

Ji
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FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT DAY

A woman is pulling into a parking lot, checking her reflection in the mirror, walking up the stairs of a church building.

INT. CHURCH FOYER DAY

She cuts through the crowds of well dressed people milling about. Comes to a door off the crowded hallway that is slightly ajar and begins to push it open.

CUT TO / DOOR OPENS TO:

INT. METRO STATION - MORNING RUSH DAY

The same woman rushes past and down the stairs to catch a train, twisting in and out between the crowds of people as she rushes to the train. But she can't squeeze in behind the last person. To her surprise, the last person, a man, sees her plight, quickly eases out of the car, and offers her his spot. She takes it in a dazed surprise. The doors slide closed and the woman just watches from her spot as the train pulls away into the tunnels.

CUT TO:

Zooming out of the man's jacket. He's fidgeting with his cufflinks, adjusting his tie, etc when he see's her in the mirror. He turns, caught off guard. SAM What're you doing here?

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS SIDEWALK DAY

The woman is walking through campus. She passes the coffee place and see's the mystery man in the window. She rushes in, surprised and delighted.

INT COFFEE PLACE DAY

RAJ
What're you doing here?

SAM

(Looking up, also surprised)
Hi! Wow! How're you? You made it
in time I hope.

RAJ

Yeah! Well I mean thanks to you.
Obviously. I was hoping I'd run
into you again. I didn't have a
chance to say thank you. How weird
is it running into you like this?.

SAM

Yeah, who'd have thought that?

RAJ

I think the universe is trying to
prove how small a world this is.
Anyways, what're you doing here?

SAM

I'm a student.
(mutters)
Well, kind of.
(normally again)
What about you?

RAJ

Me too! Wow, can't believe we
haven't run into each other
before. Guess it is a big place
and I'm new but it's nice to see a
friendly face. Oh how rude! Hi,
I'm Rajnandhni.
(holds out hand to shake)
It's great to finally introduce
myself.

SAM

(a bit bewildered)
That a cool name! Raj-da-nini?
Raj-ni-ne I may have to practice.
In any case, I'm Sam. Is that your
family name?

RAJ

Oh of course, take your time, it's
Indian. Most people have to
practice. How else can I pull off
all the syllables! Oh, but it gets
better. My last name is
Balasubraminian.

SAM

Raja-nana-dini Bala-brahmi-nindian...yeah...that practicing may take a while.

RAJ

Comes with the territory. At least my middle name is easy. -Ish.

SAM

Do you get tired of having to teach people your name all the time? I have the whole crazy name thing going on too. Ezra Samuel James. The third. There's supposed to be a doctor, or an honorable in front of that I think, judging from the other two. Anyway, it's a mouthful, I just go by Sam.

RAJ

So Honorable Dr. Ezra Samuel James the third. Junior. Esquire. What are you studying?

SAM

Actually this is my last day. I just turned in my withdrawal form. This is it for me.

RAJ

Wow! What's next?

SAM

I don't know.

RAJ

Do you have a job?

SAM

Not yet.

RAJ

What do your friends think?

SAM

No idea. They'd probably say I'm crazy. I imagine some of them are winning some bets, or losing them, depending on how long they thought I'd last. This time.

RAJ

Wow! Okay. What do your parents think?

SAM

I don't know. I haven't told them yet. They'll probably be cool though. They tend to let me go figure things out. And have always been willing to help out if I screw it up too badly.

RAJ is fiddling with her bag, seemingly lost.

RAJ

(wistfully)

That sounds really nice. Your parents sound pretty great. You seem at such peace with your decision. I'm jealous.

SAM

I think it's just time for me to find a new adventure. How about you? What're you doing?

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH ROOM

SAM

What're you doing? You do know I'm getting married right? There's a wedding happening. Here. In a few minutes.

RAJ

Yeah, I heard and thought I'd come...How're you doing? I just wanted to...

CUT TO:

INT. BAR EVENING

RAJ and SAM are talking at a table, surrounded by the general hum, nursing a drink.

RAJ

(yawning)

So what do you want to do now?

SAM

Just one more time, I promise I'm going to get it. Say it again for me. Please!

RAJ
(smiling)
Rajnandhni Balasubraminian.

