

IRISH NEVER QUIT

Written by

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EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Holding an ice cream cone, BINU BINGHAVI (13) is addressed by DOM VIANUCCI (13). The young Sikh wears a bright turban/patka.

DOM

When your mom died, the school told us it was because of natural causes. But everyone knows that she killed herself... I heard she got sad after moving to America. It had to be hard on her, because her son has skin that looks like shit...and smells like shit.

(beat)

40 bucks Friday, and lose the turban.

Dom leaves. Binu takes out a notepad. He straightens spirals, flips pages, sees a list of boys who shake him down for cash. Binu adds "Dom: \$40." His ice cream scoop falls to the grass.

EXT./INT. LONG ISLAND (MONTAGE) - DAY

Binu plays basketball. He shoots air balls, lays bricks.

He plays football, bouncing his throws off a tree tire.

A batting helmet wobbles atop his turban. Balls whizz by.

At an easel, Binu paints the portrait of a pleasant, heavy-set man. A wrapped birthday gift sits on a pedestal.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Trailed by Dom, Binu gets tripped. He stands up, limps.

DOM

Tell your dad I want a Slurpee.

BINU

He's a doctor. He doesn't work at 7-11.

DOM

It's a convenience store. That's worse.

BINU

My dad doesn't work at a convenience store. He's a pediatric cardiologist.

INT. STORE - DAY

DING! A cash register drawer flies open, SLAMS to a stop.

Binu stands next to his father, BHUPHANDAR BINGHAVI (45). BB sports a thick, black beard and thicker, black turban.

BB

Clean the bathroom. Jaldi karo.

Binu leaves. CUSTOMER (40) steps forward.

BB
Rain is coming. Sunflower needs water?

CUSTOMER
She's dying on me.

BB offers a tight smile.

BB
The flower will be beautiful.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Binu sprays the toilet. Soap mixes with filth. He scrubs.

INT. STORE - DAY

DRUNK (50) drops fun-size Snickers on the counter.

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

BB
You own stock? Costco stock-shares?

DRUNK
It's illegal to break these up.

BB
Acha? This is a serious problem.
(innocently)
Maybe you should call your Congressman.

DRUNK
Go to hell.

BB
Maybe I should call my Congressman.

Drunk SLAPS a display.

BB
Go home. Get rest.

DRUNK
You go home. Go back to Pakistan.

BB
I'm Indian. Pakistan? They don't want
me, either.

Binu watches. Drunk spits on the counter. BB wipes it, fires it back. Drunk grabs BB from across the counter, PUNCHES him.

At a cooler, All-American REGGIE KENNEDY (28) calmly watches. He grabs a six-pack, approaches Drunk. Then, Reggie SMASHES a bottle against Drunk's head. CHAOS unfolds, Reggie leaves. Binu scurries to a back office. He soon returns with a bike.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Reggie walks. A police car appears. Binu watches from afar.

EXT. HICKSVILLE - DAY

Binu speeds down an alley. He pedals through puddles, past dogs and debris. Into the woods, he hops over fallen trees. Soon, he enters a police lot. Drops his bike, runs the steps.

INT. STATION - DAY

Binu at the intake booth. A desk COP peers down at him.

BINU

Hi. I'm looking for the prisoner.

COP

The prisoner?

BINU

The detainee.

COP

What do you need, doll?

BINU

The perp who just came in: White male, 25-30, 6-1, 180? I wanna bail him out.

COP

You are precious.

BINU

How much is bail?

COP

Are you his...brother?

BINU

No, I'm his attorney. How much is bail?

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Upon his release, Reggie sees Binu waiting. They face off.

REGGIE

What's your name?

BINU

Binu.

REGGIE
Where are you from?

BINU
India.

REGGIE
I mean, where are you really from?

BINU
Oh. Long Island. Here... How come
you're already out?

REGGIE
I'm a catch-and-release kinda guy.

BINU
I didn't think it was you. They
said your name was "Reginald Kennedy."

Reggie holds on him.

BINU
... That's a black guy's name.

REGGIE
I actually go by Reggie Kennedy.

BINU
That's even more black. What's your
dad's name?

REGGIE
Marcus.

BINU
His name is Marcus Kennedy? What does
he do -- play clarinet in a jazz band?

REGGIE
What about your dad? What's his name?

BINU
Bhupandra. Bhupandra Binghavi.

REGGIE
That's cool.

BINU
It's probably not.

REGGIE
Anyway. I appreciate the help.

He heads out. Binu watches. At the door, Reggie turns.

REGGIE
You comin' or what?

EXT. HICKSVILLE ROAD - DAY

Binu and Reggie walk past Carvel. Binu guides his bike.

BINU
You don't have friends you can call?

REGGIE
You can go.

BINU
I'm a soldier. Leave no man behind.

REGGIE
Oh, you're a soldier?

BINU
God, Country, Corps.

Colorful beads on the bike's spokes rise and fall.

REGGIE
I don't really have any friends.

BINU
I have like, one.

REGGIE
That's too bad.

BINU
It could be worse.

REGGIE
I don't have friends; I have hanger-ons.

BINU
I know what that means, but I don't.

REGGIE
Hanger-ons are people who I'm there for when they need me. But they're not there for me, when I need them.

BINU
Why aren't they there for you?

REGGIE
Because they're not my friends.

Reggie stops walking. The colorful beads fall.

REGGIE
You got pegs on that bad boy?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Reggie bikes. Standing behind him, Binu's along for the ride.

EXT. STORE - DAY

The pair reach the lot, get off the bike.

REGGIE
Where do you live?

BINU
Hicksville. We moved from Central Islip.

REGGIE
Bullets are scared of that neighborhood.

A LOCAL (30) parks his car, approaches.

LOCAL
What up, Reg? I heard you built a deck
for Secchio. Can you do one for me?

REGGIE
I actually can't. It was an exclusive.

LOCAL
You're doin' "exclusives" for layin'
a foundation and throwin' down wood?

REGGIE
I signed a contract.

LOCAL
Yeah? How did it work out the last time
you signed a contract?

He heads inside.

REGGIE
You going home or staying here?

BINU
Depends. What's shakin' at your place?

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Pit-stop. Binu and Reggie in the colorful cereal aisle.

BINU
It's got a lot of sugar.

REGGIE
You can't have sugar?

BINU
I just... I don't have money.

REGGIE
Don't worry. I got your back.

INT. SEAFOOD SECTION - DAY

They gawk at the lobster tank. Reggie sees KAREN KEENE (28) a distance away. He signals to Binu that they should leave.

Reggie pushes a cart across the back of the supermarket. He peers down aisles, sees Karen again. Spins the cart, leaves.

BINU

Who was that?

REGGIE

No one.

BINU

Who was it?

REGGIE

... No one.

BINU

Uh, that was super fucking someone.

REGGIE

We went to school together.

BINU

Did you like her? Were you friends?

(beat)

You don't get extra time for ADHD.

Were you friends?

REGGIE

... We were high school sweethearts.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Karen backs her car up, almost hits Binu, then hops out. She notices Reggie, addresses Binu.

KAREN

I am so sorry. Running over a defenseless boy is not a good look.

REGGIE

It wouldn't be the first time.

BINU

No worries; I'm a struggling artist. Death is a good career move.

KAREN

I'm an artist, too. Sorry I forgot my business cards. We could've networked our way all the way to the bottom.

Binu takes his own card from a wallet, flicks it, offers it.

BINU

Again, my career isn't going so well.
Few hundred here, few hundred there.

KAREN

I was on the rise for a minute back in college, but that was back in college. I just got a "no" from Mason Mitchell.

BINU

The art dealer? You know him?

KAREN

Only in passing. He's at all the shows.

BINU

I hear he's a major-league asshole. He did artwashing for Mohammed bin Salman. Who I have no problem with, by the way.

KAREN

Speaking of major-league assholes -- Or should I say, minor league assholes?

REGGIE

It's so nice to see you, Karen.

KAREN

Sarcastic. Still. Haven't lost your fastball there.

REGGIE

I was being sincere... It's so nice to see you, Karen.

BINU

... Quiz time: So you must be Karen, he's obviously Reggie, and I'm Binu Binghavi. Now, from what I remember from the deep dive at the lobster tank, you and Reggie were head-over-heels, teenage lovers... Is my math right?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

On the bike, Binu and Reggie arrive at the latter's house. A Ferrari is parked in front. Binu tactfully admires it.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

A painkiller bottle sits on a table. Reggie mashes a pill. He loads his "bullet," sniffs. Makes a call on his phone.

REGGIE

Hi, this is Reggie Kennedy. I just wanted to leave a message for James Verruto? My arm feels great, and...

(MORE)

REGGIE (cont'd)
I was hoping you could see me throw.

INT. HALL - DAY

Binu admires photos of Reggie's family, spanning generations. Pics of young Reggie playing Little League. Reggie joins him.

BINU
This is a really nice house.

REGGIE
Sometimes.

BINU
How far back does your family go?

REGGIE
Queens, Ellis Island, County Cork...

BINU
You like baseball? We should have a catch... Granted, I'm not exactly big league material.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARCUS KENNEDY (60) drinks, MARCUS JUNIOR (25) smokes. The luxurious room has frat house vibes. Enter Reggie and Binu.

MARCUS
I got a call; what happened?

REGGIE
A guy was messing with little man's father. I caught him with a 12-ounce.

MARCUS
I'm Reggie's dad. This is Junior.

BINU
I'm Binu.

MARCUS
God bless you.

JUNIOR
He's only teasing.

BINU
It happens.

MARCUS
No offense, but whatever happened to normal names like Rob and Rick? It's like they say -- I need a dictionary to live in my own country these days.

REGGIE

Dad, there's no shortage of guys named Rob, so easy on the throttle. Also, I never met a Rick who wasn't a total shit-stain of a human being, and dollars to donuts, neither have you.

MARCUS

I'll try to be more...inclusive.

BINU

Good idea. In 30 years, your grand kids will all be working for guys named Binu.

Marcus lose his smile. Flips channels, finds his prey.

BINU

You watch Shark Tank?

MARCUS

I live for it. Every night, you get to watch someone present the sharks their invention or business, excited as clams. But then, just as promised, you get to see a man's dreams shatter in real time.

BINU

Yes. And when the sharks reject them, they have to take that walk of shame.

JUNIOR

It's a beautiful thing.

MARCUS

What I don't like is when the sharks do want to get in business, but the contestant plays hardball. Mark Cuban will play nice: "Ya know what, DaVonte? I'm rootin' for you. You're a straight shooter, and your wife's havin' a baby." But the moron gets greedy, argues with Barbara Corcoran, and the deal is dead.

BINU

Right? Forget the money, it's about the partnership... What's that smell?

REGGIE

It is... Irish soda bread, Parliament Lights, and shame... Mostly shame.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Reggie drives into the store's lot. Lifts out Binu's bike.

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Having made introductions, Binu, Reggie, and BB commiserate.

BB

I can't thank you enough.

REGGIE

Of course. Give me a second.

Reggie leaves to get beer.

BB

Will he come for dinner?

BINU

No. We know his culture, but he will not know ours. The smell of our house? No. The Sound of our Music? No. No way.

Reggie returns. Binu and BB straighten up.

BB

Come for dinner tomorrow.

BINU

Reggie's a bit of a lone wolf.

REGGIE

Dinner? I'd love to.

BINU

He is extremely booked and busy.

REGGIE

I'm seasonally unemployed.

BB

You've had Indian food?

BINU

Reggie's a steak and potatoes man.

REGGIE

... Don't you have school tomorrow?

BINU

We'll see how I feel in the morning. It's looking like a game-time decision.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - MORNING

Sunrise. Dew on the grass. Reggie runs on the warning track.

INT. CLASS - DAY

Binu sits in back. An origami star HITS him in the face...

And lands on his desk: **Open me** Binu sees DARNELL JACKSON (13), who indicates a mutual friend... BIANCA MARTINEZ (13). Bianca is the object of Binu's affection.

Binu unfolds the star: **Want to hang out tonight?** Below it reads: **Circle one** Binu flips the star: **No** **Never**

TEACHER (50) nods at Binu. He walks to the head of the class.

BINU

In the annals of human civilization,
there are a bevy of treasured texts:
The Bible, the Torah, the Quran and
the Vedas. The Tao Te Ching and the
Egyptian Book of the Dead. These
sacred books mean so much to so many.
They lift spirits and warm hearts,
yet rarely do they touch souls. Class,
for that we look to but one great man:
(beat)

Shakespeare. Granted, it may have been
three women who did the heavy lifting:
His cook, seamstress, and chambermaid,
but that's neither here nor there.

TEACHER

If you haven't read the play, start.
Guys, get in groups. The assignment's
on the board.

Blackboard: "What's the worst thing you've ever done?"

TEACHER

Binu, you might relate: "What's
the worst thing you've ever done?"

BINU

I know how to read. I picked it
up when the British civilized me.

Teacher scowls. Binu joins Bianca and Darnell.

DARNELL

Bianca: Worst thing you've ever done.

BIANCA

Last year, we had an English paper due.
I was working every night at Taco Bell,
jamming up the sour cream gun. Now, we
were supposed to drop the paper in Mrs.
Bell's mailbox, so the day it was due?
I walked into the office, grabbed the
entire stack of papers, then took off.

DARNELL

She didn't know who handed it in, and
who didn't. Buying you extra time...

(MORE)

DARNELL (cont'd)
 The worst thing you've ever done?
 Bianca, you are the worst.

Bianca smiles, leaves to get water.

BINU
 She's the best. Generational talent.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Binu eats alone. Soon, bully Dom sits across from him.

DOM
 Tomorrow? Don't check your locker.

INT. FROZEN ROPES - DAY

Fitness equipment. Reggie lifts. SCOUT (65) appears.

SCOUT
 Hi, I'm here for a prospect. Kubiak?

REGGIE
 He's in the weight room.

SCOUT
 This is the weight room.

REGGIE
 ... The nicer one.

SCOUT
 You look familiar. I'm an area scout,
 but Long Island's a new beat.

REGGIE
 Reggie Kennedy. Drafted by San Diego.

SCOUT
 Of course. Are you coaching now?

REGGIE
 Still grinding. I finished rehabbing
 from Tommy John. My velocity's great.

SCOUT
 You looking to get an invite?

REGGIE
 I've never been invited to a Major
 League camp... Just hoping to sign.

SCOUT
 Have your agent give me a call.

REGGIE
 He dropped me. I just turned 28.

SCOUT

... I'm sorry to hear that.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Reggie drives to Binu's house. He reaches the tiniest home among tiny homes. Produces his bullet, sniffs.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Reggie is greeted by the Binghavi boys. Hugs and backslaps.

BB

Mr. Reggie!

REGGIE

Hi! It smells great; what is that?

BINU

It is...chicken vindaloo, sandalwood, and shame... Mostly chicken vindaloo.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The three are seated. BB shovels food onto Reggie's plate.

BB

So tell me: What do you do?

REGGIE

In the winter, I build decks. When I'm healthy, I play baseball.

BB

Are you married?

BINU

What do you mean you play baseball?

