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Lonely people

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LONELY PEOPLE

by

Catherine Scudera

FADE IN:

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE, CAMBRIDGE (MA) - LATE AFTERNOON, 1980s

The shimmering Charles River moves slowly from one end of the town to the other, and the two-skyscraper skyline of Boston stretches upwards into the darkening sky.

A pair of SOUL MATES - HUSBAND, 75, and WIFE, 75 - walk along Memorial Drive near MIT. Students lugging heavy BACKPACKS pass them without notice. The Husband leans on a CANE, but more so on the arm he has slung around his Wife. She props him up, and cradles a large, square PAPER BAG in her other arm. They are very much in love.

A group of rowdy COLLEGE STUDENTS come toward them - the pair moves closer to the road to avoid them. As the students pass, the Husband swings his cane around in a circle, making a silly expression at his Wife - a mimic of the students. She laughs.

In the distance behind them, a TRUCK comes into view.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - CONT.

The Truck tears through a street running next to MIT.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" plays loudly on the radio. A CUP OF COFFEE jostles in a cup holder. The DRIVER, 37 and tired, yawns, putting his hand over his mouth. He reaches for the coffee absentmindedly.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE - CONT.

The Husband is still swinging his cane, Wife still laughing. Suddenly, his back gives out a little. He reels forward, and his Wife catches him. She's still laughing, and he's chuckling now too; there he goes again!

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The Driver slugs the coffee. He edges it back into its holder and turns up the volume on the radio. His head bobs down and then jolts back up.

CUT TO:

The Wife puts down the bag, and The Beatles' RECORD "Revolver" falls halfway out onto the sidewalk. The Soul Mates stumble over to the side of the sidewalk closest to the road, stepping out of the way of the other people walking.

CUT TO:

The Driver is approaching the spot on Memorial Drive where the Soul Mates are collecting themselves. His eyes shut, and the pair is visible out his front windshield. He's asleep at the wheel.

CUT TO:

The Husband is recovering, the Wife waiting for him to fully stand again.

The Wife looks up as the Truck drives toward them. She doesn't think anything is wrong at first. Then, her eyes show fearful recognition that the Truck isn't turning properly.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE SIDEWALK - CONT.

From above, the truck looks like a toy crushed up against a tree. The Soul Mates are nowhere in sight.

A crowd gathers around the truck. The spot where the Soul Mates once stood - beneath the back wheels of the truck head - is now smeared with BLOOD.

Two small ORBS OF LIGHT come up from the Blood. These are the Soul Mates' SOULS. They float into the air at a deliberate pace, rising above the city, then the clouds.

EXT. PLANET EARTH - CONT.

Massachusetts is barely visible as the Soul Mates enter the atmosphere. They join thousands of other souls rising and falling from the earth. The souls blur together into a bright film, the SEA OF SOULS, between earth and space.

EXT. SEA OF SOULS - CONT.

Two of the souls, the Soul Mates, stick together as they navigate through the Sea Of Souls.

Around them, SOULS rise slowly and drop quickly to and from earth at the sounds of DEATH GROANS and ORGASMS, respectively. The recently dead and the newly born are connected through this exchange of Souls. Some of the Souls split in two as they speed toward the earth and its people conceiving children.

Below the two Souls, south Asia and the Indian Ocean come into view from behind the cloud cover.

Suddenly, there is the sound of a WOMAN MOANING, and one of the Souls drops toward the Indian subcontinent.

INT. RESORT HOTEL ROOM, NEW DELHI - CONT., NIGHT

MOANING. Ornate, red wedding outfits are strewn haphazardly about the swank hotel room; the couple here was in a hurry to get started, and are hurrying toward a finish.

On their large honeymoon suite bed, a young Indian couple - LAL and ESHA BHATTAR, both in their early 20's - is making passionate love.

EXT. CLOUDS BELOW SEA OF SOULS - CONT.

The second Soul rushes after the first, two orbs of light chasing each other through the clouds.

The Souls break through the cloud cover. It's night over north India, the Himalayas still brightly white with snow.

EXT. BROTHEL, PATPONG DISTRICT OF BANGKOK - CONT., NIGHT

The red light district of Thailand's capital teems with locals and tourists alike. The strip clubs have flashing signs in Thai, and the upstairs of the buildings - the BROTHELS - are dark and boarded up from outside light. A few Souls fly in and out of various buildings.

A white male TOURIST, 35, snaps photographs of the Vegas-esque neon lights and a line of YOUNG TEENAGED GIRLS who are being shuttled into a side door of one of the strip clubs.

EXT. SKY BENEATH THE CLOUDS - CONT.

The two Souls fly together, quickly approaching the lights of New Delhi.

Suddenly, the second Soul careens off toward the East.

INT. STRIP CLUB - CONT.

The strip club is visible from a crack in a dirty, wooden exterior door. Inside, white foreigners wave money at OLDER TEENAGED THAI STRIPPERS, including a LADY BOY, 17, dancing on a stage. A Stripper bends down over the stage, and four DIRTY MEN reach up to pull off her skimpy bra and stick a few American dollars in her panties. A couple of the Young Teenaged Girls watch this with horror, but are shoved up a flight of stairs.

INT. BROTHEL ABOVE THE STRIP CLUB - CONT.

The upstairs floors are dark and dirty, reflecting the activities that take place there. Each of the new girls in turn stares in dread as they pass a partially open door.

Inside, an AMERICAN MAN, 55, has a young PROSTITUTE, 14, pinned against a wall. Neither is naked, but the Prostitute doesn't wear anything below the waist and the American Man's pants rest around his ankles. The American Man makes heavy grunting noises as he has sex with the Prostitute, and the Prostitute's face twists in pain. She holds back her sobs.

EXT. RESORT HOTEL ROOM - CONT.

The first Soul flies toward the window of the Bhattars' hotel room. As it passes through the glass, the sounds of the Bhattars having sex is much louder.

EXT. BROTHEL - CONT.

The second Soul heads straight for the brothel window. It pauses at the window, in which the Soul can see that the American Man is about to climax.

INT. RESORT HOTEL ROOM - CONT.

Esha CLIMAXES, shortly followed by her husband.

INT. BROTHEL - CONT.

The American Man CLIMAXES with an extra loud grunt.

CUT TO:

Lal collapses on top of his wife from exhaustion. Then they both take deep breaths, and Lal rolls off of Esha. They continue their deep breathing side by side.

CUT TO:

The American Man picks the Prostitute up off of him and places her on a dirty metal-frame BED next to them. She buries her head in the stained, thin mattress as he pulls his pants back up.

CUT TO:

The first Soul descends on Esha, whose panting has only slightly decreased, and disappears through her belly button.

CUT TO:

The second Soul, the only pure light in the room, comes in through the brothel window and goes to the Prostitute, who lies with her body contorted awkwardly to cover as many of her private areas as possible. A moment's pause. It disappears into her belly button as well.

BLACK. The CRY OF BABIES. Two Souls illuminate in the Black. AIRPLANES LIFTING OFF.

INT. JFK AIRPORT SECURITY LINES - 22 YEARS LATER, 2004

Passengers move in a fast flow toward the security checkpoint, where the human traffic stops. GRUMPY NEW YORKERS stand in line impatiently. Near the front, a mother and son converse over the rope barrier separating the passengers from the non-passengers: these are PAULA, 52, and ANDY - 21, half-Thai, carrying a BACKPACK, iPod HEADPHONES hanging off of his shoulders - SAMPSON. Andy's Soul burns brightly for a moment, identifying him as one of the Soul Mates.

Andy's shifting slowly - or at least not frantically enough for the glaring people behind him - toward the security checkpoint, but maintains eye and verbal contact with his mother.

ANDY

I'll be home soon, Ma.

Paula's face collapses into a clingy, dew-eyed smile.

PAULA

I know, baby. I just hate leaving you here - this is where we first picked you up!

Andy smiles - he's heard the story. Paula squeezes his shoulder as he approaches the very front of the line.

PAULA (CONT.)

Don't you think you can make it
back in September?

Andy kisses his mother on the cheek.

ANDY

Two months, Ma. I'll see you
then.

He kisses her on the other cheek, and then walks over to the first line at the security gates. He tosses his Backpack on the belt and removes his shoes. Before Andy passes through the gates, he turns around to wave one last time.

He turns back to the gate, and exhales sharply. Paula's still waving behind him. Andy passes through the gate, and takes his ticket from the TSA PERSONNEL STAFF (30, disenchanted). They make eye contact. Andy nods his head back toward his mother.

ANDY

Mothers, right?

The TSA Personnel member lacks any expression. Andy picks up his backpack, and sighs from lack of companionship.

INSERT - A DEPARTURE LISTING

The flight to Boston Logan Airport is on time.

INT. JFK AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONT. (NOON)

RAMINI - 21, carrying a purse and a violin case - nods at this information and speed-walks toward her departure gate. Her Soul glows as well - she's the other Soul Mate. She's on her cell phone and frustrated. She speaks rapidly in Hindi. She gets in line at her gate.

A lot of people are on cell phones, but her Hindi attracts a lot of paranoid stares. Ramini catches the eye of a FATHER standing nearby in line with his FAMILY. He turns and whispers a question to his WIFE. Ramini stands up very straight and indignant: she is no terrorist. She turns away from the onlookers.

RAMINI

(in Hindi)

Sometimes I hate being brown.

ESHA (O.S.)
 (in Hindi, over
 phone)
 What's that, Ramini?

Ramini switches to English, but has a distinct Indian-English accent.

RAMINI
 Nothing, Amma. Is Babu there?

She attempts to keep the phone on her shoulder while she reaches into her purse. She's having difficulty.

ESHA (O.S.)
 (in English,
 over phone)
 He's attending to your
 brothers...

Ramini purses her lips in irritation - she can't call that often!

ESHA (CONT.)
 ... but your MCAT scores make him
 very proud.

Ramini realizes that she doesn't have enough hands to get out her boarding pass.

RAMINI
 I have to board the plane now,
 Amma. I'll call soon. (in
 Hindi) I love you.

She's already closing the phone as her mother replies...

ESHA (O.S.)
 (in Hindi, over
 phone)
 I love you, Minnie.

... the phone CLAPS shut. Ramini sets down her purse and violin briefly, shuffles through her purse and grabs the boarding pass and her CD player's headphones, and immediately takes up the case again. The violin is clearly the most important possession to her. She switches on the CD player with her free hand: The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby."

Andy is standing about 10 people behind her in line. He listens to the same song on his iPod. They don't see each other.

INT. LOGAN AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - A COUPLE HOURS LATER

ABHILESH - 24, handsome, Ramini's arranged romantic partner - helps a couple of CUTE, YOUNGER GIRLS haul their bags to a cart. They thank him and he winks at them as they walk away. They're charmed. He turns around and sees Ramini at the baggage carousel. He walks right up to her; he picks up her trunk before she even has the chance. He treats her somewhat like a relative.

ABHILESH

I'll get that, beautiful.

Ramini is aggravated for a moment by the chauvinism, but when she sees that it's Abhilesh, she loses her offense. He's just kidding around.

RAMINI

I can carry my own -

Abhilesh waves off her offer to help carry the truck. She smiles at him appreciatively, and they walk side-by-side (though not touching) toward the door.

Andy arrives at the baggage claim. He pushes through the crowd to get to his SUITCASE. He grabs it. He turns to leave the baggage claim area when VICKI - 19, his girlfriend - leaps into his arms, nearly knocking him over. She showers him with kisses as he balances with his backpack and suitcase so that he and Vicki don't fall over.

Vicki realizes their precarious position. She jumps off of him and scrambles for his backpack.

VICKI

Let me help you!

Andy lets her take his backpack. She swings it onto her shoulders. Her delight in seeing him is practically manic. They walk.

He kisses her cheek. She beams at his approval. They leave the baggage claim.

EXT. LOGAN AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - CONT.

Vicki waves to a TAXI and dashes over to it. She and Andy squeeze themselves and his stuff into the backseat.

Three taxis ahead, Abhilesh and Ramini sit in the backseat. Their Taxi departs.

EXT. MASS. PIKE - CONT.

The two Cabs follow each other out of the Ted Williams Tunnel and into Boston proper. To the north is the city itself, with its two skyscrapers towering awkwardly above all the other buildings. The Charles River glistens.

At the exit for Massachusetts Avenue, Ramini's taxi pulls off. It heads across the river on the HARVARD BRIDGE toward the GREAT DOME of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Andy's cab heads forward toward Boston University, indistinguishable from the rest of Boston except for SIGNS.

INT. HALLWAY IN BU BUILDING - TWO WEEKS LATER

Andy rushes down the hall, phone clamped to his ear. He's panting from running and talking.

ANDY

(into phone)

Vix, it's just one paper.

A pause, Vicki's voice wailing on the phone. Andy cringes.

INT. DAILY FREE PRESS OFFICE - CONT.

BU's The Daily Free Press news staff's daily content meeting is in progress. Writers are gathered in blue plastic chairs gathered at the front of the room. TAYLOR ASHER - 21, the hardnosed, lesbian editor and Andy's best friend - stands at the front of the room.

Taylor calls names of staff writers to assign stories. She gestures forcibly using her pen. She chooses CHRISTINA JUAREZ, 20.

TAYLOR

Last one for the issue: Juarez,
whatever the fuck Bush and Co.
were thinking having their
convention in New York.

Christina nods agreeably and jots it down on a notepad. The staff is getting up to leave when Andy busts into the room, on the phone.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 I know I know, I'll call you
 back.

Taylor stops, mouth agape - what is he doing? Vicki can be heard on the other end of his cell phone. His fellow staff members turn around and stare at him. He smiles at them gawkily.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 Love you too.

He hangs up the phone.

TAYLOR
 Sampson, we discussed this last
 semester... when does Team News
 Team assemble?

Staff members stare, frozen mid-movement. Andy fidgets. He checks the time on his phone's screen.

ANDY
 3:30 p.m. ... ish.

Taylor checks her watch dramatically. She looks back up at Andy.

TAYLOR
 I didn't know "ish" covered
 half an hour.

Andy knows he's in deep trouble. There's a pause in the conversation. Still no movement from the staff.

TAYLOR (CONT.)
 Andy, stay with me a few
 minutes.

Taylor turns her attention to the immobile staff. She's shocked that they still haven't moved.

TAYLOR (CONT.)
 The rest of you, get to work!

