

THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD VERSION
A NY TALE IN BLACK & WHITE

Written by

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D13 C. 2019

VERSION

PINK SHOOTING 8/4/2019

1 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - TWILIGHT TIME AKA 'BUTTCRACK OF DAWN' 1

The occasional street sound seeps into a small NY studio. There's a bed. A corner desk with a laptop. Some bohemian adornments. A PAINTING hangs above a mantle: a crude abstract with lots of texture.

RADHA, a chubby 39, lay in bed, restless.

2 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER 2

Ear to wall, Radha listens as her neighbors have LOUD, MONKEY SEX. She reaches under her caftan to "touch" herself but the SEX MOANS turn into PATHETIC SOBS. The couple cries. Radha dries, plops back into bed dissatisfied.

3 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER 3

Radha channel surfs: A Lifetime TV child abduction movie. An ad for Super Slim Diet Drink. A music video for "Pound Da Poundcakes". An ad for Super Slim Diet Drink. She perks up.

4 EXT. RADHA'S APT BLDG. - MOMENTS LATER 4

From her window, Radha spies a sweet-faced LAMONT as he pushes his junk cart past the church across the street. He does the cross over himself. Radha's face softens until...he drops trou and 'dumps' in front of the church. Ugh!

5 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER 5

A mantle hosts pictures: Lord Krishna, GhostFace Killah and MOM, 60's brown, stylish, bright-eyed. There's also a small, engraved award: "WINNER, 30 Under 30 Playwright's Award". Radha stares at the award.

6 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER 6

She then lays back on her bed, pensive...dissatisfied.

RADHA (V.O.)
What do you think of a woman
turning 40?

7 EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

7

HARLEM INTERVIEW: IPHONE CAM POV of a SNAZZY BLACK WOMAN, 70s, in a velour tiger print sweat suit, bedazzled hat and fanny pack in all of her Harlem REALNESS. She pushes a laundry cart.

SNAZZY

Forty? Girl, forty ain't shit. I started livin' at forty! Now seventy? Call me when you seventy and can't control ya bowels.

JUMP CUT TO:

8 EXT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

8

HARLEM INTERVIEW: IPHONE CAM POV of two TEENS in hot street gear, KAMAL, Black and WALDO, Puerto Rican, both 16.

KAMAL

Forty!?

WALDO

Daaaamn! You that old Ms B?!

KAMAL

Shit, I figure you for like 30...but 40?!

KAMAL/WALDO

Daaaaamn. That's-

A passing car radio BLASTS 'Pound Da Poundcakes'...

KAMAL/WALDO (cont'd)

Ah shit! 'girl don't flake/bitch let's bake!/Bring dat ass here/ Lemme pound da poundcakes!' Hoooo!!

JUMP CUT TO:

9 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY SHOP - LATER

9

HARLEM INTERVIEW: IPHONE CAM POV of KOREAN VENDOR in fashion shirt, 55.

KOREAN VENDOR MAN

Almost forty, huh? Wow. Look good, girl! I like women that age! Yeah!
(MORE)

KOREAN VENDOR MAN (cont'd)
 Forty mean JUICY down there, HUH?
 (WINK WINK!)

JUMP CUT TO:

10 EXT. YELLOW BANANA SMOOTHIE SHOP - LATER 10

HARLEM INTERVIEW: IPHONE CAM POV of sweet a DOMINICANA, 30's,
 wearing a Yellow Banana cap.

DOMINICANA
 (Spanish w/Eng. subtitles)
 Ay! Forty!? When a single woman
 turns forty, she's like...fruit
 from the tree that falls to the
 ground for the bugs to eat.

RADHA (O.S.)
 Gracias.

DOMINICANA
 De Nada.

11 EXT. HARLEM STREET CORNER - DAY 11

COMMUTERS pile into a crosstown bus. Old women, students,
 mothers, children, Noah and the ark. The door closes.

RADHA (O.S.)
 WAIT! WAIT!

Radha runs into frame and bangs on the door.

RADHA (cont'd)
 Come on. Please? You're looking
 right at me. Yes?

The doors open and she jumps on.

RADHA (O.S.)(CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Thank you. You made your mother
 proud.

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
 My mother dead.

12 INT. CROSSTOWN BUS (MOVING) - SAME 12

Radha hovers a little too close to the driver.

RADHA (O.S.)
 Sorry. That's..um...

The driver's face = 'fuck off' so Radha disappears into a throng of passengers.

13 INT. CROSSTOWN BUS/BACK OF BUS (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER 13

Bodies smash. With no pole in reach, Radha leans on commuters. The bus stops. The bus driver comes to the back of the bus to let on a man in a wheelchair.

RAVI (V.O.)
 Hey, it's your brother. It's been a year, so don't you think we should take care of Mom's apartment.
 Aight, hit me back

14 INT. CROSSTOWN BUS/BACK OF BUS - MOMENTS LATER 14

The bus stops again...the driver returns to the back, this time to let on an old lady with a walker. Radha looks at her watch.

15 INT. CROSSTOWN BUS/BACK OF BUS - MOMENTS LATER 15

The bus pulls up to another stop. Four people in wheel chairs wait to get on. Radha pulls on her frustrated face.

The Driver comes to the back to let the disabled passengers on. Radha leans in.

RADHA
 Any way you can let me off?

BUS DRIVER
 Nope.

RADHA
 But I can just jump out-

BUS DRIVER
 Sorry for the delay folks! But this lady don't want me to let the disabled people on!

The commuters GRUMBLE in disapproval.

RADHA
 Noooo. That's not what I-

An OLD LADY scowls. Radha disappears back into the crowd.

16

INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/STERILE REC ROOM - DAY

16

Where under-funded after-school programs go to die. No decor aside from two motivational posters: "GREAT PEOPLE DO GREAT THINGS" "DEAD PEOPLE CAN'T COMPLAIN SO LIVE A LITTLE".

ELAINE, 17, cocoa and slender, delivers a poetic monologue.

ELAINE

NO! You stupid-ass SCOR-PI-O! Your stingy-ass ways mean we can't FLOW! And you, bullshit LI-BRA! Fucking deceiver! STEP OFF GIGANTOR! No one believes ya! And Mr. Ge-mi-niiiiiii? You too fe-mi-nyyyyyyne. Can't rock wit a nigga ass bigger than miine. See, me? I'm focused! My SWEET MID-BODY LUST is JUST for those I TRUST! WHY?! Cause I'm a....Cli-Cli-Cli-TAU-RUS!!!

Radha....is catatonic. As are, Kamal, Waldo and seven other DIVERSE TEENS who sit in a semi-circle.

RADHA

Wow. C'mon guys, clap it up.

Tepid applause. Elaine rolls her eyes, plops in her chair.

RADHA (cont'd)

Thanks Elaine. Okay. Any more thought on what kind of play we wanna write?

ROSA, 18, a butch Latina, eagerly raises her hand.

RADHA (cont'd)

Rosa.

ROSA

I say we do some Sci-fi shit.

RADHA

Like?

ROSA

Like this strange, blue cloud comes down from the sky raining on everybody, right? But the next day? Every man caught in the rain? They wake up with NO DICK.

Kamal and Waldo hold their dicks.

RADHA

Hm. So like a, sci-fi *mystery* kind of thing?

ROSA

Yeaaaah.

KAMAL

Naah nah. We should do some racial-type-political shit.

RADHA

Alright!

KAMAL

...where a Black dude fucks a White chick...and dies.

RADHA

And that's political because...?

KAMAL

Cause. White vagina's a plot to destroy the Black family and my moms'll kill me if I even touch one.

WALDO

Consider yourself dead bro.

The boys fist bump.

RADHA

Can we come up with something that doesn't involve genitalia, in case your grandmothers want to come?

WALDO

What, my abuela loves balls.

The group laughs.

RADHA

Okay. It's your play. It'll be whatever you put into it. Put in nothing, it'll be nothing.

ELAINE

Like your career?

EVERYBODY ELSE

Ooooh.

RADHA

Ouch. Really, Elaine?

ELAINE

I googled you. Last time you did anything was, what, 2010?

ROSA

2012! And they not producing her 'cuz white people scared of the troof, right Miss B?

RADHA

Thanks Rosa but this isn't about me.

ELAINE

Right, Bro-sa! So stop kissing her ass! You ain't going down on her!

ROSA

Fuck you. I could dream.

KAMAL

Damn, Elaine. Why so nigga-tive?

ELAINE

I'm saying: how somebody who ain't had no hit, tell me how to write fucking a play? She AIN'T no Tyler Perry.

RADHA

I appreciate that.

ELAINE

And that's why she teaching after-school, coming late everyday, when nobody wanna be here!

EVERYBODY ELSE

Ooooh!

RADHA

I told you! 20 INVALIDS on my bus today, okay?! But know what Elaine? This isn't Dangerous Minds. You can leave whenever you want. Fyi? I have a production coming up, thank you!

EVERYBODY ELSE

Oooh!

ELAINE

Umm, WORKSHOP production. It ain't even regional theater.

EVERYBODY ELSE

Ooooooh!

Victorious, Elaine grabs her stuff and heads toward the door.

ROSA

Yo Elaine! Sit. Down.

ELAINE

Whatchusay?!?

RADHA

Rosa, don't bother-

ROSA

I SAID sit your disrespectful ass down NOW, PUTA!!

EVERYBODY ELSE

OooooOH!

Kamal looks confused...until Waldo whispers in his ear.

KAMAL

Oh. Oooohhh!!!

RADHA

Would you guys shut up?! Now, girls- I mean, gender-non-conformists.

ELAINE

MAKE ME sit down....DYKE!

EVERYBODY ELSE

OooooOHHHH!

RADHA

Everybody let's just calm down and make art, okay!?

ELAINE

What 'cause you look like Bustin' Beiber I'm scared? You still a bitch, BITCH.

Rosa charges at Elaine. The room explodes in CHEERS as the girls become a flurry of fists.

RADHA

No! Nooo! STOP!!!

Radha tries to break it up but gets knocked down. One student, AVERY, 19, athletic, three-grades-behind-kind-of sexy, helps Radha to her feet.

STUDENTS peek in from the hallway as SECURITY GUARDS BURST in like mall cops, grabbing up the girls, ending the melee.

EVERYBODY ELSE

Awww maaaaan!

ROSA

Fuck Time Out New York! You FIVE STARS, Black Shakespeare ma! Like Rodimusprime, you'll rise again to slay all these Decepti-CUNTS out here!

The class erupts in CHEERS as both girls are carted out.

AVERY (O.C.)

You aight?

An assuring hand plops on Radha's shoulder. Her eyes trace up the well-toned arm, to Avery's dangerously dazzling smile. He licks his lips. Radha snatches her shoulder away.

17

EXT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/STREET - MOMENTS LATER

17

Radha, pacing wildly outside of the school, sips her diet drink with her cell phone to her ear.

RADHA

Archie! Where are you? I'm either gonna kill...(whispered) or fuck one of these kids! Where's my regional production? What I gotta do? Write a musical? An all-White play? Tell me...

A passing CAR RADIO BLASTS 'Pound Da Poundcakes'.

RADHA (cont'd)

(yells to compete)

Who gotta blow around here?!

AVERY (O.C.)

Elaine.

She turns to find Avery hovering.

RADHA

What?

AVERY

Elaine prolly woulda chilled if you just complimented her stupid poem.

He's right.

RADHA

You're right.

AVERY

And why you drinking that diet shit? I prefer my women thick.

RADHA

Thanks. No, Avery, that's not appropriate. I'm your teacher.

He leans in..like the Queen Mother to Ripley in "Aliens".

AVERY

I turn 20 in two weeks.

He walks away. She spies his tight butt and grimaces.

18 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY SHOP - DAY 18

Harlem Interview: The Korean Man restocks a shelf with beauty products. One product shows a black couple in embrace. He looks to camera and arches his eyebrows flirtatiously.

14 JUMP CUT TO: 14

19 EXT. YOUMOJA THEATER - DAY. 19

An awning for a storefront theater reads YOUMOJA THEATER: Where Black Voices Rise and Rise and Rise.

20 INT. YOUMOJA THEATER - DAY 20

In a small black box theater, a BLACK MAN, 40's rehearses a monologue on stage. He acts with his entire body, emphasizing everything with his hands and too-loud voice. He holds a phone receiver.

ACTOR

When I got that CALL....I felt my BALLS shrivel up. When I got that CALL...I thought "Damn Darlene! That's fucked up!"

Artistic Director FORREST, 46, watches, unimpressed. Adorned in white linen and glistening like jojoba oils, Forrest is the male embodiment of Iyanla Vanzant. A young Black UNDERLING sneaks in and whispers in his ear. Forrest signals his actor to stop.

HUMMING NEGRO SPIRITUALS are heard...

21

INT. YOUMOJA THEATER/OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

21

African masks and posters of previous productions ('Hey Honky!' 'The Wind Done Blown') cover the walls. Incense wafts through the air. Radha sits across from Forrest, his desk covered in Awards and Afrocentricity. He stares at her...

RADHA

Is that patchouli? Mmm. Hey, thanks for seeing me last minute. I wanted to talk about my workshop production? Still thrilled about it. Though my agent thinks I should be making more- I told him, Black theater spaces are sorely underfunded but I must tell this Harlem story with my people. He just thinks that at this point in my career, I should have a regional production of the play, with a fee that's enough to cover a month's rent.

Forrest smiles. Rises. Leaves his desk to sit cross-legged in front of a candle-lit altar adorned in African fabrics and pictures of dead black people- a shrine to the Ancestors. He pats the space beside him then closes his eyes in meditation. Radha kneels to get down next to him but her KNEES CRACK LOUDLY. He looks at her.

RADHA (cont'd)

Sorry.

Then goes back into his meditation. The bucket sitting next to him is to catch a leak from the roof but Forrest is not swayed. He takes a deep breath, stares at the altar.

