

UPPERCUT

Written by

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EXT. JACKSON HEIGHTS - DAY

SHIVA SINGHAVI (25) runs with pace on Roosevelt Avenue, an overly crowded, highly congested Broadway -- deep in the heart of Queens.

Jackson Heights includes in its ranks blacks, whites, and Latinos, but the restaurants Shiva runs past suggest Mumbai meets Shanghai.

Arms and legs pump against a frenetic, colorful backdrop. Signage and storefronts boast goods and services. Realtors and cell phone providers are joined by dollar stores and nail salons. Shiva runs past an Irish bar adorned with shamrocks and the national flag. A formal, copy shop-style banner declares, "Jack Dempsey Drank Here."

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Shiva works the register at his family's convenience store.

He is joined by his precocious sister, VIJAY SINGHAVI (12).

SHIVA

What's the capital of Cameroon?

VIJAY

Yaoundé.

SHIVA

What's the capital of Mongolia?

VIJAY

Ulaanbaatar.

SHIVA

Which element's periodic symbol is Nd?

VIJAY

... Neodymium.

SHIVA

Who's the all-time leader in triples?

VIJAY

Sam Crawford.

SHIVA

Ty Cobb. The Georgia Peach... Who the heck is Sam Crawford?

VIJAY

The all-time leader in triples.
Crawford had 309, Cobb had 295.

SHIVA

Interesting. What is...24 times 18?

VIJAY

432.

SHIVA

I was kidding. How'd you know that?

VIJAY

Daddy taught me. I know everything up to 30 times 30. Things get a little wonky after that.

SHIVA

I feel like you have the answers written down. Hands? Ears, maybe?

Shiva playfully grabs Vijay's wrists. He examines her palms, then flips her ears. Vijay squirms and worms.

SHIVA

Where are they? Under your feet?

VIJAY

Shiva, if you tickle my feet, I can promise you right now that they will never find your body.

SHIVA

... Okay, that's just weird. We're always having a good time, but then you take things way too far.

VIJAY

That's not true.

SHIVA

It is true. When I was trying to explain football rules to dad during the Jets game, we heard you muttering. You were like, "I want to see Josh Allen's rotator cuff torn off, like freshly shredded chicken."

VIJAY

I never said that. Never.

SHIVA

Exhibit B: Jets against Arizona. You wanted to have Kyler Murray's spinal column extracted. That way it could be -- and I quote -- "laid out with dishonor, upon the battlefield below."

A small smile forms on Vijay's face.

SHIVA

"We will scatter your innards and entrails across the river Hudson. Then, your family name will reek of loss, for generations eternal."

VIJAY

Innards and entrails are the same thing, ya butt. And you're taking it too far, not me.

SHIVA

Oh, stop. Me taking it too far would be calling up the FBI and being like, "I think my baby sister's the Freezer Man for the Genovese crime family. I stuck her hairbrush in a zip-lock bag in case you need to test some samples."

VIJAY

It was a harmless joke.

SHIVA

It was, but it was also kinda creepy. "If you tickle my feet, they will never find your body"? I mean, this is why we don't have cable.

VIJAY

That's...not why we don't have cable.

Her lower-class lament registers in Shiva's eyes.

VIJAY

Can I see your phone?

She takes it before he can answer. Types in six digits.

SHIVA

How do you know my password?

VIJAY

Eh. Everyone knows your password.

SHIVA

Dad does? Sunny does?

VIJAY

Is this that girl who's into you?

Shiva offers a glance as Vijay scrolls through pictures.

VIJAY

What's her name?

SHIVA

Priya.

VIJAY

Priya what?

SHIVA

Priya Modi.

VIJAY

Do you like her?

SHIVA

We're just friends.

VIJAY

But you like her.

SHIVA
... "Like" is a strong word.

Vijay studies Komal.

VIJAY
She has this almost sort of...
annoyed expression on her face.

SHIVA
It's just the flash.

VIJAY
... Is she Gujarati?

SHIVA
Who are you, the village matchmaker?

VIJAY
I'm just curious.

A beat.

VIJAY
What are all these tiny bumps on
her forehead?

SHIVA
It's human skin you fucking maniac!

He smiles as Vijay laughs with abandon.

A bell CHIMES on the door. SERGEY YAROSLAV (50) walks in.

YAROSLAV
Hello, hello. You are late with rent.

SHIVA
Mr. Yaroslav, with all due respect,
we're actually a month early, but my
dad says to hold off on paying since
the radiator's off. We're freezing.

YAROSLAV
Why is this my responsibility?

SHIVA
Uh, you own the store. That's sort of
the upside of us trying to buy you out.

Bells CHIME. A WOMAN enters, followed by RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ (20).

YAROSLAV
Where is your father now?

SHIVA
He's working.

YAROSLAV
Working where? Where is he working?
All I see is you two doing nothing.

SHIVA

He's moonlighting as a security guard. At the Citibank on 74th.

YAROSLAV

Your father's working security? Ha! He cannot provide security for his own family. How does he guard bank?

SHIVA

... With his life. Right? He guards it with his life, so maybe don't --

YAROSLAV

Listen, smart guy: Your father wants store? He gives me 150 thousand. You want heat? You give me 150 dollars.

He raps his knuckles on the counter, then leaves.

VIJAY (to herself)

What a dick.

Ramón gets in line behind Woman.

WOMAN

Can I get two Lucky 7's?

Vijay tears scratch-off tickets, Shiva accepts cash.

VIJAY

Good luck, Ma'am.

WOMAN

Thank you, baby.

She leaves. Ramón steps forward.

RAMÓN

You got them new Dutchmasters?

SHIVA

Nah, they haven't come in yet.

With confidence, Ramón points a gun at Shiva's chest.

RAMÓN

Empty the register; empty the safe.

Shiva quickly opens the register. He grabs cash, then change.

RAMÓN

I don't need no pennies; fuckin' open the safe. You gotta have a safe here.

SHIVA

Look, man; just take it easy. You'll get your money and be on your way. Just please put the gun down.

RAMÓN

Bitch, I will blast you. Open the fuckin' safe.

SHIVA
I don't know the combination.

RAMÓN
I'mma count to five.

Shiva's eyes narrow.

SHIVA
This is like the 20th time I've been held up. Who counts to five?

Ramón cocks the hammer.

RAMÓN
I'mma count to three.

SHIVA
I'm sorry; I'm just scared, okay? My sister's only twelve. We're scared.

Ramón shifts his gun so the barrel points at Vijay.

SHIVA
Are you serious?

RAMÓN
One...

SHIVA
I swear I'm not lying. I don't know the combination; only my dad does.

RAMÓN
Two...

An all-consuming anger wells up in Shiva. He lifts the partition, leaves his station, then advances towards Ramón.

Shiva punches him square in the stomach. Ramón falls to his knees as his gun rattles on the floor. Shiva lifts Ramón, then guides him into a wall of magazines.

Punches come fast, propping Ramón up like a hail of bullets. He bounces off the wall and back into fists. Ramón DROPS to the floor. Blood runs from his mouth.

EXT. STORE - NIGHT

The doors BURST open, Ramón's body as a battering ram. Shiva stops on the sidewalk, sees a parked NYPD Impala.

Still holding Ramón by the collar of his coat, Shiva drags him to the Impala. He adjusts his grip, then hoists Ramón onto the hood of the car.

Shiva collects himself as the ordeal comes to a close. Then, Officers MIKE MURPHY (25) and MARK TULLIO (30) exit a store, dinner in hand. They size up the scene, and a fast calculus has them in recognition of Shiva, a friend of the beat.

TULLIO

Get that citizen off the goddamn car.
I will not lose my job by going viral
on TikTok.

SHIVA

Kids are moving on from TikTok.

TULLIO

Shiva, I swear to God, you better have
five good reasons.

SHIVA

Well, I've got one great reason, so
why don't we start there?

TULLIO

Mike, help me get him off the car.
He's looking like Jesus on the cross.

SHIVA

Actually, he's Latino, so it would be
"Jesús" on the cross.

Shiva grabs Ramón's ankles, hauls him off the hood. Ramón
FALLS to the street, head hitting hard. Murphy winces.

Tullio snaps on latex gloves, kneels beside Ramón.

TULLIO

Look what you did to him. Why are you
making a mess an hour into my shift?

SHIVA

Can we back up?

TULLIO

(to Ramón)

Are you okay?

Blood shines on Ramón's lips. Tullio takes vitals.

TULLIO

Buddy, listen to me. Are you okay?

RAMÓN

Fuck you... Pig.

Tullio pats Ramón's chest, nods briskly.

TULLIO

You're okay.

Murphy turns to Shiva, addresses him with familial contempt.

MURPHY

You're a pain in my ass.

SHIVA

I hear Bobby got suspended.

MURPHY

Yeah, well he's a pain in my ass, too. Hey, let me use the bathroom?

SHIVA

I heard he wiggled out in public.

MURPHY

I gotta use the shitter. Please?

SHIVA

Use the Dunkin' Donuts bathroom.

MURPHY

It's not as clean as yours.

SHIVA

Yeah, because we don't let your filthy ass anywhere near it.

MURPHY

Come on; don't make me beg. I'll let you sit shotgun Saturday night.

SHIVA

... Get the key from Vijay.

MURPHY

Nice. Nice!

He heads for the store. A moment, and Tullio looks at Shiva.

SHIVA

He pointed his gun at her face.

TULLIO

Wait, he robbed you guys?

SHIVA

Yeah. You gotta take him in.

TULLIO

I thought he was just shoplifting. Let me get a statement from Vijay.

SHIVA

Thanks, man.

TULLIO

... How is she doing in general?

SHIVA

I dunno. Better than you and me.

TULLIO

Ain't that the truth.

He pulls out his cuffs in preparation for Ramón's arrest.

TULLIO

Listen, Shiva: I know this isn't your first rodeo, but save it for the ring.

SHIVA

Sorry. All I saw was a white light.

TULLIO

I know, but all kidding aside...
I don't want you getting hurt.

(beat)

Save it for the ring.

INT. GYM - DAY

Shiva takes a massive PUNCH to the face. He's sparring, mastering his craft in a boxing gym. BOXERS, TRAINERS, and CORNERMEN watch as they sit in folding chairs, along with DAMASCUS BARNES (50), the gym's co-owner.

Damascus Barnes, quite simply, is the Devil's only son.

Shiva's chin gets SMASHED. Neither he nor sparring partner MICHAEL BUFORD (25) wear headgear.

DAMASCUS

Let's go, Shiv! Come on, now!

In a nearby ring, RICH O'BRIEN (65) teaches a weekend WARRIOR. She SLAMS a surly-faced boxing dummy. It tips over and falls.

She then joins Rich, who's watching Shiva and Buford spar.

Shiva gets hit. His skittish CORNERMAN looks at Damascus.

WARRIOR

Are these guys professionals?

RICH

Junior welterweights. One's got all the talent in the world, but there are questions about his heart. The other one lacks talent, he might be the single most overrated fighter since Goliath himself, but the young man has never, ever quit.

Shiva gets WALLOPED. His co-cornerman, DARNELL KING (50), again looks to Damascus, who slightly shakes his head: "No."

WARRIOR

It looks like he's had enough.

Cornerman King stares at Damascus, who finally nods "Yes."

King walks to Damascus, who hands him a butterfly knife.

King WHISTLES. Shiva heads over to him, then offers his left wrist. It's taped to the small of his back.

Shiva was fighting with one arm tied behind his back. Only now do we see the full bodies of both Shiva and Buford.

Previously, we saw heads, necks, and shoulders, leading us to believe that Buford was the more talented fighter.

Cornerman King slashes through tape. Shiva is now unleashed.

The two fighters converge. Shiva finds an opening, then clocks Buford in the neck. Buford collapses. The crowd HOOTS/HOLLERS.

RICH

See that? Desire and effort will never stand toe-to-toe with God-given talent.

(beat)

Good work. Let's go again soon.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Water rains down on Shiva's head. Blood clouds the water.

INT. GYM - DAY

Post-shower, Shiva walks across the gym. Rich approaches.

RICH

How ya doing? I'm new here.

SHIVA

Nice to meet you. I'm Shiva.

RICH

Rich O'Brien. Listen, I like your game, but can I offer a suggestion?

SHIVA

Sure.

RICH

When you fight from a distance, you're good. You're real good. There are guys with much longer arms who could learn from you. But when you're fighting up close, there's a lot to be desired.

Rich takes out his wallet, finds a card, gives it Shiva.

RICH

If you wanna improve your close-range fighting, stop in and see Coach K. Coach K runs a tight ship in Woodside. When guys ask my advice, I send them to Woodside. Work on getting close, and also improving your footwork.

SHIVA

I mean, I'm from Queens, so maybe I'll drop by. I appreciate the tip.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Fighter LAWRENCE DAY (29) plays an NBA Jam arcade game. Enforcers VIRGIL GRANT (35) and STAN HARPER (35) await orders to mangle. A granite pair of off-duty gargoyles.

Damascus Barnes fiddles with a remote. He struggles to sync a flat screen TV with his laptop.

DAMASCUS

I asked for a state-of-the-art, gut renovation, they gave me paper thin walls. They gave me the Eames chair, but with Rent-A-Center electronics.

VIRGIL

That Samsung flat screen is baller.

DAMASCUS

This Samsung flat screen is broken. South Korean electronics companies like Samsung and LG cannot compete with Japan-based outfits like Sony and Mitsubishi, and that is a fact.

VIRGIL

Toshiba's weak; they're Japanese.

DAMASCUS

Toshiba? Nobody say nuttin' about no Toshiba, Virgil. We talking about the Mets and Yankees, you dropping bullshit about the Quebec Nordiques. Them niggas moved to Colorado when you was in diapers, and much like Toshiba International, they got shit to do with the conversation we having tonight.

STAN

But why are Japan's products better?

DAMASCUS

By virtue of the fact that them niggas are Japanese. South Korea's never done shit right beyond embryonic stem cells and the 1988 O-lympic Games. Meanwhile, you know why Japanese businessmen tend to kill themselves? It's cuz they care. They got too much pride to be shipping low-grade product, cuz they'd rather die than hear that a black man was struggling with his coaxial cables.

And with that, the flat screen comes to life. A clear security feed plays color footage. Darnell, Shiva's co-cornerman, appears in the locker room. He furtively pops open a locker.

STAN

Don't do it, Darnell! Don't do it!

Cash is stolen from a wallet. Damascus turns off the TV.

DAMASCUS

Bring 'em in.

Virgil leaves to round up bodies. Soon, Shiva and his team file through. Darnell, plus trainer KEITH CRIVELLO (50).

Damascus sits behind his desk. Shiva and Company sit in the seats which face him. Virgil, Stan, and Lawrence look on.

DAMASCUS

Someone's been hittin' the lockers.
He swings his butterfly knife, looks at Shiva.

DAMASCUS

You know sumpin' about this?
Shiva shakes his head.

DAMASCUS

Darnell, be honest: You need money?

DARNELL

No, Cus. Whose lockers did they get?

DAMASCUS

Crivello: African niggas perfected
the art of stealing, while Italian
niggas invented it. Now talk to me.

CRIVELLO

The only thing I've ever stolen was my
wife's heart.

Damascus looks back to Darnell. The butterfly knife swings.

DAMASCUS

Spread him wide.

Virgil and Stan approach, and Darnell stands up to protest.

DARNELL

Hold up, yo.

Virgil SLAMS him onto the table, holds him down. Stan pries
Darnell's mouth open. Fingers pulling teeth.

Damascus then lowers his knife down Darnell's throat.

DAMASCUS

People said Damascus Barnes got soft.
They said, "Cus found Jesus. He found
a wife. Once the baby was born, they
moved out of the ghetto and into the
suburbs faster than grandma can say
"New York City public schools."

(beat)

It ain't that I got soft, I got rich.
Now beat it, Darnell. You're done here.

He raises the knife. Darnell heads to the door, turns around.

DARNELL

Cus, I've been with Shiv before most.
But I've been with you my whole life.
(beat)

Are you saying I can't be his corner,
or that I can't come back to the gym?

DAMASCUS

Boy, you can't come back to Brooklyn.
(MORE)

DAMASCUS (cont'd)

(beat)

How foolish is you not to grasp that?
Can you come back to the gym? No, you
finger-licking, check-cashing retard!
I don't even want you in the borough!

He throws the knife. It STABS the wall. Darnell leaves.

DAMASCUS

Back to business: Red Glove Promotions
had a proposition for Bob Pollock. Bob,
like any conscientious promoter, heard
what Red Glove had to say. And that is
why, my dearly beloved, we're gathered
here today: Velvet dreams.

Damascus produces a velvet pouch. He places it on the table.

DAMASCUS

Lawrence... As fight night approaches,
you got friends and family excited to
show up at the Paramount. They'd love
to see you destroy Martinez, and dude,
I wanted to bear witness to that same
destruction. Only Red Glove, the
proposal they made? Beluga caviar for
everyone, kid. We's about to get paid.

(beat)

See, the revelation is that Red Glove
thinks both their boys are contenders.

LAWRENCE

And what are we?

DAMASCUS

Footnotes, nigga. Mere footnotes. You
wanna engage in some real talk? Shiva
sits on the filet mignon side of the
plate, while you down in the dog bowl.
You Alpo. You Kibbles. You a Eukanuba
nigga. Whatever the situation is, Red
Glove believes that between Patterson
goin' against Shiva and Martinez goin'
against you, one or both can land a
title shot within months. In light of
that, they don't need you two touchin'
'em up along the way. Now Shiva has a
future...but your future's passed. He
growin' stronga every day, you gettin'
tired every night. So Bob Pollock says
he won't let Shiva go down yet. It's
you he's offering as a sacrifice. You
can't be damaging their contender.

LAWRENCE

I'm not ready to be dropping down.

DAMASCUS

Ain't about you, Larry, it's about us.
It's about your family. So instead of
thinking of "me," try thinking of "we."

From the pouch, Cus takes out two stacks of cash: \$250,000.

SHIVA

If Lawrence isn't ready to fall, I'll
take the drop. When is it my turn?

Lawrence wipes a tear.

LAWRENCE

Cus, I'm not ready to lose.

DAMASCUS

You done lost 15 times in 30 fights.
For a nigga who ain't ready to lose,
you got a strange way of showing it.

(beat)

Your job is to fall down in the 4th.

LAWRENCE

Do I got a choice?

DAMASCUS

You know you don't, or you wouldn't
be crying. See how that do, soldier?

Lawrence nods his head.

DAMASCUS

We good?

LAWRENCE

We good.

Damascus smiles.

DAMASCUS

We...are great.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Damascus drives Shiva in a red, serpentine Ferrari.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY

Rich O'Brien, the boxing coach, sets flowers at a headstone.
The name on the stone reads, "Alexander." 2/7/79 - 3/17/99.

EXT. BATTERY PARK - DAY

The sun sets at the American Merchant Mariners' Memorial.

Shiva and Damascus observing in silence, south of Pier A.

DAMASCUS

It was created by an artist named
Marisol Escobar. She was originally
from Ecuador, but moved here in the
1950's. Ain't nobody know this spot.

SHIVA

What is it? It's amazing.