She shoos them away. The staff collects their things and vacates the meeting area. Andy knows he's in *really* deep trouble. Taylor waits impatiently for him to make his move to the front. He's nervous, and approaches cautiously.

ANDY

(quietly)

Taylor, I had a crying girl on the phone.

Taylor is not impressed.

ANDY (CONT.)

She has this paper due for this really important class and she's worried about getting into law school...

Taylor raises an eyebrow.

TAYLOR

Ah, so it was your sophomore girlfriend this time, a week into the semester.

It's a statement, not a question. Andy doesn't know how to respond. He watches Taylor blankly, like a kid just caught coloring on the walls.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

We live together, so you know better than most that I've done some stupid things for pretty girls in the past...

Taylor looks over at SOPHIE - 20, FreeP photographer - and sighs. Andy looks hopeful. Taylor puts a hand on his shoulder and pulls him closer to her.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

... But I've never let any girl get in the way of me doing the best I can in the job that I love -

She looks at Sophie again.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

-- no matter how pretty she is.

Andy nods enthusiastically.

ANDY

Sorry, Taylor. It won't happen again.

Taylor gives a knowing smirk and then walks away. Andy's still waiting for his story assignment. Andy follows after her.

ANDY (CONT.)

What's my story this week?
Didn't Björk come out with a new LP?

Taylor stops. She turns her head, cocking an eyebrow.

TAYLOR

Nothing for you this week, Sampson. And no more until you get your priorities in order.

She steps close to him, whispering a secret.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Just because we're bosom buddies doesn't mean I'm going to give you special treatment.

She walks away to look over another staff member's shoulder at his computer. Andy's left standing by himself, aghast, his busy (former) coworkers circling around him.

Andy jumps slightly - his cell phone has started to vibrate in his pants' pocket. He pulls the phone out: the screen says "MOM." He looks over to Taylor, who's watching him out of the corner of her eye. He answers the phone, his forehead furrowed in frustration.

ANDY

(into phone)

Hi there, how was your big presentation?

He starts to walk out of the room. Taylor shakes her head: maybe he's a lost cause. Andy reaches the door.

ANDY (CONT.)

(comfortingly)

No, no Ma, I'm sure they loved it.

INT. RAMINI'S ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Ramini is seated on her bed, practicing a slow, moody piece on her violin.

A KNOCK at the door. She doesn't hear. A louder knock. She hears, glancing at the door, but she doesn't stop playing; she wants to finish the piece.

Abhilesh slowly opens the door and peeks in. She ignores him.

ABHILESH

Are you coming, Minnie?

Ramini halts her bow suddenly. She takes a deep breath, calming herself from the interruption. She turns to him.

RAMINI

I told you. The audition's on Friday. I'm practicing.

She turns back to her sheet music. Abhilesh doesn't budge.

ABHILESH

(mockingly)

You still want to do that?

Ramini doesn't respond to him. She picks up her bow again. Abhilesh is undeterred.

ABHILESH (CONT.)

(serious tone)

Do you really think you'll make it into an orchestra?

RAMINI

(annoyed)

Yes, Abhilesh, I do.

Abhilesh is visibly surprised. He wants to talk her out of it.

EXT. RAMINI'S ROOM - CONT.

Down the hall, Ramini's roommates MANJU (21) and POOJA (22) wait excitedly for Abhilesh and Ramini to join them on their outing. Abhilesh looks over at them, and they wave to him with their hands to hurry up.

INT. RAMINI'S ROOM - CONT.

Ramini ignores Abhilesh and starts to play again. He glares at her, angered by her disrespect for his wishes.

ABHILESH

(irritated)

You're in well enough clubs to ensure your future at medical school, and you mustn't get distracted. I hope you reconsider this...

Abhilesh considers his words.

ABHILESH (CONT.)

... this frivolous waste of your time.

Ramini stops playing abruptly and flashes him a nasty look. He's already shutting the door. Muffled through the door, Ramini can hear him talking, and then a cry of protest from Manju and Pooja. She sits up straight, and begins to play again.

EXT. MIT KRESGE AUDITORIUM - FRIDAY, DAY

Andy walks briskly down the hallway leading to the Auditorium with KRISTIN, 22, red, curly haired, and first violin in MIT's Orchestra. He has his BACKPACK and a NOTEBOOK in hand. They're mid-conversation.

ANDY

I appreciate you fitting me into your schedule.

KRISTIN

(amicably)

Any press is good press.

There's a natural pause, but Andy has a bit of a guilty conscience. His intentions with the article are not altogether unselfish.

ANDY

My editor loves classical. She'll love a feature about local orchestras and... stuff.

Andy's obviously unsure what the article will actually entail, but Kristin doesn't notice. Kristin smiles - a feature! - because this is just the sort of thing the MIT orchestra needs.

KRISTIN

A feature, huh? Sounds like
this article will make everyone
happy!

Andy chuckles apprehensively.

ANDY

I certainly hope so.

They open the Auditorium doors.

INT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM, MIT - CONT.

Ramini is on the stage alone. She's focused, slightly bent over in concentration. She is finishing part of a difficult violin solo, running up and down the notes with ease.

Directly below the stage, the MIT Symphony Orchestra's DIRECTOR, DR. BISS (55), and two STUDENTS, IRINA MORRIS (19) and DAVID ALEXANDER (22), watch Ramini intently. The Director writes on his notepad, and all three look impressed.

Behind them, the whole auditorium is empty, save for Kristin and Andy standing at the back door. Andy is entranced. His SOUL glows within him, recognizing its mate. Kristin sees a threat.

KRISTIN

(whispering)

This must be our last violinist
today. (pause) She's doing
alright.

Andy's not paying attention to her. He has eyes and ears only for Ramini.

Ramini ends the piece with a loud flourish. She takes a satisfied breath, and then puts her bow down across her lap. She looks at the Director and the two Students.

The two Students clap and the Dr. Biss nods in approval. Ramini smiles confidently. Irina and David's clapping dies down, but there's still CLAPPING in the audience. Ramini looks confused, and scans the auditorium. The Director and students turn to look as well. In the back, Andy is clapping vigorously.

Andy and Kristin approach the stage.

ANDY
 (shouting)
 That was wonderful!

Ramini flushes. Andy keeps clapping. Ramini's SOUL glows as well. Dr. Biss tries to rescue her from her embarrassment.

DR. BISS
 Don't scare the poor girl, it's
 her first time on our stage!

He smiles at Ramini.

DR. BISS
 Thank you for your time, Ms.
 Bhattar.

Ramini slightly bows, in thanks, and picks up her violin. She scampers off-stage. Andy watches as she goes, his clapping finally waning.

INT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM, BACKSTAGE - CONT.

Ramini ducks behind the RED STAGE CURTAINS, flustered. She peeks out and looks at Andy. She smiles despite herself; she's never heard such unabashed compliments about her musical talents.

INT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM SEATS - CONT.

Andy approaches Dr. Biss, and the pair shakes hands.

ANDY
 Her first time?

Dr. Biss nods. Andy gets an idea.

MONTAGE - ANDY GETTING THE JOB DONE IN A WEEK

-- Andy sends out e-mails while making a phone call to a local orchestra

-- Andy meets with DIRECTORS

-- Andy barely makes a T-train

-- Andy runs after ORCHESTRA MEMBERS leaving the SYMPHONY HALL to interview them

-- Andy collapses on couch, and immediately falls asleep; Taylor watches him, curious

INT. HALLWAY, KRESGE AUDITORIUM - WEEK AFTER AUDITIONS

Ramini has her VIOLIN with her as she walks. She turns a corner to find the ENTIRE ORCHESTRA in a mob around the CHAIR LISTINGS. There are CRIES of disappointment and joy.

Ramini stands near the back, waiting for more of the crowd to depart. She's nervous, and alone.

IRINA (O.S.)

Oh my God!

Kristin pushes her way to Irina's side. Irina points out to her a line on the VIOLIN CHAIR LISTING. Kristin is also surprised.

She turns and looks at Ramini. She glares.

Ramini pushes her way through the crowd, but once she gets in the "line" to the Violin Listing, people start to make a path for her. She looks at the listing.

INSERT - VIOLIN CHAIR LISTING

Ramini's listed as second chair to Kristin.

BACK TO SCENE

Ramini is taken aback. She never believed she was that good.

Kristin HUFFS with distaste, and walks off. Irina comes up to Ramini. She's almost overly friendly.

IRINA

That's amazing! Your first
audition! Congratulations!

Ramini smiles at her, and then her smile grows when she realizes that Irina is right: she *is* good.

EXT. COMMONWEALTH AVENUE - TWO WEEKS LATER, LATE AFTERNOON

Andy walks outside the building within which is *The Daily Free Press* office. He pauses before he enters the building to pick up the day's FreeP. He unfolds the paper, and finds that his article, "Keeping Music Alive and Profitable: Your First Job," is on the front page below the fold.

INT. DAILY FREE PRESS OFFICE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

The office is slightly abuzz with staff members preparing the next day's paper. Seated in two chairs near the front of the room, Taylor and MAC KAPLAN - 22, cocky - converse. Taylor is speaking, and showing Mac a red-marked copy of his latest article.

TAYLOR

Mac, I need you to step these up. You're all we've got now.

Mac nods, barely taking the criticism seriously. He looks past Taylor and sees something that surprises him. Taylor turns.

Andy practically knocks her out of her chair with a bear hug. He's grasping the FreeP with his article in it in his hand. Taylor looks a little horrified by his display of affection. Mac looks almost as uncomfortable as Taylor. Andy holds on to her for a couple of seconds too long. Taylor starts squirming and batting him away.

INT. HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL - A WEEK LATER, AFTERNOON

Ramini walks with her Pre Med Club through the halls of Harvard's Medical Center. Five MEDICAL STUDENTS - all in their mid-20s - lead the pre-med students at the finish of the tour. Ramini looks pleasant, but a little bored.

One Medical Student - ALISON PRICE, 27 and pretentious - walks backwards and talks to the group.

ALISON

(a little smug)

I'm sure you can all see now why Harvard is the best med school in the country.

Most of the pre-med students chuckle, nodding in agreement. Ramini rolls her eyes a little. One of the other med students - PARVATI CHATTERJEE, 24 and pregnant - pauses mid-step and leans against the wall. Ramini is the only one who notices her. She walks to her side.

RAMINI

Mrs. Chatterjee, are you alright?

Alison stops for a moment: Mrs. Chatterjee is holding up the tour! She taps her foot impatiently. The group turns and stares.

MRS. CHATTERJEE

I just need a moment -

Mrs. Chatterjee interrupts herself by doubling over, about to vomit. Ramini catches her.

MRS. CHATTERJEE

(croaking)

Maybe a bit of fresh air.

Ramini looks to the Medical Students for help. They stare passively; they expect her to take care of it. Ramini puts an arm around Mrs. Chatterjee's back and helps her walk to the front door, squeezing past the Pre Med Club and Mrs. Chatterjee's peers.

EXT. HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL SQUARE - CONT.

Ramini and Mrs. Chatterjee hobble outdoors. It's very cold, and they've both left their coats inside. Ramini shivers, and Mrs. Chatterjee takes deep breaths.

Suddenly, Mrs. Chatterjee pushes Ramini away for her and runs to the nearest trashcan. She VOMITS violently.

Ramini is taken aback, and looking a little sick herself. She approaches Mrs. Chatterjee tentatively, queasy from the sight. She rubs Mrs. Chatterjee's back as she continues to throw up.

Ramini hears MUSIC. She tunes out Mrs. Chatterjee's nausea and looks behind her. In the Square, a HOMELESS MAN - 50 and dirty - plays on a beaten up, out-of-tune SAXOPHONE for money.

Mrs. Chatterjee coughs up the last of her vomit. The sound brings Ramini's attention back to her. Mrs. Chatterjee wipes her mouth, and gives Ramini a weak smile. Ramini returns it.

INT. INDEPENDENT RECORD STORE - EVENING

Taylor walks into the record store, GROCERY BAG in hand. She searches the store for Andy, ignoring the various CDs and records. She finds him near the back at the cash register. The CASHIER - 16, punk, and disinterested - barely listens to him.

ANDY
 (to cashier)
 All I'm asking is if you have
 "Something New" on vinyl.

The Cashier shrugs. She doesn't know what that is.

ANDY (CONT.)
 It's a record.

He uses his hands to make a big circle.

ANDY (CONT.)
 A record of The Beatles.

The Cashier stares blankly. She really doesn't know.

ANDY (CONT.)
 (getting
 frustrated)
 The Beatles!

The Cashier yawns.

CASHIER
 How about something from this
 century?

She gestures to the Billboard Top 20 CD DISPLAY near the register. Andy nearly blows a gasket.

Taylor intervenes, leading Andy away.

TAYLOR
 That's enough there.

She waves to the Cashier, who is still unresponsive.

ANDY
 How did you know I was here?

TAYLOR
 Your mother called, and if
 you're not at the ice cream
 parlor, you're here.

Andy's very surprised.

ANDY
 How did she get your phone
 number?

Taylor stops him before they exit the store. She steadies him in one place, and then reaches into the Grocery Bag. She pulls out a pint of DOUBLE CHOCOLATE FUDGE ICE CREAM and a plastic SPOON. She hands them to Andy. She gives him a lecture.

TAYLOR

No one gets a job at *The Globe*.
Don't take it out on Avril
Lavigne (nodding toward the
Cashier), even though she's
unacquainted with the Beatles
and that's one of your 7 Deadly
Sins. You don't want to work
copy for a big paper anyway.

She almost stops - and Andy opens his mouth to speak - but then thinks of something else.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

And I know like any other
fanatic you want to work for
The Rolling Stone, but no one
gets in there either.

Andy frowns, almost pouting.

ANDY

But you're going to get a job
at *The Globe*.

Taylor snorts.

TAYLOR

That's because I'm the editor
of a daily paper and still get
straight A's. And I like copy.

She leans in close to him and makes a weird face.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

I'm insane! You want more.

Andy nods, subdued. Taylor is satisfied, and opens the ice cream for him. He takes a bite.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Now let's go home and watch
Yellow Submarine until the
FreeP notices I'm missing.

Andy nods, regaining some of his lost ego.

ANDY

New York's where the music is
anyway. And this city is no New
York!

Taylor snorts. They turn to leave together.

TAYLOR

You try saying that at the
game.

A BASEBALL BEING HIT!

