

NEW DELI

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FADE IN

EXT. OLD DELHI - INDIA - BUSTLING STREET - DAY

The buildings are weather-stained and, in parts, ramshackle.

Rundown small cars, auto rickshaws and motorbikes churn out smoke, scurry like ants, fight their way as best they can.

STREET BAZAAR:

Indian Rap Music blares from a sound system somewhere, TRADERS go about their business.

In their midst, baseball-capped AADI GANGULY (23), hip-hops with other YOUNG MEN - admired by a few female ON-LOOKERS.

A DRUG DEALER (age indeterminate) appears from the crowd.

DRUG DEALER

Aadi my man. How is the old baba?

Aadi stops dancing. The On-lookers retreat.

DRUG DEALER (CONT'D)

Kill two birds. Ease the old man's pain, live the life of a prince.

Aadi appraises the disheveled, emaciated interloper who proffers a small plastic bag of white powder. Aadi hesitates, turns back to his friends who stare him down.

The Drug Dealer looks about at the chaos and circumstances.

DRUG DEALER (CONT'D)

When you are desperate, Aadi.

Aadi teeters on resigned defeat. His cell phone rings.

AADI

Baba?

His face turns dour. He urgently crosses the street, choreographing his way through the traffic with complete disregard for his safety, and makes his way among the throng, oblivious to the vehicular damage left in his wake.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

A humble apartment, decorated with images of Ganesh, photos of Gandhi and past Indian Prime Ministers, a small library.

Aadi, cap off, seated on the edge of a bed, holds the withered hand of his frail FATHER (60s) who beckons him closer. Despite a faltering voice, his English is impeccable.

FATHER

The time has come, my son.

Aadi's eyes moisten.

AADI

Time ...?

He squeezes even harder. The old man winces at the pressure, retracts his hand.

FATHER

Is of the essence, yes.

AADI

Arrangements need to be made then.

Father waves a hand dismissively.

FATHER

I have made them already, Aadi.

AADI

You made them already?

FATHER

Of course. You have never met him.

AADI

Him? You talk as if you have?

FATHER

When I was much younger. It was a heavenly affair.

Aadi, eyes agape, slowly looks to the heavens, mouths his Father's words.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Now you can get to see him, too.

AADI

My maker?!

FATHER

Your maamaa jii!

AADI

Maama jii? So, when you say "it is time..."

FATHER

Time to stop all this dancing in the street and accept the scholarship.

AADI

But I must care for you.

FATHER

Bah, I have had my time. Here is your chance to complete your degree. Create something wonderful, a special palace for a special princess maybe.

Aadi bows his head respectfully.

The Father turns to a bedside stand. There is a small carved teak casket and an envelope resting beside an old photo of a young married Indian couple. He picks up and gently shakes the casket. The sound of grit inside.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Your mother's wish was to see again her big brother. Now you can see him for her. He has agreed to put you up.

AADI

Yet still there will be expenses.

He stands and goes to the window, looks out to the

STREET BAZAAR:

where the Drug Dealer fights off two Older Women brandishing bolts of colorful fabric.

FATHER (O.S.)

Aadi, we are never that desperate. Here.

BEDROOM:

Aadi turns back to see his Father, with a laboured hand, proffer the envelope.

Aadi opens it. It is crammed with bills in US currency.

EXT. BROOKLYN NEW YORK - STREET IN COBBLE HILL - DAY

Cars and trucks go about their business as they pass by the Taj Delicatessen. Parked at the curb, a not-so-well-maintained black town car.

INT/EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Behind the counter, RANA SANTOORI (60), a handsome Indian, sporting a white handlebar mustache, farewells an OLD INDIAN WOMAN customer, laden with a bag of groceries.

All the while Rana keeps an eye on another in the store --

A bruiser of a man, CAIN (40s), roams the haphazard array of stock: a pyramid of cans here; a stack of soap powder in amongst packaged foodstuffs. Hardly room to move.

Cain grabs some chocolate bars from a display, approaches the counter. He rips the wrapper from one, drops it on the floor and with a menacing stare, eats the bar in front of Rana.

He swallows and immediately thumps his chest in discomfort, pats his pockets - to no avail.

CAIN
You sell Nexium?

Rana shakes his head.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Call this dump a deli?

He turns and approaches the exit. Undaunted, Rana calls.

RANA
That will cost eighty-five cents.

Cain returns to the counter, eyeballs Rana.

Rana deftly lowers his hand beneath the counter.

Cain slaps a dollar bill down and resumes his exit. At the door, he does a last survey, cringes at the sight of cracks in the walls, paint peeling from the ceiling.

CAIN
No wonder old man Epstein wants out.

Rana returns his hand to the counter top and regards Cain disdainfully as he heads out the door.

STREET OUTSIDE

On the sidewalk, Cain nearly collides with ALICE HOOPER (50).

He removes another chocolate bar from his overcoat pocket and goes to the parked black town car, the passenger window down.

Cain tosses the chocolate bar to the passenger, PRESTON (IRONSEID) JUNIOR (40-ish), suited up in Armani, plenty of bling about him.

Cain gets behind the wheel of the car. It squeals away into traffic as the wrapper is tossed from the passenger window.

Alice gives them a disapproving look, enters the Deli.

DELICATESSEN - CONTINUOUS

Alice goes to the refrigerators, addresses Rana in a distinctive Irish brogue.

ALICE
Mornin' to ya Mister Santoori.

Rana looks at the clock on the wall - it's well past midday.

RANA
And to you Miss Hooper.

Alice selects a carton of cream and, with a spring in her step, goes to the counter.

ALICE
What's with the bruiser?

Rana shrugs dismissively.

RANA
Looking for a drug store.

ALICE
The streets dried up?

Rana feigns a smile, changes the subject and refers to the carton of cream.

RANA
Not like the young ones, eh, getting your groceries cheaper over the line?

ALICE
On-line.

Rana hikes his shoulders, whatever.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I like the personal service.

Rana twirls the ends of his white handle-bar mustache.

Alice places a bill on the counter ensuring that her hand brushes Rana's hand resting there. He blushes.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Besides, you're practically family.

He smiles tightly, but turns his attention to ...

THE ENTRANCE where Aadi holds a small duffle bag, a backpack crimping his short, embroidered kurta.

Aadi makes a final check of his cell phone, puts it in the front pocket of his jeans, lingers nervously, as if casing the joint.

RANA
I hope you have money in your pocket.

AADI
Very little at this stage, sir. But I am hoping that is but a temporary state of affairs.

Aadi's hand goes swiftly to the back pocket of his jeans.

Rana whips a hand gun from under the counter.

Aadi freezes in fear with an envelope held in his hand.

AADI (CONT'D)
No no no, sir. I am simply looking for maamaa jii Rana. That is all.

Alice raises her eyebrows at Rana.

AADI (CONT'D)
I am Aadi Ganguly. I am here to complete my studies as an architect. I am to start tomorrow.

This is out of left field for Rana.

RANA
Tomorrow?

AADI
Circumstances delayed my arrival.

RANA
Circumstances?

AADI
I believe my father wrote to you.

RANA

He did. Some time ago. But --

Aadi gives a surreptitious glance toward Alice.

AADI

I see. I should spend another night
at the YMCA?

Rana does his best to allay the young man's misgivings.

RANA

No no. We're not -- No no.

Alice takes her cue and moves a little away from him.

Rana stands awkwardly a moment. He turns to Alice.

RANA (CONT'D)

My late sister's child. So young.

Alice prods Rana, addresses him sternly.

ALICE

And so needing a roof over his head.

RANA

Of course. Of course.

Rana moves to the entrance and embraces the much taller Aadi. It's an awkward maneuver with all the luggage, and the gun in Rana's hand comes precariously close to Aadi's nose.

Eyes a-poppin', Aadi eases the muzzle away from his face with the envelope, which he offers to Rana.

AADI

A small contribution to assist in
this regard.

Rana leads a shell-shocked Aadi back to join Alice.

RANA

My nephew. An architect.

Alice relieves Rana of the hand gun, briefly assesses its weight, places it on the counter, picks up her cream.

Passing Aadi, she places a hand on his shoulder, shakes her head pitifully.

As she exits, she chances another glance at the weapon.

Rana closes the door after her, flips the OPEN sign to CLOSED, returns and again hugs Aadi who is unnerved by the sight of the weapon on the counter.

INT. RANA'S APARTMENT ABOVE DELI - DAY

SPARE BEDROOM

More a spice warehouse than a bedroom. Beneath a pile of old clothes, a small, child-size bed. Some other basic furniture.

Aadi breathes in the atmosphere.

RANA

Sorry about the mess. But since receiving the letter, I've been under pressure.

Aadi looks for elaboration but Rana quickly changes subject.

RANA (CONT'D)

And how is the old professor?

Aadi's eyes tear up.

RANA (CONT'D)

I see. The "circumstances".

Rana moves to console him with an awkward man hug.

Aadi wipes away the tears, brightens up, rummages through his backpack and withdraws a small, carved teak casket. He rattles it like a maracas.

RANA (CONT'D)

Ashes?

AADI

Mother and Father.

RANA

But the Ganges?

AADI

My itinerary did not allow a visit. But I will ensure they eventually find rest in the sacred river.

RANA

And at the airport --?

AADI

Sacred Hindu musical instrument.

Rana shakes his head in disbelief, gathers up the old clothes from the small bed.

RANA

An heirloom. Your mother and I shared this bed in our younger years. Before she was betrothed.

Rana catches Aadi's eyes and offers an empathetic smile.

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the unlit room, Aadi lies gingerly on top of the bed, street noises drifting in.

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Aadi, feet overhanging the end of the bed, stirs.

He stretches away his aches and pains, negotiates the junk on the floor, offers namaste to an image of Ganesh on the wall alongside a photo of a young Indian boy standing with a younger Indian girl in traditional Hindi attire.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

At the stove, Rana pours creamy mixture onto a skillet, spreads it into something resembling a thin crepe.

Aadi, in jeans and hoodie, swings from the bottom of the stairs and enters the kitchen, offers a polite cough.

Rana surreptitiously closes an Indian cookbook on the table, pushes it out of sight, and bids Aadi be seated.

Aadi offers his customary namaste as Rana serves a plate of messy pre-cooked crepes.

RANA

Traditional oats dosa... If you're hungry. And no animals were killed in their making.

This pleases Aadi.

Rana gapes as Aadi devours the breakfast, smiles at his nephew's moan of approval.

He pours teas from a pot, adds plenty of cream and two teaspoons of sugar to each cup. He turns back to the stove, does a double take when Aadi adds two extra spoons of sugar.

AADI
At what time does trading start?

RANA
Never mind me. You better get your
own business sorted.

AADI
It was sorted yesterday.

Aadi finishes off his crepes, gulps some tea, stands.

AADI (CONT'D)
Today I begin in earnest.

He bounds up the stairs.

Rana turns from the stove. The plate is empty.

RANA
(aside)
If you're hungry.

He picks up the plate, examines it in the light. It's squeaky clean. He reaches up about to store it in the overhead cupboard when Aadi, shouldering a backpack, re-appears.

In one fluid movement Rana instead packs it with the soiled dishes in the ancient sink, turns on the faucet.

Aadi stands there nervously.

AADI
"Kay sera sera".

Rana is not quite sure what to make of this. Aadi hikes his shoulders and does the briefest of Bollywood dance moves.

Rana shakes his head in bewilderment. He picks up a pre-packed lunch container and hands it over.

After an awkward moment, Aadi accepts it, offers thanks, takes a final gulp of tea and departs the deli.

Rana stands befuddled as he watches Aadi exit, oblivious to the sink about to overflow!

INT. LECTURE THEATER - MORNING

Aadi locates an isolated seat toward the back, amidst a sea of students of varying ethnic backgrounds.

A few rows in front is VANESSA EPHRON (23) seated next to the handsome but boorish BENJAMIN (23), and a few of his Disciples.

Vanessa turns to survey the scene, nodding to a few peers.

Aadi, sits rigid and self-conscious. There is an air of the Adonis about him which causes Vanessa to take a second breath before turning back to face the lectern.

The lecturer, PROFESSOR KYOCHU approaches a lectern out front and the class comes to order.

The Japanese Prof's grasp of the English language is poor, has difficulty with the "R"s and the "L"s.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU

Welcome to final semester topic.
There are many fine heritage building
in this city, fallen into disrepair
and crying out for TLC --

Some of Benjamin's Disciples snigger at the Professor's difficulty with the language.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU (CONT'D)

We must never forget our heritage.
In few days will be given details ...

But Aadi focuses on Vanessa's jet-black Romany locks.

INT. COLLEGE CAFETERIA - DAY

Aadi wanders aimlessly about the crowded facility.

He sets his lunch box down at one of a few vacant seats at Benjamin's table. The Disciples are gobsmacked.

Oblivious to their stares, Aadi eats his sandwich.

Vanessa arrives with her salad. She hesitates a moment, captivated by Aadi's presence. She checks her phone, turns it off and sits next to Benjamin.

VANESSA

(to no-one in particular)
What do we all make of the professor?

Her friends all chortle.

AADI

A very knowledgable man, although I
am taken by his strange accent.

The Disciples snigger and mock Aadi's own accent.

DISCIPLE #1
You know he has an Irish wife called
"Eileen".

Another student makes slanting eyes with his fingers.

DISCIPLE #2
And she answers to "Irene".

They earn a stern look from Vanessa. She addresses Aadi.

VANESSA
(re: Disciples)
Rejects from Drama Faculty.
(re: the Prof's accent)
The Professor is not from Brooklyn.

AADI
I too am a long way from Brooklyn.

BENJAMIN
You are in Brooklyn, kibitzer.

Irrked by Benjamin's attitude, Vanessa politely corrects Aadi.

VANESSA
"My home is a long way from
Brooklyn."

AADI
So too is mine.

Benjamin feigns to quell the Disciples.

Vanessa breathes in the aroma of Aadi's sandwich.