REGGIE

Minor league ball. Most recently, I was in the Toronto Blue Jays system.

BB

Acha? There are many Indians in Canada.

BINU

Some say too many Indians in Canada.

REGGIE

To answer your question, I'm not married. Tell me about your wife.

BB

... She left us three years ago.

BINU

You would've liked her.

REGGIE
Same deal: My mom died, too.

BINU
Your mom died?

REGGIE
When I was 19, yeah. Drugs and alcohol.
Can I ask about yours?

BB
Depression.

REGGIE
Sorry if... Depression meaning what?

BB
Use your imagination.

A silence descends.

BINU
Jesus Christ, Dad. At his house we
watch Shark Tank.

BB
He asked after baring his soul.
Thank you for sharing, Reggie.

BINU
Yes, thank you for sharing, Reggie.
That was brave of you. There's gonna
be coffee and refreshments afterwards.

BB
Have you found peace?

REGGIE
I never once told my mom, "I love you."

BINU
I never said, "I love you" either.
(beat)
Do you want to look at my art?

REGGIE
Sure. I was hoping you wouldn't ask,
but sure.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Reggie sits, tosses a ball against a wall. As he did early
on, Binu paints the portrait of a pleasant, heavy-set man.

REGGIE
You're better than adults.

BINU

Thanks. I paint portraits of customers.

REGGIE

Whenever I meet an artist, I encourage and praise them, but I'm usually lying.

BINU

I do that.

REGGIE

Yeah, but I'm a menace with my lying. I want to tell them to quit. Instead, I get all serious. I'll be like, "Am I the only one you've shown this to you?"

BINU

We can't afford the quality paints. I can only get them from the art store, but this kid Dom... His parents own it.

Reggie notices the birthday gift from page 1.

REGGIE

What's with the present? The pedestal is a nice touch. Very on brand.

BINU

My mom died right before my last birthday. That's the last present she gave me... We fought a lot, because I didn't want to wear a turban anymore.

REGGIE

She'd want you to open it.

BINU

Maybe. But she never gave me a gift I wanted. She'd get me colorful turbans, trying to change my mind.

The mystery box looms large.

BINU

You know Cher? The singer?

(off a nod)

"If I Could Turn Back Time"? Cher?

REGGIE

I'm from America, too.

Binu gets the gift, sits across from Reggie.

BINU

When I miss my Mom, I sing to the gift. When Cher says "Baby"? I say "Momma."

(MORE)

BINU (cont'd)

(beat)

If I could turn back time / If I could find a way / I'd take back those words that have hurt you / And you'd stay.../ I don't know why I did the things I did / I don't know why I said the things I said / Pride's like a knife, it can cut deep inside / Words are like weapons, they wound sometimes / I didn't really mean to hurt you / I didn't wanna see you go / I know I made you cry/ But Momma if I could turn back time...

(beat)

How bad do you miss your mom?

REGGIE

My mom gave me 1,000 painful memories. I miss her so much.

BINU

She blessed you with athleticism. And your dad lives in a mansion.

REGGIE

That's not his house. It's mine.

BINU

But you haven't made the majors.

REGGIE

No. But I was a bonus baby.

BINU

You were a first-round pick?

REGGIE

... Do you want to be my assistant?

(beat)

In the minors, your teammates come from everywhere. But on Long Island, you've got water on all three sides. It's like Maine and Florida: Folks never pass through and share ideas, so we rarely meet anyone different.

BINU

I'm different.

Reggie stops tossing the ball.

REGGIE

You're special.

BINU

You're special, too.

REGGIE

I used to be.

Binu admires the pleasant man. He takes it from the easel, gives it to Reggie, who evaluates.

REGGIE

By the way, if Karen calls? That whole business card exchange? Don't be weird.

BINU

Why do you say "if" she calls.

REGGIE

Did she call?

BINU

No.

Binu's phone RINGS. No one moves. RING TWO. With his eyes locked on Reggie, Binu mutes the call.

REGGIE

Are you always like this?

BINU

It's all part of the plan.

REGGIE

What's the plan?

BINU

... We're gonna get her back.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

A pitching machine FIRES. Reggie LAUNCHES baseballs into an illuminated sky. They disappear over the outfield fence.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - MORNING

Reggie drives to church. He arrives, sees a large cross.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sun shines through stained glass. PRIEST (30) greets Reggie.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Priest counsels Reggie.

REGGIE

My pill situation has gone from bad to worse. I was thinking of giving up.

PRIEST

On the pills or baseball?

REGGIE

It's been a year since the surgery,
and my velocity is good, but not great.

(beat)

I was thinking about stem cell therapy.
It's legal, but if the doctor is shady
with PEDs... I could show up on a list.
I'm a lot of things, but not a cheater.

PRIEST

... If the house is too much or you
need to dry out, stay in the basement.
We've been friends forever. Bobby stayed
after the divorce; now he's doing well.

REGGIE

I appreciate it. You know the only thing
worse than when no one believes in you?
It's when everyone believes in you.

INT. HALL - DAY

Binu walks to his locker. Hand near the dial, he stops.

Binu turns the dial, opens the locker. Out falls a large,
frozen fish. Its cold, dead eye meets his. Soon, TEACHER 2
appears, then writes a detention ticket for "horseplay."

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Binu sits. Other KIDS ignore him. His phone RINGS.

BINU

Hello?

EXT. GARDEN (INTERCUT) - DAY

Karen examines a flower bud with her fingertips.

KAREN

Hi, this is Karen. It this Binu?

BINU

Yeah, how are you? I'm at lunch.

KAREN

What are you eating?

BINU

Haven't decided. I have back-to-back
free periods, so I like to sneak long
lunches in town... You wanna get food?

Karen moves to an easel. In a painting, she colors a bud.

KAREN

I don't think that's appropriate.

BINU
Getting lunch is inappropriate, but hitting me up on the cell right after sex education class is the move?

KAREN
... Between me and Reggie, do you normally hang out with adults?

BINU
No. That's what makes this fun.

KAREN
Can you make it to Dan Long's Diner?

BINU (pats turban)
Sure. Oh, I know we only met briefly, so let me describe what I look like.

INT. DINER - DAY

Binu watches Karen cut her hamburger into bite-sized pieces.

KAREN
I read about you on Artforum. Wow.

BINU
I just wanna keep learning.

KAREN
It's great that you don't have an ego.

BINU
An ego is better than false humility.

KAREN
Hm. Piet Mondrian once said, "Humility is the most noble form of vanity."

BINU
Artists are confident. Like athletes.

KAREN
Maybe that's why you like Reggie.

BINU
I like Reggie because Reggie likes me.

KAREN
How do you even know each other?

BINU
... We met through my dad.

KAREN
Oh. I'm showing at Lake House tomorrow.

BINU (lying)
Nice. I might go with my friend Bianca.

KAREN
Is Bianca more than a friend?

BINU
She doesn't like me like that.

KAREN
How do you know?

BINU
Karen, have you by chance read *How to Hypnotize Women in Nine Months or Less?*

KAREN
... You were doing so well.

BINU
It offers some insight. I saw Theo Von on The Joe Rogan Experience? Theo and Joe agreed that the book's methodology is sound.

KAREN
Now where did our waitress run off to?

BINU
Theo is super cool; give it a rest...
So Bianca and I will see you tomorrow?

KAREN
Definitely. I can't wait for the three of us to hang out.

BINU
Just the three of us. Definitely.
(smiling)
It's a date.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Binu paints, BB folds laundry. Binu takes an empty paint tube, cuts it open with scissors, swabs his brush inside.

BINU
I'm out of white.

BB
Paint with other colors.

BINU
I need white. White's a primary color.

BB
To be great, you must have limitations.
(MORE)

BB (cont'd)

Pablo Picasso had to paint with blood.

BINU

The blood of pubescent girls. It was a choice.

BB

In this house, you will not speak ill of Picasso!

BINU

What in the actual.

BB

... How much for paint?

BINU

40 bucks. It's a professional acrylic.

BB

You're not a professional.

BINU

This painting sold in advance for 300. Will you ever get me something I want?

BB

Where's the money I gave you?

BINU

I spent it.

BB

On what?

BINU

Bianca and ice cream.

BB

You don't know the value of a dollar.

BINU

I sell original art for good money, and I clean toilets for free. So yeah: I don't know the value of a dollar.

BB

... I like Bianca. Get my wallet.

EXT. HICKSVILLE - DAY

Binu bikes through town. Arrives at Dom's art supply store.

INT. ART STORE - DAY

Binu enters, sees Dom at the register. Gingerly approaches.

DOM
Did you like the fish?

BINU
... I need Winsor and Newton. White.

DOM
Do you want to be white?

BINU
I don't want to be white. Sometimes,
I wish the rest of you were Indian.

DOM
Maybe go back to your country.

BINU
... Just because you can't make it in
America doesn't mean I should go back
to my country.

DOM
What are you gonna do about it...?
You're just a cowardly sandnigger.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Reggie pitches, Junior catches. Marcus mans the radar gun.
The gun clocks a series of Reggie's fastballs: 97. 98. 97.

MARCUS
He can't hit 99, much less a hundred.

Under the megawatt lights, Junior takes off his mask.

JUNIOR
Velocity's pointless if he has no
control. He's got no off switch.

REGGIE
Junior, I'm standing right here.

JUNIOR
Should we talk behind your back?

REGGIE
Everyone else does.

JUNIOR
... You can't control yourself.

INT. BINU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Binu's in bed. He looks at his art on the wall.

Binu turns the lights on, illuminating paintings of his mom.
He gets a brush, makes adjustments, and goes back to bed.

INT. STORE - MORNING

Before school, Binu works the early shift. BB does inventory. CUSTOMER 2 notices Binu by the oven, painting.

It's an 8 x 10 oil: The desk Cop from page 3.

CUSTOMER 2

That's terrific.

BINU

It's terrible.

BB

It's brilliant. Time to celebrate.
Clean the bathroom.

EXT./INT. BUS - DAY

Binu sits behind DRIVER (60). Dom's in the back. Binu yawns.

DRIVER

Get more sleep. Indian kids study
too much. Gotta learn how to live.

Artist Binu ignores. Turban against glass, he gazes outside.

INT. DETENTION - DAY

Binu sits with future CONVICTS. No teacher. He calls Reggie.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

A cavernous, nearly-empty, four-car garage. All-white walls.

Reggie's at a fish tank. Atop its cover is a Vicodin bottle. Fish food is next to it. Reggie feeds the fish, who rush to the flakes as if prescription drug abusers. His phone RINGS.

REGGIE

What's going on, Beans?

BINU

Not much, GG. I'm in detention.

REGGIE

What did you get detention for?

BINU (avoiding)

Listen: There's a show at Lake House. I know I start today, but I wanna impress a girl. Are you down to take me after?

Reggie looks at his Vicodin Rx on the fish tank's cover.

REGGIE

Unfortunately, I'm always down. Let's meet at the store and let your dad know.

BINU
Cool. Speaking of which, can we talk
about my turban? I wanna cut my hair.

INT. GYM - DAY

Binu, Bianca, and Darnell shoot around. Soon, Dom arrives.

DOM
Darnell, we need one more.

DARNELL
Play Binu.

DOM
It's against his religion.

BIANCA
What's wrong with me?

DOM
We can't keep up. You're too fast.

BIANCA
Oh. You're so nice. I didn't think
anyone noticed.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Binu and Darnell change, but look away due to modesty.

DARNELL
Defend yourself.

BINU
Sometimes I let Dom mess with me. That
way he doesn't get bored, move on, and
mess with the kids who can't handle it.

They finish changing, and can now face each other.

BINU
No one sticks up for Indian or Asian
kids. Sometimes the popular kids are
willing to burn their social capital --

DARNELL
I'll stick up for you.

BINU
I appreciate it. But at some point in
high school, you won't even know me.

EXT. YARD - DAY

At a client's home, Binu HAMMERS. Reggie operates a saw.

Later, Binu sits on a bucket, eats lunch. Reggie gathers wildflowers. He closes the distance, hands them to Binu.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Binu and Reggie pull into Lake House. Binu sees Bianca get out of her mom's car. Dressed well, they meet in the lot.

Reggie looks on with warmth as Binu offers the wildflowers.

INT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

Enter Binu, Reggie, and Bianca. Art hangs up, PATRONS hang out. Karen sees Binu and Bianca, smiles.

She sees Reggie, then stops smiling. Karen joins the group. She's not pleased with Binu for bringing Reggie along.

KAREN

Look what the cat...dragged in. Do you have anything to say for yourself?

BINU

Her name is Bianca, you witch.

BIANCA

Hi, Miss Karen.

KAREN

Aren't you a little fashion maven?

BIANCA

Thanks! You look incredible.

KAREN

You're so sweet. Do you want to get some food and I can show you around?

Bianca nods. Karen loses her warmth:

KAREN

Hello, Reggie.

REGGIE

I'm sorry; I didn't know you'd be here.

KAREN

Binu, I'll text you.

BINU

Tomorrow?

KAREN

Now. Expect a flurry of them. Followed by a storm, then a blizzard.

Binu pulls out his phone, looks innocently at Karen.

BINU

My dad said to turn the ringer off.
I don't wanna ruin your special night.

Unmoved, Karen snatches his phone, struggles with the switch. Reggie gracefully takes it, flicks it on, returns it to Binu.

Charmed, Bianca smiles. Karen takes her hand, marches off.

INT. BAR - DAY

Reggie and Binu play darts.

REGGIE

Tonight is about you and Bianca.
We're not trying to get Karen back.

BINU

The twinkle in your eye in the lot
begs to differ. Also, on Joe Rogan?
Jordan Peterson would say that your
voice rising an octave spoke volumes.

REGGIE

We haven't talked since high school.
I've seen her once or twice at parties,
but we haven't talked since we were 18.

BINU

That's adorable.

REGGIE

It's not.

BINU

You're right. It's a tragedy. It's a
Shakespearean tragedy. It's Romeo and
Juliet, but with an Irish lad and an
Irish lass. It's the Capulets and the
Montagues, but with Kennedys and
Karens. What's her last name?

REGGIE

I'm not telling. You're a liability;
you know too much.

BINU

I have her card and bought her lunch.

REGGIE

Did you give her the Good Seat?

(off Binu)

When you're eating with a girl, you
should always give her the Good Seat.
It's the one facing the best outdoor
view, or the open floor of a restaurant.
Taking the Good Seat is a huge red flag.

BINU
... What are your red flags?

REGGIE
I don't have red flags. I have red
lights.

Karen marches Bianca back in. Marches Binu out by the hand.

INT. SHOWROOM - DAY

Binu and Karen surrounded by nature paintings on the walls.

BINU
We both paint portraits, but yours are
somehow sad and beautiful.

KAREN
Don't act so surprised, and why didn't
you tell me he was driving.

BINU
I can see the brush strokes from here.

KAREN
Hold it. The lighting ruins my yellow.

Karen walks to her painting, takes it off the wall. Heads to
the kitchen, turns back to Binu. Juts her head, Binu follows.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Karen carries in her painting. Places it on a steel counter.
From past showings. TOEDDY DE LA CRUZ (25) recognizes Karen.