FORREST

The ancestors. They're always with us, always watching. I trust them. They told me in spite of numerous challenges, that I must preserve this theater. And now they're reminding me what we create here is imbued with a spirit of cause. Not commerce. So that's a "no" Beloved.

Radha looks at the altar.

RADHA

They said that? They don't want my
rent paid? Can we try MY ancestors
this time?

22 EXT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - SUNDOWN

22

Radha leaves out looking cute. LAMONT yells from across the
street.

LAMONT

Aw shit. Maybe you'll finally bring
a nigga home tonight. Lord knows
ain't nobody been up there- and by
up there I mean UP IN THERE-

RADHA

Yup. Got it, thanks.

23 EXT. RESTAURANT (ESTABLISHING) - NIGHT

23

We see the outside of a fancy MANHATTAN EATERY.

24 INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

24

A swanky theater affair hosts mostly WHITE, SILVER-HAIRED
PARTYGOERS dressed to the nines, drinking the good stuff.

Two PATRONS, LYLA & JOY, 60's, have an exchange.

LYLA

I've been sworn to secrecy.

JOY

Come on, you can tell me!

LYLA

Okay but not a word. Michael and I
are investing in multi-racial
revival...of Fences.

JOY

August Wilson is timeless!

LYLA

I know! And now integrated! We just
found our Troy: Keith Fucking
Carradine.

JOY
My bladder!

LYLA
Amazing, huh? But not a word!

25 INT. RESTAURANT - BY THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

25

Radha sips water, smiles plastically at passing party-goers. A WAITER shoots by with a platter of GLISTENING RIBS. Radha eyes them...like a long lost lover.

ARCHIE (O.S.)
Tempted?

Radha turns to find Archie, Korean, 39, sharply dressed, hovering.

RADHA
Nope. 40 by 40. Doin' smoothies, bew!

ARCHIE
Ohhh. That's why your breath....

RADHA
What?

ARCHIE
So there may be an opportunity.

RADHA
To drown in a sea of old white women?

ARCHIE
Look beyond the ladies...

Radha looks over to see a WHITE MAN, 50's, tall brooding, surrounded by eager HANGERS-ON- more silver-haired Patrons who laugh at his every wit.

RADHA
That's J. Whitman.

ARCHIE
I know-

RADHA
Why would I care about J. Whitman?

ARCHIE

In between drinks and trying to grope my ass, he says they have a last minute slot to fill.

RADHA

And?

ARCHIE

And it may be a chance to get your play up. Or would you rather have the roof leaking on your production at YOUmoja?

RADHA

J. Whitman only does Black poverty porn plays of which mine are not. Great. So I got dressed and resisted succulent ribs for nothing.

ARCHIE

Didn't someone almost stab you today?

RADHA

No. I was vigorously pushed, okay. They're good kids.

ARCHIE

'Archie! Where's my regional production?!"

RADHA

I'd rather do a workshop production with Forrest and his cheap ass ancestors then suck up to J. Whitman.

Archie smiles at passersby as he talks to her.

ARCHIE

Listen. I let that man graze my ass, so you're gonna ingest a breath mint and go see what that man has to say.

She begrudges him, eventually smellsing her own breath. Resigns it's not that bad and heads over.

26 INT. RESTAURANT - BY THE BAR - SAME

26

Radha pushes through what seems like a sea of more SILVER-HAIRED PATRONS to get to Whitman...who holds center court as he engages his hangers-on, more silver-haired patrons.

WHITMAN

I'm not scared of controversy- our all female production of 12 Angry Men? My idea. But a live cow? On stage? Sorry, I draw the line at fresh cow shit!

The Patrons laugh as Radha approaches and hovers....

WHITMAN (cont'd)

Radha- excuse me ladies. Hey!

RADHA

How are you?

WHITMAN

Puckering up to the patrons as usual. How are you? Archie says you're teaching?

RADHA

I've been teaching for a while.

WHITMAN

Well, theater misses you.

RADHA

It does? Was it looking for me? Cause I'm still here-

WHITMAN

Archie insisted I read your play.

RADHA

Thank you.

WHITMAN

It's...

RADHA

Yes?

WHITMAN

Well tell me about it...in your own words.

RADHA
 Okay. Well...um...Harlem Ave is...

CUT TO:

27 INT. BLANK SPACE - RANDOM OPEN BLANK SPACE - DAY 27

As Radha speaks, a techni-color scene unfolds. A YOUNG BLACK MAN, MARCUS, 30's, appears...

RADHA (V.O)
 ..about a Young Black Man who inherits a grocery store from his dead parents and how he struggles to keep the business afloat...

A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN, STACEY, 30's, appears...The couple embrace and smile toward camera.

RADHA (V.O.)
 With the help of his beautiful wife. Who's an activist.

The wife raises a Black Power fist.

BACK TO:

28 INT. RESTAURANT - BY THE BAR - SAME 28

WHITMAN
 That's it?

RADHA
 Well no, it's about gentrification and how this young Black couple- you didn't like it.

WHITMAN
 The idea is powerful....

RADHA
 But?

WHITMAN
 But the writing rang a little inauthentic.

RADHA
 Hm.

WHITMAN

Like someone trying to capture a voice but never really landing on one.

RADHA

Okay. Well thank you for the note and yeah, thank you.

WHITMAN

Now wait. It has something. I just wished you hadn't shied away from darkness. I mean if you're gonna call it Harlem Ave...you gotta give me HARLEM AVE.

RADHA

Should I add a pregnant teen shooting up in an alley?

WHITMAN

Nonono. You're missing my point. I'm talking a Black Harlem shifting under a White Hipster land-grab. But your play never goes there. At one point I thought, did a Black person really write this?

Radha looks across the room to Archie.

WHITMAN (cont'd)

Look, there's definitely a voice under all those words. Just keep at it. The good news? I still need a book writer for my Shirley Chisolm musical.

Radha feigns a smile. She starts to walk away...when from across the room, Archie sees something in her eye.

ARCHIE

Fuck.

But it's too late. Radha turns back and lunges at Whitman's neck. The crowd GASPS.

29

INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

29

WE HEAR Radha SOBBING as CAMERA CU on MOMS pic; her expression in the pic appears sympathetic.

Radha, face wet with tears, mouth wet with BBQ sauce, cries into a Styrofoam container of ribs.

RADHA

I just (inaudible) be a fucking artist. It's not fair! I put in the work! (muttering) twenty years! I'm tired, mommy. Tell me what to do.

Rib juice stains on her face, Radha lowers her head in defeat...

30

INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

30

Not much has changed. Radha sits in the same spot. Head slumped.

Suddenly...outside SOUND seeps into the apartment: a car radio blasts 'Pound Da Pound Cakes'. Radha raises her head. Her eyes change. An epiphany.

MOMENTS LATER

Radha, with pen and pad in hand, spits a venomous rhyme.

RADHA

Yo! Where my period at?/Oh shit! There it go/Right next to belly bloating and this spotty flow/Where my damn house keys?/Why My lower legs hurt?/Sciatica locked legs like Attica/WORD/Yo why my ass always horny?/Why I always gotta pee!/Why that young boy on the bus offer his seat to me?/Why my skin so dry?/ Why I'm yawning right now?/Why them A.A.R.P. niggas sending shit to my house?/Why my ass so impatient?/But I like them young bucks/But 10 o'clock roll around and I'm too tired to fuck? /Why my knees be writing checks that my back can't cash?/ Why I think I'm gonna fart/but my ass got other plans/Why/ most Hip Hop got me feeling so much older?/Yo, when the fuck is this loud-ass song gon' be over!?!/ Yeah I tried to dance hard but my knees straight caught me/Cause Yo/This is 40 nigga/This is 40.

Startled by her own discovery, Radha looks to camera.

BLACKOUT

31

31

32 EXT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 32

An Upper West Side, Prewar building sits under a canopy of trees and sunlight.

33 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY 33

A sunken living room in a massive, high-end upper west side apartment is luxuriously decorated and filled with high end art and sculptures. Archie's on a call.

ARCHIE

Hey Marcy! I'm good! Things are good! Jerry sold another pilot. Linda's up for two Tony's and Antonio and I are going to Greece. Uh huh, matching thongs honey! How's pregnant life? Ah. Sounds painful. Hey, did you get a chance to read Radha's latest? What? No, she's fine! That was sunstroke! She's recovered and feverishly writing her next masterpiece.

CUT TO:

34 34

35 INT. A TRAIN (MOVING) - DAY 35

Radha with an new found passion, writes in her pad as A YOUNG WHITE COUPLE get on the train. Radha does a double take when she sees....

ANGLE ON white guy's ASS. It's huge. BULBOUS.

Radha stares at the man's ass and writes feverishly, looking up every few moments at her butt-spiration until the GIRLFRIEND scowls and drags her big booty boyfriend away. Bummer!

36 EXT. PARK CANOPY - LATER 36

Radha approaches as Archie, on a bench talks into his phone.

ARCHIE

No hun. Antonio, I can't. I'm meeting Radha. She's still very fragile, very Miss Sophia after jail, ya know?

(MORE)

ARCHIE (cont'd)
 She needs some cheering up and wow
 oh my, unabomber realnesss. Okay,
 baby call you back. Bye.

He hangs up.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
 Come here. Hey!

RADHA
 Hey. Hey.

ARCHIE
 How are you?

RADHA
 I'm okay. I'm okay. Listen I need
 to talk to you about something-

ARCHIE
 Me too. Last night-

RADHA
 Last night was crazy-

ARCHIE
 Last night. Don't worry about it.

RADHA
 Something happened after-

ARCHIE
 Listen! Radha. I think there's a way
 to smooth things over with Whitman-

RADHA
 Got on 145/Guess who pass

ARCHIE
 What...?

RADHA
 A skinny white dude with the
 fattest ass/He was standing with
 his Becky/When her eyes met mine/
 she looked away like she was shamed
 G/They musta had a real love/or
 that bitch had a fetish for some
 Black Girl Butt/But a butt/But a
 butt painted white/connected to a
 pink ding-a-ling/it made me sing/
 White Maaan/with a Black Woman's
 butt/How you carry all that back
 there?/What the fuck?

ARCHIE
Yes. What the fuck.

RADHA
Just think about...me doing Hip
Hop.

ARCHIE
Doing WHAT to it?

RADHA
I want to make a mixtape.

ARCHIE
About a white man's ass?

RADHA
About the 40-Year-Old woman's pov.

ARCHIE
Dry vag. Soupy tits. Am I missing
something?

RADHA
Where'd I spend most of my time in
High School?

ARCHIE
With your regrets?

RADHA
At the cafeteria table. Beating out
beats. Rhyming. Everyday. Every
composition book, full of rhymes.
You tried charging people to battle
me because I was the best emcee in
high school.

ARCHIE
Honey, we're not in high school.
We're almost 40.

RADHA
So. I can't I make great music? Not
the bullshit my students listen to
but real music. I found this
producer on Instagram-

ARCHIE
Oh my Jesus.

RADHA
He's from my old hood Brownsville.
He doesn't take phone calls.

(MORE)

RADHA (cont'd)

I think you just show up with a bag of weed.

She plays a HIP HOP TRACK off her phone. She nods along.

RADHA (cont'd)

Dope, right?

ARCHIE

Honey. The other night we had a bad moment.

RADHA

I need to create something that's mine-

ARCHIE

And now we're having a lil' break down.

RADHA

-something that doesn't rely on critics or gatekeepers-

ARCHIE

Or choking out a White man?

RADHA

Is (sniff) that the rotting carcass of friendship?

ARCHIE

Look, I get it. You're mom's gone. You're a little sad, a little stuck, a lot of eating. You're in mourning...but you're not done with theater.

RADHA

Is there a 40 under 40 list I don't know about?

ARCHIE

Look, make your little music if that's what you need right now. In the meantime, I'll smooth things over with Whitman and you can tighten up your script. Okay?

Radha is distracted by something.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Hello?

RADHA
Oh. My. God.

ARCHIE
What?

She points to where a white man, who with his malty poo,
waits for the light to change. The man's ass is quite rotund.

RADHA
Two big white butts in one day/They
call that an omen, home-ay/Sorry to
but I'm out bae/Gotta write rhymes
to-day!

ARCHIE
Radha. Radha!!

She rushes toward the beacon that is the White guy's ass.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
Fucking shit.

BLACK OUT

37 EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY 37

INTERCUTS:

SNAZZY
You wanna do WHAT?

38 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY SHOP - DAY 38

KOREAN VENDOR
Hip hop hibity hop.

39 EXT. YELLOW BANANA - DAY 39

DOMINICANA
Que es 'mixtape'?

40 EXT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 40

WALDO/KAMAL
(in their own world)
("Bring that ass hear
lemme pound them pound
cakes')

41 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY SHOP - DAY 41

KOREAN VENDOR
(doing pelvic thrusts)
You need dancer?

42 EXT. YELLOW BANANA - DAY 42

DOMINICANA
Ohhhh. Hahahahahahahahaha!!!!

43 EXT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 43

WALDO/KAMAL
Bring that ass! Bring that ass!

44 EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY 44

SNAZZY
Really? We sisters finally get a
Michelle Obama out there and you
want to do THIS ridamdicrousness?!
Mm mm! Hear that?! Harriet Tubman
just SHOT herself in the afterlife!

Snazzy angrily pushes her laundry cart out of frame.

45 EXT. ROCKAWAY TRAIN STATION/BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 45

Radha comes out of the Brooklyn train station and walks down
a down a tree-filled block of modest houses and BLACK
CHILDREN playing as...

Another VOICE MAIL from her brother plays.

RAVI (V.O.)
Hey, I straightened up over at
Mom's but there's a lot of stuff
yo. When you coming by? A bunch of
your shit is still over there.
Aight, hit me. Later

46 INT. D'S APT BUILDING/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 46

Radha stands outside of an apartment door. THUNDERING BEATS
PULSE from the behind it. She KNOCKS. No Answer. KNOCKS
LOUDER. The door cracks open and weed smoke billows out.