DAMASCUS

In the middle of World War II, a Nazi U-boat tore up an American Merchant Marine vessel. The Marines we see here, they held onto the ship as it sank. But as they was drowning, the Nazis took photographs.

(long beat)

Not that I'm expecting life jackets and inner tubes from a Nazi, but still.

SHIVA

Look how his face disappears when the water level rises. It's crazy.

Statues shout for help as they pull a man from the ocean.

DAMASCUS

Shiv, with D off the team, Crivello don't wanna serve as trainer no more. He don't wanna start over with a new cornerman. Not this close to the fight.

SHIVA

... He doesn't wanna start over with a new corner this close to the fight, but he's okay with dropping off this close to the fight?

DAMASCUS

Crivello's at odds with how you work.

SHIVA

I work hard.

DAMASCUS

Most definitely. But trainers, they view fighters in the same way horse trainers view thoroughbreds. Even if the horse or the fighter is a great athlete, trainers wanna feel like you is working their program. They need to feel like you is under their tutelage. Crivello's big-time. He a ESPN nigga. He a Twitter nigga. You gotta genuflect with a man like that, because their egos is fragile.

SHIVA

I work really hard.

DAMASCUS

Harder than a nigga at Monticello. But working hard or training hard don't mean you're studying hard. Bottom line? You don't watch tape.

SHIVA

When I analyze, I overanalyze.

DAMASCUS

I'mma get you an ace transition team
so you can stay in tune for Patterson.

SHIVA

Oh, come on. If I don't even have a
team, why can't I take the dive and
score my payout?

DAMASCUS

Because, you ign'ant mothafucka! That
faggot never wins, and you never lose!

Shiva recedes.

DAMASCUS

16 wins and 0 losses. The only thing
Shiva Singhavi knows how to do in life
is win, yet the only thing he wanna do
in life is lose.

SHIVA

We go through this every time. If I'm
so good, get me a title fight. Please.

DAMASCUS

Quit asking and quit dreaming, son.
Take a look in the mirror tonight,
here's what that mirror's gonna say:
"Sometimes you good, most times you
great, but you ain't legend. Uh-uh."

SHIVA

I thought 16 and 0 was impressive.

DAMASCUS

The junior welterweights alone have
22 unbeaten fighters in the top 100.
Even if you was one of ten, let me
know when people want your business.
(beat)

Understand: America ain't ready for
no Hindu boxer. Who gonna be in your
fan clubs? Who gonna drop PayPal for
online merchandise and fine apparel?

SHIVA

If you won't give me a shot at the
title, fine. But then let me take the
250K so we can own our store and I can
start my life. What am I gonna do, go
to college at 30? Graduate at 34?

DAMASCUS

Shiva, keep winning, you'll rise in
stature, and Vegas won't blink when
high rollers bet on your loss. Show
some faith, and have some patience.

SHIVA

Patience? I'm not 13 anymore.

DAMASCUS

Right. You're 25, and still butting heads with me. You've got ambition to spare but no perspective at all.

With wide eyes, Damascus makes his appeal.

DAMASCUS

We are not mere mortals. There is a preternatural, transcendent gift that you and I have been given. It ain't from Jesus but from Genetics. This is some Charles Darwin/Gregor Mendel shit we dealing with. Daily.

SHIVA

... I gotta go. I need money and I want a match-up with Whittaker. If you wanna talk about that, awesome, but otherwise, I gotta go.

DAMASCUS

You'll go when I'm ready to dismiss. You need money. You want a match-up with Whittaker. But you ain't takin' no PED. You ain't taking no EPO. Singhavi, you ain't trying.

He counts off ten bills from an obnoxious wad of cash.

DAMASCUS

This is 1,000 even. Deposit 500 hundred in the bank and spend the other five on your sisters... Or maybe just spend all of it on Sunny.

SHIVA

Sunny has a job.

DAMASCUS

Not one that pay her what she worth.

SHIVA

... Sunny has a job.

DAMASCUS

Know what else your sister has?

(beat)

Your sister's got that "good hair."

Damascus extends the money. Shiva doesn't take it.

DAMASCUS

Don't be a hero, Singhavi. Never let pride get in the way of dinner. Your family needs this money more than Damascus do.

A moment. Shiva snatches the money, then walks away.

Damascus considers the sunset and sinking ship.

INT. SHIVA'S APT - NIGHT

Shiva's shoulder, wrapped in ice. He watches a pot on the stove. Shiva soaks his badly-swollen hands in the hot water.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Eggs sizzle on a grill. Shiva waits for takeout with friends RON ARCENEUX (29) and HAROLD BAKER (26).

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Later, they eat on the steps of a brownstone. Across the block, 200 feet away, KEVIN BASS (40) scolds his son, BILLY BASS (10).

Shiva watches as the confrontation begins to escalate. Classical MUSIC begins. Beat cop GREG FALLARINO (30) approaches.

Shiva sees Kevin Bass, a black father, slap his son Billy. He motions for Harold and Ron to watch. Fallarino asks Bass to stop. Bass turns, sees that Fallarino is a cop.

The men converge, being to argue. Shiva watches, then looks away.

The transition back to Fallarino and Bass now shows the men struggling for control of Fallarino's gun. We don't see Shiva or his friends. The gun FIRES. Shiva, Ron, and Harold run for cover.

Bass overpowers Fallarino, then sees why he has the upper hand: It's because Fallarino stopped fighting. A look of fear is on the latter's face. Bass follows the sight line, and sees his son lying flat on the sidewalk. He's gasping and pleading for air.

Billy Bass dies with his eyes wide open. The MUSIC stops cold. In the distance, and ambulance wails.

INT. STORE - DAY

Shiva arranges the cooler. His father, RAM SINGHAVI (55), helps a MAN at the register. Man drops candy on the counter.

MAN

These are value packs from Costco.
You can't break them up for resale.

RAM

What are you saying I can't? I have.
This is what you are showing me now.

MAN

You can't sell these.

RAM

I'm sorry, Sir.

MAN

Don't be sorry. Fucking stop.

RAM

... You work at Costco?

MAN
That's not the point.

RAM
You own stock? Costco stock-shares?

MAN
Listen to what I'm saying. It's
illegal to break these up for resale.
You can be prosecuted for this.

RAM
Acha? This sounds like big problem.
(innocently)
Maybe you should call your Congressman.

MAN
Fuck you.

RAM
Maybe I should call my Congressman.

MAN
Fuck you.

Man drops the candy, leaves. Shiva walks past Ram.

RAM
I want to talk.

SHIVA
Let's talk when we get home.
I don't wanna argue in front of any
customers.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Shiva enters his family's small, three-bedroom apartment.

He stops at his father's open bedroom door.

Ram cries as he looks at a framed picture of his late wife. He
then sees Shiva. After a beat, Ram gets up, heads to the kitchen.
Shiva follows. Once there, Ram works on a leaky sink pipe.

RAM
You do not love Vijay.

SHIVA
I do love her. I like her, too.

RAM
You don't. I can tell.

SHIVA
You're right. I don't love her.

RAM
Okay, maybe you do. You like spending
time with her, theek hai? So, I think,
you love Vijay, but you don't care
whether or not she is safe.

SHIVA

I don't know what I was thinking.

RAM

If they have gun, you stop everything.

SHIVA

Dad, I see a gun once a year. I saw a goddamn shooting last night.

RAM

Why do you use a bad language?

SHIVA

I dunno. Maybe if I were in college, they could teach me some nicer words.

RAM

College does not make you smart.

SHIVA

It doesn't make you dumb, either.

RAM

Studies won't teach you anything. Boxing will teach you everything. You have the big plan, college boy, but sometimes you are a real stoo-pid.

SHIVA

Dad, stop calling me "college boy."

RAM

This is not India. It's free country.

SHIVA

Okay, first off, India's a free country, too. Also, you can't call me "college boy," because out of the three of us who are of age, you're the only person who's ever been to college. Actually, since you have an M.D., you've been to college twice. That's a little twisted.

RAM

Do you love your sisters?

SHIVA

Almost as much as I love you.

RAM

Don't make fun. I may speak with an accent...but I don't think with one.

Ram turns on the water. The pipe still leaks.

INT. VIJAY'S ROOM - DAY

Shiva KNOCKS on Vijay's door, enters. In bed, she reads.

VIJAY

Hey. Madison Square Garden had a sale today. Rangers tickets were buy one, get one, so I got four.

SHIVA

Why?

VIJAY

Why not? I'm the only one of my friends who's never been to MSG.

SHIVA

I just don't want to go to the Garden unless we have top-shelf seats. I'll see them in Brooklyn, just not at MSG. The thing is, you're never willing to see the Islanders.

VIJAY

That's because the Islanders are awful and their fans are even worse.

She flips on her side. Shiva sits at her desk, produces the cash Damascus gave him. Sticks \$100 bills in her piggy bank.

SHIVA

Look: You wanna go to Madison Square Garden cuz you're all about Stanford White's architecture. I get it. You wanna go to MSG and see your team play hockey. I get it. But I'm so close to breaking out, okay? I don't want us in the cheap seats when I'm getting close.

VIJAY

The expensive seats aren't better.

SHIVA

Well, they are. They have padding.
(beat)
They also put a napkin under your drink. It gets pretty out of hand.

VIJAY

... Shiva, Daddy's been crying.

SHIVA

I know; I saw. But there's nothing wrong with crying. It's a release.

VIJAY

He usually cries on D-Day, though.

SHIVA

So talk to him about it.

VIJAY

He's lonely. I don't know what to do.

SHIVA

Just keep being a sweetie-baby.

VIJAY

I'm serious.

Shiva holds on her.

SHIVA

Let me ask you something: When did all the sweetie-babies get together and decide to make you their Queen?

VIJAY

... You're thoughtful; you know that?

SHIVA

I get it from my sister.

VIJAY

Which one?

He gets up, then heads out.

SHIVA

You'll never know.

VIJAY

Which one?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Shiva's sister, SUNNY SINGHAVI (26), speaks with a JUDGE.

Shiva's in the gallery as Sunny, a public defender, lands jabs. As Sunny walks back to to her client, she winks at her brother.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Sunny scarves down a sandwich as Shiva sits across from her.

SUNNY

What did you do last night? Are you having fun or just training?

SHIVA

I hung out with Priya Modi.

SUNNY

Yeah, I don't like that girl.

SHIVA

Interesting. What don't you like?

SUNNY

Just her whole general aesthetic.

SHIVA

She called me out for being her only guy friend with less than four pairs of pants.

SUNNY

Oh, I see -- she thinks she's better than you.

(MORE)

SUNNY (cont'd)

Or rather, she knows she's not better than you, she feels badly about herself...so she'll pass it on, and make you feel bad about yourself.

SHIVA

Maybe. Three pairs is pushing it.

SUNNY

Not maybe. No maybe. That woman is a back-office bitch at Goldman, she is mean, and it is not morning sickness drawing that conclusion. That girl's back office as fuck, yet she's gonna try to diminish you? I don't think so.

SHIVA

Hold on.

SUNNY

Nah, Shiva -- they're the ones who need to hold on. You're the one going places.

Shiva smiles.

SUNNY

What are you eating these days?

SHIVA

Complex carbohydrates, simple proteins...little bit of fruit.

SUNNY

What about Soylent? Are they giving you that Soylent shit? Don't drink that.

SHIVA

What do you know about Soylent?

SUNNY

I'm having a baby; I read about food.

(beat)

You should be eating lots of red meat. Red meat and eggs yolks. You know all that horrible Monsanto shit? Eat that.

(beat)

People want non-GMO? You need GMO-GMO.

Shiva smiles. Sunny pushes a brown paper bag towards him.

SUNNY

I got you a present.

SHIVA

You know I don't like surprises.

SUNNY

I didn't say it was a surprise, dippy; I said it was a present. It's really good fried chicken.

SHIVA

I can't eat that.

SUNNY

I spent 20 dollars on it.

SHIVA

Offer it to your clients.

SUNNY

Fuck my clients. This is for you.

(beat)

I don't buy KFC for anyone, you know.
I'm not saying twenty dollars is a
ton of money, but like...I could've
spent some time in Sephora instead.

SHIVA

Oof. You should've gone to Sephora.

SUNNY

Yeah, I realize that now. Thank you.

(to herself)

I could've picked up a few things.

SHIVA

If it makes you feel any better, I
got a present for you, too.

He produces a stack of cash.

SUNNY

Put that away; are you crazy?

SHIVA

I want you to bet on a fight.
Carlos Martinez over Lawrence Day.

SUNNY

... Do you give money to girls?

SHIVA

What?

SUNNY

I'm just curious if this is how you
do it.

SHIVA

Uh, I don't like where this is going.

As if breaking attorney-client privilege, Sunny looks around.

SUNNY

When you give a girl money, when you
give me money, have a little class
and put it in a greeting card.

SHIVA

Oh, for fuck's sake.

SUNNY

We are not simple people. We may live
simply, but we are not simple people.

SHIVA

A greeting card just seems so formal
and distant. What about an envelope?

SUNNY

Oh, honey, no.

SHIVA

What's wrong with an envelope?

SUNNY

"What's wrong with an envelope?"

SHIVA

Yes, what's wrong with an envelope?
You put cash inside and hand it over.

SUNNY

You're not an Irish immigrant trying
to curry favor with Tammany Hall and
fucking Boss Tweed. You're my brother.

(beat)

You need a girlfriend so you'll be
relaxed and loosey-goosey in the ring.
The first pretty girl you see from
today on, I want you to say five words
to her... "Do you have a boyfriend."

SHIVA

That's a little too forward.

SUNNY

It's not. The minute a girl hears,
"Do you have a boyfriend," this is
what happens: She thinks, "Oh, my God.
This guy's hitting on me." Then, three
things happen: 1) She has a boyfriend,
so she'll tell you. 2) She doesn't
think you're cute, so she'll lie, and
say she has a boyfriend. 3) If she says
"No, I don't have a boyfriend..." Well,
that means she's willing to consider
you. As long as you don't say anything
too stupid the rest of the way...you've
got yourself a chance at the dance.

SHIVA (repeating)

Do you have a boyfriend.

SUNNY

Do you have a boyfriend.

SHIVA

(beat)

Take the money. Put it on Martinez.

SUNNY

I can't afford to bet on sports. If
you can, go for it, but as a family,
we can't afford to bet on sports.

SHIVA

... We can't afford not to.

SUNNY

Shiva, the world is a horrible place. I've got orchestra seats, and it's a dirty Petri dish that's filled with too much Nitrogen, too much CO2, and not enough Oxygen. It's dirty, and I don't want us making it dirtier.

(beat)

Gambling's not a path to travel down. Even when you've got that inside tip.

Shiva looks at a mounted TV. The news shows photos of father Kevin Bass and his late son, Billy Bass. Billy's young smile, replaced by crime scene footage.

SHIVA

If the world is a horrible place, and it's this bacteria-filled Petri dish, then why do you want to bring a baby into some dirty, disgusting world?

Sunny shrugs, as if the answer is obvious.

SUNNY

So she can clean it the fuck up.

EXT. HUDSON HEIGHTS - DAY

Nine flights of stairs connect Overlook Terrace. It's the highest natural point in Manhattan. Shiva runs up and down.

EXT. HOUSE - DUSK

Rich rings the BELL on a rickety home. MEG KWAN (75) appears.

She looks at Rich for a moment, then closes the door on him.

Rich sighs, then walks away. A moment, until the door opens up. PATRICK "QUIET" KWAN (75) presents. Kwan never speaks, and his facial expression never changes. Rich walks back up the steps.

RICH

Long time, Kwan. Can I come in?

Kwan doesn't move.

RICH

Bob Pollock and Damascus Barnes gave me a job last month. It's good work.

(beat)

Maybe it's not "good" work, but it is honest work, and now there's an opening for a trainer. Cus has a kid who's 16 and 0. He's ranked 25th.

Kwan's blank stare.

RICH
 I've seen the kid fight. Not much, but
 enough. I know what he can do. If they
 give me a fair shake...I think he'll
 pick me. But he still needs a cutman.
 (beat)
I need a cutman.

Rich looks down.

RICH
 I know we never brought home a title or
 that Vegas money...but I do believe you
 valued my friendship.

Rich looks back up.

RICH
 I know I treasured yours.

Kwan holds on Rich with a shark's dead eye. Then, he opens
 the door. Rich enters the house.

INT. SHIVA'S APT - NIGHT

Shiva watches two big box TVs placed side-by-side. On one TV,
 he studies Hector Camacho. On the other, Sugar Ray Robinson.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shiva walks up to a storefront promoting "Coach K's Corner."
 He peers inside, but is confused with what he sees. He steps
 back, then checks the sign again.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Shiva enters. KERIANNE WATSON (25) is a black woman in charge
 of tiny DANCERS. Young children in tutus and pointe shoes.

SHIVA
 Hi.

Dancers look at the handsome stranger. A Dancer, to herself:

DANCER
 Lawd, thank you.

SHIVA
 Um... I think I might've come at the
 wrong time. I'm looking for Coach K?

KERIANNE
 I'm Coach K. Kerianne Watson.

SHIVA
 ... Oh. You're "Coach" Kerianne.

KERIANNE
 Dance coach. Ballet, salsa, foxtrot...

Shiva nods meekly.

KERIANNE
Who referred you?

SHIVA
Uh, Rich? Rich O'Brien?

KERIANNE
Oh, shoot. Any friend of Rich is
an enemy of mine.

Shiva smiles.

KERIANNE
What'd he send you for?

SHIVA
I need to work on my footwork. Um, I
like to box. I'm not that good... I
mean, I am, but I want to get better.

KERIANNE
Okay. So you like, what, box on the
weekends?

SHIVA
Uh, yeah. Something like that.
(beat)
He also said I need to work on...

KERIANNE
Don't be shy. If we're gonna work
together, I need to know what we're
working on. What are we working on?

SHIVA
... Getting close?

Giggles from Dancers.

KERIANNE
I'll check my schedule and call Rich.
In the meantime, tell him I said, "Hi."

SHIVA
Okay, cool. I appreciate it.

He stands there for a few awkward seconds.

KERIANNE
You need parking validated or just...?

SHIVA
Sorry.

He moves to leave, stops, sthen turns around.

SHIVA
Do you have a boyfriend?

Dancers gasp.

SHIVA

Oh, man... This is your place of work,
and that was incredibly inappropriate.

KERIANNE

It was, but if you're gonna come at me
like that, you gotta leave it out on the
table a minute. Damn sneak attacks don't
give a girl a chance to think.

SHIVA

Sorry. It's not something I do a lot.

KERIANNE

Oh, really? We thought you were a
regular Don Juan.

Dancers laugh.

KERIANNE

Figured you were some kind of Casanova.

Dancers, louder.

KERIANNE

Thought you were channeling Lord Byron.

SHIVA

A'right, you're killing it now.

Having taken a break on Kerianne's dud, Dancers laugh again.

DANCER

Ask her if she has plans Saturday.

KERIANNE

Hey-hey; I do have plans Saturday.
More importantly, mind your business.

DANCER

You got no plans tonight, though. I
heard you on the cell. Coach has got no
plans tonight, and she gon' be sittin'^r
at home, watchin' her programs.

KERIANNE

Debbie?

DANCER

She got no plans. And if she say she
do, ain't t nuttin' but a flat-out lie.

KERIANNE

Debbie.

