

SUPER SALAAM

by

Margarida Rodrigues

1 INT. MUMBAI, SALAAM'S HOME - DAY.

A tiny room. A dirty, narrow window-less box of wood.

Walls covered in chipping pastel paint. Clothes hanging from pegs. Shoes standing under a wooden bed.

Two figures lay on the bed next to each other.

SALAAM, (11) too short for his age, admires PRIYA, (25s), his mother, sleeping. Extremely pregnant. Beautiful.

CUT TO.

Salaam happily cleans the floor with a broom.

Suddenly, he stops. His eyes catch something.

He kneels down. Holds it in his little hand and smiles- it's a condom. A used condom.

Salaam smells it; wack! Wrong call. Throws it away.

Salaam nervously reaches for the wardrobe across the room. Then, carefully opens a drawer. He smiles- that's it!

Condoms. Lots of untouched condoms.

Salaam has found gold!

CUT TO

Salaam sits on the floor. Rips the package. Blows.

One. Two. Three.

Takes a break. Sights. The condom is swelling.

Four. Five. Six. Seven. Makes a knot.

Big smile- success!

He got it! It's a balloon now! 11-year old Salaam wanted a balloon.

CUT TO.

Salaam, now dressed in his school uniform, goes over to the mirror and brushes his hair. He looks to the side and smiles.

On the wardrobe, jewelry- Priya's jewelry.

Salaam runs his fingers through the rings, bracelets, earrings- a locket.

A strange-looking locket. Old. Rusty. Still, able to maintain his charm. The boy holds it in his hand like a treasure.

Then, a sound. Mom! Salaam quickly puts the locket back in his place.

Silence. Tension. Heavy breathing.

Salaam turns around. Nothing. Priya is sleeping.

Sights. That was close!

His eyes get drawn somewhere else- Mom's makeup.

CUT TO.

Salaam sits on the floor. Holding the balloon in one hand, lipstick on the other.

He draws, delighted.

CUT TO.

Salaam gets close to Priya's bed. The balloon peeks through his arms.

Priya is still asleep. Salaam carefully lays his treasure next to her and leaves.

In very bright red it reads; **SUPER SALAAM!**

FADE IN; 1 YEAR LATER.

2 EXT. MUMBAI, AEROPORT - DAY.

MR.BEEF, tall, fat and British (40s), makes his way out of the airport. His many suitcases hold him back.

Gasping. Groaning. Mr.Beef catches his breath as he waves at his ride, with sympathy.

CUT TO.

3 INT. CAR - LATER.

Mr.Beef gets inside the car and smiles thought the mirror.

The driver mumbles something and looks away- he surely isn't

a very talkative person.

MONTAGE; The streets of Mumbai.

The ride starts as the driver blasts music on the radio and Mr.Beef looks out the window, to find;

- Stalls, trash, and animals walking around.
- Children running away from the police.
- A queue of men sleeping on card-boards.
- Two women fighting.

The light turns red and the car stops.

A crowd of children crosses the road. They go straight towards the cars and knock on their windows.

ZAHID (12), and ARJUN, (13) get close and start their daily task of making a living.

ZAHID	ARJUN
I want to eat, please /give me some money!	/Please! I'm very hungry!
(beat)	
10 rupees?	

They rub their fingers together- the universal sign for money.

Mr.Beef looks away, disturbed.

The driver takes notice and talks for the first time.

DRIVER
Do you want me to get rid of them?

MR.BEEF
(uncomfortable)
There is no need. Thank you.

Suddenly the light turns green and the car starts moving. We get a CLOSE UP of Zahid's face, and seamlessly...

4 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

...We are watching Mr.Beef's car drive away. The boys run after it.

ZAHID
Son of a bitch!

ARJUN
Cock sucker!

They chuckle and start moving away.

Across the road, a group of children, aged 10 to 16, stand on the side. Blacked with grime. Poorly dressed. With greasy, long hair.

ZAHID
Hello, motherfuckers!

ARJUN
We got 30 rupees!

The boys look back at them and smile. Now we get to see their faces- a dirtier and seemingly angrier Salaam, is at the center, holding a pack of glue.

SHANKAR (13), SONU (16), and a few other boys all gather around him. Each one, holding a plastic bag in their hands, patiently waiting for their share.

SALAAM
(fills the bags with glue)
First Arjun...then Zahid...then
Sonu...and Shankar.

Shankar isn't happy with his share.

SHANKAR
Give me some more! You didn't give me
enough!

SALAAM
That's enough for you! It has to last
for everybody!

SHANKAR
(pushes Salaam)
What the fuck, pussy!

Salaam pushes him back.

SALAAM
I'm making all the money around here!
And you're spending it all!

Zahid and Sonu have a conversation as they fight in the back.

SONU
How much does Anil owe us?

ZAHID
(huffs glue from his bag)
150 rupees.

Shankar and Salaam keep pushing each other.

SHANKAR
You stole 400 rupees from
me/ yesterday!

SALAAM
/SON OF A BITCH! That wasn't
your money! I didn't steal
anything from you!

Sonu takes Salaam by the arm.

SONU
Stop being so childish!
(beat)
There's work /to do.

SALAAM
(sets himself free)
/It's not my fault!

Zahid waits for them with good, old KISHA, his female dog.

ZAHID
Can we go to Collaba Causeway, this
time?

SONU
Lots of tourists. Great thinking,
little brother.
(to Salaam)
You in?

SALAAM
(glancing at Shankar)
As long as that dick doesn't come.

SONU
Shankar will be collecting bottles
with Arjun.

SALAAM
Good enough for me.

ZAHID
(gets up)
Let's go!

5 INT. CONSERVATORY, AUDITORIUM - DAY.

Mr.Beef plays the piano, beautifully.

About 20 students watch him from their seats with admiration.

FAJAR, (50s), the director of the conservatory stands with a microphone in his hand, also watching.

Mr.Beef stops. That moment is over.

Clapping. Cheering. The students loved it.

Mr.Beef gets up and walks towards Fajar- clapping louder than anyone in the room.

FAJAR
(to Mr.Beef)
It was very moving.

The claps fade away.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
(to students)
What are you doing! Mr. Lewis came all
the way from Manchester to visit us!
He deserves more than that!

More clapping. Mr.Beef grows uncomfortable.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
Alright.

Clapping continues.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
I think that's enough.

Not really.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
STOP!

Silence. Almost. KALE (18) is still clapping. The students stare at him.

Fajar frowns- how dare you!

Mr.Beef makes an effort not to laugh.

Kale puts his hands on his pockets. It was worth it.

FAJAR (CONT'D)

Let's move on. As I was saying, Mr. Lewis came a very long way to meet you.

(beat)

He'll be giving you classes for the next four weeks, and help you with the compositions for the Spring Concert.

(beat)

It's an honor to have such a talented musician as your teacher. I don't want to hear any complaints. You must be respectful and listen. At all times.

(beat)

I expect you to welcome Mr. Lewis with open arms. Make him feel at home. Is that clear?

Silence.

FAJAR (CONT'D)

Good.

CUT TO.

Mr. Beef stands in the middle of the room, surrounded by Fajar, ARYA (19), obsessed with Nicola Benedetti, and a few other students.

ARYA

When I was four I watched Nicola Benedetti play the violin on TV and I had an immediate connection with it.

(beat)

I was so excited that I made my father buy me one just like hers a few days after that!

Discomfort. Everyone looks like they've heard this story a million times before. Students start to disperse.

ARYA (CONT'D) (O.S)

I went to Scotland with my family when I turned 15 to watch Nicola Benedetti play.

(beat)

She was even more beautiful in real life. I'll never forget it!

Mr. Beef shakes his head continuously. All the other students are gone now.

Fajar takes notice and looks around. There's gotta be a way to save this conversation!

Kale and his friends chat in a corner. He takes his chance.

FAJAR

Kale!

The boy looks back. Arya frowns- what the hell!

FAJAR (CONT'D)

You seemed to have enjoyed Mr. Lewis's piece, before. Come here!

Kale gets closer and shakes Mr.Beef's hand.

KALE

Nice to meet you.

MR.BEEF

Kale?

KALE

Yeah.

MR.BEEF

Oh.

(beat)

Funny.

Awkward staring. Nobody understood the joke. Mr.Beef grows uncomfortable.

ARYA

My favorite thing about Scotland was the ice-cream. So many flavors-

KALE

You do know he's British.

ARYA

Yes, but Nicolle-

FAJAR

I think we've heard enough about Nicolle, Arya.

ARYA

(under her breath)

Sorry.

Hesitance. Kale looks back at his friends, waiting.

KALE

(to Mr.Beef)

I'm going to be cooking lunch for some of us in the kitchen. I'm not a great cook but you're welcome to join us if you want.

MR.BEEF

I would love to, but I'm extremely tired. We'll have to make it another time. I think I just need a nap.

FAJAR

Jetlag!

Fake laughs.

KALE

Alright. Well, I've got to go.

(to Mr.Beef)

It was nice to meet you!

MR.BEEF

Have a great lunch!

6 INT. CONSERVATORY, MR.BEEF'S ROOM - LATER.

Door opens.

Clumsy Mr.Beef gets inside his humble ROOM, with his luggage on one hand, and his phone on the other.

He's leaving a voicemail.

MR.BEEF

Hi! Just calling to let you know I'm safe.

(beat)

Again.

(throws luggage on the floor)

Just arrived. Everything's great. Great flight. Great food. Great students. Just amazing. Terrific!

Takes a break. Puts his keys on a bedside table. Sights. He's nervous.

Studies the room.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

I know things are a bit-
(beat)

Tense, between us. And I'm breaking the rules. I know, I'm sorry. But I just wanted to give you a call. Check on you, like we used to. I miss that.

Gets inside the bathroom and stands there.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

Anyways, I'm sorry. I feel dumb. I'll give you your space. Hopefully, we can talk about this when I get back. I'll see you soon. Cheers.

Mr.Beef puts his phone down and looks ahead.

The bathroom. Something's wrong. What is it?

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

For God's sake.

Toilet paper. Where the hell is the toilet paper?

7 EXT. COLLABA CAUSEWAY - DAY.

MONTAGE; Zahid, Salaam, and Kisha go begging.

- WORK; Zahid and Salaam ask strangers for money separately. One. Two. Three. Four. Nothing. They stride confidently through all this. They know this routine.

- ICE-CREAM; In a deftly practiced move, Zahid scurries inside the trash, scavenging for ice-cream scraps. Kisha helps him out. Lucky for him, there's plenty. He sits down and licks two cups in a row. Kisha gets some too.

- PERSEVERANCE; Salaam keeps begging. Five. Six. Seven. Eight-Zero rupees. He's really not having any luck!

- SHARING; Salaam and Zahid share their disappointment with some ice-cream.

Sights. Salaam gets up and walks away.

ZAHID

Where are you going?

(beat)

Salaam?

Whatever. Zahid shrugs and enjoys his ice-cream.

8 EXT. CAFE- LATER.

Frustration. Annoyance. Anger. Salaam is still not having any luck begging.

SALAAM

PENIS COUNTRY! Son of a bitch!

(beat)

Without us street kids you couldn't survive!

(kicks imaginary strangers)

We clear your shoes and collect your garbage! We are the poor, you need us!

Salaam hears a strange laugh behind him.

He turns and finds Mr.Beef, sitting in a table outside of a cafe. Staring at him. Still laughing.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Why are you laughing, you fat son of a bitch!

More laughter. Now tears stream down his face. This is hilarious!

Salaam's face turns red. What's so funny?

MR.BEEF

You look very angry, lad. Usually, some cake makes me feel better!

(beat)

You may join me if you please.