VANESSA
Interesting sandwich.

AADI
Green chutney sandwiches - coconut,
coriander and chili. Specialty of the
Taj Delicatessen. You know of it?

She shakes her head.

AADI (CONT'D)
Near the Cobble Hill Park.

BENJAMIN
Not our preferred neighborhood.

Vanessa proffers a diplomatic smile and extends her hand to Aadi, much to the consternation of the others.

VANESSA
Vanessa. Vanessa Ephron.

AADI
I like that. Miss Vanessa Ephron.

VANESSA
Ms.

Aadi is bemused.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Not "Miss". "Ms". "Mzzzz".

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is tidy. Aadi lies on his bed, in another world.

AADI
"Mzzzz". Not "Miss", "Mzzzz".

Contented, he turns off his light, settles in for the night.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - MORNING

Aadi ambles along the sidewalk, mumbling "Mzzzz, not Miss" to himself as he takes in the surrounding architecture.

A burgundy town car with the licence plate *EXP-IMP* glides by with Vanessa in the passenger seat, tinted window down, and turns at the end of the block.

And Aadi's gait becomes more sprightly.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE

The town car pulls into the curb behind a yellow BMW parked in a 'No Parking Zone'. Benjamin, leaning on the trunk of the yellow car acknowledges the driver.

Vanessa alights, offers a cursory farewell to the driver and watches the vehicle pull away.

Joining Benjamin, she chances a glance back in the direction from which she has just been driven.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Aadi walks a corridor, mumbling to himself.

AADI
 "Mzzzz". Not "Miss", "Mzzzz" --

Vanessa rounds a corner of a connecting corridor and almost collides with Aadi mid-sentence...

AADI (CONT'D)
 Mzzzz Vanessa Ephron.

VANESSA
 My friends call me Ness.

Aadi, demurring, blushes as he mumbles "Ness" to himself.

They continue side-by-side, both very awkward.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 You didn't catch the bus?

AADI
 An unnecessary expense. I was taught that a penny saved...

VANESSA
 Just like my father. "Run home behind a bus, save three dollars. Run home behind a taxi, save thirty!"

No reaction. Vanessa stops at a particular doorway.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 My tutorial class.

They stand mute a moment. Vanessa manages a polite smile, takes a step into the room.

AADI
 Ah yes! Save thirty dollars! Run home behind --

Vanessa immediately comes back out to the corridor. Their eyes lock, neither sure of the next move. Aadi gulps, plucks up courage.

AADI (CONT'D)
 Perhaps we could...?

VANESSA
 We? You and me?

Aadi fidgets, in a dither. He nods, unconvincing at first and then more vigorously.

AADI
Maybe tea ... coffee? Later?

Vanessa stares at him a beat ... her eyes sparkle ... a silent "yes". She re-enters the room.

Aadi checks his small leather purse. Beams.

INT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

As Aadi ushers Vanessa into a booth, she turns off her phone. Impressed by this, Aadi follows suit.

AADI
And you are from Brooklyn?

VANESSA
Born and bred. In Park Slope.

AADI
I shall visit one day.

A dour WAITRESS attends.

VANESSA
Coffee. With cream.

AADI
I will be having tea.

A baffled look from the Waitress.

AADI (CONT'D)
With condensed milk.

A more intense baffled look from the Waitress. Vanessa intervenes.

VANESSA
With cream and sugar.

The Waitress shrugs and departs.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I think American tea will be fine.
So your home is...?

AADI
I am from Ram Nagar. In old Delhi. I
am here on a scholarship.

VANESSA
Scholarship? Wow. Impressive.

Aadi shrugs humbly.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
So your parents are --?

AADI
Both were teachers.

VANESSA
Teachers? English?

AADI
No. Indian.

VANESSA
They taught English?

AADI
How did you know?

Vanessa is disarmed by Aadi's dewy-eyed innocence.

AADI (CONT'D)
Yes, they were teachers and thus were
very poor. And it is not good to be
poor in India.

VANESSA
Or anywhere.

Their eyes meet and attest their mutual understanding.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
You said, "were teachers"?

AADI
Sadly, both are deceased. I arrived
late, they departed early.

She places her hand on Aadi's, unnerving him.

VANESSA
But you have some memories?

AADI
Oh yes, thank you. They are in my
pack. Until I visit the holy river.

She is puzzled.

AADI (CONT'D)
Their ashes. I have them.

Vanessa waits for enlightenment.

Aadi opens his backpack, removes and rattles the teak casket.

The Waitress returns with their orders, sees Aadi rattling the casket. She reaches to the far end of the table and places a sugar shaker in front of him.

VANESSA
I'm sure they'll be happy right here
in Brooklyn.

EXT. EAST RIVER - PIER 6 PARK - AFTERNOON

Ashes slowly disperse in the waters of the river.

Standing alone above at the edge of the pier, Aadi raises the teak casket solemnly to his lips. This pious act complete, he places it in his pack and offers namaste to the waters below.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - EVENING

Aadi, a spring in his step, approaches the delicatessen as the black town car screeches away from the curb outside.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - EVENING

Aadi sashays into the Deli, his face beaming, addresses the whole world.

AADI
I am in love with Brooklyn. So much
so that I have --

He stops in his tracks.

Rana, slumped on his stool behind the counter, looks up warily, his eyes red from turmoil, puts on a brave face.

Aadi waits patiently for enlightenment.

RANA
It is a pity, for I fear you have
made a grave mistake.

AADI
But uncle, in this country is it not
regarded as we do the Ganges?

Rana turns to him.

RANA
Ganges?

AADI
The East River?

Aadi removes the casket from his backpack, no more rattling.

AADI (CONT'D)
They are now finally at rest --

RANA
Your parents? The East River?

Aadi looks for approval. Rana wobbles his head, ambivalent.

RANA (CONT'D)
I am sure they will be happy.

AADI
And yet there is still a problem?

RANA
The problem is you might need to find
alternative accommodation.

Aadi goes to protest but Rana continues.

RANA (CONT'D)
The problem is, the rent is going up,
and business is going down. Customers
have a new way to shop.

Aadi shrugs "And"?

Rana wavers, eyes downcast and speaks as if in confession.

RANA (CONT'D)
I've no option but to close.

AADI
Is this not your livelihood?

Rana waves a dismissive hand, goes and locks the door, stands inanimate, staring out into the street.

Beads of sweat appear on Aadi's furrowed forehead.

AADI (CONT'D)
There is always India, perhaps?

Rana returns from the door, stares pathetically into Aadi's eyes, steadying hands laid gently on his nephew's shoulders.

RANA
You are my India.

He disappears into the back room.

Aadi embraces the empty teak casket, looks to the back room.

AADI
(sotto)
As you now are mine.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

At the lectern, Professor Kyochu addresses the students.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU
As I mention in first lecture, we
must never forget our heritage --

Again a few Disciples snigger at the Prof's pronunciation of "helitage". The Professor pauses for their attention ...

PROFESSOR KYOCHU (CONT'D)
As architects, we must respect these
buildings and help them maintain
their place in what will be your
future --

He pauses again as the offending students persist.

Vanessa, seated with them, shushes them ...

PROFESSOR KYOCHU (CONT'D)
Which brings me again to topic of our
major project for final semester,
'Reclaiming Urban Heritage'.

But his lecture is interrupted again, by a commotion near the back of the theater.

All eyes are on Aadi, as he finds a seat away from everyone else, lost in his own world.

BENJAMIN
I wonder what he's on?

DISCIPLE #1
Maybe he does a line every morning.

DISCIPLE #2

Coke?

DISCIPLE #1

Curry powder.

Vanessa again admonishes them ...

With calm restored, The Professor resumes his lecture.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU

By now you have identified example of Brooklyn heritage. Perhaps tenement, library, park, school. Only two month for submit final proposal. Must make early start.

No sooner is he settled, Aadi gathers his gear and causes mayhem as he lumbers back out of the lecture theater.

Noticing this, Vanessa gathers her gear and, to the chagrin of Benjamin, causes more mayhem as she also shuffles out.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU (CONT'D)

Such enthusiasm.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

Aadi slinks along the corridor.

VANESSA (O.S.)

Wait up, wait up.

Vanessa rushes to join Aadi.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

You want to tell me?

He is reluctant to talk but her look is the catalyst.

AADI

Uncle is to shut up his business.

VANESSA

Because?

AADI

Customers now shop online. Nobody is needing the delicatessen anymore.

VANESSA

This is Brooklyn. Everybody is needing the delicatessen.

AADI

But it would appear nobody is needing his.

VANESSA

You think it's as simple as that?

Aadi hikes his shoulders, reluctant to continue the discourse.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Any way, so what if he retires?

Reluctant to explain, Aadi walks off leaving Vanessa hanging.

EXT. STREET - COLLEGE ENTRANCE - DAY

Aadi examines a notice board with listings of student apartments for rent. He squats on his haunches, morose.

I/E. TAXI TRAVELLING - COLLEGE ENTRANCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice, in a taxi, sees Aadi on the street, slumped over, his face buried in his hands. She calls to the DRIVER.

ALICE

Pull over here a minute, please.

The Driver complies. Alice exits the taxi and approaches Aadi.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Surely this would be the young Aadi?

Aadi looks up, wary of the interloper.

ALICE (CONT'D)

The nephew. Of Rana Santoori.

Aadi nods his head indifferently - but on recognizing Alice, stands and makes himself presentable.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What's all this then?

AADI

I am forced to find new digs. But I do not have the funds for these. And thus my future in this --

ALICE

What's wrong with the delicatessen?
Is he that unbearable?

AADI

Oh no, no, Miss Alice. It is to close
and uncle is to lose his only home.

Alice frowns at this revelation.

ALICE

Lose the delicatessen?

AADI

It seems there is not the business to
meet the demands of increased rent.

ALICE

Increased rent? Is that so?

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Alice storms toward a table RONNIE (early 50s).

RONNIE

Sis. Thought you'd gotten lost.

ALICE

Are you in on it, too?

RONNIE

In on what?

ALICE

Your miserable husband's plan.

RONNIE

You know he never tells me anything.
Now what's he doing?

ALICE

He wants to shaft Mr Santoori.

RONNIE

Shaft Rana? From the deli?

ALICE

Wants to stick it right up him. And
his poor nephew as well.

RONNIE

Well, I'm not involved. But you
obviously are.

ALICE

Yes, well... I am a regular, am I not? I mean, he's practically family.

The other diners, mainly women, are not only all ears, they're all stares.

INT. EPSTEIN REALTY - INNER OFFICE - DAY

A well-worn office, between antique and just plain old.

A gaunt ISAAC EPSTEIN, hands unsteady, looking older than his sixty years, shuffles in front of the seated Ronnie.

ISAAC

It's run down, it's --

RONNIE

And whose fault is that?

ISAAC

Ah, faults, schmaltz. The whole neighborhood needs pulling down.

RONNIE

You sound like one of those upstart property developers.

Isaac stops his shuffling and gives Ronnie the evil eye.

ISAAC

It's for the best.

RONNIE

Best for who?

ISAAC

Doesn't matter.

RONNIE

Yes it does.

ISAAC

Why are you so concerned?

RONNIE

My sister Alice, for one.

ISAAC

Let him move in with her then.

RONNIE

There's also the kid, apparently.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

Vanessa, seated with Benjamin and Disciples, oblivious to Professor Kyocho's (Mute) lecture, scans the auditorium -- but there is no Aadi.

INT. EPHRON LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Vanessa slumps through the house, past her mother, GLORIA (late 40s) on the sofa watching television.

GLORIA
Like that, is it?

Vanessa stops at the stairs and turns back to her mother.

VANESSA
Like what?

Gloria, a slightly over-painted but still attractive woman, does not take her eyes off the television.

GLORIA
Something's on your mind.

VANESSA
Not important.

GLORIA
Don't lose sleep then.

Vanessa rolls her eyes at her mother's attitude. She starts again for the stairs, stops and asks

VANESSA
You still shop at Lowenstein's delicatessen?

GLORIA
Of course. Outside the club, what else I got to do. Why?

VANESSA
Just curious.

Vanessa heads up the stairs.

Gloria, unfazed, concentrates on the television.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Vanessa looks briefly at a sign in the main window:

'CLEARANCE SALE - BROOKLYN'S FINEST SPICES'

She bites her bottom lip, heaves a sigh, composes herself.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Rana, at his counter, keeps a vigilant eye on two African-American YOUTHS hanging out in the magazine section.

The Old Indian Woman customer completes packing her purchases into a macrame string carry bag.

OLD INDIAN WOMAN

Mr. Santoori. I have been a customer for nearly twenty years. I took my business from that scoundrel Mr. Mukherjee and now it seems I am to return to him.

RANA

I'm sorry. But there are some things in life beyond our control.

OLD INDIAN WOMAN

That man is a disgrace. He belongs back in India. So I hope, Mr. Santoori, that you reconsider and not abandon this enterprise.

RANA

It would take a visit from a heavenly Devi to --

At the ENTRANCE, Vanessa appears with the aura of an angel. She gently inhales the aromas of the store, wanders nonchalantly surveying the haphazard layout of the premises.

The two Youths, seeing Vanessa, ignore the magazine.

The Old Indian Lady takes her purchases and departs.

OLD INDIAN LADY

(to Vanessa, passing)
I do not like Mr. Mukherjee.

RANA

Can I help?

VANESSA

Mr. Mukherjee?

Rana is taken aback, places his palms on his chest as if to ward off an insult.

RANA

Never! I am Mr. Rana Santoori.

He twirls the ends of his mustache.

VANESSA

I'm glad to hear.
(looks around shop)
You cater well for Indian.

RANA

We cater well for all, Polish sausage
... and ham off the bone ... for
those inclined.

Rana taps the side of his nose with his index finger.

VANESSA

We pretend it's that other white
meat.

BACK STORE-ROOM

A sullen Aadi, busy unpacking supplies, stops, listens, amused by Vanessa's confession. There is a lull in the conversation.