DANCER

Coach K gonna be sittin' by her cell,
and she ain't got nuttin' to do,
besides waiting on yo' text messages.

KERIANNE

Debbie!

Dancers have a final laugh at their instructor's expense.

SHIVA

Uh, I'm actually headed to a friend's place right now? He's going to work after that, but you know that Chinese place down the block? Gourmet Buffet?

KERIANNE

Sure. People rave about it.

SHIVA

Yeah, it's great. So, I actually get free meals there cuz we're family friends with the owner. I know it's short notice, but if you wanna stop by at 8, it...you know, might be fun. We can just stuff our faces for free.

KERIANNE

Hm. 8 o'clock... Sure. Might be fun.

INT. GOURMET BUFFET - NIGHT

Shiva and Kerianne help themselves to bowls and trays of food.

SHIVA

How many people do you teach a day? I've never met anyone our age who runs their own business.

KERIANNE

80 people come through most days. My family had a decent amount of money growing up, so that's one reason I have my own business. Not the only deciding factor or anything, but... it's probably reasons one, two, three, and...I don't know, five?

SHIVA

What's the fourth reason?

KERIANNE

Four? Honestly...? I'm brilliant and hard-working. That's the true secret of my success.

SHIVA

Hm. My family didn't have any money growing up, so that's one reason I don't have my own business. But maybe one day when my ship comes in...

KERIANNE

She'll understand what kind of guy you've been?

SHIVA

We'll see. I'm not holding my breath.

KERIANNE

So, what do you do? Terrible question, but where do you see yourself in five years?

SHIVA

Dude, what is this, a job interview?

Kerianne sets down a salad fork and picks up her steak knife.

KERIANNE

Kind of, yeah.

SHIVA

I have zero idea where I see myself in five years. I'll probably end up getting bludgeoned to death by a Viking in America's upcoming race war... What about you?

KERIANNE

Franchises. I want to save enough money, establish a studio in each borough, and hire the best teachers. The idea is to pay them well, and treat them even better.

SHIVA

That's awesome. It's admirable.

KERIANNE

It's just a dream. What are the odds it happens...? Eh, pretty good, given help from the parentals, but still.

SHIVA

It's not just a dream, it's a goal.

KERIANNE

We'll see... But what's your deal? Business school? Medical school? Breaking hearts, then mending hearts?

SHIVA

To be honest, I'll settle for school-school. I really want to go to college and get a degree. Right now, I'm just kind of going through that mid-20s life crisis.

KERIANNE

But what do you do? Other than having Rich send you to me so I can teach you how to fight like a man under the guise of -- what was it -- "footwork"?

SHIVA

Wait, what?

KERIANNE

Rich sends me pug-nosed boxers, not pretty-boy thinkers.

SHIVA

Not for nothing, and I know I'm not the most beautiful boy in the world, but do I seem like the type of guy who needs to be set up to meet a girl?

(beat)

I fight. I'm in the same boat as everyone. All I do is fight. It's a struggle and a rat race for everyone, no matter what you do. And part of the reason I don't like mentioning what I do is because once I start talking about it, it's hard to stop. And most of it is me complaining, which is never a good look.

KERIANNE

I get that. Life is hard, right? I think that... Life is about being here, and wanting to be there. And at some point, people just have to kind of...I don't know what the right word is, but you have to sort of reconcile the fact that it's okay to not know what you want to do.

SHIVA

Totally. But I know I want a degree.

KERIANNE

That's great, but don't pressure yourself. College isn't for everyone.

SHIVA

It definitely is for me. It's not like I'm good with my hands or anything.

KERIANNE

You're not good with your hands? Interesting. Filing that one away.

SHIVA

I take that back. I actually think I'm great with my hands. Others...disagree.

KERIANNE

When you mentioned that you're family friends with the owner, how do you know him? Is he your parents' friend?

Shiva raises an eyebrow.

SHIVA

Why do you assume it's a 'he'?

KERIANNE

Impressive. Food for thought... Speaking of which, you mentioned eating clean? That's great. I don't eat healthy or clean at all, ever, but it's cool that you do... So is this a cheat day? Do you work out?

SHIVA

I do. I try not to get too crazy with weights so I can stay flexible. A lot of running, which I'm not a fan of. But weightlifting is a necessary evil.

KERIANNE

Why? To keep up with the competition?

SHIVA

To keep up with the competition. 100%, just to keep up with the competition.

KERIANNE

Cuter, taller, richer, I guess... And by the way: Those things matter. Cute, tall, and rich? Those things matter a lot... Just not to me.

SHIVA

Cool. It wasn't really on my radar, but cool... Working out to keep up with the competition -- at least for me -- it's not about cuter, taller, wealthier.

KERIANNE

Then what's it about?

SHIVA

Bigger, stronger, faster... New topic: how's your food?

KERIANNE

It's great. As good as advertised. I was going to ask if you wanted to split our meals half-and-half, but some people are weird about sharing.

(beat)

Are you weird about sharing?

SHIVA

I hope not. I have two sisters and one bathroom, so it's all about ongoing, protracted negotiations. It's like trying to achieve peace in the Middle East. Everyone's always fighting and blaming and nothing gets done. It's been an entire lifetime of us warring over who did what, and who did it first. Not that you asked, and this may be TMI, but they're Israel, and I'm Palestine... I should probably talk to someone about it.

Kerianne studied him as she gently patted her hair.

I think you just did.

A WAITER (30) approached, then topped off their glasses.

SHIVA

Thank you.

KERIANNE

Wow. A guy who acknowledges the waitstaff. Imagine that.

SHIVA

Wow. A guy who gets credit for having a shred of human decency. Here we are.

KERIANNE

You'd be surprised by how many guys are rude to the waiter. Sometimes they're just indifferent. Like they're not even there. It's almost worse.

SHIVA

I am surprised. You must have dated a lot of guys... Or maybe... Not enough?

KERIANNE

Probably the latter. I just read a lot of horror stories from women online. Mainly on Reddit when I can't sleep.

SHIVA

Still, you're obviously really savvy about things.

KERIANNE

Yeah, no. Not at all. I've actually never even been on a date. I mean, I've had a boyfriend, but it just sorta came together in college. We never went on a formal, planned date or anything... What about you?

SHIVA

Same deal. One girlfriend, but you're the first person I've ever had dinner with. Technically, this isn't a date, obviously, but I still want you to have fun... What was your boyfriend's name? What did you like about him?

KERIANNE

His name was Thomas. What did I like about him? I don't know; you tell me. He was mean, boring, and aimless. Not "aimless," per se, just not fulfilling his potential. Or even trying.

SHIVA

A lot of guys are bonkers when we're young. And a lot of us stay that way.

KERIANNE

Even with the little things, there were red flags.

(MORE)

KERIANNE (cont'd)

I dated Thomas -- that was his name --
I dated Thomas for a year-and-half,
and six months into it, guess what I
found out about him? Guess what he
told me?

Shiva poked a piece of pineapple with his fork, then slid it
off the prongs with full lips.

SHIVA

He already had a girlfriend and you
were his sidepiece.

KERIANNE

Close. I already had a boyfriend and
he was my sidepiece... Just kidding.
(beat)
Sort of.

SHIVA

Well what did he tell you? What did
you find out about him?

KERIANNE

Guess.

SHIVA

I don't know; I'm not good at these
things... Okay, I got it. Six months
in, he tells you that when he was 22,
he was diagnosed with HIV. But now,
his T-cell count is back to normal,
and the doctor said the virus is
totally undetectable in his blood.

KERIANNE

Worse. So much worse. I found out that
if you call Thomas anything other than
'Thomas'? He flips the fuck out. Like,
he was one of those guys where if you
called him 'Tom' or 'Tommy,' he'd
seethe. Inwardly and outwardly seethe.

SHIVA

You're so funny. You should hang out
with one of my neighbors. She hates men
almost as much as she loves them. She's
always just like, "Shiva, where are all
the normal, cute, decent guys?"

KERIANNE

They're dating each other.

SHIVA

At least you're comfy addressing it all.
With my ex, I never tell people anything
about her. Not even her name.

KERIANNE

Why not?

SHIVA

Partly to respect her privacy.

Looking down, Shiva offers the slightest, telltale smile.

SHIVA

Hopefully, she'll respect mine.

KERIANNE

Weird answer, weirdo. And back at you.
What did you like about your girl?

SHIVA

She was not "my" girl. She was "a"
girl, but she was not "my" girl.

KERIANNE

But what did you like about her?

SHIVA

I mean... It wasn't one thing.

KERIANNE

I can imagine.

SHIVA

Well, that's just it. You really can't.

KERIANNE

Jesus. Now I really want to know.
Seriously, what'd you like about her?

SHIVA

... How much time do you have?

Kerianne picks up her drink, gently swishes it around, as if searching the thawing glaciers for a heart-melting response.

KERIANNE

I probably should've saved that topic
for a rainy day. Or maybe a sunny one.

SHIVA

Or just not one at all.

KERIANNE

Or just not one at all... Do you eat
Indian food a lot? I've had it often,
but never authentic Indian food.

SHIVA

Not to throw a wet blanket on things,
but I haven't eaten much Indian food
since my mom died, so...

KERIANNE

Oh, my God. I'm the worst.

SHIVA

Don't sweat it. That's life... Or
maybe it's death, but yeah, I don't
eat much Indian food.

(MORE)

SHIVA (cont'd)

Now, Chinese, Japanese, and Thai? I can't get enough. I guess it's because South Asian culture and East Asian culture is so similar in a lot of ways. I am jealous of their restaurants, though.

KERIANNE

Why?

SHIVA

Because they're so happy. Take this place: "Gourmet Buffet." It's a simple, happy name. Every Asian restaurant is just way too cute: "Yumi's Happy Paradise." "Be Nice with Fried Rice." Or it'll be something playful like, "Cluck Cluck Duck Duck."

KERIANNE

That's adorable.

SHIVA

No. It's not. Again, it's really not. It's seriously uncool. Because every Indian restaurant is super, on-brand Indian. They're all named something like, "You're Not Dating a half-Muslim Girl, Are You?" Or it'll be, "Hello, Son: It is now 12:02 in the Morning. You're Two Minutes Past Your Curfew." And then there's my totally favorite Indian restaurant. It's called, "I Heard Your Son Got Waitlisted at Princeton."

Kerianne shook her head, conveying a tacit approval.

KERIANNE

I have to get going.

SHIVA

Yeah, I do, too.

(long beat)

Can I ask you a serious question?

KERIANNE

... Is there any other kind?

Shiva takes an imperceptible breath. He looks to his left, he looks to his right, and then, for the time in his life?

He takes a chance outside of the constricting, choking, confines of a boxing ring.

SHIVA

Will you go out on a date with me sometime?

For the first time, all evening long, Kerianne Watson smiles.

KERIANNE

I would love to.

INT. GYM - DAY

Rich, Kwan, and CANDIDATES fill out forms. A CUTMAN looks over.

CUTMAN

Where you from?

RICH

Bay Ridge. I grew up in Mississippi.

CUTMAN

Are you Jewish? My girl's Jewish.

RICH

Are you one of those people who thinks every white guy with brown hair you meet is Jewish?

CUTMAN

Are you?

RICH

I'm from the South.

CUTMAN

So?

RICH

I'm from Mississippi.

CUTMAN

They don't got Jews in Mississippi?

RICH

Not anymore.

Cutman looks at a frozen Kwan.

CUTMAN

Where he from?

RICH

... The Bronx.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Damascus finishes a call, pours over intel with Crivello.

DAMASCUS (phone)

July 4th is a ways away. Do you.

(beat)

I'm taking a Mercury Cougar down to Macon, Georgia, and I'm coming back with enough fireworks to maim Jason Pierre-Paul's entire fucking family.

Shiva enters, furious.

CRIVELLO

I should've told you in person.

SHIVA

Fuck your person, no one likes you.

CRIVELLO

... Nico Patterson is going to wipe his ass with your career, and I'm not taking that punch.

SHIVA

Were the ten degree Sundays worth it? Changing my style for no good reason?

CRIVELLO

Your style is gonna get you injured.

SHIVA

That's the best you can do? Boxing is gonna get me injured. My record is 16 and 0, and you're a huge bag of shit.

CRIVELLO

You have no passion for the sport.

SHIVA

What?

CRIVELLO

You have no passion for the sport.

Shiva picks up Cus's baseball bat. He fires it at Crivello, standing 20 feet away. The bat lands against a wall of books. Cus wipes his brow after the bat CLANGS on his shiny floor.

CRIVELLO

I'll help you find a trainer. I'm gonna stay on to help you transition.

SHIVA

Fuck yourself. I didn't ask you to.

CRIVELLO

Damascus did. It's a courtesy for deserting your sinking ship.

SHIVA

Cuz you're afraid of him?

CRIVELLO

Cuz I like you. I may not like you as a fighter, but I like you as a person.

SHIVA

That makes me feel bad.

CRIVELLO

It shouldn't.

SHIVA

Well, it does, because I don't like you as a trainer or as a person.

CRIVELLO
 ... You got a lot of confidence for a
 guy who probably won't make it out of
 the 5th round.

SHIVA
 Wow. You think I'll get to the 5th?

CRIVELLO
 Not without me, you won't.

INT. GYM - DAY

Candidates line the outside of the ring, going two men deep.
 Shiva tangles with a PARTNER. Candidates BARK out tips.

During a quick break, Shiva sees that Rich and Kwan are the
 only men removed from the action. They're up against a back
 wall, silently watching.

Shiva resumes his workout. He looks at Rich and Kwan again.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Shiva, Cus, and Crivello, united in front of the aspirants.

CRIVELLO
 Boxing is 50% math and 50% physics.
 (to Rich)
 Sir, can I help you? You look lost.

RICH
 ... No.

CRIVELLO
 Do you have a question?

RICH
 ... No.

Crivello moves on.

CRIVELLO
 I review fights with precision.

As if on cue, Rich raises his hand.

CRIVELLO
 Yes?

RICH
 Why are you dressed like that?

CRIVELLO
 Like what?

RICH
 Like a college basketball coach.

Scattered laughter.

CRIVELLO

I aim to look like a professional.

RICH

Okay... But why are you dressed like a college basketball coach?

Louder laughter. Shiva smiles.

CRIVELLO

You know, I used to dress like you. Like a total slob. You should try wearing a suit to the gym one day.

RICH

Oh, I'd love to. I would. I just wouldn't want anyone mistaking me for an asshole.

Everyone ERUPTS but Shiva, who is intrigued by Rich and Kwan.

INT. GYM - DAY

Using a grip strengthener, Shiva rests on a couch as Trainers appeal to him. Shiva homes in on Rich and Kwan in the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Rich pours himself a coffee. He turns, only to meet our boy.

SHIVA

Hey. Rich O'Brien, right?

RICH

Yes, Sir. And this terrific cutman is Quiet Kwan.

SHIVA

Why do they call you Quiet Kwan?

Kwan's immovable face leaves Shiva confused. He looks to Rich.

SHIVA

Why do you call him Quiet Kwan?

RICH

The reason we call him Quiet Kwan...
(beat)

The reason we call him Quiet Kwan is because he doesn't talk a whole lot.

SHIVA

Oh.

Rich looks at Kwan, who returns Rich's gaze for a few seconds.

RICH

Kwan says you're dumber than you look.

SHIVA

I appreciate that. Will he offer the same honest critique of my skill set?

RICH
Well, if you got a minute, I'll start.

SHIVA
I was hoping --

RICH
First off, you're slow.

SHIVA
What?

RICH
You're slow.

SHIVA
I heard you the first time. Explain.

RICH
From a distance, I thought you were slow. Up close? You're even slower.

SHIVA
Can we... What do you mean by "slow"?

RICH
This is like talking to my ex-wife. Kid, it's really simple. Christ gave it only four letters for a reason.

SHIVA
Hold up. Are you saying that Jesus Christ came up with the word "slow"?

RICH
... Are you saying he didn't?

SHIVA
Okay, Jesus didn't come up with "slow." You can have the burning bush, you can even have evolution, but you can't have abortion, and you can't have "slow." That is not happening.

RICH
Says who?

SHIVA
... At the Whitney Museum, there's a security guard at the main desk named Frankie Knuckles you should meet.

RICH
Why do they call him "Frankie Knuckles"?

SHIVA
I don't know. Maybe ask the guy who read me the riot act about Quiet Kwan.

Rich stands down.

SHIVA

Frankie Knuckles will take you to a sickle sword from around 1,000 B.C. On one side of the sword, it says "fast" in whatever language it is. Now on the other side?

RICH

It says "slow"?

SHIVA

In big block letters, man.

RICH

Fine. I'll give it a look.

(beat)

Frankie Knuckles, you say?

SHIVA

He's their best security guard.

RICH

You know him and he knows you.

SHIVA

Yeah. Frankie's good people.

RICH

Well does he know that you're slow? Cuz you're slower than turtle shit.

Shiva bites his lip.

RICH

It's nothing to smile about.

SHIVA

I'm sorry.

RICH

Good. You want to explain to me how you're 16 and 0 while fighting with Plaster of Paris in your shoes?

SHIVA

... I'll work on my speed.

RICH

You're gonna have to.

Rich leaves. Shiva's left with Kwan's frozen stare.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Cus at his desk with Shiva/Crivello. Rich and Kwan enter, sit.

DAMASCUS

Rich O'Brien and Quiet Kwan. Damn.

(beat)

Shiva...when I first met this man, he was so country, he thought the S&P 500 was an auto race.

Shiva, Crivello, and Cus laugh. Rich and Kwan, hardly amused.

DAMASCUS

I been bugging you to train again for the last 20 years, now you after this boy? Is you strugglin' with mortality or sumpin'? You feel time is slippin'?

RICH

I'm slipping. Time is doing just fine.

DAMASCUS

Rich, I printed out this story this blogger wrote about me. You read it yet? You hear about this? Listen here: "Damascus Barnes, like his father and grandfather before him, appears as if forged from iron ore and sheer will. Born in Brownsville and raised in the Putnam Houses, the projects served as less of a breeding ground and more of a training ground. Bullied as the result of an early childhood stutter and a developmentally disabled sister, Damascus learned how to fight at the age of seven, but never learned how to stop. Predictably, his appetite for violence landed him in a juvenile detention center. Once there, however, his innate intelligence was recognized by a pair of Corrections officers. They turned Damascus on to classical composers and fresh fruit. In equal measure, 'Cus' devoured both. Later, at age seventeen, Mr. Barnes's eager, intellectual flower bloomed when he became the first member of his family to attend college, double majoring in History and English at Howard University. Damascus paid his tuition by slinging commercial weed and crack cocaine, perpetually confused when the bursar wouldn't accept cash in lieu of personal checks. And though his appetite for fruit and drugs dimmed and diminished, violence had a place in his heart forever. At 25, Damascus did a bid at Rikers Island after a local..." See...I wish he would've stopped there. Just some hood rats doing hood rat shit. Disrespecting my baby cousins. He coulda left that out.

CRIVELLO

It was a great interview, Damascus. Okay, let's dive right into it, Rich. What have you noticed about this kid?

RICH

First of all, he's a liberal.

CRIVELLO
... He's a liberal.

RICH
He fights like one, too.

In the face of judgment, Shiva shoegazes. Cus takes over.