Nothing. Silence. Salaam stares at Mr.Beef like he's the most mysterious creature he has ever seen.

Alright. No pressure. Still chuckling, Mr.Beef checks his phone.

Salaam hesitates. Eyeing him warily. Is it safe? Maybe. Let's take a chance. He walks quietly towards Mr.Beef's table.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

(looking at the phone)

Staring at people like that is really rude, you know?

Salaam is caught off guard.

SALAAM
I'm not staring at you.

MR.BEEF
(looks up)
Why are you standing here, then?

Salaam is now in front of Mr. Beef.

SALAAM
I wanted to warn you that.
(hesitates)
If you keep being disrespectful to me.
I'm gonna call my friends and we will
KICK YOUR ASS!

Confidence. Salaam is really proud of this one.

Mr.Beef holds his laughter.

MR.BEEF
You have to forgive me. I had no idea
you were such an outstanding
gentleman.
(beat)
I mistook you from a rude little boy
with too much free time. But you're no
such thing. You're a good fellow. No
doubt. I'm terribly sorry for laughing
at you.

Salaam frowns. He doesn't look very convinced.

Chuckles.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Have a seat, and keep me company.
Let's make amends!

An arm is extended. Nothing. Salaam stays frozen in his spot.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
You're supposed to shake it, boy!
(beat)
Go on! Let's start over!

Consideration, good enough, okay.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Very well. Have a sit.

Salaam carefully knells on a chair in front of his tall new friend - he won't take being the smallest one in the room.

Big smile. Mr.Beef hands him his plate full of biscuits.

Salaam doesn't waste any time.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
You may call me Mr. Lewis.

Salaam eats without taking his eyes off the plate.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
What shall I call you?

Nothing. Very rude. Mr.Beef bends down, close to Salaam's face.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Lad?
(beat)
Your name?

Salaam finally looks up. The plate is empty.

SALAAM
(chewing)
Do I have to pay for these?

MR.BEEF
(dry)
No.

Takes the plate away from the boy.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
So, your name?

SALAAM
I'm Salaam. Can I get some more?-

MR.BEEF
Maybe later.

Bummer.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
How old are you?

Takes a moment. Mumbles.

SALAAM
(insecure)
Eleven.

MR.BEEF
Alright. Do you go to school or do you
just shout at people all day?

SALAAM
I don't do school.

MR.BEEF
No?-

SALAAM
It's for pussy's. Everybody knows
that.

MR.BEEF
What do your parents think about that?

SALAAM
They don't care. They live far away.
In a giant mansion.
(beat)
With a pool. And a cook that makes the
best butter chicken in the whole
country.

MR.BEEF
What's not to like?

SALAAM
They were too pretentious.

Chuckles.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Did you run away, also?

MR.BEEF
Never.

Salaam carefully observes Mr.Beef's face. There's something
there too hard to decode.

Mr.Beef grows uncomfortable.

SALAAM
What are you?

MR.BEEF
 Pardon?

SALAAM
 What are you?

Confusion. Awkward silence.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
 Your country.

MR.BEEF
 Oh! Of course.
 (beat)
 I'm British.

Big smile. Teeth are showing.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
 What's so funny?

SALAAM
 (exited)
You're a Beef!

MR.BEEF
 What?!

SALAAM
 (laughing)
A BEEF!

The waiter arrives. What a strange situation.

WAITER
 Would you like to pay in cash?

Salaam shakes in his chair.

MR.BEEF
 (to the Waiter)
 Are you seeing this? The disrespect!

But he's smiling. Honestly, it seems like Mr.Beef is always smiling.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
 (exploring his pockets)
 Give me a second.

Off of his large pocket, many things make their way to the

table; two pens, some napkins, crumpled receipts, a dollar- a small switchblade.

Salaam notices it immediately.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
 (as he takes things out)
 You have to forgive me, I'm a bit of a packrat. I keep my own private collection in my pocket!

The waiter nods in silence, slightly concerned.

The switchblade. The boy can't take his eyes off the switchblade. There's something about it. It's insufferable.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
 (to the Waiter)
 I've always been a big fan of Mary Poppins. When I was younger I wanted to be just like her! With her big bag, always tremendously full!

Nervous smile.

Salaam takes his chance and slowly moves his arm towards the object of his desire. Grabs it.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Cheers! I've got it!

Salaam quickly puts the switchblade on his pants. Smiles at Mr.Beef finally paying with some rupees.

SALAAM
 (gets up)
 I've got to go!

Moves away from the table abruptly.

MR.BEEF
 What-

SALAAM
 (walking)
 It was nice meeting you Mr.Beef!

MR.BEEF
 Goodbye?

9 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK.

Salaam and Priya stand on top of a shabby building. She is smoking.

Excitement. Playfulness. Her arm is extended as she occasionally points at men on the street.

SALAAM

French!

Nods, correct. Smokes. Points at another man.

Salaam hesitates.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Spanish?

Alright, very good. Now harder.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Italian?

Shakes her head.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

German?

Chuckles, no.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

What is it, then?

Finishes her cigarette. Points at the suspect.

PRIYA

That one is a Beef.

Confused smile.

SALAAM

What?

PRIYA

A British man.

Chuckles. Priya stares at the man closely and keeps going.

PRIYA (CONT'D)

They're cursed. Hence cursed them.

SALAAM
What did they do?

PRIYA
They disobeyed.
(beat)
In the beginning, Hence protected
cows.

(beat)
In her eyes, they give us the purest
of all love. The love of a mother to
her children. Milk is the outcome of
her compassion. Of her motherhood

(beat)
Cows gave all of this to us, without
anything in return. So, Hence asked us
to protect them, as a way of repaying
for what we have taken from them. And
we did.

(beat)
But the British people didn't. They
were too greedy. They liked beef, way
too much.

(beat)
And so, as a punishment, Hence made
their skins very white. The whitest
I've ever seen! And now, every time
they go near the sun for too long
their skin starts burning. And their
faces became red, just like beef!

Laughs.

SALAAM
You're lying!

PRIYA
It's true. Look at him!

Salaam gets a bit too excited.

SALAAM
Hey-oh Mr.Beef!

PRIYA
Salaam-

SALAAM
(shaking his arms)
Over here!

People start looking around- including the man.

PRIYA

Stop!

Laughs.

10 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER.

Tailors. Beauty shops. Cigarette shops. Food stores. Mobile phone shops. Barbers.

Women. Dozens of women line each block. Charming potential clients, in their bright clothes and loud makeup.

Man, ranging from university students to lawyers, soldiers and businessman, appraise the stationary woman, who return their lingering glances.

CUT TO.

A CLOSE-UP to MAN 1's face (40s).

MAN 1

Rate Kya Legi?- what's your rate?

CUT TO.

A CLOSE-UP to MAN 2's face (40s).

MAN 2

Chalti Hai Kya?- will you come?

CUT TO.

Music blasts. Booze flows. TWO BOYS (10) give alcohol and drugs to a group of men having a good time. They pay them 20 rupees.

The boys leave. We follow them as they climb tiny stairs.

Laughs. Footsteps. Children with bells on their waists speed down the steps.

They keep climbing. Women of all ages emerge from their rooms. Children cry in the background.

ELAINA (30s), and her son RAGHU (4) stand at the door.

RAGHU
 (to Elaina)
 Get more clients. I'm hungry.

One more step. We lose sight of the boys as they get to a group of children; Salaam, EDHA (12) JIERA (13), a boy, ADIRA (12), her little BROTHER, and SISTER (6, 4).

From the far, Salaam watches Priya.

Lined against the door. Combining her hair. Laughing with her friends. Holding her strange-looking locket.

He seems conflicted.

JIERA (O.S.)
 Salaam!

Turns.

Jiera and Edha stand in front of him, dressed provocatively.

EDHA
 It's your turn!

SALAAM
 What?

JIERA
 You're the customer!

EDHA
 You must pick one of us!

SALAAM
 Oh.
 (beat)
 Well...

The two girls start to dance and pose, laughing hysterically.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
 (bored)
 Jiera.

The winner jumps outta joy.

JIERA
 (to Edha)
 Again!

EDHA

It's not fair! I never get picked!

Laughs. Salaam and Adira glance at each other - remember her.

The girls fight in the back.

JIERA (O.S.)

You're too skinny! Boys like bigger women! My mom told me that!

EDHA (O.S.)

That's so unfair! I'll never get chosen!

Salaam looks away. Priya is no longer where she was before. Where is she?

He finds her. Her beautiful face. Her strange-looking locket.

She's getting inside their room with a strange man. Giggling, flirting.

Salaam doesn't understand. He resents her.

11 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT.

Mr.Beef goes through his bags. And pockets. And the wardrobe.

His belongings are spread on the floor. Something's missing.

CUT TO.

12 INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Mr.Beef walks through the HALL, nervous. Mumbling. There are sounds of people laughing.

The sounds intensify as he gets to the KITCHEN and looks around.

His students sit around a big table. Having fun. Distracted.

Mr.Beef stands there for a moment. They don't notice him right away.

ARYA

Did you know, Nicole Benedetti started learning the violin at the age of four! Just like me! It's crazy, right? We're so similar!

Kale finds Mr.Beef. Grins. Surprise!

13 EXT. HOME - DAY

Salaam, Shankar, Arjun, and Zahid are home- or better, they're on the streets.

Home is the sidewalk. Some blankets. Empty food boxes. Trash.

They play cards and smoke. The switchblade passes from hand to hand, as they play- it's Shankar's turn.

ARJUN
(to Zahid)
Give me /three!

ZAHID
/Motherfucker! You're
cheating!

ARJUN
You're just jealous!

SHANKAR
(to Salaam)
I think we should sell/ it.

SALAAM
/No way! That's mine!

SHANKAR
It's useless!-

ARJUN
(drops the cards)
That's not true! We can use
it to defend /ourselves!

ZAHID
/Yeah! We can stab the cops!

Chuckles.

SHANKAR
(to Zahid)
You're so dumb! Do you think
this could hurt/ anyone?

SALAAM
/Give it back!

Hesitance.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
It's mine!

SHANKAR
(gives in)
Whatever.

Silence. They keep smoking. Salaam plays around with the switchblade's compartments.

Zahid takes his plastic bag outta his pocked and looks

inside- it's empty. He huffs- it's not working.

ZAHID

I'm hungry.

Arjun takes his bag out and huffs - nothing. Shankar does the same thing.

ARJUN

I'm out.

SHANKAR

Me too.

Salaam ignores them. Shankar is furious.

SHANKAR (CONT'D)

Maybe if Salaam wouldn't have been such a sting this morning-

SALAAM

You always spend all of it anyways!

They can't argue with that - it's true.

Arjun carefully stares at the switchblade in Salaam's hands and smiles at the other boys.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

What?

14 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Salaam, Arjun, Shankar, and Zahid consider possible victims.

A little girl and her mother- no, too mean.

An old man mumbling to himself, with a threatening look- too dangerous.

A fat kid, leaving a candy store- perfect.

Confidence. Salaam stares at the switchblade in his hand.

ZAHID

(under his breath)
He's definitely rich.

ARJUN

Right?! See how fat he is!?

SHANKAR
That would never hurt him-

ZAHID
Shut up, fucking pussy!

SHANKAR
You shut up!

Salaam starts walking towards the victim. The boys follow.

SALAAM
(walking)
Hey kid! What's your name? I'm Malik!
This is-
(pointing at Shankar)
Aarav-
(pointing at Arjun)
Advik, and-
(pointing at Zahid)
Abhik.

ZAHID
Yeah. That's me- I'm Advik-

ARJUN
(to Zahid)
I'm Advik!-

SALAAM
(to the fat kid)
Don't mind my friends, they're very
dumb.