RADHA
 (coughs)
 D here?

47 INT. D'S APT - SAME

47

Radha enters a smoke-filled living room full of YOUNG BLACK MEN, who all nod to the beats as a DUDE rhymes in a make-shift sound booth.

DUDE
*Vice grip be tight like nun habits/
 natural selection/GOD gotta have it/
 I'm rabid/like beavers/make atheists
 believers/be folding deceivers/golden
 like them fucking retrievers.*

The men are a contrast to the apartment decor- doilies, plastic-covered furniture, all the stylings of a Jamaican Matriarch. A mantle hosts 90's era Sears Portraits of a MOTHER and her SIX YEAR OLD SON.

An attractive young man sits behind the boards, changing levels, turning knobs. This is D, 28. He takes this VERY seriously. Nodding to his own beat until only distracted by the emcee's lackluster flow. D takes a breath and keeps it moving.

Radha' watches him. Sees the effect of his music on the guys. She made the right choice. D's BOY, 23, walks over.

D'S BOY
 Wdap ma. What you need?

RADHA
 Beats. Tracks.

D'S BOY
 For..?

RADHA
 Me?

The music STOPS. Everyone freezes.....stares at her.

D'S BOY
 You rhyme?

RADHA
 Yes. And I have...

She holds up a small bag of weed.

RADHA (cont'd)
 Currency.

D'S BOY
 No doubt. What they call you?

RADHA
 Um..

The couch clutch of men wait on her answer as well.

RADHA (cont'd)
 I..uh. I go by um, Radha.
 Mus....prime.

D'S BOY
 What?

RADHA
 RadhaMUSprime.

D'S BOY
 Ah shit. Like....*Optimus*?

She makes the TRANSFORMERS sound effect.

RADHA
 That's me!

He laughs but kinda likes it.

D'S BOY
 Ayo D. This RadhaMUSprime. She need
 beats, yo.

She nods to D. D nods back and returns to the boards.

Radha sits proudly amongst the men on the couch. She's done it, claimed the most important thing to an emcee; The All Mighty Hip Hop Moniker. She let's out a breath of relief only to COUGH from the cloud of ganja in the air. The men laugh. She laughs. Life is GOOD!

48 INT. D'S APT - MUCH LATER THAT NIGHT

48

Radha snores, mouth open, on D's couch. She's nudged awake and looks around to get her bearings. The men are gone. D is gone. The apartment is all but empty except for D's Boy.

RADHA
 What time is it?

D'S BOY

Two.

RADHA

A.M.? Where's D?

D'S BOY

Gone.

RADHA

Where?

He shrugs.

RADHA (cont'd)

What am I supposed to-

He shrugs. Groggy, pissed, Radha gathers her things and storms out. SLAMS the door.

49 EXT. D'S APT BUILDING - SAME 49

POV from across the street as Radha tries to slam the tenement door behind her but it's a tenement door so it only swings on it's hinges. Robbed of her dramatic slam-exit, Radha STOMPS down the block, muttering to herself.

CUT TO:

D watches her from a stoop across the street.

50 INT/EXT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/DOOR - DAY 50

A POSTER BOARD for a Josh Whitman production of THE BONFIRE sits on an easel. On it, the image of two WHITE ACTORS facing each other with angst. An attached sign reads CLOSED REHEARSAL.

51 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/STAGE - SAME 51

A state-of-the-art 200-seat theater host an audience of a few journalists, producers and friends. They watch the same two actors from the poster board, perform a climatic scene.

MALE LEAD

Just say it. Say what you've been meaning to say to me since we first laid eyes on each other. Say it.

FEMALE LEAD

Fine. I love....red meat.

The lights GO OUT and the small audience APPLAUDS WILDLY. The lights come back up and the actors come out and take their bows. Archie CLAPS though he doesn't know what he's just seen.

52 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOBBY - DAY

52

Whitman and Archie alone.

ARCHIE
Congrats Josh. It's your next hit.

WHITMAN
I try.

ARCHIE
You look great.

WHITMAN
Considering my neck was in a vice last week.

ARCHIE
Again. I'm so sorry-

WHITMAN
Can I help you with something?

ARCHIE
I wanted to thank you for not pressing charges.

WHITMAN
It wasn't that tight of a grip. Pilates. I do admire your loyalty though I'm not sure what the attachment is...

INTERCUT:

53 INT. FLASHBACK - 90'S PROM PHOTO

53

A pic from the 90's...A TEENAGED ARCHIE with braces in a tuxedo and a TEENAGED RADHA in a tacky party dress, pose stiffly for a prom photo.

BACK TO:

54 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOBBY - DAY

54

ARCHIE

You read her play. She has real voice.

WHITMAN

She's good. But she's not special.

ARCHIE

That's bullshit. Look all she needs is for someone to-

WHITMAN

Stop. Seriously. Begging doesn't suit your lovely cheekbones. You're smarter than this. You should be producing theater, not letting some washed-up writer weigh you down.

ARCHIE

But if you just-

WHITMAN

Sorry. There's nothing more to say.

Whitman pats Archie on the back. He then shoots away. Archie looks around, takes a deep breath and slowly follows on Josh's his trail.

55 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - DAY

55

Waldo and Kamal face the semi-circle of students. They pitch like two rabid car salesmen but Radha is not very present.

WALDO

So the sperm, he goes through all these portals, right? Parts of the vagina, the chocha-

KAMAL

But at each portal, he gotta fight like mad assault ninjas, like a crab ninja, cause, you know, a bitch had crabs once and shit-

WALDO

We should write in a TAMPON ninja, too. Anyway, the sperm, after all of these trials, finally makes it to Vagzilla, Queen of Vaginal Eggs, right?

KAMAL
I prefer Eggalisha, but whatevs.

WALDO
Now, The Queen, she all fine and
shit but ol' spermy, he gotta
seduce her and shit so he can....

They look at each other.

KAMAL/WALDO
'Cum To Be'.

KAMAL
Get it? That's the title!

WALDO
Yup. Word! So...whatchuthink?!

The students mouths hang open in shock. But glum Radha...?

RADHA
Sure. Why not?

Kamal and Waldo high five each other.

WALDO/KAMAL
YES!

EVERYBODY ELSE
Whaaaat!?!/Not sperm!!/C'mon Ms. B!!

The BELL RINGS.

RADHA
Let's pick up next week.

The grumbling students scatter. Avery smirks at Radha but she rebuffs with a 'hell no' head shake so he scurries out with the rest of the class.

RADHA (cont'd)
Rosa. Elaine.

The girls stay behind. Elaine reluctantly, of course.

ROSA
What up, Miss B?

RADHA
Don't 'Miss B' me. The Dean said I
should kick you BOTH out my class.

ROSA

Nooo!

ELAINE

That would be sooo terrible.

RADHA

But I won't. Why? Because even though we'd rather be some place other than this terribly-lit room...

ROSA

Not me.

RADHA

We committed to telling a story. And not some version of Poverty Porn! So stop thinking, that if you don't get what you want, the world should stop for you ELAINE!

ROSA

I like THIS Miss B.

RADHA

Or that if someone says something you don't like, ROSA, you get to choke them the fuck out!

ROSA

You right. My bad.

RADHA

Elaine. Your poem was great. Okay?

ELAINE

Yeah?

RADHA

Yes. But if you think people will appreciate something just 'cause you made it, wake up, 'boo'. Or you'll end up a washed up, 40-Year-Old playwright with a stupid notion to be a rapper and has the shits from drinking diet drinks that don't meet FDA standards! Is that what you want for yourselves!? I said, IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?!

ELAINE/ROSA

No.

RADHA

Fine.

ROSA

A rapper, Miss B?

RADHA

See you next week.

She leaves the girls to themselves.

ROSA

Wow. She like...Queen Latifah and
Judge Judy rolled into one, yo.

Elaine looks at Rosa with disgust.

56 EXT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/MAIN CORRIDOR - LATER 56

Radha leaves out until she sees Avery waiting for her. She looks for a way out when her phone RINGS. Saved by the bell. As she approaches Avery...

AVERY

Ayo...Ms. B....

She points to her phone apologetically...

ARCHIE (O.S.)

Radha.

RADHA

Thank you, Jesus!

57 EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE STREET - SAME 57

Archie talks into his phone while walking through his neighborhood.

ARCHIE

Yes I am your salvation!

INTERCUT:

58 EXT. WADLEIGH/STREET - INTERCUT 58

RADHA

What's up?

ARCHIE
I saw Whitman. His new play is
trash. Anyway your name came up.

RADHA
So?

ARCHIE
So I told him, straight up, like
what's up with my girl, ya know?

Her phone CHIMES.

RADHA
Hold on.

ARCHIE
And he said-hello? Radha?

ANGLE ON: Radha's PHONE. A text from D reads: "YOU COMING
THOO?"

RADHA
This motherfucker.

ARCHIE
Excuse me?

RADHA
Lemme call you back.

ARCHIE
No, wait-

She hangs up.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
Fuck.

A RANDOM PEDESTRIAN turns around.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
No. Not you. I'd never fuck you.

59 EXT. D'S APT BUILDING - LATER

59

Radha approaches as D sits on his stoop with a few of his
BOYS surrounding him. He nods to them and they disperse.
Radha starts to pace wildly as she let's him have it.

RADHA

Look. I don't know you. And you for damn sure don't know me to pull some ghosting shit on me but nigga I'm from Brooklyn too, okay! Lived on Mother Gaston in the 90's. The 90's! By aroma alone, I know the difference between three grades of crack! So don't go acting like I'm some White newbie hipster exploring the Black terrain when I'm fucking *from* here, okay?!

He gets up....goes inside the building without a word. *What the?* Radha follows right behind him.

60

INT. D'S APT - MOMENTS LATER

60

D enters with Radha right on his heels.

RADHA

If you didn't want to work with me, you shoulda just said so!

He goes over and sits at the boards.

RADHA (cont'd)

And what's really fucked up? You guys letting a sister walk by herself to a Brownsville train station at TWO in the morning!

He turns on a HOT TRACK..she YELLS above it.

RADHA (cont'd)

That even sound right?

D.

Nah. It don't.

RADHA

OKAY!

He turns the volume down.

D.

It was more like 2:10. You got some funyuns from the corner bodega, went down to the station. Ya train came in like ten minutes.

Radha is stunned by this information.

61 INT. D'S APT - PRESENT DAY

61

D turns the music back up. Nods, checks levels. He finally looks at her. Then looks at the booth.

D.
You going in or nah?

RADHA
What, now?

D.
You want another beat?

RADHA
Maybe.

He changes the BEAT. Then puts on another. And another. They're all pretty exceptional. He lands on another beat.

RADHA (cont'd)
Wait. The last one.

He shifts back to the previous beat. Radha nods along. It's good. She takes out her notepad when her PHONE RINGS.

RADHA (cont'd)
Sorry.

She checks.

ANGLE ON PHONE: ARCHIE (OR RAVI) is calling.

She turns off her phone and gets back to her notepad.

RADHA (cont'd)
So I started this commentary on black narratives but through the white gaze's constant eroticism of black pain...

D deflates.

RADHA (cont'd)
You don't wanna know what I'm rhyming about?

D.
I just make the beats, lady.

She finally goes in the booth. Puts on the earphones and nods along to the beat.

D. (cont'd)
Aight. Come in on the-

Before he can instruct, Radha finds 'the eight' and goes in.

RADHA
Now here's a little story 'bout a girl
who's black/with herpes, diabetes/chick's
notoriously fat/let's add some asthma
attacks from all the courtyard crack/use
true/current use is low/but I want my
shit produced/so...

D. looks up from the boards. He wasn't expecting her prowess.

RADHA (cont'd)
No happy Blacks in the plot lines please/
just a crane shot of Big Mama crying on
her knees/for her dead son/the B-Ball star
who almost made it out/sounds fucked up
enough to gain my film some capital/so
I'ma pitch some fucked up shit/made just
for the screen/the most pathos-drenched
drama that's ever been seen/sure blacks
behaving Huxtable achievements/but these
white producers just don't be believing
shit/so it's Poverty Porn/I'll write some
Poverty Porn/yo if I wanna get on/better
write me some Poverty Porn. Next verse.
Yo/you like that shit?/yo I could add
somore/a bunch of toddlers getting shot
in front of liquor stores!/DAMN!/Why was
them kids outside anyway/They moms was
sucking dicks/in dimly lit hallways
of/dark, fucked up, seedy-ass tenements/
the roof is where gangs rape old ladies
just for sentiment/Yeah!/now this shit
is getting real ghetto prolific/ain't no
hipsters gentrifying/ gotta keep this
authentic/So yeah/no soy milk in the
bodega yet/just shells and forties in
the gutter wet/Now does this make you
wanna throw up ya hands and holler/how
'bout we add a three-year-old crackhead
sucking dick for a dollar?/It's poverty
porn/you regla blacks are just such a
yawn/yo if I wanna get on/betta write me
some poverty porn!

Radha comes out of the booth as D feverishly works the boards retooling the track with excitement.

RADHA
How's that last one?

He nods...which is a lot for him.

RADHA (cont'd)
Cool. Can you send it to me? If my kids could see me now...not my kids, I don't have kids. I mean my students. I'm a teacher. I teach theater. Well playwriting. Though I don't feel much like a playwright these days. Anyway, my students would really get a kick-

Seeing D. isn't much for conversation, she stops until....

Radha notices something on a cluttered coffee table- an album cover acts as a make shift blunt rolling station. Radha picks it up and wipes the weed particles away to reveal John Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme' album.

RADHA (cont'd)
Coltrane?

D.
What I'm from Brownsville so I don't know?

RADHA
Oh no...I was just-

D.
Mah moms put me on.

RADHA
Your mom has good taste. What does she think of your music?

