, if she didn't see us together much. Just in case.

YUSUF

(shrugs)

Oh, right. Sure

NAVEED

(zipping up knapsack)

There. That'll kill two birds with one stone.

YUSUF

How's that?

NAVEED

Oh, you know. It, uh, takes care of Daliah finding out about our little plan and...you know, the time we used to hang out, I'll be able to use as study-time.

YUSUF

(unconvinced)

Right. I better get back to campus myself. I'm crazy-late for class.

A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF WALKING AWAY. A MOMENT LATER, HE LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER AND QUICKLY TURNS BACK AGAIN. A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED AS HE DEPOSITS AN ENVELOPE INTO THE MAIL SLOT, FLIPS HIS KNAPSACK OVER HIS SHOULDER AND WALKS AWAY.

INT. LIBRARY. DAY.

NAVEED SITS IN A CARREL; OMAR LEANS OVER THE TOP TO TALK TO HIM. HE'S GOT A SILVER STUD EARRING IN HIS BOTTOM LIP AND HIS HAIR IS A DRAB, MATTE BLACK.

OMAR

I'm not joking. This whole thing has reached the absolute height of ridiculousness. I'm going to talk some sense into that flighty little head of hers.

NAVEED

Seriously, what's done is done. You can't undo anything for me that already hasn't done its damage.

OMAR SIGHS LOUDLY.

NAVEED

(matter-of-factly)

It's okay. So she wasn't the one for me.

OMAR

(skeptically)

Suddenly you're king of the quick-change, all of a sudden?

NAVEED'S HEAD SUDDENLY JERKS BACK, AS IF HE'S TRYING TO CATCH SOMEBODY'S ATTENTION. OMAR FOLLOWS HIS GAZE. A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF WALKING PAST, UNAWARE.

NAVEED  
(distracted)  
It's fine. Really.

OMAR  
(whispering sharply)  
I don't know about that. I just don't get you. First, that guy stole your girlfriend and you never did anything about it. Where was your sense of dignity? Honour, man! And now, all of a sudden, you're trying to be his best friend on top of it all! Forgive me, but you ain't in Kansas, if you get me. You've got to watch your own back. There's no goddamned fairy godmother who's going to do that for you!

EXT. ON CAMPUS. DAY.  
DALIAH AND LAYLA SIT, SMOKING, ON A RAISED CEMENT PLATFORM OVERLOOKING A THAWING GARDEN.

DALIAH  
My mom said the matchmaker lady said that his family sounded miffed on the phone when she told them we weren't interested. I hate that. Makes me feel horrible, like they hate me. They should at least try to be *pleasant*. It's a very delicate process.

LAYLA  
I don't see how the guy's feelings *wouldn't* get hurt. It sounds worse than just trying to break up with a person. It's such a personal thing, but it's not even allowed to take place in a personal way. It's like... emotions get *amplified*. And publicized.

DALIAH  
Well, it pisses me off that they got so mad because I said 'no thank you'. I mean, look at it the other way around, too. Who is he to think that he has the right to just *pick*

me, without considering that I have a choice to make, too, not just him. What does he think I am, that he can just look me over, put a finger to his lip, and then say, ok, I'll have this one. Like I'm a-a- chocolate in a box! Because...cause...

LAYLA

Because life is not a box of chocolates.

DALIAH

Damn right! (pause) I don't know where he's coming from--I'd say he's got Pakistani mentality, but it's not even that. He's got Pakistani caveman mentality. And he's never even been out of Ontario!

LAYLA

Maybe that's his problem.

DALIAH

(taking an orange  
from her knapsack)

Not his most debilitating one, I should add.

LAYLA

(in shock)

What are you *doing*?

DALIAH

Oh yeah, get me, I'm healthy! (beginning to peel the orange) But, in related news, we're giving The Dating Game tournament another go this weekend. (she turns to Layla suddenly, fluttering her eyelashes and looking dreamy) Oh, do you think he'll be the one this time? Say you believe, Toto!

LAYLA

Click your heels, Dodo, and wake up, for God's sake! I told you to stay away from that there hash-type substance.

DALIAH

(picking at the orange)

What is *with* this thing? The peel's, like, painted on! (She hits the orange against the cement in frustration)

LAYLA

Seriously, I just don't understand how this is supposed to just *happen* to you... that you'll conveniently, just by chance, happen to fall in love with one of these guys picked by... some other people who don't even know you to look at!

DALIAH

(head down looking  
at her orange)

Fall in love.. hehe hehe (she snickers like Beavis and Butthead)

LAYLA

Do you honestly believe that? That something that's supposed to grow naturally and progressively ... should come out of something so systematic... mechanical, even?

DALIAH

I suppose I don't really. Not really. But there's always that one chance. That's all you need, really. *I just need one!* Someone who gets... me. Who knows where I might meet up with him? (pause; then, sarcastically) Yeah, of all the places in the world, I'm sure he'll be sitting at my dining room table, making small talk with my mom. Nix what I was just saying. Because even if he was Tom Cruise, that image of him sitting there makes me detest him already. I can't help it. No matter what kind of guy he is, I'm thinking, what's *wrong* with you, that you can't even get together with a woman on your own?

LAYLA SNORTS. DALIAH LOOKS AT HER EXPECTANTLY.

LAYLA

I wouldn't be so critical. You're queen of the clueless when guys are hitting on you.

DALIAH

Well, that's different, anyway. It's not like I'd be getting together with any of those guys, anyway.

LAYLA  
(simply)

Why not?

DALIAH  
I just wouldn't start something up with a guy who wasn't the same religion as me.

LAYLA  
But what if you just happened to fall in love with a guy who wasn't? What would you do? Wouldn't you marry him?

DALIAH  
I just know that regardless of how much I liked a guy, if he wasn't Muslim, I wouldn't... let it progress to that point.

LAYLA  
(frustrated)  
This is nuts! The kind of guys you're supposed to marry, you tell to get lost, and for the ones you're not, you've got blinders on. *Who* are you going to end up with? Where are you going with this life of yours?

DALIAH  
(deadpan)  
I'm not saying I'm unaware of the paradox.

DALIAH STOPS PICKING AT THE ORANGE, LOOKS AT IT AND THEN SINKS HER TEETH INTO IT, PEEL AND ALL.

DALIAH  
(expressionless)  
It's surprising how bad peel tastes.

SHE PUTS THE ORANGE DOWN AND PICKS UP HER CIGARETTES; AS SHE LIGHTS UP, LAYLA REACHES FOR ONE.

DALIAH  
(laughing in mock surprise)  
You're asking me for a cigarette after *that*?

INT. NADIR'S BEDROOM. LATE AFTERNOON.  
THE ROOM IS A MESS. THE BED IS UNMADE. THE CLOSET DOOR IS OPENED TO REVEAL HANGERS STICKING OUT AT ALL ANGLES; SOME CLOTHES ARE

NEATLY ARRANGED, WHILE THE REST THREATEN TO FALL OFF THEIR HANGERS WITH ONLY THE SLIGHTEST NUDGE. A BASKET FULL OF LAUNDRY SITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLOOR. DALIAH IS SEATED AT NADIR'S DESK, THE COMPUTER SCREEN GLOWING IN FRONT OF HER. HER CHAIR IS PULLED AWAY FROM THE DESK AT THE MOMENT AS SHE STRUGGLES TO PULL HER SHOE OFF HER LEFT STOCKING'D FOOT. THE LEFT SHOE SITS WHERE SHE'S TOSSED IT ON THE FLOOR. HER EYES ARE BLOODSHOT AND SHE SLOUCHES OVER THE KEYBOARD. A TOP 40 STATION PLAYS SOFTLY ON THE RADIO. SOMEONE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR AND OPENS IT BEFORE DALIAH HAS TIME TO RESPOND. CHRISTINE ENTERS.

CHRISTINE

(surprised to find Daliah)

Oh! Where's Nadir?

DALIAH

(finally pulling the second shoe off)

At the library. He said I could use his computer until he gets back later.

CHRISTINE

At the library? He told me to meet him here this afternoon.

DALIAH

Oh, he must've forgotten to call you. I've got this write-up of a lab due for night-class tonight and there was no other way I would have been able to--

CHRISTINE

Well, I'm glad you have him to help you out.

DALIAH SMILES BLANKLY.

Oh, well, I guess I should come back tonight then. (pause) Want to see something? I started learning how to dance, Pakistani-style. I thought Nadir would like it.

DALIAH MAKES A FACE LIKE SHE'S GOING TO THROW UP, BUT CHRISTINE DOESN'T NOTICE THIS SINCE SHE IS SWITCHING CDs ON THE PLAYER. CHRISTINE STRAIGHTENS AS A DANCE MIX OF A TRADITIONAL PAKISTANI SONG BLARES FROM THE CD PLAYER. STACCATO BEATS BOOM AT THE MOMENT JUST BEFORE YOU EXPECT THEM. THIS PUTS DALIAH SLIGHTLY OFF-BALANCE SINCE HER NERVES ARE ALREADY ON EDGE. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF



HER EYES, LIDS CRASHING DOWN INVOLUNTARILY WITH THE BEAT.  
CHRISTINE GRABS THE BACK OF DALIAH'S ROLL-AWAY CHAIR AND QUICKLY  
SWIVELS IT AROUND SO THAT DALIAH IS FACING HER.

CHRISTINE

Watch!

CHRISTINE BEGINS DANCING.

DALIAH

(shouting over the music)

I think it's more hip and less stamping!

CHRISTINE DOESN'T ANSWER. SHE FIXES A PERMASMILE ON HER FACE AS SHE MOVES TOWARDS DALIAH AND THEN BACK, THEN TOWARDS DALIAH AND BACK AGAIN, EACH TIME ENDING WITH A LOUD BANG AS HER SHOE CLOGS THE WOODEN FLOOR AND, EACH TIME, CLOGGING THE FLOOR CLOSER TO DALIAH.

THEIR CONVERSATION OCCURS AS CHRISTINE SPEAKS WHEN SHE HITS THE FLOOR NEAR DALIAH, AND DALIAH RESPONDS WHEN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN HER AND CHRISTINE IS AT ITS GREATEST, FORCING HER TO YELL TO BE HEARD.

CHRISTINE

Did Nadir buy my Valentine's Day present yet?

DALIAH

How would I know?

CHRISTINE

I know he tells you--things. I bought him a watch.

DALIAH

You did? I hope you didn't blow your life savings on him!

CHRISTINE

I've decided I want him to be my first.

DALIAH

Your first asshole boyfriend?

CHRISTINE

You know--my *first*.

DALIAH  
Ohhhh--Don't tell me that!

CHRISTINE  
Why? You think I shouldn't?

DALIAH  
I just do not want to know!

CHRISTINE  
But why? Just tell me what you think! I need  
an impartial opinion.

DALIAH  
Christine, I really don't--

DALIAH IS CUT OFF BY CHRISTINE'S STAMPING. A CLOSE-UP SIDE SHOT  
OF CHRISTINE'S FACE LOOKING DIRECTLY INTO DALIAH'S FOR A MOMENT,  
AS SHE LEANS DOWN AFTER SHE HAS STAMPED THE FLOOR.

CHRISTINE  
C'mon, you can be honest with me.

DALIAH DOESN'T RESPOND UNTIL CHRISTINE HAS DANCED HER WAY ACROSS  
THE ROOM AND THEN BACK UP TO WHERE DALIAH SITS.

DALIAH  
No! I don't think you should. Not with him!  
Not at this point.