FAT KID (13), nervously backs away as the boys get closer.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Don't be scared! I've always wanted to
be friends with a fat kid!
(beat)
Fat kids are my favorite. Other people
make fun of them, but not me. I always
help them out!

Fat kid is now cornered against a wall- he holds the bag full
of candy against his chest. Salaam smiles.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Is that candy? I love candy.
(to the boys)
Do you guys like candy?

THE BOYS

Yes, yes!

SALAAM

Can I have some? Friends share. We're friends, right?

Fat kid hesitates- he seems pissed and scared at the same time.

Shankar glances at the knife hidden in between Salaam's fingers, impatiently.

Then we hear a yell, not that far away.

MALE VOICE (O.S)

Hey! Get the fuck away from my son!

The boys look to the side- the kid's parents run towards them- the father looks particularly upset.

Zahid, Salaam, and Arjun back away.

ARJUN

Let's go!

Fat kid takes his chance to escape, but Shankar grabs him.

ZAHID

Leave it!

No - not without a fight!

Shankar takes the switchblade out of Salaam's hand and makes a cut on the kid's arm.

SALAAM

What the fuck!

The kid cries. Arjun and Zahid run.

Shankar punches his victim in the face and takes the candy bag outta his hand.

SHANKAR

We're doing you a favor trust me.
You're way too fat!

Salaam holds his breath and is taken back to...

15 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - FLASHBACK.

...Salaam and another two boys, getting beaten up by four kids from a different school.

Salaam and his friends lay on the ground, wearing their school uniforms- protecting their heads from the kicking with books.

KID 1
(kicks Salaam)
Whore's son!

KID 2
If I pay you now, will your mom suck
my dick, later?

Laughs.

Still, on the ground, Salaam struggles to breathe again...

16 EXT. COLLABA CAUSEWAY - BACK TO PRESENT.

...And just like that, he's back.

The kid's dad runs. He's much closer now.

Salaam stands there, confound. Shankar has already backed away with the candy.

SHANKAR
What the fuck are you doing? Let's go!

The man is now in front of them. The woman right behind, crying.

Shankar takes off. Salaam runs alongside, terrified. His bare feet hurting on the rough ground.

They don't have much time; the man is gaining.

A heart-pounding chase. Salaam looks back to check on him.

His eyes are drawn to the fat kid laying on the ground, crying. His mother stands next to him- they hug. It looks so comfortable.

Salaam looks away. Holds his tears.

FADE TO BACK.

17 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK.

Salaam and his mother, Priya sit on the bed of their small room. The color red shines through the small chandelier and the colorful curtains. Music blasts outside.

Priya carefully wipes Salaam's face with a wet cloth.

Puffy eyes. Swollen lip. Scratches. Dry blood. A big bump in his forehead.

Salaam seems receptive, angry. He can't even look her in the eyes - he blames her.

She feels his contempt - it hurts.

Priya lays the cloth on the bed and strokes her son's face-only like mothers can. Then she grabs his chin, forcing him to face her. They both hold their tears - they're both sorry.

Salaam slowly breaks down. She holds his head against her chest. They both cry. The music keeps going outside.

FADE TO BLACK.

18 EXT. COLLABA CAUSEWAY - LATER.

M.Beef and Zahid wonder on the crowded market. Hemmed in.

MR.BEEF
(walking)
Where are we?

KALE
(walking)
Colaba Causeway!!

They get closer to the stall. Two girls, (10, 13) are the owners.

KALE (CONT'D)
(holds items)
Whatever you're looking for, we'll
find it here, for sure.

MR.BEEF
I wasn't looking to-

KALE (CONT'D) MR.BEEF
(holds a little knife) /Actually-
This is perfect.

(beat)
How much for/ it?

GIRL #1
50 rupees!

KALE
I'll give you 30.

GIRL #2
45!

KALE
40.

GIRL #1
45!
(beat)
I know he's rich!

KALE
Fair enough.
(to Mr.Beef)
Go on. 45 rupees.

19 EXT. COLLABA CAUSEWAY - AFTERNOON.

Mr.Beef and Kale sit on a bench eating ice-cream.

MR.BEEF
You only sell pistachio?

KALE
It's a superior flavor.

MR.BEEF
Indeed.

Mr.Beef holds the small knife on his hand.

KALE
Good purchase?

MR.BEEF
It's great. To be honest, I didn't
actually want a replacement.

KALE
What-

MR.BEEF
I feel terrible.

KALE
We made the whole trip to buy it!

MR.BEEF
I know. I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself. The switchblade can't be replaced. It holds meaning.

KALE
What do you mean?

MR.BEEF
Well, on my thirteen birthday, my sister gave it to me as a gift. She told me to never lose it. Or else she'd kick me in the bollocks!
(chuckles)
I've taken it with me ever since. Everywhere I go, I have a little piece of her with me.

Silence.

KALE
I'm really sorry.

Sorry? Sorry for what?

MR.BEEF
She's not dead!

KALE
Oh. My bad!

Laughs.

MR.BEEF
I'm sorry for dragging you here.

KALE
It's okay. This is the most fun I've had in a long time.
(beat)
Things at the conservatory are very demanding. Sometimes it's just too much.

MR.BEEF

I'll take your word for it.

KALE

Please don't-

MR.BEEF

I know what you mean. I've been there.
Trust me, it doesn't get any better.

Laughs.

KALE

I'm a scholarship student. I'm suppose
to stand out, but the other students
have been playing for so long. It
feels like as much as I try, I'll
never be as good as them.

MR.BEEF

It's a competitive environment.

(beat)

Do you have family backing you up?

KALE

I have people. But they have
resources, and money.

MR.BEEF

That's just a bunch crap! You work
hard, money and resources will come to
you.

Big smile - there's hope.

Suddenly Mr.Beef's face becomes sour. Kale looks ahead.

Two street kids laugh as they huff glue from their bags.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

Do you know what's in the bags?

KALE

Glue. It helps with hunger.

Dancing. Giggling. One of the kids gets up and looks at the
sky.

KALE (CONT'D) (O.S)

They're high. Sometimes they see
things that aren't there. It's scary.

Like a bad trip.

Silence.

20 EXT. HOME - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT.

Salaam, Zahid, Arjun, Sonu, Shankar, and a few other boys, are reunited around a bonfire, smoking, and talking about their day.

Salaam is not paying much attention to the conversation. He seems confused and sorry.

SONU
(to Shankar)
You, stabbed the kid?

ZAHID
He did!

ARJUN
I saw it!

SHANKAR
Then we ate all of his candy!

ARJUN
That motherfucker had good taste!

SONU
(to Shankar)
You stabbed a fat pussy!
(chuckles)
Son of a bitch! I'm impressed!

FADE TO BLACK.

21 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - DAY.

Mr.Beef walks around the room.

Goes over his bag. Takes pants out. Something isn't right.

Unfolds them. They're way too small.

Frustration. Sighs. How could he do something so stupid?

Stops. There's something in the back pocket. What could it be?

He takes it out - a piece of paper.

Genuine smile. Pleasant surprise.

22 EXT. COLLABA CAUSEWAY - DAY.

Salaam, Zahid, Shankar, and Arjun walk around, huffing glue from their bags. Kisha follows Zahid, she looks tired.

ZAHID

Kisha is hungry. We need money for breakfast.

The boys dig in their pockets. They take the money out and give it to Zahid.

ARJUN

I have 30 rupees.

SHANKAR

I have 40.

SALAAM

20.

ZAHID

(to Salaam)

Can we buy Donuts?

SALAAM

Yeah, that's enough.

ARJUN

Cool. Kisha loves Donuts!

The boys stare at the old dog with love.

VOICE (O.S)

Listen, I just need some pants - these should not be allowed for a man my age!

Salaam looks around - he recognizes that voice.

SHANKAR (O.S)

Can we get the ones with chocolate?

ZAHID (O.S)

No, you fucking dick! Do you want to kill her?

SHANKAR (O.S)

We can take it off!

Stress. Annoyance. Mr.Beef still wearing his pajama pants, stands in front of a stall, holding some very colorful clothing items.

MR.BEEF

For God's sake! Don't you have any jeans?

Big smile.

SALAAM

(walking)

I've got to go.

ZAHID

What? Where are you going?

(beat)

Salaam?

(beat)

He did it again!

23 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Mr.Beef walks through the streets holding a bag on his hand.

Salaam follows him. Hiding. Curious.

Mr.Beef gets to the CONSERVATORY.

Salaam stops and watches him get inside. What now?

24 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - LATER.

Mr.Beef puts his new, extremely colorful pants on quickly.

25 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Salaam walks around the building, trying to find an entry.

Checking windows. Doors. Nothing. It's not gonna be that easy!

26 INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER.

Giggles. Laughs. Embarrassment looks.

The students stare at funny Mr.Beef, awkwardly standing in the middle of the room.

MR.BEEF

I think that's enough.

More laughs.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

It was an emergency!

(claps)

You'll have to get over it. We have work to do!

27 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Salaam is still searching around the BUILDING.

He hears music- singing. Looks up.

28 INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER.

The students play in the AUDITORIUM. RACHITA (19), beautiful is the one singing.

29 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Salaam follows the sound to find a WINDOW, near the ground.

He gets closer. Lulled by the music.

He kneels on the floor and looks thought it. Inside, the AUDITORIUM.

Then Mr.Beef. Amused. Proud.

Then Rachita. Gracious. Talented.

Salaam can't stop staring at her. There's something about her voice. Something about the song.

Suddenly, the sound gets muffled, and he's taken back to...

30 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK.

...his home. His bed. Priya singing the same song but without the instruments. Just acoustic. She has a nice voice- a motherly voice.

Salaam rests in her chest...

31 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER - BACK TO PRESENT.

...He keeps glancing at the Rachita. He can still hear his mom singing. It feels good. Cozy.

Suddenly a sound. Footsteps. Salaam looks back, surprised.

Kale. Distracted. Smoking a cigarette.

Surprise! Kale drops his cigarette on his foot.

KALE

Shit!

(to Salaam)

What the fuck, kid?

32 INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER.

Kale and Salaam walk inside the AUDITORIUM. Rachita has stopped singing.

Mr.Beef glances at Salaam, in disbelief.

MR.BEEF

(walking)

Look who we've got here!

KALE

He said he knew you.

MR.BEEF

Of course. That's the finest gentlemen I've ever met! Mr. Salaam!

(to Salaam)

You're welcome to stay. I hope you don't have to leave in such a hurry this time.

Salaam swallows dry.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

Kale, go take your sit. Let's continue!

CUT TO.

Sitting on a small chair, Salaam watches Mr.Beef's class.

The music goes on, as he;

-Stares at the instruments.

-Smiles at the students. Mainly Rachita.

-Exchanges glance with Kale because he can't stop laughing at Mr.Beef's pants.

CUT TO.

The class is over.

Salaam emerges in the crowd of students surrounding Mr.Beef.

MR.BEEF
(walking)
Did you enjoy my class?

SALAAM
It was fine.

MR.BEEF
I must say, I'm really surprised to see you here.

SALAAM
Why?

He knows exactly why. Silence.

Mr.Beef goes over to his bag and grabs some music sheets.

Salaam redolently takes the switchblade outta his pocket.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
I found this the other day. On the floor.

Big smile. The switchblade shines in the boy's hand.

MR.BEEF
(takes it)
So nice of you.

Mr.Beef saves the switchblade in his jacket. Then he places the music sheets on the piano. Salaam follows him like a dog.

SALAAM
I didn't steal it or anything.

MR.BEEF
That thought didn't cross my mind-

SALAAM
I'm not a thief.

Really? Sits on the piano.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Alright, I might've taken it. Accidentally.