SAM stumbles. Multiple times.

SAM
Alright, I have a better idea. How
about I just call you Raj?

RAJ
(who had just taken a sip,
begins to choke back laughter
and coughing)

SAM
What's wrong?!?

RAJ
Nothing, nothing.
(still chuckling)

SAM
No seriously. What?

RAJ
It's just that Raj means king.
Reminded me of my parents, that's
all.

SAM
What about your parents then, do
they call you Raj-da-naan-anon and
on and on too?

RAJ
No, no. They're not that
committed. That's only when I'm in
trouble.

SAM
and on and on and on?

RAJ
Stop!

SAM
Okay then?

RAJ
Okay what?

SAM
What do your parents call you?

RAJ

Well my dad just says mari dikhri, which translates to 'my daughter', but in a sweet way. Or sometimes 'rani' which means queen. Cause Rajnandhni means princess. It's a long story.

SAM

I have all day your highness.

RAJ

(ignoring him)

My mom calls me ranra. It's sort of like 'sweetheart' or 'dear'. Or sometimes she says maro dikhro...which technically means 'my son'. But only she can call me that. It's a mom thing.

SAM

To call her daughter son?

RAJ

Yes. No. I mean it's like her prerogative. It's her right.

SAM

So as a dashing white knight, who saved you from the evils of tardiness and the perils of a crowded station. Do I have prerogatives?

RAJ

I don't know, do you?

SAM

Yes. I'm calling you Raj. Because it's easy. And it doesn't take as much time to pronounce. So hopefully you'll make it to class on time, Raj.
(smiles)

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH ROOM

RAJ

(worried face, chewing lip, tense shoulders, etc)

SAM

I don't have a lot of time. I'm going to be late. To my own wedding. What do you need?

RAJ

(still worried face, chewing lip, tense shoulders, etc)

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, RAJ'S PARENTS' HOME

It is quite evident that RAJ is very beloved, with photographs everywhere of her over the years

RAJ

(in Hindi)

Mom, dad, I need to talk to you.

DAD

Of course mari dikhri. You've got such a good head on your shoulders. We really lucked out, didn't we Payal?

MOM

Of course beta. How're your studies going? Are you taking good care of yourself? We could have come to you. You didn't have to drive all the way here.

RAJ

(nervous/attempting to gather courage)

No, I wanted to come here. I need to talk to you.

DAD

Anything at all. You know you can always talk to us.

MOM

Is something wrong?

RAJ

Thanks dad. No mumme (no mom). It's not a problem. Okay...so, I know you both have done so much for me. Moving here, making sure I had a great childhood. Helping me with school.

(MORE)

RAJ (CONT'D)

And I know you're looking forward to me finding a husband. And you've offered to help. But...

MOM

See Amit, I told you she'd met someone! Who is it beta? Is it Sahil? He's a wonderful man from a great family. You know, Praghna auntie and I were day dreaming about being in-laws! Or maybe...

RAJ

No mom. It's, it's not Sahil. His name is Sam.

DAD

Samir, the guy from temple? Or do you mean Sampat? Have we met him? What about his last name? Maybe we've met his parents?

RAJ

No dad, he's not Bengali.

The parents' faces are becoming confused. RAJ explains what she means. Now they're upset.

MOM

Rajnandhni! I can't believe you!

DAD

We raised you better than this. Not to be fooled by others' false promises. Did you forget about your cousin? What do you think your aunt would say to this?

RAJ

Ha ji (yes to respected elders). Please mom, dad. Just give me a chance. Meet him. Just once. Then you can make up your mind, however you'd like. I will respect your wishes.

MOM

What promises has he given you? To make you act like this? To betray us?

RAJ

I'm not presenting this to you blindly.

(MORE)

RAJ (CONT'D)

You just said so yourself that you thought I was responsible.

More yelling, emotions running high, with tears and harsh words volleying back and forth as RAJ sees that what she thought was a simple plan implodes in front of her eyes.

DAD

Enough. You're right, you are responsible. And we've raised you to be independent so you can stand on your own two feet. We've fought for you to have that right. And we'll continue to fight for it. But make no mistake, your mother and I do not have the energy to watch you throw your life away.