D.
Iont know. She died.

This hits Radha...until finally....

RADHA
Sorry about that. Okay....well, I'ma get going. The session was great but I'm gonna go...

Though first confused, D sees her to the door.

RADHA (cont'd)
Oh.

She digs into her bag and hands him a bag of weed.

D.

Nah.

RADHA

Don't I need to pay for the session?

D.

We good. From last time.

RADHA

Okay. Cool.

He opens the door for her.

D.

You need me to walk- *follow you* to the train again?

Embarrassed, she shakes her head 'no'.

RADHA

But I wanna come back. I want to make a mixtape.

D.

Oh.

RADHA

What?

D.

You could. You.....nice.

RADHA

What?

D.

You heard me.

RADHA

You don't think I'm some crazy old broad for doing this?

D.

I ain't say all that. But..whatchu doing...it's interesting.

Who knew? And who knew how bad she needed to hear this.

RADHA

Thanks D.

He nods. She nods. They both nod as she heads out. He watches her leave out when...

D.

What you doing Thursday?

Radha is confused but smirks anyway.

63 EXT. RADHA'S BLOCK - DAY

63

An upbeat Radha strolls toward her apartment when she spots someone up the street. She deflates a little.

64 EXT. RADHA'S APT BLDG. - DAY

64

Archie stands in front of her building wearing sunglasses as if trying to go unnoticed.

ARCHIE

Yeah bitch.

RADHA

Archie.

ARCHIE

Don't Archie me.

RADHA

I was just gonna call you.

ARCHIE

You got me waiting in your not-gentrified-enough-for-me part of Harlem getting harassed by homeless Harry over there.

LAMONT

It's Lamont, but okay.

RADHA

Look-

ARCHIE

No YOU look! You're blowing me off when I'm trying to tell your-tired-unproduced-ass some GOOD news!

RADHA

What?

ARCHIE
Harlem fucking Ave! Whitman wants
to produce it.

RADHA
What?

ARCHIE
Said he's over the "thing" and
wants to do your play, pending we
make some changes around length and
tone and did I say length? Doesn't
matter, he's all in!

RADHA
Wow.

ARCHIE
I know, right?

RADHA
I mean...

ARCHIE
What?

RADHA
I don't know. Does this feel right?

ARCHIE
Does an after dinner fart feel
right? Hells yes!

RADHA
I mean, do I want to compromise my
play for some arrogant asshole?

ARCHIE
You choked that asshole! That asshole
didn't press charges. That asshole
STILL wants to work with you. Unless
you have a million dollars to produce
your modern-day play with 12 characters
of color, with no music, no dancing, no
slaves or war-torn Africa?

RADHA
No but-

ARCHIE
This is the major production you
wanted!

RADHA

Yeah but do I want it this way?

ARCHIE

You know, the whole us-against-the-world-thing was cute in high school. But I like opportunity! And eating out. And silken robes. Just know to stay an underdog you have to lose shit.

RADHA

We can find another producer.

ARCHIE

I'm talking about me.

RADHA

What? You don't mean that. I've known you since I was skinny. Since you pretended to like girls.

LAMONT

I KNEW it. But for a sammich, a hole is a hole, right?

RADHA

Look, I'm doing a show Thursday-

ARCHIE

With who?

RADHA

With D. From Brownsville? He produced a track for me.

ARCHIE

Please tell me we're talking about weaves.

RADHA

He's doing an artist showcase and invited RadhaMUSprime to perform.

ARCHIE

WHodaMUS?

RADHA

Look, I don't need my agent to come. I need my friend. It would mean a lot if you came.

Archie folds his arms.

RADHA (cont'd)

Archie?

LAMONT

Come on, man! Give a bitch a chance. Her desperation makes me nauseous. Though, technically, you gotta eat something to *throw up*, nahmean?

ARCHIE

Whitman had some notes. Will you look them over?

RADHA

I will think about it.

Archie charges off.

RADHA (cont'd)

See you Thursday?!

ARCHIE

Whatever, bitch! Look at the notes!

Archie stomps out of frame as Snazzy walks in pushing her shopping cart.

SNAZZY

You Forty yet?

RADHA

Not ma'am, not yet.

SNAZZY

Still trying that rapping shit?

RADHA

Yes, Ma'am.

SNAZZY

Mm. You not gonna be happy til you sleeping in a box like that fool over there!

LAMONT

Hey mama!

SNAZZY

Shut up with that mama mess! I'll beat some homeless ass!

65 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - DAY

65

Waldo and Kamal corner Radha.

RADHA

Why are you guys still here?

They look at each other.

RADHA (cont'd)

Hello?

KAMAL

My ex-girl's older half cousin said
you rhymin' in a show?

WALDO

It's true, Miss B?

RADHA

Don't y'all have someplace to be?

WALDO

It's like that?

KAMAL

Fa real? You just gonna shut the
youth out of a moment that could
change how we dream? How we look at
this cold world out here? How we
confront-

RADHA

Yes! Okay? Damn.

WALDO

Aw shit! That's what's up!

KAMAL

We could come thoo?

RADHA

I don't know, guys.

WALDO

Come on, Miss B. We live for this
shit! Now you ain't just TALKING
about shit, you making shit! Shit!

She thinks...and finally nods.

WALDO/KAMAL

Yes! Woooo!

RADHA

But JUST you two, you hear me? You cannot tell another soul.

They give each other a 'pound'.

WALDO

Bet!

KAMAL

We GOT you, Miss B! Mums the fucking word.

66 EXT. ARLENE'S GROCERY - NIGHT

66

Waldo, Kamal, Elaine, Avery, Rosa, (who carries a bouquet of roses, of course) and like, 12 other WADLEIGH STUDENTS are on line arguing with a BOUNCER.

KAMAL

Yeah we on the damn list! Ain't no minors here!

WALDO

We major, sun! Why you tryna play us!?

KAMAL

What you want? Cash? Some weed?

ROSA

Shut up, stupid & stupider. I got this!

Rosa lifts her shirt, exposing her breasts to the Bouncer.

ROSA (cont'd)

Now. You know the charge for looking at a MINOR's titties?!

The Bouncer grimaces and Elaine shakes her head but looks at Rosa's chest...again.

67 INT. ARLENE'S GROCERY - MOMENTS LATER

67

The Wadleigh crew has made it inside to where a crowd of people talk and drink in a dark performance space. The kids grab a spot in the front of a small stage.

68 INT. ARLENE'S GROCERY/GREEN ROOM - SAME

68

In a grungy green room that smells of the sweat and vomit of all the underground acts that came before...a nervous Radha sips her diet smoothie. She looks at her reflection..then at a pic of her mom.

D eyes the picture of her Mom.

D.

That's your moms? She coming?

RADHA

In spirit, I guess.

D finally gets it.

D.

Oh shit. Why you ain't say nothing?

RADHA

Don't you get tired of adding people to the Dead Moms Club in your head?

She scarfs down her diet drink.

D.

Fa real? That's what we on now?

RADHA

Says the guy with the metabolism of a baby goat. You'll see. It's harder to lose weight when you get older.

D.

Ain't nothing wrong witchu.

RADHA

Just my nerves.

D.

It's one song.

RADHA

I know but-

D. pulls her out of the seat and out of the green room.

RADHA (cont'd)

Wait. Where we going?

69

INT. ARLENE'S GROCERY/HALLWAY BY STAGE - MOMENTS LATER 69

A smoked-filled room finds a bunch of DUDES, knee-deep in a raw freestyle cypher. D leads Radha over as...

YOUNG M

Yo I get crotches/hot like scotches/
knock tall niggas down a few notches/I
pro-actively clear up blotches/with my
skeet concoctions!

D pushes her forward.

RADHA

No.

D.

It'll chill you out.

RADHA

But-

D.

Trust.

She slowly adds herself to the cypher. D nods at her with assurance...as in...'c'mon...go on'

RADHA

Yo..yo..I'm mad nervous/doubting my
words'll be of service/up to par/the
bars I spar with/flow flow flow your
boat/it's almost time to go/hope I do
D. proud enough to give a bitch some
mo'...Cause I'm hooked/shook/got a pang
for them beats, hits/like diabetics for
sweet shit/On the realness?/If beats
the mother of invention/Then I'm
sucking on her sweet tit.

DUDES

Ooohhh!

They dap and high-five her. She's pleased with herself. So is D.

D'S BOY

'Sucking on her sweet tit', huh?
You fuck wit girls?

D.

Aight yall. It's a good crowd.

They affirm him with POUNDS and HIGH-FIVES. D. leaves. The guys scatter as...Radha takes in a deep breath to calm her nerves. D's Boy hands her a blunt.

RADHA

Oh, I'm good. Thanks.

D'S BOY

You wanna keep flowing, right?

RADHA

Yeah but...

She looks at the blunt then looks at him...Ah what the hell? Radha takes it. Puffs it. Coughs VIOLENTLY but tries again. A looooong pull and puff with ease this time.

D'S BOY

Yeah. RadhaMUS!

RADHA

Yeah. Flowing.

She exhales smoke and makes the TRANSFORMERS sound effect.

70

INT. ARLENE'S GROCERY/STAGE - LATER

70

The Wadleigh crew hug the front of the stage in excitement. Janelle takes the mic and the audience CHEERS.

JANELLE

You guys having a good time?

CROWD

Yeeeah!

JANELLE

Great! Thanks again for coming to our lil' showcase. D worked very hard on all the beats you hear tonight, so give it up for D.

They APPLAUD. D stands at the DJ booth, raises his hand.

JANELLE (cont'd)

Now as one half of our budding entertainment company D's Nuts, I won't take credit for this next act. Nope! She's all D's discovery. Give it up, for much older emcee, RadhaMUSprime!

Radha's students and a gaggle of her FRIENDS scream with delight. Amongst them is STACEY, the actress who was the 'wife' in her imagined Harlem Ave scene.

RADHA'S FRIENDS
YAAAAY!!! YESSS!

Radha finally takes the stage but....she. is. zooted.

RADHA
Wow. Guys. Woah! Thanks so much for coming! AWWWWESOME! Okay. DJ?

D turns hits a knob and the 'Poverty Porn' TRACK BLASTS....

RADHA (cont'd)
Yo....yo...

But Radha then spots...

RADHA (cont'd)
Archie? Oh shit! DJ, one second?

The music STOPS.

RADHA (cont'd)
Guys. This is Archie. My best friend since...omigod. If he looks different it's cause he had a 'BEARD' (points to self) in High School! Hahaha! Get it?!

D. looks at Radha ala 'WTF?!' Janelle is all 'told you so'.

RADHA (cont'd)
My bad. I'm just ruining the track, which was so awesomely crafted by D. Guys! Give him another round of applause! Making Brooklyn and his dead mother, proud! All Black men are not in jail knocking up babies they can't take care of.

Archie is horrified as Icarus gets closer to the sun.

RADHA (cont'd)
But you didn't come here to hear me talk. Well yeah you did but not like this, right? So, DJ! Kick it again, please?

The BEAT kicks back in...

RADHA'S FRIENDS & STUDENTS
 Yeah Radha!/You got this!/Do it ma!
 Go Miss B!

The audience nods along as Radha finally hits the mic...

RADHA
 Uh! Uh! YEAH! This is the 40 year
 Old Version! Yo....yo..yo yo
 yo....yo.. yo..yo yo....

71 INT. ARLENE'S GROCERY - MOMENTS LATER 71

Icarus. The Sun. The audience...dumbfounded. D., D's Boy, Janelle and the rest of his crew, stare in awe at Radha who is stuck...on stupid.

RADHA
 Yo....yo....yo....yo yo yo yo.....

The track STOPS. Radha looks to D. for pulling the plug.

RADHA (cont'd)
 Yo?

We hear a DRUNK WOMAN WAILING.

72 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 72

Radha still high, sobs incoherently into Archie's lap. He strokes her hair as she cradles a batch of ribs.

RADHA
 My God! What was I thinking? I'm no rapper. I'm a fucking playwright. Give me a chance, I'll make things right! Oh God!! I swear I wasn't trying to rhyme. Not this time! Oh Gawd I did it again! STOP MEEEEEE! Somebody pleeeeeease!!!

All Archie can do is rock her in his bosom.

ARCHIE
 Come on. Come on.

73 EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY 73

IPHONE CAM POV of....

SNAZZY

Damn. Damn. Just Damn.

JUMP CUT TO:

74 EXT. YELLOW BANANA - DAY 74

DOMINICANA

Ay! Lo siento mucho!

JUMP CUT TO:

75 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY SHOP 75

KOREAN GROCER

My poor Ebony Flower.

JUMP CUT TO:

76 EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY 76

SNAZZY

I will not use my lips to utter 'I
told you so' but....

But her EYES say it all.

77 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT/DINING ROOM - DAY 77

In daylight, you can see how extravagant Archie's pad is. Nice decorative touches; African sculptures, Ornate wall hangings. Boo got some doe.

A somber Radha sits at one end of a massive glass table. She eats a bowl of cereal when Archie enters in a silken house coat and kisses her cheek. He joins her at the table. They are quiet. Radha stares at a painting on a nearby wall. It's one of her mother's.

ARCHIE

Did you want that back?

RADHA

Why? You actually bought it from her. It's yours. They say after your mom dies, she shows up in your dreams. But a year and nothing. Even my dreams need rewrites.

ARCHIE

You should talk to someone. How's your brother holding up?

RADHA

We keep missing each other. Wait. Where's Antonio?

ARCHIE

He left.

RADHA

What?

ARCHIE

Jack Llena's premiere got moved. He's my top grossing client. I couldn't miss. So I had to postpone Greece. Antonio lost it. Said I care more about my clients than I do him. Lies.

He wipes a bit of milk off her mouth.

RADHA

Fuck him. Now you can date Korean.