CHRISTINE HAS ALREADY STAMPED HER WAY BACK TO THE BED AND BEGINS  
STAMPING BACK TOWARDS DALIAH AGAIN. A SHOT OF HER ULTIMATE FOOT-  
STOMP AS HER SHOE CATCHES DALIAH'S TOES. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF  
DALIAH'S EYES, BUGGED OUT. A SHOT OF CHRISTINE DANCING BACK  
TOWARDS THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM, PERMA-SMILED, APPARENTLY NOT  
NOTICING DALIAH'S PAIN. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH SLOWLY ROTATING  
HER CHAIR AROUND TO FACE THE COMPUTER. A SHOT OF THE MONITOR: SHE  
IS ONLY AT THE POINT OF DESCRIBING THE METHOD OF THE EXPERIMENT.  
SHE LOOKS AT HER WATCH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER DISORIENTED FACE AS  
CHRISTINE'S FIGURE MOVES JERKILY IN THE BACKGROUND, AS IF, ANY  
MOMENT, SHE WILL POUNCE ON DALIAH WHILE HER BACK IS TURNED.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE DANCE BAR. NIGHT.  
A SHOT OF DALIAH STANDING TALKING TO A GUY AT THE BAR. A SHOT OF  
NAVEED AND OMAR LOOKING OVER IN DALIAH'S DIRECTION. WHEN NAVEED

MAKES AS IF TO GO OVER TO HER, OMAR MAKES A WEAK GESTURE OF PROTEST.

OMAR

What are you thinking, man?

NAVEED

I'll give her one last chance.

OMAR

Are you serious? C'mon, let it go.

A SHOT OF AN AMAZED OMAR AS NAVEED PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD. AFTER A MOMENT, OMAR TURNS AND PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

WHEN DALIAH RECOGNIZES NAVEED, SHE TRIES TO INCONSPICUOUSLY PUT OUT HER CIGARETTE IN AN ASHTRAY CONCEALED BY THE BAR-EDGE.

NAVEED

Would you like to dance?

DALIAH

(guardedly)

I don't really slow-dance that much.

NAVEED

C'mon, you owe me this, at least.

DALIAH

(a little amazed at this)

You think so, do you? Fine, I'll dance.

NAVEED REACHES FOR HER HAND; SHE DODGES IT, PRETENDING SHE DOESN'T NOTICE IT. HE FOLLOWS HER OUT INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE DANCE FLOOR AND THEY DANCE.

NAVEED

(intimating)

Your mother know you smoke?

DALIAH

(with a blank expression)

I don't.

NAVEED

Oh. (unsure as to whether she's joking or not; a pause, then) I had no idea you go out

to the clubs.

A SHOT OF DALIAH, LOOKING IRRITATED.

NAVEED

(continuing)

What are you doing?

DALIAH

What do you mean?

NAVEED

You're leading!

DALIAH

What?

NAVEED

Yes, you are! You're leading.

DALIAH

(confused)

This is how I always dance. No one's complained before.

NAVEED

I'm not complaining. (pause) I thought you said you don't dance to slow songs?

DALIAH

Much. I said, much. (pause) What's the point to this, Naveed?

NAVEED

Ah...

HE LAUGHS, STRETCHING OUT THE MOMENT, WHICH IRRITATES DALIAH EVEN MORE.

NAVEED

Alright, I had to know--did you really reject me because I'm shorter than you?

DALIAH

(uncomfortable)

C'mon, Naveed--I, like, weigh more than you.

NAVEED

You're exaggerating. Besides, I'm not *that* scrawny.

DALIAH

No, I didn't mean that. Just that--well, we're not suited to each other.

NAVEED

Or maybe is it because I'm not a doctor or a lawyer. I can't remember--it was one or the other. A lack of prestige or a lack of height. Either way, I didn't measure up.

DALIAH

Naveed.

NAVEED

I mean, don't you think that's a little superficial of you?

DALIAH

*I'm* being superficial? What deep and insightful affinity did you think you'd achieved with me in just one night?

NAVEED

I thought we got along well.

DALIAH

Sure--

A SHOT OF NAVEED'S EXPECTANT FACE.

DALIAH

But, Naveed, that's not enough to base a marriage on.

NAVEED

I know of ones based on a lot less.

DALIAH

Well, I expect a goddamn hell of a lot more, I guess.

NAVEED

(sarcastically)

Such a lady!

DALIAH

(a pause; then)

I'm giving you my time here, so it surprises me to hell and back again that you're doing all you can to repel me. I don't mind just walking away right now, you know.

NAVEED

I'm sorry. Just tell me, on the basis of one night... you've already concluded that you're not interested enough in me to contemplate---

DALIAH

Yes.

NAVEED

Hunh! Way to beat around the bush.

DALIAH

I don't mean to--

NAVEED

You think you're going to get someone better than me--is that it?

DALIAH

(after a pause)

Number one, you do not know me well enough to speak to me in that tone--

NAVEED

I'm sorry. Forget I said that.

DALIAH

And number two, it's not a question of 'better' okay? It isn't. I just need somebody... different. (pause) C'mon, you're going to have no problem--

NAVEED

Don't--don't start into that--how I'm so great, just not for you!

DALIAH

Well, how about this--what is it about me that supposedly makes you think I'm the one for you?

NAVEED

I'm not going to stand here, complimenting you, if that's what--

DALIAH

Look, I certainly don't need you to compliment me on anything. If you want to get down to it, what is it about *me* that got to you?

NAVEED

We had--rapport.

DALIAH

Rapport.

NAVEED

We clicked, we got each other--

DALIAH

(shaking her head)

No. I was just being nice, normal, amiable, and, to be honest, I'm not naturally inclined towards niceness or normalcy so--

NAVEED

Oh, c'mon.

DALIAH

We did not click, as you say. I'm being honest here because I think we should be clear on this. (a pause; then, she sighs) You're a--

NAVEED

Stop!

DALIAH

Nice guy, but--

NAVEED

Stop it! Shut up!

DALIAH IS STUNNED AT NAVEED'S RUDENESS. THEY STOP MOVING TO THE MUSIC. AFTER A MOMENT, SHE TURNS TO WALK AWAY.

NAVEED

Hey, I'm sorry, okay? Don't leave mad.

DALIAH  
(turning back)  
You say sorry an awful lot, don't you? But  
I'm not mad. You're misreading me again.  
It's just-- (she shoots a finger skyward)  
Song's over.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER AS SHE TURNS AND WALKS AWAY.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE. KITCHEN. LATE AFTERNOON.  
A SIDWAYS VIEW OF DALIAH AND HER MOTHER; HALF THE SCREEN IS  
TAKEN UP BY THE COUNTER AND ADJOINED STOVE, AND THE NUMEROUS  
ITEMS ON TOP OF IT. WE SEE DALIAH'S PROFILE, PARTLY OBSCURED,  
FARTHER FROM US THAN HER MOTHER'S. DALIAH CHOPS UP VEGETABLES  
FOR THE SALAD WHILE HER MOTHER MOVES QUICKLY BACK AND FORTH IN  
FRONT OF US AS SHE STIRS POTS ON THE STOVE, AND GETS ITEMS FROM  
THE FRIDGE AND CUPBOARD. DALIAH WEARS JEANS AND A BLUE  
SWEATSHIRT, HER MOTHER WEARS SWEATS.

DALIAH  
(cautiously)  
Are you mad at me or something? (her mother,  
busy, does not respond) Did I do something  
wrong? Or what?

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(irritated)  
Why are you all the time so paranoid? What  
are you hiding that makes you so worried?

DALIAH  
(brusquely)  
Fine.

A PAUSE AS THEY CONTINUE TO WORK. DALIAH'S MOTHER CLEARS HER  
THROAT.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
I was talking to your Auntie Salma the other day.

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH, GRIMACING.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(casually)  
She really does talk too much. It's not very  
nice.



DALIAH  
(ironically)  
Did Salma have a good story to tell about  
someone? Anything newsworthy?

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(sharply)  
Don't call her 'Salma'. She's your auntie.

DALIAH  
I can't do that anymore, call them 'aunties'  
when I'm not related to them, and when I only  
know them on a superficial level. I wouldn't  
trust them with anything real. All they're  
interested in is a good piece of gossip, and  
maybe an actual scandal once in a while.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
You think you're so Canadian--

DALIAH  
(confused)  
What?

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
That's why people don't send their girls off  
to school. Because they come back thinking  
they know so much.

DALIAH  
(dryly)  
I thought it was because they (with emphasis)  
do 'all kinds of things' with the boys.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
Well, if they were that kind of girl, they  
could just as easily do it at home, too. No!  
It's because there's no respect left when  
they talk to their elders. (mutters to  
herself) Superficial level!

DALIAH  
I wish I had respect for them! I liked them  
when I was little, but as I grew up, I  
stopped. It's like they're trying to snub me  
all the time, I can see it when they look at  
me--

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Maybe they're reacting to the way you treat them now that you go to university and talk like you know so much.

DALIAH

I know that's not true. Because when I step through the door at all your friends' parties, I empty my mind. Leave the excess baggage at the door. Because all you really need with your friends is a pretty face and an expensive Pakistani suit. You think I talk about school there? That's the furthest thing from my mind. Nail polish, hair, this season's colours.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Well, they're parties, aren't they?

DALIAH

The scariest thing is that they don't even care about anyone else's kid but their own. There's no fear, no guilt: the women spread rumours about other people's kids as if there's nothing particularly devious about attacking someone who's forbidden to talk back to an auntie. I'd bet you they even talk about me. Like when I first lived in residence, the first girl in this community to actually move out of the house before she was married, and your *friends* were all hushed as if it was something to be ashamed of.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(as if she's heard  
this before)

Oh, when are you going to forget about that? And if you're so worried about what people say about you, why do you do things that make them talk?

DALIAH

(scoffs)

Oh, I could do things that make people talk, believe me.

A PROFILE SHOT OF MOTHER, WARY, SUDDENLY LOOKING OVER IN THE MIDDLE OF ROOTING IN THE FRIDGE. A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH FROM

BEHIND, OBLIVIOUS. A REVERSE SHOT: WE SEE HER MOTHER CLOSING THE FRIDGE SLOWLY AND WALKING OVER TO THE STOVE.

DALIAH  
(resentfully)

But I do *nothing* because I worry too much about what *your* friends would say. Do you know how stupid that makes me? They're *nothing* to me, but they mean *so much*!

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(irrationally)

Oh, you do nothing? (pause; then, to Daliah's back) Then why does Salma feel it necessary to call me and warn me to keep an eye on you, that you're going wild, that her son, Omar, saw you smoking on the street like some....

A MEDIUM SHOT OVER THE COUNTER OF DALIAH. SHE STOPS CHOPPING VEGETABLES, FROZEN.

DALIAH  
(softly;  
nodding her head)

Wild. She's calling *me* wild. (she sighs) Well, what would she have called it when Omar was selling hash in high school? Oh, but he's male, so maybe she'd call it a business venture.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(frowning)

Did you just make that up?

DALIAH

Believe me, it's from a much more reliable source than Salma. I'm surprised *she* doesn't know, considering her knack for scoring major gossip.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(pause; getting angry) So he did see you smoking a cigarette? (she shakes her head) How could you be so stupid?

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

I've learned, during my considerable number of years here on Earth, that there's only one sure way to handle situations like these: Deny, deny, deny!

(to Mother, as if she's being silly)

You think I'd be smoking? He's the pothead. He could have seen almost anyone and imagined he saw me. I know he goes to Mac now. I know he'd love to be able to pick up some dirt and report back, so his mother would have something interesting to talk about at the next party. Why would I.... (she trails off, shaking her head).

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(mock pleading)

Just *pulleeze* get married and then you can do anything you want and nobody will care. Isn't that enough motivation? (her expression hardens) In the meantime, you better make it a habit for people to see you when you're *not doing*--anything wrong.

DALIAH

(putting down the knife)

I'm going to *not* get dressed. (wipes her hands on a dish towel) And then I'm going to *not* orchestrate my life around little weasly people. And when I finally stop living this *not-life*, I'm going to *not-see* those people forever.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(laughing)

Who are you going to Nazi?

DALIAH

(dryly)

Oh, this is good, this emotional flip-flop. Keeps me on my toes.

DALIAH WALKS OUT OF THE KITCHEN.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE-DALIAH'S BEDROOM. EVENING. A SIMILAR SCENE IS SET OUT BEFORE US AS IN THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND HOME, EXCEPT THE ROOM IS VERY NEAT AND ALL THE BOOKS, KNICK-KNACKS, MAKE-UP ARE PERFECTLY ARRANGED. ALTERNATIVE ROCK PLAYS.