INT. FENWAY PARK - NIGHT

It's the 12th inning of overtime in the ALCS Championship series between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees. The game is tied. The crowd is electric, and fans from both teams - denoted by wearing red or blue, respectively - are in a tizzy.

INT. FENWAY PARK, SEATS ABOVE THE GREEN MONSTER - CONT.

A fight breaks out between opposing fans. All of the rows near them stand up to watch. Four POLICE OFFICERS run to break it up.

Just a couple of rows back, Ramini and Abhilesh are with Abhilesh's PEERS from his graduate program. They're all nerdy, Indian men, and a couple of them are with their WIVES. One man - KARON, 27 - wears a MIT: EECS t-shirt. None of them are in Red Sox or Yankees colors. All are standing except Ramini, who is reading something in her lap. She eats a spoonful of Dippin' Dots.

The two Wives point to the fight with horror, cowering behind their husbands. The husbands also watch apprehensively as the police grab both fighters. Karon notices Ramini.

KARON

(to Abhilesh)

Your sweetheart is always
working! She will be quite
successful.

Abhilesh smiles approvingly at Karon, and then looks over to Ramini. She's making notes on SHEET MUSIC; it only looks like she's reading her biology textbook. She doesn't notice him staring at her, nor does he notice that the fight has been broken up and everyone else has sat back down.

The BURLY IRISH BOSTONIAN behind him is upset.

BURLY MAN

Sit your ass down!

Now Ramini looks up, giving the Burly Man a caustic glare. Abhilesh is startled and sits down immediately. He steams in his seat. Ramini goes back to her work on the sheet music. Abhilesh takes a deep breath, his anger increasing.

Nearby, Vicki and Andy are seated. Vicki is decked out in all Red Sox paraphernalia, from her hat to her Johnny Damon jersey to her sweatpants. Her hat is cocked awkwardly to the right side - a good luck charm. She's tense with anticipation.

Andy has one ear plugged into an iPod. He's listening to Elliot Smith. His head bobs with the music. He writes something down in his notepad.

INT. THE BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONT.

Red Sox player David Ortiz waits for his turn at the plate. Yankees famed closing pitcher, Mariano Rivera, eyes him from the mound.

INT. SEATS ABOVE THE GREEN MONSTER - CONT.

Vicki checks the scoreboard for who's up at bat next. She sees Ortiz's name and whacks Andy in the arm. He cringes.

ANDY

Ouch!

VICKI

This is important! We could win this!

Andy shakes his head.

INT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONT.

Ortiz steps up to the plate.

CUT TO:

Andy rubs his arm.

ANDY

(mumbling)

You've been saying that for the
last five innings, not to
mention the last three games.

Vicki doesn't hear him over the roar of the crowd. She adjusts her hat slightly for the utmost luck. He chuckles lovingly at her superstition.

CUT TO:

Ortiz steadies himself on his feet. Rivera pitches. Ortiz hits the ball - CRACK! - and it goes flying.

CUT TO:

Everyone except Andy leaps up and shouts.

CUT TO:

Nearby, Abhilesh and his friends stand up as well. Abhilesh knocks into Ramini's Dippin' Dots, spilling them over her. She moves in time to save her music and textbook, but her blue jeans and kameez are covered. A page of her sheet music flies from her grasp. She ignores her ice-creamed clothes, sets down her book, and goes after the renegade page.

CUT TO:

Vicki jumps onto her chair to see where the ball is headed, not acknowledging Andy at all. He looks up in time to see her pointing a couple of rows ahead and to the right: that's where the ball is headed.

VICKI

Andy! Andy!!

He looks down at his feet: Vicki's glove. He looks up at her: she's still pointing and repeating his name. He grabs the glove and pushes through the other fans in their row, making it to the aisle.

CUT TO:

Ramini picks up her sheet music. She sighs with relief. She looks around her and sees rows of fans emptying out into her aisle, including the Burly Man and Abhilesh's peers. She's surrounded. She stands. She looks up: the ball!

CUT TO:

Andy pushes aside the Burly Man and jumps into the air. He reaches up and catches the ball!

When he hits ground again, he actually falls right into Ramini. The two of them almost fall to the ground, but Andy stabilizes the two of them. They make eye contact: Andy already looks apologetic, Ramini irritated. They recognize each other. Andy's happy to see her.

ANDY

Hello again!

Ramini blushes instantly. Abhilesh comes up from behind her. Andy notices the ice cream all over her, and pulls a crushed napkin out of his pocket, wiping off the front of her shirt. Ramini's surprised. She's not used to men, especially strangers, coming anywhere near touching her.

Abhilesh becomes really angry when Andy touches Ramini. Andy nor Ramini sees Abhilesh walking toward them.

ANDY

(referring to
the ice cream)

Did I do that? I'm so sorry,
Dippin Dots are a favorite of
mine too.

Ramini takes the napkin from him and uses it to wipe off her pants. She's uncomfortable with how comfortable he is around her.

RAMINI

Thank you.

Andy holds up the ball to her, still in the glove.

ANDY

I'm really sorry. Do you want
this?

Ramini's surprised. Before she can say anything, Abhilesh grabs her from behind, yanking her away from Andy. Abhilesh tightens his fists, threatening Andy with his demeanor. Ramini is not pleased with either of them.

RAMINI

Abhilesh, stop it.

Abhilesh ignores her. Andy squares his shoulders in readiness.

As Abhilesh is about to swing, Vicki steps between them: she saw Andy offer the ball to Ramini, and she's mad.

VICKI

What are you doing?

Andy looks at the ball. His shoulders loosen. He offers the ball to Vicki sheepishly. She grabs it from him. Vicki throws a mean look to Ramini, who is still rubbing her arm. She directs her anger back at Andy, shaking the ball in his face.

VICKI (CONT.)

Don't you know how important this is to me? Didn't your parents like baseball?

She storms off. Andy's suddenly offended, not sorry. He yells after her.

ANDY

Yeah, my *dad* liked baseball.

Two COPS arrive. They stand between Abhilesh and Andy, holding their arms out.

COP #1

Any problems here?

Andy and Abhilesh acknowledge each other. Abhilesh is still steaming, but both shake their heads. Andy walks away after Vicki. The Cops depart. Andy looks back at Ramini. Abhilesh is pulling her back into their row. Andy waves goodbye, still apologetic toward Ramini. Ramini doesn't return the favor: she's annoyed with him and Abhilesh.

The seats empty out amid joyous shouts from Red Sox fans everywhere.

INT. ANDY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT WEEK, MORNING

Andy lives in a small two-bedroom apartment. The walls are covered in music posters - especially in his room - and the furniture is old hand-me-downs.

The only nice thing in the whole apartment is the stereo system: surround sound with tape, CD, and record-playing options. The TV is small. The system is for music.

Andy lies on a ratty couch in the main room, listening to The Beatles through the stereo. He eats NEOPOLITAN ICE CREAM out of the container. The stereo REMOTE lies on his stomach. He peruses the latest *Daily Free Press*: his article about the latest Elliot Smith album has been published.

The front door knob jingles - someone with a key is trying to get in. Andy doesn't notice.

Taylor opens the door; she looks exhausted and frustrated. She tosses her BAG and WINTER COAT on a nearby chair. She spots Andy on the couch.

TAYLOR
(accusingly)

Aha!

Andy looks over at her, confused. He turns down the music using the Remote. He checks a WALL CLOCK (it's an old Beatles one; their arms act as the clock hands): she's not supposed to be here!

ANDY
You're home?

Taylor walks toward him, wagging a finger.

TAYLOR
It has been you!

She takes the ice cream away from him, sits on the couch near his belly, and uses his spoon to eat.

ANDY
I'd almost forgotten you live here.

Andy steals the spoon from her hand and takes a scoop for himself.

ANDY (CONT.)

(with ice cream
in his mouth)

How was sleeping in the office
again?

Taylor takes the spoon again, and moves her body so Andy can't take it a second time. She shifts her weight so she can pull an ENVELOPE out of her back jean pocket. She places it on Andy's belly.

TAYLOR

Mac's sick, and regardless
there's only so much of his
drivel I can stomach
publishing.

She looks at Andy, seeking sympathy.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Did you read that slop about
the merits of radio
conglomerates?

She shudders.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

In any event, I need you to
take this story.

Taylor puts the ice cream down on his belly too. She stands up and walks toward the door. Andy picks up the envelope slowly, as not to spill the ice cream, and opens it. He removes two LARGE TICKETS. His eyes widen.

Placing the ice cream on the floor, he runs to the door to catch Taylor before she's gone. He grabs the door before she can close it.

ANDY

R.E.M.? This Friday?

TAYLOR

That is, in fact, what the
tickets say.

She tousles his hair.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Let me know by tonight if you
can make it.

She leaves. Andy stands alone. He looks at the tickets. He makes a face of determination. He takes his CELL PHONE out of his pocket about to dial, just as it begins to RING. It's his mother. He picks up.

ANDY

(into phone)

Hey Ma, I was just thinking about you. (pause) Yeah, about this weekend...

INT. LARGE SYMPHONY HALL - THAT FRIDAY

Ramini plays with the MIT orchestra in front of a large audience. She sits second chair to Kristin. She sways passionately with the fast piece, completely absorbed.

At the end of the piece, the audience bursts into applause, giving the orchestra a STANDING OVATION. The orchestra and the Director takes a bow.

Kristin leans over to Ramini.

KRISTIN

(whispering)

Not too bad for your first show.

Ramini can sense Kristin's being somewhat disingenuous.

From behind them, Irina leans between them.

IRINA

(whispering)

Ramini, are you free for ice cream after the show?

Kristin gives Irina a NASTY LOOK: "what are you inviting her?" Ramini doesn't see this, and is pleased at Irina's kindness. She nods and smiles.

As the HOUSE LIGHTS go up, Ramini looks for any of her friends: no one is there. She keeps her smile on, but her mood is clearly dimmed.

EXT. TD BANKNORTH GARDEN (R.E.M. CONCERT) - CONT.

Andy, Vicki, and Sophie are squished together at the press access door to the concert venue. It's cold and windy outside. Each has their press pass clipped to their WINTER COATS. Sophie has her CAMERA BAG, and Andy his NOTEBOOK. Vicki's just along for the ride, and she's excited.

They reach the door. Sophie flashes her pass to the first of the three SECURITY GUARDS - all big, male, and in their early 30s.

SOPHIE

Sophie Pomeroy: P-O-M-E-R-O-Y.

Security Guard #1 checks his LIST. He nods to let her pass. She walks to Security Guard #2, and opens her Camera Bag for him to inspect.

Andy steps up next. Vicki puts her arm in his.

ANDY

Andrew Sampson: S-A-M-P-S-O-N.

He points to Vicki.

ANDY (CONT.)

And guest.

Guard #1 checks the List. He comes to the "S"s, and shakes his head.

GUARD #1

Not on here, kid.

The Guard gestures for the next person to step up. Andy doesn't move, confused. Vicki looks at him, perturbed.

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - CONT.

Ramini and 6 of her orchestra friends, including Kristin, David, and Irina, are crammed into a booth. They're sharing three BANANA SPLITS. Ramini savors it.

They're talking about the performance.

KRISTIN

That second movement! Superb!
Cheers to all!

The others nod and give "Here here!"s; they raise their ice cream SPOONS as a toast.

IRINA

We have to start thinking about something to get Dr. Biss at the end of the year. He's so good to us.

Irina looks at Ramini for support. Ramini nods, swallowing her mouthful of ice cream so she can speak.

RAMINI

We should ask the Chamber director to conduct us for some pieces that we could record for Dr. Biss as a gift.

She wipes her mouth with a napkin. The others nod, smiling: that's a great idea. Ramini grins, feeling at home.

EXT. TD BANKNORTH GARDEN - CONT.

The reporter behind Andy tries to push him aside, but he stands his ground. Sophie is finished with her inspection, and she walks back to Andy to see what the problem is. Andy tries to reason with the guard.

ANDY

There must be a mistake: I'm from *The Daily Free Press*. I have a pass.

Andy waves his press pass in the Guard's face as proof. The Guard gives him an angry stare; Security Guard #3 makes his way behind Guard #1 as extra, threatening support.

GUARD #1

You're not on the list.

Andy walks in a circle, head in his hands, trying to think. Vicki puts her hands on her hips.

VICKI

So we stood out here in the cold for nothing?

Andy doesn't have time to respond to her. He goes back to the Guard.

ANDY

Is "Mac Kaplan" on there?

The Guard doesn't move. Andy repeats himself.

ANDY (CONT.)

Kaplan: K-A-P-L-A-N.

The Guard checks the list. He finds the "K"s. He nods to Andy.

ANDY

(pleading)

Mac's from my paper, but he's sick and I'm taking his place. I can even call my editor, Taylor Asher, if you don't believe me.

The Guard stands up and towers over Andy: he's tired of this charade.

GUARD #1

I don't care if you call the editor of *The Globe* - you're not on the list.

Andy shakes his head; he's out of ideas. He backs down, and steps out of line. Sophie and Vicki follow him.

SOPHIE

What are we gonna do?

Andy's defeated, but trying to stay calm.

ANDY

You go on in without me.

Sophie walks away slowly, reluctant to leave Andy outside, but she does go. Vicki waves her hands in Andy's face to get his attention.

VICKI

And what are we gonna do?

ANDY

I don't know!

Andy sits down on the sidewalk, trying to think. His cell phone rings. He picks it up without looking at the number.

ANDY

(into phone)

Hello?

He bolts upright. Paula can be heard crying on the other end of the line. Andy stands up, so angry with himself that he picked up the phone.

ANDY
(into phone)
Ma, Ma, I can't talk right now,
I'm at the show.

Vicki throws up her hands in frustration.

VICKI
And now your mother calls!

Andy can't get off the phone. His mother is sobbing. He's stuck. He can hear the concert starting within. He sits back down on the sidewalk, resigned.

INT. RAMINI'S APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

Ramini opens the front door to her apartment. She's humming the piece that she heard earlier at the concert. She walks past the living room, pauses, and then backtracks.

Abhilesh is sitting on the couch, reading, with her two roommates on each of his sides.

RAMINI
(to Abhilesh)
What are you doing here?

Abhilesh closes his book dramatically and looks up at her.

ABHILESH
You're home late. Your phone is
off. Your roommates were
worried.

Pooja and Manju nod with concern. Ramini grits her teeth - they didn't even come to her show! She isn't going to apologize.

RAMINI
I told you, I had a concert. We
went out for ice cream
afterwards.