DAMASCUS
Seriously, now. What have you noticed about him? Not just today.

RICH
His footwork is sloppy. His right hook is strong, his chin is weak. His arms are too thick; his legs are too small. He has a combination of limited vision and poor vision, which sounds like the same thing, but it's not. It's not fun. He... What's your name again, son?

SHIVA
Shiva.

RICH
Okay, Sheldon. Hold out your fist.

Shiva extends his arm and makes a fist.

RICH
You ever play rock, paper, scissors?

SHIVA
Course.

Shiva, still extending his full arms and clenched fist. Rich covers Shiva's fist with his pale, wrinkled palm. He then slams Shiva's fist on the desk. The kid howls.

RICH
See that? Hands like wet tissue paper, and slower than ten pounds of molasses in a five pound bag. His right hook, though...it's no joke. Power and speed.

Shiva winces.

DAMASCUS
Keep going, Richie. Digame.

RICH
I think his left uppercut should be put up for legislation of some sort. Ought to be illegal in forty states.

DAMASCUS
It's that good?

RICH
It's that bad.

DAMASCUS

... What do you see in his future?

RICH

Damascus, does it really matter?
Do you need to write down his allergies
and emergency contact number, too? I
just... What do you see in his future?

DAMASCUS

I see ice to reduce swelling. I see a
medium steak, and I see a little bit
of ass, but not nearly enough, given
his looks, charisma, and kindness.

RICH

Okay, fair enough. You know what I see
in the boy's future...? I see boxing's
past. I see Durán's aggression,
Frazier's fire, the light in Ali's eye,
and the chip on LaMotta's shoulder.

For the first time, Shiva looks up.

CRIVELLO

A minute ago you said he was slow.

RICH

He's slow in light of his ability.
His hook is quicker than Joey G's.

DAMASCUS

You're comparing Shiv to Joe Gans?

RICH

Eh. He's more of a Jack Dempsey.

Cus and Crivello laugh uproariously. Rich solemnly waits.

RICH

Are you finished?

(beat)

Dempsey got knocked out by Gene Tunney.
Twice. Find someone who can knock this
kid out once, I'll give you my watch.

DAMASCUS

Great. That Timex will pair nicely
with my Patek Phillipe.

RICH

Takes a licking...keeps on ticking.

DAMASCUS

Lucky for you, we in the lickin' and
tickin' business. But shit, Rich, we
talkin' Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney?
That's high praise from a Rich O'Brien.

RICH

Their Irish blood made them great.

DAMASCUS

Their black blood made them champions.
(beat)
You think Shiva's better than 13?

RICH

Give the kid dysentery and a low-grade malarial fever, and he's still better. I understand you have bigger names and younger men, but I can get him to fly.

DAMASCUS

Look... Shiv a half-hearted boxer who wanted to quit 20 years ago, and you a half-assed trainer who did quit 20 years ago. So how the Hell is a nigga like you gonna help a nigga like him?

RICH

Well, I figured we'd start from the fact that neither of us are niggers, and then work our way up from there.

DAMASCUS

What did I tell you about them hard "R's," Rich? Not everyone is on the level like you and me. Someone hears that, they gonna shoot pistols first, then ask questions later. Ain't even sure if they gonna be any questions.

(beat)

Shiva's problem is that he doesn't love boxing. Fighting isn't boxing. Maybe it's an intrinsic quality he needed to be born with, but if you trained him, do you think he could develop that love for boxing?

RICH

With me?

DAMASCUS

Imagine he's your guy as of right now. Ain't gon' happen, but imagine. Can a love for boxing be cultivated?

RICH

If he's my guy? Oh, he's gonna love boxing. Yes, Sir. He's gonna develop a deeper, spiritual love for boxing.

(beat)

He might not like me very much, but he's gonna love boxing.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shiva exits the gym, sees Rich at a bus stop. Approaches.

SHIVA

It looks like we're picking Kenny.

RICH
Kenny's a good trainer. Real good.

SHIVA
I was hoping you'd have a plan of sorts. Title fight dreams, I guess.

RICH
Try to have them to get you fights in more visible venues. The Paramount's good, but Franklin Square's better.

SHIVA
Can you get a casino? Like Foxwoods?

RICH
I don't know anyone over there.

SHIVA
Well, I appreciate you coming out.

They shake, and Shiva heads out. Rich calls after him.

RICH
I can't get you Foxwoods, but if you were to train with me, I can get you a fight in Madison Square Garden.

Given Vijay's wish, Shiva stops in his tracks. Turns around.

RICH
You're not getting a title fight out of Damascus. I know the drill, I get the politics... I can get you to MSG.

SHIVA
How?

RICH
I dunno. But every boxer I've ever trained, Madison Square Garden is where they end up.

SHIVA
... Were you being honest about the things you said about me? Or was it just talk to land the job?

RICH
It's just past 7. If you warm up fast, we can get dinner by 10... Your call.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

A CUSTODIAN sweeps. Shiva and Rich spar, Wisdom vs. Youth.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

A WAITER brings hamburgers and fries to Shiva and Rich. Shiva eats a fry. Seeing this, Rich casually picks up Shiva's burger with one hand, Shiva's plate with the other.

Then, Rich dumps Shiva's fries into his own pile of fries. He slaps the burger down on the plate, slides it back to Shiva.

SHIVA
The hamburger isn't good for me,
either.

RICH
I know, but a man's gotta eat
something.

SHIVA
... So, where are you from?

RICH
Mississippi. What about you?

SHIVA
India. From a state called Gujarat.

RICH
Well...where are you *really* from?

SHIVA
Oh. Jackson Heights... I want to move
to Long Island one day.

RICH
No, you don't.

SHIVA
Maybe Jersey or upstate. I don't like
Jackson Heights. I kinda hate it.

RICH
Can I ask you a personal question?

SHIVA
Shoot.

RICH
... Did you used to get picked on a
lot when you were little?

SHIVA
Nah.

Rich stares at him. Forever.

RICH
Did you used to get picked on?

SHIVA
... Sure.

RICH
I thought so. That's how half of
fighters learn how to fight.

SHIVA
How do the other half learn?

RICH

Oh, you know. Their fathers beat their mothers. Or their parents abused the hell out of 'em... You know what helps?

SHIVA

What?

RICH

Names. Name for me the boys who hurt you.

SHIVA

... How much time do you have?

RICH

Apparently not enough.

(beat)

So, it was white kids?

SHIVA

White kids, black kids...Puerto Ricans, Asian kids... Queens is a diverse place.

(beat)

It was mainly the other Indian kids.

RICH

Why's that?

SHIVA

I guess I was an easy target. My mom died, and my dad was always working, so I just was like a lone wolf. Astray from the pack or whatever... We work at a convenience store, so that didn't help.

RICH

So, when you get in the ring, what's your motivation? Do you ever think about the boys who gave you trouble?

SHIVA

... It's all I think about.

RICH

Lots of Indians work in stores, by the way. You know better than me. They drive cabs. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

SHIVA

Yeah, but most South Asians own their stores. We just work in one. And it's a shithole, too. Like, dirty linoleum that's all curled up from water damage. Plus...other kids, if their dad's a cab driver, you don't see their dad doing the work. They may as well work in an office. My dad was standing behind a counter all day. Counting pennies and heating up soft pretzels.

RICH
 There's nothing wrong with pretzels.
 (beat)
 I like pretzels.

Shiva smiles.

SHIVA
 I like pretzels, too.

EXT. SINGHAVI APT - NIGHT

Shiva enters. Sees Ram, plus two DETECTIVES in overcoats. The silence is broken by the CRACKLE of a police radio.

DISPATCHER
 Two-Four-Five, Assault with a deadly
 weapon. Two-Four-Five, Assault with a
 deadly weapon. 93-10 Sutphin Boulevard.

As dispatch REPEATS, a Detective turns his radio off. By doing so, his message is clear: This is more important.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Shiva and Ram on the roof. The Manhattan skyline, far away.

SHIVA
 I'm telling you the same thing I
 told them: I didn't see anything.

RAM
 They don't believe you... I don't
 believe you, either.

INT. GYM - DAY

Shiva does sit-ups. With one hand, Rich holds Shiva's feet down. When Shiva rises, Rich slaps his cheek with the other hand.

RICH
 Sheldon, what are you doing later?

SHIVA
 I gotta run some errands.

Rich slaps him again.

RICH
 What are you doing after that?

SHIVA
 I'm probably gonna go on Yelp and
 write terrible things about you.

Rich slaps him a third time.

RICH
 I want you to come meet someone.

SHIVA
 Who?

A final slap. Once more, with feeling.

EXT. STREET - DAY

At the entrance to a building, Rich hits a button. Then again. ALMA VÉRTIZ (10) approaches, sizes up Rich and Shiva.

ALMA
Who you buzzin' for, Mista?

RICH
Kitty Rogers. Do you know her?

ALMA
Do you know her?

RICH
I do. Have you seen her?

ALMA (lying)
She's on a date. I saw her leave.

RICH
Can you tell her Rich stopped by?

ALMA
Maybe. That man got a lot of money.

RICH
When she's back, just let her know?

ALMA
... She got another date after that.

RICH
Yeah? I bet he's got money, too.

ALMA
No, he's just cute. About five years younger than you, and ten times cuter.

Shiva laughs at Rich. Alma heads inside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rich and Shiva walk to the subway.

SHIVA
So, is this Kitty person a woman you like, and you brought me because she'll think, "Oh. Rich is hip and cool. He runs with an inclusive crew. What a handsome young millennial."

Rich stops. Shiva stops. They face off.

RICH
What the hell is a millennial?

SHIVA
I guess you don't spend a lot of time online.

RICH
No, I'm always online. I'm constantly
 online. Now what the hell is a
 millennial?

SHIVA
 ... Is she the ex-wife you mentioned?

RICH
 Sheldon, you ask too many questions.

He starts walking again. Shiva heads after him like a puppy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Earlier, Shiva ran past a bar with a banner which read, "Jack Dempsey Drank Here." KEVIN DONAHUE (40) owns the bar. He stands with his father, DANNY (65). Shiva runs by and bumps into him.

KEVIN
 Slow the fuck down, asshole.

SHIVA
 I'm so sorry.

KEVIN
 People wait on our beer line, and when
 you run by every day, they have to get
 out of the way to accommodate you.

SHIVA
 I'm really sorry. But when the line's
 out to the curb, I go into the street.
 (beat)
 I know the deal; we have a store, too.

KEVIN
 Yeah. Meatball sandwiches that are the
 most expensive in Queens.

SHIVA
 That's because our meatballs actually
 have meat in them. Which reminds me:
 Your mashed potatoes are lumpy.

KEVIN
 Maybe yours were. We take care of our
 own. And when have you even eaten here?

SHIVA
 "We take care of our own"? Classy. And
 I've eaten here a lot, but never again.

KEVIN
 Is that a promise?

Kevin heads into the bar. Father Danny scowls at Shiva.

INT./EXT. NEW YORK - NIGHT

MUSIC plays. A MONTAGE of Shiva and Kerianne on a first date.

They go to a museum, eat, then walk around. Finally, they go to Lincoln Center, where the Amateur Astronomers Association meets up. They look at the stars through high-end telescopes.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Shiva and Damascus watch the news. A REPORTER stands in front of the 115th Precinct as PROTESTERS demonstrate.

REPORTER

Thank you, Tom. Police say that in disciplining his son, 42-year-old Kevin Bass crossed the line. Today, as detectives look to piece together the events that led to the death of 10-year-old Billy Bass...a community demands justice.

DAMASCUS

This is a powder keg. It's powder keg, and you got the match.

REPORTER

Did the officer draw his gun in an aggressive show of force? Or, did Mr. Bass reach for the gun in a struggle which would claim his son's life?

SHIVA

I said I didn't see anything.

DAMASCUS

As long as it stay that way.

Billy's mother screams and bawls.

INT. GYM (MONTAGE) - DAY

1) Shiva pounds Kwan's pads. 2) He shadowboxes with small dumbbells. 3) He hits the double-end bag. 4) Shiva hits the speed bag. When he stops, he sees Rich and Kwan, by an exit. Rich opens the door, turns, crooks a finger.

EXT. GYM - DAY

Shiva opens the door. Rich and Kwan have vanished. AARON WHEATLEY (25) appears, then shoves Shiva into trash cans.

Shiva gets to his feet, rushes Aaron, but just as he throws a punch, Rich jumps in the fray and takes the blow.

Aaron tends to him. Shiva looks on, confused. Rich gingerly stands, then rabbit punches Shiva in the stomach.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Kwan massages Shiva with magnesium oil.

RICH

Do you know what a crow-hop is?

SHIVA

Nope.

RICH

In baseball, when the ball's hit and a fielder catches it, they hop a bit in the air so as to gain momentum. It adds power and distance to a throw.
(beat)

Kwan had our boy Wheatley toss you, so we could see how you'd respond.

SHIVA

Okay, well, you could've just asked.

RICH

After you got up, you did a perfect crow-hop. You did it out of instinct, cuz you're a street fighter. From all the bullying. And that's good, cuz it means you don't run from real fights. Other guys, most of them are boxers, not fighters. Now, as good as you've been record-wise, you show more form and technique jumping out of a trash can than you do in the ring. That's why your left uppercut's the least developed of your punches.

SHIVA

Because of street fighting?

RICH

Hundred percent. The uppercut is obviously a close-range punch. You don't box well up close, cuz in the streets, standing too close to your opponent can get you killed.

SHIVA

That makes sense.

RICH

So does abandoning your left.

SHIVA

Why don't we just work on it?

RICH

Cuz I can't teach you anything in a few days that'll help you on Friday night. Patterson's team has to know your left is weak, so they're probably expecting us to address it.

SHIVA

Except we're gonna scrap it.

Rich looks at Kwan's blank face.

RICH

Kwan says that your hook is the moneymaker. Stay with that. Eliminate the left uppercut, stay with the right hook, go with your strengths. Now, if Coach K can help with your footwork and with getting close, we'll bring back your left for the next fight.

SHIVA

Yeah. About Coach K...

RICH

What about her?

SHIVA

Nothing. So, we can drop the uppercut, it's just... This isn't swimming or whatever. Adding or dropping punches can have consequences, right?

RICH

... Do you know how to swim?

SHIVA

Sure. Why do you ask?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ram adds Indian food to Rich's plate, as the latter eats with the family. A TV PLAYS a song-and-dance number. Sitting next to Sunny is her husband, BILU MEHTA (30).

SUNNY

Every Bollywood story ends the same way. A villain lectures the hero in Hindi, but the very last line is always in English. Shiva, do it.

Shiva gathers himself.

SHIVA

Mainnē sōcā ki maiṁ kēvala ēka bāra āpa isa batānē jā rahā hūm°, kyōnki āpa bārikī sē sunanā cāhatē haiṁ. Maiṁ tumhēṁ apanē pūrē jīvana kī taraha kacarē kē sātha kāma kara rahē haiṁ. Kyā āpa isē āpa kō prabhāvita ki'ē binā isa taraha sē lōgōm kā ilāja kara sakatē haiṁ viśvāsa karatē haiṁ, tō phira kyā lagatā hai, dōsta.

(Indian accent)

You are in for a real big surprise.

RICH

... Teach me that. We can use it in the future to intimidate opponents. The Spanish boys and the Russians always have a lock on intimidation before the bell.

(MORE)

RICH (cont'd)
 We gotta memorize that. Can I write it
 down with you tonight? Is that okay?

An answer doesn't come fast enough. Ram KICKS Shiva's chair.

SHIVA
 It's really not that deep, but sure.

RICH
 What did that even mean?

SHIVA
 ... I want you to listen closely, for
 I will tell you this once. I have been
 dealing with garbage like you my whole
 life. If you believe you can treat
 people badly without paying the price,
 think again, my friend.

(beat)

You are in for a real big surprise.

Rich produces his wallet. He locates some paper, then a pen.

RICH
 Write it down. In your language.

Shiva accepts the paper and pen. He writes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Shiva puts dishes away as Vijay enters, opens the fridge.

SHIVA
 Can't sleep?

VIJAY
 I'm doing homework. I just need a
 little pick-me-up.

SHIVA
 Blueberry seltzer is a pick-me-up?

VIJAY
 You want some?

Shiva extends a glass and Vijay pours. They clink glasses.

VIJAY
 Salud.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hanging upside down on a jungle gym, Shiva does sit-ups with
 BOXERS. As they rest, the fighters look like bats.

INT. GYM - DAY

Behind the reception desk, Shiva hangs out with a boxer.

JEN MORRIS (25) approaches them.

JEN

Hi, I'm doing a story for *The New York Post* on a Shiva Singhavi? I was told I should swing by for an interview?

SHIVA

Uh, I'm Shiva, but what is this about?

JEN

My editor wants a story on you, because you're the only ranked Indian boxer in the world. I talked to Damascus Barnes, and he said you'd love to talk.

SHIVA

I think Damascus would love to talk. I don't need a target on my back.

JEN

Come on; you have an inspiring story.

SHIVA

I was born this way; it's nothing I did on my own. If you want to talk about my chicken francese or my impeccable taste in outerwear, let's go. Pull up a chair.

INT. RING - DAY

Shiva trains with an MMA FIGHTER who punches and kicks. Shiva meets the kicks with his gloves. Jen settles into a folding chair, drawing the attention of Cornermen and Cutmen.

The MMA Fighter kicks at Shiva. Shiva punches his foot, sending the Fighter spinning like a top and down to the canvas. Shiva walks to the ropes, then throws a wrist weight to Rich.

JEN

How has being an Indian boxer --

RICH

He's trying to make history here, so can you come back another time?

JEN

You're trying to make history, but who's gonna record it?

SHIVA

The fact that I'm an Indian boxer is the least interesting thing about me.

JEN

That's cute. But to the public, the fact that you're an Indian boxer is the only interesting thing about you.

Onlookers laugh.

JEN

What comes after boxing?

SHIVA
A degree.

JEN
And then?

SHIVA
A 9 to 5.

JEN
After that?

SHIVA
Happiness.

JEN
... Will you have dinner with me?

The faces in folding chairs were cleaning gloves, filing nails, or reading magazines. But with Jen's question, the entire lineup of onlookers -- in near-perfect unison -- look to see Shiva's reaction. A Boxer, busy with his phone, finishes his text, then looks up as well.

INT. AQUA CENTER - DAY

Shiva and Rich are at the Asphalt Green Aqua Center. They sit in front of a swimming pool. A DIVER leaps off the board, hurtling end-over-end, before cutting the surface with hardly any splash.

SHIVA
Jesus.

RICH
Don't take the Lord's name in vain.
He won't be there when you need him.

A MONTAGE of Shiva swimming, and Rich walking alongside him, Eventually, Shiva surfaces, struggling to breathe. Rich eyes the other end of the pool. He sees three SWIMMERS, as thin and as fast as mako sharks. Rich nods his head at them.

RICH
Look alive. Practice is over.

Shiva turns around. The Swimmers dive in the water. They surface 15 feet out from their dives, and then move through the water. There's fear in Shiva's eyes. Rich walks away. As he passes the lifeguard's station:

RICH
I'm gonna need a medic on Lane 5.

LIFEGUARD sees Swimmers take Shiva under. He blows a WHISTLE.