DALIAH, DRESSED IN ANOTHER BLACK OUTFIT AND CHUNKY-SOLED SHOES, APPLIES MAKE-UP USING THE DRESSER MIRROR. WE SEE HER FROM BEHIND, AS WELL AS HER REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR.

A CLOSE-UP OF HER FACE IN THE MIRROR. SHE HAS TOO MUCH MAKE-UP ON ALREADY. HER LASHES ARE MASCARA'D TO THE POINT THAT THEY LOOK AS IF THEY ARE FAKE; SHE HAS APPLIED LIQUID LINER TO HER EYES, GIVING HER AN EGYPTIAN OR CHINESE LOOK; HER LIPSTICK IS LINED, FILLED AND POWDERED A 'DEADISH' BLOOD-RED. A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER REFLECTION AS SHE STRAIGHTENS UP AND LOOKS AT HERSELF. THERE IS A KNOCKING AT THE FRONT DOOR. SHE DOES NOT REACT, EXCEPT THAT SHE APPEARS A LITTLE DESPONDENT NOW, AS SHE TAKES A KLEENEX FROM THE BOX AND WIPES IT HARSHLY OVER HER LIPS, LEAVING A REDDISH SMEAR.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENT'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM. A FEW MINUTES LATER. THE SAME VIEW LONG SHOT FROM WHERE DALIAH BEGAN HER SLOW-MOTION RECOUNTING OF THE PREVIOUS WEEKEND. THIS TIME, WE SLOWLY TRACK THE DISTANCE FROM THIS POINT TO WHERE DALIAH SITS AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE, FACING THE OTHER DIRECTION. ON HER RIGHT IS YUSUF, WITH WHOM SHE IS TALKING. ON HER LEFT IS DALIAH'S FATHER AND MOTHER.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

A lifetime of deadening the senses when the situation calls for it really makes it difficult at the moment you wish you had it to ...clarify a few things. All I know was that I didn't get pissed off at the sight of him sitting in my house; I didn't resent him, shoot imaginary arrows from my eyes, when he looked at me; I didn't get those Batman-like exclamations --you know, like Kapow! or Bam! except, for me, they were Idiot! and Retread! -- firing uncontrollably across the marquee of my mind. But--

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH SITTING AT THE TABLE; HER MAKE-UP IS BACK TO NORMAL. SHE APPEARS PLEASANT BUT STILL SLIGHTLY GUARDED IN THE SET OF HER MOUTH.

other than knowing this, that I could relax with this guy.... I draw a blank when I try to figure out exactly how he might figure into my life.

INT. DALIAH'S LIVING ROOM. DAY.  
DALIAH AND LAYLA SIT ON THE COUCH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA.

LAYLA  
So that's something, right?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH.

DALIAH  
(a pause; then, she nods)  
That's something.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.  
A SHOT OF DALIAH STRETCHED OUT ON HER BED, HOLDING THE PHONE TO  
HER EAR.

DALIAH  
(soberly)  
All I'm saying at this point is that I don't  
not like him.

A SHOT OF MOTHER AT HOME, IN THE LIVING ROOM.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(dryly)  
A proud day. How your father and I have been  
waiting to hear those words!

DALIAH  
Oh, gimme a break!

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
(seriously)  
So you *will* see him again?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH SHRUGGING, AS IF TO SAY, WHY NOT?

DALIAH  
Yes.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF MOTHER, SMILING, RELIEVED.

DALIAH'S MOTHER  
That's all I'm asking. (pause; then, she

sighs) I don't know why this is so hard for you. I wish it wasn't. But, you know, the longer you wait to get married--

DALIAH

Yes, yes, the older I get! All I ever seem to talk about with you is marriage, *marriage!* Like we're afraid it's going out of style-- or maybe we're afraid *I'm* going out of style, is that it?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

It's just that, I see you, I mean *all* the girls like you, and I think, what are you doing to your lives?

DALIAH

What am I doing? You're the one that said you were sending me away to school as long as I made good grades and kept away from the boys! Well, I'm on the goddamn Honour List and--(exhales) I'm just trying to make sure I can make a good career for myself. Build on what you've given me and make sure it's as stable as possible for *my* kids.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

But where are you going to get these children from? You don't just pick them out of thin air! You have to find someone to share your life with first. When are you going to fit them in? What's the use of building something if... For your children, if you never *have*--. *When* are you going to--?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH, OPEN-MOUTHED, TAKING A QUICK BREATH, READY TO GIVE VOICE TO AN EVER-READY RETORT TO JUSTIFY HERSELF. AFTER A MOMENT, WHEN SHE REALIZES SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY, SHE CLOSSES HER MOUTH.

INT. LAB. DAY.

DALIAH AND NADIR, WEARING LAB GLASSES AND LAB COATS, DEPOSITING DROPS OF SOLUTION ONTO MICROSCOPE SLIDES AND ANALYZING THEM UNDER MICROSCOPES.

DALIAH

So have you bought Christine's present yet?

NADIR

For what?

DALIAH

Valentine's day, moron.

NADIR

You know me, I don't do that kinda stuff.

DALIAH

You don't *do* Valentine's Day?

NADIR

I don't do that emotional, gift-giving, Hallmark-card crap. I figure, I'm present enough.

DALIAH

Listen, she bought you a *watch*. You can't just take it and not give her anything back. That's so cheap. She *expects* you to get her something.

NADIR

Well, what should I get her then?

DALIAH

You're asking me?

NADIR

(dryly)

You're the expert, right?

DALIAH

(straight-faced)

Oh, that's grand. I'm laughing on the inside, really. (a pause as she switches slides) Astonish the masses--be normal, and make like your girlfriend is someone you're actually going out with. I don't know, take her out to dinner if you can't get your imagination up.

NADIR

Unnnnh... that's so boring.



DALIAH

So figure something else out.

NADIR

No, dinner's good enough. (he smiles) Want to come?

DALIAH

Do me a favour and get a grip on your insanity.

NADIR

No, *you* get a grip and do *me* the favour.

DALIAH

Please!

A PAUSE.

NADIR

Do you think a girl would consider me to be marriage-material?

DALIAH

I'm assuming you're not talking about Christine?

NADIR

You know who I'm talking about.

DALIAH

(stops what she's doing and looks up)

Take a look at this picture. I'm advising you to buy your girlfriend a Valentine's Day present, as a token of your--I have *no* clue what word's supposed to fit in there--and you're asking me if I'd ever marry you?

NADIR

I'm just hypothesizing, what would you say if I asked?

DALIAH

Hypothesizing? More like extrapolating way outa the ballpark, don't you think?

NADIR

Seriously, c'mon, you know it's us that belongs together. (as if ruminating) You know, if I knew for sure about you, I'd drop Christine. And all that other stuff.

DALIAH

Music to my ears. If I were an idiot.

NADIR

I don't understand you. Every other girl I know is fixated on the future; they want to get hitched. Or at least engaged.

DALIAH

(taking off her glasses)  
Including Christine?

NADIR

(irritated)  
No, not Christine.

DALIAH

No need to get defensive.

NADIR

That's just for now--in the meantime. There's no future.

DALIAH

And she knows that?

NADIR

Why wouldn't she? Of course she knows it. C'mon, darlin'.

DALIAH

(voice-over)  
Something about his *darlin'*... that mid-western twangish put-on *darlin'* that somehow makes me suspect, however irrationally, that his asshole tendencies are just a pretence.

NADIR

(smiling a little  
too confidently)  
Yeah, you'd marry me.

DALIAH SIGHS, REARRANGES HER GLASSES AND CONTINUES WORKING.

INT. A CROWDED COFFEE SHOP. NIGHT.

A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AND YUSUF STANDING AT THE CASH. A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE IN LINE BEHIND THEM, AS WELL AS GENERALLY MILLING ABOUT. A FAIR-SKINNED, LIGHT-HAIRED GUY IN HIS MID-TWENTIES APPROACHES YUSUF.

GUY

Hey, Yusuf. What's going on?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF AS HE TURNS AND SEES THE GUY. CONSTERNATION SHOOTS ACROSS HIS FACE AND IS JUST AS SUDDENLY MUTED. THE TWO CLAP EACH OTHER ON THE SHOULDER.

YUSUF

(distracted)

Yeah, how've ya been?

GUY

(smiling knowingly)

Listen, buddy, I won't bother ya. You've been studying for that thing on Thursday, haven't you?

YUSUF

(a sudden realization,  
then, relief)

Oh, yeah! Yeah, you're right about that.

GUY

Good luck on it, eh? I'm sure you'll ace it.

THE GUY LEAVES. A SIDE SHOT OF YUSUF, SHAKING HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY AND SMILING, AS HE PAYS FOR THE COFFEE. DALIAH LOOKS AT HIM A LITTLE ODDLY BUT DISMISSES IT. THE TWO WALK TOWARDS A SMALL TABLE AND SIT.

DALIAH

You have a test on Thursday?

YUSUF

(a pause)

Ah, I'm not--no, I don't have a test. (he smiles and leans in conspiratorial) I'll tell ya, but...I used to go to high school with

that guy. There was a bunch of us; everyone called us the wolfpack--

DALIAH  
(dryly)

The wolfpack.

YUSUF  
(conceding)

C'mon, it was *high school*. We were Grade Thirteen, the big guys. (in mock self-conceit) Our motto was, if you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch.

DALIAH  
(smiling)

Oh, that's original.

YUSUF

Anyway, we had this whole lingo down, that only we could understand; it was great. It was so totally a complete language, and nobody could ever catch on. So--my point--when you were with a girl and wanted the guys to get lost, you'd say something like what he said, and there you go. Perfect. (he smiles) And the girl would never get that you just wanted to be alone with her.

DALIAH

Wait a minute. You mean what he said about the test on Thursday, that was it?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF, NODDING.

DALIAH

But I don't get it. How would--

YUSUF

Oh, I still know him pretty well. I told him the other day that I'd met a girl and that I...

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH. SHE SMILES IRONICALLY.

YUSUF  
(continuing)

was going to see her again, I thought. He knows who you are; I pointed you out to him once when you were playing pool, but you never know, I thought for sure he was going to say something stupid in front of you.

DALIAH

But, what--is it the words that mean something specifically or is the whole phrase put together?

YUSUF

(joking)

Look, I've already committed something heinous telling you *that*. I'd be dead if anyone knew I just disclosed that information to a *girl*!

DALIAH

Oh, come on!

YUSUF

I will not be cajoled.

A PAUSE AS DALIAH PRETENDS TO BE DISCOURAGED AND SIPS HER COFFEE.

DALIAH

When I was playing pool?

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF YUSUF, SUDDENLY LOOKING ANXIOUS.

DALIAH

I haven't played pool for a while...since before I met you.

YUSUF

(conceding)

Well, I'd seen you around before. I just didn't know exactly *who* you were.

DALIAH

(making a face)

I don't like that. It's a little...off-putting.

YUSUF

It's only natural.

DALIAH

Yeah, but I don't like being... observed.  
Especially when I'm not aware of it.

YUSUF

(pause) You mean you didn't even think I was  
familiar-looking at all when you first met  
me?

DALIAH

(shaking her head)

But that's probably because my eyesight  
sucks. And I tend not to pay attention to my  
surroundings enough. I swear, I can meet  
someone, talk to them for a long time and  
then, when they leave, for the life of me, I  
wouldn't remember their face. Their name, I  
would know, and I could spell, even if it was  
something phonetically-dyslexic. But faces  
I'm not good at.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF, LEANING FORWARD, SCRUTINIZING HER HAND.

YUSUF

(indicating the diamond ring  
on her ring finger)

Boyfriend give you that?

DALIAH

Nope. Parents. Twenty-first birthday.

YUSUF

Nice. I like your parents. They seem happy.

DALIAH

Yeah.

YUSUF

It seems like such a nice way to end up; just  
happy...content.

DALIAH

I think my parents are perfectly happy,  
but...I don't see myself ending up like that  
exactly.

YUSUF  
(joking)  
You don't see yourself ending up perfectly  
happy?

DALIAH  
I just don't see myself ending up like that.

YUSUF  
I did... I hoped to be married like my  
parents. And then, all of a sudden, *poof*, and  
there's no *them* now.

DALIAH  
I'm sorry.