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

Do your customers have trouble
finding what they want?

RANA (O.S.)

Not my regulars.

THE DELI PROPER

Vanessa scans the store, vacant except for the two youths.

Aadi, standing in the doorway to the back Store-Room, catches sight of Vanessa. His eyes brighten, as do hers.

AADI

I did not think you frequented this
neighborhood?

VANESSA

Never been much reason --

Rana coughs politely, hoping for some explanation.

AADI

Oh. Uncle, apologies. Mzzz Ephron.

Vanessa politely extends her hand.

VANESSA
Vanessa. Vanessa Ephron.

AADI
One of the students --

Rana's eyes perk up.

AADI (CONT'D)
We had coffee.

Neither Aadi nor Vanessa take their eyes off one another.

RANA
A pity we don't serve coffee at the
Taj Delicatessen.

VANESSA
Perhaps you should. I mean, maybe you
would get more customers. That way
and you wouldn't have to close.

She realises her *faux pas*.

Rana turns to Aadi seeking an explanation.

Vanessa relieves Aadi from further embarrassment.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
We were in class and I knew something
wasn't right. So I probed, and Aadi
reluctantly told me of your plight.

RANA
My plight?

Vanessa turns to Aadi with an apologetic shrug.

Rana flops resignedly on his stool behind the counter.

RANA (CONT'D)
I suppose there's no denying "my
plight".

He looks around at his lot.

RANA (CONT'D)
Thirty-five years I have run this
establishment. And now the building
is to be demolished for apartments.

VANESSA
Demolished? For apartments! When?

Rana shrugs.

RANA
A few months max. But it's
inevitable. The landlord is
negotiating a sale as we speak.

VANESSA
Is there nothing you can do?

Vanessa turns to Aadi, who's lost in thought.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Aadi?

It's an epiphany moment. Aadi stands resolute like Winston Churchill.

AADI
We shall sink the deal. We shall not
surrender.

Rana turns to Vanessa, gives the crazy gesture, rotating his finger near his temple. But Aadi stands firm.

AADI (CONT'D)
To do that we must bring the
customers back.

They listen, bemused, as Aadi vocalizes his thoughts.

AADI (CONT'D)
Imagine if this tired old
delicatessen was transformed into
something not seen in Brooklyn
before? A vivacious new deli. The
customers would surely return.

RANA
And who's going to do that?

A waggish grin unfurls on Aadi's face.

Rana gives him an incredulous look.

RANA (CONT'D)
You're to be an architect, not a
storekeeper.

VANESSA
He's got a point.

AADI

And a very good point indeed.

But they still don't get his point.

AADI (CONT'D)

To graduate I must first complete the major assignment. Reclaiming Urban Heritage.

He surveys the delicatessen.

AADI (CONT'D)

It stands before us as we speak.

Vanessa's eyes brighten at the gathering momentum.

AADI (CONT'D)

The delicatessen is part of Brooklyn's urban heritage, is it not? We shall reclaim that heritage. Before the "inevitable", we shall turn this into the most popular delicatessen in all of Cobble Hill. All of Brooklyn.

RANA

All of Brooklyn?

Aadi grabs Vanessa's arms, his face broadcasting an infectious smile.

AADI

All of New York City.

Vanessa, swept up in the moment, reciprocates, an enthusiastic accomplice.

AADI (CONT'D)

Our landlord will have a riot on his hands if he tries to force us out.

Rana coughs to get their attention.

RANA

One thing.

What's that?

RANA (CONT'D)

Money?

The enthusiasm rapidly wanes.

EXT. EAST RIVER - PIER 6 PARK - DAY

At the end of the pier, Vanessa studies Aadi as he peers forlornly into the water below where he previously scattered his parents' ashes. He breaks from his reverie, pulls up a take-out coffee cup attached to a length of string.

AADI
Won't reach.

VANESSA
Aadi, they've been washed out to the Atlantic by now.

AADI
I cannot return without a part of them to toss in the holy river.

VANESSA
It'll probably never come to that.

AADI
My visa allows me only to study, not to work. Even if to help another.

Vanessa takes the cup from him and crushes it, throws it in a nearby bin. Aadi sighs, succumbing to her logic.

They walk back toward nearby volleyball courts.

VANESSA
There must be other options.

They walk past two men on a bench openly doing a drug deal. Aadi can't take his eyes off them.

AADI
In run-down Old Delhi ... If you were desperate enough.

Vanessa looks back at the deal, takes a step back from Aadi, and reprimands him with a scornful look.

VANESSA
We are not that desperate!

But his doleful look says otherwise.

INT. EPHRON STUDY - NIGHT

DAVID EPHRON (50), seated at his luxurious mahogany desk, reviews online trade sites on his computer.

From behind, Vanessa gently massages his shoulders. He leans back, his bald spot nestling into her chest.

VANESSA
How's it going, old man?

DAVID
Getting older each day, trying to
make an honest living.

VANESSA
Thought of trying a dishonest one?

Brow furrowed, he swivels his seat.

DAVID
My rebellious daughter.

He returns to his business. She continues to massage. David slowly turns again to her.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You in some sort of, you know, female
trouble?

VANESSA
No! I have a friend. A fellow
student.

DAVID
And she's in --?

VANESSA
NO!

DAVID
Okay, then. What is it?

She turns a little away from him, considers her response.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Fess up. How much is involved?

VANESSA
A whole lot more than even you can
raise, I guess.

David is all ears.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
But I suspect you might be able to
influence others.

He eyes her suspiciously, waits for her to continue.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 There's a delicatessen. In Cobble
 Hill.

David's brow furrows on hearing this.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 Do you know the neighborhood?

DAVID
 I've been in the vicinity -- a few
 times. On business.

VANESSA
 Business?

A hint of perspiration appears.

DAVID
 Where's this leading? Is this going
 to involve your mother?

VANESSA
 Doesn't have to.

David muffles a sigh of relief.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB DRIVING RANGE - DAY

David drives his balls without conviction, constantly looking
 away from the task at hand.

Further along the line of golfers is PRESTON IRONSEID SENIOR,
 (whom we'll call IRONSEID - late 60s), an imposing presence.

He acknowledges David looking across at him. In turn, an
 affable wave back.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB DINING ROOM - DAY - LATER

David ambles to the bar, locates Ironseid at a dining table,
 hoeing into a steak. David summons up courage, approaches.

IRONSEID
 David, pull up a pew.

David sits, waving away an approaching WAITER.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
 How's the driving going?

DAVID
So-so. Mind not on the job.

IRONSEID
So what's it on?

DAVID
Vanessa, actually.

IRONSEID
She's not been corrupted, like her
father, I hope?

The comment unsettles David further.

DAVID
It seems she has this project...

Ironseid waits for David to come to the point.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Related to her degree.

IRONSEID
Related?

DAVID
It's a third party actually.

IRONSEID
Details?

DAVID
Hazy at this stage but it's going to
require considerable funds...

IRONSEID
Beyond your means?

Humiliation shows in David's reddening cheeks.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
And you'd like me to broker a loan?

David nods, obsequiously.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
Secured or unsecured?

David offers an inconclusive wavering of the hands.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

Perhaps I'll drop by. Haven't seen the lovely Gloria since I don't know when. How is she doing --?

DAVID

Actually --

IRONSEID

Need-to-know basis only? What's today? Friday. Okay, my office. Monday morning. Nine.

A relieved David stands and, short of genuflecting, makes his appreciation obvious as he backs away.

INT. COLLEGE CAFETERIA - DAY

Aadi and Vanessa, at a table away from Benjamin and the Disciples, pore over rough sketches in a design folio.

VANESSA

At the mere mention of a Cobble Hill deli, we were greenlit. No need for details, just a basic proposal at this stage.

AADI

He has an empathy for the people of Cobble Hill, perhaps?

Before she can respond, Benjamin approaches.

BENJAMIN

Ness, what's with Siberia?

VANESSA

Need some space to go through some planning.

BENJAMIN

Yeah well, you know Prof Kyochu is allowing students to partner up.

VANESSA

Yes, we're well aware.

BENJAMIN

I have some good ideas I'd like to share - we'll make a great team.

VANESSA

That's kind of you, Benji...

Benjamin, riled by this term, frowns.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

But we already have a proposal we want to put forward.

Benjamin looks from Vanessa to Aadi in disbelief.

He gives them both a steely look and on his departure...

BENJAMIN

By the way, the name's Benjamin.

He barges past his chuckling Disciples and gives them all the middle finger.

AADI

So, he is not a happy man. I believe he likes you very much.

VANESSA

He's a poseur. Only likes me for what he thinks he can get through me.

Aadi doesn't comprehend.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Thinks that my father might help him climb the social ladder.

AADI

"Social ladder"?

VANESSA

You know, mix with people of a higher class.

AADI

Ah, yes, the American caste system?

VANESSA

Yes indeed.

AADI

Your father has friends in high places?

VANESSA

And possibly in low ones as well.

Aadi is bemused by the comment.

EXT. STREET - DAVID'S CAR - NIGHT

David exits his burgundy town car parked out front of Roxy's Jewelers, neighbor to the Taj Delicatessen. He makes his way toward the entrance.

INT. EPHRON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vanessa, drained, design folio under one arm, slings her backpack on the sofa and sits next to her mother, Gloria, watching television.

Gloria takes her eyes off the television momentarily and registers the folio resting on Vanessa's lap.

VANESSA
Our major project.

Vanessa flips over the front cover. Gloria glances over but doesn't take much notice of it.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
We have to redesign some aspect of Brooklyn's built heritage that's at risk of being destroyed.

GLORIA
And what have you chosen?

Vanessa enthusiastically starts flipping over the various sketches in the folder.

VANESSA
We are going to revitalise one of Brooklyn's, one of New York's, icons. The delicatessen.

GLORIA
I see. And when you say "we"...

VANESSA
Students are allowed to work in pairs.

GLORIA
That's nice. You and Benjamin will do just fine, I'm sure.

Vanessa turns to face her mother who stares back a moment.

VANESSA
Not Benjamin, mother.

GLORIA

Not Benjamin? But he's such a good catch. Your father thinks the sun shines out of his ass.

VANESSA

So does Benji. Look, he's fine on the occasional date, but on this issue we're on different levels. He's into grander things--

GLORIA

Something wrong with grand?

Vanessa gives her mother a steely cold look.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Darling, you can't be this way all your life.

An impasse.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

So just who is the other half of "we"? You're not batting for the other team are you?

VANESSA

No mom. I leave all that to the softballers. Let's just say that he's... well, he's different.

Gloria digests this a moment.

GLORIA

You know your father doesn't like different.

VANESSA

On the subject --?

GLORIA

Your guess.

VANESSA

Working late. Again?

Gloria shrugs, trying not to betray any suspicions.

EXT. STREET - DAVID'S CAR - NIGHT

David enters his burgundy town car parked out front of Roxy's Jewelers.

INT. VANESSA'S BEDROOM/EPHRON LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Vanessa in bed half asleep, rouses. She strains to hear.

GLORIA (O.S.)
Do you know what the time is?

DAVID (O.S.)
What can I say? It's business.

GLORIA (O.S.)
It's always business.

DAVID (O.S.)
I'm negotiating a deal with a jeweler, if you must know.

GLORIA (O.S.)
Male or female.

DAVID (O.S.)
I love it when you're jealous.

EPHRON LOUNGE ROOM

David takes Gloria in his arms, tries to placate her.

GLORIA
Your daughter was waiting up for you.
Showed me sketches for her major project.

David feigns an interest in what Gloria says.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
It's a joint project. She's partnered up.

Vanessa at Bedroom door, eaves-dropping.

DAVID (O.S.)
Don't tell me she's getting serious about him at last.

GLORIA (O.S.)
Not Benjamin.

DAVID (O.S.)
Oh?

Vanessa cringes.

Gloria tries to hush things.

GLORIA

I know you don't like different ...

David looks to upstairs, moves towards them.

Vanessa gets back into bed, douses her bed lamp and feigns sleeping, an exaggerated snore.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

The window is void of any 'Clearance Sale' sign. Some blobs of Blu-Tack are all that remain in its stead.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - STORE-ROOM - DAY

To the rhythm of BOLLYWOOD MUSIC blaring from a Blue-tooth device, Aadi dances uninhibited, doing strange things with merchandise, stacking it cleanly up against a wall.

Rana enters.

RANA

Turn it down. You'll scare away our customers.

Aadi goes to his smartphone, reluctantly turns the volume down, and sashays back to his task.

AADI

We should play it louder so everyone knows that you --

Vanessa appears, standing next to Rana. Aadi stops his dancing and beams a huge smile.

AADI (CONT'D)

-- are here.

Vanessa's eyes are red. Aadi's smile wanes. He goes to her, falling short of physically comforting her.

AADI (CONT'D)

Ness?

She stands a moment swaying, before moving close in to him, stimulating him to take her in his arms.

RANA

Brooklyn does this to a young man?

Vanessa breaks away.

Both men are puzzled.

VANESSA
It's Saturday.

AADI
And still we must work.

Rana digs Aadi in the ribs.

VANESSA
The Sabbath. I'm meant to be
otherwise engaged. Sorry, Aadi. But
it's off.

AADI/RANA
Off?

VANESSA
Our palace. I won't be able to work
with you any more.

Rana and Aadi exchange bewildered looks.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Aadi.

She turns and goes toward the exit.

Impulsively, Aadi pursues and grabs her arm, turning her toward him. She gives a castigating look at his trespassing hand. He releases his grip, lowering his eyes, embarrassed. In turn she takes his hand in hers, a tender act of conciliation.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
There are some things it seems a
Jewish girl is not meant to do.

She wavers a moment, pecks him on the cheek and departs.

The Bollywood Music ends. Rana twiddles with his moustache.

AADI
But what does this mean?

RANA
It means someone does not want to
curry favor with us.
(off Aadi's confused look)
Wrong caste.