Chuckles. Silence. Salaam stands next to him.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
I like your pants.

Laughter. Good enough- he's forgiven.

MR.BEEF
Sit.

Salaam is not in the position to disobey.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Have you ever played the piano before?

Shakes his head. Totally!

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Great. Show me what you got.

Oh, no.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Go on. It won't bite you.

Salaam fakes confidence as he lays his fingers on the keys.

Then he starts playing. Thing is; he doesn't actually know how to play.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Stop!

Grabs his hands away.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Are you trying to destroy the piano?

Confusion. Shame. Salaam wishes he could disappear.

Regret. Mr.Beef takes a different approach.

Lays Salaam's fingers back on the instrument. Then, places his hands on top.

They play.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
You must do it softly. Like this.
(plays)
There you have it. It's not that hard,

is it? It comes naturally.

Salaam smiles, his doubts disappear. Now he doesn't wish to be anywhere else.

33 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - DAY.

MONTAGE; Salaam's new routine.

-WORK; Salaam and Zahid beg on the road. Running after cars. Knocking on windows. 10 rupees. 25. 15. Zero. Salaam looks up to the sky; it's noon. Excitement.

-CONSERVATORY; Salaam walks inside the CONSERVATORY from the front door. Waves at the receptionist. She doesn't look back. Too busy with her quiz book.

Salaam walks through the HALL. Students are now leaving. They high-five him. Kale winks.

He gets to the AUDITORIUM, Mr.Beef is already sitting on the piano bench, waiting for him.

- PRACTICE; Mr.Beef and Salaam play the piano.

- LUNCH; Mr.Beef and Kale have lunch with the other students in the KITCHEN of the conservatory. They eat. No cutlery. Just a naan, and your hands. Mr.Beef struggles to put anything in his mouth. When he finally gets it. He makes a clear effort not to spit everything- too spicy.

- BATHROOM; Mr.Beef sits on the toilet. Relief. Now he feels better. Then he looks to the side. Frowns. Shit! He forgot. There's no toilet paper!

34 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Salaam, Zahid, Shankar, Arjun, and Sonu play football with a big group of other STREET KIDS.

This game is not ordinary. The ball isn't an actual ball, it's a melon. Yellowish. Dented. Getting more and more destroyed with every kick.

Salaam plays defense. He isn't paying any attention. Whispering the song he's been learning. Playing piano with his fingers on the air.

Zahid kicks. The melon rolls towards Salaam.

He fails. They score!

Yelling. Zahid and the other boy's from his team celebrate.
 Sonu glances at Salaam. He's pissed. Salaam doesn't care.
 He looks up at the sky. Smiles. It's noon! Sprints away.
 Sonu follows him with his eyes, confused. Zahid emerges
 behind him. Sights.

ZAHID
 He always does that.

35 INT. CONSERVATORY - DAY.

Salaam walks through the conservatory with a bloody bandage
 on his head.

Smiles at the receptionist.

Shock. She drops her quiz book on the table.

He keeps going.

He gets to the AUDITORIUM. Grins at Mr.Beef. He frowns.

SALAAM
 What?

MR.BEEF
 Would you mind telling me what's wrong
 with your head, lad?

SALAAM
 (gets closer)
 It's fake.

MR.BEEF
 How can it be fake when you're
 bleeding?

Salaam holds his hand on the bandage until some blood gets on
 his fingers. Shows it to Mr.Beef.

SALAAM
 It's pig's blood.

Hesitance.

MR.BEEF
 Why the hell have you got pig's blood
 in your head!

SALAAM

People always give more money if we're hurt. So we buy bandages and pig's blood, and fake injuries. Then we lay on the streets and beg for money.

MR.BEEF

That's actually a really smart move.

SALAAM

Thank you.

MR.BEEF

It's a real shame you don't go to school. You'd make a great student.

SALAAM

I disagree.

MR.BEEF

(sits down)

Of course, you do.

Puts his hands on the piano. Salaam notices something- a ring.

SALAAM

Are you married?

MR.BEEF

(looks at the ring)

Oh. This-

SALAAM

You never told me you had a wife!

MR.BEEF

(uncomfortable)

I suppose it never came up.

SALAAM

(sits down)

How is she like?

MR.BEEF

Well, she.

(beat)

She's- feminine.

Chuckles.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

What?-

SALAAM

You're weird! My mom always said men act differently around women. Especially if they're in love.

(beat)

Do you like Valentine's day?

MR.BEEF

It's not my favorite-

SALAAM

Mom always celebrated it. We'd have date night, together! I'd give her flowers and she'd cook Aloo gobi! Sometimes Fish Curry if we got lucky!

MR.BEEF

I thought you said you had a cook.

SALAAM

Obviously. That was before.

(beat)

Before she started lying. Plus, she was bossy and annoying. And a liar. And I don't want to talk about her anymore.

MR.BEEF

Suit yourself.

(beat)

Let's play.

36 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - DAY.

Salaam and Zahid dig through trash bins. Already opened bags surround them, as they grab what can be sold or used.

There's a mound of plastic bottles sitting next to Zahid, who has given up and is happily licking an ice-cream cup - again.

Salaam glances at his friend, disdainfully.

SALAAM

Get up you lazy dick! I always do all the work!

ZAHID

But it's my favorite!-

SALAAM
There's only one fucking flavor!

ZAHID
Yeah!
(beat)
My favorite.

Salaam drops the trash in his hands and sits next to him.

SALAAM
Give me some.

Zahid hands him the cup and awkwardly sucks his stinky fingers.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Do you think spider-man went to school?

ZAHID	SALAAM
No way!	/But he's super smart!
(beat)	
School is for pussys and he	
has/ superpowers!	

ZAHID
And rich!

SALAAM
Yeah, he's totally rich!

Silence.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Do you think that-
(hesitates)
If we go to school, we can also have superpowers?

ZAHID
You don't have any.

SALAAM
Yeah, but that's because I never finished!

ZAHID	SALAAM
The kids I know who go to school don't have /them!	/You don't know any!

ZAHID
Do you know any?

Salaam doesn't know any.

SALAAM
(under his breath)
Maybe they hide them.

ZAHID
Who would hide having superpowers!?

SALAAM
I would!

ZAHID
Why?!

SALAAM
People would try to steal them from
me. They could use me to fight in the
wars!

ZAHID
I don't want to go to war.

SALAAM
Neither do I.

ZAHID
Maybe we shouldn't do it.

SALAAM
WHAT! But we could have powers!

ZAHID
(shrugs)
Even if I wanted to, Sonu would never
let me go to school. And I'd never get
my powers.

SALAAM
(gets up, play-fights)
I'd go for you! And when I came back,
I'd kick Sonu's ass with my super
strength!- then he would let you!

ZAHID
(gets up)
Sure! You could be; SUPER PUSSY!

SALAAM

No way! I would be SUPER SALAAM! And you would be my ugly assistant; SUPER ICE-CREAM LICKER!

Laughs.

Zahid throws the ice-cream cup, and it hits Salaam squarely in the face.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

(laughing)

You're dead, motherfucker!

Salaam grabs a bunch of trash and throws it at Zahid.

They commence play-fighting. Laughing hysterically. Jumping around the trash- acting like happy children.

37 EXT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK.

Salaam makes his way back from school, in his uniform.

He gets to the SHABBY BUILDING.

He goes up the STAIRS.

As he gets close to home, he hears yelling.

Stops. Listens- it's Priya!

Salaam runs up the rest of the steps.

Yelling intensifies. He gets to the DOOR- it's open.

A bunch of women stand around it, gossiping.

Another yell.

Salaam gets inside.

He finds his mom. Laying in bed. Crying - she seems terrorized.

There are three more women inside. He only recognizes one of them, RAIKA, (25s) Adira's mom, holding Priya's hand- remember her. The other two women wear white clothes and masks. Doctors!

Salaam makes up his mind and smiles- Mom is having the baby!

Another yell. Priya glances at him.

Raika notices the intruder and starts walking towards him.

RAIKA
Get out of here!
(grabs his arm)
You can't come in!

Salaam is pushed outside, surrounded by all the other women.

CUT TO.

Salaam sits on the steps.

It's the afternoon. The women are gone. The yelling is still going. Salaam is bored and worried.

Another yell. Louder. Longer. Why is she yelling like that?

Salaam gets up and peeks through the window. The red curtains don't let him see much. It takes time to adjust.

Relief. Crying. Joy.

Salaam gets closer to the window, finally able to see.

He watches one of the doctors clean the baby, and then give it to extremely sweaty, Priya. Everyone seems so excited and happy.

DOCTOR 1, (40s), starts walking OUTSIDE.

Salaam speeds back to the stairs. Sits down.

She emerges at the door.

DOCTOR 1
Have you been here the whole time?

No answer.

DOCTOR 1 (CONT'D)
That's a long time.

Silence. She sits next to him.

SALAAM
Can I see her?

DOCTOR 1
Not yet. She just had a beautiful
girl. She needs to rest.

SALAAM
She was screaming very loud.

DOCTOR 1
You heard everything, hum?
(beat)
It's painful. But worth it.

Silence.

DOCTOR 1 (CONT'D)
(gets up)
Well, I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

Excitement. I sure am!

38 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - LATER.

Salaam and Doctor 1 come inside. Salaam holds a bag of potato
chips in his hand- he chews loudly.

DOCTOR 2, (40s) packs her stuff. Raika sits on the bed next
to Priya, resting with the baby on her lap. They chat
quietly.

Salaam gets closer to his mother, she looks back at him.
Tired eyes. Smiles.

CUT TO.

Salaam and Priya lay on the bed next to each other. In the
middle, the baby sleeps- they admire her.

PRIYA
That's your sister, Asha. She's
beautiful.

Salaam plays with her little fingers.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
You'll help me take good care of her,
won't you?

Shakes his head. Of course!

Salaam strokes Asha's feet carefully. Priya holds her little
hand.

PRIYA (CONT'D)

I'll send her to school. And she'll become a doctor or a lawyer. Or whatever she wants to, as long as she's happy.

SALAAM

Will she be able to fly?

PRIYA

If she's lucky.

SALAAM

What about super strength?

PRIYA

Of course.

Salaam looks up to the reddish ceiling.

SALAAM

I can't wait to get my powers.

PRIYA

Your grandmother was always bragging about hers. I used to get so jealous.

Looks back at her.

SALAAM

You never got yours.

PRIYA

I never finished school.
(strokes his face)
But you will. And so will Asha.

SALAAM

(sits down)
And then we'll save you from the bad men with our super strength!

Laughs.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

I'll punch their faces so hard! Just like superman!

PRIYA

Yeah, yeah. You'll be my Super Salaam!

39 INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT.

Salaam plays the piano with Mr.Beef.

Fajar watches from afar.

Nervousness. Mr.Beef notices him. Gets up.

MR.BEEF

Nice to see you!

FAJAR

No need to get up.

(walking)

The students kept telling me about this little prodigy. I had to come and check for myself.

(to Salaam)

My name is Fajar- Fajar Abbasi. And I own the chair you're sitting at.

SALAAM

Cool.

FAJAR

I've worked really hard for that chair. For this place.

(beat)

Do you think you're worthy to be sitting on my chair?

SALAAM

Yes.

FAJAR

Yes?

Salaam nods, exited.

FAJAR (CONT'D)

Confidence is important. As long as you don't drawn in it. What's your name?

SALAAM

Salaam.

FAJAR

Salaam!

(beat)

You're talented indeed. I'm impressed.

I'd like to invite you to play the opening at the Spring Concert.

Excitement. Joy. Mr. Beef and Salaam glance at each other.

SALAAM

Really?