UNDERWATER

His muscles burning with lactic acid, Shiva struggles to fend off mock drowning attempts by the Swimmers. His lungs fill with water, so the Swimmers carry him up towards the surface.

WHITE TILE

Rich watches from his seat as a MEDIC and the Lifeguard pump water from Shiva's chest. Rich calmly opens a bag of peanuts.

LATER, Shiva and Rick are back in their seats. Instead of the Diver, they watch CHILDREN jumping from great heights.

SHIVA

I could've died today. Swimming.

RICH

You could've died any day. Boxing.

SHIVA

I assume there's a lesson here? Maybe other boxers went through that?

RICH

Plenty. Damascus... Cus is named after Cus D'Amato, the man who was a father figure to José Torres, among others. Cus came up with this training idea when safety wasn't exactly a top priority.

SHIVA

Cus D'Amato tried to kill José Torres?

RICH

... You might be better than I thought.

SHIVA

That's very flattering, but fuck you.

RICH

José Torres stayed underwater for 1:10. Only two boxers before him lasted as long, and only two after him lasted as long... You stayed under for 1:23.

(beat)

Shoulda taped it. No one'll believe me.

SHIVA

I lasted longer than José Torres?

RICH

... You lasted longer than anyone.

SHIVA

A near-drowning doesn't make me better.

RICH

You know how it's a cliché for folks in our business to say, "Boxing is 90% mental, and 10% physical"? It's not. Boxing's 10% mental, and 90% physical.

Rich walks away. Turns around, pops a peanut.

RICH

Whatever doesn't kill you.

INT. PACIFIC AQUARIUM - NIGHT

Mid-interview, Shiva and Jen look at fish tanks.

JEN

You think you could ever win a title?

SHIVA

I mean, yeah. If I'm being honest, I think I'm the most underrated athlete in New York. Pound-for-pound, I think I'm the best athlete in New York. Now, that may be delusional, but I have to believe that in order to get over the fear of stepping into a ring.

The fish swim in schools.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

At the corner of "Walk" and "Don't Walk"...

JEN

Do you want to come up for a minute?

SHIVA

I actually have to be up by five.

JEN

Boxing is 24/7, you don't do interviews. And it's impossible to have girlfriends?

SHIVA

It's hard to have any friends.

JEN

Whatever. I thought the boxing thing was cool, but it's really just a bore. Seems like you don't go to parties or events or anything. It's not exciting.

SHIVA

I never said it was.

JEN

You're getting up at 5 o'clock on a Saturday morning. That's more apropos of a suburban dad than a 20-something.

SHIVA (innocently)

Wait, what's wrong with suburban dads?

JEN

It was just a comparison.

SHIVA

What did suburban dads ever do to you?

JEN

I should let you go.

SHIVA

But I was just starting to have fun.

Having rarely been rejected, Jen's entitlement boils over.

JEN

You know it says your earnings online?
It says you made \$40,000 last year.

SHIVA

That's a lot of money for a fighter.

JEN

But it's not a lot of money for a man.

(beat)

I'm just being honest with you.

SHIVA

You sure are... And if I'm being honest
with you? I don't have to be up by five.
I just went on a date with someone, and
I don't wanna muddy the waters by dating
around. I'm old-fashioned that way.

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Shiva approaches the counter. Ram and Vijay are behind it.

SHIVA

Sorry I'm late. Go get some sleep.

RAM

I don't need sleep. You need sleep.

SHIVA

Dad, you just worked a double shift.

RAM

I go in ten minutes. When Joe comes.

SHIVA

... Who the hell is Joe?

RAM

He's my friend. When I am tired, Joe
will come. Go have a beer, Shiva.

SHIVA

I don't drink beer.

RAM

It's never too late to start.

Shiva smiles.

SHIVA

Okay, well, say "hi" to Joe for me.

He leaves.

VIJAY

Daddy, who's Joe?

RAM

There is no Joe. I don't have friends,
silly. I just want Shiva happy and
rested. You go, too. Go watch a TV.

She kisses him with a series of four pecks. He gives her five.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Shiva ransacks the fridge. He gives up, turns, sees Vijay.
She's mid-pour with a glass, plus a guilty look on her face.

SHIVA

What are you drinking?

VIJAY

Crystal Light.

SHIVA

Which flavor?

VIJAY

Strawberry Kiwi.

SHIVA

You finished all the Lemon? You
promised you would leave me a Lemon.

VIJAY

I just wanted a nightcap. If --

SHIVA

Hold the phone. Yesterday you needed
a pick-me-up, now you want a nightcap?
(beat)

You want a bump, too?

VIJAY

What's a bump?

A moment.

SHIVA

It's a small amount of cocaine.

VIJAY

... How much is a small amount?

SHIVA

Just enough to even you out.

VIJAY

... Have you ever tried cocaine?

SHIVA

No. Of course not.

(beat)

Why, you got some?

They break out in familial laughter.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shiva takes the garbage out. He exits his family's building, is seen by BRIAN DRUJAK (45), one of the two detectives who waited to question Shiva on the night of Billy Bass's death.

DRUJAK
Singhavi, I didn't know you were Mr. Popular with the NYPD.

SHIVA
Officer, lots of my friends are cops.

DRUJAK
Nah, buddy. Lots of my friends are cops. You, it seems, are Mr. Popular.

SHIVA
I told you: I didn't see anything.

DRUJAK
I thought you got your stories straight, but it turns out, no such luck... Harold Baker didn't see a thing. He was looking at a girl down the street, while Ron Arceneaux was lending an appreciative eye. You, it seems, were looking at Billy Bass.

SHIVA
If they were checking out girls, how would they know what I was looking at?

Drujak reads from a notepad.

DRUJAK
Because, cupcake: Ron said, "I didn't see anything. Harold was looking at a girl, I was looking at her, too. But Shiva was tracking Billy Bass."

Drujak flips a page.

DRUJAK
"Shiva tapped me. With the back of his hand. Then he said, 'Holy shit.'" (beat)
"'Look.'"

SHIVA
... I think I should talk to a lawyer.

Drujak smiles.

DRUJAK
I think that's a really good idea.

INT. GYM - DAY

Shiva and Rich, getting into it. Shiva slams the speed bag.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Shiva walks around. Rich studies violets. He beckons Shiva.

RICH
You got a girlfriend, Sheldon?

SHIVA
(Indian accent)
Roses are red, violets are blue. You have arranged marriage...waiting for you... I'm kidding. I don't have a girlfriend, but I do have a prospect.

RICH
You need to know your flowers.

SHIVA
I once got a girl a dozen red roses. That's the extent of my knowledge.

RICH
You get a girl red roses, she'll get herself a new man. Go with yellow. But I personally like violets. Known for a fragrant, yet elusive scent. After a single sniff, the scent disappears.

SHIVA
What? How?

RICH
A chemical it releases called ionone temporarily desensitizes our sense of smell. Another thing: When you give a girl flowers, don't hand 'em over with a goofy smile on your face. As if you did something special, and you're all proud of yourself.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rich and Shiva at Kitty's. After double-dutch, Alma evaluates.

ALMA
Sorry, but she don't like violets.

Shiva laughs at Rich.

ALMA
I worked at the garden co-op with her, so I know she don't like 'em. Violets look fake to her. Like bodega flowers.

From her window, KITTY ROGERS (65) observes Rich and Shiva. Rich looks up just as Kitty leaves her spot. Sees curtains.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shiva and Rich head back to the gym.

SHIVA

So, do you have a crush on her, or is she your ex? I'd think you'd know if your ex wasn't into violets, but you seem like a guy who never got his wife flowers. Then you split up, and you learned everything about flowers.

RICH

Sheldon...you talk too much.

SHIVA

Ha. You can definitely dish it out, and you definitely can't take it.

RICH

... You know what the worst thing about getting old is? It's that I can't put a beating on punks like you. But I'm gonna tell you something: When we get back to the gym, I'm gonna hit you with a weapon when you're not looking. I'm gonna hit you with a dumbbell or a stick or whatever the hell I can find. I'm gonna hit you, and it's gonna hurt bad. Real bad.

They walk in silence for a while.

SHIVA

Rich, I'm really having fun with you. Like, my dad never takes me anywhere.

RICH

Do you ever take your dad anywhere?

SHIVA

I guess not... Still, this is fun. I'm really having fun with you.

(beat)

"I'm having fun with you, too, Sheldon."

INT. GYM - DAY

While BOXERS train in the background, Cus throws *The New York Post* on a table. Shiva's face is on *The Post*'s back cover.

DAMASCUS

"I'm the best athlete in New York"?
Goddamn it, you cocky-ass sandnigga!

Damascus picks the paper back up, flips to Jen's article.

DAMASCUS

"... his manager and promoter Damascus Barnes, an electric blend of Don King and P.T. Barnum"? The fuck is she even writing? I am the bastard son of Rosa Parks and Malcolm X! The offspring of Sarah Bartmaan and Mandingo!

(MORE)

DAMASCUS (cont'd)

I am the red-headed stepchild of Jackie Robinson and Cruella De-Fucking-Vil!

SHIVA

I said I have to believe that I'm the best athlete in New York. But that it was delusional to actually believe it.

DAMASCUS

The New York Post? When I'm done with Jenny, she gon' be The New York Ghost.

EXT. GYM ROOF - DAY

Rich fires slingshots at glass bottles in a vacant lot below.

RICH

I sent Kwan to get you some icy-hot.

SHIVA

... What's the story with him?

Rich fires a rock. It smashes a glass.

RICH

I don't know if he's 80, 90, or what. I do know that when they rounded up the Japanese in the 1940's, Kwan was a kid, and he did time in the internment camps.

(beat)

Don't go running your mouth, but here's what I know... Kwan's father escaped. No one ever escaped, so they brought young Kwan in to see what he might've heard. And probably to send a message.

(beat)

When Kwan didn't speak...they made sure he would never speak again. They cut up his tongue. Bad. Real bad... It's sad, but don't feel sorry for him, cuz he's doing pretty well. He's got a wife who loves him. I know they have money issues, and I hear the electricity gets turned off from time to time, but Kwan's got a job now. And that's cuz of you... All I know is that the man was always there for me. Not in word, maybe, but in deed. And when push comes to shove, he'll be there for you, too... Quiet Kwan is the best man I've ever known.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Damascus, Shiva and Rich watch an ESPN and First Take reunion. SKIP BAYLESS, MOLLY QERIM, and STEPHEN A. SMITH discuss Shiva.

SKIP BAYLESS

I've been covering sports since 1974. With that said...I've been following sports since 1955.

(MORE)

SKIP BAYLESS (cont'd)
 At four years old, I was a die-hard
 fan of the Oklahoma Sooners. The class
 of the Big Twelve.

He pauses for effect.

SKIP BAYLESS
 Never in my life.

STEPHEN A. SMITH
 And neva in mine.

Damascus SNAPS a pencil like it's a matchstick.

SHIVA
 Relax. He's setting it up to defend
 me. It's just a little misdirection.

SKIP BAYLESS
 I have followed sports since 1955...
 and I have but one question for you,
 Stephen A. Out of all the myriad of
 sports enigmas, here is my question.
 (beat)
 Who does Shiva Singhavi think he is?

SHIVA
 Okay, well that's not good.

STEPHEN A. SMITH
 He is the most underrated athlete in
 New York, Skip. Acco'din' to himself.
 He's also the best athlete in New
 York. Acco'din' to who? Himself.

SKIP BAYLESS
 These are the sort of...bloviations we
 expect out of a Reggie Jackson. Out of
 a Muhammad Ali. Yet now we have a 25th
 ranked boxer who, according to sources
 I'm hearing from, is a tune-up for his
 opponent. Nico Patterson is gunning
 for a title fight with a stud in Rahim
 Whittaker. As such, Shiva Singhavi is
 nothing more than a sacrificial lamb
 to be slaughtered.

Damascus flips channels. A protest march is on the news.

Shiva hangs his head as the pressure builds from both sides.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Shiva enters. Vijay works a blender.

VIJAY
 You're gonna love this protein shake.

SHIVA

Listen: Dad's pretty upset. I heard he's stomping around outside all crazy, probably because I said something dumb in the interview... When he comes home, you don't have to be here for the yelling, okay?

Ram enters, back first, struggling with a stack of newspapers.

SHIVA

Hi, Dad.

RAM

Hi? Shut up, hi/hello. Can't you see I have problem? Help me, you stoo-pid.

VIJAY

Daddy, how many newspapers did you get?

RAM

All of them.

SHIVA

You're not mad?

RAM

Mad? I have been waiting for this my whole life, and half of yours, Shiva!

Ram puts the papers on a table. He grabs a pot and a ladle, passes them to Vijay. He takes a set as well, goes to the window, opens it. He BANGS on the pot. Vijay does the same.

RAM

My son is not afraid of anyone! Do you understand? He will fight anyone!

Shiva recedes, but Ram/Vijay continue to bang pots and pans.

INT. THE PARAMOUNT - NIGHT

Fight night in Huntington. Shiva's family take their seats.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Shiva shadowboxes as he prepares to face Patterson. A KNOCK.

SHIVA

It's open.

Kerianne comes through.

SHIVA

You showed up.

KERIANNE

Looks that way.

Shiva smiles. Rich enters from the bathroom.

RICH

Coach? What are you doing here?

KERIANNE

Hey, Rich. So...it's our second date.

RICH

What?

KERIANNE

It's out third date.

RICH

How? You're so far out of his league.

KERIANNE

Stop. Are you impressed that I got him to take off his shirt this fast?

RICH

If you're in the market for a man, I give lessons to nice guys who work on Wall Street. I know doctors. Lawyers. You're gonna date this nothingburger?

Shiva and Kerianne laugh. Rich notices flowers on a table.

RICH

Wait. What the hell are those?

KERIANNE

Violets. It's an arrangement of violets. Have you ever seen anything like it?

RICH

... Sheldon, whenever you get advice, you're not supposed to take it. You're supposed to ignore it, and do what you were gonna do. You stole my goddamn mojo.

SHIVA

Relax, Rich. There are plenty of fish in the sea. Your time with come.

RICH

We need to stop telling people that there are plenty of fish in the sea. Because that's not true anymore, literally or figuratively.

(beat)

I hope you get your ass kicked.

INT. THE PARAMOUNT - NIGHT

The bell RINGS. Shiva and Patterson converge, gloves raised.

PATTERSON

I'mma tear up your sister; feel me?

(beat)

I'mma do the little one, too.

REFEREE

Don't be a hero, Singhavi. Clean fight.

Patterson is strong, but Shiva is tough. And angry. He moves in, and immediately lands haymakers. In response, he takes defensive jabs. From there, Shiva works Patterson's body and cheeks. The latter continues to get rocked, but can take the punishment.

Shiva drives a right hook through Patterson's defense, catching him on the ear. Patterson goes down, and the crowd ROARS.

Patterson stands. Kerianne, Vijay, Sunny, and Bilu are overjoyed. However, Rich and Kwan are unimpressed. Patterson hits Shiva with a few jabs. Shiva absorbs them as he moves inside, then lands three brutal body punches. Patterson recoils in pain.

The Ref separates them. Upon resuming Shiva powers forward, takes punches as he gets inside, but Patterson's out of gas. Shiva drives two left uppercuts into his torso.

As Patterson covers a broken body, Shiva delivers a straight cross to his head. Patterson's eyes go blank as he drops to the canvas. The crowd rises as one, EXPLODING in joy.

Shiva's crew celebrates. Cus lights a cigar.

By contrast, Rich and Kwan look like pallbearers. Shiva sees them. His smile is erased by Rich's dour affect.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

In silence, Kwan cuts off Shiva's wraps.

SHIVA

Tell his guys that was boring as fuck.
We should go again.

RICH

I told you to ditch the left uppercut.

SHIVA

Rich: It was a first round upset.

RICH

Congratulations.

SHIVA

Why are you mad?

RICH

... I told you to ditch the uppercut.

He leaves. Shiva is left with Kwan's blank stare.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Shiva exits a car and approaches the entrance to a club. He sees Sunny, Vijay, and Kerianne approaching as well.

They converge. Sunny and Vijay hug him. Shiva shakes Kerianne's hand in an over-the-top, professional manner.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Shiva's family and friends socialize and celebrate.

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Post-party, Shiva and his three girls drive out to Long Beach.

Shiva drives, Kerianne rides shotgun. Sunny and Vijay are in back. Vijay motions for TRUCKERS to honk. They ignore her.

EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

Sunny POPS a champagne cork as the three look at the water.

Vijay tries (in vain) to get a tugboat to blast its foghorn.

SHIVA

I'm glad we came out here. It's hard to be happy about life when Cus won't even give me a day off tomorrow.

SUNNY

You're a winner tonight. I know it's hard to enjoy, but I'm proud of you.

Again, Vijay crooks her arm at the tugboat.

KERIANNE

This champagne is really good.

VIJAY

It tastes like cold pee-pee.

SHIVA

It tastes like liquid diamonds.

SUNNY

Oh, my God; you're drunk. I definitely got you drunk.

SHIVA

I'm not drunk.

SUNNY

You are drunk.

SHIVA

Eh. I'm high.

VIJAY

On what? Can I see it?

SHIVA

No.

SUNNY

No.

Forlorn, Vijay pumps her arm. The tugboat's foghorn blasts.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Shiva drives. The car stalls out.

LATER, car parked in the shoulder, Kerianne works on the engine. Vijay is with her. Shiva is in the driver's seat, Sunny in back.

KERIANNE

Try it now.

Shiva tries to start the car, but the engine won't turn over. Kerianne tries another fix. Vijay flashes a light. In the car...

SHIVA

Did you talk to the precinct?

SUNNY

I didn't want to bring it up.

SHIVA

Bring it.

SUNNY

I did... Tim Ford wants to meet you.

SHIVA

That name sounds familiar.

Kerianne nods at Shiva. He turns the key, but it won't start.

SUNNY

He's the PBA President. He's important.

SHIVA

Why's he important; he's the union guy?

SUNNY

You know when a cop kills someone and it's obvious he should be prosecuted? Like, all the other cops say he's a bad apple who makes everyone look bad?

SHIVA

Sure.

SUNNY

Tim Ford's the one person standing up for those cops. He's that guy.

(beat)

He's a guy people do not say "no" to.

SHIVA

I'll meet him.

SUNNY

You don't have a choice. He's the kinda guy people don't say "no" to.

SHIVA

And?

SUNNY

You're gonna hafta say "no" to him.

SHIVA

About what?

SUNNY

Lying for them... If you're trying to stay neutral, stay neutral. If you're not gonna speak up about Kevin Bass, that's up to you. But if you're not helping Kevin Bass...do not help them.

(beat)

Whatever they sell you...don't buy it.

Kerianne nods at Shiva. He turns the key, and the engine ROARS. Kerianne and Vijay climb in. Once inside, they fist bump.

VIJAY

That's some serious girl power.

KERIANNE

No, bubba-licious. It's just power.

The four blast off, music BLARING.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Rich and Kwan watch Shiva stand in the batter's box and face a PITCHER throwing darts. He swings, misses, and swings and misses some more. He then takes the last pitch in the ribs.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Shiva and Ram by the store. Ram gives money to a HOMELESS MAN.

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Vijay handles a long line that's formed. Enter Shiva and Ram.