Rana goes to a shelf, grabs and unrolls the "CLEARANCE" Sign.

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

At his small study desk, Aadi skims through the sketch book and the early drafts of designs. He closes it and stares forlornly at the cover on which is a hand drawn title page -

"Reclaiming Urban Heritage: A Proposal by Vanessa Ephron and Aadi Ganguly" - a work of art in itself.

INT. COLLEGE CAFETERIA - DAY

With the sketch book under his arm, Aadi carries his home-made lunch to a vacant table. Stares at his samosas.

Elsewhere, Vanessa is seated with Benjamin and his Disciples.

VANESSA

(to no-one in particular)

I do feel sorry for him, though.

BENJAMIN

Ness, please.

VANESSA

If his uncle's deli is demolished,
who knows what might become of him?
If worse comes to worst, he might
even be deported. Who knows?

Benjamin, his mind ticking over, takes her hand.

BENJAMIN

Yes. Who knows.

Aadi stops toying with his meal and takes the sketch book over to Vanessa.

AADI

Mzzz Ephron. If I may have a word.
About our project.

BENJAMIN

You mean, your project.

AADI

Vanessa?

Vanessa does not acknowledge him.

BENJAMIN

She's on my team now.

AADI

Ness?

Benjamin stands to confront Aadi.

BENJAMIN

Beat it.

Aadi stands his ground.

AADI

The days of the British Raj are long
past.

The comment completely bamboozles Benjamin who turns to his Disciples for enlightenment. They shrug their ignorance.

Frustrated, Benjamin lunges toward Aadi. Some of the more juvenile students join in - and a good ol' fashion, all-in, food fight starts, with an abundance of salad flying.

A slice of tomato hits Aadi on the cheek. He stops sparring with Benjamin, yells to the crowd, waves the tomato slice.

AADI (CONT'D)

STOP THIS!

His voice has such authority, the students stop their melee.

AADI (CONT'D)

Are you not aware there are people in
this country who are starving?

There is a brief moratorium as the mob digest this appeal.

Vanessa catches Aadi's eye and nods her empathy.

But the others give it short shrift and are quickly back into it - and Benjamin renews his scrap with Aadi.

Two Mall-Cop type SECURITY MEN move in to control the chaos but end up more like a pair of Mack Sennett characters.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

The Deli is closed up for the night. A disheveled, forlorn Aadi, a scuffed-up cheek, enters. In the window the sign has returned, with the word DEMOLITION added:

'CLEARANCE SALE - BROOKLYN'S FINEST SPICES - DEMOLITION'

INT. A BAR - NIGHT

Benjamin's drunken Disciples aid and abet him trying to seduce an inebriated Vanessa with another drink. But she declines.

BENJAMIN

Forget him Ness. He's got nothing going for him.

VANESSA

You know nothing about him.

This arouses the Disciples, some of whom put hands over hearts, intimating she's fallen for Aadi - not so, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

He lives in Cobble Hill. What else is there to know?

VANESSA

I don't know ...

BENJAMIN

Point is, he might not be with us much longer, will he?

She gives him a questioning look.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

"If worse comes to worst". You said it yourself.

The Disciples churlishly wipe mock tears from their eyes.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Then he'll be out of our hair for good.

VANESSA

How so?

She picks a speck of sliced pickle from his hair.

Pissed off, Vanessa leaves them to it, and fighting her insobriety, staggers away from the bar.

Sneering, Benjamin watches her go. He pulls his Disciples into a huddle.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - AADI'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Aadi is roused from his bed by the wailing of a SIREN that's suddenly killed... followed by loud VOICES in the deli below.

VOICE #1 (O.S.)
Mister Aadi Ganguly! We have reason
to believe you are an alien.

RANA (O.S.)
I think you mean Aryan --

Aadi leaves his bed and, in his shorts and T-shirt, stumbles half asleep down the stairs.

VOICE #1 (O.S.)
You are in this country illegally.

DELICATESSEN:

There, Rana is being hassled by two plainclothes "Men in Black" AGENTS, and their two armed, UNIFORMED BACK-UP.

RANA
My name is Mister Rana Santoori and I
am an American citizen. I have been a
citizen of this country longer than
you've been alive!

One of the Back-up whispers in the ear of Agent #2.

AGENT #2
(addresses Agent #1)
Too old?

Aadi appears, takes a while to comprehend the over-the-top scenario.

AADI
Uncle?

The Agents et al turn on Aadi.

AGENT #1
Aadi Ganguly?

Aadi nods. He's too bleary-eyed and confused to consider that the two so-called Uniformed Back-up look suspiciously like Benjamin's Disciples.

AGENT #1 (CONT'D)
Grab your things. You're outta here.

AADI
Outta here?

The Agent pulls a folded paper from inside his jacket.

AGENT #1
We have reason to believe you are in
this country illegally.

AADI
I am here legally on a valid Visa. I
am a student.

AGENT #2
Yeah, of no fixed address.

RANA
But he lives here - with me, his
uncle.

The Agent #2 goes to the sign in the window.

AGENT #2
Not for much longer, if our intel is
correct.

Rana and Aadi look at each other - "intel?"

RANA
This has been my home for longer than
you've been alive. And it is now the
official home to my nephew. I am his
official sponsor. So I don't know
where you got your "intel" from.

Rana reaches out for the folded paper but the Agent snatches
it away from him.

AGENT #1
That's classified.

He gives Agent #2 a nod toward the door.

AGENT #1 (CONT'D)
(brandishes document)
You got three months. We'll be
keeping an eye out.

They exit and hurry toward a black, unmarked van parked
outside, a Rental Company decal on the door, leaving Rana and
Aadi alone to ponder the ramifications.

INT. PROFESSOR KYOCHU'S OFFICE - DAY

Aadi, like a school boy pleading with the Principal, stands before Professor Kyochu seated in his ergonomic swivel chair at his glass and chrome desk.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU
I cannot break rules.

AADI
Oh, no no no no, sir. That would be dishonorable. But in this country, I believe it is permitted to bend --

Professor Kyochu frowns as Aadi formulates his argument.

AADI (CONT'D)
Sir. I have a dilemma. It is my poor uncle.

The Professor remains seated, emotionless.

AADI (CONT'D)
He runs a delicatessen.

The Professor hikes his shoulders, waits for enlightenment.

AADI (CONT'D)
Sir, the delicatessen, a part of Brooklyn's heritage and the subject of our, my, semester assignment, is threatened with demolition.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU
Most unfortunate. But not grounds for extension.

There is now desperation in Aadi's voice.

AADI
Sir, the delicatessen is my home too. If demolished, then without suitable accommodation I cannot study properly. I have been given but three months --

PROFESSOR KYOCHU
Perhaps you could withdraw and enrol again at later date.

Aadi's shoulders sag even lower.

AADI

Sir, my scholarship gives me only one chance. If I withdraw I must leave the country ... and all it offers.

This seems to hit a nerve with the Professor. He stands and addresses Aadi directly, in a conciliatory manner.

PROFESSOR KYOCHU

Then you must prevent demolition.

A dejected Aadi accepts his ultimatum, offers Namaste and exits the office.

Professor Kyochu bows respectfully.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

Aadi wonders morosely along the corridor.

He rounds the corner of a connecting corridor, where Vanessa walks arm in arm with Benjamin.

Seeing Aadi, she quickly frees her arm, motions to Benjamin to give her time, and goes to Aadi. She reaches a hand out to him but he ignores her.

VANESSA

He was just being polite.

But he pays no heed to her, a more pressing matter on his mind.

AADI

In three months I am to be deported.

VANESSA

What?

AADI

I was rudely awoken by immigration with an ultimatum --

She reaches out again and this time makes contact. There is empathy.

VANESSA

Aadi, it doesn't work like that. This much I know. You have a valid visa. A student from India. It's not as if you're from Mexico.

But he breaks away from her and wanders off again, Benjamin sniggering in the background.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

With design folio under his arm, Aadi wanders along the sidewalk, kicking out at the odd piece of litter.

Other pedestrians give him a wide berth.

Totally not with it, he crosses the street. A HORN blasts. The yellow BMW, seen previously outside the College entrance, swerves. Aadi twirls and pirouettes and the momentum of his backpack carries him to the other sidewalk.

As he watches the BMW speed off, he comes to an abrupt halt against the door of a 24/7 Bakery, which sways open.

INT. 24/7 BAKERY - NIGHT

Aadi stumbles inside, watched all the while by a lone CUSTOMER, and the BAKER behind the counter.

BAKER
What will it be?

Aadi gathers his bearings, grabs a seat at the counter, checks his purse.

AADI
Tea.

BAKER
Settle for coffee?

Aadi nods. The Baker pours a coffee and serves a plain bagel.

Aadi holds up his purse, shakes his head. The Baker pushes the plate forward anyway.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Friday special. One goes with the other. House rules.

AADI
Then I must not break the rules.

BAKER
With a grand entrance like that, you must be Brooklyn Ballet.

Aadi shakes his head.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 (refers to folder)
 Salesman?

Again Aadi shakes his head.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 Too well dressed to be a hobo.

He's lost Aadi on this one.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 Hobo. Bum. On the streets.

AADI
 On the streets? Oh, no sir. Not yet,
 anyway. I am a - was - a student. Of
 architecture. But I fear I must
 return to India without a degree and
 thus bring disgrace upon my late
 mother and father. And upon Uncle
 Rana.

BAKER
 And --?

Aadi is perplexed.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 And a woman?

He has hit a nerve.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 There is a woman?

Aadi nods.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 See that light globe up there?

Aadi acknowledges the light globe in the shade overhead.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 Does the name Edison ring a bell?

Aadi nods, curious.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 He once said that many of life's
 failures were people who gave up when
 they were so close to success.

He gives Aadi a moment to digest this.

BAKER (CONT'D)
So how close are you?

Aadi sits upright, ponders a moment, nodding to himself.

With some new-found spirit, an appreciative Aadi stands, slings his pack over a shoulder and gathers his folder.

AADI
Thank you sir, for the advice.

As Aadi heads toward the door, the Baker calls him.

BAKER
Say pal.

Aadi turns just in time to catch the bagel flying through the air - and still maintain balance despite his encumbrances.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - ROXY'S - NIGHT

A high-spirited Aadi walks briskly past Roxy's Jewellers. A sign in that window reads:

DEMOLITION SALE - PLEASURE STILL OUR BUSINESS.

The DING of a bell. David Ephron stumbles out of the entrance door to Roxy's establishment, almost bumping into Aadi, gleefully finishing the last of the bagel.

Their eyes meet briefly, David lowering his face out of embarrassment as he enters his burgundy town car, with gaudy licence plate *EXP-IMP*, and pulls out into the traffic.

On the other side of the street, the yellow BMW surreptitiously also pulls away from the curb.

Aadi continues on to the delicatessen, enters and rips down the "CLEARANCE SALE" sign from the window.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - MORNING

Aadi moves fluently, re-stacking the boxes of spices back into the Store-Room when Rana, wiping sleep from his eyes, enters. He's taken aback by what's going on.

AADI
Morning uncle.

RANA
What are you up to at this unearthly hour?

Aadi stops his packing and points up at the bank of fluorescent lights overhead.

AADI
You see those lights up there?

RANA
Fluorescent, yeah --

AADI
Edison.

RANA
Edison? He didn't invent them.

AADI
That is not the point.

Rana hovers, waiting for "the point".

AADI (CONT'D)
We will not give up when we are so close to success.

RANA
And what do you have in mind?

EXT. STREET PARK SLOPE - MORNING - LATER

A bus pulls to a stop. Aadi alights, consults his phone, orientates himself and heads off down the tree-lined sidewalk, past the rows of well-maintained brownstones.

EXT. EPHRON BROWNSTONE - DAY

Aadi stops at the foot of the steps leading to a particular three-level brownstone.

He checks the address on his phone, gathers his nerve, ascends the steps, removes his baseball cap, rings the bell.

Gloria answers the door and her eyes brighten on seeing the handsome young Aadi.

Cap in hand, Aadi politely offers namaste but before he can speak, Gloria retreats inside, leaving the door ajar.

DAVID (O.S.)
Who's calling on us today!

GLORIA (O.S.)
Tzedakah.

DAVID (O.S.)
What?

GLORIA (O.S.)
Alms for the poor.

David, wearing a yamulka, opens the door. His unctuous smile turns to near contempt on seeing the brown-skinned Aadi.

DAVID
Do you know what day it is?

Aadi braces himself but neither recognizes the other.

AADI
Yes, sir. It is the Sabbath.

DAVID
Exactly. The Sabbath, for Christ sake! Have you beggars no respect?

AADI
No sir. I mean yes sir, I am most respectful of your Sabbath, for Christ sake. But I am not --

Gloria re-appears with a palm full of quarters which she proffers to Aadi. He whips his cap away.

AADI (CONT'D)
Oh, no no no. I beg of you, I am not begging.

DAVID
Then what are you after?

AADI
Is this the Ephron residence?

DAVID
So what?

AADI
I was wondering, if I may speak to the young lady of the house --

GLORIA
(flattered)
How can I help?

DAVID
No you may not!

Aadi is taken aback by David's belligerence. Gloria is deflated.

AADI
Vanessa. Mzzz Vanessa Ephron.

GLORIA
I'm sorry young man but the younger
lady of the house is not in. She's
otherwise occupied on the Sabbath.

AADI
Ah, yes, the Sabbath. Occupied. I
should have remembered.

Dejected, and off David's quizzical look...

AADI (CONT'D)
Could you inform her that Aadi
called. From college.

David glares daggers.

With eyes locked on to David's, Aadi retreats awkwardly,
backwards down the steps to the sidewalk and bumps into
David's burgundy town car parked out front.

David's daggers intensify.

Aadi sees the licence plate - "EXP-IMP" - gulps down
encouragement, turns back to David.

AADI (CONT'D)
A nice motor car, Mister Ephron. A
very nice motor car.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

Aadi loiters outside by the window, intently watching the
passing traffic.