TOEDDY
Hola, Karen.

KAREN
¡Hola! Seré rápido, Toeddy. Gracias.

Binu waves at Toeddy. He smiles, brings Binu a chef's hat.
Binu puts on the hat. It covers his turban.

KAREN
I need egg yolks and saffron.

Toeddy gets eggs from the fridge. Karen gets a bowl, whisk.

BINU
You've clearly done this at past shows.
Can we get into how incredible you are?

Once Toeddy returns with the eggs, she separates the yolks,
beats them, then uses a basting brush to adjust her yellow.

KAREN

¿Puedes trabajar en los trazos?

Toeddy does brush strokes, adding saffron where applicable.

BINU

Your yellow is fine. The light was, too.
How did you even paint this?

KAREN

Private instruction and manic depression,
but we're not here to talk about the art,
we're here to talk about me. Why didn't
you tell me he was driving?

BINU

If my dad took us, it'd be like a date.
Reggie driving us is just innocent fun.
He said he's seen you once or twice at
parties, not that you haven't talked.

KAREN

What do you mean "once or twice" at
parties? We've seen each other once.

BINU

He's probably just foggy on the details.

KAREN

Life is in the details. It's made up of
atoms, molecules, and details. That's why
our alien overlords saddled us with them,
what-do-you-mean-once-or-twice-at-parties?

BINU

I didn't know it was so important to you.

Karen returns to (passionately) whisking the yellow yolks.

KAREN

It's not. But his selective memory is a
concern... I went to Cornell. Had I then
gone to Cornell for grad school, I would
remember attending Cornell twice.
There's a difference between seeing your
high school sweetheart once at a party,
and seeing her once or twice at a party.

Binu adjusts egg yolk with a finger. Karen SLAPS it.

BINU

Cornell is overrated. I'm sure you had a
memorable time, once or twice at parties.
But it's a safety net for the privileged.

KAREN

Have some more gruel, Oliver Twist...

(MORE)

KAREN (cont'd)
 You know what's the best part about
 being rich?

BINU
 What?

KAREN
 Having a lot of money.

Binu adjusts paint with a finger. Now, Toeddy SLAPS him.

TOEDDY
 Karen, siempre me haces sonreird.

BINU
 What does that mean?

TOEDDY
 I said, "You always make me smile."

KAREN
 Binu, learn Spanish. Women like men
 who know a culture other than their
 own. Bianca would love it. I know I
 would. Long Island guys are basic.

INT. SHOWROOM - DAY

Surrounded by Patrons, Reggie and Bianca are fast friends.

BIANCA
 ¿Conoces ese chiste?

REGGIE
 ¡Me encanta ese chiste!

BIANCA
 Conozco a un hombre con una pierna de
 palo llamado Bob.

REGGIE
 ¿En realidad? ¿Cómo se llama
 su otra pierna?

BIANCA
 ¿En realidad? ¿Cómo se llama
 su otra pierna?

Subtitles: "I know a man with a wooden leg named Bob."
 "Really? What's the name of his other leg?"

BIANCA
 How do you know Spanish so well?

REGGIE
 Baseball. You pick it up quickly.

BIANCA
 You're so fun. No wonder Karen liked you.

REGGIE

She liked everyone. She brought out the best in everyone. Karen was enchanted by the world; the world was enchanted by her. That was her superpower, but she had so many strengths. They were effortlessly complemented by her incalculable gifts. Karen was kind, brilliant, stylish, cool, witty... She was extraordinary. Timeless.

BIANCA

Gosh. I hope a boy will go on and on and say such nice things about me one day.

REGGIE

He will. Every Queen has her day. And I know Karen would go on forever about me.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Back with Binu and Karen. Toeddy haplessly creates literal and figurative kitchen fires that Karen puts out.

BINU

Why did you and Reggie break up? You're the total package. I bet a lot of awful poetry was written about you in college.

KAREN

A boy wrote a song for me. And an opera in graduate school. It fades after that.

BINU

You're like Helen of Troy. You've got a face that launched a thousand ships.

KAREN

You're just kissing up. After being mean.

BINU

No. I adore Reg. But in what world could a Greek god with his raw intelligence or three million dollar signing bonus right out of high school ever again meet a woman like you? Definitely not while steamrolling through These United States as a globally-elite professional athlete.

KAREN

Reggie was a good starter boyfriend. He taught me about what I wanted, and what I never wanted again. He was too polite. He lacked urgency and was shy. He often slept. In darker moments...he'd get sad.

(MORE)

KAREN (cont'd)

(beat)

He was flaky, flighty, too spontaneous, he didn't like sports (makes no sense). I feel like he was a better friend to my parents than he was to me? He was too optimistic, he was never on time.

BINU

In all seriousness, why'd you break up?

KAREN

We were young. But the wounds are fresh.

BINU

My dad says... Sometimes it's easier to talk if you don't have much invested in the person listening... Tell me.

KAREN

We fought a lot. It was bad.

BINU

Can I ask what you fought about?

KAREN

One night, the cops came. It got ugly.

BINU

Four years ago...my mom killed herself.

KAREN

I supported Hillary. Reggie voted Trump.

Binu fires his chef's hat at an innocent Teddeo.

BINU

You cut off some perfectly good dick over politics? Long Island is Italian cops and Irish fire-people! Who was he gonna support? Joseph Biden? If it was about women's rights, Biden woulda said, "Girls can't cook. But first, lemme tell you about the baker's dozen of Japs I killed during The French and Indian War."

KAREN

Stop.

BINU

"Naw, we told them to stop. It was a whole platoon of 'em. Me and my man Pork Chop filleted them into thin slices with but three bayonets between us."

Karen smiles. Steps back to see her egg yolk adjustments.

BINU
Will the lighting bring out the yellow?

KAREN
I hope so. Though this is a warm-up act.
I don't want to upstage the headliner.

BINU
What's the headliner?

KAREN
An oil-on-canvas from my new collection:
Portraits from the Long Island Railroad.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

A painting from the inside of a Long Island Railroad train.
It features a man commuting to work: Haggard. Weary. Brave.

Reggie sees its label: "The Hollow Cheek."

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

STAFF on break eat dinner. Among them, Karen dines.

In the distance, Reggie steps out. Sniffs his bullet.

Curiously observing, he watches Karen hold court.

INT. SHOW ROOM - DAY

Binu, Reggie, and Bianca watch Karen linger among Patrons.

BIANCA
Talk to her. You're in a suit. People
might think you're an important buyer.

Reggie approaches Karen.

REGGIE
How's it going?

KAREN
Not well. I'm waiting on an art dealer.
That Mason Mitchell guy I had mentioned.

REGGIE
How's your family?

KAREN
My folks are in Florida for the winter.
I'm living at the house. I was between
apartments and commuting into the city,
but I got laid off. How's your family?

REGGIE
Dad's on disability. Junior, too. Like
father, like son... What were you doing?

KAREN

Software engineer. The lights went out.
 (beat)
 Being 28 and stagnant in your parents'
 fancy house is a slow, gilded death.
 That said, I obviously can't complain.

REGGIE

I can. Everyone's problems are relative.
 (beat)
 Your paintings were always jaw-dropping,
 but I didn't know you'd get this...dark.

KAREN

... Before you go, Binu wanted to walk
 around the vineyard. Pick some grapes.

REGGIE

I'll get him for you.

KAREN

Did you like anyone showing tonight?

REGGIE

There was a lot of good work.
 (unaware)
 I liked the artist who did train riders.
 "The Hollow Cheek"? Major League player.

Portraits from the L.I. Railroad. Karen, caught off-guard.

EXT. VINEYARD - DAY

Binu and Karen walk along a row of grapevines.

BINU

Do you want to paint together?

KAREN

Meeting of the minds.

BINU

We can compare notes.

KAREN

Share tricks of the trade.

BINU

Yeah. To be honest, I don't have any...

KAREN

Friends?

BINU

I was going to say "peers." Art peers.
 (MORE)

BINU (cont'd)
 I kind of have all the friends I need.
 (picks a grape)
 Do you?

KAREN
 It's harder to make friends at my age.

BINU
 Isn't it easier?

KAREN
 You would think. At school, teachers
 and the other kids don't support you?

BINU
 Teachers support everyone. Other kids
 don't even like themselves, forget me.

Karen picks grapes, shares them.

KAREN
 People who aren't capable of achieving
 their dreams will always criticize the
 people who try. It's not the achieving
 of our dream or the attempt itself. It
 bothers them that we even have a dream.

In the clear distance of the cool night, MASON MITCHELL (40)
 closes in on Karen. He sports a tailored suit, chiseled face.

MASON
 Karen Keene.

KAREN
 Mason Mitchell.

BINU
 I fucking knew it.

MASON
 It's been awhile. How are you?

KAREN
 Good, how are you? This is my friend
 and co-conspirator, Binu Binghavi.
 His portraits were in Artforum.

MASON
 What was your name again?

BINU
 Binu Binghavi?

MASON
 Of course. The convenience store
 portraits. I didn't know you were...

BINU
A kid?

MASON
A Sikh.

BINU
Oh. You pronounced it right. Most people say "Seek." But it's "Sick."

MASON
I pronounce everything right.

Binu chuckles.

MASON
Why are we laughing?

BINU
Wow, okay... Karen?

KAREN
Who have you been seeing lately?

MASON
No one... I'd like to see both of you. Your portraits convey urgency.

BINU
I have an apprentice job after school, but if Karen can host us, let's do it.

KAREN
Okay, the three of us... Might be fun.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - DAY

Binu, Reggie, Bianca, and Karen say their goodbyes. Bianca gives Karen a hug, enjoys an extended bear hug with Reggie.

Reggie and Karen raise an awkward hand, then head off.

Karen makes the long walk to her car. Binu, Reggie, Bianca make their way to Reggie's truck, animated in the distance.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Reggie watches from a distance as Binu and Bianca say their goodbyes in front of Bianca's house.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Reggie rounds out a pillbox with painkillers. On his cell:

REGGIE
Hi, this is Reggie Kennedy, leaving a message for James Verruto... Me again. I was...hoping you could see me throw.

On a computer, he Googles Binu on Artforum. Sees his smile. He considers his bullet. The beautiful room is suffocating.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Under bright lights, Reggie faces an imposing PITCHER. He BLASTS fly balls over the fence.

EXT. BINU'S ROOM - MORNING

Binu's on his laptop. He compares before-and-after pictures on a Sikh's barber's website. Indian boys with cool cuts.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Binu and Darnell walk with VIKRAM MEHTA (13).

VIKRAM

What do you have now?

DARNELL

Art. We're getting our projects ready.

VIKRAM

Check out my submission: The watercolor of our baby pics. I'll stop by in a few.

DARNELL

Binu's gonna win.

VIKRAM

Binu never wins.

BINU

Why do you think that is?

VIKRAM

Most people take punches in life. Some of us throw them.

INT. ART ROOM - DAY

Arts and crafts line the walls, sit on tables. Dom shapes a mold in the corner. Binu and Darnell walk in, set up shop.

Dom looks at them. Darnell walks to a pile, flips through artwork, digs out Vikram's aforementioned watercolor. The paintings of classmates feature turbans on Binu and Vikram.

Since Vikram doesn't wear one, Darnell raises an eyebrow.

He brings the watercolor to Binu, who sighs in defeat.

DARNELL

Dom, why would you do this?

DOM

Binu's a glory hog. He gets points for diversity cuz people feel bad for him.

BINU

Well don't drag Vikram into it.

DOM

Fine. Just don't hog all the attention, because other people have noticed, too.

BINU

Like who?

DOM

Give me paint money and I'll tell you.

Dom leaves. Binu folds up the watercolor, hides it.

BINU

Vikram's coming. If he sees himself with a turban painted on his head, he'll melt.

DARNELL

Vikram is tough.

BINU

He's soft. He's not like most Indians; it's an odd culture. There are layers.

DARNELL

How is he not like most Indians?

BINU

He's light-skinned. He's never felt pain. Dad's a doctor, Mom's got a Masters in Physics, and his sister's name is Monica.

DARNELL

That's so aspirational.

BINU

It's wild. He's like Simba from the Lion King. He can't do racism; he's an infant.

Vikram enters. Silence descends.

DARNELL

Your sister's name is Monica?

VIKRAM

I don't make the rules. I follow them.

DARNELL (lying)

... I brought out your watercolor, spilled paint on it, then panicked and threw it in the trash outside... Sorry.

Vikram, confused.

DARNELL

Binu went to find it, but it was gone.
It might've been taken by the janitor.

VIKRAM

Custodian.

BINU

Janitor. He knows what he is.

VIKRAM

... Janitor is offensive.

BINU

Custodian is offensive. It assumes that
a janitor is something to be ashamed of.

DARNELL

Blue collar work is important. Even more
with AI coming your stupid, artsy dreams.

BINU

Sam Altman is about to run a train on us.

VIKRAM

... Did you throw my watercolor out so
you could win the contest...? Fuck you.

He leaves. Binu approaches a vase of flowers. A TEACHER
enters the space. Binu doesn't notice.

He lifts the vase, throws it into a cinder block wall,
SHATTERING it. Water, glass, and tulips are everywhere.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Binu and Darnell sit before dour Principal CARLE (55).

CARLE

I understand you joined the track team.

BINU

Yes, Principal Carle.

CARLE

I'm told Darnell was the slowest boy on
the team. Only you're now the slowest.
Congratulations on a race to the bottom.

BINU

Thank you.

CARLE

If you don't have any friends, coming in
last won't help... Sports aren't for you.

BINU
Should I quit?

CARLE
I'll say this: Quitting is underrated.

BINU
I get that, but... Indians keep going.

CARLE
(beat)
How's your father? He never comes on
Parents' Night.

BINU
... Some of us work for a living.

Carle stares him down.

CARLE
Do you have outside male role models?
Seeing that your father is...absent?

BINU
David Hockney? Sean Scully? Rondinone?

CARLE
None of them move me. You're dismissed.

Binu leaves. Darnell is on his own.

CARLE
He's a bad influence. You're even worse.

DARNELL
Binu didn't join track to make friends.
He did it cuz I'm his friend... When I
come in last place, my dad loses it...
Binu only signed up for track so he'd
come in last place. He did it to save me
from my dad, so leave his dad out of it.

Darnell stands.

CARLE
I didn't dismiss you.

DARNELL
Sorry, boss.

CARLE
Excuse me?

DARNELL
I'm sorry. Principal Carle.

CARLE
 Other students have earned the privilege
 of calling me "Principal Carle." You can
 call me "Sir."

Darnell leaves.

CARLE
 Sit down. I didn't dismiss you.

DARNELL
 I didn't ask... Sir.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Binu and Bianca balance on a see-saw. Eat ice cream cones.

BINU
 I wanna ask you something, but I
 don't want you to be mad at me.

BIANCA
 I won't be mad.

BINU
 Forget it.

BIANCA
 Ask me.

The see-saw rises and falls.

BINU
 Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

BIANCA
 I hate you.

BINU
 Don't deflect. Answer the question.

BIANCA
 I want to help with climate change.

