

PANDAS IN NEW YORK

"Pilot"

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PANDAS IN NEW YORK

TEASER

INT. UBER CAR - DAY

(RISHI, VLADIMIR, NGOZI)

WE ARE OUTSIDE AT JFK INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS. RISHI PANDA, 27, INDIAN-AMERICAN, GETS IN THE BACK SEAT WITH A DUFFEL BAG. THE DRIVER, VLADIMIR IS A RUSSIAN WITH A THICK ACCENT.

RISHI

Hi, I'm Rishi. You're...(READS HIS  
PHONE) Vladimir?

AS RISHI PULLS HIS DOOR SHUT, VLADIMIR LOOKS AT HIS PHONE.

VLADIMIR

Destination is 168th Street and  
Courtland, Bronx Free Clinic?

RISHI

Yes, that's right. It's--

VLADIMIR GUNS IT, SENDING RISHI PRESSED BACK INTO THE SEAT.

VLADIMIR

You know, if you need doctor, Bronx is  
dangerous to seek medical attention.

RISHI

Oh. Ha. No. I am a doctor. I'm going to  
be working at the Clinic. It's my new  
job. And the Bronx doesn't scare me--  
(AS CAR SWERVES, TERRIFIED) Aagh!

VLADIMIR

You have long flight?

RISHI

Very long. All the way from Cambodia.

VLADIMIR

I only ask because you don't look fresh. Also, look thin.

RISHI

I don't look 'fresh?' (THEN) And how would you even know if I'm thin?

VLADIMIR

How long in Cambodia?

RISHI

(NERVOUSLY EYES THE ROAD) A year.

VLADIMIR

You were on holiday?

RISHI

No, Vladimir, I didn't take a year-long vacation in Cambodia. I don't think anyone does that. I was there with Doctors Without Borders.

VLADIMIR

You are Indian, yes?

RISHI

Yes. (THEN) My parents are from India.

VLADIMIR

I knew this! As soon as you say you are doctor, I think 'Indian.'

RISHI

Not all Indians are doctors.

VLADIMIR

(ROLLS EYES) Right. Any doctors in your family?

RISHI

Well, my parents are both doctors.  
(THEN, ADMITS) And both of my sisters are doctors. But that doesn't mean--  
(LURCHES RIGHT) Please slow down.

VLADIMIR

(LAUGHS, PLEASED) Indians are doctors!

RISHI

What if I made a generalization about Russians? Like 'all Russians are---'

VLADIMIR

Strong. Is fact. Name any weak Russian. You cannot.

RISHI

(EYES ROAD) Do you see the red light? There's a red light! It's red!

VLADIMIR

Indian people very smart. Children get education, so they can make good money.

VLADIMIR HONKS, TURNS AROUND TO SCOWL AT ANOTHER DRIVER.

RISHI

Yes, it can be good money-- truck!  
Truck truck truck truck truck!

VLADIMIR

Why work for poor people when you can  
make big doctor cash and buy Tesla?  
Stupid.

RISHI

(OFFENDED) Do you weigh in on the  
lives of all of your passengers?

VLADIMIR

(SHAKES HEAD) You want to waste  
medical degree, your choice.

RISHI

(ANNOYED) That's right. It is my  
choice. (LOOKS AT HIS PHONE) How is  
your rating four-point-nine stars?  
Because you're getting none from me.

VLADIMIR

Indian people also emotional. Is fact.

VLADIMIR SPEEDS UP AND RISHI HOLDS ON FOR DEAR LIFE, AS WE...

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS

ACT ONE

SCENE A

INT. BRONX FREE CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - DAY  
(RISHI, NGOZI, LITTLE GIRL, MAYA)

RISHI ENTERS WITH HIS DUFFEL BAG. PEOPLE WAIT IN CHAIRS. THE RECEPTIONIST, NGOZI, 28, AFRICAN-AMERICAN, WALKS OUT OF THE BACK WITH A CLIPBOARD, PAST HIM. HE FOLLOWS.

RISHI

Hi, I'm Dr. Panda, the new attending.