YUSUF  
(frustrated; then)  
Divorced. I meant, when they got divorced.  
(pause) Before--I guess that was before they  
died. I mean, it was. Did you want another  
coffee?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, SMILING GENTLY AND SHAKING HER HEAD, NO.

INT. DALIAH'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.  
YUSUF STANDS, LEANING OVER THE SOFACHAIR IN WHICH DALIAH SITS,  
CROSS-LEGGED. HE PLAYFULLY FLICKS A FINGER AT A LOCK OF HAIR  
HANGING BY HER FACE, WHILE HOLDING ONTO THE ARM OF THE CHAIR.

YUSUF  
Okay, then. I guess I should get going.

DALIAH  
Don't let the door hit your ass on the way  
out.

YUSUF  
(smiling)  
I guess I'll have to take my chances.

A LONGISH PAUSE.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
Oh my God! He wants to kiss me! The  
bastard!

(to Yusuf)  
Go on, then. You need your beauty sleep.

YUSUF  
(straightening)  
Aren't you going to walk me to the door, at least?

DALIAH  
You'd get lost again, otherwise, wouldn't you?

YUSUF  
(joking)  
That only happened once. There's too many doors in this place. It's like Let's Make a Deal. You should have just the one door, to get out.

DALIAH GETS UP AND LEADS YUSUF TO THE FRONT DOOR, HER FACE SCREWED UP IN CONFUSION.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
He's not going to kiss me! What a bastard!

SHE HOLDS THE DOOR OPEN AS HE MOVES INTO THE DOORWAY AND TURNS.

YUSUF  
So, see you tomorrow.

DALIAH  
Bye.

YUSUF  
Bye.

DALIAH CLOSES THE DOOR AND LOOKS THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE. THEN SHE TURNS, ARMS CROSSED.

DALIAH  
Hm!

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. DALIAH LOOKS THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE AGAIN. A SHOT OF YUSUF, ONE HAND LEANING ON THE DOORJAMB. DALIAH SMILES AND READIES A HAND ON THE DOORKNOB.



DALIAH  
(speaking through the door,  
a little too sweetly)

Who is it?

YUSUF  
Who are you expecting?

DALIAH  
Oh, just about everyone.

YUSUF  
Yeah, well, they're all out here with me--

DALIAH  
Oh good, I was beginning to worry.

YUSUF  
And they want you to open the door. (pause)  
Or am I going to have to break it down  
myself?

DALIAH  
While I wouldn't mind seeing *that*--(opening  
the door halfway)--I don't want to wake the  
neighbours. (pause) Couldn't find the way  
out, could you?

YUSUF  
No.

HE LEANS IN THROUGH THE DOORWAY BALANCING ON ONE ARM WHILE HE  
PULLS HER INTO THE DOORWAY WITH THE OTHER, AND KISSES HER.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
The bastard!

HER ARM GOES AROUND HIS SHOULDER. AFTER A MOMENT, THEY PULL  
APART.

YUSUF  
You've got to stop letting strangers into the  
house.

DALIAH  
(smiles)  
That's become apparent.

YUSUF  
So, tomorrow, then. G'night.

DALIAH  
Bye.

HE LEAVES. JUST AS SHE'S ABOUT TO CLOSE THE DOOR, SHE OPENS IT AGAIN AND STICKS HER HEAD OUT.

DALIAH  
Yusuf!

YUSUF  
(sticking his head  
around the corner)  
Yeah?

DALIAH  
Would you help me with my med application?  
You've done all that before.

YUSUF  
(blankly)  
Yes.

DALIAH  
I'll bring it tomorrow. Do you still have a  
copy of your old one around, maybe? It might  
help.

YUSUF  
I'll... look around.

DALIAH  
Thanks, man.

YUSUF  
No problem.

DALIAH SHUTS THE DOOR. A SHOT OF THE BEWILDERED/SHOCKED EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE, STILL STICKING AROUND THE CORNER, AS IF DISEMBODIED.  
A SHOT OF DALIAH TURNING AWAY FROM THE CLOSED DOOR. SHE STARTS TO SMILE, WHEN THE PHONE SUDDENLY RINGS. SHE RUNS TO HER BEDROOM.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM.  
DALIAH RUSHES IN AND PICKS UP THE PHONE, STILL SMILING, AS SHE

THROWS HERSELF ON HER BED.

DALIAH

Hello?

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(a little too sweetly)

Hello, pumpkin.

A CLOSE-UP OF DALIAH'S FACE CONTORTING IN HORROR AND DISGUST. SHE CLASPS A HAND OVER HER MOUTH. SHE GETS OFF THE BED AND SITS AT THE DESK-CHAIR.

DALIAH

Oh! Oh!

(voice-over)

Oh my God! I kissed him!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Daliah?

DALIAH

Mom? Call you right back!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(sharply)

Daliah! What's the matter with you?

DALIAH

Hm, nothing. I've, I've got, uh,--

(voice-over; as if  
reprimanding herself)

Do you kiss your *mother* with that mouth?  
(to her mother)

--something on the stove!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(sarcastically)

Wow, big night. What are you making, soup?

DALIAH

Call you in a minute!

DALIAH'S MOTHER

(suspiciously)

You mean you're really cooking something?

DALIAH, EXASPERATED, HANGS UP THE PHONE. SHE SHAKES HER HEAD AS

IF SHE'S DISGUSTED. AFTER A SECOND, SHE BEGINS TO SMILE.

INT. DALIAH'S APARTMENT-LIVING ROOM. NEXT NIGHT.  
YUSUF AND DALIAH SIT ON THE COUCH, KISSING TENTATIVELY; LOOSE-  
LEAF PAPERS AND FORMS COVER MOST OF THE COUCH, THE COFFEE TABLE  
IN FRONT OF THEM, AND THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF THE COUCH.

YUSUF  
(pulling away)  
I'm sorry I'm not much help with this  
application stuff.

DALIAH  
That's okay. It's been years since you ever  
looked at it. How could you remember what  
you wrote?

THEY KISS.

YUSUF  
I do want to marry you.

DALIAH  
(pulling back, irritated)  
Uhh!

YUSUF  
What? Don't you--I mean, what's wrong with  
that?

DALIAH  
Gimme a break!

YUSUF  
No, I'm being serious, don't you even think--

DALIAH  
(a pause; then)  
I just want to be sure I'll be able to trust--  
-somebody, have somebody think of me as  
another person first, before I'm forced to  
click into wife-mode.

YUSUF  
But a wife is, like, the highest thing for a  
guy. It's--up there. (pause; then,  
ironically) It's really a very prestigious

designation, you know.

DALIAH

(shaking her head)

I want someone to put that much into *me*, not the possibility of me as a future wife.

YUSUF

Are you a little bit nuts?

DALIAH

No, I'm a little bit rock and roll. (pause) I can't *believe* you can't even remember what you wrote on your freaking application!

SHE LEANS OVER TO THE FLOOR, WHERE SHE GETS HER PACK OF CIGARETTES FROM HER KNAPSACK.

YUSUF

(ironically)

Oh, so, now the shameful truth comes out! You're just using me for my brain.

DALIAH

(looking for something in the pile of papers)

Too bad it didn't do me any good. (pause) Where's my lighter?

YUSUF

(looking around)

You smoke?

DALIAH

(vaguely)

Don't be silly.

SHE STANDS AND CONTINUES LOOKING.

YUSUF

(picking up a pack of matches from the table)

Well, here's matches.

DALIAH

(reaching out for them)

Good enough.

YUSUF

(standing)

Here. (he strikes a match and, leaning over,  
puts it to the tip of her cigarette)

A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH, A SUSPICIOUS EXPRESSION ON HER FACE, AS SHE EXHALES.

DALIAH

Thanks.

INT. HEALTH SCIENCES BUILDING. LATE NIGHT-EARLY MORNING.  
A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AND LAYLA LOOKING SUSPICIOUS AS THEY SNEAK AROUND THE DESERTED HALLWAYS. A MEDIUM SHOT OF A HEAVY ORANGE DOOR AS DALIAH FITS A KEY INTO IT. WHEN IT WORKS, SHE LOOKS AT LAYLA WITH GLEE BEFORE SHE PULLS THE DOOR OPEN; THE TWO GO INSIDE. A SHOT OF THE SIGN ABOVE THE DOOR: "HOME BASE"

INT. HOME BASE.

A LONG SHOT OF THE ROOM: A SMALL BANK OF COMPUTERS SITS ON THE LEFT, ALONG WITH A SERIES OF MAILBOXES. STALE DONUTS AND A COFFEE PERCOLATOR SIT ON A TABLE BY A WALL, ON WHICH THERE ARE SEVERAL CLASS COMPOSITES. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM SITS THE GOAL OF THE GIRLS' QUEST: THE POOL TABLE.

LAYLA

(looking around)

This is supposed to be just for doctors and med students. (looking at Daliah) Are you going to tell me where you got the key or what?

DALIAH

(finding a pool stick  
on a counter)

Connections, baby! Well, Nadir, anyway. He's used to doing things without authorization. And he's the only connection I've got, sad as it is. C'mon, let's play.

LAYLA

(a little worried)

You don't think Security will hear us playing?

DALIAH  
Don't be silly, Layla. (she looks at her)  
They're sleeping.

INT. HOME BASE. LATER.  
THE GIRLS ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF A GAME. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE TABLE  
AND DALIAH AS SHE TAKES A SHOT. A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA, WHOSE  
BACK IS TO US AS SHE LOOKS AT THE WALL WITH THE COMPOSITES  
HANGING ON IT.

DALIAH  
Your shot.

LAYLA  
(not moving from her spot)  
Well, there's two from last year.

DALIAH  
Two what?

LAYLA  
Good-looking med students.

DALIAH  
(irritated; getting tired)  
C'mon. Take your shot.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA AS SHE LOOKS OVER HER SHOULDER AT DALIAH.

LAYLA  
And there's nobody here named Yusuf.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH. SHE MAKES HER WAY, DELIBERATELY, OVER TO  
WHERE LAYLA IS STANDING. A LONG SHOT OF BOTH OF THEM AS THEY  
EXAMINE THE COMPOSITES.

LAYLA  
He could have been sick.

DALIAH GOES BACK TO HER SPOT, LOOKING DOWN AS SHE CHALKS THE  
STICK.

DALIAH  
(evenly)  
Sure.

LAYLA

He could have....anything else. Lots of things.

DALIAH

What's the big deal? It doesn't mean anything. I haven't been in *my* class composites since...a long time.

LAYLA

Yeah, yeah. No, no, it doesn't mean anything.

DALIAH

Alright, then, let's just leave it at this point in time.

LAYLA

Yes.

DALIAH

We'll play pool.

LAYLA

Yes, that's right.

DALIAH COLLECTS ALL THE BALLS AND PUTS THEM IN THE TRIANGLE. WHEN SHE LIFTS THE TRIANGLE UP, ONE OF THE BALLS ROLLS AWAY, IRRITATING HER. SHE REPLACES THE TRIANGLE AND THE BALL, WAITS A SECOND, THEN LIFTS THE TRIANGLE AWAY. ONE OF THE BALLS FALLS AWAY FROM THE FORMATION AGAIN. SHE REPLACES THE TRIANGLE, HAVING BECOMING INCREASINGLY UPSET. WITH BOTH HANDS ON THE TRIANGLE, SHE LOOKS AT LAYLA, NEEDING A FOCUS FOR HER ANGER.

DALIAH

(frustrated)

You're not focusing, Layla. (pointing at the triangle) Right here. All your mental energy.

A SHOT OF LAYLA, QUIET, NODDING APPREHENSIVELY. A LONG SHOT OF THE DOOR AS SOMEONE OPENS IT WITH A SHOVE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE POOL SCENE, DALIAH LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER. A MEDIUM SHOT OF TWO SECURITY OFFICERS AS THEY COME THROUGH THE DOOR. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE TURNS TO LAYLA.

DALIAH

(accusingly)



Layla.

LAYLA  
(astonished)

I didn't do it!

EXT. CAMPUS. NIGHT.

DALIAH AND LAYLA LEAVE THE HEALTH SCIENCE BUILDING AND BEGIN WALKING TOWARDS US.