FAJAR

I don't see why not. The song would have to change. But I think it could work.

(to Salaam)

Are you ready to learn something new?

Big smile. Shakes his head. He would love to.

40 EXT. HOME - DAY.

Arjun, Sonu, Zahid, and Shankar sit on the floor. Huffing glue. Smoking. All of them with one thing in common- something is clearly making them very confused.

SONU

What the fuck is he doing?

ZAHID

I don't know.

ARJUN

It's weird.

SHANKAR

Very weird.

Salaam sits on the floor with a large pen, drawing something in a piece of cardboard. Suddenly he yells, radiant.

SALAAM

Finished!

He gets up and exposes the final product.

They don't look extremely impressed- the drawing isn't great.

ZAHID

Is it a map?

No, idiot.

SONU
You're a really talented artist!

Laughs.

SALAAM
It's a piano, you dumb motherfuckers!

SONU
(gets up)
You think I'm that stupid? I was just
messing with you.

Gets closer.

SONU (CONT'D)
Why did you do that shit, anyway?

SALAAM
To play.

Sonu grabs it.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
What the fuck!

Fakes playing.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Give it back!

SONU
It doesn't make any sound!

The other boys laugh.

Salaam takes it back.

SALAAM
It's just to practice.

SONU
You need a real piano for that.
(beat)
Let's do Batchi.

The boys get up and start taking money outta their pockets.

Then they surround Sonu on the floor and give him the money.
Shankar gives 70 rupees. Arjun and Zahid give 60. Only Salaam
gives as little as 20 rupees.

SONU (CONT'D)
 (to Salaam)
 Is that all you got?

SALAAM
 People weren't giving as much money,
 today.

SONU
 Don't fuck with me! All of us managed
 to get way more than you!

SALAAM
 It's not my fault people are so
 greedy!

Sonu sights and adds 70 to the mix.

He starts splinting the money equally into piles.

Arjun and Shankar huff glue from their bags- they can't count.

Salaam looks away. The piano card-board is his best invention yet.

Zahid watches his brother. He doesn't know how to count, but he knows that Sonu shouldn't hide 40 rupees inside his shoe when nobody's watching.

Sonu winks at him. He knows his secret is safe.

Salaam hears a giggle at distance and looks up.

Across the road, he finds a girl (14) and her little brother (7) making their way back home. They wear school uniforms. The boy giggles and holds the girl's hand- they seem happy.

Salaam feels his heart drop. And just like that, he's taken back to...

41 INT. SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK.

...Salaam at school. School uniform. Clean hair. Clean face.

Children his age surround him on their chairs. Exited. Happy.

TEACHER (30s) writes on a blackboard.

TEACHER
 Who can tell me the answer?

Giggling. Yelling. They all want to.

CUT TO.

42 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER.

Salaam and the other children dance in a circle.

CUT TO.

43 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER.

Laughs. Students sit on the floor. Teacher at the center.

TEACHER

Can you tell me where's bad touch?

EDHA

Panties!

ADIRA

Chest!

MALE STUDENT

(between his legs)

Over here!

CUT TO.

44 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER.

Salaam and a few other students watch TV.

The Super Man ad comes up. Excitement grows.

SALAAM

Can't believe we're gonna be just like
him someday.

Confusion. What the hell is he talking about?

CUT TO.

45 INT. SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - LATER.

Salaam walks towards Adira sitting alone, surrounded by
books.

SALAAM

Hi Adira.

ADIRA

Hello.

SALAAM

(sits)

What are you doing?

ADIRA

Science homework.

(beat)

My mom told me what happened to you and Nabhij. I'm sorry about the big bump in your head. It looks kinda ugly.

Shrugs.

SALAAM

At least I got this cool scar.

Spreads his hair away. Adira isn't really impressed.

ADIRA

Great.

SALAAM

Are you going home?

ADIRA

Not yet. I like it here, better. Don't you?

SALAAM

I don't know.

ADIRA

Our place isn't good, at all. There are lots of bad people around there.

(beat)

Sometimes I can't sleep because men come knocking on my door at night.

SALAAM

Me too. And the music is always very loud!

Nods. Correct.

ADIRA

Once, I woke up and there was a man in my room. My siblings started crying.

They were so scared.

SALAAM
Were you scared?

ADIRA
Of course. But then my mom and her friends came in and saved us. But he could've hurt me or my siblings.
(beat)
That's why my mom wants us to go to school. If I study I can become a nurse. And then I'll never come there again.

SALAAM
Not even to visit your family?

ADIRA
I'll bring them with me. We'll live in a big house outside and then we'll all be happy.

SALAAM
Yeah, happy.

46 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - NIGHT.

Priya gets ready in the mirror. Bight clothes. Makeup. Hair. Nails.

Salaam sits on his bed, watching her.

SALAAM
Mom?

PRIYA
Yes, baby?

SALAAM
Why doesn't anybody else know about the power's thing?

PRIYA
Because it's a secret.

SALAAM
Yeah, I know but-

PRIYA
Only our family knows how magic works.

It's our secret.

SALAAM
Isn't that unfair?

PRIYA
Life's unfair.

SALAAM
Was it unfair to you?

Fake smile. Takes two pills outta a package.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Why haven't I ever met grandma? Does she hate me?

PRIYA
Of course not.

Silence.

SALAAM
Does she hate you?

Nothing. Holds tears.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
Why does she hate you?

Hesitates. Swallows dry.

PRIYA
Because I'm a whore.

Walks away.

47 INT. CONSERVATORY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT.

Salaam calmly eats a sandwich as he walks away from the conservatory.

VOICE (O.S)
Salaam!

Salaam turns and smiles- Kale runs towards him.

KALE (CONT'D)
How are you doing?

SALAAM

I'm fine.

KALE

You're more than fine. I heard about the concert. Congratulations!

SALAAM

It's pretty cool, right?

KALE

Yeah! You're good!

SALAAM

You think so?

KALE

Of course. I was about your age when I started. It saved my life.

SALAAM

(laughs)

Yeah, right!

KALE

It did.

(beat)

I know a place where they let kids like you practice!

SALAAM

Kids like me-

KALE

You could check it out. They're cool.

SALAAM

Sure.

Kale takes a cigarette outta a bunch and gets ready to light it.

KALE

They have an awesome TV-

SALAAM

Yeah. They also don't allow smoking.

Puts the cigarette back on the box. Salaam walks away.

KALE

(follows)

I know you've probably heard this like a million times. But you won't get offered an opportunity like this ever again!

SALAAM

Really?

KALE

It's pretty fancy. You can only get in with an invitation, so you're welcome.

Salaam keeps walking.

KALE (CONT'D)

Cmon, they even have a piano teacher!-

SALAAM

No cursing.

KALE

They serve great meals!

SALAAM

Boring school.

KALE

You can learn a practical profession!

SALAAM

No glue.

KALE

You won't need that!

Salaam swallows dry.

SALAAM

Alright.

KALE

Alright?

SALAAM

Just to check it out!

KALE

Got it. You're gonna love it.

48 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK.

Salaam walks around the room with Asha on his lap.

He takes a clean diaper and toilet paper from a wardrobe. Then he lays Asha on the bed and starts cleaning her up.

The baby laughs.

Salaam hides his face in his hands. Then lets his eyes peek through his fingers. More laughter.

Suddenly loud noises outside. Yelling. Crying. Sobbing.

VOICE (O.S)

I don't want to go with you!

Salaam stops.

He goes over to the door and looks around- nothing. The yelling and crying continue.

CUT TO.

49 EXT. SALAAM'S HOME - LATER.

Salaam goes down the stairs. The yelling intensifies.

Women of all ages gather around the steps.

He finally gets to the scene.

Adira. Adira is the one yelling. Sitting on the floor, holding her brother and sister against her chest. They also cry.

MADAM, (60s) shouts at them.

MADAM

Don't be so stubborn. Come!

Adira and her siblings sob and shake their heads. No.

MADAM (CONT'D)

Come with me. It'll be alright.

(beat)

Your mother wanted me to take care of you!

Mother? Raika. Raika is dead!

Adira and Salaam's eyes meet. She's miserable. Salaam holds his breath, not sure of what to do.

He hears two women talking behind him.

VOICE 1 (O.S)
She had been sick for a very long
time. Her soul is finally in peace.

VOICE 2 (O.S)
I knew she was gonna die I just feel
bad for the children.

VOICE 1 (O.S)
She was taking Oradexon. It was just a
matter of time.

Salaam looks back at them, horrified. Oradexon?

50 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - FLASHBACK.

Priya taking the pills.

51 EXT. SALAAM'S HOME - FLASHBACK.

Salaam pushes the women away, they mumble something.

He ignores them and goes up the stairs.

CUT TO.

52 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - LATER.

Salaam speeds through the room.

Stress. Heavy breathing.

He opens the drawers and takes everything out.

One. Two. Three.

Salaam stops. There they are. The pills.

He holds the pack and reads; ORADEXON.

No. It can't be!

One by one, the pills come out of the box. He accumulates them in his hands.

Then, a sound. Door opens.

Salaam freezes.

FADE TO BLACK.

53 EXT. HOME - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT.

Salaam opens his eyes. Shaking. Sweating. Struggling to breathe.

He sits. His friends surround him, all cuddling next to each other, sleeping peacefully.

Zahid is ahead of him, Kisha lays by his side.

Salaam gets up and silently moves away, hoping not to wake anyone.

But dogs really do have the best ears- Kisha follows the boy.

He sits on some STEPS, still nervous. Still not breathing properly. He pets Kisha and smiles- he feels better, calmer.

VOICE (O.S)

(whisper)

Salaam!

Zahid is awake. Salaam doesn't acknowledge him.

ZAHID (CONT'D)

(sits)

Salaam! What are you doing?

No response.

Zahid decides to check on him.

They sit next to each other in silence, petting Kisha.

ZAHID (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

SALAAM

Do you remember your mother?

ZAHID

A bit.

SALAAM

How was she like?

Hesitates.

ZAHID

Mean.

SALAAM

What would she do?

Zahid shows him his hand. It's dark, but the city light allows Salaam to see the burns in Zahid's fingers.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Cigarettes?

Nods, yes.

ZAHID

She used to beat me and Sonu. That's why we had to leave.

SALAAM

What about your father?

ZAHID

I don't know. I never met him.

SALAAM

Neither did I.

ZAHID

How was your mom like?

SALAAM

Perfect.

ZAHID

Lucky.

54 INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY.

Salaam and Mr.Beef sit next to each other, playing the new song in the piano.

Kale and Fajar watch them from the far.

Salaam misses a note. He seems distracted. Lost in his thoughts.

He fails again. He stops playing. Sighs.

Mr.Beef glances at him, worried.

Fajar gets closer and puts his hands on Salaam's shoulders.

FAJAR
Let's take a break.

Walks away.

MR.BEEF
What's going on?
(beat)
You did this perfectly, yesterday!

Shrugs.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Is there something bothering you? Do
you not want to do this anymore?-

SALAAM
I do want this!

MR.BEEF
Okay.

SALAAM
It's just.
(beat)
I don't know. I'm distracted.

MR.BEEF
I can see that.

Looks down.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
Do you know what I like to do when I'm
nervous?

What?

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
It's pretty easy.
(beat)
I just, smile and eat what's in hand.

SALAAM
What if you have nothing to eat?

MR.BEEF
You just smile.

55 INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Mr.Beef, Kale, Arya and some other students have lunch together. The TV plays in the background.

Pictures of Nicola Benedetti are shown as a voice-over announces her victory.

VOICE (V.O)

Nicola Benedetti, awarded many times before, as done it again! Tonight, she celebrates her victory of a Grammy for best classical instrumental solo. For the Marsalis; Violin Concerto; Fiddle Dance Suite!