NGOZI

(GRUFF) You don't start until Monday.

RISHI

Yeah, I just wanted to stop in and check it out. I'm excited to start--

NGOZI

Do not be excited. This is not exciting. This is an under-funded sanctuary for people marginalized...

THE POWER GOES OUT. WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT, NGOZI OPENS A PANEL AND RESETS THE BREAKER. EVERYTHING TURNS ON AGAIN.

NGOZI (CONT'D)

...by a corrupt for-profit healthcare system controlled by powerful men who are indifferent to those in need of--  
(LONG BEAT) Did. You. Just. Fart.

RISHI

(SURPRISED, DEFENSIVE) What?! No.

RISHI LOOKS AT AN OLD MAN SITTING NEARBY. THE MAN LOOKS AWAY.

NGOZI

(BEAT) ...in need of a competent, caring physician to set their broken bones, suture their wounds and treat their venereal diseases.

RISHI

Well, I'm competent and I care. I was with Doctors Without--

NGOZI

As long as you're here, let's have a short orientation. I am Ngozi Jones, the receptionist. You may call me Ngozi or Ms. Jones. I do not work for you, I work for the Bronx Free Clinic. I may not have a medical degree, but I am a person, so be polite, be succinct, get your own coffee and we'll get along just fine.

RISHI

Understood--

NGOZI

I'm not done. (POINTS) See that desk? That's my desk. Do not touch anything on my desk. (TO PATIENT) Mr. Martinez, you can go in now.

(MORE)

NGOZI (CONT'D)

(TO RISHI) I'm a cisgender African American who identifies as a woman and my preferred pronouns are 'she' and 'her.' If you call me 'honey' or 'sweetie'...

NGOZI (CONT'D)

RISHI

...or anything that demeans me, or women in general... Oh. I would never--

NGOZI

...or if you physically touch me, or anything on my desk, you will hear about it. I grew up in Brooklyn.

RISHI

(SWALLOWS) I grew up in Queens.

SHE STARES AT HIM. HE STARES BACK, UNSURE. THEN:

RISHI (CONT'D)

I'm Dr. Rishi Panda. Like the bear. It's a common Indian surname, a variation of 'pundit' which means 'learned person.' I identify as a man so my pronouns are 'he' and 'him.' You can call me Rishi, Dr. Panda, Dr. Rishi. (BEAT) Or whatever you want. (THEN) Does 'Ngozi' mean anything?



NGOZI

It's Swahili. It means 'football.'

RISHI CHUCKLES, THINKS SHE'S JOKING, REALIZES SHE'S NOT.

RISHI

Very nice, very nice. (COUGHS) I guess  
I should introduce myself to (CHECKS  
PHONE) Maya Robinson. The admin?

NGOZI

(STARES HIM DOWN, BEAT) Wait here.

NGOZI CROSSES OUT. RISHI NOTICES A LITTLE GIRL, SITTING IN  
HER MOTHER'S LAP. HE KNEELS DOWN TO TALK TO HER.

RISHI

And how are you feeling?

LITTLE GIRL

I haven't pooped in six days.

RISHI

(REASSURING) They're going to give you  
some medicine, and you're going to  
feel a lot better, promise.

THE LITTLE GIRL SMILES, LOOKS AWAY. MAYA ROBINSON, 28, DOWN  
TO EARTH, ATTRACTIVE, CROSSES IN.

MAYA

Dr. Panda?

RISHI'S PHONE RINGS. HE HOLDS UP A HAND IN APOLOGY.

RISHI

(ANSWERS) Hi, Dad, yes I landed, but  
can I call you back?  
(MORE)

RISHI (CONT'D)

...yes, but I just had to make a quick stop then I'm coming right to you--  
...very tired, yes. ..no don't put her on. I-- ...okay-- ...hi, Ma-- ... I missed you, too. I'll see you soo--  
...yes, I did. -- ...an omelet and fruit. ...honeydew...very fresh.  
(LOOKS AT MAYA, EMBARRASSED) Mom, I have to call you back. (HANGS UP, SPENT) Sorry about that. My parents can be a little much. (OFFERS HAND)  
Rishi. Panda.