ARCHIE

You sound like my mother. 'Why you no try Korean guy?'

RADHA

'When you bring Korean baby?'

ARCHIE

Um. No.

RADHA

What, 'cause I'm Black? Who's racist now?

ARCHIE

Aaaand cut. That's a wrap on "Shut The Fuck Up".

As Archie collects her bowl, Radha looks up at her mother's painting. She's pensive. Then finally.

RADHA

I'll do it.

ARCHIE

Shut the fuck up?

RADHA
Whitman. Tell him I'll do the play,
if you think he'd still..?

ARCHIE
Of course! I had him in the palm-
he'll do it. Are you sure?

RADHA
Yeah. If I can keep my play in tact-

ARCHIE
Aaaaaah!

He grabs her with delight and wipes her mouth again.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
(as his mother)
Look at my sweet little brown baby!
Come drink mommy milk!

78 EXT. STREET/INTERVIEWS - DAY 78

PHONE CAM POV of SNAZZY.

SNAZZY
Look. I didn't say you COULDN'T but
that you shouldn't. Not some rapping
pipe dream. At YOUR age? Hell naw!
Folks outthere watching us! We GOSTA
make REAL contributions, ya know?

As Snazzy talks...we see a few moments play out in....

79 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/ REC ROOM - MONTAGE 79

-In Radha's classroom...the usual suspects of Rosa, Kamal,
Waldo and Avery sit in a semi-circle but Radha's is empty.

80 INT. D'S APT. - MONTAGE 80

-At D's apartment, a random DUDE rhymes at the mic. D sits
behind the boards. He checks out for a moment. He dials a
call.

81 INT. CRESCENT THEATER/WHITMAN'S OFFICE - MONTAGE - DAY 81

-We see an iPhone. D's name pops up as an incoming call...but Radha is busy meeting with Whitman who is expressive as he gives her notes-

BACK TO:

82 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/WHITMAN'S OFFICE - DAY 82

Radha and Whitman are at the end of their meeting.

WHITMAN

I loooove the new characters.

RADHA

You do?

WHITMAN

Yes. The sassy old Black woman doling out unwanted advice? Love her! The teens are fine. Maybe spice them up with a little rap number?

RADHA

Mmm.

WHITMAN

But don't stress. We'll organize a reading so you can hear the changes.

RADHA

Okay, good. Thanks.

Awkward silence. Whitman studies his note pad.

RADHA (cont'd)

Um, before I forget, I just wanted to-

WHITMAN

It's okay. I spoke with Archie. I know about your dead mom and all that. My mom was special too. Look, no more apologies, okay? I'm over it. Plus we got a little buzz, and buzz means butts in the seats.

RADHA

Right. I also wanted to say...it's important that I work with a Black director?

WHITMAN

Of course! We want that for you too. We'll make it happen. Okay? Oh, one last note! Gentrification. As a theme it's great. As an opposing force, it's playing weak.

RADHA

Okay.

WHITMAN

It shouldn't be this 'thing' that's happening out there. It should be personified in the play, you know?

RADHA

Not exactly.

WHITMAN

Well..if we have this..

As Whitman talks we...

CUT TO:

83 INT. BLANK SPACE - DAY

83

Our Young Black Couple embrace and smile toward camera.

WHITMAN (V.O.)

Black couple facing gentrification in Harlem, then we need to see just who's gentrifying.

A young white woman, JAMIE..the FEMALE lead from Whitman's other play, appears behind them. She steps forward and the couple pull apart, looking at her quizzically. They then look back to camera ala 'wtf?'

BACK TO:

84 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/WHITMAN'S OFFICE - SAME

84

RADHA

Mm. I don't know. My play is about this couple-

WHITMAN

I KNOW what your play is about. I also know we need to grab our core audience. To do that, we have to write them into the play.

Radha let's out a heavy sigh.

BLACK OUT.

85 INT. BLANK SPACE - IN BLACK 85

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS. TEEN ENERGY BUZZES.

86 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY 86

CAMERA FOLLOWS behind a group of LOUD BROWN TEEN GIRLS led by Elaine down the hallway. They push through a SEA of BUZZING YOUTH until they pass an open classroom door.

87 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - SAME 87

Radha's class is in session.

Elaine doubles back and her gaggle of girls follow to crowd in the door way (ala Morris Day and The Time in that scene from Purple Rain).

ELAINE

Heard your show was...da BOMB.

The girls EXPLODE in laughter.

GIRLS

Haha! Yo. Yo. Yo yo yoyoyo! Haha.

Radha lets out a breath as Elaine and her girls disappear from the doorway.

88 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - SAME 88

The Girls trail behind Elaine.

ELAINE

Radhamus? More like..

GIRLS

NADA-mus! Hahahahaha! Yoyoyoyo!

The laughing girls push on as Elaine slows, allowing them to pass and disappear around a corner. Alone, Elaine leans on the wall. Just like Morris Day's taunts of The Kid (in Purple Rain), Elaine's taunts of Radha have left her empty.

89 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - SAME

89

The students stare at Radha.

ROSA

I'll bust her ass if you want.

WALDO

Man, fuck her, Ms. B. We just glad you back. We was worried.

KAMAL

Word. What happened up there, yo? You was having a stroke or something?

ROSA

No, pendejo! Clearly she had a nervous breakdown!

WALDO

They calling you 'Frozen Yo-gurt' Miss B.

KAMAL

I heard them say 'The Human Yo Yo'.

ROSA

Was it some bad sherm? I been there. One time I woke up in a pair of thongs and I'ma boxers kinda girl, you know? That sherm shit real. Wanna talk about it?

Radha. Does. Not.

90 EXT. SHETLER STUDIOS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

90

The outside of a Mid-Town rehearsal space.

91 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/HALLWAY DOOR - SAME

91

ANGLE ON: A handwritten sign hangs on a rehearsal room door. It reads "HARLEM AVE READING."

92 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/HALLWAY - SAME

92

Radha stands outside of the rehearsal room on her cell phone as an OLD BLACK JANITOR changes the trash bag...the swishing noise of his crinkling garbage bag interrupts Radha's conversation ever so often until he gestures an apology and moves on.

RADHA

Huh? Hey. Yeah. No, I'm excited. I wrote up 'til the wee hours. I feel good. Yeah everybody's here. Good cast. Not the director I wanted...

INTERCUT:

93 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT (OR EXT. STREET) - DAY

93

ARCHIE

Her All-Male version of Steel Magnolias was amazing.

RADHA

There go my fears.

ARCHIE

It's just a reading, right?

RADHA

You're right. I'm gonna push through.

ARCHIE

That's my girl.

BACK TO:

94 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/HALLWAY - SAME

94

RADHA

Will you get to peek in at some point? Okay, good-

Stacey comes out of the rehearsal room.

RADHA (cont'd)

Hey Arch. I'll call you later.
(hangs up)
Hey girl!

STACEY

Hey. Recovered from the other night?

RADHA

Huh? Oh no, I'm GOOD. That was like a live performance experiment thing but glad you're here.

STACEY

You know I love this play! It's a bit *different* than I remember.

RADHA

Got notes from my producer. Turns out I don't need 12 characters. He's writing the check so....

STACEY

So you're fine with the changes?

RADHA

Oh yeah! Stacey. Writing is rewriting. With this draft, I'm honing in on a more universal tone. Ya know?

95 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/REHEARSAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 95

Jamie from Radha's imagined vignettes has been cast. She stands as she reads from her script.

JAMIE

Harlem for all it's color and splendor and beauty...still has a way to go, ya know? Like, what's a girl gotta do to get some soy milk around here?

We see the rest of the mostly Black cast sit around a table for Harlem Ave's first table read. The director, JULIE LIPSHITZ, 50's, a Carly Simon type, nods along intensely while Stacey and Marcus look to Radha who tries her best to look okay with things.

96 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/REHEARSAL ROOM - LATER 96

Deep into the rehearsal. Marcus and Stacey are engaged in a scene.

MARCUS

Baby, I hear you. I'm not suggesting we change our whole flow.

(MORE)

MARCUS (cont'd)

Just that we incorporate stuff that these new Harlemites want.

STACEY

New Harlemites? Does that even sound right? Baby, we can't be changing for them. We gotta-

Stacey stops. Looks over her script and keeps going.

STACEY (cont'd)

We gotta...um. Radha?

RADHA

Yup.

STACEY

I don't mean to-

JULIE

Please go ahead. This is why we're here. This is EXACTLY why we're here. This is the work. We are working it.

STACEY

Okay. Why is she talking like this?

JULIE

Mmm. Good question. The Wife. She's trying to persuade her husband...he wants to stock the shelves with Soy Milk and she's concerned about-

STACEY

No, I know what her concerns are. I'm wondering about the language..?

JULIE

Ah. The vernacular. The verbiage. Well...let's ask the playwright.

RADHA

Um. Well. The Wife, she's from the old school.

STACEY

She's 35.

RADHA

I know that. I mean she's rooted in like...an old, southern mystical charm, ya know?

STACEY

Not quite.

JAMIE

I get it.

Stacey gives her a look.

STACEY

I'm wondering why she's the ONLY character talking like this? Jamie doesn't talk like this. Marcus doesn't talk like this...

JULIE

I think what our illustrious playwright is saying here is...

RADHA

Can I say what I'm saying?

JULIE

Of course! You wrote the damn thing. Your words. Your vision. Why not? Please do!

RADHA

Okay. The fact that the wife speaks one way and Jaime speaks another is because...

JAMIE

I'm white.

JULIE

NO! No no no no nonono! No. No. NO! RACE, in this moment is irrelevant! OKAY?! We'll unpack that later!

RADHA

Look. I know why the wife talks this way. I can't quite articulate that right now but I need you to keep talking that way so I can learn what it means and then give that back to you so you can then give it back to us. Okay?

Stacey nods but doesn't get it. No one does. Not even Radha.

JULIE

Okay!

(CLAP!)

Back to it baby!

Radha's phone CHIMES. Saved by the bell. Radha points to it and excuses herself to a corner of the room.

RADHA

Hello?

97 INT. D'S APT - SAME 97

A BEAT BANGS. D. holds out his phone so she can hear it.

INTERCUT:

98 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/REHEARSAL ROOM - SAME 98

Radha let's out a heavy breath.

99 INT. D'S APT. - SAME 99

He nods and an OLDER BLACK WOMAN, 50's, one more likely to be running a day care program than rhyiming, starts rapping from inside the booth.

OLDER WOMAN

I'm fresh to def/I want my check/I
want respect/I want my check/All
eyes on deck/I want my check/Don't
start no shit/gimme my check.

INTERCUT:

RADHA

Who the fuck is that?

D.

RosettaMUSprime.

RADHA

Funny.

D.

Well you don't want these beats.

RADHA

I never said that.

D.

I sent you like 300 texts. And I
don't text, mahnigga.

RADHA
I've been busy with rehearsals of
my play?

D.
When we finishing this shit?

She's silent.

D. (cont'd)
Nigga. You had a bad night.

RADHA
No. I had a lapse in judgement.

D.
What's that supposed to mean?

RADHA
A lapse in judgement is when-

D.
I'm saying- You don't wanna fuck
with this music no more?

She looks at her rehearsal where the director Julie, is
flailing a bottle of Soy Milk at her cast.

D. (cont'd)
Hello?

RADHA
D.

D.
What.

RADHA
Don't be like that. It's not a
total loss. I'm thinking of putting
some rhymes in my play.

D.
What?

RADHA
I'm saying, that I have to be
realistic about things. I'm three
months shy of 40...

D.
So?

RADHA
So, I need to...stay in my lane,
you know?

He's silent.

RADHA (cont'd)
Hello?

D.
I heard you.

RADHA
I just-

CLICK He's hung up.

RADHA (cont'd)
Hello? Really?

The rehearsal...

JULIE
This is NOT SOY MILK people. No.
What's in this bottle is what each
of the characters need from each
other. It's Love. It's fresh air.
Fresh produce. Rent controlled
apartments. Block parties. It's
Old Black Women on a stoop, humming
with open arms as they welcome
fresh blood into the veins of
Harlem. This isn't Soy Milk. It's
LIFE!

Radha let's out a deep, pained breath.

100 INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

100

Radha nods off, holding a script, when a BLACK MUSLIM MAN,
40's, dressed in more traditional garb makes his way through
the train.

MUSLIM VENDOR
Selling oils! Got your oils here.

He approaches, holds out a sample for Radha, who politely
refuses. He nods, then passes to take a seat in the corner.

With the train on tracks sound giving him a rhythm. As the
train approaches 145th street, Radha stands. She looks over
at him. He smiles and she finally shoots off the train.

101 INT. RADHA'S APT - LATE NIGHT 101

Radha is at her desk working on rewrites. She reads what she's written aloud.

RADHA
(as Jamie)
Well I have ideas too.

CUT TO:

102 INT. BLANK SPACE - DAY 102

Jamie and Stacey and Marcus are in a scene but they all speak with Radha's voice.

JAMIE
Why can't we just make a community garden?

STACEY
It's not that simple.

JAMIE
It is. You just have to change your perspective.

STACEY
Taint nothing wrong with my damn perspective.

JAMIE
Excuse me?! Don't take that tone with me!

MARCUS
Ladies! Stop. Just stop.

Marcus comes between them. He then starts tongue-kissing Jamie. Stacey looks to camera.

STACEY
This some bullshit.

BACK TO:

103 INT. RADHA'S APT - SAME 103

Radha catches her reflection.

RADHA
...absolute bullshit.

She pushes away from her laptop.

RADHA (cont'd)
 This is bullshit. This is, this is
 bullshit. This is bullshit. This
 is, this is bullshit.

She starts to bounce along to her new hook. She finds her phone, hooks it up to her wifi speaker. One of D's BEATS BLASTS through her apartment. She finds her reflection again...and let's loose.