Arya yells hysterically. Some people clap. Others laugh.

The environment changes, as a charismatic INTERVIEWER (30s) smiles at the camera.

INTERVIEWER

Hundreds of people march together, today to show their support to the LGBTQ+ community in Mumbai.

Grunts. General discomfort. STUDENT #1 (20s) puffs.

STUDENT #1

Turn that off.

The charismatic interviewer is substituted for a PROTESTER (20s).

PROTESTER (V.O)

We're here celebrating who we are. We come from different places. Different sexualities. Different genders. And this is a celebration of our being!

Mr.Beef looks around. Most of his students shake their head. Kale checks his phone, unbothered.

A 10 year-old YOUNG PROTESTER joins the interview.

YOUNG PROTESTER (V.O)

My sister is a lesbian and I love her more than anything. She deserves to be happy!

A gasp. Shock.

STUDENT #1
Disgusting! Can't believe they're
teaching this to children!

Silence. Kale looks up. Some students seem irritated by the
comment. Arya particularly.

ARYA
That's not very progressive.

Grunts.

STUDENT #1
They can do whatever they want but
leave the kids out of it! They're
impressionable! It sets a bad example.

Kale glances at Mr.Beef, shrinking in his chair.

ARYA
Children should know that this is
okay! They need to know there's people
out there like them!

STUDENT #2, (20s), intervenes.

STUDENT #2
Do you want them to get bullied in
school?

ARYA
They get bullied anyway!

STUDENT #1
Bullshit! This isn't natural behavior!
We should be sending these people to
the hospital!

Okay. That's enough. Mr.Beef swallows dry.

MR.BEEF
(gets up)
I've gotta use the bathroom.

Walks way. Most of the students don't notice him.

Kale follows him with his eyes.

ARYA (O.S)
There are dozens of science studies
that tell us it isn't possible!

STUDENT #1 (O.S)
That's a lie the media wants you to
believe!

56 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Mr.Beef. Stranded. Hurt. Leaning against the wall, in
silence.

Kale emerges from the doors. Faces him.

KALE
Hi.

Mr.Beef is caught by surprise. Plasters a smile.

MR.BEEF
It was very hot in there.

KALE
Yeah.

Awkward smiling. Kale doesn't really know how to show his
support.

KALE (CONT'D)
Do you wanna go get ice-cream?

57 EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY.

Mr.Beef and Kale stare at a beautiful view, eating ice-cream.

MR.BEEF
How did you find this place?

KALE
I used to come here with my friends.
We'd throw rocks at the cops.

Chuckles.

KALE (CONT'D)
You can see everything from here. All
the injustice.

Mr.Beef extends his arm.

MR.BEEF
Are those the slums?

KALE

Yeah. That's the Dharavi Slum.

Kale points ahead.

KALE (CONT'D)

See those buildings? That's where the rich people live.

They look like two completely different places.

MR.BEEF

God.

(beat)

Where did you live?

KALE

I used to live in a Village. I had a large family. Many siblings. Came here looking for work. Never went back.

MR.BEEF

What happened?

KALE

I found a couple of friends. Started earning money. Smoking. Then drugs.

(beat)

I eventually found my way back, but it too late by then. I had forgotten everything. I don't know where to find them.

Honest smile - Empathy. Mr.Beef relates to his struggle.

MR.BEEF

Last time I saw my family was at my father's funeral.

Swallows dry.

KALE

I'm really sorry-

MR.BEEF

He was a twat. I hadn't talked to him in years. He didn't even come to my wedding. In fact, none of them did.

KALE

Not even your sister?

MR.BEEF

It breaks my heart to this day. Last time we spoke she said some really hurtful things.

(beat)

I'm ashamed to admit, she still gets to me. She has a way with words.

Sighs. It was good letting it all out.

Kale grabs little rocks on the ground.

KALE

(throws the rocks)

Fuck them.

Sad smile.

MR.BEEF

Fuck ignorance.

58 EXT. CONSERVATORY - DAY.

Salaam and Zahid stand in front of the huge building.

ZAHID

You're gonna play, here?

Excitement. Nodding.

ZAHID (CONT'D)

But this is for rich people!

SALAAM

I know!

ZAHID

How much are they gonna pay you?

Hesitates. Mumbles.

SALAAM

They're still deciding on that. But probably a lot!

ZAHID

Totally! You'll probably be the next Feethoven or something.

SALAAM

You mean Beethoven.

ZAHID

Yeah. That's what I said.

(beat)

Do you think they'll give you fancy snacks?

SALAAM

Oh, yeah!

59 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK.

Crying. Desperation. Priya, with Asha on her lap, warms up milk on the heater. She struggles to keep standing.

Salaam follows her like a puppie. Worried. Confused.

Priya is weak. Her face looks sour. Her eyes puffy.

SALAAM

Mom-

PRIYA

Mom is taking care of your sister. She can't right/ now.

SALAAM

/I can hold her-

PRIYA

Go do your homework. I don't need any help.

Loses strenght. Takes support on a desk.

SALAAM

Let me take her-

PRYIA

I'M FINE!

Salaam backs off. Priya reconsiders. Calms down.

PRIYA

I'm fine. I need you to go do your homework.

Salaam gets ready to leave. She loses strenght again.

SALAAM

Mom-

Something's wrong. Priya throws Asha in Salaam's arms.

Runs to the sink. Starts puking violently.

CUT TO.

Priya lays on the bed. A big bucket next to her.

Salaam rocks Asha, as he feeds a cup of water to his mom.

SALAAM

You need to rest. I can make you *hing mari ukalo*. It always helps me when I'm sick.

PRIYA

(laughing)
You don't know how to do that.

Oh really?

SALAAM

Asafoetida. Black pepper powder.
Lemon, salt-

PRIYA

Very funny, but we can't afford it.

SALAAM

I have some money saved for teaching Edha!-

PRIYA

You're not spending your money/ for this!

SALAAM

/It's my money!

PRIYA

I won't let you do that.

Salaam gets up. Walks away.

PRIYA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

Puts Asha in her crib. Goes over to the wardrobe. Takes money out.

PRIYA (CONT'D)

Salaam, don't you dare!

SALAAM

(walking)
I can't hear you!

PRIYA
Salaam! Come back here!

Ignores her. Keeps going.

PRIYA
I'm serious! If don't come back here-
Salaam is now at the door.

SALAAM
I'll only take a second! I promise
I'll be quick!
Hesitance. He sure doesn't give up easily.

SALAAM
Please?
Smiles- okay.

PRIYA
No talking to strangers.

SALAAM
No-

PRIYA
If you need any help-

SALAAM
Ask your friends. Yes, I know!

Priya gives in. Proud.

PRIYA
Be careful.

Naughty smile.

SALAAM
You be careful!

Disappears.

Priya looks ahead. The milk is still heating. Salaam forgot to turn the heater down!

60 INT. DON BOSCO SHELTER - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT.

Salaam and Kale walk through the halls of the Don Bosco

Shelter.

Boys of all ages fill the corridors.

SALAAM

I can't believe you made me come.

KALE

Cmon. It's not so bad!

SALAAM

Half of these kids have glitter in their hair.

KALE

It's hair gel.

SALAAM

Whatever you call it.

KALE

We're here.

Kale opens a door.

YAACHANA (30s) and NAYAN (30s) chat inside a room.

YAACHANA

Salaam!

Salaam freezes. Something's wrong with that woman. The sari. The hair. Yaachana looks just like his mother!

61 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK.

Salaam holds the pills.

Priya comes inside.

PRIYA

Salaam?

62 INT. DON BOSCO SHELTER - BACK TO THE PRESENT.

Nayan stands in front of him now.

NAYAN

(extends his arm)

It's nice to finally meet you!

Awkward smile.

Nayan saves his arm for another occasion.

YAACHANA

Kale told us you play the piano. Would you like to show us?

63 INT. DON BOSCO SHELTER, PIANO ROOM - LATER.

Nervousness. Confusion. Salaam sits on the piano bench.

Kale, Nayan, and Yaachana watch him from their sits.

NAYAN

Whenever you're ready!

Sights. Yaachana smiles at him.

Salaam looks away. His mind spinning. Retrieving the memories.

64 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - FLASHBACK.

Priya facing him directly.

PRIYA

What are you doing?

65 INT. PIANO ROOM - BACK TO PRESENT.

Kale moves towards Salaam.

KALE

Everything alright?

Salaam looks back at Yaachana.

KALE (CONT'D)

You don't like them?

A moment of decision. Something stirring inside him.

SALAAM

Sorry.

Salaam ups from the bench and makes a break for it - straight out the door.

KALE

Salaam?

(to Yaachana and Nayan)

We'll be right back.

CUT TO.

66 EXT. DON BOSCO SHELTER - LATER.

Kale follows Salaam.

KALE

Salaam! Where are you going?

Holding tears. Gasping. Speeds further away.

KALE (CONT'D)

(garbs his arm)

Hold on!

SALAAM

(fights back)

Let go of me!

Sets himself free. Stops. Let's a tear slip.

Kale strokes his face.

KALE

Hey, you're alright. Whatever it is,
we can figure it out. Just tell me
what's going on.

SALAAM

I can't-

KALE

Please. Don't waste your chance. Let
me help you.

SALAAM

No.

KALE

No?

Salaam inches backwards. Scared. Angry.

SALAAM

I don't need your help! I'm fine!

(beat)

I was fine! Why can't you just leave
me alone!

Storms away.

67 EXT. TOY'S STORE - LATER.

Anger. Sadness. Salaam walks through the streets letting his feelings burn out.

He turns.

Something catches his eye.

We follow his gaze to see a TOY'S STORE.

Trough the window, we see SPIDER-MAN, highlighted, maybe just for him.

Salaam can't help staring at his reflection in the glass.

He's barefoot. His hair is greasy. His clothes are ripped and dirty, too short for his continuously growing body.

His thin, naturally tanned face seems darker as if his skin tone could be confused by the dirt filling his face.

His mouth trembles as he realizes; he's miserable.

Suddenly a hand on his back. Pryia emerges behind him. Lovely. Serene. Patient.

Salaam holds his tears. One. Two. Three- he lets it all out. All the shame. And guilt. And pain. And anger.

Anger takes over, as he punches the glass and speeds away.

Spider-man isn't there anymore. It never was.

68 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Mr.Beef and Kale walk inside the KITCHEN.

MR.BEEF

So, he just stormed away?

KALE

Yeah. It was really weird.

MR.BEEF

(opens the fridge)

Do you think he got scared?

Takes a beer out.

KALE
 (sits)
 Maybe.

Closes the fridge. Takes a cup. Goes over to a tap.

MR.BEEF
 (fills the cup)
 Was he angry at you? Did he seem
 different?-

KALE
 Not before the incident. He was fine.
 All sarcastic and funny. It looked
 like he was having a good time.

Silence. Mr.Beef sits down in front of Kale- hands him the
 cup of water. Kale drinks.

MR.BEEF
 Do you think we might've pushed him
 too hard?

KALE
 It could be. It took me a broken arm
 and two broken ribs to go back to
 school.

Stops. Frowns.

MR.BEEF
 God. What happened?

KALE
 I got hit by a car. I was kinda forced
 to come, in a sense. If I hadn't, no
 one would've taken care of me.
 (beat)
 I was pissed at first, but eventually
 I got used to all the rules. It was
 worth it though, it allowed me to
 discover my passion, the piano.

MR.BEEF
 Do you think Salaam might be feeling
 the same way?

Takes a sip o bear. Kale shrugs.

KALE
 I don't know. Maybe he didn't feel

like he was good enough.