MAYA

(SHAKES HIS HAND) Maya Robinson.

STILL SHAKING HANDS, THEY GO A BEAT LONGER THAN EXPECTED.  
MAYA TAKES HER HAND BACK.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Your file said you were in Cambodia?

RISHI

Just got back, in fact. (BEAT) It's why I don't look fresh. (THEN) I wanted to say hello in person before Monday.

MAYA

I was surprised you took the job.  
Doctors usually come back from an NGO and want to start making money.

RISHI

Money's overrated. I like deprivation.

NGOZI WALKS BY WITH HER CLIPBOARD. WHILE PASSING:

NGOZI

Then you're in the right place.

MAYA

I bet it's nice to be home. Back in  
New York. Did you miss it?

RISHI

Mostly I've been dreaming about Papaya  
King hot dogs.

MAYA

Why would you go to Papaya King if you  
could have Papaya Dog?

RISHI

Because Papaya King is the original.  
It sets the standard.

EYE CONTACT. A PAUSE. MAYA SMILES.

MAYA

I think you've been eating the wrong  
hot dogs. It's sad, really.

RISHI

I'm open to giving Papaya Dog another  
shot, but only if you're buying.

(THEN) I'm a little strapped for cash  
and my new job doesn't pay well.

MAYA SMILES. NGOZI WALKS BY WITH HER CLIPBOARD. WHILE  
PASSING:

NGOZI

You two can stop your hot dog flirting  
now because Gray's Papaya is better than  
Papaya King and Papaya Dog combined.

NGOZI CROSSES OUT. MAYA AND RISHI LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

RISHI

(WAVES IT OFF) How would someone even  
combine two hot dogs?

MAYA

Makes no sense whatsoever. (THEN)  
Though I wouldn't say anything to her.

RISHI

It's not worth getting beat up.

MAYA LAUGHS, SHAKES RISHI'S HAND AGAIN.

MAYA

Welcome to The Bronx Free Clinic, Dr.  
Panda. See you Monday morning. We're  
very glad you're here.

THE POWER GOES OUT AGAIN AND NGOZI CROSSES IN, OPENS UP THE  
PANEL TO TAKE A LOOK. AS MAYA WALKS AWAY RISHI TAKES HER, AND  
THE CLINIC, IN, AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE B

INT. PANDA ORTHOPEDICS OFFICES - DAY  
(CAROL, RISHI)

A BUSTLING MANHATTAN MEDICAL OFFICE SUITE. PLUSH WAITING ROOM. ADJACENT OFFICES, EXAM ROOMS AND AN APPOINTMENT DESK, BEHIND WHICH SITS CAROL, 67, VERY TAN, A JEWISH GRANDMOTHER. SHE BEAMS AS RISHI ENTERS, CROSSES, HUGS HIM.

CAROL

He's back! Oh, it's good to see you  
Rishi. (THEN, WORRIED) You look thin.

RISHI

Hey Carol! How are you?

AS SHE LEADS HIM BY THE HAND THROUGH THE WAITING ROOM DOOR INTO THE BACK, SHE IS IMMEDIATELY KVETCHING.

CAROL

Honestly, terrible. At night I swear I can hear my body decaying. And Bruce. My god. My son is forty-two years old and his career is trading the Bitcoin, whatever it is. Before that, herbal supplements. That's a living? Gives me *tsuris*. Not full blown, not *gehoketh tsuris*, but still. What did I do wrong? You and your sisters became doctors. A dream.

RISHI

(STOPS) Wasn't there a wall here?

RISHI INDICATES A HALLWAY. SHE OPENS A DOOR AND HE ENTERS:

RESET TO:

INT. NEW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

(OM, RISHI, PUSHPA, CAROL, GITA, JIM, ASHA)

RISHI'S PARENTS ARE THERE, WAITING. PUSHPA, 60, IS A FORCE OF NATURE IN A 5'1" PACKAGE. OM, 62, IS JOLLY, BEAMING. PUSHPA HUGS HIM, TEARS RUNNING DOWN HER CHEEKS.