RANA (O.S.)
Three nights so far traffic spotting.
Keep it up, you'll make the Guinness
Book.

Aadi turns briefly to his uncle standing outside the doorway.

AADI
Uncle. Next door --

RANA
Roxy's Jewellers? Yes?

AADI
And upstairs?

RANA

Ah, I see. Has it come to that?

Aadi is unsure of the intimation.

RANA (CONT'D)

Does "lady of the night" mean anything?

AADI

Of course, she is a --
(hiding embarrassment)
No no no. You misunderstand.

RANA

Something to do with Miss Ephron, maybe?

AADI

Yes. No. I mean, yes, sort of.

RANA

Brooklyn does this to a young man.

Aadi watches his uncle enter the Deli and douse the lights - leaving one security light dimmed down.

Leaning against the window in semi-darkness, Aadi stakes out the street.

LATER

Aadi is squatted on the pavement, sleeping, collar turned up against the chill, cap pulled down. Very little traffic. Very little business. He is woken by the DING of a bell.

David exits the door to Roxy's and goes to his burgundy town car parked at the curb.

AADI

Nice motor car. Mister Ephron. A very nice motor car.

David stops in his tracks, stunned like a stag caught in a spotlight.

A moment to recognise Aadi in the dimness under his cap.

DAVID

Now look here.

Aadi stands to confront David.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I don't know what your game is, but I
suggest you leave my daughter alone --

AADI
Or?

DAVID
-- Or there will be repercussions.

Aadi glances over to the entrance to Roxy's and back to David.

David weighs the intent of this look, unaware of the yellow BMW pulled up on the other side of the street behind him.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Okay, what are you after?

AADI
Two requests, sir.

DAVID
Try me.

AADI
First, some intel.

"Intel"?

AADI (CONT'D)
The name of your loan broker.

David, gob-smacked by this demand out of left field, has trouble containing his mirth.

DAVID
Are you serious?

AADI
Yes sir. I am not wishing to lose the
roof over my head.

DAVID
The roof over your head? And just
where might that roof be?

Aadi turns back, indicating the Deli.

DAVID (CONT'D)
The delicatessen?

AADI

And if I am to lose the roof over my head, chances are so too will others in the building, including Mzzz Roxy.

David looks toward the entrance to Roxy's. A serious dilemma.

DAVID

Forget it. Don't waste your time.

AADI

Rest assured of that. For time is of the essence. Believe me.

David cannot ignore Aadi's resolve, and relents.

DAVID

Preston Ironseid, Senior. Name mean anything to you?

Aadi shakes his head innocently.

DAVID (CONT'D)

A man not to be messed with, put it that way.

David moves towards his car - unaware of the yellow BMW on the other side of the road driving off.

AADI

My second request...

David stops in his tracks, looks to the heavens, exasperated.

INT. COLLEGE CAFETERIA - DAY

On a mission, Aadi approaches Vanessa's table.

Benjamin spies him and starts to rise from his seat. Vanessa places a placating hand on his shoulder, excuses herself, intercepts Aadi and escorts him away.

VANESSA

Do you know how embarrassed I was when my Mom told me what you did?

Aadi tries to dismiss this with a hike of the shoulders.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Coming round, begging with cap in hand.

Aadi is about to respond but is cut short --

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 How did you even find my address? You
Googled me didn't you --?

He shakes his head vigorously.

AADI
 Oh no no. I would never...

He produces their joint design folio and indicates her name and address on the cover's label.

She heaves a sigh in defeat and leads him a few paces away.

VANESSA
 So why did you go there?

AADI
 To get you to reason with your
 father.

VANESSA
 Dreaming the impossible dream.

AADI
 Yet all things are possible in our
 dreams.

She regards him with wistful eyes.

AADI (CONT'D)
 Mzzz Ephron. Vanessa. Ness. Do you
 really not wish to work with me on
 this project?

In a bind, she weighs up her options, turns briefly back toward the impatient Benjamin.

VANESSA
 But you know my father.

AADI
 I certainly do.

She looks for elaboration.

AADI (CONT'D)
 In light of changed circumstances.

Vanessa mouths the words "changed circumstances".

INT. DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

An image of the Taj Mahal on a large computer screen.

Vanessa and Aadi sit on Hokkï seats in front of the computer.

VANESSA

Lovely, but...

AADI

It is more than lovely. It is all that India stands for.

VANESSA

Yeah but this is...

AADI

I would like it very much if the delicatessen were to be a palace like this.

VANESSA

It's a mausoleum.

Aadi studies her a moment.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

The Taj mahal. It's a mausoleum.

AADI

(embarrassed by *faux pas*)

That is true. That is certainly true. However --

VANESSA

And this is Brooklyn, Aadi, not --

AADI

This is an Indian delicatessen, is it not?

VANESSA

Was. And we all know its fate?

AADI

Then we have a different vision.

There is a brief impasse.

Aadi gives her a discerning look.

VANESSA

But I like the idea of white marble.

Aadi smiles, his chest expanding. They turn to the screen...

SERIES OF DISSOLVES - COMPUTER SCREEN SHOTS: -

Rudimentary 3-D images - design concepts for the new deli. Some of the innovations are downright outrageous:

- a cell phone point-of-sale area;
- an extensive, glass and Texas Rose Yellow cabinet laden with exotic pastries and such;
- booths with coffee drinkers;
- an opening in the wall to what was Roxy's Jewellers - glass and chrome cabinets display the United Nations of jewelry;
- a corner lounge where lovers and hipsters mingle;
- a single full length glass entrance door beneath the shelter of a 'Five Star Hotel' style marquee;
- at the entrance, the pavement boasts an inlaid design befitting the Taj Mahal;
- above the marquee, a sign - *NEW TAJ DELICATESSEN*

INT. DESIGN STUDIO - NIGHT

Aadi and Vanessa in NOTICEABLY DIFFERENT CLOTHES, exhausted, bleary-eyed, at the large computer. They both lean back, straining to keep balance on their Hokki seats.

VANESSA

Next step, the pitch.

AADI

Pitch?

VANESSA

The marriage proposal of the business world.

Off Aadi's bemused look.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Convincing someone to believe in what you are planning. Like persuading a girl to invest a good part of her life with you...

Aadi smiles, unnerving Vanessa.

INT. IRONSEID OFFICE - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

A plush, modern office befitting a successful legal firm.

Lap-top and design folio in hand, Aadi and Vanessa approach one of IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONISTS.

VANESSA

We'd like to see Mr. Ironseid,
please.

The Receptionist looks them up and down with disdain as her CO-RECEPTIONIST answers a ringing telephone.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

VANESSA

Unfortunately, no. But --

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

No "buts", I'm sorry. No appointment,
no --

AADI

Then we would like to make an
appointment.

The Receptionist consults her computer screen, showing little enthusiasm for the young punks standing before her.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

We're looking at... hmm... not for at
least six weeks.

AADI

That cannot be so.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

It can be and it is.

Not interested in any further deliberation, she attends to another phone call.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Ironseid Venture Partnerships.

Vanessa turns to retreat but Aadi stands steadfast.

AADI

The American Dream is at stake here.

The Receptionist covers the phone, glares daggers at Aadi, until Vanessa takes his arm, coaxes him away and together with tails between their legs turn and head for the huge glass doors.

Aadi holds the door open for Vanessa and follows her out into the foyer ...

But in one fluid motion, Aadi pirouettes and follows the closing door back into Ironseid's outer office, leaving Vanessa approaching the elevators alone.

Aadi addresses the Receptionist as she ends the phone call.

AADI (CONT'D)

Does the name "Ephron" ring the bell?

In the foyer, Vanessa turns around, realizes she is alone at the elevators, gives Aadi a stern look, waits on his return.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

No, should it?

AADI

I believe Mr. Ironseid is familiar with the family name. A most significant family name. And if you value your position here.

The Receptionist sits bug-eyed, stunned by this impertinence. Aadi stands his ground, and under the sway of his stare, she buzzes through on the intercom phone.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT'S VOICE

Yes?

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

There's a Mister Ephron --

AADI

-- Mzzz Ephron, not Mister.

IRONSEID'S RECEPTIONIST

A Mzzz Ephron to see Mr. Ironseid -
No, no appointment. Yes, "Ephron".

PERSONAL ASSISTANT'S VOICE

Hold.

Vanessa sidles up alongside Aadi, a WTF look on her face.

IRONSEID'S INNER OFFICE - LATER

On the desk, a framed dollar bill, with an image of famous Brooklyn lawyer Joe Flom where Washington should be.

Leaning back in his plush leather executive chair, Preston Ironseid Senior, in business shirt, Star of David cuff-links, addresses Aadi and Vanessa sitting opposite.

IRONSEID
So why come bother me?

AADI
You were highly recommended.

Ironseid nods his acknowledgement.

VANESSA
We had hoped my father would assist
our efforts --

IRONSEID
Ah yes, your father.

VANESSA
But he has a thing about --

She curtails her confession, turns briefly to Aadi.

Ironseid looks from one to the other.

IRONSEID
I see. So state your business. I can
give you five.

AADI
We have a proposal perfect for a man
in your position. A proposal that
will set a benchmark for
delicatessens --

IRONSEID
Delicatessens?

AADI
My uncle's, to be precise.

Aadi and Vanessa beam enthusiastically ... until they see Ironseid subtly shake his head dismissing them.

IRONSEID
Was expecting more of a palace along
the lines of a Taj Mahal.

AADI

Ah, that, sir, is a mausole --

Ironseid simply raises a hand. The finality of it all.

Deflated, Vanessa stands, ready to leave. She looks to Aadi who leans forward in his seat and picks up the framed dollar bill and asks ever so politely.

AADI (CONT'D)

Sir. Is this the first dollar you ever earned?

Vanessa reaches over and takes it from Aadi.

VANESSA

It's a picture of Joe Flom.
(off Aadi's puzzled look)
A metaphor.

IRONSEID

You know of Joe Flom?

VANESSA

Our legacy.

She returns to her seat, replaces the framed bill.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

From little things.

IRONSEID

Big things grow.

As if on cue, Vanessa leans forward, makes room on the desk for her lap-top so that Ironseid can see. The impertinence - but Ironseid doesn't protest.

VANESSA

Our new deli will have the finest collection of gateau, petits four, macaron and --

Aadi assumes Vanessa's enthusiasm and together with a running commentary they go through their 3-D concept drawings on the laptop.

AADI

Booths for those partial to caffeine.

VANESSA

An area for customers to collect their online orders.

AADI

With an opening through to our
neighboring business, Roxy's
Jewelers.

VANESSA

With glass and chrome displays.

AADI

Where affordable jewelry from various
cultures around the world will be
available.

VANESSA

And of course a grand entrance.

AADI

(emphasising)
Befitting a palace.
(a secondary thought)
But not a mausol --

Vanessa curtails him - enough!

Ironseid turns the lap-top to face him more and plays around
with the 3-D representations.

Aadi and Vanessa watch, reacting, matching Ironseid's facial
expressions as they change and grow more interested.

VANESSA

Naturally, these are all still at
concept stage but we plan to redefine
Delicatessen, bring it into the
twenty-first century.

AADI

An entirely new deli.

VANESSA

That brings people together again.

Ironseid turns the laptop back to face Aadi.

IRONSEID

You got balls, I'll give you that.

AADI

Thank you, sir.

IRONSEID

As for you, young lady.

AADI

Oh no, sir, she doesn't.

Vanessa shushes him.

IRONSEID

And your actual proposal?

AADI

This is the final assignment for our degree course. We are required to present --

VANESSA

A fully budgeted, bespoke development project that satisfies all planning regulations, environment and building codes, etcetera, to be made available online at --

IRONSEID

The Buildings Information System.

VANESSA

You're familiar? Anyway, it must be a project attractive to investors.

AADI

Without financial impositions on the city itself.

Ironseid reclines in his seat, ruminates a moment.

IRONSEID

And if I don't commit?

Aadi's ebullience subsides.

AADI

My uncle's old delicatessen will fold and the premises demolished to make way for a modern apartment block.

IRONSEID

Is that such a bad thing?

VANESSA

It is when all the tenants will be facing eviction without compensation!

IRONSEID

But what will you two be facing?

VANESSA

Without a roof over his head, Aadi
here --

Aadi touches her arm to quell her angst. He gestures toward the framed dollar bill.

AADI

Sir, when you were my age, you too
had dreams of what you might achieve
in this country? Despite all
obstacles?

Ironseid looks from one to the other, takes the framed dollar bill, leans back in his chair and fondles it.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Vanessa and Aadi stare straight ahead, mesmerized by their coup.

VANESSA

How did you convince him to see us?

AADI

I, too, am something of a poseur.

Vanessa ponders silently. The elevator DINGS upon reaching ground level.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

The two African-American youths, ogling at an R-rated magazine, look up at the approaching Ironseid.

He delicately takes the magazine from them and replaces it on the display.

IRONSEID

You two should be in school.

The youths, overawed by this presence, depart without protest.

The scene doesn't go unnoticed by Alice, the only other customer, selecting her usual daily supply of cream.

Ironseid selects a 'Futures' magazine and takes it to Rana at the counter.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

Do they ever buy?

RANA
Just look. They're harmless.

IRONSEID
No way to do business.

RANA
I get by.

Ironseid surveys the place.

IRONSEID
Ever thought of giving it up?

RANA
Another one! Join the cue. Behind my
landlord.

IRONSEID
And who might that be?

Rana nervously twirls his mustache. Alice intervenes.

ALICE
Mr Isaac Epstein. And Mr. Santoori
here has been a loyal tenant for that
man for thirty-five years.

IRONSEID
And you are?

ALICE
A loyal customer.

IRONSEID
(back to Rana)
Thirty-five years, eh?

RANA
And before that, my late parents with
the older Epsteins. You know, we came
to this country in the late sixties.
They started with five dollars in
their pocket and within two years had
set this up against all odds.