SHIVA

You can't keep giving him money.

As they head behind the counter, bells CHIME on the door. Murphy and Tullio, in uniform, enter.

MURPHY

There he is. The best athlete in New York, and a danger to the community.

RAM

He's very dangerous. Lock the man up.

MURPHY

You coming out later or avoiding us?

SHIVA

You said you'd let me sit shotgun if I won. You think I'm gonna miss my first chance in twenty years?

Tullio sees Vijay handing out miniature flags from a box. Half are Indian flags, the other half are American flags.

TULLIO

This line is for flags? You got flags?

VIJAY

It's funny, cuz the American people coming in ask for an Indian flag. Then Indian people are like, "Ooh, can I get that American flag?"

MURPHY

Wait, that's the Indian flag he's got? I like that. It's like the Irish flag with a little razzle-dazzle.

SHIVA

Listen: I'm bringing a girl tonight. We've been hanging out a lot, and it's kind of moving fast. I'd just rather have her meet you guys now and get it over with. Plus, it's a great club.

MURPHY

You didn't tell her we're cops, right?

SHIVA

No. But speaking of which, maybe we leave the guns home tonight?

MURPHY

That's hypocritical, Shiva. If you're bringing a date, I'm bringing a date.

SHIVA

Murph, we always have issues when you guys bring guns.

MURPHY

Fine, no guns. What else?

SHIVA

... Don't wear too much cologne.

MURPHY

Shiva, I know what girls like. Also, I'm not goin' out naked. You can have my gun or you can have my CK One, but you can't have both. That's the law.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Rich and Shiva, now at an urban garden. Rich holds tulips, watches the tough, unforgiving Alma Vértiz.

RICH

"If you've got something to prove, there's nothing like a challenge."

SHIVA

Bruce Lee?

RICH

Rich O'Brien.

Alma turns in their direction. Rich spins around.

RICH
Did she see me?

SHIVA
I don't think so.

RICH
She definitely saw me.

Shiva walks over to Alma.

SHIVA
Hi. My friend wants to talk to you.

Alma looks at Rich.

ALMA
You two don't look like friends.

SHIVA
Give me a second.

He returns to Rich, then takes him back to Alma.

ALMA
You don't give up, do you?

RICH
I would. I don't know how.

ALMA
Nice tulips.

RICH
They're for you.

ALMA
... They're for me?

RICH
You said you and Kitty garden together.
(beat)
I saw your names on the schedule, so I
know she's not here. I came for you.

He gives her the flowers.

RICH
It's practice, for when a boy you like
brings you flowers one day. You don't
want to come off as being too happy
about it. Boys get too comfortable, so
it helps to act like you've been there
before. And whaddaya know? Now you have.

ALMA
These are for me? Not Miss Kitty?

Rich extends a bag.

RICH
This is what I brought for Kitty.

He sets the bag down. Alma peeks inside. Looks up at Rich.

INT. KITTY'S APT - DAY

A cactus sits on Kitty's kitchen table. Kitty studies it.

KITTY

It's a cactus. A cactus, Alma.

ALMA

He said it's cuz you're prickly.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Shiva enters. Sees TIM FORD (50), head of the police union.
LATER, Ford treats Shiva to a steak dinner.

FORD

What would you say if I told you that police officers killed 1,246 citizens last year...312 of them being unarmed?

SHIVA

I think it's both a low number and a high number.

FORD

What makes you say that?

SHIVA

It's a politician's answer. Half my friends are cops, while the other half don't particularly like cops... 300 is 300 too many. For us as U.S. citizens, and for law enforcement, too.

FORD

That's a balanced view, Shiva. I'm happy to hear we have an ally in you.

SHIVA

Mr. Ford...I'm not anyone's ally.

Ford nods his head.

FORD

Shiva, if you maintain your current position of neutrality --

SHIVA

I don't have a position. I have the truth, and it's all I have, or need. I'm not lying for you or for anyone.

FORD

Oh, I'm not asking you to lie, and I don't think Billy's family would want you lying, either... That said, I have some very deep pockets which line my jacket. They're quite heavy, Shiva, so I'd like you to help me empty them.

(MORE)

FORD (cont'd)

(beat)

I hear Damascus Barnes is your manager.

SHIVA

Do you know Cus?

FORD

... Do you?

SHIVA

Yeah. Since I was a kid.

FORD

Well there you go... What I wouldn't do to have you to wear a wire.

SHIVA

If it's Cus...all you gotta do is ask.

FORD

Nah... I don't like to use the phrase "Deep State," cuz I'm not disingenuous, and I'm not a gullible moron, either. But just like Chicago PD has a shadow force...there are...let's say "rogue" elements of the NYPD. And with a guy like Damascus...it'd be easier for us to kill him than to arrest him. No question.

INT. KERIANNE'S APT - NIGHT

Kerianne opens up. Per Rich's advice, Shiva holds yellow roses.

KERIANNE

You showed up.

SHIVA

Looks that way. Wow, it smells great in here.

KERIANNE

Oh. It's fried chicken, egg rolls, and shame.

(beat)

Mostly shame.

SHIVA

That's funny. So, are you sure you wanna come out? I know it's a quick turnaround, but I feel bad that I dragged you to Long Island with my sisters.

KERIANNE

Yeah, because hanging out with an athlete and his sisters isn't fun.

SHIVA

Well, I'm not trying to be fake humble about it, but I just want to show you a normal time.

(MORE)

SHIVA (cont'd)

I didn't get to dance, and you've seen how good of a boxer I am, but I think it's important that you see how bad of a dancer I am.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

An SUV pulls up. Murphy sits shotgun, Tullio's in back. JESSE ARYN (30), a cop as well, also sits in back. Shiva and Kerianne come out, approach the car. Murphy points back with his thumb.

SHIVA

You promised I could sit shotgun.

MURPHY

The early bird gets the worm, Shiva.
Hi, Kerianne. I'm Michael Murphy.

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Shiva and Kerianne, in the third row of the SUV.

Kerianne, oblivious to their cop work, breaks a silence.

KERIANNE

So, Mike: Shiva tells me that you guys have been close since 1st grade?

MURPHY

Very close. And I'm curious what else he's told you about me, but I'd rather be polite and ask you some things about yaw-self. Shiva tells me you run a dance studio? That is great.

KERIANNE

Oh, thanks. And you? What do you do?

MURPHY

Me? I work for NASA.

KERIANNE

That's amazing. What do you do there?

MURPHY

I'm an astronaut.

KERIANNE

Wow, that's incredible.

Shiva shakes his head at Murphy's cover story.

KERIANNE

Are you guys all in NASA?

TULLIO

I'm a meteorologist.

KERIANNE

For NASA?

TULLIO

Well, I mainly freelance. Full-time, I work for NBC News with Brian Williams.

KERIANNE

What?

TULLIO

I work for NBC News and Brian Williams.

KERIANNE

You mean Lester Holt?

TULLIO

Him, too.

KERIANNE

And Jesse, is it? You're a boxer or lawyer, right? Maybe just a surgeon?

JESSE

I sell drugs to private school kids.

KERIANNE

You don't worry about catching a case?

Jesse sees police lights in his rear view mirror.

JESSE

Not really.

He pulls over. Waits for a COP (25) to approach.

MURPHY

You chuck it on that one, you chuck it on this one, you chuck it on your mother and you chuck it on your father. You chuck it on your brother and you chuck it on your sister, you chuck it on that one and then you chuck it on me. Nobody no give you no break. Police no give you no break. Not a soldier man give you no break. Not even your kids no give you no break. Hey Hey, bad boys, bad boys. Whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you?

Cop arrives at Jesse's window. Taps the raised glass.

COP

License and registration.

MURPHY

Don't open it. See what he does.

SHIVA

Murph, that's not funny.

Jesse lowers the window. He watches it go all the way down.

JESSE

May I see some I.D.?

COP
Why do I smell marijuana?

TULLIO
Probably because we just smoked the mother of all spliffs. Fuck, bro; you should've seen it.

COP
Sir, please step out of the car.

JESSE
Is your shield fake? It looks plastic.

MURPHY
Why did you have to act so mean? Don't you know you're a human being? Born of a mother with the love of a father, reflection comes, then reflections go. Bad boys-Bad boys. Whatcha gonna do --

COP
I'm asking nicely to stop singing.

MURPHY
Are you asking nicely cuz I'm white?

Cop turns back to Jesse.

COP
Sir, step out of the car.

Jesse reaches for his back pocket to retrieve his badge. Cop places a hand on his gun. A nervous Kerianne notices.

COP
Step out of the car.

Jesse ignores him, reveals his badge. Tullio and Murphy show their badges as well. Exasperated, Cop sighs.

INT. VIP ROOM - NIGHT

Minus Kerianne, Shiva, Murphy, Tullio and Jesse relax in a quiet lounge that's well-appointed and discreet.

MURPHY
I don't think she was that mad.

SHIVA
No, girls are never mad when they ask to get dropped off before dinner even starts. And black women are always up for a shitty encounter with a cop.

MURPHY
She had a great time, Shiv. She got exposed to some real diversity, not that Black Lives Matter...propaganda.

SHIVA
Do you not have an empathy gene?

MURPHY

Act like an animal, get treated like an animal. Or blame it on slavery.

SHIVA

And slavery was 160 years ago, right? Jim Crow was what -- a country singer?

JESSE

Right? Fuck you, Murphy. Read a book.

Tullio sips his drink, stares at Shiva.

TULLIO

You know, when we came by today, Murphy asked if you were comin' out, or if you were avoiding us. That was for a reason.
(beat)

When push comes to shove, do you hang out with your other friends, or with us?

SHIVA

My "other" friends? I only have friends.

TULLIO

You know I don't have a racist bone in my body. But tell me -- honestly, now -- what do you see in your black and brown friends that you don't see in us? Like, Jesse's half-black/half-white/all cop. Maybe you relate to them more, but we looked out for you from 1st grade to 8th grade, when no one cared about you.

SHIVA

... Are you crying?

TULLIO

I'm serious, Shiva. I just wanna know what makes them so special.

SHIVA

Nothing. They hardly even call me to hang out anymore. And you only do when you can't into the bar you want.

TULLIO

Answer the question.

Shiva's eyes meet Tullio's.

TULLIO

What do you get from all your other friends that you don't get from us?

Shiva innocently shrugs.

SHIVA

They let me sit shotgun.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Shiva cuts vegetables. Vijay enters, stone-faced.

SHIVA
What's wrong?

VIJAY
Shiva... Rahim Whittaker called.

SHIVA
What?

VIJAY
He called the landline.

SHIVA
Rahim Whittaker called.

VIJAY
... Yeah.

SHIVA
And?

VIJAY
He said he wants to talk to you. Man-to-man, without managers or promoters. He said he wants to fight next month with an 80/20 split of the money.

SHIVA
... Rahim Whittaker called our phone.

VIJAY
Yeah. But Daddy said you won't fight for anything less than a 50/50 split.

SHIVA
It's illegal for Dad to represent me.

VIJAY
Well, he just did. Daddy told Rahim, "50/50. My son is a race car driver, and he's gonna be a star."

SHIVA
What did Rahim say?

VIJAY
... Buckle up.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Near the Loeb Boathouse, Shiva rows a boat. Ram relaxes.

SHIVA
This is tougher than boxing. Pretty sure I'm your favorite kid right now.

RAM
No. Sunny is the favorite. Then you, then Vijay...

(MORE)

RAM (cont'd)

I haven't known Vijay as long, so if all equal, first is Sunny, then Vijay, then Shiva.

SHIVA

American parents love all their kids equally. Or they at least say they do.

RAM

You ask favorite, I tell you favorite.

SHIVA

I'm just trying to bond with you, Dad. I'm trying to show you a good time.

RAM

I don't have time for good time.

Shiva stops rowing.

SHIVA

Do you have time for me?

RAM

... Don't talk about American parents. You enjoy being on a television? You enjoy being recognized on a street?

(beat)

American parents...don't let their children be boxers.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Shiva, Rich, and Kwan on a football field. From the sideline, they watch COACH GARGUILO warming his PLAYERS up.

RICH

We're gonna run a drill. See how you stack up. Not against a 13th-ranked fighter who may not have taken you seriously, but against warriors who play through the whistle.

SHIVA

Great. Let's run some goddamn drills.

RICH

We're doing the five-dot drill. It transformed Tom Brady from the slowest college quarterback ever seen into the slowest NFL quarterback ever seen.

SHIVA

Sounds like fun.

RICH

For you, maybe. But each time you mess up, they're gonna have to do drills of their own. Contact drills.

LATER, Shiva executes the drill with precision, but he periodically misses a step.

Each time, two players smash bodies via 1-on-1 tackles. Shiva sees the devastating impact each hit makes, and sees Players and Garguilo growing upset.

LATER, Shiva sits alone on a bench, spent. Passing Players ignore his presence, and several regard him with contempt.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - DAY

Back at the gym, Shiva, Rich, and Kwan study video of Rahim. Rich watches Rahim dominate by annihilating his challengers.

RICH

Even his nickname is better. I don't know what either of your nicknames are, but five bucks says Rahim's is better.

Rich and Kwan look at one another.

RICH

Kwan says to ask about yours.

SHIVA

It's Shiva the Serpent. Shiva is an Indian God...and there are a lot of snakes in India. It makes sense that I'd be featured with a snake in the artwork and promotions or whatever.

Rich and Kwan exchange a second look.

SHIVA

I didn't give it to myself, so let's focus on what's important... I would have gone with something traditional.

RICH

Like what?

SHIVA

Rich, it's not something I've given a lot of thought. Prime-Time? The Boy Wonder? Smokin' Shiva Singhavi?

RICH

... It sounds like you've given it a lot of thought.

SHIVA

Yeah, when I was in high school, great. Now can we stop joking and get to work?

Again, Rich and Kwan silently confer.

RICH

Kwan wants to know Rahim's nickname.

(beat)

We know it's better. Just say it.

SHIVA

... Rahim the Dream.

Rich and Kwan exchange silent glances.

RICH
That's even better than we thought.

SHIVA
You're keeping me loose; that's great.
Let's make a list of Rahim's weaknesses.

RICH
We already did that.

SHIVA
And?

RICH
He doesn't have any.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rich walks to his place. He stops upon seeing Kitty Rodgers.

KITTY
I wasn't sure if you lived here.

RICH
It's not pretty, but it's home.

Kitty sizes up the dilapidated building.

KITTY
It's better than I expected from you.

RICH
... You want to get some coffee?

KITTY
Rich, I'm not here to reconnect.

RICH
The top junior welterweight is a kid from England. His dad's from England, and his mom's from Pakistan. Name's Rahim Whittaker. He's a killer.

KITTY
I know who he is.

RICH
Then you know he's 36-0. 33 knockouts.

KITTY
Great. Bring him some flowers.

RICH
Kitty, I'm training again. With Kwan.
(beat)
I'm training Whittaker's next opponent.

Kitty, intrigued.

RICH

They're opposites. My guy's American, but his family comes from India. Real good-looking kid, but Whittaker might rearrange his face.

KITTY

... What do you want?

RICH

I want you to talk to him. He doesn't know what he's fighting for.

KITTY

What's he fighting for?

RICH

It's more about what the kid's fighting against. England ruled America till the 18th century, and they ruled India till the 20th century. I want that weight on his shoulders... I think he can carry it.

KITTY

He doesn't care about those things. Ask him. It's a narrative you're assigning.

RICH

Of course. He's fighting for his family, his checkbook, and his place in history.

(beat)

But he's also fighting for me... Maybe he'll fight for you, and for Alex, too.

KITTY

Alex is dead.

RICH

So was I. But the kid has brought me back to life. He's brought Kwan back to life. And if you're lucky, maybe he'll do the same thing for you.

Reversing roles, Rich brushes past her. Enters his building.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Shiva drives in Westchester with Rich and Kwan. They pull into the driveway of a palatial estate.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A door opens. MELISSA BARNES (55) welcomes Shiva and his crew. Melissa is the blue-eyed, blonde-haired wife of Cus. Their CHILDREN greet all, Damascus following suit.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Shiva and Cus stand on the red bridge above a huge koi pond.

DAMASCUS

I want you to smile, dog. I want you to smile real wide, cuz I got good news. You about to become a wealthy man.

SHIVA

Did you get me an endorsement? I wasn't expecting one, but holy fuck.

DDAMASCUS

Nah, it's better than all that. Shiva, your wish is my command. It's time for you to fall. And for one million. Cash.

Shiva pales.

DAMASCUS

People are talkin' about you, kid. The US vs. the UK, India vs. Pakistan, good vs. evil. It's your time to fall, and it's time to get paid.

SHIVA

Cus, I can't throw a title fight.

DAMASCUS

I knew you'd give me static on this.

SHIVA

What did Bob say? Please talk to Bob.

DAMASCUS

Bob is over-leveraged, and so am I.

(beat)

In case you haven't noticed, the gym's nicer than most...but it's not paid for. My house isn't either... You gon' take a million, and we gon' take ten. We got a bailout plan that's real.

SHIVA

Look, we can figure something out.

Damascus throws his glass into the water. Fish swim away.

DAMASCUS

Shiva, make no mistake. I'll kill you if don't lose this fight... But first, I'll cut your whole family while you watch... I'll do it slowly.

SHIVA

Yeah, I get it.

DAMASCUS

That's just it, boss.

(beat)

I don't think you do.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Shiva drives the gang back into the city. WFAN on the dial.

Miniature Indian flags stand proudly in Queens storefronts.

CALLER (O.S.)

I really don't understand why his fans have to wave the Indian flag. I got pride in my heritage -- we all do. But if this guy wants Americans supporting him, he should ask his fans to support America. I see the Indian flag in all the stores. Where's the American flag?

Shiva turns the radio off. They travel in silence.

INT. SHIVA'S APT - DAY

Kwan stretches Shiva's legs. Rich eyes shots of Shiva's family.

RICH

I talked to Kerianne. She wanted to know if we'll all go bird-watching together. I said "yes," and then she uninvited me... Go see her. Bring some binoculars.

SHIVA

You should come with us.

RICH

I told you: She took back the invite.

SHIVA

I was talking to Kwan.

Quiet Kwan, stone-faced.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Shiva, Rich, and Kwan. Shiva runs wind sprints. He sets up alley-oops, he rebounds, and does pass drills. (All poorly.)

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Shiva's now with Sunny. They look out at the city and water.

SHIVA

It's crazy to think about how many human lives exist within this view.

They stand in silence. Forever.

SUNNY

Why am I here? What's going on?

No response.

SUNNY

Wanna jump, or just think about it?

Shiva smiles a bit.

SHIVA
 Damascus said I have to take a dive.
 They're going to make ten million
 dollars betting against me, and I'll
 get a million for myself.

SUNNY
 You can't throw the championship.

SHIVA
 ... Watch me.

SUNNY
 Shiva.

SHIVA
 If I win, he'll kill me.
 (beat)
 Or maybe he'll just kill you.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Shiva locks his car, heads for his apartment. Sees Brian Drujak, following up for more questioning.

Shiva turns to head off in the opposite direction. Drujak watches him go.

EXT. RINK - DAY

Shiva plays hockey at Chelsea Piers. A HOCKEY PLAYER eyes Rich, who holds his stare. Hockey Player skates around, again looks for Rich. This time, nervously. Rich offers a nod.