BINU
 You'd be great at it. You're caring.

BIANCA
 I want to issue "dire warnings." Write
 a book. You know *The Picture of Dorian
 Gray*? I'm Ecuadorian, but...everyone
 thinks I'm Mexican. The book would be
 called *The Picture of Ecuadorian Gray*.

BINU
 That's funny. What else do you want?

BIANCA
 ... A passport to a bigger life.
 (beat)
 What about you?

BINU
 I dunno. I have a lot of problems.

BIANCA
 I have problems, too.

BINU
 My problems have problems.

BIANCA
 What are your problems' problems?

BINU
 Mainly me.

With her end of the see-saw on the ground, Bianca quickly gets off. She sends Binu (and his cone) crashing to earth.

EXT. CLIENT HOUSE - DAY

After school, Binu SAWS wood while Reggie HAMMERS nails.

Soon, Reggie HITS his thumb. Binu gets ice from a cooler, then tends to Reggie with brotherly love.

BINU
 Are you okay?

REGGIE
 No, load up your painting. You're gonna have to drive us to Karen's.

BINU
 Focus on your arm.

REGGIE
 It's fine. I got something for the pain.

BINU
 ... What happens if you don't make it to the big leagues?

REGGIE
 You're looking at it. This exact life.
 (beat)
 But I will play Major League Baseball.

BINU
 I like your confidence... I read some more about you online.

REGGIE
 People can be critical.

BINU

They can be cruel, too.

Binu passes the strap of his safety goggles over his turban, then onto the back of his head. The goggles shield his eyes.

REGGIE

I had early injuries, and still came close. But two years ago, I blew out my arm and tore my UCL. It was a gift, though. The new ligament is stronger.

BINU

How do you prove it?

REGGIE

I have to hit 100 miles an hour. If I do, a scout will see me throw... If he sees me, he's gonna sign me.

Binu sets the goggles on his forehead. Faces off with Reggie.

BINU

Do you know how to box?

REGGIE

No. But I definitely know how to fight.

LATER

Reggie gives Binu a bare knuckles boxing lesson.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Reggie and Binu drive. Paintings are secure.

EXT. KAREN'S HOUSE - DAY

On the deck are Gridwall panels. Binu's portraits of happy customers from the convenience store hang proudly.

They are complemented by several of Karen's portraits. The commuters of the Long Island Railroad.

Binu and Karen stand in the grass. They hold palettes filled with paints. Face their respective easels.

In the distance, Reggie takes in the property. He produces his bullet, then discreetly sniffs.

He returns to the deck. Admires "The Hollow Cheek."

KAREN

What do you feel when you look at the blank canvas? What do you see?

BINU

I see endless possibilities. And I feel gratitude, just for the chance to paint.

KAREN

I feel the wind on my face. I feel free.

Binu's painting is an oil of himself. In front of his easel. Its focus is Reggie and Karen, talking in the grass. We do not see Karen's canvas, though it's a similar version.

BINU

I also feel this...nagging anxiety.

KAREN

I feel a debilitating procrastination whispering in my ear.

BINU

What's it saying?

KAREN

I'm wasting the privilege of being a woman in America who can own her own business and order hot guys on the phone.

BINU

You should talk to someone about that.

KAREN

I think I just did.

REGGIE

How is your love life, Karen?

Her eyes narrow.

REGGIE

It was a human, earthbound question. Clearly, the dating apps have been kind.

KAREN

I'm sure they're paradise for you.

REGGIE

I wouldn't know. I don't use apps.

KAREN

You write your number on the ball?

REGGIE

Too crass. I mainly just poke around whatever city I'm in. I later find a nice bench to sit down on, and start reading my books wherever I left off.

(MORE)

REGGIE (cont'd)

(beat)

Then I wait until someone hits on me.

BINU

What a fucking demon.

KAREN

You wait until someone...hits on you.

REGGIE

It is possible they, too, like to read.

KAREN

You never read books. What do you read?

REGGIE

Way back in Single-A ball with the Fort Myers Mighty Mussels? My catcher Hector got me into Mark Twain and the Brontë sisters. But all the writers involved had pretty harsh words for Jane Austen. It's comical: Like rappers having beef.

BINU

Can I have your autograph?

KAREN

The Brontë sisters...and Jane Austen.

REGGIE

Sure. I got further into American Lit while in Double-A with the Montgomery Biscuits. Long bus rides, yeah? Anyhow, in our book club, we read Emily Brontë, cuz guys had a slump buster named Emmy.

KAREN

... What pray tell, is a "slump buster"?

BINU

It's when they diddle a groupie to get them out of a protracted hitting slump. Continue: We're listening with intent.

REGGIE

Mark Twain once said, "Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I want to dig up Jane Austen, then hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone."

KAREN

He didn't say that.

Reggie considers paintings with teammate SELDEN LARUE (21).

REGGIE (V.O.)

He did. I memorized it to impress girls after they'd strike up conversations in museums. When I got demoted to Single-A with the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers? I'd visit *The 90's Museum* with my boy Selden LaRue on off-days. Selden now works for Latham's as an art auctioneer in Midtown. I should introduce the three of you.

(beat)

Anyway. The local girls would plop down, and we'd discuss Mark Twain, Emily, and Charlotte Brontë as D-1 shit talkers of Jane. But Anne Brontë was the ringleader. She was driven by professional jealousy, but she was also 1850's homely. And you just know that Jane Austen was a solid 7.

KAREN

Run it back. You never once read a book.

REGGIE

I never did a lot of things I should've.

Karen sees Mason Mitchell crossing the gate. He arrives.

MASON

Hi, Karen. Hi, Binu.

KAREN

Hey, there.

BINU

Hello, Mason Mitchell.

Mason and Reggie nod.

KAREN

Let's get into it; have a look. Can I get you anything?

MASON

No. I would prefer to be alone, however.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Three friends pick at meats, cheeses. Scoop veggies, dip.

REGGIE

"I would prefer to be alone"?

BINU

"However"?

REGGIE

You want to sell art to this guy?

KAREN

He's hot and rich. We all have our flaws. Let me grab some Prosciutto?

REGGIE
You're a vegetarian.

KAREN
Grow up. Plants are our friends.

REGGIE
May I please have a celery stalk?

BINU
Stalk?

KAREN
You can just say, "Can I have the celery"
like any normal person. Where did you get
"stalk"? In Cincinnati? Elly De La Cruz?
Oops: Cincy is a major league franchise.

BINU
Good one, Keene.

KAREN
Don't call me by my last name. We're not
there yet.

REGGIE
... When did you get into baseball?

BINU
Can you take me to get my haircut?
My dad gave me permission. It's time.

Mason comes through the sliding door, addresses Karen.

MASON
I have my thoughts. Let's have a drink.

KAREN
I don't drink.

MASON
It's never too late to start.

INT. GAME ROOM - NIGHT

Ornate decor complements Reggie's house. The four shoot pool.

MASON
You both create mature portraits of
people... Karen, let's not mince words.
Your work, using Binu's name. And Binu:
Your work, using Karen's name.

KAREN
I don't follow.

MASON
Your portraits are dark. His are light.
(MORE)

MASON (cont'd)

The people in your paintings are, in a word, miserable. His are joyful. Why do you think that is?

KAREN

We reflect the world around us?

REGGIE

Binu has nowhere to go but up, and Karen has nowhere to go but down.

KAREN

Maybe. I hated my job, and hated going to work. So did the people on the train. Now I miss work, and I miss them, too. Either way, isn't the sadness beautiful?

MASON

Not when it comes from you. What's the market for your work? Who are the buyers?

KAREN

Rich people, poor people...everyone else?

MASON

Poor people don't want to see their poverty reflected in art. Rich people have expectations of you, and everyone else? Everyone else has more important things to do than think about you.

KAREN

What expectations do rich people have?

MASON

The wealthy have disdain for you. You're upper middle-class; you work for them... You're not Binu, you're Karen.

KAREN

So?

MASON

They think, "Why can't she be me? Why not work smarter, not harder?" The last thing the rich want is a portrait of mediocrity: The rank-and-file, sweating it out on the Long Island Railroad, Metro-North and New Jersey Transit? Is that what people want?

REGGIE

I think it is.

MASON

The market would suggest otherwise. I like Karen's art, but I like money more.

(MORE)

MASON (cont'd)

No one wants sadness from a woman; they want joy. As women's roles in the workplace shift, they're still expected to be buoyant. No one likes a sad woman.

REGGIE

Everybody likes sad women. My mom drank herself to death, just like her own mom.

BINU

My mom was sad, too, Mr. Mitchell. She gobbled a fistful of barbiturates, just like Marilyn Monroe.

KAREN

That's not cute.

BINU

You're not the one who found her.

MASON

At your age, with your gift, if you painted Karen's grown men and women riding on the train, it'd be poetic.

BINU

Why?

MASON

The point of art is to reveal truth. To say "This is How Life Is." If an Indian boy can capture the despair of worker bees, then buyers would surely present.

BINU

But that's Karen's art.

KAREN

My art is my life. It's how I express my love for the world. My love for people.

MASON

No one cares.

REGGIE

I care. You can draw a straight line from Karen Keene to Robert Henri and Édouard Manet. Realism at its finest.

KAREN

... When did you learn about Realism?

REGGIE

Back when I was in Triple-A with the Albuquerque Isotopes? A couple of the guys would chill at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center on off days. It was a

(MORE)

REGGIE (cont'd)
 nice palate cleanser after a night at
 the Holocaust & Intolerance Museum of
 New Mexico. It's when I found Realism.
 Actually...I suppose Realism found me.

MASON
 Those places do not exist.

REGGIE
 They do; Google them. They're real and
 they're funny. Why else would I say it?

MASON
 ... What do you do?

REGGIE
 I'm a baseball player.

MASON
 I don't watch sports.

REGGIE
 Me neither. I do drugs and I read.

MASON
 You're with the Yankees? The Mets?

REGGIE
 The minors.

MASON
 ... I'm sorry to hear that. Binu, you
 also have a fondness for your subjects.

BINU
 They're customers from our store.

MASON
 That's fine. Again, babies or puppies
 are what buyers want from Karen. They
 want her in a sun dress, not in black.
 She's talented, but not interesting.

(beat)
 I have to be going. You have my offer.
 You're both skilled, but if you take
 ownership of the others work? That's
 the only way you can make a name for
 yourself in the arts in this economy.

BINU
 I'm not that cynical.

MASON
 Karen is.

BINU

We want to make a name for ourselves
before AI takes over.

MASON

Adapt or die. Publish or perish.

KAREN

What does AI even know about art?

MASON

What does artificial intelligence know
about art? Only the first three letters.

EXT. BACKYARD TENNIS COURT - NIGHT

Reggie and Karen play pickle ball under lights.

KAREN

I know why you hang out with Binu.
He reminds you that no matter how
difficult your life is, his is worse.

REGGIE

The reason I hang out with Binu is to
reassure him that no matter how bad
life might feel, at least he's not me.

KAREN

... What would you say about my life?

REGGIE

Losing your job was a blessing. Having a
big house when no one has a house isn't
going to make you happy. I paid for mine,
and I'm not happy. But your talent isn't
a depreciating asset like a throwing arm.

Binu appears, gives Karen water.

BINU

What are you guys talking about?

REGGIE

I was saying how my life isn't optimal.
Karen was saying how your life is trash.

BINU

Your life stinks for sure, but mine is
subjectively shit... Speaking of which,
I gotta go. I have an early lunch with
my oppressor in the cafeteria tomorrow.

REGGIE

Dom?

BINU
You remember his name?

REGGIE
Of course. It's important to you.

A small light in Karen's eye.

BINU
Can you pick me up at school one day in the Ferrari? It'll make me look cool.

REGGIE
No. I'd be messing with the space-time continuum. You're like a schoolboy and I'm Charles Darwin. I'm this zoologist-type who studies your ecosystem.

KAREN
It's like non-human intelligence seeding us here, experimenting on us, but mostly keeping their distance before harvesting --

BINU
What's with your goofy alien obsession?

REGGIE
Let's figure out how to sell your art. Both of you. Let's sell it on our own.

KAREN
How?

REGGIE
Selden LaRue... For now, I wanna help Binu with Bianca. I feel youthful and useful instead of aging and injured. Struggling with painkillers.

KAREN
Struggling how?

REGGIE
Struggling the way people struggle. Do you think commuters you paint are okay? They're taking something, or should be.

BINU
What kind of damage do painkillers do?

KAREN
... They hurt your heart.

Winding up with his racket, Reggie LAUNCHES a ball high into the night. The three watch as it rises, then falls.

REGGIE

For artists and athletes, turning 30 is a different ballgame. It may not happen for me, so let's make it happen for you.

(beat)

Let's sell your art. Set up a gallery. Host a pop-up. I have museum experience.

Karen, doubtful.

REGGIE

I've worked with top lawyers, serious agents, and unserious owners for over ten years now. We can sell your art.

(beat)

I can't pitch, but you two can paint.

BINU

Give him a shot, Karen. Let's have fun.

KAREN

Okay. Let's sell art... Let's have fun.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Reggie and Karen see Binu off in BB's modest car.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Standing alone, Binu waits for the bus. 20 feet away, KIDS commiserate. Save Bianca and Darnell, Binu has no friends.

EXT./INT. BUS - MORNING

Binu behind Driver. Stares out the window as life passes by.

DRIVER

How come you always sit in front?

No answer. Dom sits in the back.

DRIVER

Do you do everything your mom says?

BINU

No.

DRIVER

Then why do you sit in front?

BINU

For the same reason you do.

"Because I have to."

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Reggie eats with Marcus Junior.

JUNIOR

You want to go to the city tomorrow?

REGGIE

It feels different these days. Bleak. There aren't enough native New Yorkers to combat the tech and finance bros.

JUNIOR

You sound old.

REGGIE

I am old.

JUNIOR

You sound bitter. Tech and finance bros don't have your gifts. In order for you to be great, they have to be normal. Also, anyone who says they're a native New Yorker better not be from Long Island. It's a weird flex in general.

REGGIE

It's just pride.

JUNIOR

It doesn't take any skill to be born in the city. Moving from out of state, that takes guts... It takes courage to move there without mom's home-cookin' waitin' in the suburbs. Transplants don't get a break from the rat race.

(beat)

For a forward thinker, your politics are ass backwards. You should go into the city. Maybe bring a girl.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Binu walks to his locker. He sees Dom there, so he stops.

Bianca approaches the locker, so Binu hides and watches.

BIANCA

You have Binu's combo?

DOM

No, it's a secret present exchange.

BIANCA

Got it... Can I ask you something?

(beat)

Does he ever say anything about me?

DOM

You mean, does he like you?

BIANCA

No. Why? Does he maybe like me?

DOM

Yeah. He does like you.

(lying)

But he only "likes" Indian girls...

He likes you, just not in that way.

EXT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

A fancy, yet soulless room. Reggie studies Latham's online.

EXT. HALL - DAY

Vending machine. Binu straightens a bill against the edge. Inserts it. Candy uncoils, but dangles mid-air.

EXT. BUS LINE - DAY

Binu, Darnell, Dom, and BOYS horse around. Dom stops Binu.