IRONSEID
The American dream.

RANA
And even though it's becoming a
nightmare, this American won't give
it up until he's good and ready.

Alice leans across and grasps Rana's trembling hand.

IRONSEID
Good for you.

He waves the magazine...

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
I'll just take this.

... and slaps some bills on the counter.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
Now, I believe there's a Miss Roxy?

Rana gestures 'next door'. Ironseid departs leaving Alice and Rana with mouths agape like stunned fish.

EXT/INT. ROXY'S JEWELLERS - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A small sign on the entrance door states opening times:

*Hours of business 10.00am - 3.00pm Other times by
appointment only*

Ironseid peers through the window into the sparsely stocked jewelry store. There are no customers. He enters.

The DING of a little bell above the door announces Ironseid's entrance. He scans the premises - Nobody home? He returns to the door but is stopped by a Voice.

ROXY (O.S.)
We're open for business.

Ironseid turns to Roxy who, in her mid-40s, still has the goods to arouse a male visitor. But Ironseid remains stoic.

IRONSEID
I have a proposition.

ROXY
Like I said, we're open for business.
And my business is pleasure.

IRONSEID
And my pleasure is business. Perhaps
we can satisfy one another.

INT. EPSTEIN'S REALTY - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Ironseid approaches ISAAC'S RECEPTIONIST.

ISAAC'S RECEPTIONIST
Welcome to Epstein Realty.

Ironseid doesn't beat about the bush.

IRONSEID
A word with Mister Epstein.
(adding with a smile)
If I may.

The Receptionist consults her computer screen.

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

Ironseid simply hands over a business card. It's enough to crank the Receptionist into action. She buzzes through to the inner office.

INNER OFFICE - SAME

At his desk, Isaac, with unsteady hands, has trouble using a letter opener to rip open and flatten empty envelopes, checking for any missed contents.

The old-fashioned intercom BUZZES.

ISAAC
(into intercom)
Trust it's business.

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE
Mister Ironseid is here to see you.

ISAAC
(unnerved)
That punk doesn't have an appointment!

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE
*It's a Mister Preston Ironseid,
Senior.*

But before Isaac can respond, Ironseid enters.

Isaac stands, a firm grip on the letter opener, brandishing it like an epee as if to ward off an assailant.

Ironseid leans forward, somehow manages to place an index finger on the wavering point, lowers the letter opener to the desk and offers his hand.

IRONSEID
Preston Ironseid, Senior.

ISAAC
I didn't realize --

IRONSEID
Perhaps you're acquainted with my
son, Junior?

More comfortable, Isaac releases the letter opener, accepts
the offered hand and motions to his visitor they should sit.

ISAAC
He's suggested we do business.

IRONSEID
"Suggested"? I see. And you'd rather
not?

ISAAC
Business is business.

IRONSEID
And the nature of the business?

ISAAC
I have some property - that might be
ripe for redevelopment.

IRONSEID
And what's stopping you?

He has hit a nerve.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
Perhaps the terms are not mutually
favorable?

ISAAC
Why the inquisition?

IRONSEID
I'd like to make you an offer --

Isaac finds the courage to stand again and confront Ironseid.

ISAAC
I presume your thugs are outside.

Ironseid chuckles amiably at Isaac's candor.

IRONSEID

Mister Epstein. Thugs are for those who don't know how to negotiate.

Isaac cautiously returns to his seat.

ISAAC

So negotiate.

IRONSEID

Let's start with some background briefing.

INT. LIMOUSINE TRAVELLING - DAY - LATER

Ironseid closes his *Futures* magazine as his limousine pulls into the curb.

The CHAUFFEUR exits and opens the passenger door. David enters and settles in the back seat next to his host as the Chauffeur returns to the wheel.

IRONSEID

You have the route?

On his cue, the Chauffeur pulls the limousine into the traffic.

David appraises the luxury appointments of the bespoke vehicle, particularly the liquor cabinet.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

I summoned you, David, with regard to your visit a while back. About negotiating a loan.

David is cautious.

DAVID

I decided not to proceed.

IRONSEID

And I'm sure you had your reasons.

As they travel, Ironseid pours two whiskies.

David looks out the heavily tinted window and concern mounts on his face.

Ironseid holds his glass up to examine the aura of its contents.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

My parents, like so many back then, were poor. You know what I mean? What I went through to become a lawyer. I took a leaf from the book of my hero and did all the shit work. No-one in the big firms would touch it. And they didn't want any little Jew-boys in their midst.

He turns to ensure David is paying attention.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

A little thing called prejudice. You know what I mean?

He raises his glass. David responds with an unsteady hand.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

I know a man with a similar story. Prepared to do the shit work. A real mensch. He knows all about prejudice.

Ironseid waits a moment for David to digest all this before finishing his drink.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

Your daughter came to see me. Along with her young Indian friend. I believe you're acquainted.

David by now is looking for a way out.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

They pitched me a very attractive project involving the mensch. You should be proud of her.

He looks in the direction of the street and addresses his Chauffeur.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

Slow here, please.
(to David)
Thanks to your daughter, I now own an old deli...

EXT. STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The limo slowly rolls past Roxy's as Isaac sheepishly approaches the entrance to the Taj Delicatessen.

IRONSEID (O.S.)
... And a jewelry store.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

On seeing Isaac enter, Rana reaches below the counter.

Isaac, in a placating gesture, labors to hold his wavering hands up in a surrender pose.

ISAAC
Relax. I'm alone.

Rana does just that and returns both hands to the counter as Isaac wanders the store, eyeing its general rundown state.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
I thought it time to come set the record straight.

Isaac tries to avoid eye contact but he cannot evade Rana's glare bearing down on him.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
There are pressures.

Rana awaits enlightenment.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
When I put the property on the market, there were no serious takers. But then the young punk came along and I saw him as a savior. The deal was he would just maintain the status quo, collect his rent, mind his own business, stay out of everyone's hair. That's why I didn't bother telling anyone. Little did I realize his real intentions.

RANA
He wanted us all out?

ISAAC
He suggested I upped the rent, assuming you'd all leave voluntarily. I didn't look beyond that.

RANA
Is the answer not simple? Don't sell.

ISAAC
I have little choice.

Rana is not convinced.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

There are some things in life beyond our control -- Beyond my control.

He pauses, raises his unsteady arms.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

My friend, my health is failing.

Showing his genuine concern, Rana comes from behind the counter, closer to his old friend.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Too soon, my time is coming to an end. I haven't told Ronnie yet. Life might be cheap in this town but dying isn't and I don't want to leave her without adequate funds. As things go, this place won't hold it's value.

Rana goes to the front door, looks out the street, finding this all too difficult to handle.

RANA

And your savior, the young punk --

ISAAC

Not an issue now.

Isaac approaches Rana, clasps his two hands like a brother.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

I've negotiated a better deal.

Isaac opens the door, does a final survey of the delicatessen and offers Rana a cordial smile as he leaves.

INT. BURGUNDY TOWN CAR TRAVELING - DAY

David, avoiding eye contact with Vanessa, drives his daughter in his town car.

DAVID

Now that it's out of my hands, where does that leave us?

VANESSA

How do you mean?

DAVID
Your friend. He didn't tell you why I
revealed Ironseid's name?

VANESSA
He just said that in light of changed
circumstances --

DAVID
And did he say what the changed
circumstances were?

VANESSA
No. And I didn't ask.

David furtively wipes a few beads of sweat from his brow.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I just assumed he appealed to the
more sensitive you.

STREET OUTSIDE COLLEGE - INTERCUT

David's town car cruises past Benjamin, seated on the hood of
the yellow BMW, holding court with his Disciples.

DAVID (O.S.)
But what's so wrong with Benjamin? I
still think you two can --

THE TOWN CAR

Vanessa looks incredulously at her father.

VANESSA
Never. He's got grand designs.

David looks vacantly at her.

DAVID
A good thing.

Vanessa shakes her head in disbelief.

VANESSA
On himself.

DAVID
But why this other one?

VANESSA
Because I ... I really don't know.

David pulls the car into the curb.

DAVID
Are you two --?

VANESSA
(charily)
No, Dad.

INT. COLLEGE STUDIO - DAY

Vanessa completes typing on her laptop and clicks Return as Aadi arrives with some collated sheets.

AADI
The digital has been submitted?

Vanessa nods, takes the printing.

VANESSA
These we affix to the plans. All appendices are done. The model is in the security room, so all we need now is a good pitch to the professor.

AADI
I believe we have already demonstrated our skill at "pitching".

VANESSA
Yes, I believe we have.

Vanessa gives him a friendly punch on the shoulder - but she loses balance on her Hokki stool and almost topples over.

Aadi grabs her hand and tries to steady her but he also loses balance and they both fall to the floor, laughing arm-in-arm, a sensuality in their eyes.

EXT/INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

A huge, new sign -

CLOSED FOR REJUVENATION

- is plastered over the windows of the store.

A fuming Preston Junior stares through the window at Aadi and Vanessa supervising proceedings. The shelves, bare of merchandise, are being dismantled by WORKERS.

One of the Workers steps on something on the floor. He picks up and examines a disfigured plastic replica hand gun and waves it around in jest, finally in the direction of ...

... Preston Junior who steps back on the sidewalk and enters the rear seat of his black town car which lurches into the traffic.

INT. EPSTEIN'S REALTY - INNER OFFICE - DAY

Preston Junior, with Cain behind for support, hassles Isaac.

PRESTON JUNIOR
Whaddaya mean, it's outta your hands!

ISAAC
It means I've done a deal with
someone else, that's what it means.

PRESTON JUNIOR
And that someone else?

ISAAC
Confidential.

Preston Junior turns to Cain who takes a threatening step forward to back him up.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
You bust me up and you go down. I
know someone in really high places.

PRESTON JUNIOR
That so?

Isaac nods assuredly.

PRESTON JUNIOR (CONT'D)
The old curry-eater doesn't know no-
one. I'll find out who's behind this.
And when I do ... he might have to
watch his back.

The bumbling Preston Junior turns to leave, rams into Cain standing right behind him.

ISAAC
Sound advice.

Preston Junior and Cain untangle themselves and depart.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

The lights are dimmed, the place is in a mess; rubble here and there, a wheelbarrow, tools and equipment lying about.

THE KITCHEN

Rana sits at the table on which is a small spread of Indian dishes and condiments, while at the stove Aadi pours oil into a hot pan.

AADI

So we must now perfect our pitch.

RANA

Your pitch?

AADI

Our pitch, yes. A proposal.

Rana's eyes brighten.

RANA

Brooklyn does this to a young man?

AADI

No no no no no. To the Professor!

Flustered, Aadi carelessly drops pappadums in the pan. The hot oil splatters and smokes on the side of the hot pan. Aadi's clothes are soiled but he deftly avoids injury.

But the spilled, hot oil rapidly ignites and a fire starts on the stove, spreading to the mat on the floor.

Rana runs into the corridor and ... a beat ... returns with a fire extinguisher. It doesn't work. He looks desperately to Aadi. They grab towels, try to smother the burgeoning flames.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

A FIRE CREW packs away fire extinguishers into a small fire truck in the street outside the delicatessen.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rana and Aadi assess the damage - only minor, walls blackened in patches, the mat destroyed, the stove out of order.

Aadi picks up a not-so-burnt pappadum from the stove top. He snaps a segment and crunches on it. Not too bad.

RANA
We don't have any alarm. How did they know?

AADI
I didn't call.

RANA
Not me.

ALICE (O.S.)
I did.

Alice standing at the landing, holds a basket hamper.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I could smell the smoke out on the sidewalk.

RANA
Out on the sidewalk?

She places the hamper on the soiled table.

ALICE
I knew you two were roughing it.
(off Aadi's pappadum)
But not this rough. Spend some time at my place, why don't you? I've only the one bedroom but there's a sofa and --

Aadi seems enthusiastic but Rana replies diplomatically.

RANA
That's most kind, Miss Hooper, but we'll be fine. Won't we Aadi?

Deflated, Aadi just as diplomatically nods his head.

ALICE
Suit yourself.
(motions to hamper)
There's more where that came from.

On her departure, Aadi surveys the scene - and his pappadum.

AADI
Uncle, why did you not avail yourself of her kind offer?

RANA
(dismissive)
Did you not detect a pitch?

INT. PRESTON JUNIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A framed poster of Trump Tower adorns one of the walls, a few artificial indoor plants, a few battered file cabinets. Cain snoozes on a not-so-well-sprung sofa.

Preston Junior, at his desk, reads the local newspaper. He flips the page and comes across a small report that grabs his attention. He mouths the text as he reads:

PRESTON JUNIOR
*"... the delicatessen did not have
 the statutory fire alarms or
 functioning fire extinguishers
 contrary to regulations. Given that
 the site is undergoing..."*

He downs the paper, kicks the sofa. Cain quickly rises and follows him out of the office.

EXT. STREET - TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Preston Junior's town car pulls up to the Deli and he and Cain go into the now totally gutted store.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Most of the rubble has been cleared, a bare shell of a room.

Preston Junior approaches a WORKER.

PRESTON JUNIOR
 Why you still working? This place is
 a safety hazard.

WORKER
 (knuckles Preston on head)
 Actually, you are pal. So I suggest
 you beat it.

Cain approaches in a threatening manner.

The Worker whips his hammer from his tool belt as his colleague moves in to support.

Backing down, Preston Junior points a menacing finger.

PRESTON JUNIOR
 I have friends in high places.

WORKER

Where? In the gutter? Above the
sewer?

Preston gives the Worker the evil eye and backs out.

INT. COLLEGE ARCHITECTURE FACULTY - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Aadi and Vanessa, nursing lap-tops and folio, approach a
SECRETARY at her desk.

SECRETARY

Submissions?

They both nod affirmative.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Names?

VANESSA

Vanessa Ephron --

AADI

And Aadi Ganguly. We are a joint
project.

The Secretary consults her computer screen.

SECRETARY

I'll let Prof know. He won't be long.