Sad eyes. There's something else there. Mr.Beef empathizes.

MR.BEEF

I'll make sure to tell him how good he
is next time I see him.

69 EXT. HOME - NIGHT.

Salaam arrives home. His friends stare at him, in silence.

Tension. Something's wrong. The boy stops. Crushed.

Ahead of him, the piano cardboard. Destroyed. Torn to peaces.

SALAAM

Who did this?

Silence.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

WHO DID THIS!

Salaam looks around- Zahid and Arjun look down.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

(tackles Zahid)

Tell me who did it!

Salaam hits Zahid- Zahid accepts the punches.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch! Why didn't you do
anything!

Silence. Suddenly a laugh.

Stops.

SONU (O.S)

I didn't think you'd be that angry
about a piece of trash.

Turns.

Sonu smokes a cigarette peacefully.

SALAAM

(running)

I'll fucking kill you!

Salaam fails to tackle Sonu. Instead, he's thrown on the floor.

SONU

Wanna give it another go?

Grunting. Salaam gives it one more shot- fails again.

SONU (CONT'D)

You're getting more confident Salaam.
It doesn't look very good on you. It's
very disrespectful, really.

(beat)

It's one of your many new talents it
seems.

Sonu finishes smoking- steps on his cigarette.

Salaam spits blood.

SALAAM

(gets up)

You're a fucking pussy.

Sonu slams him against a wall. Hits his head.

SONU

How does sucking English cock taste
like hum? You must've sucked it pretty
well to get the opening on the Elite's
Musical! How much did you charge for
it?

Chuckles.

SALAAM

I'm not like you.

Sonu grabs him by the neck.

SONU

You're calling me a fucking faggot?

Salaam spits on his face.

Chuckle. No, he won't take that. Sonu holds Salaam's neck and
laughs.

SONU (CONT'D)

Does that hurt?

Salaam struggles to breathe.

SONU (CONT'D)
 You wanna know what hurts me the most?
 Betrayal.

Sighs. Gasps.

SONU (CONT'D)
 Now, just to make it clear. Were you
 gonna keep the money all to yourself,
 like you've been doing for the past
 month?
 (beat)
 Were you planning on moving away to
 Englishland with your new friend?

Salaam is venting. Everything is foggy. His head hurts. He
 feels his eyes shut down.

Zahid gets up.

ZAHID
 (walking)
 Sonu. Brother.
 (beat)
 Let him go, please.

Big smile.

SONU
 We're just having a friendly chat.

Hesitates. Gets closer.

ZAHID
 Please Sonu. Please?
 (beat)
 Sonu, please! Please leave him alone!

SONU
 Alright.
 (tuns)
 You don't mind going next?
 (slaps Zahid)
 Help out your friend!

Zahid falls on the tough ground.

Sitting. Holding his neck. Gaining his strength back. Salaam
 watches the terrorizing scene.

The other boys don't move.

Sobbing. Crying. Sonu is now on top of his brother.

SONU
(punches Zahid)
Are you a fucking faggot too?

ZAHID
(sobbing)
Sonu, please.

SONU
You're a little bitch! You need me.
You depend on me!
(beat)
You obey by my rules, do you
understand?

More crying. Zahid glances at Salaam. It's his only chance.
He has to go.

Salaam gets up and starts running.

SONU
Shit!
(gets up)
Come back here, you fucking pussy!

Salaam runs.

SONU (CONT'D)
Salaam!

CUT TO.

70 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
Salaam?
(beat)
What are you doing?

CUT TO.

71 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Running. Heavy breathing. Heart thudding in his chest.

CUT TO.

72 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

Salaam opens his hands. Pills fall on the floor.

CUT TO.

73 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

More running. Hyperventilating. Chest pain. Sobbing.

Salaam wipes his face with his hand.

CUT TO.

74 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA

What have you done?

Priya desperately tries to save all the pills she can.

CUT TO.

75 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Stress. Chills. Hot flushes. Salaam keeps going.

CUT TO.

76 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

SALAAM

(stops her)

No!

PRYIA

Leave it! What's wrong with you!

CUT TO.

77 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Now sprinting. Feet tingled. Hands shaking. Blood pounding in his ears.

CUT TO.

78 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

SALAAM
 (under his breath)
 No....no...You can't-

CUT TO.

79 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Intense emotions. Shivering. Gasping. He is stranded in this memory.

CUT TO.

80 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

SALAAM
 You have to stop. No-

PRIYA
 Salaam!

SALAAM
 No. You can't-

PRIYA
Salaam!

SALAAM
 You have to stop!

Priya slaps him. Pure desperation. Immediate regret.

But it works. He stops rambling. Now they just stare at each other.

CUT TO.

81 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Sweating. Dizziness. Vision disfigured. Salaam is now bawling his eyes out.

CUT TO.

82 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
 I know.
 (beat)

I know you're gonna die, if you keep taking them. You can't-

PRIYA
Who told you this?-

SALAAM
You can't-

CUT TO.

83 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Tension rises. Palpitations. Chest and windpipe closing up. Dry throat. Hysterical crying- GUILT. Salaam feels guilt.

CUT TO.

84 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
Salaam. Listen to me.

SALAAM
No. You lie!-

PRIYA
(crying)
When I arrived I was skinny and dark skinned.

SALAAM
Stop!

CUT TO.

85 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Stomach-churning. Lashes out. Yelling at the sky.

CUT TO.

86 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
I had small breasts- they're bigger now.

(beat)
My hips are larger too.

Crying.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
Demand for me has/ risen!

SALAAM
/Please, you can't!

CUT TO.

87 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Salaam stops. Exhausted. Sobbing. Letting his feeling fly free. Putting them out there.

CUT TO.

88 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
Baby, I've got no dreams for myself.
I'm living an awful life.
(beat)
But if get good costumers, you and
your sister will have a bight future.

CUT TO.

89 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Salaam doesn't want a bright future- he wants his mom.
Cries hysterically. Slowly crawls to the floor.

CUT TO.

90 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
Please. Don't worry about me, Super
Salaam.

CUT TO.

91 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Given up. Holding his knees. Shivering.

CUT TO.

92 FLASHBACK, SALAAM'S HOME.

PRIYA
You have to let me save you.

CUT TO.

93 EXT. STREETS OF MUMBAI - LATER.

Breaks down. Hides his head on his face.

FADE TO BLACK.

94 INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY.

Mr.Beef gives a class.

The secretary comes inside. Smirks.

SECRETARY

Mr. Lewis, would you mind clarifying something?

Mr.Beef walks towards her.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Do you know this child?

Mr.Beef follows her gaze to find Zahid. Sitting on a bench, facing the floor.

MR.BEEF

I know him. Thank you for letting me know.

Walks away.

SECRETARY

(under her breath)

Perv.

Mr.Beef is now ahead of Zahid.

MR.BEEF

Are you Salaam's friend?

Looks up. Tires eyes. Bruised face.

Shocking reveal.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

What happened?

(beat)

Where's Salaam?

95 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY.

Salaam walks around his old neighborhood. It hasn't changed.

Beauty shops. Food stores. Barbers. Women.

Dozens of women lining each block.

Salaam takes a look at the stalls. Food. Makeup. Bijou.

He notes, in passing, something in this particular stall.

A locket. A strange-looking locket.

Salaam can't believe his eyes.

VENDOR

You like it?

Looks up.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

30 rupees.

Silence.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

You know what? 20! Just for you!

Nothing.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

What do you think?

96 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER.

Salaam continues his journey with a paper bag on his hand.

He gets to a SHABBY BUILDING - his old home.

He looks ahead. Surprise.

Adira.

Lined against the door. Combining her hair. Laughing with her friends.

She looks back at him. He's taken back to...

97 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - FLASHBACK.

...Yelling. Crying. Adira stands behind Madam, frighten.

MADAM

Give her to me! I'll give her a good

life! Don't be selfish!

SALAAM (O.S)
 (crying)
 No...Please!

Madam grabs Asha and gives her to Adira.

MADAM
 She'll have a good life. You can go.
 (beat)
 Leave! I don't want you here!

CUT TO.

98 EXT. SALAAM'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - BACK TO PRESENT.

Adira looks at Salaam.

CUT TO.

99 EXT. CONSERVATORY - DAY.

Mr.Beef speeds through the doors in anger. Fajar follows him.

FAJAR
 Mr. Lewis?

Doesn't acknowledge him.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
 Mr. Lewis you can't leave! The
 students are counting on you!

MR.BEEF
 They'll understand-

FAJAR
 Mr. Lewis the concert is tonight. They
 need your guidance!
 (beat)
 I'm really sorry Salaam left, but you
 simply can't leave right now!

Nothing. Mr.Beef is determined.

FAJAR (CONT'D)
 You can't save him.

Stops.

FAJAR (CONT'D)

You've given him everything. If he isn't willing to take it.

Turns. Fajar makes a sad smile - compassion.

FAJAR (CONT'D)

You can't help him anymore. It's not working.

Swallows dry. Crestfallen.

MR.BEEF

I can't do that. I'm really sorry.

Walks away.

100 INT. ADIRA'S HOME - LATER.

Door opens. Adira and Salaam get inside her home. A tiny room. With a barred window and just enough space for a bed.

Adira walks towards the creaking bed. Asha lays on it.

ADIRA

(holds Asha)

You can't stay long. Madam won't like to see you.

SALAAM

You work for her now?

Gives him the baby.

ADIRA

(walks away)

I'll send her to school with my siblings, don't worry.

Prepares to leave.

SALAAM

You wanted to be a nurse.

Stops. Sadness in her eyes. Looks back.

ADIRA

Be quick.

CUT TO.

101 INT. ADIRA'S HOME - LATER.

Asha and Salaam lay on the bed. She plays with the locket. He admires her.

SALAAM

You like mommy's necklace? It's very powerful. Like magic.

(beat)

One day, it'll be yours. And then, you'll have super-strength, and super-speed, and super-breath. Maybe even invisibility! I'd like that. What do you think?

102 EXT. ROOFTOP - AFTERNOON.

Stress. Heavy breathing. Mr.Beef wonders in circles.

CUT TO.

Phone ringing. Mumbling.

MR.BEEF

Pick up...Please, pick up.

His voice trembles.

Voice-mail.

MR.BEEF

Shit!

Throws his phone on the floor. Grouts. Lays his head on his hands.

CUT TO.

103 EXT. ROOFTOP - AFTERNOON.

Mr.Beef sitting. Looking ahead. Tired. Sad.

Kale emerges from behind. Two ice-cream cups in his hands.

Sits next to him. Hands him one of the cups, smiles.

MR.BEEF

(takes it)

How did you find me?

KALE
This is my spot.

Mr.Beef fakes a smile. Takes the switchblade outta his pocket.

KALE (CONT'D)
I thought you'd lost it.

MR.BEEF
Salaam gave it back.

Chuckles.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
I don't even know why I was so sad in the first place. It would've made any difference.

KALE
You really don't get along anymore.

Nods, no. Takes a scoop of ice-cream.

KALE (CONT'D)
Can I ask, what did she told you? Last time you...

Sudden discomfort. Talking about it strings up memories. It makes him sad.

Takes a long breath. It's time.

MR.BEEF
She told me that I shouldn't have children because it would be a sin against God's will.

Gasps, sympathetic.

KALE
Whoa, I'm really sorry.

Sights.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)
You know, afterwards, I asked myself. What if she's right? What if not good enough?

Faces Kale.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

Even worse, I told that to my husband.
I told him, he wasn't good enough. And
I meant it.

(beat)

How could I be so selfish to believe
that a child isn't worthy of my love?

Kale takes a scoop of his ice-cream. Looks ahead.

KALE

How can anybody?