Hockey Player makes a beeline for Shiva, and then, at top speed, he body checks him in the open ice. Shiva falls on to the ice. He struggles to get up, so Player 2 helps him.

PLAYER 2
 Don't be a hero. Take your time.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Kerianne cleans the barre. Shiva enters. They face off.

KERIANNE
 Nice binoculars.

SHIVA
 Thanks.

KERIANNE
 ... Before we go, let's work on that
 close-range fighting.

SHIVA
 Do you really think it'll help?

KERIANNE
 Do you really think you're my first?
 (MORE)

KERIANNE (cont'd)

(beat)

Move with me, and you can move with him. You have to anticipate where he'll lead you. And where he won't.

Shiva sets his binoculars down. The pair get in position.

KERIANNE

Follow my lead, okay? Ready on "one."

Hand-to-hand, hand-on-waist.

KERIANNE

One.

As she takes steps forward, he steps back.

INT. FOREST PARK - DAY

Shiva and Kerianne enjoy the richness of the tree canopy. They write down their findings in a notebook.

Kerianne sketches yellow-rumped warblers, blue-headed vireo.

INT. SINGHAVI APT - DAY

Back home, Shiva and Kerianne come through the door.

KERIANNE

It smells so good in here.

SHIVA

Oh. It's chicken vindaloo, sandalwood, and shame... Mostly chicken vindaloo.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Shiva and Kerianne sit with Ram.

RAM

Kerianne, I want to ask a question. And please answer with a truth. There is no wrong answer.

SHIVA

Can we not do this?

KERIANNE

Leave your dad alone. I'm a big girl.

RAM

Let us say that you and I become a friend today. Then, next time I see you, I bring you the music CD. I bring you my favorite jazz, from John Coltrane. Is this a good gift?

KERIANNE

Sure. Any gift is a good gift.

Ram directs a smug smile at Shiva, then retrieves a CD that's neatly gift-wrapped, featuring a bow on top. Ram then presents the (Coltrane) CD to Kerianne.

KERIANNE

Oh, my God. Thank you so much.

RAM

Okay, Shiva. Now you bring a gift.

SHIVA

... I don't have anything.

RAM

Don't be modest, man. Just get it.

Shiva, embarrassed. A beat, and Ram shakes his head.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Kerianne sees the Irish bar owned by Kevin and Danny Donahue.

KERIANNE

Ooh, mashed potatoes. Let's eat here.

SHIVA

Uh, I'd rather go somewhere nicer. I don't want to be weird, but if we were to fall in love and get married, I wouldn't want our first meal to be at a pub. And the potatoes are lumpy.

KERIANNE

There's plenty of time to go to nice places. Plus, it says, "Jack Dempsey Drank Here." How can you go wrong?

INT. BAR - DAY

The pair eat. Kevin's angry-faced father, Danny, watches.

SHIVA

I'm still kind of embarrassed about the way I asked you out

A WAITRESS sets down the check. Then, owner Kevin appears.

KEVIN

Surprise seeing you here.

SHIVA

She wanted to come.

KEVIN

For the lumpy mashed potatoes, yeah? Your money's no good here.

Shiva, nervous about a potential racial incident taking place in front of Kerianne. Then, Kevin grabs the check. He smiles.

KEVIN

There's no charge for your food.

(MORE)

KEVIN (cont'd)

(beat)

I told you. We take care of our own.

Shiva nods towards Kevin's dad, Danny, who's still watching.

SHIVA

Thanks. But what about your dad?

KEVIN

He won't ever change. Just fight.

He extends his hand. Shiva shakes it. Father Danny looks on.

EXT. JACKSON SQUARE - NIGHT

Shiva and Kerianne toss pennies up at the tiered levels of an active fountain. They play a makeshift game of Skee-ball.

SHIVA

So, can you close up your studio any day you want to? Just clear out your schedule if you want to stay home in your PJs, then eat ice cream all day?

KERIANNE

Not if I want to expand. Nationally.

SHIVA

Sounds like you're on a mission.

KERIANNE

A few of them.

EXT. STREET - DAY

MUSIC plays. Shiva walks Kerianne home. They share a first hug.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The next morning, Shiva and Ram go for a walk.

SHIVA

Dad... If I lose, I don't want you to think less of me.

RAM

I don't want you to think less of me, theek hai? I am the one who made you.

SHIVA

... Do you need money?

Ram stops walking, regards Shiva suspiciously.

RAM

Does Shiva need money?

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Shiva, Damascus, Rich, Kwan, and BOB POLLOCK (70) are at the press conference for the fight. RAHIM WHITTAKER (28) and his ENTOURAGE are in attendance on the other end of a long table.

INT./EXT. NEW YORK (INTERCUT) - DAY

All over town, people watch. Danny Donahue, alone at his bar.

REPORTER 1

Question for Shiva: Are you feeling pressure because of the Muslim and Hindu divide, or the Pakistan and India divide, plus the national pride of both American and England?

SHIVA

Uh, this is America, so for me, we're South Asian guys who are more similar than we are different. He's my Muslim brother.

REPORTER 1

And Rahim, that same question for you.

Rahim's smarmy English accent is ready to be rolled out.

RAHIM

That was an answer that losers give. Forget about the two nations, I'm King Kong, and he's Curious George.

REPORTER 1

Bob Pollock. Do you have a response?

BOB

Oh, I don't know. At my age, I'm not able to roll my eyes that well.

The room explodes. Danny Donahue watches, intrigued.

REPORTER 2

Shiva, do you have a girlfriend?

BOB

We treat our fighters as if they're in a boy band, Miss. If he had a girl, we would say he didn't. We don't wanna be dashing any dreams the fans might have.

REPORTER 2

Well can you at least tell us his type?

BOB

This is a title fight, not the charity auction for a date with my fighter. Why don't you ask me about what my type is? I say he likes them just like me: Fiery Italian girls with deep tans. And none of that spray-on shit, either. We're talking mid-day sun. You gotta earn it with UV rays, gamma rays, then rub it in with some Hawaiian Tropic. It's the only way to fly. Do it like we used to.

The room laughs again, seduced by Bob's devil-may-care charm.

REPORTER 3

Mr. Singhavi, what are your thoughts on the flag controversy?

SHIVA

I mean, that started with my sister. Some friends who gave us both the Indian and American flags, so we handed them out. Then other people started ordering them online, I guess, and now it's a thing. I see lots of American flags flown on my behalf, too, but no one talks about that.

REPORTER 3

Is it a distraction -- this questioning of your patriotism?

Shiva reaches for a miniature Indian flag in front of him.

SHIVA

No, it's just... Actually, yes, it is.
(beat)

Here's the thing... Most people see a flag, whether it's the American flag, the Indian flag, Rahim's Union Jack, whatever. They see a flag, and they have a reaction. Sometimes it's pride, sometimes it's disgust. Lately, people are looking at our Indian flag, and they see this country -- America -- not getting its due. So, I've been doing some research. I learned about how flags get made. For example, this flag was made in China. It's a dollar flag, but there's a lot of technology that goes into this. The nylon used for the flag itself is made by DuPont. It's a type of nylon called SolarMax, something a guy from Poland patented. "DuPont" is a French name, so that's a French-American family who paid for the SolarMax nylon invented by a guy from Poland. And someone in China put it all together. Also, there's the stick the flag's attached to. The stick is made from a polymer that was an Irish schoolteacher's invention. The brass grommet isn't brass, it's a very hard rubber made by a company down in Cuba. What I'm saying is... when some people look at this flag, all they see is India. But when I look at this flag...I see the whole world.

Cameras flash. At his bar, Danny Donahue smiles.

INT. FIELD - DAY

Rich and Kwan watch as Shiva misses field goals attempts.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Shiva and Ram carry trash bags, heave them into a dumpster behind the store. Ram hands a dollar to Jay Kenny, the homeless man who he helped earlier. Shiva notices. Later...

SHIVA

Can you stop giving him money?

RAM

You shouldn't talk about Hindu/Muslim.

SHIVA

I didn't. They asked me about it.

RAM

Why say a good thing about Muslims, but nothing about Hindus?

SHIVA

Cuz they're persecuted, and we're not.

RAM

They hurt us. Muslims had Hindus as slaves, then Shiva says there is no difference. Are you now the crazy man?

SHIVA

Why'd we even move here? To chase money? Because that didn't work out, did it? If it matters so much, don't move to a country where we're all the same to the average American. You didn't stay in India to fight and make India great, but all I do here is literally fight. I'm sick of fighting, okay?

RAM

I'm sick of your problems.

SHIVA

I'm sick of you.

Ram slaps him across the face.

RAM

What do you want to do? Taxes? Do you want to do a taxes for work?

SHIVA

Maybe! Is putting on a tie every day really that bad? Do you enjoy making 15 bucks an hour?

RAM

Don't talk to me like that.

SHIVA

... Do we even make that much?

RAM

Don't talk to me.

SHIVA

Do you realize why it bothers me that you give money to the homeless? It's not cuz I'm a jerk. It's not cuz mom's gone, so we need to save more money... It's cuz Vijay doesn't have a phone.

RAM

She doesn't need it.

SHIVA

No, but there are 30 other kids in her class, some with more money, some with even less. But out of those 30 kids? 29 of them have a phone.

RAM

... She doesn't tell me.

SHIVA

She doesn't want to hurt your feelings and make you worry. She makes me worry.

(beat)

If you think I'm gonna let Vijay spend the best years of her life in this store? Under these fluorescent lights? Then you don't anything about her, and you don't know anything about me.

RAM

You think you're too good for a store?

SHIVA

I didn't say that.

RAM

You're not too good for a store, okay?

SHIVA

I never said I was.

RAM

Vijay is my daughter before she is your sister. You think you're a big shot now?

SHIVA

I never said that.

RAM

You think so. You think Vijay is too good to work in a store?

SHIVA

I fucking know she is!

Silence. After a moment, Shiva leaves.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Shiva and Rich watch news coverage of Billy Bass's death.

RICH
 You can't let family in your head.
 I don't want you to have any regrets
 after this... Trust me when I say this:
 Turn your brain off, okay? No regrets.
 No. Regrets.

SHIVA
 Rich, anyone who tells you that they
 have no regrets is also telling you
 that they're an asshole.

On TV, Billy's mom gives a tearful press conference.

RICH
 You been following this?

SHIVA
 Sure. Little bit.

RICH
 ... Get eight hours, okay?

Rich pays their tab, heads to the door.

SHIVA
 Rich?

The mentor turns around.

SHIVA
 Thanks for being my friend... With
 my schedule, I don't have many.

RICH
 ... Neither do I.

Shiva forces a smile.

RICH
 "Friendships born on the field of
 athletic strife are the real gold of
 competition. Our awards shall corrode,
 but our friendships will live forever."

SHIVA
 Jesse Owens?

RICH
 Rich O'Brien.

SHIVA
 ... I know that my dad loves me, but
 he doesn't really...understand me.

RICH
 Your father does understand you.
 Better than you understand yourself.
 (beat)
 When I came over your house, I saw it
 with my own eyes, Shiva.

Shiva looks down. He looks back up, is about speak, but stops.

RICH
What's wrong?

SHIVA
... Nothing.

RICH
What's wrong?

SHIVA
Nothing.

RICH
... Tell me.

SHIVA
Nothing, it's just...
(beat)
I didn't think you knew my name.

For the very first time, Rich smiles.

RICH
Everyone's gonna know your name.

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Shiva drives. Listens to Santigold's "The Riot's Gone."

EXT. STORE - NIGHT

Ram takes out the trash. A FIGURE watches. After Ram throws a bag in the dumpster, Figure HITS him with a crowbar. Ram falls.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Shiva bursts through the doors, is met head-on by Sunny.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Shiva and Sunny take it outside. Sunny lights up a cigarette.

SHIVA
I didn't know you smoked.

SUNNY
I do a lot of things.

Shiva accepts a proffered cigarette. A moment passes.

SHIVA
I think Damascus is sending a message.

SUNNY
Fuck you, Shiva. This is all on you.
(beat)
You're not the only one with dreams,
you know. I watch you fight, but do
you watch me fight? There's a lot of
lawyers in the world, but trial
attorneys? Not so much.

(MORE)

SUNNY (cont'd)

When you came to give me that money,
I thought you were returning the
favor for all the fights I came to.

SHIVA

And that's selfish of me, but do I
ever criticize you...? You could be
making 200 grand a year working for
a white shoe law firm, but instead you
go to bat for rapists and murderers?

SUNNY

Everyone deserves a defense.

SHIVA

Sure. But why does it have to be you?

SUNNY

Because it's a stepping stone. Because
if I prove myself here, then one day I
can defend somebody who's on Death Row.
Someone who isn't a rapist or murderer,
but is accused of being one... You're
not the only one who has dreams. Do you
realize what that would be like for me?

SHIVA

Please don't cry.

SUNNY

I'm tired of being the oldest child in
this family. I'm tired of having to be
the disciplinarian for Vijay cuz you
and dad can't be bothered to raise her.

(beat)

Why do you two get to be best friends?

SHIVA

Sunny, what are you talking about?

(beat)

You're my best friend.

He takes his sister in his arms, hugs her. She lets it out.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Shiva sits with Ram, who recovers in bed.

SHIVA

I'm sorry.

RAM

I'm sorry.

SHIVA

Dad, sometimes... Maybe I feel a little
resentment about things. About how you
never ask about how it feels to be me.

RAM

... How does it feel to be Shiva?

SHIVA

It's not about me as an individual.

(beat)

It's not easy growing up here. For any of us. Other cultures, too.

RAM

What is it like?

SHIVA

I mean, it's perfectly fine... Except when it's not.

Shiva rubs his brow.

SHIVA

I just feel like you never taught me anything. Like how to shave. How to tie a tie. How to exist... How to talk to girls.

RAM

Shiva... Your mother was all I knew. What do I know about girls?

Shiva fights tears.

SHIVA

I don't know what's gonna happen with the fight. He's really talented, Dad.

(beat)

I do know that we're never going to have to worry about money again. So you can give as much as you want to the homeless. As much as you want.

Ram smiles. They hug.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELDS (MONTAGE) - DAY

Shiva plays sports on a higher level than he was previously playing them at. Football, basketball, hockey, and baseball, plus swimming at the Asphalt Green Aqua Center.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY

Driving in suburban New Jersey, Shiva pulls up to a house. He parks his car, walks up to the home, then RINGS a doorbell. TEEN (17) opens the door.

TEEN

Jesus. Are you here to see my dad?

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Teen takes Shiva through the house. A party is underway. Teen escorts Shiva to the basement, presents him to a man with two GIRLS sitting on each leg.

Detective Brian Drujak. Confronted by Shiva on his own turf.

DRUJAK
What are you doing here?

SHIVA
I want to talk to you.

Drujak and the Girls, looking up at Shiva.

SHIVA
Is this a bad time?

EXT. YARD - DAY

Shiva and Drujak sit on the hard seats of a child's swing-set.

SHIVA
I didn't see it happen. And this is
the last time we'll talk about it.

DRUJAK
When I check the eyewitnesses, I have
a Shiva Singhavi, Ron Arceneaux, and
Harold Baker. And aside from what
you've got going on as a boxer, wise
up. You're not like those people.

SHIVA
I'm exactly like them.

DRUJAK
Bullshit... Black people always make
everything about race. I don't hear
you do that. In your interviews, you
answer honestly and deflect well. And
you don't make everything about race.

SHIVA
Just so you know... Black people aren't
the ones who made everything about race.

DRUJAK
They're always playing the race card.

SHIVA
Black people don't play the race card,
Detective... The race card plays them.

The two Girls appear outside, wave to Drujak on his swing.

DRUJAK
When you have kids and they don't get
into college because of affirmative
action...you'll sing a different tune.

SHIVA
Again, I never saw it happen. If I did,
I would've told you.

DRUJAK
How do I know that?

SHIVA

Because: Between me, you, Harold, and Ron, I'm probably the only one of us who cares what happened.

DRUJAK

You're a good kid, Shiva, and you're trying to do a really good thing here. But in doin' this good thing, you're doin' a bad thing, too. It shouldn't be weighing on you with 24 hours left before the biggest night of your life.
(beat)

I don't know what you know, but I know this: If you keep goin' down the path you're going down...the only person who's gonna pay for this crime is you.

Drujak stands, heads into the house. Shiva sits on the swing.

INT. LAKE - DAY

Shiva and Rich fish. They're joined by Kitty, who fishes, too.

RICH

Kitty, I want to get a hot dog. He can't have one, but would you like one?

KITTY

They're full of preservatives. I like them, but they're bad for you.

RICH

All the more reason we should eat them now. While we're still young.

Rich heads off, leaving Shiva and Kitty. They fish.

SHIVA

I've never been the 3rd wheel on a date.

KITTY

... You think we're here on a date?

SHIVA

Aren't we?

KITTY

This is about you. I'm here for you.

SHIVA

Wait, what?

KITTY

Rich and I share a bond, but it's one we'd rather not share. In another life, Rich and Pat Kwan worked with my son. He lost his life in the ring. It was clear he was overmatched and he had no chance.

(MORE)

KITTY (cont'd)

Rich didn't prepare him well enough,
so some twenty years later... Rich
blames himself for Alex's death.

(beat)

I blame him, too.

SHIVA

Is "Alex"... Alexander Mironoff?

(beat)

Alexander Mironoff was your son?

KITTY

Not "was" but "is." He is my son.

SHIVA

... I'm sorry.

KITTY

Why? You're the only hope I've got.

(beat)

You have to win this fight. It'd be
like ending a curse... Just give me a
reason to smile. I know you didn't ask
for this, but neither did I.

SHIVA

... I don't think I can do this.

She indicates Rich as he walks back with two hot dogs.

KITTY

When Rich told me he was training
again, I knew I'd meet you. And I knew
I'd say the following... It doesn't
matter if we win or lose -- it doesn't
matter how we play the game, even. It
only matters that we did play the game.

(beat)

I'm just so happy to have hope... But
even if you lose, remember this, okay?
You are alive and well in this world.
Be happy and be proud. You're trying.

SHIVA

... I still can't believe it. I mean,
you gave birth to Alexander the Great?

A small, proud smile.

KITTY

We just call him Alex.

Kitty defiantly casts her fishing rod far into the water.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rich walks by a storefront. He stops to look at the display.
It features a sculpture which is labeled. The nameplate reads,
"Shiva the Destroyer."

INT. YOGA STUDIO - DAY

Rich enters. BLAKE ANDERS (30) is in front of a yoga class. RADHA BYAGARI (25) and an Indian GRANDMOTHER watch Blake.

BLAKE

Do you guys know what chakras are?
I hope I'm not insulting anyone's
intelligence. I know you're a more
upscale crowd than my 7 o'clock.

Radha rolls her eyes. Blake sees Rich, shy and meek.

RICH

Hi... I saw the Shiva in the window.
The sculpture out there?

BLAKE

It's not for sale.

RICH

... It says "Shiva the Destroyer."
Is that historically accurate?

BLAKE

It's art.

RICH

... Okay.

BLAKE

It's modern art.

RICH

Hm. I'm gonna put on my thinking cap
and figure out how to better explain
it... Okay: Is "Shiva the Destroyer"
real, or is it fucking make-believe?