They settle in plush chairs along with some other STUDENTS.

Vanessa nudges Aadi to get his attention. She turns off her
phone and Aadi is about to do the same when it RINGS.

Embarrassed, he answers. A look of despair crosses his face.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

Vanessa comforts Rana inside the gutted delicatessen - work
halted, no Workers in sight.

Aadi quotes from a sheet of official looking correspondence.

AADI

"...due to a submission lodged with
the New York City Buildings
Department. Regarding fire safety
provisions and emergency exit
signs..."

VANESSA
Lodged by?

AADI
Preston Ironseid Junior, President of
Preston Properties.

VANESSA
Preston Ironseid Junior! May I?

She takes the sheet and peruses it with Rana.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
This injunction has been delivered
here to the Taj Delicatessen, but
it's made out against --

VANESSA/RANA/AADI
New Deli Developments.

INT. IRONSEID'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

Aadi, Vanessa, Rana in conference with old man Ironseid in
business shirt, signature Star of David cuff-links.

IRONSEID
Seems he needs a few more lessons in
business principles.

The others wait for enlightenment.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
Lesson number one. Do the research.
(waves the Injunction)
New Deli Developments?

RANA
He hasn't bothered to find out --

VANESSA
Who's behind --

AADI
New Deli Developments?

Vanessa takes the Injunction.

VANESSA
But the hearing's not for another
three months!

She grabs Aadi's hand and squeezes it.

Ironseid reads their worried faces ... goes and collects his jacket from a stand, readies himself for business.

INT. BROOKLYN MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

CORRIDOR OUTSIDE HEARING ROOM

Aadi, Vanessa and Rana pace impatiently.

Preston Junior and Cain approach them.

PRESTON JUNIOR

And here's me thinking we'd wiped out corruption in City Hall. I mean who did you bribe to fast track, eh?

(no response from the others)

Did you seriously think I wouldn't be prepared already?

He and Cain move to the Hearing Room entrance. Stopping at the door, Preston Junior turns back.

PRESTON JUNIOR (CONT'D)

No more little stunts, I hope.

After he enters, the others consult their phones. Their anxious hell is relieved by the arrival of Ironseid Senior.

IRONSEID

You know, I'm convinced I was a star of the stage in a different life.

The others wait for enlightenment.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

All down to timing.

HEARING ROOM

Aadi ushers Vanessa and Rana into the room and the three take their seats set aside for the respondents.

Preston Junior looks across from his table with an obscene smirk on his face. But it doesn't last long, his hubris replaced by humiliation.

Ironseid enters, takes his seat next to the other respondents and acknowledges Preston Junior with a cheeky salute.

The panel of ASSESSORS look satisfied that all is ready for procedures to commence.

THE CORRIDOR - LATER

Preston Junior waits at the doorway until his father emerges.

PRESTON JUNIOR
So, you win again.

IRONSEID
Looks like it.

PRESTON JUNIOR
Only because of who you are.

IRONSEID
I'm glad you noticed.

The others take a back seat and observe the family feud.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
I am who I am because of what I've been prepared to do. It's given me a reputation. "Ass-hole" is not a prerequisite for success.

PRESTON JUNIOR
So you keep lecturing me.

IRONSEID
Advising you --

Preston Junior turns to walk off --

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
I haven't finished yet.

A submissive Preston Junior halts, turns to his father.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
Perhaps it's time to reconsider.

PRESTON JUNIOR
Meaning?

Preston Junior looks contemptuously at his father; and, one by one, at the others, a study in poignancy.

PRESTON JUNIOR (CONT'D)
No fucking way!

He storms off in a huff, giving a piercing glance to the other three respondents.

Darting a menacing look, Cain follows.

Ironseid pulls out his cell phone, punches a number.

IRONSEID
(into phone)
Back to work!

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

STORE-ROOM

Rana, wearing his hard hat, comes down the stairs, juggling a tray with coffee pot and an assortment of cups. He negotiates his way through the piles of boxes stacked floor to ceiling.

DELI PROPER

Aadi and Vanessa, also wearing hard hats, oversee Workers reinforcing the opening into Roxy's.

Ironseid enters from the street and joins them.

IRONSEID
Shouldn't you two be somewhere?

But before they can respond, Rana enters with the coffee.

Each in turn grabs a cup and pours coffee.

Ironseid waits till last, leaves Rana with the tray but no cup. A Worker turns to Ironseid and indicates his bare head.

Taking the hint, Ironseid, seeing no spares, hands the coffee pot to the Worker, returns his cup to the tray, takes Rana's hard hat. Both seem happy with the deal until the Worker points out that Rana is now without a hat.

Handing the cup back to Ironseid, Rana places the tray over his head - but gets a stern rebuke from the Worker.

Rana dismisses the farce and departs with just the tray.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
(examines his hard hat)
Must emphasise this with my new
project manager.

AADI/VANESSA
Project manager?

IRONSEID
I'm a lawyer and investor. But not a property developer as such. A project such as this needs a professional Project Manager.

AADI
But this is our project.

VANESSA
Yes! Our Project.

Aadi looks to Vanessa with a beaming smile.

IRONSEID
Cannot argue with that, young lady.

Ironseid nods towards the Workers.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
But let's leave this to the pros, shall we?

He gulps down some coffee and hands his cup to one of the other Workers.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
(to Aadi and Vanessa)
Drink up, time for school. Motor's running.

Aadi and Vanessa reluctantly concede.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)
It might be your project, but you've yet to graduate.

He performs a vaudeville flip and roll of his hard hat and presents it to the first Worker who has to juggle the pot and cup he already has, somehow securing the hat under an arm.

INT. COLLEGE ARCHITECTURE FACULTY - OUTER OFFICE - EVENING

Aadi, laptop bag slung over shoulder, paces slowly back and forth in front of Vanessa. She's more relaxed in one of the plush chairs, nursing the large design folio.

VANESSA
Aadi, sit down. Remember it's karma.

The Secretary approaches them.

Vanessa stands and links arms with Aadi. He becomes more relaxed with her intimacy.

SERETARY
 (addresses Aadi)
 The Professor was most upset to hear
 of your family's grief.

Aadi and Vanessa exchange bewildered looks.

SERETARY (CONT'D)
 He was more than happy to reschedule
 and will see you both now.

EXT. COLLEGE ENTRANCE - EVENING

Vanessa and Aadi, arms linked, exit the college grounds, beaming smiles upon their faces. They stop in their tracks.

Benjamin behind the wheel of his parked yellow BMW, his sinister face illuminated by a photo on his cell phone. He looks up, turns off the phone, TOOTS his horn.

Vanessa ignores him. She gives Aadi a light peck on the cheek and motions him to depart.

Benjamin starts his car and cruises up to confront Vanessa.

BENJAMIN
 Can I offer the young lady a lift?

VANESSA
 Kind of you Benji but I'll wait --

BENJAMIN
 It's Benjamin.

VANESSA
 Benjamin. Very kind. But I'll wait
 for my father.

BENJAMIN
 Enjoy the wait.

He drives off, leaving Vanessa uneasy with his acerbic tone.

INT. BUS TRAVELING - EVENING

Vanessa, conscious of the other passengers, has her phone to her ear. There is no answer - she disconnects.

EXT. EPHRON BROWNSTONE - EVENING

Vanessa approaches her home to be greeted by Gloria in a flurry, tossing David's clothes and effects on the sidewalk.

VANESSA
What the --? Where's dad?

GLORIA
(Yiddish)
Mamzer. Dreck --

Gloria re-enters the building ... and returns down the steps with more clothes, wedding photos, other memorabilia.

Vanessa rushes to stop Gloria.

VANESSA
"Bastard"? "Shit"? What the fuck?

GLORIA
"What the fuck?" I'll tell you what the fuck. "I'm negotiating a deal with a jeweler," he says. More like laying a pearl necklace on a nafka!

VANESSA
A what?

GLORIA
Pearl necklace ... it's when a man shoots his load --

VANESSA
Mom! I meant "nafka"!

GLORIA
A whore!

VANESSA
Mom, what's going on?

Gloria pulls from her jeans back pocket a folded envelope.

GLORIA
These were under the door. "Roxy's pimp and her client".

VANESSA
Roxy's? Pimp?

GLORIA
Operates out of a jeweler store in Cobble Hill apparently.

Vanessa takes the envelope and removes a number of home laser printed, 8x10 photos. She straightens the photos.

She shuffles them, each one taken from the street, clearly showing Aadi, late at night on the sidewalk outside Roxy's, facing an older man, bald spot at the back of his head.

VANESSA

But that's --

GLORIA

Yes. I'd know that bald spot anywhere. And who's he with? Her Indian pimp!

Vanessa focuses on the image of Aadi.

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - AADI'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Aadi, legs crossed on his bed, viewing a site on the Taj Mahal on his laptop. A text PINGS on his phone:

VANESSA PHONE TEXT

*How could u do this to me, my family.
Never want t c u again.*

Aadi is at a complete loss. He punches in the phone reply. No answer. He tries again - still no response. He texts:

AADI PHONE TEXT

?????

He flops back on his bed, nursing his phone on his lower abdomen and stares at the ceiling, his mind racing.

His phone buzzes on his groin, startling him. Without looking at the caller ID he answers.

AADI

Ness.

VANESSA'S VOICE

Miss Ephron to you.

AADI

Miss Ephron. I am not understanding this. All of a sudden I am in the untouchable caste. What is it I have done?

VANESSA'S VOICE

*I'm talking about you and that nafka,
and --*

AADI
That what?

VANESSA'S VOICE
That whore ... and my father.

Aadi slaps a hand to his forehead. He doesn't know how to respond.

VANESSA'S VOICE (CONT'D)
I never took you to be a pimp.

AADI
Pimp?

But the call is terminated leaving Aadi bewildered.

Rana appears at the doorway with Alice holding a food hamper.

RANA
A problem?

Aadi waves his phone.

AADI
She never wants to see me again.
Again.

Rana gestures "Who?"

AADI (CONT'D)
Ness.

ALICE
Miss Ephron?

A distraught Aadi can barely manage a nod.

RANA
No matter. You're already done with
the assignment. Your studies are
almost over, our Project Manager --

Alice digs a reprimanding elbow into Rana's ribs. He winces in pain as she urges him away from the bedroom.

On their retreat, Aadi, holds up his phone and asks.

AADI
Does "pimp" mean the same in American
as --?

Rana and Alice exchange stunned looks, and nod in unison.

SERIES OF EVENING SHOTS - CONTINUOUS:

- Aadi runs from the Taj delicatessen.
- Aadi jumps on a bus just as the doors are about to close.
- Aadi on the slowing bus with his phone showing Map of Park Slope, prepares to exit.
- Aadi running through the streets of Park Slope.

EXT. EPHRON BROWNSTONE - EVENING

Panting, Aadi scales the steps of the Ephron Brownstone and feverishly rings the intercom button. No answer. He tries repeatedly. Eventually a response through the speaker.

VANESSA'S VOICE

Aadi, go away.

AADI

You know it is I?

VANESSA'S VOICE

I can smell the deceit.

Aadi takes a brief whiff of his armpit.

AADI

Miss ... Ness. I do not trade in pleasures of the flesh.

VANESSA'S VOICE

What?

AADI

I am not a pimp. My late mother would disown such an unworthy soul.

VANESSA'S VOICE

Then why were you cavorting with her and my father --?

AADI

Her? Who is her?

VANESSA'S VOICE

Roxy, damn you. And my father. We have photos of you. Late at night outside her place of business.

AADI
Perhaps there is a perfectly good
explanation.

The intercom clicks off.

Aadi stands alone, morose. After a near-eternity, the front door clicks and Vanessa appears on the stoop in satin shorts and revealing top.

Aadi stands gaping at the salubrious sight. She thrusts the photos at him, curtails his gloating.

VANESSA
They came with a note "Roxy's pimp
and her client."

Aadi is bemused by the photos.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
So far no Facebook - that we know of.

She stands there resolute.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Explain.

AADI
You are not friends? Or maybe you are
friends but this friend is afraid
that other friends --

VANESSA
Explain the photos, damn you!

Aadi thinks quickly on his feet.

AADI
I am there because, as you know, I
live --

VANESSA
I know, I know. And?

AADI
Roxy?

VANESSA
Yes?

AADI
Her business premises are part of our
Urban Heritage --

VANESSA

Tell me something I don't know --
like about my father?

AADI

I saw him only briefly --

Aadi struggles to be vague without blatantly lying.

AADI (CONT'D)

One night ... I don't remember.
I am thinking perhaps he was sent to
negotiate. On behalf of Mister
Ironseid? Maybe?

Vanessa shakes her head at the incredulity of it all.

AADI (CONT'D)

I am suspecting she had other plans
but your father's task was to get --

VANESSA

Get what?

AADI

Satisfaction --

VANESSA

That's the polite term.

AADI

-- and get her to agree to our
project.

VANESSA

Then why at night?

This has Aadi stumped - momentarily.

AADI

Her schedule. Yes, her schedule. Mzzz
Roxy is a businesswoman. A very busy
businesswoman.

Unimpressed, Vanessa snatches back the photos.

VANESSA

I should never have gotten involved
with your kind.

Hurt by this, Aadi withdraws back on to the stoop.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean it like that.

He turns his back on her, descends the steps and wanders back along the street, into the encroaching night...

VANESSA (CONT'D)
 (contrite)
 Aadi, please. You know I didn't mean
 ... Aadi!

She goes in pursuit ... but she's lost him. She looks up at the nosey neighbor but cannot bring herself to say anything. She bites her lip, closes the door on the night.

EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

An impressive Five Star Hotel marquee with the neon sign THE NEW TAJ DELICATESSEN scrawled in a Hindi styled script.

Suspended below, a banner:

GRAND OPENING - SOON

INT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

The renovations are nearly complete, white marble everywhere.

Overseeing proceedings, Preston Junior signs off a sheet with one of the Workers.