MOM

(communicating silently with DAD)

So we will leave the decision up to you. So now you have a choice to make. Do you have anything you'd like to make of that?

RAJ

(fiddles with her hands, devastatingly torn)

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE PLACE

SAM

So how'd your weekend go?

RAJ

They're my parents. I can't...They've given up everything for me. It can be anything else. They're so hurt.

SAM

So did you tell them you're with me?

RAJ

You have to understand they're so hurt.

SAM

What did you tell them?

RAJ

I promised to never see you again.

SAM

What? Seriously!

RAJ

They were so hurt, they're so upset. You have to understandÉ

SAM

I'm upset. And don't forget, you promised me.

RAJ

Yeah, I know.

SAM

So what does this mean. I mean, are we going to continue to hide under a rock, rushing to cover things up when they come? Be secret lovers forever? Misspell our initials when we carve them into trees so no one knows?

RAJ

No. No. Because I came here to tell you goodbye. I came here to tell you I can't do this.

RAJ is surprised that she actually said it. SAM is equally surprised that this is the turn of the conversation.

SAM

So that's it? Parents got mad, so too bad, that's it.

INT. CHURCH ROOM DAY

SAM So what do you want?

RAJ

Um...congratulations. I came here to congratulate you.

SAM

That's it?

RAJ

No. I just...you deserve every happiness. Anita is such a good person and such a good fit! I'm just so happy for you.

SAM

Thanks. Yeah, Anita's great. You met her?

RAJ

Well, no. I'm sure she's great though. My parents have met her and they say good things.

SAM

(darkening with the mention of parents)

Your parents...Yeah your parents, great...

RAJ

They're happy for you. They send their lo- they send their best wishes.

SAM

Don't return them.

(pause)

Well I'm going to be late to my own wedding. So...

RAJ

Yeah of course! Congratulations again. Best wishes to you and Anita as well.

SAM and RAJ part, attempting social graces as SAM walks to the door.

FADES TO:

INT. RAJ'S PARENTS' HOME EARLIER WEDDING DAY

DAD

Mari dikhri! How's the job going? Is your boss doing better? Let me know, maybe I can help?

RAJ

Hi! Yes. No, no, I don't need any help, everything's fine. How're you? How's mom?

MOM

(while entering)

Ranra!! It's so good to see you!
To what do we owe this wonderful
surprise?

RAJ

I just wanted to come see my
favorite parents!

MOM

Well, we love seeing our favorite
daughter! Oh and did you hear
about the Nayars? They have a
daughter about your age. Oh what's
her name? Anita!

RAJ

No, is everything okay?

MOM

Well you'll never believe who
she's marrying!

RAJ

Mom, really? We're going to gossip
about brown people matchmaking?

MOM

Rajnandhni, she's marrying Sam.

RAJ

Oh that's great! You mean Samir
from temple?

MOM

No beta. Her parents are letting
her marry a dhorio (caucasian)!

RAJ

Wow! Oh wow. Okay...Good for them?
(sees her parents' faces)
Or not?

MOM hands RAJ the invitation. RAJ finally reads the names and
everything clicks.

RAJ

Wow. Um, can you excuse me while I
run to the bathroom. Long car
ride.

DAD

We weren't sure how to tell you.
(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

But at least you were able to
escape him unharmed, right? Let
others deal with him.

MOM

Exactly. Besides, you have Nikhil.

RAJ

Yeah, Nikhil. Nikhil's...Nikhil!
Great!

Slight pause/tension as Raj continues to digest.

RAJ

Actually mom, dad, one more thing,
and then I'll drop this. You
raised me to be independent. You
taught me to think for myself. And
I am forever grateful to you both
for that. But because you did
teach me that. And because I do
have a good head on my shoulders
thanks to you, I was making the
right choice about SAM. SAM
would've been right for me.

DAD

Beta...

RAJ

No, I can't. I just can't. I have
to go.

RAJ walks out, parents behind her telling her to come back.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH ROOM

SAM

(heading towards the door)
I have to go.

RAJ

Wait, Sam.

SAM What?!?

RAJ

One last thing.

SAM
Fine, last thing. What do you have
to say?

RAJ
Don't.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END