RADHA (cont'd)
 This some fucking bullshit/Why you
 fucking do this/who the fuck you
 fooling/acting like you cool sis/
 Selling out your soul/but fucking up
 your axis/
 Tryna get some flow/but laying on ya
 back sis/letting niggas fuck you
 raw/just to get some access/ mama
 raised you betta/but yet and still your
 ass is/fucking for chips/sucking white
 wrinkly dicks/just to be a New York
 Times Theater pick....

Radha stops herself as the beat keeps banging. She looks at her mother's picture and is about to break down in tears when...the couple next door starts SCREAM FUCKING. AGAIN!

104

INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - DAY

104

Deep into a scene....Waldo stands before his classmates, dressed head-to-toe in all white clothes and Kangol. He is a spermizoid. Rosa wears a long black cape and a large crown on her head with a giant letter "V" on top. She is the Queen of Vaginal Eggs.

WALDO
 (ala Billy Dee)
 So...you gonna let me in or what?

ROSA
 (in British accent)
 Preposterous! You killed all my
 guards. Destroyed Spermicide Castle
 and..now..you expect me to just let
 you in?

WALDO
 Have I not proven that I would stop
 at nothing to get to you?
 (MORE)

WALDO (cont'd)
Come on, ma. You know you want me.
I'm saying- you foine as hell, yo.

ROSA
Really.

WALDO
Word. I ain't never seen no egg
like you and I done seen some eggs.

ROSA
(as herself)
What I look like, some stupid ho?
That I go for some dumb shit like
that, motherf-

KAMAL (O.S.)
That's not even the line Rosa!

Kamal sits legs crossed, clipboard in hand, watching in the
role of Director.

ROSA
So?

KAMAL
So you can't be changing shit up
like that.

ROSA
First of all, she gotta be more
feminist, yo. She can't be letting
some dude just run up in her!
Second, just cause Miss B said
cover while she take a piss, DON'T
make you the director of shit.

KAMAL
Les..bi..honest. I'm in charge!

As they squabble, Elaine's head peeks in from the hallway.

105

INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - SAME

105

Radha watches as Elaine spies into the classroom.

RADHA
Hey.

ELAINE
(startled)
Shit.

RADHA
You coming in?

ELAINE
Me? Nah.

RADHA
You can, you know?

ELAINE
Nah, I'm good.

Radha watches her leave.

A THICK BEAT BANGS.

106 INT. D'S APARTMENT - LATER

106

D's BOY is now in the booth with D at the boards. D nods along but can't get into his friend's empty flow.

D'S BOY
Niggas wanna laugh laugh, we clap clap
with black acks/niggas wanna switch
hit/we get lit wit six clips/wanna
slide by like drive bys?/we got
clockwork orange needles for eyes
guy!/I rake them hoes/take them blows/
shake them re-up boys and they bag of
toys yo/collater-oh damage of the
liver/if I give up/any intel that would
make your brain swell-

D allows himself a distraction of his phone.

ANGLE ON HIS IPHONE: It's open to Radha's Instagram page and posts of her rehearsals. The location, Pearl Studios.

D's Boy catches on to D's lack of enthusiasm.

D'S BOY (cont'd)
Yo. What the fuck? Hello?

D.
My bad. You wanna run it again?

D'S BOY
Nigga where you at? You tripping
over that old broad?

D.
Fuck you. She ain't old.

D'S BOY
Nigga, she ain't young!

D can't argue with that.

D.
At least she gave me some damn
storytelling. Like, what the fuck you
even saying in there? You even know?
Half Y'all niggas just be stringing
words together and shit. I make the
beats but Goddamn, sometimes you need
storytelling. Like, what are you even
talking 'bout?

D gives D's Boy a chance to explain himself but even he
doesn't know the point of the rhyme. So he just shrugs. WOMP
WOMP.

107 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/REHEARSAL ROOM - LATER 107

Stacey does a monologue for a small audience of Radha, Archie
and Whitman who seems quite pleased with what he sees.

STACEY
Harlem. The place I've called home
my whole life. Harlem. She wrapped
me in her arms and mothered me when
my own mother passed on. Harlem.
Where I got my first kiss. Where I
started my cycle. Where I became a
woman. Where I met the love of my
life. Harlem.

A COMMOTION is heard in the hallway. Archie jumps up. He
cracks open the door to see...

108 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/ HALLWAY - ARCHIE'S POV - SAME 108

...D being apprehended by an OLD JEWISH SECURITY GUARD.

D.
Yo, get the fuck off me! I told you
what I'm doing here!

109 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/REHEARSAL ROOM - SAME 109

Archie closes the door.

ARCHIE

My apologies. Just some thug life.
Please...

The actor re-centers herself.

STACEY

Harlem. Where I became a wife. A
business owner. Where I'd imagine
owning my own home one day but
where a woman can't even afford the
damn rent. Harlem. A place where I
imagined preparing meals in my own
kitchen and hope to hear my
children call out to me-

D. (O.S.)

RADHA!!

STACEY

What the-

Radha jumps up and heads for the door.

110 INT. SHETLER STUDIOS/HALLWAY - SAME

110

Radha runs out to see D...now covered in a gaggle of old,
weak-bodied, security guards.

RADHA

D!

D.

Tell these bitches you know me!

RADHA

STOP! He's with me!

The guards back off and disperse.

RADHA (cont'd)

Robopop. You okay?

He nods. Archie approaches.

ARCHIE

Um....Radha?

RADHA

Archie this is D. D, Archie. Give
us a second?

Archie looks D. up and down...he tries to play mad but smirks cause D kinda foine. Archie eventually goes back inside.

RADHA (cont'd)
What are you doing here?

D.
When we finishing these tracks?

RADHA
Are you for real? I'm in the middle of a rehearsal.

D.
I'll wait.

She gives up...stomps back into the rehearsal room.

111 EXT. SHETLER STUDIOS - NIGHT

111

Radha, Archie and Whitman walk out of the building.

RADHA
I don't understand. I gave you a list of names.

ARCHIE
And we tried. But every working Black director is working.

RADHA
This fucking sucks.

WHITMAN
It'll be fine. Julie will give you what you need. She directed Raisin In The Sun, ya know?

Radha and Archie share a look.

WHITMAN (cont'd)
We have to move forward, okay? Night.

Whitman walks off. Radha looks at Archie.

ARCHIE
It's not ideal, I know, but in three months when you're on Broadway, you won't even remember this shit!

Archie notices someone out of frame.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Oh. Hello.

Radha turns to see D. leaning on his car, a 2012 Nissan Altima, cuz...he's from Brooklyn.

112 INT. D'S CAR - LATER

112

The car crosses the Brooklyn Bridge...as Radha talks to herself while Hip Hop music plays on the radio.

RADHA

"Julie will give you what you need." Really? How? What the fuck does she know about being Black in Harlem? Wait. Where are we going? Guess I'm getting kidnapped. Is that you?

D.

What you think?

RADHA

It's good.

113 EXT. WAREHOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN BROOKLYN - NIGHT

113

A cluster of various Brooklyn browns clutter the outside of seedy warehouse. LOUD HIP HOP MUSIC vibrates from inside.

RADHA

Oh. We're in the Bronx. Exacly where I thought I would end my night and my life. I'm not in no mood for a party.

D.

It's not a party. Just come on.

RADHA

I got rewrites.

D.

Of that bullshit play?

RADHA

Fuck you.

D.

I overheard it from the hallway. It's corny.

RADHA

Like you know anything about theater.

D.

There you go. Making fucked up assumptions again.

RADHA

I'm sorry.

D.

Who ain't seen Hamilton?

He drags her by the hand...

114 INT. WAREHOUSE - SAME

114

..into a large raucous room of CHEERS....

CAMERA FOLLOWS them through a buzzing crowd until they reach the edge of an elevated boxing ring.

Inside the ring, TWO WOMEN, underground Rap Goddesses, NORMA BAYTES, 30s, and MS. FIT, 20s face each other. They trade snarls..ready to devour each other. But first a word from our host...Hip Hop luminary, Brooklyn's own, BABS, host of QUEEN OF THE RING.

BABS

Yeah. Babs Bunny the Girl. First lady of the streets. QOTR! Y'all akready know what it is.

The crowd goes wild!

BABS (cont'd)

Y'all ready for some real shit!?

CROWD

Yeah!

BABS

Y'all ready for that raw shit!?

CROWD

YEEEEEEEEAH!!

The CROWD GOES WILD.

BABS

Well, I need y'all to give it up for the ladies!

CROWD
Woooo! Yeas!!!

BABS
We going to get right into it.
Representing Murderville, Mount
Vernon, Shooney Da Rapper!

CROWD
Yeaaah!

BABS
Representing Brooklyn, give it up
for Ms. Fit. Representing Queens,
give it up for Miss Undastood.
Representing the BX, give it up for
Norma Bayts! Ladies, y'all already
know what it is. Ms. Fit, it's on
you.

A BELL RINGS- "DING DING DING!"

MS. FIT
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme

CROWD
OOOOhhhhh!

Ms. Fit mean mugs Shooney Da raper as she gets real close to
her face as she rhymes. The CROWD goes WIIIIILD. The host,
BABS calms them down.

SHOONEY DA RAPPER
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme

CROWD
OOOOhhhhh!

The Crowd screams like rabid beasts at the end of the first
round. The BELL RINGS. "DING DING DING!"

A BELL RINGS- "DING DING DING!"

MISS UNDASTOOD
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme

CROWD
OOOOhhhhh!

Ms Fit mean mugs Shooney The raper as she gets real close to her face as she rhymes. The CROWD goes WIIIIILD. The host, BABS calms them down.

NORMA BAYTES
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme
Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme Rhyme

CROWD
OOOOhhhhh!

The Crowd screams like rabid beasts.

115 INT. D'S CAR - LATER 115

The car sits outside of Radha's building. She is beaming.

D.
Glad I dragged you, huh?

RADHA
Omigod. Yes. I mean, I heard about it but to see them live? Damn. Thanks.

D.
Bet. No worries. Anything you need.

They look at each other. Radha looks to camera.

116 INT. BLANK SPACE - IN BLACK 116

"Adventure Time" by Nai Br.XX floats in....

117 INT. RADHA'S APT - MOMENTS LATER 117

D has Radha pinned down on her bed. They kiss and grin passionately. He then heads down and disappears to her Region of No Visitors....

RADHA
Now...waymint....um...where you going? Oh shit.

Radha's eyes roll back into her head as if possessed by a Tongue Demon. She covers her mouth but D's putting in that work, making her squirm with delight.

RADHA (cont'd)

Wow. Omigod. That's a...that's quite a young tongue.

118 INT. RADHA'S APT - DAY

118

Radha sits in her bed on her computer. D lays next to her.

D.

What you doing?

RADHA

Me? I'm writing on my bullshit play.

D.

Yo, let me ask you a question.

RADHA

You just asked me one.

D.

I gotta ask you another one.

RADHA

What?

D.

Yo, you muslim or something?

RADHA

What?

D.

Why you always got that thing on your head?

RADHA

I just.. What does D stand for?

D.

You got it.

RADHA

Alright.

He pops up and notices a tattoo on her leg:

ANGLE ON: An elaborate abstract image of a couple in embrace.

D.
That's dope.

RADHA
Thanks. My mom drew it.

119 INSERT: THE SAME ILLUSTRATION BY CAROL BLANK APPEARS ON A 119
GREETING CARD.

BACK TO:

120 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - DAY 120

RADHA
It was part of a series of greeting
cards she made in the 70's.

D.
That's bananas. Yo, why ain't more
of her work up in here?

RADHA
I will...I have to sort through her
apartment-

D.
Okay. When? Let's do it.

RADHA
Thanks but I'm okay right now.

D.
Musta been dope, having an artist
for your moms.

RADHA
Which part? The government cheese
or the squatting?

D.
Word?

RADHA
She struggled. Both my parents did.
He was a drummer and did plumbing
to make ends meet so his hands were
permanently stained from oil. And
when she wasn't painting. She
taught kids. I said I would never.

D.
Teach kids?

RADHA
Struggle. But here I am.

D.
Yeah. My didn't think me making
music made sense. But I'm like, you
put Coltrane and Quincy in me.
Whatchu expect? We good now. I know
she up there jamming to my shit.
Yours too.

RADHA
Jamming?

D.
I'm saying, your moms, she's proud
of you.

Radha is half-annoyed and half-intrigued.

D. (cont'd)
'Mama, may I....'

He looks at her.

D. (cont'd)
'Mama, may I....'

She relents.

RADHA
'Mama, may I...'

He starts to do the beat box. And Radha keeps repeating the
phrase over and over again until they have flow. He starts to
freestyle...and she takes over the beat box....

D.
Mama, Mama may I tell you/How much
I love you/And I would give all of
these beats equipment up/Just for
one more chance to hug you/Mama,
may I/Mama may I tell you/How much
I miss you/They preach all this
masculinity shit/But if you was
here I'd kiss you/Tell you despite
it all/I still love you/Showed me
gratitude by the handful/I know you
not here/I can still say that I'm
thankful/Mama, may I/Mama, Mama may
I.

They switch up.

RADHA

Mama, may I/Mama, Mama may I say I
wonder sometimes like/Are you the
person feeding these rhymes/And if
I'm not creating art/Am I
committing a crime/Mama, may
I/'Cause sometimes/I just be
missing you like/Wishing you were
here/Instead of out there
somewhere/Mama, may I/Mama, Mama,
Mama, Mama, Mama, Mama, may I, may
I, may I...

D. continues to beatbox but Radha is frozen. She's on the
verge of tears. It's just too much.

D.

Yo, you good?

RADHA

Yeah.

He tries to comfort her by rubbing her back.

D.

You sure?

But she pulls away from him.

RADHA

Yeah. I'm good.

121 EXT. RADHA'S APT BLDG. - LATER

121

Radha walks D to his Altima. He opens the drivers side.

D.