Everyone laughs.

BLAKE

I have a class to teach.

RADHA

Sir? It's real. That's who Shiva is.

RICH

Thank you. Thank you, Miss.

He turns to Blake, then pauses before storming the beach.

RICH

Mainnē sōcā ki maiṁ kēvala ēka bāra
āpa isa batānē jā rahā hūṁ, kyōṅki
āpa bārikī sē sunanā cāhatē haiṁ.
Maiṁ tumhēṁ apanē pūrē jīvana kī
taraha kacarē kē sātha kāma kara rahē
haiṁ... Kyā āpa isē āpa kō prabhāvita
ki'ē binā isa taraha sē lōgōṁ kā ilāja
kara sakatē haiṁ viśvāsa karatē haiṁ,
tō phira kyā lagatā hai, dōsta.

(MORE)

RICH (cont'd)
 (Indian accent)
 You are in for a real big surprise.

The class erupts, with Rich having memorized as planned.

INT. CUS'S CONDO - DAY

Damascus cleans and polishes a gun.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shiva jogs. He passes the Irish bar owned by Kevin Donahue.

Shiva stops jogging, then stares at the bar. The elder Donahue, Danny, offers Shiva with a sneer. In his Irish brogue:

DANNY
 The fook are you looking at?

The banner which reads, "Jack Dempsey Drank Here" is being taken down by a WORKER. A new one has already been put up. It proudly declares, "Shiva Singhavi Drank Here." Having won the crowd, Shiva smiles. Danny nods at Shiva, and he smiles, too.

INT. BANK - DAY

Damascus and Shiva, surrounded by safety deposit boxes. Cus produces shrink-wrapped bricks of green. Ten altogether.

DAMASCUS
 You're a millionaire. Do it up.

Shiva picks up a brick of cash, smells it through plastic.

SHIVA
 Did you have my dad beaten up?
 (long beat)
 How do you sleep at night?

Damascus, incredulous.

DAMASCUS
 Soundly, and on a pillow. I sleep every night on a cool pillow filled with other people's dreams. Lesser nigga's dreams.
 (beat)
 In case you get ideas... Vijay's next.

INT. CIPRIANI - NIGHT

Shiva, Kerianne, and Vijay are mid-meal. The plates are big, the portions are small. A WAITER brings wine, then indicates another table. Rahim Whittaker dines with his wife, ZARA KHAN (28). Rahim raises a glass to show pre-fight respect.

Vijay casually gives him the finger. Zara rises, heads over.

SARA
 Hi, how are you guys? Um, Rahim was hoping we could switch for a moment?

LATER, Sara bonds with Kerianne and Vijay. They laugh and smile, while Shiva sits face-to-face with Rahim Whittaker.

RAHIM

Mate, when I said that I'm gonna kill you, that's not meant to disrespect you or your family. I'm just trying to drum up the money.

SHIVA

Sure.

RAHIM

That said, between you and me? This fight isn't a success unless I do kill you. I want you dead, but it's not personal. If shit goes down, I'll be there to take care of your family.

SHIVA

Listen...

RAHIM

I want to move to New York. London's a small pond, and I'm a very big fish. But I don't want to move here, then establish myself all over again. I've gotta make a statement.

SHIVA

Yeah, I get it. You want to be the best fighter in New York.

RAHIM

I want to be the only fighter in New York.

Shiva pales.

RAHIM

I can't wait to fight you. I can't.

SHIVA

Sure. Cool.

RAHIM

I'll make you a martyr... You're gonna die in the ring. You've got skills, bro, but we both know you're not in my league. I'm gonna put you down like a dog, and the world will love you for it. Trust me.

Shiva takes pills from a box. Downs them with water.

RAHIM

What do you got there?

SHIVA

L-Arginine for my blood vessels, plus L-Cartinine for metabolic waste, and BCAA... What are those?

Rahim, in turn, pulled out a gold box.

RAHIM

AMB, a precursor to testosterone. ROC is a type of oxygen-carrying booster which helps me breathe when most would choke. This little guy is the best performance-enhancer I've seen in years.

SHIVA

... You take PEDs? You take steroids?

RAHIM

You don't?

SHIVA

Wait. IBO testing doesn't flag you?

Rahim smiles.

RAHIM

Where do you think I get my gear?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Kwan exits, dog on a leash. Meg Kwan watches him off.

EXT. VAN CORTLAND PARK - DAY

Kwan arrives at the Canine Court dog run. He looks around, left to right. Sees NATE COYLE (50), staring him down while holding leash. Kwan looks at at his dog, running with the pack.

Before he knows it, Nate is next to him. Shoulder-to-shoulder.

After a moment, Kwan begins to speak in flawless English.

KWAN

Shiva won't throw the left uppercut tonight. We were gonna abandon it against Patterson, but he threw it anyway. Tonight? No left uppercut.

NATE

That's not what we're paying for.

Kwan produces a salt-and-pepper notebook, hands it to Nate.

NATE

What's this?

KWAN

... Everything.

Nate flips through Kwan's notebook, full of detail.

KWAN

We took Shiva to Mt. Sinai for his physical. They found damage in his stomach. Internal bleeding. I give him cortisone in general, but lately, I've been giving him a saline solution. He's gonna be in some serious pain tonight.

NATE

I'll shred this once we read it.

KWAN

If you fight your fight, you'll win. If you want to guarantee Rahim wins, pound Singhavi's face early, cuz he'll be protecting his stomach. When I point to my face...that's when he's told us know that his face is busted, and he needs to start protecting it. So, when he's protecting his stomach early, focus on on his face. Then, when his face has had enough, I'll touch mine, and Rahim should switch gears. Hit Singhavi's stomach, and he'll bleed out internally.

They watch the dogs. Kwan's dog begins wrestling a pit bull.

INT. PREP ROOM - DAY

Shiva enters, sets down a bag. He sees two blackboards.

One features complex plans, the other features simple advice: "ACT ON INSTINCT" -- "DON'T BE A HERO" -- "MIND OVER MATTER."

Rich enters the room. Neither man breaks the silence. Then:

SHIVA

Are those your quotes?

RICH

I thought you wrote it.

SHIVA

Oh, the plan is mine. The one board. I just wanted to diagram it, though I'm more worried about Rahim's plan.

RICH

Everyone's got a plan till they get punched in the mouth.

SHIVA

Rich O'Brien?

RICH

Mike Tyson.

Shiva smiles.

RICH

You know why you did the other sports?

SHIVA

Cross-training. The other sports used my muscles in ways boxing moves don't. You also wanted me to be aware of the fact it's a privilege to do this.

RICH

Those are better reasons than what we had in mind. Kwan and I thought you'd be a better fighter if you knew what is was like to struggle. Both you and Rahim have never lost a fight. How are you gonna react if you're down on points, and have to fight from behind? More importantly... You were handed your ass by kids who specialize in sports you can't handle. It was hard, but hey: Now you're gonna get after it on your turf, in your element. So compared to the other sports, this will be easy. Hopefully, it'll be fun.

(beat)

A lot of the kids you played with are out there. It's their fight, too.

He stands there, forever. The fight night pressure builds.

Rich approaches a blackboard. With a piece of chalk, he crosses a line through the advice we see, and the advice we've heard.

"DON'T BE A HERO" becomes "~~DON'T~~ BE A HERO." Rich walks out.

INT. RING - DAY

Hours before the fight, Shiva and Sunny climb into the ring.

SHIVA

I drove to that cop's house.

SUNNY

Shiva, why would you do that?

SHIVA

To get him off my back.

SUNNY

Why won't you just tell me what you saw. You were looking at them.

SHIVA

At first I was, yeah. I saw Kevin Bass slap his son. Yes. Ron and Harold were checking out a girl, and I got their attention. Then the cop comes over, and he and Kevin Bass start arguing. It was a few seconds, but Sunny, how many times have you seen a cop arguing with a black guy, a white guy, a white woman, a Latin guy, whoever it may be? So they're arguing, and I notice something out of the corner of my eye. It was a bunch of rats in the garbage. And not like two, but like, a colony of rats. And you know how hard it is to look away from that; it's this disgusting, primal thing that you can't turn away from.

(MORE)

SHIVA (cont'd)

It's like rubbernecking after a car crash. So, I'm looking at the rats for a few seconds, and when I look back, Bass and the cop are wrestling for the gun. And then they fall to the ground. And I don't know if the cop pulled his gun when he should've de-escalated with an abusive parent...or if Bass made a move for the gun. If I knew a kid was gonna die, I wouldn't have turned away for this quintessential, "ew/gross" New York moment.

(beat)

I just looked away. If someone was at fault, I would've said so. I'm not protecting any cops or any fathers as if I give a shit about anyone but you, me, and Vijay... I wish I had seen it.

SUNNY

Did you tell the cops that?

SHIVA

Less is always more with cops. You get into specifics, you'll open yourself up for anything. The only thing to say to cops is "I didn't see anything." Whether you're lying or telling the truth, it's "I didn't see anything."

SUNNY

It seems like they want you to lie about what happened, so you can best protect their interests... Maybe you should lie, but in order to protect yours.

They look out at the canyon of empty seats.

SUNNY

Honestly, Shiva? I'm scared.

SHIVA

... So am I.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Shiva enters the MSG chapel. Sees Tim Ford sitting alone.

LATER, Shiva sits with Tim, surrounded by religious icons.

SHIVA

Thanks for coming on short notice.

FORD

Well thanks for seeing me, Shiva. We're all rooting hard for you.

Shiva sees Jesus nailed to the cross. Sets up a lie:

SHIVA

I'm telling you what I saw, and it's not because I want a pay-off.

FORD

It's about truth. Pursuing justice.

SHIVA

... Your man was the aggressor. He was absolutely wrong when he reacted the way he did. He moved in on Kevin Bass like bear protecting his cub. Thing is, I see cops, and I see the job they do, in the cities they do it in, and it's a shit show. That cop was in the wrong, but he was trying to do his job. Still, I know the optics are terrible for you guys.

FORD

... Is there anyone else you've told about this?

SHIVA

No. My sister offers advice, but no.

FORD

That's good. That's very good.

SHIVA

Actually... Damascus Barnes knows.

FORD

Okay. When did you tell him?

SHIVA

Just now. I told Bob Pollock, too.

(beat)

Why are you smiling?

FORD

You know exactly why I'm smiling.

(calling back)

And you didn't even have to wear a wire to do it.

Shiva looks to a large cross.

FORD

Knock 'em dead.

SHIVA

You, too.

INT. RING - NIGHT

Tom Rosenthal's "It's Ok" works well as a fine contrast to the brutality of boxing, invoking thoughts of Shiva's mom.

The fight begins, and from the start, Rahim fires fastballs at Shiva from every direction and arm angle.

He locates his secondary pitches, so to speak, and changes speeds. From the first row, Damascus is pleased. Shiva looks at him with fear.

Both boxers periodically retreat to their corners, then hop back up, deftly signaling the passage of time. Shiva goes down twice, pops up fast. He goes down a third time, but is slow to get up. After a fourth time down, Rich and Kwan exchange looks. Friends and family look on, mortified.

RICH

They have to stop the fight. Go for the knockout. Look for an opening.

Before the 5th round bell, Shiva lands his first big punch. Following a flurry of jabs, he lands his second and third.

Rahim returns fire. Shiva takes a left cross and a right.

Shiva mounts a second attack. The bell RINGS. He returns to his corner with a face like ground beef.

RICH

That's what I want. You can do this.

SHIVA

I can't lift my right arm. I'm done.

RICH

Gimme one punch. I have to throw in the towel if you can't fight.

SHIVA

I can't go...but I can't quit. Please don't... You have to let him beat me. I'm not a quitter.

Kwan seals up wounds.

RICH

One punch.

SHIVA

I can't... I can't.

Suddenly, Rich's face is forced out of the way by Kwan's.

KWAN

You can and you will. You're gonna win this fight, starting right now.

Shiva, confused.

KWAN

Look at me. Look at my face and listen. I met with their team and told them that when we took you to Mt. Sinai for your physical, the MRI came back clean, but there was damage to your stomach.

SHIVA

My stomach?

KWAN

I told them that when your face is done and you're favoring it, I would signal them that it's time to hit your stomach.

SHIVA

What?

KWAN

They're going all-in on your stomach.

SHIVA

Kwan...my stomach feels fine.

KWAN

I know.

SHIVA

I went to Beth-Israel, not Mt. Sinai. And...my stomach is fine.

KWAN

I know. I fed them absolute lies. So, it's really gonna piss off Rahim and his crew when they find out we lied.

Shiva smiles.

KWAN

Hit him with the left uppercut. I told them you abandoned it. Get in close; he thinks you're afraid of getting close. He'll pound your stomach, thinking it's his path to victory, so he'll let you move in close. That's when you take him out with the left uppercut. Let him in.

Shiva grabs Kwan's face between the paws of his gloves.

SHIVA

I thought you couldn't talk.

KWAN

I thought you couldn't fight.

Shiva smiles.

SHIVA

Let's go.

KWAN

Let's go.

SHIVA

Let's go!

KWAN

LET'S FUCKING GO!

The bell RINGS. Kwan touches his face. Rahim's CORNER sees it.

Rahim focuses on Shiva's stomach. He caps off a flurry with a hook. Shiva goes down.

"It's Ok," plays as the Ref counts in slow motion. Shiva lays on the canvas. His eyes open and close with periodic blinks, like those from a dying animal.

He sees Damascus Barnes. Cus stares: "Do not get up."

Shiva sees his section. Sunny shakes her head. "Stay down"

However, around the arena, the young athletes from the various sports he played are screaming, exhorting him to rise. FLASH BACK to the Hockey Player who said, "Don't be a hero." Then, we see him in the crowd. We see the boys who played football, basketball, and baseball. We see the three Swimmers. Finally, Shiva sees a post-assault Ram. Arm broken, covered in a cast.

At the 2:00 mark, "It's Ok" shifts from quiet resignation to burgeoning hope, and Shiva begins to stand. The two boxers fight again, and Rahim continues to pound Shiva's stomach. However, Shiva is now in close, and slow motion reveals the beginnings of a powerful left uppercut. It heads for Rahim's chin like a heat-sinking missile. Only Rahim snaps back, and Shiva comes up empty. He misses his chance.

Having swung so hard, Shiva loses balance, falling over to his right side, ending up into a low crouch. He doesn't fall, though, so an opportunity presents.

Potential energy turns into kinetic energy, since his power is concentrated on his right side. He now begins the mother of all right hooks, one that emerges from the depths like a white shark rushing to the surface.

Rahim's head, which snapped back to avoid the left uppercut, moves back into place. But just as it does, Shiva's right hook arrives, slamming Rahim's skull. As he slowly falls, he's replaced by SHOTS of scenes from page 1 to page 100.

Just when the warmth and nostalgia has shrouded us in comfort, it's interrupted by a meat and potatoes face. It's the Ref. He looks down at us, as if we're Rahim. He then waves his arms emphatically, his voice breaking the music.

REFEREE

10! That's it! It's over! It's done!

17,000 people rise and roar. Shiva's friends and family erupt.

EXT/INT. NEW YORK - NIGHT

Throughout the city, New Yorkers celebrate. We see Danny and Kevin Donahue in their packed bar. Alma Vértiz screams.

Lawrence Day, Virgil Grant, and Stan Harper at the gym. Darnell King at home. Murphy and Tullio at the precinct.

INT. RING - NIGHT

Yet we never saw Shiva, as he was swallowed up by the crowd storming the ring. Kwan and Meg, both crying, lock eyes.

Rich and Kitty Rodgers look at each other for a while. They're so happy that they're stone-faced and stunned. Then, Kitty slightly pumps her fist. Rich smiles and winks.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and Gentlemen, the undisputed,
undefeated, and new WBC, WBA, WBO, IBF,
and IBO junior welterweight champion of
the world: Shiva! The Destroyer!

Shiva is pushed up, rising above the crowd. He sits on Rich's shoulders with his arms raised. Rich spots Kwan, now with Ram, and he sets Shiva down. He indicates the pair, and the four men converge. Shiva and Ram exchange bear hugs, as do Rich and Kwan.

Damascus watches them.

INT. MCMANSION - NIGHT

Bob Pollock sits in his living room watching fight coverage. His GRANDKIDS play, his WIFE knits. He gets up and leaves.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Bob gets in his car. He turns the engine on, drives it into the garage. Bob presses a button, and the garage door closes. He floors it, and the engine growls with anger.

EXT. TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Post-shower, hair wet, Shiva sits alone in a suit. He looks at the wall and sees framed photographs of MSG boxers.

Shiva takes out his wallet and produces a laminated photo of his mom. He stares at the picture.

Shiva grabs a folding chair. He steps up on it, then hides the photograph behind a framed photograph of Muhammad Ali. He steps down and puts the chair away. A knock on the door. It opens.

Kerianne walks past two SECURITY GUARDS. She approaches Shiva.

KERIANNE

Congratulations.

SHIVA

Thanks... I'm sorry. I know my face is
hard to look at.

After a moment, they share their first kiss.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Shiva and Kerianne exit a car, head to his family's building. In the shadows across the street, Damascus lies in wait.

INT. SINGHAVI APT - NIGHT

Shiva and Kerianne walk through the door. After they do, family and friends scream, "Surprise!" Once more hugs are exchanged, Shiva approaches Ram.

Ram sits on the combined laps of Murphy and Tullio. They're still in their uniforms, but Ram wears Murphy's hat. Shiva and Ram embrace. After they separate...

SHIVA
Where's Sunny and Vijay?

INT. VIJAY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shiva rushes in. GUESTS drink from Solo cups.

SHIVA
Where are my sisters?

GUEST 1
I have no idea.

INT. SHIVA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Shiva storms in.

SHIVA
Where's Sunny and Vijay?

BILU
I saw them grilling on the roof.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Shiva presses the elevator button, but he sees the light indicate that it's on its way to the first floor. Shiva races to the steps, then runs up while grimacing in pain.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Damascus is downstairs. He sees the elevator on its way, and when it arrives, he walks in. The door closes, until a gloved hand reaches in to stop it. The door opens, and Damascus sees a HITMAN wearing a mask.

Hitman raises a gun to Damascus's face, then holds it there.

DAMASCUS
Let's talk.

Zip-Zip. Muffled by a silencer, two bullets enter Cus's forehead. He falls down, back slumped against the wall.

Blood runs from his wounds. One river from each each bullet.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

The door BURSTS open. Shiva looks for his sisters. He turns the corner, then sees Vijay and Sunny busy on the grill. Sheepishly, Vijay swirls tongs.

VIJAY
Surprise.

Shiva closes the distance, and Sunny loses her smile. She studies his battered face.

SUNNY
I'm scared to touch you.

SHIVA
You should see the other guy.
(beat)
Not a scratch on him.

Sunny smiles.

VIJAY
You won.

SHIVA
I guess.

SUNNY
You're the champion of the world.
You won.

Shiva smiles.

SHIVA
We won.

Shiva scoops up Vijay, hugs Sunny. After separating, he struggles to hold off the waterworks.

VIJAY
So what do we do now?

Shiva smiles through his tears.

SHIVA
Whatever we want.

FADE OUT.

UPPERCUT