DALIAH

I can't believe they took my key away! How do they know my dad wasn't really with us and had just stepped out for cigarettes? How do they know he wasn't coming right back?

LAYLA

They must have seen us by ourselves on security cams or something.

DALIAH

In there, too?

LAYLA

They're everywhere. Or else it might have been that it took you so long to come up with his name.

DALIAH

I was trying to read the freaking composite! Those letters are so small. And first I had to find a picture of someone *old* and at least slightly maple-coloured. You should congratulate me. I don't even have my contacts in.

LAYLA  
(dryly)

Maybe that's why you were squinting like a blind person. Not that they noticed, I'm sure. (pause) Why don't you just talk to Yusuf about this and get it out of the way?

DALIAH  
(brusquely)

Oh yeah, sure. I will, eventually.

LAYLA

In the meantime....

THEY HAVE COME TO THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF DALIAH'S BUILDING. A SHOT OF THE LAYLA LOOKING TOWARDS US; DALIAH LOOKS UP, AS WELL. A SHOT OF THE FRONT ENTRANCE. NADIR STANDS BY THE DOOR, SHEEPISHLY, HIS HANDS STUFFED INTO HIS JACKET POCKET. HE SMILES.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.  
NADIR IS STRETCHED OUT ON DALIAH'S BED, STARING UP AT THE CEILING. DALIAH SITS AT HER DESK, READING A FASHION MAGAZINE.

NADIR

(nonchalantly)

She wanted to do it tonight.

DALIAH

(puts her hands to her ears;  
in a sing-song voice)

I can't hear you!

NADIR

I told her she should wait until she found a man she *really* loved.

DALIAH

(deadpan as she drops her  
hands to her lap)

I cannot tell you how honourable that makes you.

NADIR

Listen, I'm not telling you this to make you think--

DALIAH

Uh-huh.

NADIR

I'm not.

DALIAH

(simply)

It's very obviously an act of desperation because she senses your attention wavering.

NADIR

(indignant)

You think that's the only explanation why a girl--

DALIAH

(putting a flat hand  
up to the air)

Uh-uh.

NADIR SIGHS; THEN, A LONG PAUSE.

NADIR

I'm thinking of breaking up with her.

DALIAH

(perturbed)

What!

NADIR

(confused by her reaction)

I thought you'd be happy. (pause; he turns  
towards the ceiling again) I'm just not  
...attracted to her anymore. I think maybe  
she's gaining weight or something.

DALIAH

I can't believe you're telling me this.

NADIR

What, that she's gaining weight?

DALIAH

That you're telling me. That is so... cheap-  
-or something. Don't you have any sense of  
loyalty to her?

NADIR

I would say I do, but I guess me being here  
kind of undercuts that assertion.

DALIAH

(adamant)

No, it doesn't!

NADIR

Daliah, I am seeing you behind her back. Or  
were you under the impression that she knows

about us seeing each other?

DALIAH  
We are not seeing each other.

NADIR  
(simply)  
Well, whatever you want to call it.

DALIAH  
No. It's not *whatever I want to call it*.  
It's just...nothing.

NADIR  
Nothing.

DALIAH  
Nadir, there's black and there's white and we  
are not seeing each other, so there's nothing  
wrong with that.

NADIR  
I see. (pause) So you want to pretend that  
you're so stupid as to believe, just because  
we're not fooling around, that that  
*legitimizes* everything else between us?

NADIR LAUGHS SCORNFULLY WHEN DALIAH DOES NOT RESPOND.

NADIR  
Ohhh my goodness. You're just a little child  
in there, aren't you?

DALIAH FLICKS AWAY THE HAND HE REACHES OUT TO HER.

DALIAH  
Whatever. But I wouldn't break up with  
Christine just yet.

NADIR  
Why not?

DALIAH  
I mean, just maybe wait a while. See how  
things go. We'll start not wasting so much  
time together anymore, and maybe you guys can

fix things up.

NADIR

See, that's the difference between you and me. I never thought what we were doing together was wasting time. (pause) Fine. (he gets up to leave) Now, just for the sake of clarity, you're breaking up with me? Although, according to you, we can't really be breaking up, since we were never really going out in the first place, right?

DALIAH

(angrily)

Right!

NADIR

I just hope you know why you're doing this: You're breaking up with me for no other reason than the fact that *I'm* breaking up with her. You know that, don't you?

INT. DALIAH'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

YUSUF AND DALIAH RELAX ON HER COUCH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE TWO: BOTH WATCH THE TV SCREEN WITHOUT ANY EMOTION. THEY SEEM PHYSICALLY RELAXED BUT THEIR EXPRESSIONS SUGGEST A FEELING OF UNEASINESS. DURING THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION, BOTH YUSUF AND DALIAH SPEAK WITHOUT FACING EACH OTHER AND, WHEN THEY DO LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEIR FACES MOVE SIDWAYS AND THEN THEIR EYES FLICK OVER EXTREMELY QUICKLY, AND THEN BACK AGAIN TO THE TV.

YUSUF

Are you eventually going to tell me what the matter is, or is this maybe just my imagination?

DALIAH

I'm tired is all.

YUSUF

No, you're not. I can tell when you're tired because you start blinking about ten times a second.

DALIAH

(trying to smile)

Really?

YUSUF

And then, when you're really sleepy, like the other night, I'm not sure but I think you actually fall asleep with your eyes open. Did you know that? Like slightly parted, as if you're keeping watch or something.

DALIAH

(interested)

Do I really? That's gross.

YUSUF

I think it's funny. Like you're dreaming, but you've got this blank expression on your face, without a hint of recognition as to who I am and, at any second, you could just *click* awake and say, Who do you think you are? And what makes you think you can speak to me?

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE-DINING ROOM. NIGHT.  
THE DINING ROOM TABLE IS COVERED WITH DISHES OF FOOD AND THE HOUSE IS FULL OF PEOPLE DALIAH DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW. A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH, WHO IS DRESSED IN WEDDING ATTIRE THOUGH HER HAIR IS LOOSE. SHE IS GIVEN A PIECE OF WEDDING CAKE. SHE TAKES A BITE, GRIMACES AND LOOKS OVER TO WHERE THE CAKE IS BEING SERVED. A SHOT OF THE CAKE: NOW, IT APPEARS UNCUT AND LOOKS OLD AND STALE, WITH COBWEBS AND DUST ON IT. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH; HER HAND WITH THE PLATE DROPS FROM OUR SIGHT. SHE MOVES FORWARD THROUGH MANY PEOPLE, WHO DON'T SEEM TO TAKE MUCH NOTICE OF HER. AT THIS POINT, SHE SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE. UNSEEN PEOPLE PUSH OBJECTS INTO HER HANDS AT DIFFERENT POINTS; EVENTUALLY, SHE LOOKS DOWN AND STOPS. WHEN SHE LIFTS HER HANDS UP, WE SEE THAT THERE IS A CLOTH-COVERED BOOK IN ONE HAND AND A BRIDAL BOUQUET IN THE OTHER; HER MOTHER IS SUDDENLY IN FRONT OF HER. DALIAH HOLDS HER HANDS, NOW EMPTY, OUT TO HER MOTHER, PALMS UP, TENTATIVELY, IN STUNNED DISMAY, AS A CHILD WHO'S FALLEN AND CUT HER HANDS ON GRAVEL.

DALIAH

(guiltily)

Mom?

DALIAH LOOKS OFF INTO THE KITCHEN AT A GROUP OF MEN; HER MOTHER FOLLOWS HER GAZE. ONE OF THEM, HIS BACK TO US, IS BEING PATTED

IN A CONGRATULATORY MANNER BY THE OTHERS. DALIAH TURNS BACK TO LOOK AT HER MOTHER AND, SUDDENLY, JANE IS RIGHT THERE WITH HER.

DALIAH'S MOTHER

Run, Daliah, run!

THE BOOK AND BOUQUET ARE AGAIN IN DALIAH'S HANDS. SHE GIVES THE BOUQUET TO HER MOTHER, THE BOOK TO JANE, AND THEN PUSHES HER WAY THROUGH THE KITCHEN.

EXT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE-FRONT DOOR. NIGHT.  
WE SEE DALIAH BURST OUT OF THE HOUSE, DRESSED IN PLAIN BLACK SWEATER AND PANTS. SHE GETS INTO THE CAR IN THE DRIVE AND TAKES OFF LIKE A SPEED DEMON. AFTER A MOMENT OF PANIC AND CHECKING THE REARVIEW MIRROR, DALIAH EXHALES AND SETTLES INTO HER SEAT. AFTER ANOTHER SECOND, SHE SEES, OUT THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW, THAT THERE IS ONLY FOGGY BLACKNESS WHERE THE STREET SHOULD BE. SHE GASPS.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.  
A SHOT OF THE CLOCK-RADIO, GLOWING 4:23 IN DIGITAL-RED. DALIAH GETS OUT OF BED AND FINDS A BOTTLE IN HER DESK DRAWER. SHE HOLDS IT UP AND WE CAN SEE THAT THE BOTTLE OF NYTOL IS EMPTY. SHE SIGHS, PRESSING HER FOREHEAD AGAINST THE SCREEN OF THE OPEN WINDOW. A MOMENT LATER, SHE BRINGS A HAND UP TO THE SCREEN; THE LIGHT FROM THE STREET-LAMPS IS ENOUGH SO THAT WE CAN SEE THAT THERE ARE HALF-MOON INDENTATIONS ON HER PALM FROM CLENCHING HER FISTS IN HER SLEEP. SHE LOOKS BACK OUT THE WINDOW AND BREATHES IN DEEPLY.

EXT. OUTSIDE DALIAH'S BUILDING. THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.  
A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AND YUSUF IN A COVERED SECTION BY THE FRONT DOOR. YUSUF SITS ON A BENCH BY THE WALL, LEANING FORWARD, HIS HEAD HANGING DOWN, WHILE DALIAH STANDS OFF TO THE SIDE, HER ARMS CROSSED.

DALIAH

But--why *lie*?

YUSUF

You know why--everyone wants a doctor, a lawyer, a *something*. I thought if--

DALIAH

(interrupting)

I know, I know--No, I don't get it. You must

have known it would have come out...if, if anything were to come of *us*. Unless--you didn't expect anything to. In which case, why did you bother coming to my house? Why? I mean, my parents force me to do that stuff, meet rishtas. Nobody forced you to do anything!

YUSUF

I just didn't think--

DALIAH

This doesn't make sense to me at all.

YUSUF

It was stupid, okay, I realize that and I knew it then. But--but, okay, I didn't believe anything would really happen between us then. I didn't think ahead. Everything's different now.

DALIAH

Yes, everything is different.

A PAUSE; YUSUF'S EXPRESSION HARDENS.

YUSUF

Because I'm not in med school? Really?

DALIAH

Because you lied so bare-faced, shamelessly, without flinching, without--*thinking*, all for some superficial crap that you assumed would make all the difference in the world!

YUSUF

(angry)

Well, doesn't it? It got my foot in the door. Do you think I would have made it that far if I had been honest?

DALIAH

I don't know. All that has nothing to do with me. You know that. Somehow, certain people show up at my door, physical embodiments of their own resumes, recommendations... and I take it from there.



YUSUF

Just go ahead and say it then--Is that it?  
Are you tossing me in with the rest of the  
discards?

DALIAH

The only thing that scares me is lying--  
misrepresentation, putting up a pretense so  
puffed up, it's ready to pop. Because that  
shit is something I can't even touch, I have  
no control over it, and no way of knowing  
what's true and what's not.

YUSUF

Don't, Daliah. Don't tell me to get lost.

DALIAH

I'm not. I wasn't. But, the only thing that  
scares me now is, how can I possibly know if  
there's more of you that's just pretending?

YUSUF

(shaking his head, weakly)  
No. This is *me*, okay?

DALIAH

(shaking her head slowly)  
Okay.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. DAY.

A MEDIUM SHOT: LAYLA SITS ON THE BED; DALIAH, AT THE DESK.