Come thoo later.

RADHA

I have rehearsals later.

D.

Come thoo after that.

RADHA

Eh. I have previews are in a couple
weeks so-

D.

Fuck it. Do whatchu want.

RADHA
What's the problem?

D.
You was just talking shit before,
right?

RADHA
I'm sorry?

D.
About the mixtape? You never wanted
to do that shit. Nah, just a trip
through the black terrain for you?

RADHA
What are you talking about?

D.
Came all the way to Harlem for this
shit? Man, fuck this.

He aims his alarm key at his car. "BOOP BOOP"

RADHA
Wait...D..!

But he gets in his and pulls off. Womp womp.

Before Radha can feel regret....a CLAP...then another is
heard from across the street where LAMONT CLAPS with pride.

LAMONT
My baby FINALLY got her back blown.
C'mere! Let me talk to you.

He holds his arms out for a hug but Radha retreats into her
building.

122 INT. YOUMOJA THEATER/STAGE - DAY

122

The same Black Actor from earlier rehearses his monologue as
Forrest looks on.

ACTOR
I am me. I am HE. I am Black
DIVORCEE!

FORREST
I don't believe you. Where is the
rotting carcass of your broken
heart?! I need to smell it!

The Underling sneaks in once more, whispers in Forrest's ear while handing a flyer to him.

ANGLE ON FLYER: An image of a brick facade. And scrawled across in graffiti: HARLEM AVE PREMIERE.

BACK TO:

Unimpressed, Forrest shoos the Underling away, focuses back in his actor.

FORREST (cont'd)
There should be a fire in the crack
of your ass! Be the Phoenix!

ACTOR
I'm bursting out from behind the
hay!

FORREST
Yes, dammit!

ACTOR
You had your chance Darlene. Now
stay...THE FUCK A-WAY!

FORREST
Give it to me!

ACTOR
So let me just SAY what I GOTTA
SAY! OKAY!?! I am me. I am free. I
am BLACK DI-VOR-CEE!!!!

FORREST
YES!

Forrest stands applauds WILDLY!

123

INT. CRESCENT THEATRE - DAY

123

FRANK DILELLA, host of NY1's On Stage cable theater show, sits down with Radha in the seats of the theater. WE SEE the set build for Harlem Ave in progress...a street scene...a tenement facade...a storefront...

FRANK
Remember this face? She was one of
Spotlight's magazine's 30 Under 30
Playwrights To Watch. We watched. But
where'd she go? Well, after years of
obscurity, she's returned to theater
with J.

(MORE)

FRANK (cont'd)
Whitman production of her searing new
play 'Harlem Avenue'. Directed by
Julie Lipshitz.

RADHA
It's 'Harlem Ave', but okay.

FRANK
Harlem Ave premieres next week at
The Crescent. Please welcome New
York playwright, Radha Blank.

Radha is wooden, smiles plastically.

RADHA
Thanks for having me, Frank.

FRANK
Radha, where ya been?

RADHA
Oh, I've been writing plays and
teaching theater to teens in
Harlem. Hi guys!

CUT TO:

124 INT. HARLEM APARTMENT - DAY

124

Waldo, Kamal, Rosa, Avery and a few more of her students,
pile onto a couch in someone's apartment as they watch the
broadcast.

STUDENTS
Hiiiiiii!

ROSA
Mahboo look nice!

KAMAL
She official, sun!

WALDO
That's MY teacher yo!

BACK TO:

125 INT. CRESCENT THEATER- SAME

125

FRANK
Awesome. Speaking of Harlem....what
is Harlem Ave about?

RADHA
Well...it's a story about...

QUICK FLASH: JAMIE smiles to camera.

BACK TO:

126 INT. CRESCENT THEATER - SAME 126

Radha snaps out of it.

RADHA
A young Black couple...inherit a
mom and pop shop and a young White
woman who's just moved to Harlem
and how they all see gentrification
from different angles?

FRANK
What inspired you to write this?

RADHA
I just wanted to reflect what's
happening there.

FRANK
Is it true that you and Josh
Whitman are collaborating on his
Ida B. Wells musical?

RADHA
Who told you that?

FRANK
Opening Night is just days away. A
return to theater after nearly a
decade. What scares you most about
this moment?

The in-studio camera CLOSES IN on Radha who just can't seem
to find a response.

127 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY 127

Archie watches as Radha skims a rack of dresses he's had set
up for her. She's having no luck, so he picks one.

ARCHIE
Yes!

RADHA
No.

ARCHIE

You are giving me Miss Sofia in the motherland realness.

RADHA

No, I look like an angry mushroom.
No. No.

ARCHIE

Look, don't worry about it. We'll find something.

RADHA

Opening night is like a few nights away and I feel like shit, Archie.

ARCHIE

It's nerves. I've seen it a million times.

RADHA

It's not nerves.

ARCHIE

You still drinking that diet drink?

RADHA

It's the play. It's not mine anymore.

ARCHIE

The next one will be.

RADHA

What kind of fucking response is that?

ARCHIE

Oh no, hun. Do NOT come for me.

RADHA

Why not? Why not, Archie? You played your part.

ARCHIE

What?! No baby! YOU got yourself here! No one forced you. You always do what you want. You fucked that 25-year-old.

RADHA

26!

ARCHIE

You did that rapping shit!

RADHA

That rapping shit made me feel good about myself!

ARCHIE

Yeah, well all need something.

RADHA

You acted like Whitman was our only shot. Like you didn't believe I'd have another chance.

ARCHIE

Don't you DARE accuse me of not believing in you, OKAY?!! Do you have any idea what I-

CUT TO:

128 INT. BLANK SPACE 128

QUICK FLASH of a WRINKLY PINK BALL SAC.

BACK TO:

129 INT. ARCHIE'S APARTMENT - SAME 129

Both Radha and Archie are frozen.

RADHA

What...?!

ARCHIE

Jiggled his balls a little, yes! Anything for a friend!

RADHA

Oh. Well, let's give it up for patron saint Archie. Jiggling old wrinkly balls on behalf of the poor! Please, Archie, you ain't do that shit for me.

ARCHIE

What?

RADHA

You did it for yourself. Now, tell why the fuck am I still on your client?

ARCHIE
Oh you wanna go there?

RADHA
We don't have to. We all know you keep me around because it makes you feel better.

ARCHIE
About.

RADHA
Paying \$5000 for rent! About taking vacation to Greece in your thongs and shit. About acting like you're not really even...

ARCHIE
What?

RADHA
.....

ARCHIE
Korean?

RADHA
I didn't say that.

ARCHIE
Was dad thrilled that my date was Black? No. But thank God you were a girl. You played along and saved my sissy ass from getting beat. And I will always love you for that. But we're grown now. I'm out, and proud, very Korean. And I don't owe you anything but friendship and honesty. Yes! You're fucking talented. Yes, your mom is dead. But you are not above being a sell out.

RADHA
I'm not a sell out, Archie. Take that back. I said take it back. Know what? Fuck you. Fuck these ugly ass dresses and fuck this stupid opening. I'm not even going.

She throws a dress down and stomps out of his place.

ARCHIE
That dress didn't deserve that!

Archie let's out an exasperated breath.

BLACK OUT

- 130 INT. RADHA'S APARTMENT - DAY 130
 Radha sits alone on her bed. Contemplative.
 Suddenly, she pops up, grabs her coat and leaves out...
- 131 EXT. NEW YORK STREETS (MONTAGE OF SHOTS) 131
 'Footsteps' plays over a montage of Radha moving through
 different New York scapes.
- 132 EXT. PARK 132
 -KIDS play at a park full of Fall foilage
 -OLD BLACK WOMEN chat on a Harlem park bench.
- 133 EXT. HARLEM STREET 133
 -PEOPLE dart to and fro on a crowded, lively Harlem street.
- 134 EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY 134
 Radha watches a YOUNG MOTHER and her FIVE YEAR OLD DAUGHTER
 engaging in a fun conversation. This hits her.
 'Footsteps' winds down to a single note from the cello as....
- RADHA (V.O.)
 Hey. It's Radha. You there?
- We hear a DOOR BUZZER.
- 135 INT. CAROL BLANK'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY 135
 A large Harlem apartment is all but barren save several of
 Carol Blank's paintings hanging on the walls. A cluster of
 cardboard boxes and bags sit in the center of an unfurnished
 room. What's left of the life lived there. RAVI, 47, Radha's
 brother, a slim Black man with a face identical to hers,
 rummages through a box to find...
- ANGLE ON: An old COMPOSITION BOOK. "Radha's rhymes" written
 on it. Ravi humors himself and starts to do one.

RAVI
 One bad apple just spoiled the
 bunch/Looking at your face just
 spoiled my lunch/You can't mess me
 or even test me/Cause if you do
 your face I'll punch.

Radha walks in.

RADHA
 Um. Not quite.

RAVI
 Bout fucking time.

136 INT. CAROL'S APT - DAY

136

Brother and Sister stare at one of their mother's paintings.

RADHA
 When did she do this one?

RAVI
 I don't know. Maybe after you were
 born.

RADHA
 It's beautiful. What do we do with
 it now?

RAVI
 I got most of them at my place. I
 don't have much more room.

RADHA
 Uh, neither do I. I live in a box.

RAVI
 Guess we put it in storage?

RADHA
 Wow. You come to NY with a dream
 and your work ends up in storage.

RAVI
 Is that what you think of ma?

As Ravi speaks we see a vibrant image archive of Radha's
 mother, Artist CAROL BLANK.

-As an Art Teacher working with students in Harlem.

-As a mother cradling her son, RAVI.

-As as a member of Where We At? Black Women Artists, an enclave who organized and uplifted Black artist through out the 70's.

-Carol leading meetings of her sister artists.

-Carol posing with one of her paintings.

RAVI (O.S.) (cont'd)
She was more than her paintings.
More more more more more more

BACK TO:

137 INT. CAROL'S APARTMENT - DAY 137

RADHA
Yeah but she came to NY to be a famous artist. And what does she have to show for it?

RAVI
Us, dummy. You and me. We were her greatest creation.

This hits Radha hard. Before she can crumble in tears, Brother and Sister hug each other. Tightly.

138 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY 138

Radha approaches her classroom but falls back to spy on Elaine as Avery tries to 'mack' on her. Elaine refuses his advances and quickly becomes distracted by Rosa, who passes by with her lively crew of young stylish "QUEERBIES".

Radha has a revelation.

139 INT. WADLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL/REC ROOM - LATER 139

Radha waits by her door when Elaine passes by.

RADHA
Elaine! Got a second?

Elaine reluctantly follows her into the classroom.

RADHA (cont'd)
How's it going?

Elaine barely shrugs.

RADHA (cont'd)
I think you should come back to
class.

ELAINE
I'm good.

RADHA
I know. That's why you should come
back. You're a natural, Elaine.

Elaine both hates and craves this attention.

RADHA (cont'd)
Look, I know we had some beef but
I'm over it. Especially since it's
not about me.

ELAINE
Whatchu mean?

RADHA
I'm talking about expecting to like
one kind of person but then this
other kind of person comes along
and...they affect you. Rosa?

ELAINE
What about her?

A BELL RINGS.

RADHA
I think you should stay for class?

BUZZING STUDENTS rapidly fill the hallway until Radha's
students eventually spill into the classroom.

KAMAL
Well...lookyhere.

ROSA
Oh boy.

WALDO
You back?

RADHA
Elaine...?

ELAINE
.....

RADHA

I guess if the Dean says you HAVE to come back...you can understudy Rosa.

Elaine is thrown but tries to hide her happiness.

KAMAL

Wow! Black Jesus shining on you!

ROSA

Understudy? Nah! Uh uh!

WALDO

Aw shit! WWF- Wild Women Fights Part Deux, suns!

ELAINE

Look Rosa, I don't even-

ROSA

Nah! Fuck that, Miss B. She ain't understudying me!

RADHA

Rosa just calm-

ROSA

She can have the damn part.

EVERYONE

What?!

ROSA

I'm sick of playing this broad, yo! No offense but these breeding chicks? Then to have this dumbo all up on me and shit. I mean, I got range and shit but I ain't that good! Please. Elaine. Take this shit!

RADHA

You heard her.

WALDO

So wait. I get to simulate running up in Elaine now?

Radha and Elaine shoot him a look.

Radha looks to Rosa who then grabs the Queen of Vaginal Eggs crown off a table...and slowly places it on Elaine's head.

ELAINE

Wow. This....this is.....
 (catches herself)
 'Bout fucking time!

The class CHEERS for their new queen who bows graciously!

140 EXT. RADHA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 140

Radha comes up her block and gets to her door when she realized that LAMONT is not in his usual spot.

ARCHIE

Hey! Let's not fight, it gives us wrinkles. Look, I know you wanted to skip out, but it's still your big night. Hope to see you. Bye.

141 INT. RADHA'S APT - DAY 141

Radha sits on her bed. She looks at a GORGEOUS FLOW-Y OPENING NIGHT DRESS that hangs from the back of her door. She just isn't sure if she'll wear it. She looks at her moms picture then finds her phone and dials a call.

RADHA

Hey. D. It's me. Radha. Um. I was just calling. Yeah, I don't know why I always wear this thing on my head. Maybe for a sense of comfort. Anyway, I was just calling. Okay. See you later or not.

She hangs up.

142 EXT. RADHA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER 142

Radha, still in her gown, leaves her building with a sandwich on a plate. She crosses the street and hands it to LAMONT, who is kind of thrown by the gesture but devours the sandwich nonetheless. Radha sits on a crate next to him and watches him eat.

LAMONT

Wait. Why you all dressed up? You going to a funeral? What's this sandwich shit about? You poison me? Shit. I'm dead. Better finish it.

143 INT. TICKET WINDOW/THE CRESCENT THEATER - NIGHT 143

Rosa, Waldo, Kamal, Elaine and Avery are all done up in their nicest duds cram their angry faces in a will call window, engage a WOMAN behind the glass.