OM

There he is! Do you like your office?

RISHI

My office?

PUSHPA

My baby is home!

RISHI

Mom, don't cry. (TO OM) Why is she crying?

OM

Last night we received the news from India. Your mother's *thaae* has passed.

RISHI

Oh, no. Is that--?

PUSHPA

My grandmother's sister. It was my *thaae* who encouraged me to study medicine. Without her, none of us would be standing here today.

RISHI

I'm so sorry, Mom. How old was she?

OM

One hundred and three.

PUSHPA LETS OUT A LITTLE SOB, HUGS RISHI CLOSER.

PUSHPA

(TO OM) He is so good-hearted, right?  
Sacrificing his own happiness to help  
the Cambodians.

RISHI

It wasn't a sacrifice.

OM

I have always said Rishi is the most  
decent person I know.

PUSHPA

You don't look fresh. You must be  
tired from your journey. But we wanted  
you to see. We have taken the whole  
eighth floor.

RISHI

(UNEASY) I didn't realize it was the  
whole eighth floor.

OM

*Beta*, we have more patients than we  
know what to do with. I think it is  
all this hot yoga and Cross Fitness  
and foam rolling business. People are  
getting injured.

PUSHPA

New York Magazine rated me number one  
for ACL surgery. It was a nice picture  
of me. Did you take my email?

RISHI

Yes, I received your email. People send and receive emails. How do you not know this?

PUSHPA

Take, receive. Same idea. (TO OM) For every ten emails I gave he gave me only one back. My own son cast me aside.

RISHI

I didn't cast you aside. I called you every week. And nine out of ten emails you sent were llama memes.

PUSHPA

So? Llamas are cute.

OM

(SHAKES HEAD) I get them, too. Llama on a skateboard, llama in bed.

PUSHPA

(TO RISHI) I just missed you, that's all. I'm so glad you're back with us.

OM

In any case, our need to expand is not about the magazine--

PUSHPA

It is about the magazine!



OM

(EYE ROLL) She had it framed. (THEN)  
No, the uptick in business is about  
the New York Knicks. (TO PUSHPA) Tell  
him about the Knicks. (AS PUSHPA OPENS  
HER MOUTH) We also now have a contract  
with the New York Knicks. Word gets  
around.

PUSHPA

I only wish that *thae* could have  
lived to see this moment. She would be  
so proud to see how far we have come.  
All our dreams have come true.

PUSHPA BEAMS AT HIM, CHEEKS STILL WET WITH TEARS.

RISHI

(GUILTY) All of your dreams?

OM

Most of our dreams. You are not  
married. You should call the Bhalla's  
daughter, Indu.

RISHI

Yeah, I don't want to do that, Dad.

PUSHPA

She is a radiologist, very pretty. You  
are both of marriageable age. We know  
the family. Why not call her?

RISHI

Mostly I don't want to call her  
because I don't know who she is.

CAROL

(DUCKS IN) The Senator's wife is  
waiting in Exam Five.

PUSHPA

(ANNOYED) The Senator's wife. All she  
does is spin spin spin all the time. I  
have told her. Bad for her hips. (TO  
RISHI) Don't make plans for Sunday. We  
are having brunch at home.

PUSHPA HUGS RISHI AGAIN AND EXITS.

OM

It will help your mother's spirits  
that you are back with home with us.

RISHI'S SISTER GITA, 32, PRETTY AND TOUGH, ENTERS AND GIVES  
HIM A HUG. HER HUSBAND, JIM, PERPETUALLY TIRED, LOW KEY,  
ENTERS AND SHAKES HIS HAND.

RISHI

Hey! Gita! Jimmy! How are you guys?

GITA

You look thin. Doesn't he look thin?

OM

(CHECKS PHONE) Okay. I have a Knick  
coming at ten o'clock.