At one of the counters, Rana consults with a man wearing a white jacket bearing the words:

"KOSHER MEATS TRADING COMPANY"

Aadi wanders from area to area with his phone, giving the thumbs up to a TECHNICIAN on a ladder by the wireless router on the ceiling.

VANESSA (O.S.)
 Your project is coming along just
 fine.

Aadi turns from his task, trying unsuccessfully to mask his pleasure at seeing her standing at the grand entrance.

AADI
Our project.

They both smile awkwardly. The others around them slow their activities while pretending not to ogle Vanessa.

She plucks up the courage, approaches Aadi, looks him straight in the eye.

VANESSA

I'm sorry Aadi but I have to know.

He's unnerved by her directness.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

You said you saw my father only briefly. Did you ever see my father enter Roxy's?

AADI

No no no. Never did I see your father enter that establishment.

Vanessa heaves a sigh, not entirely satisfied.

AADI (CONT'D)

It is true. Never ever did I see your father enter Madam Roxy's.

They eyeball each other a moment. She breaks the impasse ...

VANESSA

I'm pleased to hear that, Aadi.

He musters a feeble smile, relieved ...

She turns to walk out but checks herself, confronts him.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

But ... Did you ever see my father leave Roxy's?

AADI

Ah, that is indeed another question.

She stands before him, resolute.

Aadi equivocates, cannot, will not tell a lie ... He nods "yes".

The moment hangs, a tear forming in her eyes. She turns and leaves, Aadi powerless to detain her.

Preston Junior and Rana eye each other, a shared empathy.

INT. A BAR - EVENING

A number of LONELY MALES nurse their drinks. Some of Benjamin's Disciples occupy a more raucous section of the bar.

In an intimate booth, an inebriated Benjamin is all over Vanessa, unctuously offering her succor.

BENJAMIN

He has no right to get you so upset like this.

(mumbles aside to
Disciples)

So much for sending him packing.

A few of the Disciples don their sunglasses.

Vanessa mouths "Send him packing"? But before she can delve further ...

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Ness, you need to be with your own people. I mean, imagine hanging off his arm as you make the grand entrance at your father's club?

She looks at him incredulously.

VANESSA

My father's club?

BENJAMIN

Don't knock it, Ness. You're about to graduate. You want commissions in years to come, you need to network. With the right people.

VANESSA

Just what is your interest in me, Benji? You want me hanging off your arm so you can make the grand entrance? That it?

BENJAMIN

Ness --

VANESSA

Do not Ness with me! I thought I might get some sympathy and all I'm getting is what's in it for you!

BENJAMIN

And what do you think you'll get from him. Apart from working the streets.

She recoils from him.

VANESSA

I beg you pardon. You make it sound
like he's a --

Benjamin is too shamed to look at her. She pulls him around.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Jesus, the photos! You spied, didn't
you? You couldn't send him packing,
so you tried to make out he was a
pimp, is that it? Why?

BENJAMIN

'Cos that's what most of them are,
their kind.

Vanessa winces at the term "their kind". She stands and
pushes Benjamin at arms length, back into the booth.

VANESSA

And my father! What have you got
against my father? He's the only one
rooting for you, damn it! No need for
blackmail to get what you want.

She leans across and grabs her clutch bag and her phone.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

And so what if my father was screwing
a whore. It's what all you men do,
isn't it?

She veers over to the bar, takes a glass being nursed by one
of the Lonely Males, returns to the booth and pours the
contents over Benjamin's head.

Waving her phone in Benjamin's face, she speaks so everyone
can hear.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

If those photos ever find their way
onto Facebook!

On cue, Benjamin's Disciples check their own phones for any
social media posts, some Facebook, some Instagram, some...

INT. MOTEL ROOM/EPHRON LOUNGE ROOM - NIGHT - INTERCUT

David, lying on the queen-size bed, clothes and empty mini-
bar bottles strewn everywhere, speaks on his phone.

DAVID

Does this mean you and Benjamin will
not be --?

EPHRON LOUNGE

Gloria stands beside Vanessa and listens to her daughter's
phone on speaker.

VANESSA

No, Daddy, we won't be.

Disappointment shows on David's face.

DAVID

And how does your mother feel --

Gloria storms off, yelling back at the phone.

GLORIA

What do you care what I feel!

VANESSA

Daddy, I've explained everything to
her. She'll come round. We need to
talk about this. Like adults.

INT/EXT. NEW TAJ DELICATESSEN -STREET - NIGHT

A small group of curious ONLOOKERS gaze in through the
windows at the completed, remodeled New Taj Delicatessen.

Preston Junior busies himself helping Rana set out ice
buckets with bottles of champagne in various locations.

A despondent Aadi paces to and fro, practically throttling
the cell phone in his hand.

Preston Junior leaves Rana and approaches Aadi.

PRESTON JUNIOR

Why the long face. You should be
pleased with yourself, dammit!

Aadi shrugs off the accolade.

PRESTON JUNIOR (CONT'D)

This is what you wanted, isn't it?
Why you left India?

Aadi averts his eyes, remains morose.

AADI
It was my father's wish.

PRESTON JUNIOR
Ah, yes. Fathers!

AADI
"Finish your degree," he said.
"Create something wonderful, a palace
for your special princess."

PRESTON JUNIOR
Well, you have your palace.

Aadi turns back to face Preston Junior.

PRESTON JUNIOR (CONT'D)
And your special princess?

Aadi holds up his cell phone.

AADI
It seems she is wary of my kind.

PRESTON JUNIOR
Perhaps she feels she is not good
enough for her prince.

Aadi digests this a moment.

AADI
She did like the marble!

PRESTON JUNIOR
And I'm sure she likes the prince.

Off Preston Junior's prompting, a resolute Aadi heads out
through the doors, through the gathering throng of onlookers.

INT. INDIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A CAUCASIAN WAITER #1 delivers meals to David and Vanessa.

WAITER #1
Chicken Tikka for Madam... and Lamb
Biryani for Sir.

They sit patiently as a petite CAUCASIAN WAITER #2, with an
abundance of piercings over her face, delivers side dishes.

VANESSA
Don't worry, it's Kosher.

David checks out the pale skinned Wait Staff.

DAVID

I'm sure.

He assesses the dishes in front of him.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I didn't realize you were a fan of Indian.

VANESSA

A recently convert.

DAVID

I see.

She reaches over and intimately holds his hand.

Vanessa counters the stares from a few other DINERS. She retracts her hand and speaks loud enough for them to hear.

VANESSA

Have you seen the photographs?

DAVID

I can explain.

VANESSA

They show my friend --
 -- (she checks herself)
 -- show Aadi with you outside Ms
 Roxy's.

DAVID

Like I said, I can explain.

VANESSA

When I asked Aadi, he assured me he never once saw you enter that establishment.

David opens his palms - like he'd been exonerated.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

It was a different story when I asked if he'd ever seen you leave there!

This time David flops his elbows on the table, upsetting cutlery, and draws his palms to his face, hiding his shame.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

And do you know Aadi's explanation?

David peeks through parted fingers.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

Said he thought perhaps you had been negotiating on behalf of Mister Ironseid. That the nafka had been reluctant to be a part of the arrangement and that you were negotiating satisfaction.

David removes his hands from his face and gazes at his daughter, awaiting sentencing.

DAVID

Satisfaction?

VANESSA

His term, not mine.

David nods without emotion.

DAVID

The young man said that?

Vanessa nods. David starts toying with his meal.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Kosher?

Again Vanessa nods, this time with more enthusiasm.

David spends a moment digesting this affirmation. He looks around at the other Diners, some of whom have been eavesdropping while pretending to consult their menus.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Is there some other place you'd rather be with me right now?

Vanessa looks at her watch and nods enthusiastically.

VANESSA

Like to drive me?

He stands. She follows suit.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

And mom?

DAVID

The three of us? Together? Why not?

Vanessa delves into her shoulder bag for her cell phone.

VANESSA
I'll ring?

David halts her before she can retrieve the phone.

DAVID
We'll surprise her.

She links her arm in David's and they quickly depart, leaving the other Diners to speculate on the "threesome", the "nafka" and "satisfaction".

EXT. EPHRON BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

A flustered, panting Aadi, cell phone in hand, rings the intercom and pounds impatiently on the front door. Waits ...

GLORIA (O.S.)
You lose your key, honey?!

The door opens and Gloria appears, in dressing gown. Before she can comment, Aadi pleads.

AADI
Mrs Ephron. I am wanting to pitch to your daughter --

GLORIA
Pitch?

AADI
I am in love with Vanessa but I cannot tell her because it seems her phone is --

Gloria raises her hand, looks over Aadi's shoulder.

GLORIA
Better pitch to her in person then.

Aadi turns to see David's car pull into the curb.

INT. NEW TAJ DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

An eclectic CROWD is assembled within the New Taj Delicatessen, in amongst the fully stocked shelves.

Ironseid mounts a packing crate near the entrance to 'Roxy's' section of the establishment, calls for their attention.

IRONSEID
Ladies and gentleman.

He waits for quiet, which is not long in coming.

He waves a hand around in a panoramic sweep, casting magic dust over the place and all within it.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

You see around you proof. Proof of what men --

He looks to the entrance and sees Aadi and Vanessa standing there.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

(acknowledging Vanessa)

-- and women, with a passion can achieve.

All eyes follow Ironseid's.

Aadi and Vanessa embrace, earning applause all round.

David places an arm around Gloria, dressed to the nines, very whore-ish. Reluctant at first, she decides to accept him.

IRONSEID (CONT'D)

I need say no more. Ladies and gentlemen, the proprietor of the New Taj Delicatessen, Rana Santoori.

Encouraged by generous applause, Rana, feigning modesty, moves in to take the place vacated by Ironseid.

RANA

This old Indian came to Brooklyn as a mere child and I soon found out what it had to offer. I hope I have made a small contribution in return.

A sincere show of appreciation from the others.

RANA (CONT'D)

A short while ago, another young Indian man arrived in Brooklyn.

He acknowledges Aadi.

RANA (CONT'D)

He too found out what it had to offer and was determined to make his own contribution. Fortunately, this young man met someone special --

He offers a beaming smile to Vanessa.

RANA (CONT'D)
 -- and together they met someone
 special --

Offers a slight bow of the head to Ironseid.

RANA (CONT'D)
 -- and let's not forget the guy who
 started the ball rolling in the first
 place.

Rana looks to Preston Junior who in turn looks around at the others, not realizing it is he in the spotlight. Finally he gets it, smiles broadly, takes a flamboyant bow.

RANA (CONT'D)
 Right now, it's champagne time, for
 tomorrow the New Taj Delicatessen is
 officially open for business.

STREET OUTSIDE - INTERCUT

A massive crowd of curious Onlookers now assembled outside beneath the Marquee witness the proceedings.

The sound of BOLLYWOOD-STYLE MUSIC starts drifting out from the delicatessen.

DELICATESSEN

Champagne flows, the Bollywood-style Music is prominent.

Gloria and David, attempt to chat with Professor Kyochu. They look at each other, neither comprehending what is said.

Isaac, hand wobbling, has difficulty raising his glass to his lips - Ronnie intervenes and he is most appreciative.

Cain, dressed as a Concierge, drops a Berocca® tablet in his champagne, unprepared for the volcano that erupts.

Ironseid hands Aadi an envelope, shakes his hand, pecks Vanessa on the cheek and departs without a word.

A bemused Aadi opens the envelope. Inside are two folded documents, one large, the other a brief note.

Aadi unfolds the larger document:

AN APPLICATION FORM FOR A GREEN CARD

Aadi briefly scans the document and declares.

AADI

It would appear I will require some referees.

Vanessa squeezes Aadi's hand and politely takes possession of the smaller note.

She unfolds it and together they read the Letter:

If ever you require references, young man.

*Preston Ironseid Snr.
(CEO New Deli Developments)
Preston Ironseid Jnr.
(Project Manager)*

Aadi stares like a puppy at Vanessa.

AADI (CONT'D)

I believe our project is completed.

VANESSA

Not quite.

She draws his face to hers and they kiss passionately. Aadi's body starts gyrating with the music, grinding sensuously against Vanessa. They break on hearing a polite COUGH.

Aadi turns to Rana, twirling his moustache, beside him.

RANA

Brooklyn does this to a young man.

They hug each other, Aadi maintaining his gyrating.

Rana moves away to join Alice.

Vanessa takes Aadi's hand as his lithe body is imbued by the rhythm of the music ... and he goes into full-on Bollywood dancing. She quickly follows his moves ...

STREET

The two African-American youths start their own Hip-Hop moves - the Music takes on a fusion between Indian and Hip-Hop ...

DELICATESSEN

Others inside join in the dancing but find it difficult within the Deli's confines. Aadi leads them outside ...

STREET

Where Aadi demonstrates his own style of Hip-Hop.

But it is Vanessa's turn to take the lead and her dance style is Yiddish flavored ... another fusion of the Music ...

David and Gloria join in, as well as Isaac and Ronnie who dance on with nary a care in the world ...

Isaac's eyes meet Rana's and there is a silent communion between them ...

Alice encourages Rana to dance with her and there is another fusion with an element of Irish jig now evident ...

Preston Junior, flanked by the cumbersome Cain, tries valiantly to dance Pulp Fiction, with little success.

Now the entire sidewalk, indeed entire street, has been taken over by Cobble Hill's finest.

In their midst, a sullen Benjamin and his Disciples lean on the parked yellow BMW. The Disciples, intoxicated by the music, begin to move ... and join in.

Benjamin, last man standing, has no resistance to the infectious atmosphere, and joins the throng dancing.

A short distance from the celebrations, Ironseid, himself imbued by the music, sashays up to Roxy standing on the sidewalk by the door of Ironseid's limousine.

The Chauffeur opens the door for them both to enter ... and drives off -

- against the backdrop of the flashing THE NEW TAJ DELICATESSEN neon of the marquee.

FADE OUT.

THE END