Abhilesh will not deter.

ABHILESH

How could we have known you
were safe?

Pooja and Manju nod complacently again. Ramini is surprised they have so little faith with her.

RAMINI

I have the pepper spray you
gave me.

She pulls it out of her purse to prove it.

RAMINI (CONT.)

And I was with my friends.

ABHILESH

With those American "friends"
from your orchestra.

Ramini doesn't dignify him with a response. She walks away and into her bedroom.

INT. ANDY'S APARTMENT - CONT.

Andy bursts into his apartment, Vicki close on his heels. He flips on the lights: Taylor isn't home. He walks straight for his LAPTOP. He sits on the couch, opens the Laptop, and while it boots up, he rests his head in his hands.

Vicki follows him to the couch and stands over him.

VICKI

What are you doing?

Andy takes a deep breath and starts to type furiously.

ANDY

First, I'm going to write an
article so Taylor doesn't kill
me. Then, I'm going to buy bus
tickets to New York City and
leave in the morning so my
mother doesn't kill herself.

Vicki's stunned.

VICKI

You're going back to New York?

Andy pauses but a moment with his typing.

ANDY

I have to.

He gets back to it. Vicki readjusts her coat. She's hurt that he's so easily discarded her.

VICKI

Well. I see what your priorities are.

Andy doesn't catch the connotation. He keeps typing. Knowing where she stands, Vicki leaves. She slams the door behind her.

Andy is surprised by the noise and that Vicki has left. He almost gets up to follow her, but he can't make himself leave his Laptop. He balls up on the couch, tightening all of his muscles.

He relaxes. Picks up his Laptop. Types.

INT. RAMINI'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Ramini throws her purse and coat on the floor and collapses face-up on her bed. She doesn't bother to flip on the light. Through the door, she can hear the mumblings of her roommates and Abhilesh talking about her. She stands up again, and cups her ear to the door.

MANJU (O.S.)

Abhilesh, calm yourself. She was safe, as she said.

ABHILESH (O.S.)

She can't go running around this way! It isn't proper! It distracts her from her work!

POOJA (O.S.)

It's just a club, she doesn't take it seriously.

Ramini backs away from the door. Her roommates don't understand. She hears Abhilesh yell, losing patience. The front door SLAMS.

Ramini flops into bed and rolls over onto her stomach. She closes her eyes.

INT. DAILY FREE PRESS OFFICE BUILDING - THREE DAYS LATER

Andy paces outside of the office. He's pacing and talking to himself, practicing what to say to Taylor about not getting into the R.E.M. concert. His face and hand gestures are extremely apologetic.

The DOOR opens behind him. He spins around, and Taylor peeks out. She walks over to him, shutting the door behind her. She has a NOTE in her hand. She reads.

TAYLOR

"I am the most irresponsible journalist on our whole staff."

Taylor nods in affirmative. Andy cringes a little.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Blah blah blah... "P.S. I told Sophie after the show that you'd be understanding, I think maybe now's your chance to get that date."

Taylor raises an eyebrow at Andy as she keeps reading.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

"... because I think I've convinced her that you're not insane."

He shrugs.

ANDY

The least I could do was put in a good word.

Taylor bugs out her eyes in disbelief.

TAYLOR

Do you want to get fired from a volunteered job?

Andy shrugs again. He's defeated. Taylor puts her hands on her hips, sighs. She starts on some different news.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

I'm running the piece...

Andy is briefly elated.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

... but I can't give you any more big stories for the rest of my term as editor. I can't have writers thinking I'm "understanding."

Andy understands her. He nods complacently. After all, he did mess up.

Taylor walks back to the *Daily Free Press* office door. She talks to him over her shoulder.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Remember, Andy, that Christina's taking over next semester. And I'll tell you what, after this scathing review of corporate America, I think she might think you're hot shit.

Taylor looks at him.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Are you going to prove her wrong?

Andy shakes his head "no." Taylor nods.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

Good.

INT. GUEST ROOM, RAMINI'S FAMILY IN NYC - A MONTH LATER

Ramini blinks her eyes open. It's morning. She flips over: she's under a flower-print comforter and in a conservative nightgown.

Above her, her AUNT (CHACHI DEVIKA, 50) and UNCLE (CHACHA VIPIN, 60) are standing, waiting for her to awaken. She jolts awake, sitting up straight and covering herself with her blanket.

Her Aunt holds a BREAKFAST TRAY in her hands, and lays it on her lap: INDIAN POTATO BREAD, PORRIDGE, and CHAI TEA.

DEVIKA

Good morning, Bahin!

Ramini smiles at them.

RAMINI

Thank you for breakfast,
Chachi.

Ramini picks up one of the Potato Breads and takes a bite. She makes an appreciative "mmm" sound. Her family hasn't budged. Ramini takes a more careful look at her breakfast: there is an OPENED LETTER from New York University.

Ramini picks it up and reads it.

DEVIKA

(gushing)

Your school forwarded it to us
this very morning! We're so
proud of you, Minnie!

Ramini forces a smile.

RAMINI

You opened my mail?

Her Uncle laughs.

VIPIN

You know how your chachi gets
when she senses good news.

DEVIKA

It's an auspicious day!

She points to a calendar on the wall in Ramini's room. Many days, including DECEMBER 16th, are marked with yellow highlighter.

Ramini nods, going along with her family's ancient suspicions. Devika kisses her forehead.

VIPIN

Your mother and father are very
proud, and hope you will
consider living with family if
you attend this university.

Ramini's privacy is violated again! This time, she does a worse job hiding her distress.

RAMINI

You called them?

Devika and Vipin simply ignore her concerned tone this time.

DEVIKA

How lucky Abhilesh is that
you've grown up so respectably!

Ramini cringes a little. Vipin pats Ramini's shoulder.

VIPIN

I hope you enjoy your
breakfast, your chachi worked
all morning on it!

Devika smiles proudly. Ramini takes another bite of potato bread to prove to her that it's good. Satisfied, her Aunt and Uncle walk to the bedroom door.

Ramini's COUSIN (BHAIYAA MUKESH, 19) walks in as Devika and Vipin leave. He averts his eyes from Ramini in her bed and hands her another LETTER.

MUKESH

This came in too, Minnie.

Letter delivered, Mukesh leaves the room.

This envelope is unopened, and the return address is from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. That catches Ramini's attention. She picks the Breakfast Tray up off of her lap and places it next to her on the bed. She sits up straight and opens the letter.

She reads. Her eyes fall on one sentence.

INSERT - LETTER

"...the successes from your résumé are not a perfect match for our requirements."

BACK TO SCENE

They won't even let her audition. Ramini leans back against her pillows. Her face contorts a little, and she falls into tears, trying her best to repress them.

EXT. ANDY'S FRIENDS' BROOKLYN HOUSE - NEW YEAR'S EVE, NIGHT

Andy's high school friends, MIKE (22) and DAN (21), are throwing a huge party at their "college home" in Brooklyn. On the front lawn, there's a keg and about 10 COLLEGE STUDENTS toasting the new year, even though it's near freezing outside.

INT. MIKE AND DAN'S HOUSE - CONT.

Andy works at THE BAR, pouring random alcohols into cups for his friends' many friends: the place is packed, music blasting. He really doesn't know what he's doing, but he's enjoying making these strange concoctions.

Mike and Dan approach the Bar, squeezing through the throng. They join Andy behind the Bar, temporarily relieving him of his duties.

Dan claps Andy on the shoulder.

DAN

Happy fuckin' New Year, old friend!

Dan's very drunk.

ANDY

Thanks, Dan.

Andy gestures to Mike: "take a look at this guy."

ANDY

(to Mike)

How's the house holding up?

Mike picks his foot up off the floor: his shoe almost sticks.

MIKE

Sturdy as a rock with beer spilled all over it.

He winks at Andy.

MIKE (CONT.)

Just the kind of place for you to live when you come back next year.

Andy shakes his head, but his mood is light.

ANDY

Mike, you know it's
complicated...

Mike puts an arm around Andy's shoulder and pulls him out from behind the bar.

MIKE

No talk of business tonight!
Tonight's a happy night!

But Mike does have some business in mind.

MIKE (CONT.)

And on your first New Year's
out of Mom and the girlfriend's
clutches, we were hoping you
could help us out.

Dan clumsily mixes a RUM AND COKE.

ANDY

I'm already manning your bar.

Dan hands the Rum and Coke to Andy.

DAN

Listen, Andy. We need you.

Dan and Mike look at him very seriously. Andy takes the Rum and Coke. Dan and Mike grin.

INT. RAMINI'S FAMILY'S APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

Ramini is watching the ball drop with a group of her family's INDIAN FRIENDS. She's a little bored, even when they CHEER for 2005.

Ramini calls her mother. She puts a smile on her face, forcing her attitude to follow.

RAMINI

(into phone)

Happy New Year, Amma!

Ramini pauses, listening. She walks toward the empty room next to the TV room. It's quieter than the TV room. It has WINDOWS facing the street.

RAMINI

(into phone)

Very happy staying with Chacha and Chachi. (pause; she stretches her opinion) Mukesh is... well. Top of his class at Columbia.

As she nears the window, Ramini can hear people her own age making merriment: YELLING, LAUGHING. Her face reflects her inner disheartenment.

RAMINI

(into phone)

Yes, two more acceptances just this week.

She looks for the other young people outside.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - CONT.

Andy, Mike, and Dan sing The Beatles "Like Dreamers Do." They're mostly on key.

THE "QUARTET"

"You came just one dream ago,
and now I know that I will love
you."

The boys are laughing between notes.

EXT. RAMINI'S FAMILY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONT.

There are plenty of YOUNG ADULTS laughing, signing, and yelling outside Ramini's family's apartment building.

RAMINI (O.S.)

"I knew when you first said
'hello,' that's how I know that
I will love you!"

INT. RAMINI'S FAMILY'S APARTMENT - CONT.

Ramini holds her closed cell phone in her hand. She watches the happy Young Adults from the window, longingly. They're having fun.

She spots Paula and Uncle Brian navigating their way through the Young Adults. Paula is crying. Ramini's singing becomes less joyful.

RAMINI (CONT.)

"I get high when I see you go
by."

She stops singing, focusing on Paula and Brian. Paula and Brian enter the apartment across the street from Ramini's family's - this is where Andy lives.

Suddenly, Ramini is pulled from the window. Mukesh looks out and sees all of the Young Adults.

RAMINI

(irritated)

What are you doing?

Mukesh grumbles, shaking his head. He's getting angry.

MUKESH

Every year, they disturb the
peace here.

Mukesh heads for the front door of the apartment. No one else in the family notices. Ramini, concerned, follows him.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - CONT.

Mike and Dan start to mumble incoherently; Andy's more sober than either of them, but not too much so. Mike and Dan burst into laughter, but Andy persists.

ANDY

Come on guys! "My, oh my. When
you sigh, my insides just fly,
butterfly. Why am I so shy when
I'm beside you?"

Mike and Dan degrade into laughter.

EXT. RAMINI'S FAMILY'S APARTMENT, SIDEWALK - CONT.

Mukesh walks out the street exit of the apartment building. He starts yelling at the rowdy Young Adults.

Ramini appears on the sidewalk behind Mukesh. She whacks him upside the head.

RAMINI

What's the matter with you? Are
you not in college? Do you not
enjoy fun?

She pulls him back inside.

EXT. LINCOLN CENTER - NEXT WEEK, MID-MORNING

It's snowing. Traffic is relatively light around the Lincoln Center. A TAXI pulls up in front of the building. Out of it steps Ramini with her VIOLIN CASE. She shivers, and runs into the building.

INT. LINCOLN CENTER, LARGE PRACTICE ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

A young female SECRETARY (27) leads Ramini into the audition room. She still has on her WINTER COAT, and carries her VIOLIN CASE. She takes a seat in the LONE CHAIR.

Directly in front of her sit three advisory board members: JAN LARKIN (55, grandmotherly), MARK CAMPBELL (65, short-tempered), and ISAAC PERLMAN (60, quiet). Jan and Isaac are silent and unmoving, while Mark shuffles through PAPERS.

JAN

Is it cold outside, Ms.
Bhattar?

Ramini nods, shivering involuntarily.

RAMINI

Yes, ma'am.

JAN (CONT.)

I doubt it's so cold in here.
Why don't you take off your
coat and stay a while?

Ramini immediately removes her coat, hanging it on the back of her chair and trying to remain calm. She sits back down. She holds a FOLDER of her audition music in one hand, and keeps her violin case at her feet.

Mark lays out a series of papers in front of him.

MARK

Ms. Ramini Bhattar.

Ramini smiles politely. Mark picks up Ramini's RÉSUMÉ and reads.

MARK (CONT.)

Vice President of the Pre-Med Club. 3.97 GPA. Research internship at New York University. (pause) One completed semester with the MIT Symphony Orchestra at second chair.

He looks up at Ramini, sizing her up. She keeps her smile on.

MARK (CONT.)

Have you been accepted into any medical schools, Ms. Bhattar?

Ramini nods, exuding confidence. She's going to prove she's multitalented.

RAMINI

Several, in fact.

Mark raises his eyebrows. Ramini isn't sure if she's said the right thing, but she knows it's true. Isaac finally moves.

ISAAC

Let's hear you play.

Jan nods. Ramini bends down and unhinges the locks on her violin case. She opens it. GASPS.

Ramini lifts up her BOW: some of the BOW STRINGS are snapped. She can't use the bow to play. She looks up to her three auditioners in panic; they appear unsympathetic and uncaring.

Ramini fights for an excuse. From her spot on the floor, kneeling next to her violin, she looks like she's begging.

RAMINI

It's so cold outside. I'm so sorry, but it's so cold outside. Let me ask to borrow one -

Mark cuts her off with a swing of his hand. She stops talking.

MARK

Perhaps you should come back
next year when you're better
prepared.

Ramini can say nothing. She puts her broken bow back in the case. Latches the case shut. Puts back on her coat. She faces the three auditioners.

RAMINI

(voice
quivering)

Thank you for this opportunity.

She walks out, tears forming (but not falling) in her eyes.

INT. CULTER MAJESTIC THEATRE - VALENTINE'S WEEKEND

On stage, the String Orchestra of New York City (SONYC) performs. They, especially the women, are dressed for Valentine's: lots of pinks, reds, and flower- and heart-prints. Their music is upbeat and romantic.