DALIAH

I had no clue for so long...I just feel like  
a *fool*. I truly do. I mean, he *lied* and, I  
don't know why, but I feel embarrassed. For  
him. I mean, why did he feel like he had to  
go and do that? It just makes things awkward.  
And fucked up.

LAYLA

Did he think you'd never find out?

DALIAH

(shaking her head)

I really don't know where he was going with that. Or where he's coming from, for that matter. (pause) I just keep feeling like a fool! Did he think money would impress me that much? (looking at Layla) Cause it *doesn't*.

LAYLA

I *know* it doesn't.

DALIAH

(pause) I'm not an idiot!

LAYLA

No. (sigh) Otherwise you would've married Mr. Cardiac Man, the one who couldn't bear to look you in the eyes, but kept sending you roses.

DALIAH

*Red* roses! (scoffs) It's *not* a matter of money, it's a matter of *living* together. If someone was...if I couldn't respect a person, I'd eat them alive, you know I would. I wouldn't try to, but it would happen. (pause) He can have money, but it doesn't mean the world to me. (sighs) This is exactly what I *didn't* want to happen. This is ridiculous, that someone could totally misrepresent himself and get in my house! I just can't trust my parent's ability to screen. They trust others too easily. I mean, they try but, technically, that's not their department.

LAYLA

So then just take it into your own hands a bit more. Find your own guy. There's nothing wrong with that.

DALIAH

(pause)

In one way, it's no big deal, right? Nothing's changed. Just keep going on like always. I mean, you only need one, right? There's someone for each of us, the perfect person for each of us...somewhere. And sometime, you get the chance to connect, I

truly believe that. Everyone connects at least once with the one they're meant for. But screw that up, whatever way, somehow... screw that up, and that's it for you. You're doomed. That's it.

LAYLA  
Don't worry, Daliah.

DALIAH  
I just want someone that I know will... back me up.

LAYLA  
I know. He's going to be around sometime.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, HER EYES WIDENING.

DALIAH  
I'm just afraid, I think he is.

INT. DALIAH'S BUILDING-FOYER. DAY.  
A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH FROM BEHIND, HOLDING A HANDFUL OF MAIL IN HER HANDS. THE SAME SCENE AS BEFORE: A SIDE SHOT OF HER AS SHE RAPIDLY FLIPS THE ENVELOPES INTO THE TRASH BIN AT HER FEET. WHEN SHE GETS THE LAST ENVELOPE, HOWEVER, SHE DOESN'T TOSS IT.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
It's the creamy-coloured ones you want...high cotton content.

A CLOSE-UP OF THIS ENVELOPE; THE RETURN ADDRESS IS MCMASTER UNIVERSITY. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, A SOMBRE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE AS SHE LOOKS UP. A LONG SHOT OF YOUNG ARABIC WOMAN OUT OF THE ELEVATOR AND APPROACHING THE FRONT DOOR, WHERE DALIAH STANDS BY THE MAILBOXES.

ARABIC WOMAN  
Hello.

DALIAH  
(smiling weakly)  
So, your family must be busy, getting ready for the big day, huh?

ARABIC WOMAN  
(simply)  
I am finished with marriage.

DALIAH  
(upbeat)  
Oh, you mean you've already had the wedding?

ARABIC WOMAN  
(evenly; with a sad smile)  
No wedding. Marriage is finished with me.

ARABIC WOMAN NODS A GOODBYE TO DALIAH, WHOSE HAPPY EXPRESSION SLOWLY EMPTIES ITSELF, AND CONTINUES ON HER WAY OUT OF THE BUILDING. A MEDIUM SIDE SHOT OF DALIAH, AS HER HEAD SLOWLY TURNS TO LOOK AT THE ENVELOPE STILL IN HER HAND.

INT. ELEVATOR. A MINUTE LATER.  
EXCEPT FOR DALIAH, THE ELEVATOR IS EMPTY. WE SEE DALIAH STARING STRAIGHT AHEAD AS THE ELEVATOR ASCENDS, NEVER BOTHERING TO LOOK UP AT THE DISPLAY. HER EXPRESSION BECOMES INCREASINGLY TORTURED.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. A FEW MINUTES LATER.  
SHE SITS ON THE EDGE OF HER BED, LEANING FORWARD AS SHE LOOKS AT THE OPENED LETTER IN HER HANDS. TEARS STREAM DOWN HER RED FACE. THIS IS NOT JUST A TEAR OR TWO, BUT THE MIDST OF A SERIOUS WRACKING OF EMOTION; SHE'S GASPING, A VEIN STICKING OUT ON HER NECK. WHEN SHE BRINGS A HAND TO HER FACE TO WIPE HER TEARS, SHE BRINGS THE LETTER UP WITH IT. SHE COVERS HER FACE WITH IT, USING BOTH HANDS. A MOMENT LATER, SHE LETS THE PAPER FALL DOWN; SHE IS SMILING.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)  
When you're not used to having a love life in which to invest your emotional energy, you tend to round it all up for moments like these.... (ironically) Just the fact that I'll get my own key to Home Base, legitimately, makes me weep.

EXT. CAMPUS. DAY.  
YUSUF AND DALIAH WALK DOWN A PATH BETWEEN TWO BUILDINGS. DALIAH DRINKS A COFFEE.

YUSUF

I don't know how you can *not* sleep a wink and still walk around.

DALIAH

Meanwhile, I look like the living dead.

YUSUF

No, you don't. Why don't you just stop being a trooper and get to bed?

DALIAH

I suppose I should. I feel like I'm missing something when I sleep the day away.

YUSUF

(joking)

You are missing something, no doubt about that.

DALIAH

I mean, I feel like I'm missing out on (she gestures vaguely) something happening... somewhere. Stuff that's happening. I'm approaching incoherence, aren't I?

YUSUF

Why don't you try *not* alternating between cramming and crashing and maybe things would go easier.

DALIAH

I don't like that-- the steady, gradual, never-ending way. That working a little bit, every day, for something. (in a 'dumb' voice) I guess I don't got no work ethic. I just want to work hard for a little bit, get it done, cash in my chips, and kick back.

YUSUF

Well, what do you think a work ethic is?

A LONG SHOT OF THE TWO AS YUSUF WAITS FOR HER TO RESPOND. DALIAH'S ATTENTION IS ACROSS THE QUAD. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NADIR AND CHRISTINE SMILING AND TALKING TOGETHER.

DALIAH

(brusquely)

I'm going to the library. I've--got a quiz tomorrow.

YUSUF

What? You're done! You got in. What do you care about a quiz now?

DALIAH

I'll call you later. Tomorrow, right? Warehouse?

YUSUF

Yeah, sure.

A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE WALKS AWAY. A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF AS HE WATCHES HER. HIS FACE SCREWS UP IN FRUSTRATION.

INT. HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY. A FEW MINUTES LATER. DALIAH SITS ON A FOOT-STOOL IN THE STACKS. SHE PULLS OUT A BOOK OR TWO FROM ONE OF THE LOW SHELVES. IT IS DEATHLY QUIET.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

The only thing that truly worries me is when I think, maybe I expect too much out of people, life. Maybe I have gone too Hollywood in the theatre of my mind. Maybe I don't have a lot in life other than this,

A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH SITTING IN A CARREL AND READING, HER HAIR IN A PONYTAIL.

this appreciation for a certain style, knowledge of a fashion trend. And working hard as a method of maintaining it. But it's not a surface thing--I don't expect a Hollywood man. (her eyes flick up from the book) No, I don't--I want Hollywood personality.

"LOCAL GOD" BY ALTERNATIVE ROCK GROUP, EVERCLEAR,

*[You do that Romeo. Be what you want to be.... Be my Romeo. Please be my voice in this world. I can't sing the songs that you sing. I can't find the gorgeous words.... I feel just like a local god when I'm with the boys. We do what we want, yes we do what we want.... I feel so stupid, happy in love. I feel so stupid. I feel just like a local god when I'm with the boys. We*

do what we want. (repeated over and over again)]

PLAYS, LOUD AND JARRING, OVER THE FOLLOWING MONTAGE.

DALIAH  
(voice-over)

I want CinemaScope--

WE REVOLVE 360 DEGREES IN A FAST WHIRRING MOTION, FROM DALIAH'S FACE, TO THE SURROUNDING CUBICLE, THE LARGE GLASS WINDOW THROUGH WHICH WE CAN SEE SIDEWALKS AND A GRASSY SPOT UNDER A SUNNY SKY, VARIOUS PEOPLE WALKING AROUND OR STUDYING, STACKS OF BOOKS, AND DALIAH AGAIN.

DALIAH  
(voice-over; off-screen)

--quick cuts--

SWISH PAN THE SAME 360 DEGREES SO THAT THE SAME LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT BLURS, THEN STOPS AT DALIAH'S FACE, THEN CUTS TO AN ALTERNATIVE ROCK CONCERT; TWO OR THREE SWEATY PEOPLE BODY-SURFING OVER A SURGING CROWD.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--a rockin' soundtrack--

CUT FROM THE AUDIENCE TO THE GRUNGY, LONG-HAIRED AND RAGGEDY-CLOTHED BAND THAT IS PLAYING.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--a touch of violence--

CUT FROM THE BAND TO A SHOT OF A CHAIR BEING THROWN THROUGH AN OFFICE WINDOW.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--the threat of tragedy--

CUT FROM BROKEN WINDOW TO THE DEATH SCENE IN "Godfather III: THE STEPS OF THE GRAND OPERAHOUSE, MILLING WITH PEOPLE, AS A SHOT RINGS OUT AND THE GODFATHER (AL PACINO) GRABS HIS CHEST. A SECOND SHOT OF HIS YOUNG DAUGHTER FALLING TO THE STEPS AT HIS FEET, BLOOD STAINING THE FRONT OF HER DRESS. A THIRD SHOT OF THE GODFATHER, LAYING ON THE STEPS, HIS FACE RED AS HIS MOUTH STRETCHES WIDE IN AGONY AND GRIEF.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
--the ambiguous ending--

CUT TO A GRAND CANYON-TYPE CLIFF. WE MAKE A MAD RUSH TOWARDS THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF AND THEN SUDDENLY SEEM TO HOVER, FROZEN, JUST AS WE REACH THE END.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
--boys with personality.... Good or bad, as long as it's their own.

CUT TO A SHOT OF TOM CRUISE AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS, THEN TO A SHOT OF JAMES DEAN SPEEDING IN HIS CAR IN THE CHICKIE-RACE IN *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
I want surround sound--

A SHOT OF A POSTCARD IN WHICH A MAN IN A BLACK SUIT AND SUNGLASSES SITS IN A LOUNGE CHAIR IN FRONT OF A HUGE SET OF SPEAKERS. HIS TIE IS FLYING BACKWARDS AND HIS HAIR IS UP IN THE AIR AS IF DUE TO THE EXTREMELY HIGH VOLUME OF THE STEREO.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
--the quick save--

A SHOT FROM 'THE ROCK': NICHOLAS CAGE, RED-FACED, HOLDS A LARGE SYRINGE WITH BOTH HANDS. HE STICKS IT INTO HIS CHEST. A SHOT OF HIM LYING ON WHAT LOOKS LIKE A WAREHOUSE FLOOR, GASPING FOR BREATH, AS THE SUN SHOOTS RAYS THROUGH THE WINDOWS.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
--true grit--

A MEDIUM SHOT OF JOHN WAYNE IN COWBOY ATTIRE.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)  
--true romance--

A SHOT OF A MAN SWOOPING A WOMAN UP IN HIS ARMS AND KISSING HER LIKE AT THE END OF A TYPICAL ROMANCE.



DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--the chance to give it all up on *principle*--

A LONG SHOT OF A LONE PERSON LOOKING OUT OVER A HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINTOP.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--but that's not possible. It's not all mine to sacrifice. (pause) They want that rosy filter--

A SHOT OF A LARGE BACKYARD, FILLED WITH SMALL CHILDREN WITH BIRTHDAY HATS AND BALLOONS. A CLOWN ENTERTAINS. WE SEE A MAN MAKING HAMBURGERS ON THE GRILL; WE MOVE IN CLOSER AND FOCUS ON THE SMOKE RISING FROM THE GRILL, FOLLOWING IT UPWARDS INTO THE AFTERNOON SKY.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

--the peace--

WE CONTINUE TO MOVE IN AN UPWARDS ARC INTO THE SKY. A YELLOW FILTER GIVES THIS SHOT A SUNNY GLOW.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

This is what keeps me down. Or keeps me from getting down in it.