Mr.Beef finishes his cup and gets up.

MR.BEEF

Let's go back.

104 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY.

Salaam lays on the bed next to Asha, sleeping.

Music blasts outside.

Louder. Louder. Salaam opens his eyes. Smiles.

Asha holds the locket in between her fingers.

Suddenly the music changes.

Salaam sits down- there's something about the song.

He remembers - that's the song Priya used to sing. Wait? The
song? Rachita! The concert!

Salaam gets up and looks thought the window. The sun is
coming down. Shit! He's late!

He glances back at Asha- the locket! What now?

Salaam carefully takes the locket outta her hand.
Unfortunately, he's not careful enough.

Asha starts to cry. Strokes her face.

SALAAM

I'll be back, I promise!

(beat)

You just have to wait a little longer.

Salaam leaves the room and goes OUTSIDE.

Adira stands there, smoking.

Thank you, I'm sorry. Salaam grins at her.

She simply stares across to Salaam.

He disappears down the stairs.

105 INT. CONSERVATORY - NOON.

MONTAGE; Salaam runs as;

- PRE-SHOW; The chairs in the AUDITORIUM start to fill. Kale peeks though the curtain, nervous. Behind it, Arya and the other students get ready.

- TIE; Mr.Beef adjusts his tie in the mirror. Takes a deep breath. Light comes though his phone. He looks to the side, a message - KEVIN; Check your gmail.

- PRE-SHOW; Kale smokes inside the room. Arya makes him stop, aggressively.

- GMAIL; Mr.Beef goes over to his computer. He has a notification, a new Gmail. He opens it;

"Congratulations Kevin and Coleen Lewis! Your request has been accepted! You're officially fitting foster parents!"

He holds his breath. What now?

106 INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER.

Lights off. Silence. It's time for the show to start!

The students get on the stage. Kale freezes. Struggling to breath. Fajar notices from afar.

FAJAR
(gets closer)
What's wrong?

KALE
I'm not like them.

Chuckles.

FAJAR
That's you biggest disadvantage.
You've always been insecure.

KALE

Aren't you suppose to make feel
better?

Okay, fine.

FAJAR

When I first met you Kale, I knew you
had something. And you've proven
yourself. You've earned my trust.
You've worked for it. Harder than
anyone in this room. I trust that
you'll be great. But that only does so
much. You've gotta trust yourself.

CUT TO.

Kale starts playing. Rachita singing. Fajar and Mr.Beef smile
behind the curtains.

107 EXT. CONSERVATORY - NIGHT.

He did it. 11-year old Salaam, too short for his age,
succeeded.

Ahead of him. Just a few steps away- the conservatory.

Music trails outside. The song. The beautiful song. Sang by
the woman with the strange-looking locket. And Rachita.

Salaam starts walking towards the sound.

For a moment, he makes us think that he's coming in, but he
changes his mind.

Salaam goes over to the WINDOW. Again. He watches Rachita
sing.

Remembering;

-Priya singing.

-Priya smiling.

-Priya holding him.

Tears stream down his face as he is taken back to;

108 INT. SALAAM'S HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK.

...His home.

Asha. Crying. Yelling.

Priya. Laying on the floor. Unconscious.

The heater has been turned off.

The wooden bed. The ground. A baby bottle, opened. Everything is covered in blood.

Salaam drops the ingredients and runs towards his mother.

A mixture of milk and blood cover the floor.

He knells down. Gets closer. Shaking. Weeping.

Asha keeps crying. He holds her. Then tries to fix the broken bottle. One. Two. Three, times. Nothing. He gives up.

Then he cries. Embittered. Quietly. Then louder, heartbroken.

He lays his head on his mother's chest. Holds her. Not ready to let go.

His sister cries, uncomfortably crushed between them.

As he backs off to let her breath, he takes his mother's hand and makes it touch his face. It's a soft touch- a mother's touch.

He rocks the baby in between sobs.

His pure, childish soul, is broken into pieces.

FADE TO BLACK.

109 EXT. CONSERVATORY - NIGHT.

Kale walks outside. Stands in his usual spot. Lights a cigarette.

Suddenly something surprises him. He lets the cigarette slip through his fingers and fall flat in his shoes.

But this time he doesn't care. It's too important.

Salaam. Sleeping next to the window. Peaceful. Happy.

Relief. Kale strokes his hair and smiles.

110 INT. CONSERVATORY, AUDITORIUM - LATER.

Salaam and Mr.Beef sit on the piano bench, in silence.

Looking ahead. Conflicted.

SALAAM

I'm sorry. I let you down-

MR.BEEF

I'm not angry. I was worried about you.

Salaam looks away. Takes something out of his pocket. Hands it to Mr.Beef.

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

What is this?

It's the locket. The strange-looking locket.

SALAAM

It was my grandmother's. She gave it to my mom when she went away for work.

(beat)

When I was younger she used to tell me stories about it. She'd tell me about his magic. The powers it held. Super-Strength. Invisibility. Heat Vision.

(beat)

I could have all of that if I completed one challenge. Finishing school.

Faces Mr.Beef. Sad smile. Emotions take over.

SALAAM

I know it isn't true. The power's thing. All she ever wanted, was for me to have a choice. She never could. She was a whore. Nobody treated her like a person.

(sobbing)

But she was a person. She was my mom. And now she's dead.

(in Hindi)

My mommy's dead.

Crying. Mr.Beef holds Salaam.

MR.BEEF
It's alright. You're alright.

FADE TO BLACK.

111 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM, BATHROOM - LATER.

Salaam showers. Sitting on the bathtub. Water drawing through his face.

CUT TO.

112 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - LATER.

Salaam comes out of the bathroom. Dressed. Shiny. New.

Explores the room. The wardrobe. The drawers.

Inside one of them. He finds the switchblade - and a paper.

113 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - LATER.

Door opens. Mr.Beef comes inside with some food on a tray.

Salaam plays around with the switchblade in his bed.

MR.BEEF
There it is! What got me in so much
trouble in the first place!
(gets closer)
I got you Butter Chicken.

SALAAM
(sits down)
With tandoori!?

MR.BEEF
I don't know, you tell me.

Gives him the plate. Sits down. Salaam takes a bite. Big smile- approved!

SALAAM
(chewing)
Almost forgot! I have something for
you too.

Present surprise. Mr.Beef smiles.

From under his leg Salaam hands him the paper. Mr.Beef's heart drops.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

I found this on your drawer.
Personally, I didn't really like it.
It's a bit boring for a Valentine's
card. Should've added red hearts or
something. Did you even answer?

MR.BEEF

Well-

SALAAM (CONT'D)

This Kevin guy, I think he's in love
with you.

Faces Mr.Beef, innocent.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

Are you in love with him?

There it is. It's simple. Even an eleven-year-old can get it.

Mr.Beef sighs. Trembling. Shameful.

MR.BEEF

Are you angry?

Shrugs.

SALAAM

I just feel bad for your wife.

Chuckles. Naughty smile. Tension is gone.

SALAAM (CONT'D)

How is he like?

MR.BEEF (CONT'D)

He's pretty special. He's a Banker.
Really boring job, but somehow he
enjoys it. He loves Valentine's day.
Cussing. Hates chocolate cake.

(beat)

He's confident. Likes to make sure the
people he loves, know that he loves
them. And unlike me, he doesn't let
what people think get to his pride. I
think he'd really like you.

Big smile.

SALAAM

I still think the letter could be better. You don't like glitter?-

Takes it away from the boy's hands.

MR.BEEF

Alright, firstable, this isn't a letter, it's a poem! A very beautiful one, I might add. You're just too immature to understand the depth behind it-

SALAAM

Did he write about death?

MR.BEEF

It's not about death-

SALAAM

You just said it was!

Dramatically sighs.

MR.BEEF

I forgot you don't even go to school anymore. You probably forgot how to read. I pity you-

SALAAM

I was the best in my class!

MR.BEEF

Probably a grading mistake-

114 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - DAY.

Mr.Beef and Salaam next to each other. Sleeping, peacefully.

Mr.Beef opens his eyes. The light is blinding, almost heavenly.

Sits. Glances at his room.

Bags. Bags cover the floor.

Next to him - Salaam. Finally with a good night of sleep. Protected. Loved.

Sad smile. Mr.Beef strokes his face. It's gonna be hard to leave him.

A tear. Then two. Then a river.

Mr.Beef wipes his face with his hand. It's time.

115 INT. MR.BEEF'S ROOM - DAY.

Mr.Beef leaves his room. His luggage holding him back.

The switchblade stands on his bed-side table. The poem,
hanged on the wall.

We are finally able to read it;

Once when I was running,

from all that haunted me,

to the dark, I was succumbing-

to what hurt unbearably.

Searching for the one thing,

that would set my sad soul free.

In time I stumbled upon it,

an inner calm and peace;

and now I am beginning,

to see and to believe,

in who I am becoming-

and all I've yet to be.

Our favorite, Lang Leav.

Yours, Kevin.

116 EXT. CONSERVATORY - LATER.

Mr.Beef, Kale, Salaam, and Fajar say goodbye to Mr.Beef.

Tears. Tired eyes. Salaam hugs him. Mr.Beef accepts the hug
like he's been waiting for it his whole life.

Goodbye.

117 INT. CAR - LATER.

Mr.Beef gets in the CAR. Waves away.

Through his window he sees;

-Mumbai from a different perspective...

And suddenly...

118 INT. CAR- DAY.

...Salaam looking out the window.

Next to him, Kale. Singing. Exited.

KALE

Cmon, sing with me!

Laughs.

SALAAM

Do you have anything to eat?

KALE

WHAT?

SALAAM

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO EAT?

KALE

I can't hear you unless you're singing!

Salaam turns down the volume.

SALAAM

I need food!

KALE

We just had lunch, how can you be hungry already!

SALAAM

I'm a street kid, we're always hungry!

Chuckles. Kale looks for something on the compartments.

Salaam hesitates.

SALAAM (CONT'D)
I'm just nervous.

KALE
When I'm nervous, eating makes me puke-

SALAAM
Gross! Mr.Beef told me to eat when I'm nervous.

KALE
That's terrible advice, have you seen him?!

119 EXT. DON BOSCO SHELTER - LATER.

Ice-cream. Three full cups of ice-cream. Salaam and Kale sit on a bench. Ahead of them; The Don Bosco Shelter.

KALE
We've been here for two hours.
(beat)
The ice-cream is...no longer ice-cream.

Looks away.

KALE (CONT'D)
Why are we here?

Sad eyes. Silence.

SALAAM
I thought he'd show up.

KALE
Who? Mr.Beef?

Nods, no.

SALAAM
Zahid.

KALE
Your friend.

Nods, yes.

KALE (CONT'D)
Was he a real one?

SALAAM

The best.

KALE

I know what that's like. Does he know you're here?

SALAAM

I told him. He probably hates me now. Thinks I'm a pussy.

KALE

But you're not. You're not a pussy. They're the pussys.

Confusion, what?

KALE (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Your friends who stay on the streets- they're the pussys.

(beat)

Too afraid to become anyone. To have a future. A meaningful life.

(beat)

You're ambitious. There's a reason why you're here. Don't let them take this away from you, okay?

SALAAM

Okay.

KALE

(gets up)

Let's go.

They start walking towards the door.

Salaam stops. Turns.

A silhouette from the far.

Salaam gets closer.

Priya. Beautiful. Patient. Proud.

Salaam glows with happiness.

She grinds. Holds his hand.

They walk together into the door of the Don Bosco Shelter.

Then Priya stops. Let's go of his hand. It's time. Salaam has to face this on his own. He needs to move on.

He understands. Smirks - goodbye.

Disappears inside.