Andy and Vicki sit in the back of the orchestra section. Andy is beaming with happiness. He has his NOTEBOOK in his lap, but he's so entranced that he's barely taken any notes. Vicki is a little bored; she taps her foot impatiently.

SONYC finishes their piece. Andy stands immediately to clap, as do some others in the audience. Vicki claps politely. Andy kisses her on the cheek with glee, a glee she does not share.

INT. ROMANTIC ITALIAN RESTAURANT - AN HOUR LATER

Andy and Vicki are exchanging Valentine's gifts. Andy's still on a high from the concert, and Vicki is impatiently awaiting her present.

Even though it's wrapped, Vicki's gift to Andy is obviously a record. He opens it with feigned suspicion, making Vicki giggle. As he does so, his pants' pocket starts to vibrate: his cell phone. While unwrapping the present, he slyly removes the phone from his pocket: the screen reads "UNCLE BRIAN."

Andy ignores the call and finishes unwrapping the gift. It's the record of Derek and the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*. Andy grins.

ANDY

Wow, thanks Vix!

Andy leans across the table to give Vicki a kiss. Vicki is proud of her success.

VICKI

I know "Layla" isn't quite appropriate for Valentine's, but that might be the only Clapton record you don't have.

Andy nods in agreement.

Vicki watches Andy inspect the record, her impatience rising.

VICKI

So?

Andy looks at her. Oh, right! Out of his pocket, Andy pulls a small box, about the size of a necklace case. Vicki gasps and yanks it away from him. Her attitude is completely changed. Andy laughs, and his cell phone starts to vibrate: "UNCLE BRIAN" a second time. He ignores it again.

Vicki doesn't make a noise when she opens the box. She stares at its contents, confused.

Inside the box is a WOODEN PEN.. not a necklace.

She picks up a slip of paper from inside the box. As she reads, her face softens. She meets Andy's eyes, with affection.

VICKI

It's a pen made from the old chairs in Fenway.

Andy smiles, proud of his present. Vicki stands up and gives him a peck on the lips.

VICKI (CONT.)

It's perfect.

Vicki doodles on her hand to test out the pen. Andy's phone vibrates a third time: still "UNCLE BRIAN." Andy's finally concerned.

ANDY

Peruse the dessert menu,
this'll just be a minute.

Vicki looks up from inspecting the pen. She's preemptively irritated.

VICKI

Is that your mother?

ANDY

Of course not!

He stands up, kisses her forehead, and walks toward the RESTROOMS in the back of the restaurant. He picks up the phone, putting on a fake cheery air.

ANDY

(into phone)

Uncle Brian! You ought to know
that Vicki's going to kill me
for leaving her on Valentine's.

He reaches the bathroom and stops outside the door. UNCLE BRIAN - 55, Paula's best friend, and gay - is sobbing on the phone. Andy's face goes from annoyed to concerned to very upset. He ducks into the men's room.

INT. RESTAURANT, MEN'S BATHROOM - CONT.

Andy locks the door behind him.

ANDY (CONT.)

(into phone)

I didn't know! The yellow ones
were on sale, they were on
sale!

Tears form in Andy's eyes. He contorts his face trying to hold them in. He wipes his face with his sleeve.

ANDY (CONT.)

(into phone,
accusatory)

You bought her the mint
Ghiradelli Squares, you know it
can't be the mint squares!

Andy sits down on the toilet and starts to cry in sobbing bursts. He can't restrain himself. Uncle Brian still babbles on the phone.

There's a loud knock at the door.

RESTAURANT PATRON
(O.S.)

Sir?

Andy stops crying abruptly. He consciously slows his breathing until he's calmed down.

INT. RESTAURANT, AT THE TABLE - A COUPLE MINUTES LATER

Andy approaches the table, eyes reddened. Vicki is talking to the WAITER - 30, attentive. Vicki smiles when she sees Andy walking, but then she notices his eyes.

VICKI
Sweetheart...?

Andy ignores her, directing his attention to the Waiter.

ANDY
The check, please.

Vicki is again displeased.

VICKI
I was going to order cake!

Andy can't deal with her right now. He starts crying again, attracting stares from those around him. Vicki hugs him, very aware of the looks they're getting.

VICKI
Baby, you're making a scene.

Andy practically collapses into her arms.

ANDY
(crying)
The wrong flowers! I bought her
the wrong flowers!

He doesn't stop crying, to Vicki's dismay.

INT. NEW YORK-PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND

Uncle Brian and a NURSE (30) walk Andy through the hospital hallways. Uncle Brian is fretting even more than Andy, who is trying to keep a straight face.

NURSE

(to Andy)

She'd been doing so well on the Zoloft, we weren't having her come in for the biweekly check-ups. Only monthly.

Andy nods numbly. Brian wrings his hands. They arrive at Paula's hospital door.

NURSE

It'd be best for you to see her as much as possibly. You're her only listed family.

Andy nods as she flips open her chart.

NURSE (CONT.)

Do you know how we might reach Mr. -

She pauses, unsure of the pronunciation.

NURSE (CONT.)

Mr. Thongthai?

Andy is thrown completely off-kilter - he hasn't heard that name spoken in years. Uncle Brian is horrified.

NURSE (CONT.)

Our records say that your mother and Mr. Thongthai -

Brian stops her.

BRIAN

You haven't asked Paula about
(pause) that man, have you?

The Nurse shakes her head "no." Brian has some relief. He puts his arm around Andy, who's still reeling.

BRIAN

Don't.

Andy stares at the floor.

ANDY

There's no way to contact him anyway.

The Nurse realizes the greatness of her *faux pas*. She's a bit scattered for a moment as Andy and Uncle Brian recuperate.

Regaining some strength and authority, the Nurse takes out FORMS from her Folder.

NURSE

(to Andy)

Then you can sign these forms
to consign her to bed.

Andy sighs, and rubs his forehead. This is too much responsibility. He takes the Nurse's PEN and signs the forms.

ANDY

What about her job, our
apartment?

Brian steps in.

BRIAN

I'll take care of the apartment
sweetheart, don't you worry.

Brian pauses.

BRIAN (CONT.)

But you may want to pick up
some little job at school.

Beat.

BRIAN (CONT.)

Just in case.

Andy nods. The Nurse opens the hospital door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONT.

Andy's mother is lying on the bed, barely conscious. She has a variety of IVs in her to keep her hydrated and sedated. She groggily acknowledges her son.

PAULA

Andy, my baby.

The Nurse leaves. Uncle Brian stays at the door. Andy sits by Paula's side. He takes her hand and squeezes.

ANDY

I'm glad you're alright, Ma.

PAULA

I'm glad you're here, Andy.
Will you stay awhile?

Andy chokes down his tears.

ANDY

I can't, Ma. I've got to go
back to school.

Paula's face turns into a melancholy frown. She puts her
free hand over Andy's.

PAULA

Won't you visit more, then?

Andy starts to cry.

ANDY

Of course, Ma.

Paula smiles, almost greedily.

INT. RAMINI'S ROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER, NIGHT

Kristin and Irina flit around Ramini's room, pulling out
clothes from all drawers and closets.

CUT TO:

Irina uses her own make-up to do Ramini's face.

RAMINI

Is this really necessary?

Irina waves her eyeliner pencil like a weapon.

IRINA

Hold still!

CUT TO:

Kristin has given up on Ramini's clothes. She pulls clothes
out of her own bag: the last resort.

INT. RAMINI'S LIVING ROOM - 10 MINUTES LATER

Pooja and Manju are watching a BOLLYWOOD FILM. The sound is
turned up, and Punjabi music fills the room.

In the hallway outside the living room, Kristin and Irina sneak Ramini out of the apartment. Neither Pooja nor Manju notice.

INT. RAMINI'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - CONT.

Kristin and Irina giggle loudly as soon as the trio escapes Ramini's apartment. Ramini is fully dressed for a night on the town; although her outfit's still conservative, she's wearing a SPARKLY TOP and FITTED BLACK PANTS. Ramini shakes her head at her friends, almost matronly.

RAMINI

At least you two are having a fun time.

Kristin takes Ramini's hand and walks her down the hall.

KRISTIN

You'll be having fun soon enough, trust me!

IRINA

You have plenty of time to sit around and watch movies after you're sold off to Abhilesh for good.

Ramini finally laughs.

INT. DANCE CLUB - A HALF HOUR LATER

Ramini is a wallflower at this huge club, staying at the bar though she does not drink. This isn't her scene, but she's making the best of it. Kristin, Irina, David, and others from the orchestra are on the dance floor having a good time. Irina motions to Ramini to join them, but she declines with a hand gesture.

Ramini turns back to the bar and takes notice of a SKETCHY MAN (35, greasy) who's next to her. He leers.

SKETCHY MAN

Hi there.

Ramini clutches her PURSE close to her side, gets up, and heads for the dance floor. Kristin grabs her and starts dancing immediately. Ramini's uncomfortable, but more comfortable with her friends than the Sketchy Man.

EXT. STREET IN CAMBRIDGE - CONT.

Taylor and Andy walk in the street eating ICE CREAM from cones. It's cold outside, but no matter to these ice cream fanatics. Andy's looking pretty sorry for himself, and Taylor is trying to comfort him.

They walk in silence for a few moments, not needing to speak to acknowledge Andy's problem with his mother.

ANDY

(singing)

"Mmm, I get by with a little
help from my friends."

Taylor gives him a look: not this sappy business.

ANDY (CONT.)

(singing)

"Mmm, I get high with a little
help my friends."

Taylor stops him.

TAYLOR

Andy, free ice cream is once in
a lifetime. Once in a lifetime
when your mother suddenly is
hospitalized and can't work and
you have no money. Don't get
too attached.

He knows she's just keeping up her tough exterior. They both take a lick of ice cream.

ANDY

I'm already too attached. (he
winks) I wish you liked guys.

Taylor laughs. She kisses him platonically on the forehead.

TAYLOR

The world's poorly made.

INT. DANCE CLUB - CONT.

Ramini dances awkwardly as her friends spin and grind against one another. She's amused by them, but has no desire to join in on their antics.

Something catches her eye nearby. It's Abhilesh and an INDIAN GIRL (18, American) dancing together. Ramini watches them, insulted. Kristin sees that she's stopped dancing, and follows her gaze. Abhilesh and the Girl kiss.

Ramini and Kristin are both disgusted.

KRISTIN

What?!

Abhilesh looks over at them, sees Ramini. She leaves the club.

EXT. DANCE CLUB - CONT.

Ramini heads out into the street, filled with rage. How dare he?

Abhilesh follows out after her, the Indian Girl following after him.

INDIAN GIRL

Where are you going?

Abhilesh ignores her, and she goes back into the club.

ABHILESH

Ramini! Ramini!

Ramini ignores him.

ABHILESH (CONT.)

Minnie!

Ramini swings around, pointing at him accusingly.

RAMINI

Don't you call me that! Don't
you call me my mother's name
for me! You're a liar, you live
a lie.

Abhilesh stops, staggers. He's drunk.

ABHILESH

Ramini, Ramini...

Ramini is furious. She turns and starts to walk away again.

RAMINI

I agreed to our arrangement
because you seemed like a good
man, but now I see you had us
fooled.

Abhilesh stumbles toward her, his arms out apologetically.

ABHILESH

Ramini, you have this all
wrong. These girls, they're
nothing, just stupid Americans...

RAMINI

And when we went back to India,
then I could trust you? I'm not
going back to India with you.
And you can't force me to.

Abhilesh gains some rage of his own. He won't stand to have
a woman talk to him that way. Ramini turns to walk away to
the T, but Abhilesh grabs her. She screams.

EXT. STREET IN CAMBRIDGE - CONT.

Andy and Taylor are walking and eating, arm in arm. They
hear Ramini's scream. They look at each other, stuff the
last bite of the CONES in their mouths, and take off
running.

Around the next corner, they see the DANCE CLUB, Abhilesh,
and Ramini.

Abhilesh has her by the wrists, shaking her. She's
squirming to break free. He's threatening her.

ABHILESH

How dare you talk to me that
way? How dare you?

Abhilesh grabs Ramini's hair and pulls her closer to him,
attempting to kiss her. She screams again. Andy runs right
into Abhilesh, knocking him away from Ramini with his
shoulder. BAM!

Taylor takes Ramini and pulls her aside.

TAYLOR

Are you alright?

Ramini pushes Taylor away, and starts to rummage through her Purse.

Abhilesh takes a swing at Andy, but Andy easily dodges it. They make eye contact and recognize each other.

ABHILESH

You!

ANDY

You!

Ramini finally recognizes Andy too. She isn't too pleased to see him.

RAMINI

You!

Taylor is utterly confused.

Abhilesh takes another shot at Andy, but he again ducks out of the way. Andy punches him right in the stomach. Abhilesh doubles over; he really doesn't have a chance because Andy is stone cold sober.

Ramini finds what she's been looking for: her bottle of MACE. She walks up to Abhilesh and sprays him in the face.

Abhilesh's attention immediately turns from the pain in his stomach to the stinging on his skin.

ABHILESH

Argh! You bitch! You stupid
bitch!

Abhilesh is not helping his cause. Taylor takes out her own MACE and sprays him too. He falls to the ground.

Andy approaches Ramini, who's frozen in place watching Abhilesh writhe.

ANDY

Are you okay?

Ramini doesn't respond. Andy tries to smile.

ANDY (CONT.)

Good thing we were here, huh?

Andy's words bring Ramini out of her thoughts. Tears pooling in her eyes, but prideful rage is stronger than sadness in her.

RAMINI

I'm fine! I can take care of
myself! I can protect myself!

She pushes Andy away. Andy stumbles backward, unsure how to proceed. Ramini walks back toward the club, just as Kristin and Irina come out looking for her. She collapses into their arms.

INT. MIT PRACTICE ROOM - THE NEXT MONDAY

Ramini and the other orchestra SENIORS, including David and Kristin, are seated with their instruments in front of DR. THOMPSON, 50. Some are tuning their instruments; they've just started practice.

Ramini still looks frazzled from her fallout with Abhilesh.

Dr. Thompson clears his throat for attention. He lays out his SCORE onto the CONDUCTOR'S STAND.

DR. THOMPSON

Ms. Bhattar has offered an
excellent selection for your
senior gift.

The rest of the Orchestra nods in agreement. Ramini smiles at them, but it's somewhat forced.

RAMINI

Everyone loves The Beatles.

Dr. Thompson taps his Stand, and the group prepares to play. He winks at all of them.