WE SLOW DOWN, WAFTING IN THE SKIES, AS FLIMSY AS A PIECE OF A PAPER MIGHT, WITH NO PARTICULAR DIRECTION. THE NEXT STATEMENT IS ACCOMPANIED BY A 'FLASHING' OF THE FOLLOWING SHOTS IN QUICK SUCCESSION: (1) A GOLDEN TRUMPET BEING POSITIONED WITH THE MOUTHPIECE CLOSEST TO US, AS IF WE WERE PUTTING IT TO OUR LIPS TO PLAY; (2) A LONG-SHOT OF A VOLCANO EXPLODING AT NIGHT; AND, (3) WHAT LOOKS LIKE THE FIERY BREATH OF A DRAGON, PRODUCED BY A FLAME-THROWER ON-SCREEN.

DALIAH  
(off-screen)

I want a word, a shot, a breath... to overwhelm, to demolish. To say, 'this is the picture--

A SHOT OF THE STARRY NIGHT SKY ONE MIGHT SEE LOOKING OUT OF A WINDOWSEAT ON A PASSENGER PLANE. A SAUCER-TYPE SPACESHIP ADORNED

WITH PRIMARY-COLOUR GLOBES OF FLASHING LIGHT SLOWLY MOVES INTO THE SHOT.

DALIAH

(off-screen)

--and you are not all of it.' But when I see them *looking* at me--

A BOOK OF FAMILY PICTURES SITS OPEN AS IF ON OUR LAP. A CLOSE-UP ON A BLACK AND WHITE WEDDING PICTURE, THE YOUNG COUPLE IN THE MIDDLE, WITH ABOUT 10 PEOPLE CONGREGATED ON BOTH SIDES. THE BRIDE RESEMBLES DALIAH.

DALIAH

(off-screen)

--I know I am *all* of it. I am too much with it.

A SHOT OF A BLUE AND GREEN GLOBE ON A BLACK BACKGROUND. THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE ACCOMPANIES THE DESCRIPTION OF SHOTS AFTER IT.

DALIAH

(off-screen)

When you are an extension of other people's lives, you become incomplete if you cut yourself off. There isn't much you can do. Jumping either way, forwards or backwards, holds no salvation in terms of a finding a working script; you come to believe there's no character sketch for you.

SHOT OF A TELEPHONE CORD, THEN A SHOT OF A FEMALE DOCTOR HOLDING A NEWBORN BABY, ITS UMBILICAL CORD STILL ATTACHED. A SHOT OF A LONG PIECE OF FILM NEGATIVE BEING HELD BY MALE FINGERS OVER A MAHOGANY DESK IN A SMALL ROOM, DIMLY LIT BY A BANKER'S LAMP. BOTH ENDS OF THE FILM FALL SOMEWHERE OVER THE EDGE OF THE DESK AND ARE NOT VISIBLE TO US. A SHOT OF THE DOCTOR'S GLOVED HANDS; THE LEFT HAND HOLDS THE UMBILICAL CORD WHILE THE RIGHT ONE HOLDS A PAIR OF SURGICAL SCISSORS. A SHOT OF THE FILM NEGATIVE: THE MALE'S LEFT HAND HOLDS ONE SPECIFIC RECTANGLE OF THE ENTIRE NEGATIVE WHILE THE OTHER SNIPS ONE SIDE, THEN THE OTHER; THEN, FUMBLING, HE SLIPS THE RECTANGULAR PIECE SLIP THROUGH THE FINGERS AS IF BY ACCIDENT.

INT. HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY.

A SLIGHTLY HIGH-ANGLED SHOT OF DALIAH SITTING IN THE CARREL. THE MUSIC HAS ENDED. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF HER, ELBOW ON THE DESK, CHIN

RESTING ON HER PALM, AS IF SHE HAS BEEN DAY-DREAMING UNTIL SHE SUDDENLY FORCES A DEEP, RASPY BREATH. A MOMENT LATER, HER HAND PRESSES AGAINST THE MIDDLE OF HER CHEST; THEN, SHE LOOKS DOWN AT THE TIPS OF HER FINGERS, RUBBING THEM TOGETHER AS IF SHE CAN'T FEEL THEM. SHE SITS BACK IN HER CHAIR, BOOKS FORGOTTEN, LOOKING ABNORMALLY SERENE.

INT. HEALTH SCIENCES BUILDING. A MINUTE LATER.  
A LONG SHOT OF THE LONG, GREEN-CARPETED HALLWAY. A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH WALKING, WITH HER KNAPSACK, DOWN THE HALLWAY. A LONG SIDE SHOT OF DALIAH; HER BREATHING IS RASPY, HER EYELIDS ARE PUFFED UP, AS IS HER LIP. LARGE RED WELTS COVER HER FACE; SHE LOOKS DISEASED. SHE REMOVES SUNGLASSES FROM THE SIDE POCKET OF HER KNAPSACK AND PUTS THEM ON. A LONG SHOT OF THE HALLWAY, AS BEFORE. NOW, WE SEE A DOORWAY AT THE END; A FEW PEOPLE IN WHITE COATS AND HOSPITAL GREENS CAN BE SEEN.

INT. MCMASTER-CHEDOKE HOSPITAL-EMERGENCY. A MINUTE LATER.  
A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SEEN BY THE FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR SITTING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A GLASS PARTITION. A FEW PATIENTS SIT TO ONE SIDE OF DALIAH, IN THE BACKGROUND. DALIAH, GLASSES STILL ON HER FACE, LEANS FORWARD ON THE LEDGE, ELBOWS ANGLING TO THE SIDE.

DALIAH  
(wheezing, short of breath)  
Anaphyl-(she breathes)-axis.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR; WE SEE HER BUSY WITH HER PAPERS UNTIL SHE LOOKS UP. SUDDENLY WE SEE A NEGATIVE IMAGE OF THE LADY: DARK COLOURS SEEM LIGHT, AND COLOURS THAT WERE LIGHT SEEM DARK. THE PICTURE SUDDENLY DESTABILIZES, SEEMS TO PERFORATE, THEN MELTS LIKE A PICTURE NEGATIVE HELD TO A FLAME. BLACKOUT.

INT. AN EXAMINING ROOM. NIGHT.  
DALIAH SITS UP ON THE BED, A LITTLE TIRED BUT ODDLY CHEERFUL. SHE IS BACK TO NORMAL NOW, NO SIGN OF THE RED WELTS; THE BEDSHEETS ARE IN DISARRAY, AS IF SHE HAS BEEN SLEEPING FOR A WHILE. THE EMERGENCY DOCTOR IS AN ELDERLY MALE. HE STANDS NEARBY WITH A CLIPBOARD.

DOCTOR  
Are you taking any medication?

DALIAH  
(shaking her head,  
reassuringly)

No.

DOCTOR  
Are you a smoker?

DALIAH  
Oh no. (shaking her head as if reassuring herself). Once in a while.

DOCTOR  
Have you been under any notable stress lately?

DALIAH  
(chuckling good-naturedly)  
Lately? No.

THE DOCTOR STOPS AND LOOKS AT HER GRAVELY.

DOCTOR  
You really do need to get this checked out. Hasn't anyone told you, this is potentially very serious?

DALIAH  
(nodding)  
I will. I do.

DOCTOR  
(a pause; then, as if to shock her into a response)  
You could die.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH NODDING TO REASSURE THE DOCTOR. THE DOCTOR SIGHS LOUDLY, THEN REACHES INTO A DRAWER AND PULLS OUT A SMALL TUBE. HE OPENS IT UP AND TAKES OUT A LARGE SYRINGE WITH A LONG NEEDLE ON THE END OF IT. HE HOLDS IT OUT TO DALIAH. A SHOT OF DALIAH, EYES WIDE.

DOCTOR  
Okay, then, so--*only in an emergency*--you're going to have to give yourself a shot in the thigh. Some people have trouble when they know it's going to cause them some pain, but if it's a matter of survival--

DALIAH  
(laughing a little)

Are you serious?

THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT DALIAH, STRAIGHT-FACED, UNTIL SHE SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY. SHE CONTEMPLATES THE NEEDLE AGAIN, THEN NODS AS IF SOMETHING FUNNY HAS OCCURRED TO HER.

INT. NAVEED'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED SITTING ON A CHAIR BESIDE HIS BED: ONE ARM CROSSES OVER HIS CHEST AND THE OTHER HOLDS THE PHONE TO HIS EAR; HIS LEGS STRETCH OUT ON THE BED.

NAVEED

Listen, we have to talk this out.

INT. YUSUF'S BEDROOM.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF. HE BUTTONS UP HIS SHIRT WHILE CRADLING THE RECEIVER BETWEEN HIS SHOULDER AND CHIN.

YUSUF

Uh, not now, okay? Now's not a good time.

NAVEED

You've been saying that for days.

YUSUF

I mean it, I'm... on my way out.

NAVEED

Oh? And you're not even going to extend an invitation to one of your closest friends?

YUSUF

(stalling)

What?

NAVEED

Where...are...you...going?

YUSUF

Oh, just over to...uhh--Warehouse.

NAVEED

Who are you going with?

YUSUF

What? (he bustles around his room, finds his shoes and puts them on) Oh, a bunch of people, you don't know most of them, I don't

think, and, uh....

NAVEED

Daliah?

YUSUF

Well, yeah. Yeah, her, too.

NAVEED

Ah, well, this is fortunate! Because she's the reason I'm calling. Yusuf, my friend, we really do have to talk about this.

YUSUF

(a sigh; then)

Okay, I promise. Only, tomorrow, alright? Let me...try and say something to her tonight, at least, okay?

NAVEED

Yusuf, you're being silly. How could you possibly tell her without painting yourself an absolute villain?

YUSUF

(coldly)

Tomorrow. I will call you tomorrow. Okay?

NAVEED

(smiling)

Sure, buddy, no problem.

INT. DALIAH'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AT HER DESK, THE DESK LAMP SHINING ON THE TEXTBOOK AS SHE TAKES NOTES. THE MAIN LIGHT SWITCH IS OFF, AS IF SHE HAS BEEN SITTING THERE SINCE AFTERNOON AND NOT THOUGHT TO TURN IT ON SINCE. RELAXING, JAZZY MUSIC PLAYS ON THE STEREO.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I always thought leading a *full life* meant having things to do, people to see, places to go...experiencing new things. So how could I be living a full life.. while putting all my energy into ensuring others I'd never become experienced? (pause) I don't even know what

kind of life I'm living now. Which set of standards am I supposed to use? Full, empty? Half-full, half--? Maybe throwing yourself into unknowable situations is what people do, maybe *that's* life. But if that's true, I'm really unsure as to whether I wish to join in.

INT. DANCE BAR. LATE NIGHT.

A LONG MEDIUM PAN OVER THE PEOPLE AT THE BAR. HARD ROCK PLAYS LOUD. WE SEE DALIAH AND YUSUF, THEN LAYLA AND JANE. A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWD TOWARDS US. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, AS SHE TURNS TOWARDS THE BAR TO TAP HER CIGARETTE INTO AN ASHTRAY. SHE SEES ONE FURTHER DOWN THE BAR, AND BECKONS TO LAYLA TO FOLLOW HER AS SHE MOVES AWAY TO GET IT. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF HER HAND CLOSING ON A CLEAN, GLASS ASHTRAY. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED, STANDING IN FRONT OF DALIAH. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE TURNS AND SEES NAVEED.

DALIAH

(smiling guardedly)

Hey. How are you?

NAVEED

(oddly)

Do you want to dance?

DALIAH

Ohh, I don't really--

NAVEED

Feel like it?

DALIAH

Feel like it.

NAVEED

(nodding and looking off  
in another direction)

Yeah. That sounds right.