DOM

You got the money?

They make a paint-for-cash exchange.

Reggie pulls up in a Ferrari. It's the one we saw in the driveway of his house when he and Binu arrived on the bike. Boys stare in awe. Reggie emerges like a legend. Stoically:

REGGIE

Hello, Binu Bingham.

Binu, speechless.

REGGIE

How is your...day progressing?

BINU

The fuck are you doing here?

REGGIE

I'm here for you...to teach me.

DARNELL

Nigga teach you what?

REGGIE

He's teaching me...about art.

DOM

Wait a second. You're Reggie Kennedy.

(beat)

Are you here to make Binu look cool?

REGGIE

What? Ew, who would do such a thing?

DOM
Are you gonna take him to the cages?

REGGIE
Yes... After formal art instruction.

DOM
Are you gonna strike him out?

REGGIE
... Only if I'm lucky.

DOM
Ha! Even he can hit off your bum arm!

BINU
Reggie, get in the car.

Binu hops in the passenger side, Reggie rushes to his side.

DOM
Leave! Scram! Get off our property,
you bitch-boy pedophile!

Dom throws a tuna fish sandwich at the Ferrari. Mayo sticks. Boys laugh as the car starts. Darnell raises his palm in solidarity with Binu, and the latter holds his stare.

EXT./INT. FERRARI - DAY

Binu rides shotgun, unamused.

REGGIE
I wanted to surprise you.

BINU
Everyone knows the term Big Dick Energy.
(beat)
Big Dick Energy, Version 2.0, is when a white kid from school randomly shows up to a POC kid's house without giving advance notice. They just parachute the fuck in, like eager cadets fresh out of Ranger school. They drop on in, without giving the POC friend a chance to move around ethnic foodstuffs in the fridge.

REGGIE
It was your idea, and then your dad's.

BINU
He's supposed to embarrass me. I hate myself, and I hate you... Why are you wearing a suit? Where are we going?

REGGIE
Church.

BINU

Huh... Can you take me for my haircut?
There's a Sikh barber who specializes
in giving us our first haircuts.

(lying)

My dad can't afford to take the day off.

REGGIE

If your dad's okay with it, it'd be an
honor. If you're ready? I'd love to.

BINU

Question: I have Bianca's number, cuz
we're already friends. But how do you
ask for a girl's number in the wild?

REGGIE

Just ask... Big-time players make big-
time plays...in big-time games. Oh --
After you put it in your phone, grab a
napkin, then write it down in case you
lose your phone. It lets the girl know
that she's important to you. A priority.

INT. HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Binu leads Reggie through the house and into the kitchen.

BINU

Sit down. Don't touch anything.

Reggie sits at the table, Binu continues to BB's room.

INT. BB'S ROOM/HALL - DAY

BB is without his turban. He brushes pulled-back hair.
Binu watches his dad from a slightly open door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Reggie eyes the fridge. He gets up, finds leftovers. Like a
New World explorer, he heats up ethnic foodstuffs.

INT. BB'S ROOM - DAY

Binu knocks, enters. Prepares to lie about church/his turban.

BINU

Can I go to church with Reggie?

(off a nod)

You sure? I know it's random.

BB

Religious freedom, no?

BINU

It's more that it's an adventure.

(MORE)

BINU (cont'd)

(beat)

Can I get the haircut? The Sikh barber
I told you about is taking new clients.

BB

You're not ready... Maybe I'm not ready.

BINU

Why do I even wear a patka?

BB

Finally, you ask me. Now is the time?

(beat)

Binu, we as Sikhs...are touched by God.

BINU

We are?

BB

No, stupid! You think you are Jewish?

BINU

I don't know where you're going half
the time! Reggie, get over here! Dad,
tell him I'm allowed to go to church.

Reggie appears. He's surprised to see BB's hair.

REGGIE

Wow. You look incredible.

BINU

... Why do you smell like Indian food?

REGGIE

I don't.

BB

You do smell like Indian food.

REGGIE

I don't. No one thinks that.

BINU

Dad, tell him I have permission.

BB

Binu has my blessing.

REGGIE

You sure? I'm Irish Catholic, so I
take religion pretty seriously.

BB

It'll be good for him. I trust you.

INT. BINU'S ROOM - DAY

Binu puts on a suit. He and Reggie now match. In a show of brotherhood, Reggie ties Binu's tie for him.

REGGIE

Let's go to the city tomorrow.

BINU

Can I invite Bianca?

REGGIE

Again? Will her parents approve?

BINU

Bianca's mom is poor and my dad is poor.
Poor parents don't pull helicopter shit.

Reggie begins to shine Binu's shoes.

REGGIE

There's an auction at Latham's. My old teammate Selden is an auctioneer: The museum buddy I'd meet girls with. Dress like this, and bring your best painting. Selden knows a lot of well-heeled buyers.

BINU

Can we bring Karen?

REGGIE

No. Reggie and Binu are a Saturday vibe. Karen's a Tuesday morning, 8 a.m. set-up.

BINU

We have to bring Karen. We're a team.

REGGIE

Like I said, we can do a gallery pop-up. Karen should have a show of her own. She's too chic for any screwball hijinx.

BINU

... Why is it Reggie and Binu, and not Binu and Reggie?

Reggie picks lint off of Binu. Tightens the knot on his tie.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Reggie and Binu arrive at the Church. Emerge like diplomats.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The pair sit in the pews and speak in quiet, measured tones.

BINU

What do you pray for?

REGGIE
I actually just think. I've never been
to my mom's grave. I come here instead.

BINU
You've never been to your mom's grave?

REGGIE
It's too painful.

BINU
We talked about how neither of us...
We never said "I love you" to our moms.

REGGIE
I've never said it to anyone.

BINU
... I obviously haven't kissed a girl.

REGGIE
Are you lonely?

BINU
Lonely is my normal. You ever get sad?

REGGIE
Only when I'm happy... Sometimes, when
you're out and enjoying a night? You
catch yourself in a downbeat, and feel
a pang of emptiness. It eats your soul.

Priest walks slowly with a COUPLE he counsels. Reggie nods.

BINU
Don't guys like you just meet someone?

REGGIE
You can't date when you're sad inside.
I have everything people want, but
nothing I want. My dream is fading.

BINU
My dream is so far away.

REGGIE
At least it's in front of you.

INT. FROZEN ROPES - NIGHT

Reggie does high-intensity interval training. Enter SCOUT 2.

SCOUT 2
Hey, Reg. I'm here for Rye's showcase.

REGGIE
He's taking grounders.

SCOUT 2

Off the record: What kinda kid is he?

REGGIE

Honestly...? He's a great ballplayer,
and an even better person. Ask anyone.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Reggie pitches to Junior. He's unable to hit 100 on the gun.
Once again, the gun reads fastballs: 97. 98. 97.

LATER

Alone in the grass, Reggie gazes at the infield. He produces
his bullet, takes a sniff of his painkiller.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Reggie is back in his bright, cavernous, multi-car garage.
The all-white walls beg for attention.

Again, atop the fish tank's lid is an Rx painkiller bottle.
The fish food is next to it. Reggie feeds the fish, who rush
to eat the flakes. Only this time, Reggie notices a dead
fish at the bottom.

He walks to a toolbox, gets a hammer and nail. He hangs
Binu's portrait of the pleasant, heavy-set man. Admires it.
Reggie turns around. Considers the garage as gallery space.

In the tank, the fish stirs, shakes, and swims. It's alive.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Binu bikes into Karen's large driveway.

INT. KAREN'S HOUSE - DAY

Binu and Karen study Binu's work. The oil from two days ago.
She's aware of Selden/Latham's. Not that she wasn't invited.

KAREN

Latham's. What do I wear to Latham's?

BINU

Wear what you're wearing. You're chic.

KAREN

Stylish. No one confuses me for "chic."
Have you titled this?

BINU

"Boy Meets Girl." Do you have a problem
with that?

KAREN

A couple.

On her phone, Karen peruses the Latham's website.

KAREN

Selden LaRue: From the *Home of the 90's Museum* and the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers, to...auctioneering at Latham's of London.

BINU

What are you gonna show?

KAREN

I don't need to be there.

BINU

I need you there. Bianca is coming, and I need you to run interference. The way Reggie did at Lake House.

KAREN

That could fun. Like, the cool aunt.

BINU

... Sure.

KAREN

Reggie liked "The Hollow Cheek." You say nice things about my work, but I don't know if you were being sincere.

BINU

Do you really need male approval?

KAREN

Yes. Space is limited in the art world. Literally and figuratively. Women get crowded out of creative spaces.

BINU

... How talented do you think you are? Scale of 1 to 10.

KAREN

You're the prodigy. What do you think?

BINU

I think you're as talented as you are pretty.

KAREN

Scale of 1 to 10.

BINU

9.8.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Karen leads Binu upstairs, into a world of Karen's art.

BINU
How long have you been painting?

KAREN
Third grade.

BINU
When did you know you were special?

KAREN
Second grade.

BINU
Are your parents into art?

KAREN
Everyone else's.

BINU
When you grow up Indian, you assume
that American families are perfect.

KAREN
They just want me to be happy.

BINU
That's a lot to ask.

KAREN
It's too much to ask.

BINU
... Do you want kids?

KAREN
I dunno. Do kids want me? New topic.

BINU
New topic: The elephant in the room.

KAREN
Your mom. You want to talk about it?

BINU
My therapist is great. So is my dad.
Let's talk about the other elephant.

KAREN
I am a white girl cutie. And you're a
little Indian boy. And we are buddies.

BINU
Karen: I'm an Indian kid with a turban,
and you're a white woman named Karen.
You weren't gonna acknowledge our pain?

KAREN

I was hoping you wouldn't notice and it would go away on its own.

BINU

I'm sorry you're named Karen. You and the many Beckys around the world were a response to POC being classified as Tyrone, Shaniqua, and now Pajeet. It's not cool when your name is a punchline.

KAREN

Binu's a cute name.

BINU

Exactly. I'm lucky it's cute, or doors would've been closed to me.

KAREN

Either way, start with a blank canvas, then kill everything in front of you.

BINU

Agreed. I'm just here for the art.

KAREN

I'm just here to make friends.

EXT./INT. KAREN'S CAR - DAY

Karen drives Binu to Bianca's house.

EXT. BIANCA'S HOUSE - DAY

Karen watches Binu and Bianca converge, greet one another.

BIANCA

Think it'll work?

BINU

I hope so. If we can set these two up, it'll give me material for my college admissions essay. I need to stand out.

BIANCA

You have six years.

BINU

That's soon. I read that white folks aren't getting married or having kids.

BIANCA

It's called the Paradox of Choice.

BINU

I'm joking about the college essay. I just like being around those two.

Binu and Bianca hop in the car. Karen's "The Hollow Cheek" and Binu's "Boy Meets Girl" ride along, face-up and bright.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Reggie watches Fox News with Marcus and Junior. Enter Binu.

JUNIOR
How ya doin', buddy?

MARCUS
There he is!

Enter Karen and Bianca. Having not seen Karen in years, the Kennedys jump to their feet: Beer spilling, smoke clearing.

KAREN
Hi, Mr. Kennedy. Hi, Marcus, Junior.

MARCUS
Welcome home, Karen. You look great.

KAREN
Same to you. And the house is lovely.
This is my friend: Bianca Martinez.

MARCUS
Hi, there. Have a seat, ladies.

Everyone sits. Awkwardness sets in.

MARCUS (innocently)
So, Bianca: Are you and Binu girlfriend
and boyfriend?

INT. BACKYARD - DAY

Binu and Reggie on the lawn. Through a window, from afar, they see Karen and Bianca talking with Marcus and Junior. Binu is calm, but mad. All that's missing is a cigarette.

BINU
You had one job.

REGGIE
I should have told them to play it cool.

BINU
Marcus and Marcus Junior fumbled my bag.
And you should've prepared them. "Are
you and Binu girlfriend and boyfriend?"

REGGIE
Oof. And sorry he asked about gangs.
She schooled him. Latina from Hempstead.

BINU
It's MS-13 country. I totally get why
Long Island is so obsessed with MS-13.
We just need the messaging to be better.
(MORE)

BINU (cont'd)

We shouldn't call them MS-13, we should call them by their Christian name: Mara Salvatrucha.

REGGIE

Dad would want you tell that to the liberal extremists.

BINU

I have; I'm a centrist. I break bread with them. I've looked them in the eye. Point is, MS-13 sounds like the latest update of Microsoft Paint with all the new features no one asked for. And wow: Libs do not fear the computer. But Mara Salvatrucha is legit fucking terrifying.

REGGIE

Why is Karen here?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marcus accepts an ash tray from Junior. Taps his cigarette.

MARCUS

Can I get you girls something to eat?

KAREN

I'm fine.

BIANCA

I'm good.

KAREN

Why, what do you have?

MARCUS

Anything. We have a chef come in for "Salon Sundays." Reggie has his high society pals over, then we debate issues.

KAREN

Issues?

MARCUS

Social. Political. But mainly economic. When your oldest earns a multi-million dollar signing bonus outta high school, your focus becomes holdin' on to wealth, and buildin' more of it. I like debate.

KAREN

Debate. With his "high society pals."

MARCUS

You know: Movers and shakers. Do you know fashion? Proenza Schouler?

JUNIOR

Lazaro and Jack are our friends.

KAREN

I need more.

JUNIOR

Lazaro Hernandez and Jack McCollough are the founders of Proenza Schouler. They love baseball, and Reggie likes to broaden his horizons.

KAREN

Reggie knows art and Realist painters. You host "Salon Sundays" with designers and a private chef. But you still have your TV frozen on Fox News?

Marcus exhales smoke.

MARCUS

Old habits die hard. But because of Reggie, in some areas, I did evolve.

(beat)

How about you? How have you improved?

Karen blinks.

MARCUS

I don't like the whole Republican deal. I still tune in because the media won't cover NHI and UAPs. You know -- aliens.

KAREN

... I'm listening.

JUNIOR

This planet has gone through cycles of humans being placed here or seeded and DNA manipulated. Religion's an attempt of man to explain NHI phenomenon. They are the Gods of all the religions that created us. They interacted with humans, told us our origins, how to respect the earth and one another. One day, they'll come to pass judgment with a worldwide cataclysm. These beings eradicate greed, then life begins anew.

MARCUS

Now it's our turn.

KAREN

It's our time.

MARCUS

We've missed you here, Karen.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Binu, still upset. LANDSCAPERS tend to a stunning property.

REGGIE
(conceding)
I'm here to make kissing Bianca easier.

BINU
Not even kissing! I have no designs on love! She just can't know I'm into her.

REGGIE
Again: Why is Karen here?

BINU
The same reason you were at Lake House.
This can't feel like a date for Bianca.

They watch Landscapers and flowers. Enter Bianca, unnoticed.

REGGIE
Let's stay home. Enjoy the house.
Bianca's here to have fun.

BINU
You're too comfortable in this mansion.

REGGIE
I'm uncomfortable. Let's go to Latham's.