DR. THOMPSON

But we know where you all
belong: on stage, playing.

Everyone but Ramini smiles. Ramini's face falls; she doesn't have a future in music. Kristin squeezes her knee comfortingly. She's finally warmed to Ramini entirely. They both miss the start of the song, The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby."

EXT. CHARLES RIVER, CAMBRIDGE SIDE - NIGHT, AFTER PRACTICE

Ramini walks with her VIOLIN on the sidewalk closest to the river. It shimmers in the moonlight. She watches the water move.

She walks to the edge of the sidewalk, and climbs over to the riverbank. She sets down her instrument, picks up a rock, and skips it.

She looks across the river. She's melancholy.

EXT. ACROSS THE RIVER - CONT.

Andy is on the other side of the river, also skipping rocks and also melancholy. He's listening to his IPOD. "Eleanor Rigby" is playing.

Andy's Soul glows. He looks across the river, as though he sees something.

EXT. CHARLES RIVER, CAMBRIDGE SIDE - CONT.

Ramini's Soul glows. She looks harder across the river. She sees nothing: it's too far.

INT. DAILY FREE PRESS OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY, AFTERNOON

Cheap champagne bottles POP! The EDITORIAL STAFF of the FreeP celebrates Taylor, who's been accepted on *The Boston Globe* staff. Taylor laughs and basks in the pomp and circumstance: it isn't every day that someone's accepted into *The Globe*. Plus, she's sitting next to Sophie, her long-standing crush.

Andy chimes his hard plastic CHAMPAGNE GLASS and raises it for a toast.

ANDY

To Taylor! My best friend and a hardass - if anyone was going to make it into *The Globe*, it would be her!

The Editorial Staff cheers. They drink. Taylor raises the glass to Andy.

TAYLOR

To Andy! Best of luck for his interview with *The Voice*!

The Staff cheers again, and loses themselves in the champagne. Taylor comes to Andy's side.

TAYLOR

You really didn't have to do all this.

ANDY
Of course I did!

Taylor lowers her voice.

TAYLOR
But how'd you afford it? With
your mom in the hospital and
Vicki on your ass about taking
her out on dates, all this
champagne -

Andy stops her.

ANDY
For my best friend, I can
manage.

Taylor squeezes his hand, the most affection she's going to
show in the newsroom.

TAYLOR
(very quietly)
And you're doing okay?

ANDY
Ma's coming out of the hospital
soon!

Taylor's voice drops even lower.

TAYLOR
I meant about last weekend,
that girl at the club.

Andy stiffens. That is bothering him.

ANDY
No big deal.

Taylor squeezes his hand again. She can tell he's just
putting on a good face.

INT. BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER - SPRING BREAK

Ramini enters the teaching hospital. There aren't too many
people there, because the med students are on break. She
holds her BU ACCEPTANCE PORTFOLIO in her hand, her PURSE
over her arm. She navigates through the hallways, checking
her papers to see if she's headed the right way. She looks
uncomfortable and uninterested in the visit.

Turning a corner, she almost runs into a group of ER interns rushing past with a WOMAN (24) on a GURNEY. She's in labor and SCREAMING.

Ramini is sickened.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFÉ - CONT.

Ramini ducks out of the way of the Gurney and into the café to close her eyes and take a deep breath. She does not want to be in this place.

She opens her eyes. The Café has no other patrons. Andy is standing behind the counter, staring at her. As soon as she sees him, he turns around and starts uselessly rearranging cups. He's a little bit afraid of Ramini at this point. She softens toward him.

Ramini approaches the counter.

RAMINI
(tentatively)
Are you following me?

Andy turns slightly. He doesn't trust her.

ANDY
Your boyfriend around?

There's an awkward pause.

RAMINI
He was never my boyfriend. And
no.

Andy faces her. There is a tension between them. They can't face each other for long. Andy points to the MENU.

ANDY
What would you like?

Ramini looks up; she didn't come here for coffee. She selects something anyway.

RAMINI
Small vanilla iced frappuccino?

Andy is surprised - that's his favorite. He nods in approval.

ANDY
Good choice.

He goes to mix the drink. MACHINES WHOOSH and WHIRL loudly. They dampen the tension between Andy and Ramini.

Ramini watches Andy work. He really isn't a bad guy.

RAMINI

Hey.

Andy can't hear her.

RAMINI (CONT.)

Hey!

The Machines still mask her voice. Andy stops them right before Ramini speaks next.

RAMINI (CONT.)

HEY!

Ramini's voice is very loud at this point. Andy jumps. Ramini covers her mouth.

ANDY

Yes?

Ramini drops her hands.

RAMINI

I'm sorry about the other day.
Thank you.

Andy nods uncomfortably, and pours her drink from its MIXING CONTAINER into a CUP.

Andy hands her the FRAPPUCCINO.

ANDY

That's \$2.86.

Ramini rummages in her Purse for her WALLET. Andy, now forced to face Ramini, is also forced to alleviate the tension between them. He makes small talk.

ANDY (CONT.)

What brings you to the hospital? Someone you know sick?

Ramini gives him money. He rings it up in the cash register.

RAMINI

I've been accepted here. I only have until the end of next month to decide.

Andy's surprised. Ramini takes a sip of her Frappuccino.

ANDY

You're going to medical school?

Ramini's forgotten that outside of her community, college students don't necessarily have their majors selected for them. Medical school is the logical path for her.

RAMINI

Of course.

Andy's as upset as he can be on behalf of a stranger. Ramini senses his discomfort, but doesn't understand its cause. She tries to change the subject.

RAMINI

I've visited here before, but I've never seen you. When did you start working here?

Andy's discomfort increases, but is qualitatively different. She's landed on something he doesn't want to talk about.

ANDY

About a month ago... my mom's sick, so I had to pick up a job.

Ramini's confused.

RAMINI

What about your father?

Another sore topic.

ANDY

He's not around.

Ramini clams up - she wasn't expecting that. She and Andy are failing to alleviate any tension; in fact, they're only adding to the unease in their relationship. Ramini takes another sip of her drink. Andy plunges into what he's been thinking about.

ANDY

You're not going into music?

Now he's hit a sore subject. Ramini shakes her head "no."

ANDY (CONT.)

Have you auditioned?

Ramini dislikes Andy's insinuation.

RAMINI

Of course I have! Every
orchestra in Boston!

She backs away from him. Their attempt at amicable conversation has utterly failed.

RAMINI (CONT.)

(coldly)

Thanks for the drink, it's
delicious.

Ramini heads for the door. Andy comes out from behind the counter and catches her before she leaves.

ANDY

What about New York? That's
what the music is.

Andy blocks the door. Ramini answers only because she's somewhat trapped.

RAMINI

A couple.

She pauses. Andy waits for more. Ramini huffs impatiently.

RAMINI (CONT.)

The Philharmonic, the Pops,
Chamber Music Society...

Ramini tries to squeeze past Andy, but he won't let her.

ANDY

What about Sospeso? Jupiter?
SO-New York?

Ramini's interested. She meets Andy's eyes.

RAMINI

I've never heard of those.

A COUGH (O.S.) interrupts them. At the door, there is a NURSE (40, agitated) waiting to get coffee. Andy heads for the counter, leaving the door wide open for Ramini to leave. She doesn't. The Nurse walks toward the counter.

ANDY

(to Ramini)

New York's where the music is!
That's why I'm going back there
after graduation.

Ramini doesn't believe she can succeed anymore.

RAMINI

But audition? This late?

She shakes her head "no." It seems impossible.

ANDY

You're talented. Give it a
shot.

Ramini blushes - this reminds her of when he complimented her the first time they met.

The Nurse clears her throat again to get Andy's attention.

NURSE

Coffee. Black.

Andy nods, and starts the Machines. Ramini looks at the Nurse, and remembers the hospital. She starts to shake her head again. Andy turns back to Ramini and notices her reluctance. He's hurt.

ANDY

(to Ramini)

It's just a thought.

Andy focuses on his work, dismayed. Ramini feels bad for hurting his feelings, but ducks out of the Café.

INT. BU MEDICAL CENTER HALLWAY - CONT.

Ramini looks at her BU Acceptance Portfolio. She's thinking.

A second GURNEY with another screaming, pregnant WOMAN (30) rockets past her. Ramini jumps with surprise. She buries her head in her hands. The hospital is too much for her.

EXT. BOSTON CHINATOWN, FUNG WAH BUS PICKUP - THAT FRIDAY

The Fung Wah BUS STOP is barely distinguishable from the rest of Boston's Chinatown. The streets are bustling. Bus PATRONS, all Chinese, wait in line to board the LARGE BUS.

Andy stands off to the side, looking up and down the street. He's on his cell phone. It's Vicki's VOICE on the other end of the line.

ANDY

(into phone)

You could still come if you wanted.

Andy's joking: obviously, Vicki couldn't make it to the bus stop in time. But Vicki takes him seriously, her Voice irritated over the line. Andy loses his good humor.

ANDY

(into phone)

Of course, just kidding.
(pause) I'll see you Sunday.

Andy hangs up the phone and shakes his head: this relationship with Vicki is not going well. The bus HONKS at him. He runs on board.

INT. FUNG WAH BUS - CONT.

The bus is packed. Andy hands in his ticket and walks toward the back of the bus to look for a seat. Some of the Patrons give him odd stares, whispering to one another. He's clearly only half-Asian, and thus suspect on the Chinatown bus.

Andy ignores them, but takes notes of a larger group whispering and pointing farther back. He walks to where the stares are leading: Ramini sits by herself, her BAG covering the seat next to her. She clutches her VIOLIN CASE and keeps her eyes out the window. She looks scared.

Andy smiles.

ANDY

Are you following me?

Ramini turns to him. She nearly jumps out of her seat; she wasn't expecting him there either.

RAMINI

SO-New York has offered me an audition.

Andy nods and smiles enthusiastically.

ANDY
(teasing)
What'd I tell you?

Ramini moves her bag to make room for him. Now they can be the weird bus riders together, and the stares of the other Patrons don't feel as harsh.

Andy sits down. They sit in awkward silence for a moment. Andy turns to Ramini.

ANDY
What's your name?

Ramini laughs; they had forgotten that formality.

RAMINI
Ramini Bhattar.

He extends his hand to shake. Ramini takes it.

ANDY
Andy Sampson.

They shake. They giggle, because it is funny that only now they learn each other's names. They're moving past their initial bad impressions.

INT. FUNG WAH BUS EN ROUTE TO NEW YORK - AN HOUR LATER

Andy has NEWS CLIPPINGS arranged before him. Ramini listens to her CD PLAYER and reads over Andy's shoulder. He has the article he wrote about the local orchestras included in the Portfolio. That makes Ramini smile, though Andy doesn't notice.

Andy shuffles his Clippings back together and stores them in his Backpack. He starts to rummage through the main pocket when he hears something: a BABY GIGGLING.

He peeks out from behind the seat in front of him. Two rows up, the Baby spits up on his MOTHER'S (30) shoulder. Andy makes a face, which sends the Baby into a fit of giggles.

Andy keeps eye contact with the Baby, but taps Ramini on the knee. She moves away from his touch - it's not appropriate for him to touch her! - but then sees the Baby. She pulls out her headphones.

Andy continues to make faces at the Baby. She giggles more, as does Ramini.

The Mother notices what the Baby is laughing about. She gives Andy a rude look; she doesn't want some stranger on a bus interacting with her child. The Mother shifts the Baby to her other shoulder. The Baby CRIES in protest.

Ramini laughs. Andy smiles at her. He keeps digging through his Backpack. Ramini goes back to her music.

Andy's becoming fretful: he can't find what he's looking for in his Backpack. He digs deeper.

He sits up suddenly. He's a little panicked. Ramini notices, and unplugs her headphones again.

RAMINI

Have you forgotten something?

Andy nods. He's very solemn.

ANDY

My iPod.

Ramini laughs. Andy faces her; he's quite severe.

ANDY (CONT.)

I need my music. I need it for the interview.

Ramini stops laughing. He is serious.

RAMINI

Why?

Andy searches his Backpack a second time. He takes a deep breath, deciding what and how much to share. He averts his eyes from Ramini.

ANDY

When I was little, when my dad left, my uncle Brian would give me new records every week to cheer me up.

He comes out of his Backpack empty-handed again. He sighs, becoming tenser by the second.

ANDY (CONT.)

So now, whenever I'm stressed
out, I listen to music. (pause)
Interviews are stressful.

Ramini feels sorry for him. She squeezes his hand gingerly.

RAMINI

You can listen to my music.

She offers him an EAR BUD of her Headphones. He takes it,
and looks at it suspiciously.

ANDY

What are you listening to?

Ramini's tentative - what if he doesn't like her music?

RAMINI

The Beatles.

Andy's stunned with happiness.

ANDY

No kidding?

He puts the Ear Bud in his ear. Ramini turns on the CD
Player. As soon as the music starts, Andy sighs with relief
and reclines in his chair. Ramini smiles. She's glad to
have made him happy. It's endearing.

INT. NEW YORK SUBWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

Andy is listening to Ramini's CD Player as he looks over
his News Clippings. He's on his way to the interview, and
he's cheerful.

EXT. SONYC PRACTICE SPACE, NYC - CONT.

Ramini walks up to the door. She has her VIOLIN CASE with
her and a FOLDER of SHEET MUSIC. She takes a deep breath,
and walks inside.

INT. VILLAGE VOICE OFFICE - AN HOUR LATER

Andy sits with PATRICIA BIRT - 40 and an oddball - for his
interview with *The Village Voice*. He sits stiffly in his
SUIT, and she acts strangely. She holds up one of his
Clippings very close to her face, and then far away from
it, squinting as though she's having trouble reading.

PATRICIA

Do you like R.E.M., Andrew?

Andy nods. Patricia raises her eyebrows as though he's said something very meaningful.

PATRICIA (CONT.)

How much so?

Andy finds his voice, but it's shaky. He doesn't know what she's driving at.

ANDY

I'd say easily less than The Beatles and easily more than Britney Spears.

Patricia bobs her head dramatically: a ha! Andy looks around him: there are other staff members working, but they pay no mind to Patricia's strangeness.

PATRICIA

What about Regina Spektor?

Andy's lost.

ANDY

What about her?

Patricia shrugs.

PATRICIA

Anything.

Patricia leans back in her chair, stroking her chin. She waits for Andy's response.

INT. SONYC PRACTICE ROOM - CONT.

