

NEW DELI

First Ten Pages

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FADE IN

EXT. INDIA - OLD DELI - BUSTLING STREET - DAY

Weather-stained buildings; in parts, ramshackle.

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

STREET BAZAAR

INDIAN RAP MUSIC permeates. TRADERS go about their business.

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

An emaciated DRUG DEALER (age indeterminate) appears from the crowd.

DRUG DEALER

Aadi my man. How is the old baba?

Aadi stops dancing. The On-lookers retreat.

DRUG DEALER

Let's kill two birds. Ease the old man's pain, live the life of a prince. You know you want to.

Aadi appraises the interloper. He hesitates, turns to his friends who stare him down.

The Drug Dealer looks about at the chaos and circumstances.

DRUG DEALER

When you are desperate, Aadi.

Aadi teeters. His cell phone rings.

AADI

Baba?

Dour-faced, he urgently departs, choreographs through the traffic with complete disregard for safety, or the vehicular damage left in his wake.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

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

Aadi, cap off, on the edge of a bed, holds the withered hand of his frail FATHER (mid-60s). Despite a faltering voice, the old man's English is impeccable.

FATHER

The time has come, my son.

Aadi's eyes moisten.

AADI

Time ...?

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

FATHER

Is of the essence, yes.

AADI

Arrangements need to be made then.

Father waves a hand dismissively.

FATHER

I have made them already, Aadi.

AADI

You made them already?

FATHER

Of course. You have never met maamaa jii Rana.

AADI

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

FATHER

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

AADI

But I must care for you.

FATHER

Bah, I have had my time. The semester begins soon. Complete your degree. Create something wonderful, a special palace for a special princess maybe.

Aadi bows his head respectfully.

On a bedside stand, a small carved teak casket and an envelope beside an old photo of a young married couple.

The Father gingerly picks up the casket, nurses it on his abdomen.

FATHER

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

AADI

Yet still there will be expenses.

Aadi goes to the window, looks out to the

STREET BAZAAR

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

FATHER (O.S.)

Aadi, we are never that desperate. Here.

BEDROOM

Aadi turns back to his Father who, with a labored hand, presents the envelope.

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

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

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

INT/EXT. TAJ DELICATESSEN - DAY

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

All the while Rana tracks another in the store --

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

Cain grabs some chocolate bars from a display, approaches the counter, rips the wrapper from one and drops it on the floor and with a menacing stare, eats the candy.

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

CAIN
You sell Nexium?

Rana shakes his head.

CAIN
Call this dump a deli?

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

RANA
That will cost eighty-five cents.

Cain returns to the counter, eyeballs Rana.

Rana deftly lowers his hand beneath the counter.

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

CAIN
No wonder old Epstein wants out.

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

STREET OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

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

He removes another chocolate bar from his overcoat pocket and goes to the parked Black Town Car, the passenger window down.

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

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

Alice gives them a disapproving look, enters the Deli.

DELICATESSEN - CONTINUOUS

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

ALICE
Mornin' to ya Mister Santoori.

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

RANA
And to you too Miss Hooper.

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

ALICE
What's with the bruiser?

Rana shrugs dismissively.

RANA
Looking for a drug store.

ALICE
The streets dried up?

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

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

ALICE
I like the personal service.

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

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

He blushes, smiles tightly, but turns his attention to the entrance.

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

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

RANA
I hope you have money in your pocket.

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

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

Rana whips a hand gun from under the counter.

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

AADI

No no no, sir. I am simply looking
for maamaa jii Rana. That is all.

Alice raises her eyebrows at Rana.

AADI

I am Aadi Ganguly. I am here to
complete my studies as an architect.
I am to start tomorrow.

This is out of left field for Rana.

RANA

Tomorrow?

AADI

Circumstances delayed my arrival.

RANA

Circumstances?

AADI

I believe my father wrote to you.

RANA

He did. Some time ago. But --

Aadi gives a surreptitious glance toward Alice.

AADI

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

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

RANA

No no. Miss Alice and I. We're not --

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

RANA

My late sister's child. So young.

ALICE

And so needing a roof over his head.

RANA
Of course. Of course.

Rana strides over and embraces the much taller Aadi. All the luggage make it an awkward maneuver, and the gun in Rana's hand comes precariously close to Aadi's nose.

Aadi nervously eases the muzzle away from his face with the envelope, which he offers to Rana.

AADI
A small contribution to assist in
this regard.

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

RANA
My nephew. An architect.

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

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

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

INT. RANA'S APARTMENT ABOVE DELI - DAY

AADI'S BEDROOM

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

Aadi breathes in the atmosphere.

RANA
Sorry about the mess. But since
receiving the letter, there have been
developments.

Aadi looks for elaboration but Rana quickly changes subject.

RANA
And how is the old professor?

Aadi's eyes tear up.

RANA
I see. The circumstances.

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

RANA

Ashes?

AADI

Mother and Father.

RANA

But the Ganges?

AADI

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

RANA

And at the airport --?

AADI

Sacred Hindu musical instrument.

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

RANA

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

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

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

INT. AADI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Aadi, feet overhanging the end of the bed, stirs. He stretches away his aches and pains, negotiates the junk on the floor, offers namaste to an image of Ganesh on the wall.

Alongside is a photo of a young Indian boy standing with a younger Indian girl in traditional Hindi attire.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

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

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

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

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

RANA

Traditional oats dosa. No animals
were killed in their making.

Again Aadi offers namaste.

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

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

AADI

At what time does trading start?

RANA

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

AADI

It was sorted yesterday.

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

AADI

Today I begin in earnest.

He bounds up the stairs.

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

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

Aadi does the briefest of Bollywood dance moves.

AADI
 Kay sera sera.

Rana, bewildered by the antic, picks up a pre-packed lunch in a paper bag and hands it over.

After an awkward moment, Aadi accepts it, offers thanks, takes a final gulp of tea and gambols enthusiastic out the kitchen.

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

INT. LECTURE THEATER - DAY

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

A few rows in front, VANESSA EPHRON (22) next to the handsome BENJAMIN (23), and his eclectic group of hangers-on we'll call the DISCIPLES, turns in her seat to survey the scene.

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

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

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

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

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

PROFESSOR KYOCHU
 We must never forget our heritage.
 In few days will be given details ...
 (dialog fades)

Aadi, ignores the Professor's words, focuses on Vanessa's jet-black locks.