(MORE)

OM (CONT'D)

Gita and Jim and the babies are still living with us, but we have made up the basement for you. Welcome home.

OM GIVES RISHI'S EAR AN AFFECTIONATE FLICK, EXITS.

RISHI

You're still living with Mom and Dad?

JIM

Yeah, things with the renovation have gotten out of hand.

GITA

I want things to be right. I can't help it. (THEN) I'm not sure I like that shirt.

RISHI

What's wrong with my shirt?

GITA MAKES A FACE.

GITA

I'll get you better shirts. Oh! Remember we have dinner reservations tonight. We haven't been out with other human adults in seven months.

JIM

We almost couldn't get a sitter because no one in their right mind wants to watch baby triplets.

GITA

Mom's too upset to go out, poor thing.  
So she and Dad are watching them.

RISHI

And how are my nieces? They looked so  
big in those pictures you sent.

JIM

Honestly, they're sucking the life  
right out of us.

GITA

Ignore him Rishi. He loves it.

JIM

Last night I went to bed at seven-  
thirty. The sun was still out.

GITA

(HITS RISHI'S ARM) You should get  
started on your own kids. So we can  
all go through it together. I'm going  
to find you a wife.

RISHI

Please don't do that.

GITA

Look, you don't think Mom is lining  
single Indian women up for you? Let me  
handle it. Big sister will deliver.

RISHI

Gita, I do not need you to be in charge of my life.

GITA

Yes, you do. You always have. (TO JIM) I wrote the essay for his Yale application.

RISHI

She edited it.

GITA

Wrote. I got him his first fake ID, I taught him how to drive a stick, I always figured out his Halloween costumes. I'm basically indispensable.

JIM

(TO RISHI) My wife is very "helpful" to me, too.

GITA

(TO MIKE) When he was five I dressed him up in a princess costume. I have to find those pictures. (HUGS RISHI) He was adorable.

RISHI

(SAD) She said it was a wizard costume.

JIM

(CHECKS PHONE) Well, I've got surgery.

(TO RISHI) Don't let Gita rush you into settling down and having kids.

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)

I did the tuition math from pre-school through the end of college. Times three. You do not want to know.

JIM BUMPS RISHI'S FIST, EXITS. GITA CONSIDERS THE OFFICE.

GITA

So? How do you like it? I haven't decided how I want to decorate it yet. Maybe some Moroccan-y things.

RISHI

(UNEASY) I didn't expect they'd have one ready to go like this.

GITA

Take one guess who had to deal with the contractor and architect? Go ahead. Guess who got saddled with it?

RISHI

You.

GITA

Correct. Gita carries the water. Again. And Mom and Dad were all worried about it. You should have heard them go on and on. How is the view? Rishi has a small bladder, is it close to the bathroom? You're still their prince. And it's still annoying.

RISHI

Gita, I don't want--

GITA

Personally, I think the whole eighth floor idea was a little excessive, but once you build up your patient list we should be fine. (CHECKS PHONE) Okay. I have a fractured ulna waiting. See you tonight.

GITA KISSES RISHI'S CHEEK, EXITS AS HIS YOUNGER SISTER, ASHA, 27, PRETTY, ENTERS AND HUGS RISHI FROM BEHIND. RISHI TURNS TO FACE HER.

RISHI

Asha! You look great.

ASHA

I know I'm supposed to say 'so do you' but honestly you look fat.

RISHI

That's not what I'm hearing, but, as usual, thank you for your candor.

ASHA

(FAKE SERIOUS) I'm sure you've heard there's been a death in the family.

RISHI

I did hear that, yes.

ASHA

Is it bad that don't I care? Maybe there's some Indian woman gene where you over-mourn, but I didn't get it.

RISHI

You didn't get a lot of normal human emotions. I think Mom drank a fair bit when she was pregnant with you.

SHE HITS HIM ON THE ARM.

RISHI (CONT'D)

Where's Mike?

ASHA

At his Venture Capital Club meeting.

RISHI

His what?