BINU
You saw my oil at Karen's house. It's called "Boy Meets Girl." I originally called it "Boy Loses Girl," because it's accurate. "Boy Meets Girl" works better.

BIANCA
I like "Boy Gets Girl Back in the End."

REGGIE
Have long have you been listening?

BIANCA
"Bianca's here to have fun."

EXT./INT. KAREN'S CAR - DAY

Karen drives, Bianca rides shotgun. Binu and Reggie in back.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Karen drives the group through Manhattan. She parks. Reggie gets "Boy Meets Girl" and "The Hollow Cheek" from the trunk.

INT. LATHAM'S - DAY

Karen and Bianca enter first. Are received by HOST (25).

HOST

Checking in?

Reggie and Binu enter. Are greeted by SELDEN LARUE (30).

SELDEN

You made it!

REGGIE

Looking good, Selden. How are you?
Binu Binghamvi, this is Selden LaRue.

SELDEN

Hello, Sir. I understand Reggie has
your best interests in mind, and it
appears he has your best art in hand.

At a table, Karen and Bianca stand in front of a guest book.
Bianca signs: "Bianca Binghamvi," taking Binu's last name.

KAREN

Oh -- It's "Keene" with a third "e."
Like Carolyn Keene from Nancy Drew.

Karen absently looks, sees Bianca erasing the signature.

KAREN

I need Reggie. Hold down the fort.

Karen walks to Reggie, mid-conversation with Binu, LaRue.

KAREN

Hi, I'm Karen. You're Selden, right?
It was so sweet of you to invite us.

SELDEN

We were just talking about you, in
the most flattering terms possible.

KAREN

(beat)

Sorry, I thought you were gonna keep
going. May I borrow Reggie a moment?

SELDEN

Sure. Why don't I take Binu's frame,
you give me yours, and we'll polish
the glass with a little Latham's love.

KAREN

We're excited to see what happens.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Reggie and Karen confer in private.

KAREN

Bianca has a crush on Binu.

REGGIE

Details.

KAREN

When she signed the guestbook, she wrote Binu as "Binu Binghavi." She signed herself as "Bianca Binghavi."

REGGIE

She's been practicing. Writing her name as his. Imagining a marriage.

(beat)

Did you ever write my name as yours?

KAREN

I wouldn't change my last name for anyone. Karen "Keene" is legend. Karen "Kennedy..."? Wait, that's stellar.

INT. PREP SUITE - DAY

TECH (60) gives "The Hollow Cheek" and "Boy Meets Girl" a glow-up. Binu and Selden watch.

SELDEN

Am I the only one you've shown this to?

BINU

No. Do you know Mason Mitchell?

SELDEN

Mitchell. To know him...is to know him.

BINU

He said we should switch ownership, cuz people wouldn't want sadness from Karen.

SELDEN

You are a great talent.

BINU

Karen's better.

SELDEN

She's wiser.

BINU

She's "wiser," but she's better. When I hit my prime, she'll still be better. But she's 28; has no résumé; no story.

SELDEN

... At Latham's, we take chances. Risks. I want to present "Boy Meets Girl" and pair it with our first item for auction.

BINU
Present "The Hollow Cheek" with "Boy
Meets Girl." This is a group project.

Karen enters.

SELDEN
Karen can wait a week. Artists need to
be patient. Talent needs time to breathe.

KAREN
What am I waiting for?

INT. PADDLE ROOM - DAY

Art BUYERS are gathered. A dozen of them. Manning a bank of
phones are art DEALERS. Reggie and Bianca sit in back,
excitedly holding paddles.

Binu and Karen take seats nearby. ATTENDANTS roll out covered
paintings. Selden stands in front; Buyers and Dealers perk up.

SELDEN
Welcome, everyone. We're going to open
the first bid of the day with new work
from an old favorite: Matthias Neuhaus.

Only Binu and Matthias are being shown:

SELDEN
We also have a new talent to pair with
Matthew... I present you Binu Binghavi
with "Boy Meets Girl." It's a 30 by 40
inch, oil on canvas. Gentlemen, please:

Attendants unveil "Boy Meets Girl." Unnoticed in back, an
upset Binu leaves to head "backstage."

SELDEN
I see from craned necks and curious
expressions that Binu Binghavi, at
13 years of age, lifts and inspires.

Reggie and Karen, like proud parents, exchange looks.

SELDEN
This one work raises many questions.
He's centered himself, his religion,
and today...he's a peer of Matthias.

He signals Attendants, who unveil the painting.

SELDEN
We present you... "Art Official."

The work is a canvas painted white. Reggie to Bianca:

REGGIE

It's just a canvas painted white.

SELDEN

"Art Official" is a play on words.
As in... "Artificial Intelligence."

Dealers talk on phones with off-site Bidders.

BUYER 1

It's light.

BUYER 2

It's clean.

BIANCA

It's a canvas painted white!

Buyers turn around and see unknown girl. Binu wheels out (a veiled) "The Hollow Man," and Buyers turn back around.

BINU

That's nothing more than "The Emperor's
New Clothes."

SELDEN

Binu?

BINU

You're showcasing me cuz I'm marketable.
This is the vast, art world conspiracy
against women that they warned us about.

Buyers and Dealers WHISPER in agreement.

BINU

My friend Karen's voice should be heard.
This is "The Hollow Man," and she's got
a lot more where this came from.

Binu unveils:

BIDDER 1

He's modern. Pensive. And he's stoic.

BIDDER 2

The depth of the oil. You can almost
taste it. Can we get a closer look?

SELDEN

Binu... "Art Official" is transgressive.
Matthias Neuhaus is a madman. A demigod.

BINU

I don't care if he's the Queen of Spain!
He is not fucking talented!

Buyers turn to one another as the room ERUPTS in gossip.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Karen downs a can of Diet Coke, crushes it with a hand.

KAREN

You don't need to force things in life.

BINU

You kinda do. I thought you'd be happy.

KAREN

You ruined an auction for a great artist,
and your own introduction to buyers.

(beat)

As for me... Do you know what women want?

Binu points at Bianca.

BIANCA

A passport to a bigger life.

Karen pauses at this. Then plows forward.

KAREN

Women want men in their lives who cause
minimal splashdown effect. You know how
in the Olympics, divers enter the water
without much of a splash? That's what I
want. A guy who can slide into my life
without much splash. Waves are expected,
but you belly-flopped us out of a medal.

JILL SMITH (65) presents: Chanel suit, Kelly bag.

JILL

I'm sorry to interrupt, but I had to
meet you. My name is Jill Smith.

BINU

Nice to meet you; I'm Binu. These are
my friends: Bianca, Reggie, and Karen,
the artist I was bragging about.

JILL

Karen, we should talk. And you, young
man. You ruined the day for one of the
world's most overrated artists.

BINU

The easiest thing to do is criticize.
But an all-white canvas is insulting.

With a warm smile and a good heart, TOM DOHERTY (40) appears.

TOM

Tom Doherty: I cover Culture & Society for ART News. That was quite a show in there. Out here, too. Do you think you can repeat your talking points for TV?

BINU

I guess so... People are tired of art that isn't good. And we're all forced to pretend it's meaningful or impactful. Most museums you go to have dogshit art.

TOM

I can't air that. But let's do a segment.

JILL

Tom, you're doing the Lord's work here.

TOM

Well. Maybe we'll have all three of you.

REGGIE

Hey, man; These two are enthusiastic, joyful people, but also serious artists. No questions, no answers, no interviews.

TOM

Okay, then let's figure something out. Karen... May I have your phone number?

KAREN

Absolutely.

Given Reggie's unforced error, Binu SLAPS his forehead.

KAREN

Let me also write it down so you don't lose it. I've got a napkin in my bag.

EXT./INT. KAREN'S CAR - DAY

Reggie behind the wheel. The girls sit in back. At an abrupt stop, Reggie's arm protects Binu. Karen smiles.

INT. FROZEN ROPES - DAY

Wearing boxing gloves and headgear, Binu and Reggie train.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Reggie's fish swims in the tank. Binu and Reggie watch it.

BB, here to pick up Binu, looks at the one painting up on the white walls: The pleasant, heavy-set man.

Binu puts fish food back on the lid. Sees the painkiller Rx. Disappointed, he looks at Reggie, who sheepishly looks back.

REGGIE

Let's hold our own auction. Here.

BINU

In the garage?

REGGIE

Owners of art galleries and sports teams control the ways and means of production. I learned that the hard way.

BINU

In the garage?

REGGIE

In the minors.

The pleasant man's smile. It calls them to action.

REGGIE

How do we get people to show up?

INT. KAREN'S HOUSE - DAY

Camera lights shine on Karen, mid-interview with Tom Hart. Reggie, Bianca, and Jill Smith: Present and accounted for.

"The Hollow Cheek" and "Boy Meets Girl" rest on easels.

KAREN

Friday night: Reggie's house. He's a local hero and a nice guy. He loves Hicksville, and Hicksville likes him.

Reggie, not loving the "likes" description.

TOM

Binu, when we do this live, here's the question I want to ask you: "Boy Meets Girl..." What's the meaning?

Off to the side, Binu's makeup is blended with a brush.

BINU

If the point of art is to say, "This is How Life Is..." Depicting myself in the painting raises questions: "Was the kid hired by these two? Are they neighbors?"

TOM

Are you neighbors?

BINU (insincere)

... We're all neighbors, Mr. Hart.

TOM

Then in "Boy Meets Girl," do you feel like a background player, perhaps?

KAREN

He's not.

A production ASSISTANT tops off Karen's martini.

KAREN

Thank you, Marvin... He's not. I can't explain now; you'll see at the auction. Also, to buyers viewing at home? Bring cash. Binu needs stacks. No give backs.

TOM

Okay, let's turn to "The Haunted Man." Is the Long Island Railroad the sole focus of your work, or is there more?

KAREN

There's more. But with this gentleman, in a commute which I took for granted, I saw so much beauty in my fellow man.

TOM

What a great way to look at the world.

JILL

It's the only way to look at the world.

TOM

Is beauty what drew you in, Mrs. Smith?

JILL

It was the optimism. I need a sense of purpose. I've had a career, ex-husband, and children. But now, as I get older? I want to be in on the action. The art world allows me be useful those who make the culture. Who lift up the culture... Frankly, I want to belong.

REGGIE

You belong, Jill. You're with us now. You're in a real special place, with an incredibly special person.

Karen smiles, but Reggie is looking at Binu. Karen recedes.

INT. FROZEN ROPES - DAY

Reggie watches a HITTER practicing. He makes a phone call.

REGGIE

Hey, this is Reggie Kennedy calling for James Verruto. I just wanted...

(MORE)

REGGIE (cont'd)

I was hoping you could see me throw.

EXT. BINU'S HOUSE - DAY

Binu and Reggie load happy portraits into the truck.

EXT. KAREN'S HOUSE - DAY

Binu, Reggie, and Karen load Karen's work with care.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Binu, Reggie, and Karen hammer nails and hang frames.

LATER

In one room, the walls are barren, furniture is gone.

BINU

We gotta get going.

KAREN

Where are you going?

Binu and Reggie look at each other.

REGGIE

He needs a haircut.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - DAY

Reggie takes Binu to his haircut. They park at a storefront.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Polaroids on the wall. Smiling men wearing turbans, and boys wearing patkas. Binu and Reggie enter.

Barber SAMIR PAHUJA (30) appears. Flowing hair and handsome.

SAMIR

Hi. I'm Samir.

BINU

I'm Binu. Nice to meet you.

SAMIR

Are you nervous? It's okay to be.

BINU

Kinda nervous. But mostly excited.

LATER

Binu sits in the chair, Samir stands behind him. They gaze into the mirror as Reggie observes.

SAMIR

Just a standard, classic boys' cut.

BINU
Nothing special.

Binu's word choice gives Reggie pause.

REGGIE
Shouldn't we talk about this?

BINU
You're fine, Karen.

REGGIE
Quit it. Let's think about this.

SAMIR
You think he hasn't thought about it?

REGGIE
You're right. It's a huge decision.

BINU
It's almost like, adopting a baby.

SAMIR
... It's more like giving one away.

BINU
I can always go back, right?

SAMIR
No one ever does. Which is cool, but I miss myself... We look back at our lives, and every moment was defined by the turban. You wonder who you would've been without it.

REGGIE
... Do you want me to wait outside?

SAMIR
No worries. You're good.

BINU
Actually... It might be a good idea.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Reggie sits outside. Across the road is a COUPLE. They cuddle and express affection. A solemn Reggie watches.

INT. BARBERSHOP (MONTAGE) - DAY

Binu gets his hair cut. First, his patka is unraveled. Samir begins cutting and pruning Binu's lengthy hair. Binu watches in the mirror. In time, a tear forms.

Outside, Reggie watches, moved by the display.

LATER

In the mirror, Binu and Samir evaluate freshly-cut hair. Samir sprays, applies product, styles some more.

Samir removes Binu's cape. Binu gets out of the chair, approaches a wall mirror. He looks at himself in awe.

EXT./INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Reggie drives the pair back to Binu's house. For the first time, Binu looks at his hair in a car's visor mirror.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Newly-arrived Karen takes her turn with a pair of scissors.

REGGIE

You don't need to put your stamp on his head. It's not your place. Samir has been cutting Sikh boys for years.

KAREN

Did you see a license? His papers?

REGGIE

His papers? That sounds kinda racist.

KAREN

I don't have a racist bone in my body.

BINU

Really? I probably have thirty of 'em.

KAREN

Stop.

BINU

I got like, six in my left hand alone.

KAREN

Stop... You may still get bullied, but it's not going to be easy anymore. That said, was this the right decision?

REGGIE

That is not for you to ask. Also, it might be the PC thing to say, "Keep the turban." But he lives in the real world.

A look of horror on Binu's face. BB stands in the doorway.

BB

What have you done to yourself?

Reggie and Karen freeze.

BB
What did you do to my son?

REGGIE
... You gave me permission.

BB
Binu... What have you done?

BB is about to explode. Instead, he begins to cry.

BINU
Dad, he didn't know. I lied to him, too.
I switched going to church with --

REGGIE
I thought we had permission. There was
the special Sikh barber and everything.

BB
You stay the hell away from my son.
(beat)
Karen... If I ask you an honest question,
will you give me an honest answer?

KAREN
Of course.

BB
(beat)
Why are you holding a pair of scissors?

Karen is mortified. BB wipes a tear.

BINU
Dad.

BB
I wish you would've talked to me.

BINU
I can't... You're always working.

BB
I wish your mom would've talked to me.
I could have stopped both of you from
making the decisions you've made.

BINU
... You're comparing Mom killing
herself to me wanting to be normal?
(beat)
Say something. Be a father and talk.

BB
I would have liked to have seen both
of you. Once more before you left me.

He leaves, turning his back on his son.

BINU

I wish you killed yourself, too!

Binu looks to Reggie.

BINU

Why didn't you let me take the blame?

REGGIE

Why'd you say we were going to church?

BINU

To get what I want.

REGGIE

You're scared of your dad for no reason.

BINU

You're scared of yourself for no reason. Painkillers? Stem cells? You don't need stem cells; they're a random excuse. Then when you don't try them, that's the reason you fail. Painkillers just stop you from feeling anything.