There's hustle and bustle. The MEMBERS of SONYC are packing up from practice. Ramini sits off to the side, inspecting her bow: it's in order this time. She's in a cheery mood.

She's approached by SUSAN KAPUR - 30, Indian. Susan is apologetic and kind.

SUSAN

Sorry for the wait! Are you ready?

Ramini nods, and starts to pick up her things. Susan stops her.

SUSAN (CONT.)

You sure you're ready?

Ramini tenses up. Is she missing something? She inspects her body and her bow. Everything seems in order.

RAMINI

Oh yes, I'm quite ready.

Susan winks at her.

SUSAN

Now there's some enthusiasm!

Susan laughs, which instantly puts Ramini at ease. She laughs as well, and the two walk together toward two other SONYC members: OMAR GRAY (30) and ELISSA CHOI (27). Ramini doesn't feel nervous at all.

INT. VILLAGE VOICE OFFICE - CONT.

Andy thinks, and finds something to say about Regina.

ANDY

Regina's one of the best new talents we've got out there.

Andy becomes nostalgic, nearly forgetting that he's at an interview.

ANDY (CONT.)

My friends and I went to see her show back in high school, right after "Soviet Kitsch" was re-released. We had to sneak in because we were underage -

He laughs at the memory.

ANDY (CONT.)

- but we just wanted to hear the music!

Andy laughs more. He's lost track of who he's talking to. He's picturing the concert. Patricia cocks an eyebrow.

INT. SONYC PRACTICE ROOM - CONT.

Ramini finishes tuning her violin. Susan, Elissa, and Omar peruse her papers. Ramini picks up her Folder and places some Music on the STAND.

OMAR

Why don't you play us something
from the heart?

Ramini is caught mid-movement: her hand is suspended next
to the Stand.

RAMINI

From the heart?

Omar nods. Susan interjects.

SUSAN

Play us something from memory.

ELISSA

Something fun!

The three smile. They're being completely genuine. Ramini
thinks, and then thinks of something. She looks to the
others for confirmation of her silent choice.

SUSAN

Go on!

Ramini places her violin and bow in their proper places.

CUT TO:

Andy doesn't notice Patricia's movements or sudden
normalcy, but he does stop laughing and gets serious again.

ANDY (CONT.)

I loved it. I loved that she'd
use literature in her songs.
You know how she does that?

He looks at Patricia almost imploringly to agree.

ANDY (CONT.)

It's fantastic.

Patricia's facial expression still hasn't changed.

CUT TO:

Ramini starts to play "Eleanor Rigby" by The Beatles. She
quickly gets absorbed into the music. Susan, Elissa, and
Omar are pleased.

CUT TO:

ANDY (CONT.)

Her vocal improvisations too,
combined with that anti-folk
vibe..

Patricia snorts, which makes Andy jump in his seat. He's suddenly aware of where he is again.

PATRICIA

So you had a fake ID?

Andy shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

ANDY

I just really wanted to hear
that music.

Patricia jots down something on a notepad.

PATRICIA

Mmm... fake ID..

She puts down her pen.

PATRICIA

So how do I know you're not a
snotty kid who wants to work
here because you think it's
"cool"?

Andy wasn't expecting that question. He struggles for words to express his authenticity.

ANDY

I love music, and I'm smart
about it. Continuing to write
about music is -

Andy thinks for a moment. Patricia waits for his answer.

ANDY (CONT.)

Writing about music is my first
priority. And I love this city.
I was born in Thailand, and
I've lived in Boston for four
years, but New York is my only
home.

Andy shakes his head, trying to find the right words.

ANDY (CONT.)

I want to be in New York with your paper. This is where the music is.

Andy makes eye contact with her, trying to gauge her reaction. Patricia looks unimpressed.

PATRICIA

Just as I thought. Fake IDs -

She picks up the R.E.M. concert article.

PATRICIA (CONT.)

- mistakes shoddily patched over, (condescending tone)
"loving New York"...

She gives Andy a repugnant look.

PATRICIA (CONT.)

It's just as I thought.

Andy opens and closes his mouth, somewhat like a fish. Patricia stands up and calls to a woman - KAYLA LEVY, 23, a new staffer.

PATRICIA

He's yours now.

Kayla smiles at Andy, and takes his arm to lead him out. Andy extends Patricia his hand before he's pulled away.

ANDY

(forced)

Thank you for this opportunity.

Patricia pats his hand limply, and goes back to her papers on her desk. Andy's in shock, and simply follows Kayla. They leave Patricia behind.

KAYLA

How was it?

Andy is still shocked. He doesn't know what to do.

ANDY

(miserable)

Horrible! Horrible!

He hangs his head in shame. Kayla pats his arm.

KAYLA

Don't worry. We figure if you
can keep your cool with
Patricia, you can with anyone.

Andy's surprised. He stops walking and looks back at
Patricia. She winks at him: it's all been a ruse.

Kayla pats his shoulder good-naturedly.

KAYLA

You'll hear back from us soon.

Kayla puts out a hand. Andy shakes it. He looks back to
Patricia, who's high-fiving another staff member and
laughing.

EXT. VILLAGE VOICE OFFICE - CONT.

Andy literally leaps out the door. He does a little dance
in the street. PEOPLE walking past stare at him. He gives
them a thumbs up.

He skips over to the SUBWAY STATION nearby.

INT. PAULA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Paula is with Brian, playing backgammon. She's still hooked
up to one IV and is in a WHEELCHAIR, but she looks happy.
Through the window of her room, Andy's face peeks in. He
opens the door - he's come straight from his interview.

Paula shrieks with happiness.

PAULA

Oh, Andy, my baby!

She gets up from the wheelchair and embraces Andy. They hug
and kiss each other.

PAULA (CONT.)

Tell me good news, baby.

They release each other, and Brian and Andy hug. Andy is
happy to tell his mother good news.

ANDY

The interview went well!

Paula shrieks again, and they embrace again. Andy laughs.

PAULA

I can't wait until next week
when I'm out of here! I'll fix
up your room so nicely!

Andy's laughter dies.

ANDY

My room?

PAULA

Your room at home, baby!

Andy leaves their embrace.

ANDY

Mike and Dan want me to move in
with them in Brooklyn.

Paula gasps. Uncle Brian is aghast. There's a moment of
silence wherein Andy collects himself.

ANDY (CONT.)

It's closer to the office, Ma.
And cheap.

Paula laughs, now nervous instead of happy.

PAULA

But what's cheaper than living
with your mother?

Andy doesn't have an appropriate response, so he stays
quiet.

PAULA (CONT.)

You're not going to leave me
all by myself, are you?

A NURSE (40, cheerful) KNOCKS on the door, and walks in
without invitation. She smiles at Andy and Brian; she's met
them before.

NURSE

Ms. Sampson, it's time to meet
with Dr. Klein. (to Andy)
She'll only be gone half an
hour.

Andy nods. Paula sits back down in the Wheelchair
complacently. The Nurse wheels her out.

As soon as they're out of sight, Brian grabs Andy by the arm.

BRIAN

What are you thinking?

Andy leans up against a wall. He is trying to keep his composure. He picks up his Backpack, and unzips a pocket.

BRIAN (CONT.)

You're really not staying with your mother when you come back here?

Andy shakes his head "no." He pulls Ramini's CD Player out of his Backpack. His hands are shaking.

Uncle Brian gasps overdramatically and waggles a finger at Andy.

BRIAN (CONT.)

You know you can't do that. She'll -

Andy looks at him, his face harsh. He interrupts Brian.

ANDY

She'll try to kill herself?

Brian goes quiet. Andy is out of line. Brian shakes his head more.

ANDY

Uncle, you've got to get some other people in here to see her.

He hugs Uncle Brian. Brian goes stiff, hurt on Paula's behalf that Andy is abandoning her.

ANDY (CONT.)

She needs some people besides you and me, or she won't make it.

Uncle Brian has tears in his eyes, but now he understands that Andy's right. Brian hugs Andy back. They hold each other.

EXT. FUNG WAH BUS (EN ROUTE TO BOSTON) - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

Andy and Ramini are both "plugged into" Ramini's CD Player. Andy's asleep upright in his seat. Ramini is happily ignoring the BIOLOGY TEXTBOOK on her lap.

Andy slides off to the side; his head lands on Ramini's shoulder. She tenses automatically at the touch. She stretches her neck to look at him. He's very much asleep. She smiles, and stares out the window.

EXT. FUNG WAH BUS STOP (BOSTON) - A FEW HOURS LATER

Ramini and Andy walk off the bus. They smile shyly at each other.

Vicki tackles Andy, catching him off-guard, just as she did at the airport months before. Ramini's surprised. Andy embraces his girlfriend. Ramini backs away slowly.

VICKI

Hi baby! Welcome home!

She kisses him. Ramini flinches. Vicki notices her. She is displeased.

VICKI (CONT.)

(suspicious)

Who's this?

Vicki stares more closely at Ramini's face.

VICKI (CONT.)

Haven't I seen you before?

Andy doesn't want her to remember the incident at Fenway. Andy takes Vicki's hand and Ramini's and brings them together.

ANDY

Vix, this is Ramini from the MIT Orchestra. Ramini, my girlfriend Vicki.

Vicki's face hardens, and Ramini's falls. Both thought she was the only one for Andy.

VICKI

I remember her from the ball game.

Ramini and Andy knows this and that, because of it, Vicki doesn't like Ramini. Ramini backs away from them. Andy tries to save the situation.

ANDY

(to Ramini)

Maybe we'll run into each other again soon.

Ramini shakes her head "no."

RAMINI

It was just chance. (to Vicki)
Nice to meet you.

Andy finally notices that there's more to Ramini's upset than that Vicki is being rude. Ramini is no longer happy with *him*.

ANDY

Ramini?

Ramini walks away without responding. Andy can't take action now - he has a girlfriend to tend to, but he's a little deflated by Ramini leaving.

Vicki coughs to get Andy's attention.

VICKI

So?

Andy pulls his eyes off of Ramini, who is turning a corner down the street. He takes Vicki's hand and walks toward the street, where TAXI CABS whiz past.

ANDY

I think I got the job, but wait until I tell you about the interview - horrendous! - and seeing my mother again...

Vicki stops walking with him. He stops talking. He pulls on her arm.

ANDY (CONT.)

What's wrong?

Vicki puts her free hand on her hip defiantly.

VICKI

Didn't you bring me anything?

Andy drops her hand. Isn't she listening?

ANDY

I was only there for a little
over a day...

Vicki shakes her head.

VICKI

The Sox lost this weekend, and
a gift from you probably would
have really brightened my day.

Andy doesn't know what to say.

ANDY

My mother... she's being released
from the hospital...

Vicki doesn't listen; she continues from her previous
statement.

VICKI

It's the little things, Andy,
that you always forget.

He's stunned. She doesn't let him finish talking about his
weekend. She walks to the curb and waves down a TAXI. Andy
turns slowly around to face her and the road.

Vicki opens the back door to the Taxi.

VICKI

(demanding)

Come on.

Andy stays put.

ANDY

Actually, I think I'll walk.

Vicki is shocked, partly by the foolish plan to walk from
Chinatown to Fenway and partly because he's not going with
her.

VICKI

Walk? Back to school?

Andy nods and starts walking away from her.

ANDY

See you around, Vicki.

He waves apathetically to her, not looking back.

Vicki shakes her fist at him.

VICKI

(yelling)

Fine! But don't expect me to
come back to you!

Andy doesn't respond. Vicki fades as he walks faster.
They're over.

Andy has a thought, and stops suddenly. He looks at the
sidewalk ahead, and begins to run.

Andy swoops through the crowds down the busy streets of
Chinatown. He nearly hits everyone he passes, but makes it
through to the CHINATOWN GATE relatively safely. He takes a
breather, and then hits the ground running again.

EXT. BOYLSTON STREET T STATION - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Andy dashes across the street, nearly getting hit by a CAR,
which HONKS in protest. He waves apologetically, and goes
into the T Station.

INT. BOYLSTON STREET T STATION - CONT.

Andy runs down a flight of stairs, pulling his wallet from
his pocket. He pulls out a SUBWAY CARD and heads for the
train.

The GREEN LINE TRAIN is departing. Andy runs for it, but
can't catch it in time. Ramini's seated onboard. He throws
up his hands in anguish.

INT. RAMINI'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT WEEK

Ramini practices her violin in her bedroom. She is playing
a modern piece, and on the top of her sheet music is
printed "SONYC" - she's made it into the orchestra.

She's not very happy, though. She comes to the end of a
phrase and stops playing. She places her violin on her bed.
Next to her is Andy's article, "Keeping Music Alive and
Profitable." It's well worn from reading, with notations
next to the Boston-area orchestras.

Ramini heaves a deep sigh.

INT. RAMINI'S APARTMENT'S FRONT DOOR - CONT.

There is a POUNDING on the door.

INT. RAMINI'S BEDROOM - CONT.

Ramini jumps with surprise at the noise. She hears it again: LOUD KNOCKING.

She gets up slowly and walks to her bedroom's closed door. She opens it, and peeks into the hallway.

INT. RAMINI'S APARTMENT'S HALLWAY - CONT.

Ramini surveys the scene. More POUNDING at the door and a SHOUT.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ramini, open this door!

Manju and Pooja peek out from the living room. They look back at Ramini: "what should we do?" They're afraid.

More POUNDING.

Ramini walks down the hallway slowly. Manju and Pooja watch her, silent. The POUNDING continues.

Ramini reaches the door. She looks through the peephole: it's her cousin Mukesh.

Ramini pulls back from the door. What's he so angry for? She unlocks the door, and turns the knob.

RAMINI

Mukesh, what's all this
yelling?

Before she can has time to move, Mukesh shoves the door open. Ramini falls onto her back. Pooja and Manju reach to pick her up, but Mukesh won't have it.

MUKESH

Leave us!

Pooja and Manju straighten up and back away a foot. They don't leave entirely, as he wishes, but they look like frightened rabbits. Ramini picks herself up. She stares Mukesh down.

MUKESH (CONT.)

Your parents received your e-mail message and asked for me to come.

Ramini's face only becomes harder.

MUKESH (CONT.)

You have disgraced our family's
good name.

RAMINI

I have done no such thing.

Mukesh's fury increases. He points at her accusingly.

MUKESH

You deny your parents' wishes
for your occupation and your
marriage!

Ramini starts to laugh.