KAMAL

Yeah we on the list! We know her!
She's our teacher!

WALDO

You think we get dressed up and
come down from Harlem just to
harass your pasty ass and shit?

ROSA

What's the problem lady?! You need
to see my tits or something?

144 EXT. RADHA'S APARTMENT BLDG. - NIGHT 144

LAMONT rolls his eyes as Radha laments.

RADHA

True it's my opening night but
Archie's right. I sold out and now
I have to sit through that?

LAMONT guzzles a beer and finally responds.

LAMONT

This the part where I tell you I was
an artist who fell from grace, right?
Then I impart some wisdom that changes
your outlook cause you gave me a
fucking sandwich? Like I'm some
magical negro just sitting with shit
in my pants so I can help you make up
your mind? NOPE! I ain't that nigga!
And next time, would it kill you to
put some mayo on both sides of the dry
ass bread? You want to cut my throat
the slow way?

Radha smirks. And he just chomps away.

145 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER 145

As people start to crowd the lobby, Lyla and Joy, now dressed in Opening Night attire, have an exchange.

LYLA
Exciting, huh?

JOY
Yes. And I've got insurance tonight
so this time so no bathroom breaks
for me.

LYLA
You missed the whole second act of
that last play we went to. The
mockingbird didn't die.

JOY
Oh good.

Archie, in an amazing tuxedo, enters and walks passed the
women to do a sweep of the lobby...but he doesn't see Radha.

146 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/GREEN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 146

Archie sees Stacey, Jamie, Marcus and the cast in various
forms of character dress, prepping- doing breathing
exercises, running lines or stretching but he doesn't see
Radha.

147 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER 147

Archie scans the back stage area. No Radha.

148 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER 148

Archie stands before Whitman.

WHITMAN
It's five minutes to curtain.

ARCHIE
She's on her way.

WHITMAN
I hope so. I want her to meet the
investors for Shirley Chisolm
musical. Maybe you can come on as
a producer.

ARCHIE
If by 'producer' you mean jiggle
your balls again, I'll pass.

The BELL CHIMES for curtains up. Archie leaves Whitman.

149 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATRE/AUDITORIUM - SAME

149

The show begins....we hear SWEEPING MUSIC..a curtain rises, lights dart left and right as FOG fills the stage. When the fog clears, we see the facade of the projects...we then hear a wave of black gospel voices WAILING toward a chorus...

HIDDEN GOSPEL SINGERS

Harlem Ave. Harlem Ave. You might
find love on HARLEM AVE. Harlem Ave.
Harlem Ave. You might get laughs on
HARLEM AVE. Harlem Ave OHHH Harlem
Ave. Nig-gas might get STAAABBED on
Harlem Aaaaave.

WE SEE several audience members...Radha's STUDENTS scream with delight. Forrest is unimpressed. Radha's Director Julie mouths out the chorus with passion. Radha's brother Ravi beams with pride. Archie looks around for Radha. And Whitman smiles...his baby is born!

The audience applauds as...an up-tempo beat sweeps in. Three YOUNG ACTORS who feel VERY much like Waldo, Kamal and Rosa rock and pulse onto the stage and into the spotlight.

CHORUS OF THREE

Harlem Ave/Hub of Black and Brown
life!/Where a culture, once ripe/
Change like the speed of light/Got
ya culture fa sale/Got ya vultures
that's pale/But the pulse of city
keeps raging on/the pulse of the
city keeps raging on...

CUT TO:

150 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATRE/AUDIENCE - SAME

150

CAMERA FINDS Elaine and Rosa sitting next to each other.

ROSA

Yo, is that me?!

Rosa puts her hand on the chair rest, touching Elaine's hand.

ROSA (cont'd)

My bad.

ELAINE

It's okay.

The girls eyes meet. Elaine's face softens. Rosa slowly fixes her eyes back to the stage...but she smiles.

CHORUS OF THREE
The pulse of a city keeps RAGING ON!

The actors hit a powerful pose. The audience EXPLODES into APPLAUSE.

151 EXT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/FRONT ENTRANCE - SAME 151

Radha, all made up in her gown walks up to the theater. She hears APPLAUSE from inside and takes a breath before opening the theater doors.

152 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER - LATER 152

Well into Act 1, the set has changed to showcase the outside of a colorful GROCERY, a fruit stand out front. Stacey restocks the fruit while D sweeps the front of the shop.

STACEY

Baby I'm not saying I want to go back down south.

MARCUS

So what are you saying, baby?

STACEY

I'm saying it's just getting too expensive to stay here. We GOSTA figure it out.

Just then Jamie walks on the stage.

JAMIE

What does a girl have to do to get some Soy Milk around here?!

Tickled by her, the audience bursts into LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE.

153 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOWER LOBBY BAR - SAME 153

Radha nurses a drink at the empty bar when she hears the crowd APPLAUSE. Disgusted, she slurps her drink.

154

INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/AUDITORIUM - LATER

154

We're at a climatic scene at the end of the first Act. Stacey, D and Jamie are on stage surrounded by the fake Waldo, Kamal and Rosa as well as versions of the folks from Radha's street interviews...actors portraying Sassy with her Cart, the Dominican Lady with her bag of Groceries and the Korean Beauty Supply Man holding a bag of weaves.

Marcus and Stacey have been confronted by a WHITE MAN who holds out a paper.

STACEY

What are you saying, Sir?

JAMIE

Yeah, what are you saying?

WHITE MAN WITH PAPER

I'm offering you half a million dollars for your shop.

FAKE KAMAL

Mister you can't do that! This shop means everything to us.

JAMIE

The shop means everything to me!

WHITE MAN WITH PAPER

Well It's not up to you is it? So? What will it be?

STACEY

Baby?

MARCUS

Honey?

He hands them the paper. They slowly turn and look at the paper. They both begin to reach for it when...There's a GUNSHOT. And the man with the paper falls down.

All the actors are stunned! The GOSPEL VOICES float back in.

HIDDEN GOSPEL SINGERS

Harlem Ave. Harlem Ave! HARLEM
AAAAAVE!

The Curtain falls down at the end of Act 1. The Audience explodes in rousing APPLAUSE.

155 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOWER LOBBY BAR - SAME 155

As the audience starts to spill into the bar area, Radha jumps up and runs out of sight.

156 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/WOMAN'S BATHROOM - SAME 156

Radha rushes in and hides in a stall before a crowd of WOMEN flood in behind her.

157 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/BATHROOM STALL - SAME 157

Radha sits on the toilet between the stalls of Lyla and Joy. She can only see their sparkly silver shoes as they talk.

JOY

Eh so much for support. I'll be fast, promise.

LYLA

You must. I can't miss a thing!

JOY

That first Act was quite powerful, wasn't it?

LYLA

Yes. And I loooove that "Jamie" girl. She's a star.

Radha plugs her ears and closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

158 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/BATHROOM STALL 158

Radha uncovers her ears. All is quiet.

159 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/WOMENS BATHROOM - SAME 159

Radha emerges to find it empty.

160 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOWER LOBBY BAR - SAME 160

She comes out the bar. It's empty too.

161 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER 161

Radha cracks open the door to the auditorium to peek in on the play which is coming to the end of the third act.

FROM RADHA'S POV: WE SEE a confrontation between Stacey and Jamie.

STACEY

Marcus would still be here if it weren't for you!

JAMIE

What did I do?!

STACEY

You came here. To Harlem. That's what you did.

CAMERA FINDS a BLACK WOMAN in the audience who's in agreement with Stacey.

BLACK WOMAN

MMMM HMM.

Radha retreats. She leans on the lobby wall.

162 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER 162

JAMIE

Well I don't accept your energy. I am not your enemy. I am your neighbor. Your friend. Your...

STACEY

Sister?

Jamie takes Stacey's hand. The women hug. MUSIC CRESCENDOS up in a big way as the curtain comes down and the audience EXPLODES into cheers. Everyone except Forrest, who once again is unimpressed.

163 INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER 163

Whitman stands on stage with the cast and the Director Julie, all of whom hold bouquets of flowers, the gifts of their admirers.

WHITMAN

Thank you. Thank you. Isn't this a glorious night. Thank you so much. Oh, my goodness. What a surprise.

(MORE)

WHITMAN (cont'd)

Thank you so much. This is just so wonderful. Thank you, everybody. Our director, Julie Lipshitz.

JULIE

If I may, I'm just so excited to share this moment with all of you. I just want to thank our incredible cast. They worked so hard. But nobody worked harder than our playwright. And I'd love to call her up. Radha! Are you here?

WHITMAN

Is she here? Did she come? Radha?

It's quiet. Folks look left and right. Including Archie. Where is Radha?

Finally from the back of the theater, Radha approaches the stage. The audience slowly erupts into applause as Radha takes the stage, flanked by her Director Julie and Whitman who hands her the microphone. The applause continues.

RADHA

Thanks so much. I want to thank this amazing cast. My amazing director Julie Lipshitz. Thank you for bringing Harlem alive. Thanks to my producer J. Whitman. Where would I be without you. Um. Wow. Every playwright dreams of this moment...

She looks out at the audience and freezes.

The audience is confused.

RADHA (cont'd)

Every playwright hopes... Every playwright hopes... They don't write a piece of shit like this play. My mother raised me to be fearless. I guess when she died that when I started to get afraid.

Silence. The audience waits. Radha's hands are shaking. She then makes the TRANSFORMER sound and goes for it.

RADHA (cont'd)

I GOT REALLY AFRAID/SCARED OF THE
CHOICE AND BULLSHIT I MADE/THINKING
I WOULDN'T GET PAID/BUT I'M CAROL'S
DAUGHTER/SO THAT SHIT DON'T STAIN/
I GOTTA TELL YOU/A NIGGA WAS
CHOKING/TIRED OF SELLING MY SOUL
FOR THESE TOKENS/THESE COINS/BUT
GUESS WHAT?/I MADE A DIFFERENT
CHOICE/BECAUSE IT'S TIME TO
FYOV/FIND YOUR OWN
VOICE/FYOV/FYOV/FORTY-YEAR-OLD
VERSION INDUBITABLY/FYOV/FYOV/NOT
TELLING TRUTH/JUST DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE TO ME/HOLDING BACK FROM WHO
YOU SHOULD BE/FYOV/FUND YOUR OWN
VISION/FILL YOUR OWN VOID/FIND YOUR
OWN VOICE/FUCK YOU OLD
VULTURES/FORTY-YEAR-OLD
VERSION/THAT'S WHO I BE.

Radha drops the mic. It SCREECHES! The crowd is befuddled. But Archie and her students stand to applaud as Radha leaves the stage. A small smile finds her face.

164

INT. THE CRESCENT THEATER/THEATER LOBBY - SAME

164

Radha shoots into the lobby from the auditorium.

ARCHIE (O.S.)

Radha!

RADHA

No.

She faces her friend.

ARCHIE

Radha. That was...

RADHA

If you're gonna tell me that I fucked up again, I don't want to hear it.

ARCHIE

Radha, I get it. You did good. I'm proud of you.

They look at each other with love.

RADHA/ARCHIE

You're fired./I quit.

They hug tightly.

RADHA

I love you.

ARCHIE

Love you too.

RADHA

I gotta go. I gotta handle some business.

165 INT. TRAIN (MOVING) 165

Radha still in her gown, rides the A train into Brooklyn. An OLDER BLACK WOMAN looks at her and nods in approval.

166 EXT. D'S APT BUILDING - NIGHT 166

A bunch of D's BOYS sit on his steps. They stare at Radha who simply nods as she passes by them and goes into the building.

167 INT. D'S APT - SAME 167

D works with a new artist, KYAH BABY, 20, a young female emcee. She spits viciously into the mic. She. Is. Cold. BLOODED!

KYAH BABY

My gifts/cause riffs/cause cells to
split/make limp legs kick/makes
back bones dip/from the verbs out
these lips/fucking vocal eclipse/
cause your shit isn't lit/not
remarkable or sparkable like
lyrical spliffs....

Radha slowly enters and watches the phenom. Has she been replaced? No. This young artist has her own special flow.

From behind the boards, D spots Radha. He wants to hide his excitement...but can't. He cracks a warm smile.

168 INT. BODEGA - MOMENTS LATER 168

Radha watches D as he buys her some funyuns.

169

EXT. BROWNSVILLE BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

169

D and Radha slowly walk down the street back toward his apartment as she snacks on the funyuns.

RADHA

That girl...

D.

Kyah Baby. From Queens.

RADHA

She's fucking dope. And...age appropriate.

D.

And also my lil' cousin.

Radha is relieved.

D. (cont'd)

You look nice.

RADHA

Thanks. Was opening night.

D.

Of your play? Whatchu doing here?

She shrugs.

D. (cont'd)

Wanna hear some tracks?

RADHA

Uh yeah! I don't know.

D.

I got this new jawn....

RADHA

Lemme guess...you looped baby goats crying.

D.

Nah. Mennonite chants...

RADHA

Wooooah.

They walk down this Brooklyn street...together.

D.

Wrote anything since?

RADHA

Not really...

D.

So...go off the dome....

D starts to beat box as Radha freestyles...They vibe and walk and rhyme and walk as the New York City skyline glows before them.

170

EXT. HARLEM/STREET INTERVIEW - ANOTHER DAY

170

A final word from Ms. Snazzy herself.

SNAZZY

Okay! Not a bad ending. I woulda had a bit more sex in there but hey, life's interesting. I know cause I done lived it. Yes! Been all over this here United States. Had many lovers, interesting jobs, like coat check girl at the Savoy. Hell I even ran some numbers. So I know how to make it out here. For one-

LAMONT

Just shut up already! If you ain't gonna come over here and give me a sandwich or some ass...SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Offended, Snazzy's mouth hangs open.

BLACK OUT.

THE END