(beat)

Who's never visited their mom's grave?

Reggie stands down.

BINU

We scattered my mom's ashes in the Long Island Sound.

(beat)

You wouldn't last a day in my shoes.

KAREN

Let's be mature.

BINU

I'm 13, and no one is talking to you. You're gifted, but a DEI white woman.

(beat)

No wonder you don't have a boyfriend.

KAREN

... If you want to diminish me for being alone, understand this: Your turban has been a crutch. Kids can be awful to you, but they're also super nice. Now you're going to have to compete with a billion Indian boys who do not stand out at all.

(beat)

You're not Clark Kent becoming Superman. Indian kids are going to eat your lunch.

BINU

(beat)

You don't have children, and never will.

KAREN

I won't. And I'll have you to remind me.

Binu feels bad. Until Karen doubles down.

KAREN

You grew up without a mother, and it
shows.

A beat. Binu walks to his easel, then throws the painting aside. Next, he grabs his mother's wrapped birthday present, throws it to the floor. He stomps on it, smashing the box.

Binu leaves. After a moment. Reggie moves to comfort Karen.

KAREN

Don't touch me.

(2nd attempt)

Which part of "don't touch me" did
you not understand?

REGGIE

You didn't mean what you said.

KAREN

Remind me.

REGGIE

Binu only being interesting cuz of
his turban. You didn't mean that.

KAREN

Yes, I did... You need to fix this.

REGGIE

Some things are beyond repair...
Some people, too.

KAREN

Are you talking about you or me?

Karen leaves. Soon, Reggie approaches the smashed birthday present. He sits down on the couch, box on his lap.

He stares at the envelope: Binu's name written in cursive.

The destroyed box is essentially open. Reggie puts his hand in, then touches Mom's final present. "...she never gave me a gift I wanted. She'd get me colorful turbans..." Later, to BB: "Will you ever get me something I want?"

Reggie slowly slides out a pristine, leather baseball glove.

He sits with it.

EXT. HICKSVILLE - MORNING

Sunrise. Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time" begins to PLAY.

MONTAGE

Instead of throwing or hitting a baseball, Reggie cross-trains. He fires footballs through a tree tire (just like Binu did on page 1). Only Reggie's throws are laser beams.

Reggie is at the church. Earlier, Priest said, "If the house is too much or you need to dry out, stay in the basement."

Looking to escape the prison that is his McMansion, Reggie sets up camp in a small basement room. He tosses his pills.

INTERCUT WITH

At school, Binu makes the rounds without a turban. In the hall, he is met with vacant stares from the other Kids.

Binu opens his locker. Garbage spills on the floor. Despite a change in appearance, it hasn't kept Dom from being Dom.

At lunch, Binu continues to sit alone. In class, Bianca stares blankly at him.

Karen sets up Reggie's house further. Marcus and Junior move furniture. Jill Smith sets artwork into frames.

Binu shows up, too. Faces off with Karen, and they embrace.

Binu and BB pass one another at home, but do not interact.

However, while working at the store, BB is thrown for a loop when he sees the ART News interview air. "The Hollow Man" is shown, and intrigued store Customers stare at the TV,

Desk Cop from page 3 watches at the precinct. She sees the painting Binu made of her, foreshadowed in Act II. The oil is of Desk Cop in her booth, with Binu looking up at her.

Others see the segment: Principal Carle. Selden and Matthias.

EXT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Reggie rings the bell. Mid-cleaning, Karen opens the door.

KAREN

What are you doing here?

REGGIE

I mean... It's my house.

KAREN

Where have you been?

REGGIE

Church. Father Frank's always offering me a place to stay to get straight. To get out of the house and out of my own head. I decided to take him up on it.

KAREN

... Come on in. Let me show you around.

Reggie enters. Paintings hang on bare walls, but are covered by newspaper. A contemporary home is now a classic gallery.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Reggie sees new decor. Fresh pastel paint. Flowers.

REGGIE

I like what you've done with the place.

KAREN

I asked for help. I guess we both did.

REGGIE

You took "make yourself at home" to a new level... Where's your better half?

KAREN

Uh, no. Binu and I made up, but that is your child.

REGGIE

Where is he?

KAREN

He said he was going to see his mom.

(beat)

Something about paying his respects.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Reggie parks across the street from where his mom is buried.

Soon, he joins Binu on a bench overlooking headstones.

REGGIE

Which one is my mom's?

Binu points to a headstone in the near distance. Reggie gets up. Binu follows as they head to the grave.

Reggie squats down. Touches the stone.

REGGIE

I miss you, Mom.

BINU

You can do better than that.

REGGIE
... How's school been going?

BINU
Fine.

REGGIE
How's Bianca?

BINU
I don't know.

REGGIE
How's life without the turban?
(beat)
I'm not your father, I'm your friend.
How's life without the turban?

BINU
It backfired.

REGGIE
How?

BINU
Guys found new ways to humiliate me.
New cultures. Iraq. Iran. They evolved
with better racial slurs. It's sort of
like when the raptors in Jurassic Park
learned how to open doors.

Reggie smiles.

BINU
Can you drop me off at the beach later?
Bianca and I need shells for our shell
boards... She might want to end things.

REGGIE
You're not dating. What's there to end?

BINU
I overplayed my hand with the turban. Or
maybe I underplayed it. I might lose her.

REGGIE
Again, like... What do you have to lose?

BINU
Her friendship.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Reggie pulls out a briefcase from under the bed. Opens it.

KAREN

A metal detector. Most guys would pull out a creepy sex toy. Reggie pulls out \$800 worth of children's entertainment.

From a drawer, Reggie gets walkie talkie earbuds and mics. He sets the gear down. Untangles, separates three of them.

He places a bud in his ear, calibrates the microphone.

KAREN

Binu's been quiet without you around.

REGGIE

The other kids have been making fun of him. They think he looks weird.

KAREN

He does look weird. He should go back.

REGGIE

Why are you siding with the bullies? You're supposed to be the left-wing artist. I'm supposed to be the fuck your feelings, jock-Republican-Chad.

KAREN

What's with the spy gear?

REGGIE

... Is that gold in your earring real?

He gently touches her ear lobe. Karen SLAPS him.

REGGIE

Binu's going with Bianca to the beach. You and I are gonna support his puppy love dream by telling him what to say.

KAREN

You said before that it'd be tampering.

REGGIE

But now we know that Bianca likes him. We're just greasing the wheels. Let's go to the beach; we owe it to him.

KAREN

We owe it to ourselves.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Binu and Bianca walk along the water's edge. Bianca guides the metal detector, scanning it above the sand.

INTERCUT WITH

On their stomachs. Reggie and Karen spy behind a sand dune.

Karen uses binoculars. Both wear earpieces and microphones.

KAREN

Alpha-Bravo-Charlie... Binu, you're gonna want to walk on Bianca's inside. Be a safe barrier against the water.

Binu does as instructed.

BIANCA

Is it easier not having to worry about like, getting the turban wet?

BINU

Do you like it...? My hair?

The metal detector beeps. Binu and Bianca dig. In the sand, they find Karen's gold earring. By the dune, Reggie and Karen exchange knowing smiles. They buried it.

BIANCA

Someone must have lost it.

KAREN

(to Binu)

That's sad. But it's in good hands now.

BINU

(to Bianca)

That's sad. But it's in good hands now.

KAREN

(to Binu)

Whoever dropped this earring? She'd be happy that you have a piece of her heart. Half of what's hers...is now yours.

BINU

(to Bianca)

Whoever dropped this earring? She'd be happy that you have a piece of her heart. Half of what's hers...is now yours.

BIANCA

You know why you and Karen are friends?

BINU

Is it because I have buccal fat, and in 20 years, she's going to want hers back?

Karen fumbles her binoculars.

BIANCA

No, silly. It's cuz you both always say the right thing. To everyone. I wish you saw how much people like you.

BINU

She also knows how I kind of need a mom.

BIANCA

I'm gonna give this to my mom. My dad can't afford to buy us anything other than costume jewelry. She appreciates the little things, and it's real gold.

A bit overcome, Karen removes her earbud. Unhooks her mic.

Reggie heads down the dune. Karen follows.

BIANCA

Keep it. I don't want my mom to find it.

BINU

Why? Cuz she's a cleaning lady, and you help her, so she'll assume you stole it?

Bianca SLAPS him.

BIANCA

What is wrong with you?

BINU

It seemed like the logical conclusion! You said I always say the right thing!

BIANCA

You don't!

BINU

I'm sorry! Where do I put it?

BIANCA

Just put in your locker... You should not have quit on your turban.

BINU

It was my choice.

BIANCA

Was it? You used to stand for something bigger than yourself... You didn't need people whispering in your ear... You're an artist. Start acting like one.

She heads off, the tide rolls out. Binu looks at the sunset.

INT. STORE - NIGHT

Binu cleans the toilet. The artist, uniquely in his element.

BB is behind the register. Soon, Binu takes out the trash.

BB

Should I come to the auction or no?

(MORE)

BB (cont'd)

(beat)

Are you embarrassed by me?

BINU

That's a conversation we should have had a long time ago... It's too late.

BB

It's not. Are you? Embarrassed by me?

BINU

If you don't know the answer to that, I'm not gonna be the one to explain it to you.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Under bright lights, Reggie is alone in the bleachers. He watches two RUNNERS on the track. They line up, then race one another. He admires pure form of athletic competition.

INT. BINU'S ROOM - MORNING

Binu's awake in bed. He considers his art lining the wall.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Binu nears his locker. Sees Dom putting contraband inside. Once there, Binu struggles to see Karen's earring.

BINU

Where's the earring?

DOM

What earring?

Bianca arrives on the scene.

BINU

You're jealous of me and Bianca.

DOM

I'm jealous of you?

BIANCA

What are you doing?

DOM

You said you liked me. You're always nice to me.

BIANCA

I'm nice to everyone.

BINU

Where's the earring?

DOM
Girls aren't nice just to be nice.

BIANCA
I like someone else. I told you that.

DOM
You led me on. You totally led me on.
(beat)
You're just a dirty Ecuadorian whore.

BINU
She's Mexican.

Binu SOCKS Dom in the jaw. Dom fights back, and they wrestle on the floor. CLASSMATES start a "Fight-Fight-Fight" chant.

After both are spent and the fight concludes, Dom is in pain. Binu is hurt, too, but has stood up for Bianca...and himself.

Karen's earring falls from the top locker. It lands near Binu. Face flat on linoleum tile, he serenely considers its beauty.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Binu and Dom sit in judgment of Carle. Binu gets a staredown.

CARLE
I will not tolerating fighting. Never.
Though it's my understanding that the
Sikhs are great warriors. Sadly, that
gene skipped you. You and your father.
(beat)
What did Dominic say that caused this?

Binu, upset over the reference to BB's early, store beating.

CARLE
We're already on strike two. Answer me.

BINU
We can handle it in-house. Between men.

CARLE
I saw your ART News segment. If art
doesn't work out, what do you plan to
do with the rest of your life?

BINU
I don't know. One thing I've realized
the hard way lately, is no matter how
good my life gets, something awful is
just waiting around the corner for me.
But no matter how bad life gets...I'm
so positive, and always spreading joy.
(beat)
It's probably the Sagittarius in me.

CARLE

I'm a Capricorn.

BINU

... We can tell.

EXT./INT. KAREN'S CAR - NIGHT

Karen drives to Binu's house to pick him up for the auction.

INT. BINU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Binu does a crossword. BB balances the store's books.

BINU

Karen's here.

BB

Have fun. Don't embarrass me.

BINU

I'm nervous.

BB

Don't be... Talent doesn't knock
politely on your door. It slaps you
right across the face.

Binu heads out. Calls back to Reggie at the police station.

BINU

You comin' or what?

EXT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cars fill the driveway, line the road. Binu and Co. arrive.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

The space is packed with GUESTS. Reggie walks by with a tray of food. He stops when he sees Binu getting his bearings.

REGGIE

I have to entertain your fan club.
Come find me.

He leaves. Out of his element among adults, Binu explores.

He sees ELDERLY LADY from the c-store. Binu weaves his way through the crowd, stands in front of it in calm amazement.

It's the first time he's seen a painting of his hanging up.

As such, Binu feels his old brushstrokes. The tender moment is interrupted when his hand is SLAPPED by Elderly Lady.

ELDERLY LADY

Don't touch it.

Binu is further surprised when he looks back at the painting. His subject is now beside him.

ELDERLY LADY

Respect the artist.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Binu dries hands. Fixes hair. He realizes he has no turban.

INT. ROOM 1 - NIGHT

Binu through the crowd. He finds Darnell.

BINU

Hey. I don't have the turban; people don't recognize me. In the interview, it was before my haircut, so they're probably on the lookout for that Binu.

DARNELL

You're right.

BINU

There are also a bunch of Indian kids here. I guess from other schools. I'm just a face in the crowd.

DARNELL

... Bianca's not coming. She didn't want to be a distraction. Maybe the fight scared her instead of helping.

BINU

We know she has a crush on someone. I think she's letting me down easy.

INT. ROOM 2 - NIGHT

Binu enters, sees Reggie smiling with desk Cop. She's enamored by the painting of herself and Binu negotiating at the station. Binu joins them. Sees Cop on the wall, smiles at her in person.

BINU

Hi. You look great in street clothes.

COP

I feel great. I saw this on TV at the precinct. Do you know Binu?

BINU

I'm not sure if he knows himself.

Cop picks a card out of a pouch that's affixed to the wall.

COP

\$500. Someone already bought it.

BINU
I thought this is for the auction.

REGGIE
Karen's thinking that everyone should have a chance to buy a given painting. Then if you have two show-stoppers up for bid, it makes them more valuable.

Binu nods. He feels small in the moment (and feels a new self.)

BINU
Officer, do you like the artist, or is it more that you're the subject?

COP
Both. When was the last time you saw a cop painted -- no pun intended -- in a favorable light? This is very touching.

INT. ROOM 2 - NIGHT

Binu walks around, sees his portraits and their subjects. He sees Customer from page 2, who talked about his dying sunflower. Now, Customer stands with Guests at his portrait. An oil of Toeddy de la Cruz. Toeddy's WIFE beams with pride. Soon, Binu sees several "Portraits from Long Island Railroad."

LATER

In the garage, by the fish tank, the oil hands of the pleasant, heavy-set man. The once-empty garage is packed. Enter Binu. He walks through unnoticed, takes in the scene. Guests and BB take selfies with a plump, PLEASANT MAN (30). Junior waves. He's with LAZARO HERNANDEZ & JACK MCCOLLOUGH. BB and Jill Smith are chatting. Seeds of romance, sprouting.

LATER

Along with Guests, Karen sips wine. She sees Binu, cocks her head. Binu sees Selden LaRue on a couch, scheming with Mason Mitchell. Binu and Karen lock eyes, drop jaws: "They're here." On the couch, Selden speaks to artist MATTHIAS NEUHAUS (50).

SELDEN
There's Karen. She and Binu Bingham ruined "Art Official"? We'll ruin them.