RAMINI

And you were sent here to
convince me to consent because
my parents can't fly out here
themselves?

Ramini's flippancy steals some of Mukesh's steam.

RAMINI (CONT.)

You, nineteen years old and
still living in your parents'
house, were sent here to tell
me what I should do with my
life and who I should spend it
with?

She keeps laughing. It does sound absurd. She waves Mukesh
away from her.

RAMINI (CONT.)

You can sleep on our couch
tonight and go back to New York
tomorrow morning. You aren't
convincing me of anything.

Ramini turns back toward her room.

RAMINI (CONT.)

I have practicing to do.

In a sudden burst of energy, Mukesh pushes past her,
throwing her into the wall. He throws open the DOOR to the
bedroom across from Ramini's and steps inside.

MUKESH (O.S.)

Where is it? Where is it?

Ramini's eyes widen; he's looking for her violin. She picks herself up again and runs into her room, slamming the door behind her.

INT. RAMINI'S ROOM - CONT.

Ramini doesn't get the door locked in time, and Mukesh forces it open, even though Ramini leans on it with all of her weight. She throws herself over the VIOLIN and BOW on her bed, and curls her body around them.

RAMINI

(shouting)

Stop Mukesh, stop right there!

Mukesh doesn't stop. He walks over to her, and tries to grab the instrument.

MUKESH

Give it to me! Go back to your studies! Forget this foolishness!

She SCREAMS. She rotates her body enough so that she can kick Mukesh in the GROIN. He collapses on the floor, GROANING.

Ramini pants, catching her breath. She mumbles a HINDI PRAYER over her and her instrument's safety.

After her prayer is complete, Ramini notices Manju and Pooja standing at the door, watching the scene. Mukesh is recovering from the blow, and sits up on the floor. Ramini implores her roommates with her eyes to please say something in her favor.

Pooja looks at Manju, silently electing to speak first.

POOJA

(referring to
Ramini)

She is accepted into an excellent orchestra. That is honorable.

Mukesh is skeptical, but stays quiet. Pooja nods to Manju: "your turn."

MANJU

And Abhilesh is not what he seems. He attacked Ramini, drunkenly, when she discovered him cavorting with another woman.

Mukesh doesn't believe this.

MUKESH

No!

Manju and Pooja nod. Ramini slides off the bed, still clutching her violin. The three women stand above Mukesh, dwarfing him. Ramini speaks calmly, evenly.

RAMINI

Babu and Amma tried to make good choices for me, but they did not. They couldn't, as they're far away, and cannot see what I see here in America.

She offers Mukesh a hand to help him up.

Mukesh takes her hand and stands up. He bows his head, embarrassed. His role has been reduced from the dominant sex to Ramini's younger cousin.

MUKESH

How will we find you a good husband, Didi, now that you broken off this long-standing promise?

Ramini pauses to think. Pooja and Manju have no answers. Ramini looks over to her bed, where Andy's article lies.

RAMINI

This is America, the land of opportunities.

She nods, and so does Mukesh. That will do.

INT. ANDY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT NIGHT

Yellow Submarine plays on the TV and over the stereo system, LOUDLY. Andy and Taylor jump from the couch to the floor and back, jamming on their AIR GUITARS and generally copying the animated Beatles. There are two CARTONS OF ICE CREAM with SPOONS sticking out of them on the COFFEE TABLE.

Taylor stops suddenly; Andy doesn't even notice. Taylor pulls her CELL PHONE out of her pocket. She flips it open, and reads a TEXT MESSAGE. She raises her eyebrows, curious about what she finds written there. She walks over to Andy's LAPTOP and opens it. She's taken aback by whatever's already on the screen. She gives Andy a weird look, which he doesn't see.

Andy's still rocking out. Taylor reads an e-mail. Her curiosity is certainly piqued. She calls to Andy over her shoulder.

TAYLOR
(shouting)
Andy, come here.

Andy can't hear her. He plays some more Air Guitar. Taylor walks in front of the screen. Andy stops, upset.

ANDY
(shouting)
Hey! I'm watching that.

TAYLOR
(shouting back)
You have to come read this!

Andy picks up the remote and puts the movie on silent. There is sudden QUIET.

ANDY
This better not be about
calling my mother.

Taylor rolls her eyes.

TAYLOR
I've given up on that.

Andy walks over to his Laptop and reads. Taylor follows him.

TAYLOR
It came into the "letters to
the editor" box, but it's
addressed to you.

A smile forms on Andy's face. He looks up at Taylor, happy.

But she isn't happy: she crosses her arms and taps her foot impatiently. She doesn't like being out of the loop.

TAYLOR (CONT.)

So who, exactly, is this Ramini
Bhattar?

Taylor taps on the screen to the internet browser tab adjacent to the e-mail window: Andy had been searching for "Ramini Bhattar" on Google. Andy just keeps smiling.

ANDY

She's a nice girl, Taylor. I
promise this one's really nice.

Andy goes back to the e-mail, still pleased. Taylor lets a small smile creep onto her face. She uncrosses her arms, and pats Andy's shoulder. Andy's such a sap.

INT. MIT KRESGE AUDITORIUM - THE NEXT WEEKEND, NIGHT

Andy walks into the theatre just as the show is about to begin. He has with him a small BOUQUET OF DAISIES. He finds a seat by himself near the back, and scans the stage for Ramini. She is sitting next to Kristin, and is watching Dr. Biss intently.

Andy smiles at seeing her.

The lights dim.

From the stage, Ramini looks into the audience. Pooja and Manju sit in the second row. When they see her make eye contact, they wave excitedly.

Dr. Biss taps his BATON on the CONDUCTOR'S STAND. The orchestra comes to attention. He waves the baton, and the concert begins.

The orchestra plays a variety of pieces: FAST, SLOW, LOUD, SOFT. Ramini and Kristin perform a duet together. At the end of the concert, the orchestra receives a standing ovation.

Kristin gives Dr. Biss the CD the seniors have recorded.

KRISTIN

(to the
audience)

To the greatest director we'll
ever have!

Dr. Biss is flustered. He hugs Kristin, and starts to read the track listing on the CD. He smiles.

Kristin's MOTHER (60) has come to the show; she reaches up to Kristin to give her FLOWERS, which Kristin receives graciously.

Andy watches Kristin's mother. He misses his own mother. He gets up from his seat, scoots his way down his row, and exits the auditorium.

EXT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM - CONT.

It's rainy fiercely, but there's no thunder or lightning. Andy pulls his hoodie over his head, his cell phone propped against his ear. He attempts to stay under the awning, but it's nearly nonexistent. He bends his body over the flowers to keep them safe.

INT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM - CONT.

Ramini steps out of backstage and into the audience seating. She looks around the whole theater: no Andy. She barely notices Manju and Pooja approaching her.

MANJU

Oh, Minnie, that was beautiful!

They embrace Ramini, who finally pays attention to them. Kristin and Irina come up behind Ramini with a WRAPPED GIFT. They don't see Manju and Pooja at first, but when they do, they're surprised.

IRINA

Who's this, Ramini?

Ramini brings the four together.

RAMINI

Irina, Kristin, these are my roommates, Pooja and Manju.

They shake hands, and are intrigued by one another. This is Ramini's worlds finally meeting.

Kristin pulls Ramini aside.

KRISTIN

Will you still come with us for ice cream?

Ramini looks to Manju and Pooja.

RAMINI

Actually, I'll spend the night
at home. I won't be living
there much longer, and I'll
miss these girls.

Manju and Pooja smile. Kristin's a little peeved, as is her
nature, but Irina is understanding.

RAMINI (CONT.)

(to Kristin)

I hope you all have a wonderful
time!

Irina hands her the Gift.

IRINA

We'd better give this to you
now, then.

Ramini grins. She tears open the present: it's The Beatles'
"Revolver" record. She's so pleased.

IRINA (CONT.)

You belong in New York with
your music.

She hugs Ramini.

RAMINI

Thank you.

Dr. Biss waves to the audience, much of which is still
mingling.

DR. BISS

(shouting)

You all be careful out there
tonight!

Ramini hugs Kristin, and leaves her and Irina. She heads
for the door with Manju and Pooja. Near the back of the
auditorium, she stands up on one of the seats. She scans
the audience, but Andy isn't there. She's disappointed.

EXT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM - CONT.

Andy's on the phone. It's ringing.

His mother picks up.

PAULA (O.S.)
 (cheerful)
 Andy baby, it's been so long!
 How are you?

Andy is confused. He was expecting her to be angry. He treads on dangerous ground.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 I'm doing great. Got that job
 at the *Voice*, moving in with
 Mike and Dan in July.

He flinches in anticipation.

PAULA (O.S.)
 I know baby! I'm so glad you're
 coming back to the City, but I
 couldn't possibly have you in
 the house anymore!

Andy is shocked. He tries to keep his cool by walking. He steps into the rain, still protecting the Daises with his body.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 You couldn't?

Paula laughs on the phone.

PAULA (O.S.)
 Baby, do you know where I am?

Andy thinks. His walking has taken him to AMHERST STREET next to the KRESGE OVAL. He paces there, and ventures a guess.

ANDY
 Home?

INT. FOCACCERIA ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CONT.

Paula is in a nice dress at a classy restaurant. She stands off to the side of the restaurant, trying not to bother other patrons. She waves at the NICE MAN (57, demur) waiting for her to return to their table.

PAULA
 (into phone)
 I'm out to dinner with a friend
 of Uncle Brian's.

She's almost smug about it.

EXT. AMHERST STREET AT KRESGE OVAL - CONT.

Andy is completely stunned. He moves his mouth, but produces no words. He doesn't want to jump to conclusions, but he's starting to get excited.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 A straight friend?

Paula's voice babbles on the other end of the phone, but Andy hardly listens. His eyes feel with tears of happiness. He skips in a small circle, oblivious to anyone else nearby.

EXT. KRESGE AUDITORIUM - CONT.

Ramini, Manju, and Pooja exit the auditorium. Ramini has an UMBRELLA for herself, her violin, and her Record (now in a plastic bag); Manju and Pooja share ANOTHER. They walk out into the rain. Ramini's still scanning the departing crowd.

EXT. AMHERST STREET AT KRESGE OVAL - CONT.

Paula's still going on and on about her date, and Andy's still only taking some of it in. He's just happy that she's out with someone who's not him or Brian!

Then, Andy spots Ramini crossing the street, heading toward DANFORTH STREET. He gasps: oh no, she doesn't even know he was at the concert!

Paula hears his distress.

PAULA (O.S.)
 What's wrong, Andy?

Andy starts to run down the street, sometimes dodging and sometimes failing to dodge puddles.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 Ma, I gotta go.

He gets stuck by traffic before he can cross Amherst. He's distressed.

PAULA (O.S.)
 (teasingly)
 I don't have time to talk to
 you anyway! I have a date!

Andy smiles, forgetting his bad timing for a moment.

ANDY
 (into phone)
 I love you, Ma.

PAULA (O.S.)
 Love you too, baby.

Andy claps the phone shut. He notices FLOWER PETALS floating in the water in the street. He looks down: his Daises are soaking wet, and molting.

ANDY
 Damn!

He tucks the Bouquet under his sweatshirt, where they're bound to stay a little drier but definitely get crushed.

In a break in the light traffic, he dashes across the street. The girls' with their Umbrellas are far ahead of him. He runs, trying not to slip or drop the flowers.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE AND DANFORTH STREET - CONT.

Ramini, Pooja, and Manju reach the corner of Memorial Drive and Danforth Street. They wait to cross Memorial.

Down Memorial, a TRUCK comes into view. It's alone on the road.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The DRIVER (30) listens to "Eleanor Rigby" on the radio. He sips his SODA.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE AND DANFORTH STREET - CONT.

The girls look up at the STOP LIGHTS. The Stop Lights on Memorial go YELLOW, and a couple seconds later, RED.

The girls cross the street.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The Driver acknowledges the change in light. He's not tired. He presses on the BRAKE PEDAL.

EXT. TRUCK ON MEMORIAL - CONT.

The brakes SQUEAL - it's too wet on the roads for the truck to make an easy stop.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The Driver realizes the problem. He starts pumping the brakes, but the Truck only slows marginally. He panics.

DRIVER

Shit! Shit!

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE AND DANFORTH STREET - CONT.

Andy reaches the corner just as the CROSSWALK LIGHT switches from the WHITE MAN to the BLINKING RED HAND. He's panting. He can see Ramini across the street.

ANDY

(shouting)

Ramini!

Ramini turns around. She smiles. Waves.

Andy walks into the street, trusting the lights.

The Truck BLARES ITS HORN.

Andy looks to his left, Ramini to her right. The Truck isn't going to stop in time.

Andy's face is bathed in its HEADLIGHTS. He runs toward Ramini. She drops her violin, bag, and umbrella, and runs toward him. Manju and Pooja SCREAM, and chase after her.

The Lights are almost blinding. Andy reaches for Ramini, and she grabs his hand, pulling him toward her.

WHITE.

The Truck stops past where Andy was standing.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONT.

The Driver pants, terrified. There's no stain on his window. He jumps out of the Cab.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE AND DANFORTH STREET - CONT.

The Driver walks over to Ramini and Andy, who are holding each other tightly. They're terrified too.

DRIVER

Oh my God... kids, are you
alright?

Andy and Ramini hold each other a moment longer. They look each other in the eyes. Jump away from each other - they are still practically strangers, after all.

RAMINI

(to Driver)
We're fine, sir.

The Driver nods, still shaken. He goes back to the Truck to make a report.

Ramini looks at Andy, who's also still stunned. She tries to lighten the mood.

RAMINI

Well. Now we're even, life for
a life.

Andy starts to laugh nervously, the severity of the situation finally hitting him. Ramini laughs as well. Their tears mix with the rain.

Andy pats his torso. He reaches under his sweatshirt and produces the very crushed Daises. He holds them out to Ramini.

ANDY

Thank you for inviting me to
your show. It was...

He pauses, noting the current scene.

ANDY (CONT.)

... exhilarating.

Ramini takes the flowers. She's still pleased, even if they are crushed. Some things can't be helped.

RAMINI

Thank you for coming.

Andy holds out a hand to her, which she takes. Their Souls glow.

They walk over to Manju and Pooja, joining them. Andy picks up Ramini's violin and bag, and Ramini takes her umbrella. The four walk off together in the rain.

Souls from throughout the city brighten in pairs, and free souls rise and fall. The exchange continues.

FIN.