DALIAH

(making as if to leave)

Okay, well, take care of yourself, eh.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER AS SHE TURNS AROUND AND BEGINS TO MOVE AWAY FROM US AS WELL AS NAVEED. JUST AFTER SHE GETS MORE THAN AN ARM-

LENGTH AWAY, WE SEE NAVEED'S ARM MOVING FROM HIS SIDE, UP THE MIDDLE-RIGHT PART OF THE SCREEN, OBSCURING PART OF DALIAH'S BACK. REVERSE SHOT: WE SEE DALIAH COMING TOWARDS US, A MEDIUM SHOT. SHE BEGINS TO SMILE. A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF, WHO SEES HER SMILING, AND BEGINS TO SMILE BACK. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH'S FACE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF: SOMETHING WAVERS IN THE CURVE OF HIS SMILE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH, UNAWARE, AS NAVEED APPEARS BEHIND HER. HE PUTS A HAND TO HER SHOULDER AND PUTS HIS LIPS TO HER EAR. SHE IS ANGRY FIRST, BUT HER EXPRESSION SOFTENS AS NAVEED BEGINS TALKING; A CLOSE-UP OF HIS LIPS MOVING RAPIDLY, AS ON THE NIGHT OF THEIR DINNER.

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF: HE APPEARS SHOCKED. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF HIS RIGHT SHOE, THEN ZOOM OUT TO A MEDIUM SHOT AS HE TAKES A DEFINITE STEP FORWARD. HIS WEIGHT SHIFTS FROM HIS LEFT, THEN JUST WHEN HE SHOULD SWING HIS LEFT FOOT FORWARD, HIS WEIGHT SHIFTS BACK TO HIS LEFT FOOT. A CLOSE-UP OF HIS RIGHT FOOT, AS HE PULLS IT BACK TOWARDS HIMSELF. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF DALIAH, AS NAVEED RELEASES HER SHOULDER. HE NODS ONCE, WITH A SORT OF PLEASANT EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE AND RECEDES INTO THE CROWD. A CLOSE-UP SHOT OF YUSUF, SHAKING HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY, AS HE WATCHES FOR DALIAH'S NEXT ACTION. A MEDIUM SHOT AS SHE TURNS TO LAYLA. SHE OPENS HER MOUTH, HESITANTLY. A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF: HE PUTS A HAND TO HIS FOREHEAD FOR A MOMENT; WHEN HE TAKES IT AWAY, HE SIMULTANEOUSLY STEPS FORWARD, THEN STOPS, AND LOOKS SIDE TO SIDE. A MEDIUM SHOT OF PEOPLE MILLING ABOUT; DALIAH IS NO LONGER THERE.

EXT. THE SIDE EXIT OF THE WAREHOUSE DANCE BAR. LATE NIGHT. A LONG SHOT OF THE RUSTY CLOSED DOOR; PAINT CHIPS CONGREGATE ON THE GROUND DIRECTLY BELOW IT. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE OVER-SIZED METAL DOOR AS YUSUF SUDDENLY SLAMS IT OPEN. AN EXTREME LONG SHOT OF DALIAH, WALKING ACROSS AN ALMOST-EMPTY LOT, THE MIST IN THE AIR WAFTING OVER HER.

YUSUF

Daliah! Please, just wait. Don't go!

A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE TURNS AROUND. A LONG SHOT OF YUSUF UNTIL HE REACHES HER. A MEDIUM SHOT OF BOTH OF THEM. A MEDIUM SHOT OF DALIAH.

DALIAH

What you guys did was really evil-like. What you did. I don't want to be in that scene.

YUSUF

It's not like that. That's what he wanted, but it's not what I was doing! Honestly!



DALIAH

At least *he* was being honest... couldn't stand all that crap, that you were going to, what? Pretend never happened?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF, MOUTH OPEN IN VAIN, NOT KNOWING HOW TO ANSWER TO THIS.

DALIAH

Whatever you did, it's done now--you can't undo it. (pause) But I've got to say, you did it really well.

A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE BEGINS WALKING AWAY AGAIN.

YUSUF

Daliah.

DALIAH

(turning)

Yusuf, you came to my parents' house and lied, to their faces and to mine. And all the while, you were laughing behind your little face.

YUSUF

I wasn't laughing. It never felt like that at all. Naveed has nothing to do with me.

DALIAH

He *programmed* you, what to do, what to say.... I can't possibly know the difference between what was you, what was him, what was made-up.

YUSUF

What is *me* is that I think I love you, I really do.

DALIAH

(pause; then)

Wouldn't it be awful if that were true?

A LONG SHOT OF DALIAH AS SHE WALKS TOWARDS US, HEAD DOWN.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

And just like that, like the moment after your eyes snap open from sleep, and you separate what really happened to you from what really didn't...

WE MOVE OVER DALIAH'S SHOULDER AND, THROUGH THE INCREASING MIST, RAPIDLY TRACK TOWARDS THE SPOT WHERE YUSUF SHOULD BE, BUT ISN'T.

DALIAH

(voice-over)

I lost that future in the instant.

THE TRACKING SHOT SLOWS DOWN; WE SOON MAKE OUT YUSUF STANDING BESIDE THE DOOR HE EMERGED FROM EARLIER. HE STANDS WITH HIS HANDS IN HIS POCKETS, WATCHING THE SPOT WHERE DALIAH HAS DISAPPEARED. THE DOOR SLAMS OPEN ONCE AGAIN. LAYLA COMES OUT. A MEDIUM SHOT OF HER AS SHE STOPS BY YUSUF AND GIVES HIM A DISGUSTED LOOK.

LAYLA

(spitefully)

Who do you think you are?

A MEDIUM SHOT OF LAYLA AS SHE GOES AFTER DALIAH. A MEDIUM SHOT OF YUSUF'S PAINED FACE. A MOMENT PASSES. HE TURNS AS IF TO GO BACK THROUGH THE METAL WAREHOUSE-LIKE DOOR, THEN STOPS, LOOKS RIGHT AND THEN SHUFFLES LEFT, OFF-SCREEN. ANOTHER MOMENT ON THE DOOR AS WE HEAR HIM WALKING AWAY.

INT. DALIAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE-DALIAH'S BEDROOM. EVENING.  
WE SEE DALIAH BEFORE THE MIRROR AGAIN. HER ROOM IS SPOTLESS AND NEAT AND THE STEREO IS TURNED OFF. SHE IS APPLYING COVER-UP STICK UNDER HER EYES WHEN THE DOORBELL RINGS. NOTICING A THREAD ON HER SLEEVE, SHE PLUCKS IT OFF AND THEN, LETHARGICALLY, ALLOWS HER HAND TO FALL AWAY.

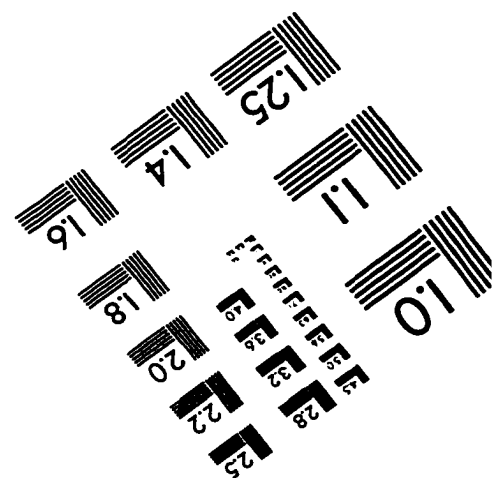
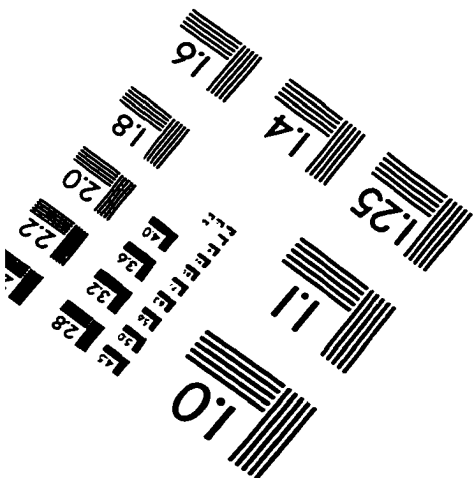
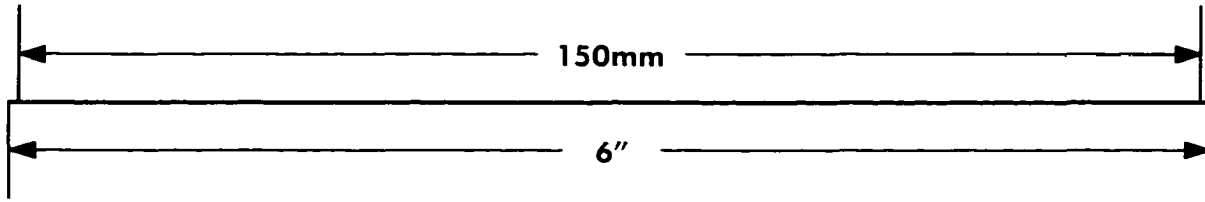
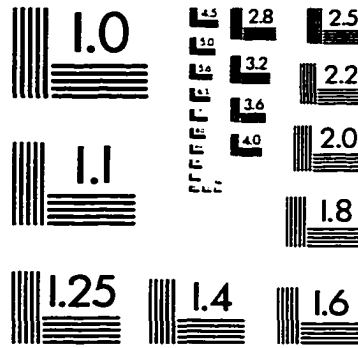
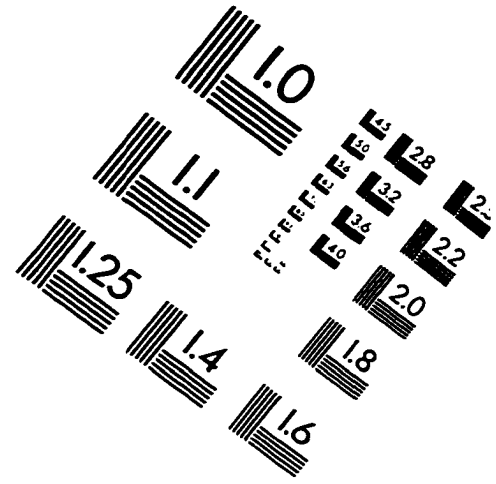
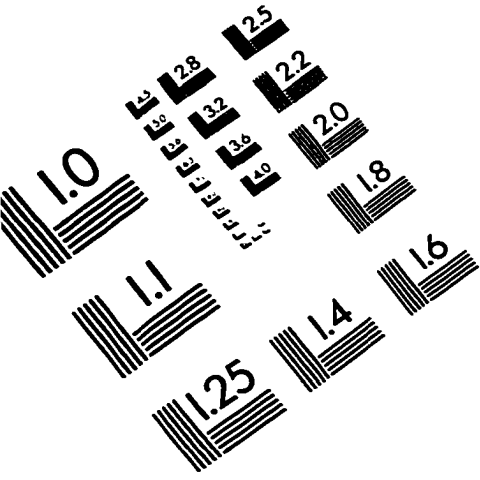
INT. NAVEED'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

A LONG SHOT OF NAVEED, STILL IN BED. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE MAIL AS SOMEONE SLIDES IT UNDERNEATH HIS DOOR. A MEDIUM SHOT OF NAVEED AS LEANS OUT OF BED. HE CAN STRETCH OUT FAR ENOUGH JUST TO PUSH THE MAIL AROUND WITH THE TIP OF HIS FINGER. A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE MAIL, AS HE PUSHES THE ENVELOPES AROUND. HE PUTS A FINGER ON A CREAMY-COLOURED ENVELOPE.

EXT. NAVEED'S RESIDENCE. A SHORT WHILE LATER.  
A LONG SHOT OF THE FRONT DOOR, FROM WHICH NAVEED EMERGES, FRESH  
AND READY FOR THE DAY. HE BREATHES IN DEEPLY, LOOKING ALL AROUND  
AND UP AT THE SKY, HAPPY.

Nabeela Sheikh is a writer from Guelph, Ontario. She has previously published poetry in *The Antigonish Review*. She has also won a prize in the University of Guelph's Young Writers' Literary Competition, as well as First Prize in a short fiction contest held at McMaster University. This is her first screenplay.

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