MATTHIAS
How?

Unbeknownst to Selden, Marcus and Junior can hear them talk. While chatting with eclectic artists, they're eavesdropping.

MASON

We buy "The Hollow Man." Then shred it.

(beat)

We have a man acting in your interests.

Echoing the vineyard meet, Karen approaches. Three men rise.

KAREN

Mason Mitchell.

MASON

Karen Keene.

KAREN

Selden LaRue.

SELDEN

Matthias Neuhaus.

KAREN

How do you do?

MATTHIAS

Bring me the boy.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Binu approaches the Pleasant Man, alone after his moment.

BINU

Congratulations. I saw you in the garage.

PLEASANT MAN

Thank you. I'm Erich; what's your name?

BINU

Abi. So, how much did you sell for?

PLEASANT MAN

No one's actually bought it. It's a lot to ask someone to go home with a fat guy.

BINU

... Do you think Binu's getting credit for having a turban? Cuz he's different?

PLEASANT MAN

Are you jealous?

BINU

No. I work in a convenience store, too. If I was going to be jealous of anyone, I'd be jealous of everyone.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Binu comes downstairs. Karen shoots pop-a-shot basketballs.

BINU

What are you doing?

KAREN

Getting "Boy Meets Girl" for auction.
And I wanted to be alone. The calm
before the storm. What are you doing?

Binu shrugs.

KAREN

Are you having fun?

BINU

I'm a little sad. No one knows who I am.

KAREN

I never introduced you. Let's do it now.

BINU

Nah, I kinda like it. I feel like a spy.

Reggie comes downstairs.

KAREN

There he is. So I met Matthias Neuhaus,
and he is an alien. A tall gray. Where
are Marcus and Junior when I need them?

REGGIE

With the fashion and litera-toor people.

KAREN

I still don't get the Republican-redneck
bent your family had, now engaged with a
liberal crowd. People do evolve over ten
years, but how did you three...transform?

BINU

I know. People like Marcus have my dad's
back. If say, racist things go down, the
average person writes a strongly-worded
letter to the editor about it. If Junior
sees it, he picks up a baseball bat.

KAREN

What would you do, Reggie...? Whatever.
Do you want to see "Lovely Little Men"?
It's what I was painting when you made
"Boy Meets Girl." Reggie was my past
little man; you're my present little man.

Karen heads to a room, Binu and Reggie follow. She opens a door. Mounted side-by-side are "Boy Meets Girl" and...

REGGIE

"Lovely Little Men." Do you hate it?

BINU

Why do you downplay your talent? Aside from the richness and depth, it's more important than mine... It's meaningful.

KAREN

How?

BINU

My painting doesn't include your easel. In "Boy Meets Girl," I'm the painter, so I'm portraying you two as the focus. I'm just a background person in your lives.

KAREN

No, you're not.

BINU

Thanks to you. "Lovely Little Men" has my easel in the painting, shown behind yours. Unattended to, since I'm in the grass talking to Reggie. It shows that we're all friends. With "Boy Meets Girl," since I'm painting in front of you... I never show your easel. Which means Karen doesn't paint. You two are just a couple.

REGGIE

We're just friends.

BINU

We have to auction off "The Hollow Cheek" and "Lovely Little Men." I'll fall on my sword. Mine is good. This is significant.

KAREN

You're going to be sad if I auction both.

BINU

"Boy Meets Girl" is extraordinary. For a 13-year-old. It's not fair to you for us to be in the same room together.

KAREN

(beat)

You're going to be sad if I auction both.

BINU

... I know.

Binu closes in on "Lovely Little Men."

BINU

It's like a Normal Rockwell painting.

REGGIE

... It's like a Karen Keene painting.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jill Smith in front of the fireplace. Perched on the mantle, well-covered, are "Lovely Little Men" and "The Hollow Man."

JILL

Join me tonight, as I present to you, an angel sent from the Lord. Many of you know her as Karen Keene, while I hope to call her my friend. Together with Binu Binghavi, she has given us two reasons to smile. We've all seen "The Hollow Man," but tonight, he is now joined by two "Lovely Little Men."

Jill reveals the paintings. Guests CHATTER and CLAP.

JILL

Binu decided to let his art breathe. He wanted Karen to shine. I've seen the reception that his portraits of customers received. After a show of tonight's art, his future is bright.
(beat)
So is ours.

Guests approve of Jill's message. Lit faces light the room.

JILL

Binu's art is optimistic and hopeful, while Karen's art is pessimistic and hopeless... "Portraits from the Long Island Railroad" isn't for everyone, but "The Haunting Man" is undeniable. If it's not for you, perhaps "Lovely Little Men" is. It shows off Karen's range. She can pivot from despair to joy with the best of us. After all, Binu and Reggie Kennedy under a warm sun is a day in the life to remember.
(beat)
Enough from me. Let's hear from you.

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

AWOL from the auction, Binu steps outside. Sees Matthias Neuhaus and BLADES BENUN (35). They stand at the edge of Karen's brightly-lit pool.

BINU

I'm sorry. Am I allowed to be here?

BLADES

Only if you want to miss the auction.

BINU

I only showed up for Binu... I'm Abi.

BLADES

Blades Benun. It's a nickname; I used to row crew in college. Blades meaning oars. This is Matthias Neuhaus. He's an artist.

MATTHIAS

Where has Mr. Binu been all night?

BINU

... Looking for his friend Bianca.

BLADES

What do you think of the art tonight?

BINU

It's great. I hope it sells. I heard people don't want sad art from girls.

MATTHIAS

What makes it sad?

BINU

The one with Binu is happy. Everyone came for happy, and "The Haunted Man" is depressing. Long Islanders don't want to be reminded of their commute.

MATTHIAS

A handsome man under horrible lights. What do you know of art, little boy?

BINU

... Nothing.

Reggie comes through the door, joins the group.

BLADES

I interpret the painting differently. I see a man proud to go to work. His exhaustion is real, but it signifies pride in his work. A man grateful to have a job. People say, "New York is a nice place to live, but I wouldn't want to live there." I think it's the opposite: New York is a great place to live, but I wouldn't want to visit.

(beat)

The city and the Island have a lot of different people. Personally, I don't see restaurants or events as the draw. It's all the wonderful people we meet.

MATTHIAS

... "The Hollow Cheek" a beautiful painting made by a miserable woman.

He leaves. Soon, Blades leaves, pausing in front of our duo.

BINU

It was nice to meet you, Blades.

BLADES

I'll see you around, Binu.

Recognizing him, Blades winks, then heads inside.

REGGIE

Who was that?

BINU

The Hollow Man.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The auction is up-and-running. Jill Smith points at Bidders.

JILL

2000 dollars. \$2000 for "Lovely Little Men." Can we get 2200? 2200, cash only.

BUYER 1

3000.

JILL

3000! Okay. Will anyone offer us 3200?

No one responds. Buyers look around.

JILL

3000 going once... Going twice... Sold for 3000 dollars to the man with lofty ambitions and the jacket to match.

Buyers CHEER. Karen and BB, a picture of humility and grace.

JILL

Turn your attention to "The Hollow Man." Again, we'll start the bidding at 1000.

BUYER 1

3000 dollars.

JILL

3000 again! We have a man on a mission.

BUYER 1

A couple of them.

JILL

3000. Can we get 3200? 3200, cash only.

Mason Mitchell and Matthias look towards a MYSTERY MAN (50). "We have a man acting in your interests." (He'll buy Karen's painting, as Mason or Selden's interest would drive Karen to have the painting pulled.)

JILL

Okay. 3000 going once... Going twice.

MYSTERY MAN

10,000 dollars. First and last bid.

GASPS. Karen is stunned. Mason and Matthias are pleased.

JILL

Sir, do you have the money?

MYSTERY MAN

Do I have the money...? I am the money.

JILL

Well. I knew Long Island would deliver.

MYSTERY MAN

Thank you.

DARNELL

She was being petty!

BB

That wasn't petty. It was condescending.

Scattered laughs.

JILL

Right. Shall I ask if anyone has 10,200?

(beat)

No? \$10,000 going once... Going twice...

Marcus pulls out a bank-issued stack of hundreds: 10K total.

MARCUS (rising)

20,000 clams. He's comin' home with us.

Junior reaches into his pocket. Hands Marcus another 10K.

JILL

\$20,000! \$20,000 going once... Going twice... Sold to Long Island's first and last -- Patron Saint of the Arts!

Guests APPLAUD and HOLLER. Karen finds Marcus and Junior for a hug. BB and Darnell join them. Reggie smiles, but sees Binu alone in a corner. Binu leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Reggie looks for Binu, opening various doors. One leads to a bathroom, another to a library. He stops at Karen's bedroom.

Reggie knocks, enters.

INT. KAREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tucked into Karen's giant bed, Binu cradles a stuffed animal.

REGGIE
How are you feeling?

BINU
I'm happy for Karen.

REGGIE
I'm happy for you.

BINU
Even if my store portraits all sell, a few thousand only pays for art lessons. I still can't pay Dom for a paint tube.

REGGIE
I'll buy you paint.

BINU
It's not the point... He still owns me.

REGGIE
That's awful... That said, what about sticks and stones? Broken bones?

BINU
Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me? The thing about broken bones...is that bones heal. Words hurt, because they linger forever.

REGGIE
So do accomplishments. You know what the worst thing is that you can call a man...? "Unaccomplished..." People are always afraid that their best days are behind them. Guys even more, because we have a lot of advantages. Since I was 18, all I wanted to do was get to the majors. As a 1st round pick, it was expected. At some point, I just wanted to get there so I'd be able to be like Selden: Parlay major league experience into a cool job.

BINU
Why Selden?

REGGIE
So I can be around people like you.
(MORE)

REGGIE (cont'd)

(beat)

That's what Jill Smith wanted. And Karen just won the Super Bowl. She gave up on her art a long time ago. Your greatest art isn't "Boy Meets Girl." It's helping build a life for me and Karen. You created what baseball was supposed to do for me.

BINU

So you're gonna be art dealer now?

REGGIE

Maybe. My name was everywhere after the interview. After tonight, Karen you, and me aren't the same people we were this morning.

BINU

Will you quit baseball?

REGGIE

That's not my decision.

BINU

Are you happy?

REGGIE

Never. But I'm so excited for whatever comes tomorrow. Looking back, I was so busy living life and having fun...that I didn't spend enough time living life and having fun... I've spent my entire 20s worrying, and for no reason.

Binu gives him the stuffed animal. The luxurious room glows.

BINU

Our moms would be really proud of us.

REGGIE

... Do you think so?

Binu nods.

BINU

I love you, Reggie.

REGGIE

I love you, too.

They share a long embrace.

EXT. HICKSVILLE - MORNING

Sunrise over Long Island Sound. Boats float, birds SING.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Binu goes back to his turban. Looks in the mirror, adjusts.

EXT./INT. BUS - DAY

Binu sits behind Driver. Looks to the back, Dom isn't there.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Binu walks to his locker. Finds Bianca waiting for him.

BIANCA

Hi. How was last night?

BINU

... We missed you.

BIANCA

Are you doing anything after school?

BINU

Reggie's gonna give me and Karen a boxing lesson. You want to come?

BIANCA

Sure.

Binu faces his locker. Stares at the dial. Opens the locker. Objects fall out, making click-clack noises that draw attention. Binu looks at the mess. He and Bianca crouch down.

Binu picks up a paint tube of Winsor and White. 100 more surround him. He looks closely at a tube. He and Bianca smile.

INT. FROZEN ROPES - DAY

Later, Binu and Karen watch as Reggie boxes with Bianca. SCOUT 3 (70) enters the room, sizes things up.

SCOUT 3

Hi. I'm looking for Frankie Andriani.

REGGIE

He's on the field. You can't miss him.

SCOUT 3

Thanks. Do you know where I can find Reggie Kennedy?

REGGIE

I'm Reggie.

SCOUT 3

Great to meet you... James Verruto.

(beat)

I was hoping I could see you throw.

EXT. FROZEN ROPES FIELD - DAY

Binu, Karen, and Bianca watch from the bleachers as Reggie stands on the pitcher's mound. Verruto holds a radar gun.

Reggie pitches to a CATCHER. He's unable to hit 100 mph.

As it did earlier, the gun reads his fastballs: 97. 98. 97.

BINU

I can't look.

BIANCA

Then don't.

They look at each other instead.

BIANCA

I should've came last night.

BINU

We'll do it again one day.

BIANCA

I wanted to give you space.

BINU

... I don't need space... I need you.

The 13-year-old's share their very first kiss on the lips --

Just as Reggie winds up and delivers his pitch. The fastball cuts through the air and lands in the glove with a loud BANG.

Dirt from the leather PUFFS... 102 m.p.h. appears on the gun.

Reggie waits as Verruto walks to mound.

VERRUTO

You called me for a reason... Weren't exactly wasting your quarters.

Verruto takes the ball.

REGGIE

You like the velocity?

VERRUTO

Sure. But I know your history, and you keeping sending tapes. Velocity's fine.
(beat)

I'm more impressed by your control.

REGGIE

You want to see something off-speed?

Verruto puts the ball back in Reggie's glove.

VERRUTO
 You can show me in Spring Training.
 (beat)
 I'll send some more guys next week.

Reggie watches as Verruto leaves and his dreams arrive.

EXT. OUTFIELD GRASS - DAY

Reggie stands in centerfield. Karen strolls out to him.

REGGIE
 Hello.

KAREN
 Hi.

REGGIE
 It's been wild the last week or so.

KAREN
 We haven't really had time to talk.

REGGIE
 Do you want to catch up? Reconnect?

KAREN
 If that's what you want to call it.
 (beat)
 You don't mean like a date, right?

REGGIE
 No, just...

KAREN
 We never actually went on a date.

REGGIE
 I mean... We were just teenagers.

KAREN
 What do you want to do?

REGGIE
 I don't know. I would plan it out.
 (beat)
 Something low-key...but elaborate.

KAREN
 Multiple exit points along the way.

REGGIE
 I'd like to get to know you better...
 What are you doing next-next Saturday?

KAREN
 Is something wrong with this Saturday?

REGGIE
I figure you have plans this Saturday.

KAREN
I don't.

REGGIE
What about this Friday instead?

KAREN
Do you have plans this Saturday?

REGGIE
No, I just think Friday would be better.
(beat)
I don't think I can wait until Saturday
to see you again.

MONTAGE

Old friends go a series of dates. They have a fancy dinner in fancier clothes. They play ping-pong at a sports complex. On a lake, they cast fishing rods from a boat.

The pair go ballroom dancing, then feed animals at the zoo. They test beauty products at Kiehl's, then fire rocks into the water with slingshots. Trying on clothes, Reggie comes out of fitting rooms in suits. Karen emerges in dresses. In and around Long Island, they go to yard sales, finding gold.

Lastly, at a party on New Year's Eve, Reggie and Karen kiss.

EXT. OUTFIELD GRASS - DAY

Back in centerfield, a question remains.

REGGIE
Do you want to go out on a date
with me?

KAREN
... I would love to.

Reggie and Karen smile, then share a long, warm hug.

FADE OUT.

THE END