ASHA

Did I not tell you this? My husband is part of a Club of amateur investors, doctors and dentists mostly, who are looking to fund a billion dollar start-up. Which is apparently referred to as a 'unicorn.' So Mike has taken fifty thousand of our hard-earned American dollars and is now an 'angel.' It's why we've put off having kids.

RISHI

Also, you don't want kids yet.



ASHA

True. (THEN) You'd think the great living we both make as doctors would be enough, but no. Mike wants a jet.

RISHI

What sort of start-up?

ASHA

It's an app that recommends doctors. (HOPEFUL) Does that sound like it'll make a billion dollars?

RISHI

(SHRUGS) Maybe you guys will get really super rich. You can do a lot of good when you have a lot of money.

ASHA

I'm not feeling it but I have to be supportive. That's marriage in a nutshell.

RISHI

Asha, listen. I've got a big problem. Big.

ASHA

Oh no. What. Is it bad? I haven't had any coffee yet. Did you get a Cambodian girl pregnant?

RISHI

No, no. It's just that... I'm not taking the office.

ASHA

(NOT UNDERSTANDING) Well, it was the best one available.

RISHI

That's not it. I'm not going to work here. At all.

ASHA

(LONG BEAT) Are you serious?

RISHI

I took a job somewhere else.

ASHA

Where?

RISHI

The Bronx Free Clinic.

ASHA

(LAUGHS) You are so screwed. They think you're starting here Monday.

RISHI

(SHAKES HEAD) I know. I was going to tell them but it didn't seem like a good time.

ASHA

Does Gita know?

RISHI

Of course not.

ASHA

She's like the third parent, I know.  
She buys me vitamins. And underwear.

RISHI

It just seems to mean so much to them.

ASHA

(LAUGHS) This is, like, nuclear. All  
of us working together under one roof  
is the finish line for Mom and Dad.

RISHI

(SIGHS) It is, I know.

ASHA

You need to tell Gita, though. As kind  
of a beta test on how an actual adult  
will react. (THEN) Honestly, I think  
you'd be in better shape if you'd  
gotten a Cambodian girl pregnant. You  
could just come right out with that  
one. At least there'd be a grandchild  
in it for them. (THINKS) Yeah, you are  
screwed, my friend. (KISSES HIM)

Welcome home!

ASHA EXITS LAUGHING, LEAVING RISHI ALONE AS WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE C

INT. CHIC RESTAURANT - NIGHT

(RISHI, GITA, ASHA, MIKE, MAYA, OM)

RISHI, GITA, ASHA AND MIKE (31, WANTS TO BE SLICKER THAN HE IS) IN A BOOTH IN THE CORNER. ASHA POURS CHAMPAGNE.

RISHI

Bummer Jim couldn't join.

GITA

When I got out of the shower he was fast asleep with his mouth open. I didn't want to wake him. (TO ASHA) Was he always this boring?

ASHA

(NODS) It's why you married him.

MIKE

Did Asha tell you I'm funding a start-up that recommends veterinarians?

ASHA

Honey, you said it was people doctors.

MIKE

The Club feels that space is crowded. But no one's doing vet recommends.

ASHA

There might be a reason for that, no?

MIKE

We pivoted. One idea doesn't work, you pivot. Companies do it all the time. Twitter started as a podcast directory.

ASHA

(TO GITA) I think he just made that up.

MIKE RAISES HIS GLASS AND MAKES A TOAST.

MIKE

To my brother-in-law. The most selfless guy I know. Back in the U.S. and ready to be a productive member of society.

RISHI

You know, I've actually been a productive member of society.

MIKE

I just meant you're back in the fold now. With paying patients.

ASHA

(TO RISHI) Paying patients. Huh.

RISHI

Gita, I need to tell you something.

MIKE

What about me? Tell me, too.

GITA

You're here, Mike. You're automatically included. (TO RISHI) Tell me what?

ASHA

Gita, this is huge. Hee-uge.

GITA

You already told Asha? You two have always ganged up. Always. It's because I'm smarter than both of you.

ASHA

You're not smarter than me.

GITA

I'm way smarter than you.

RISHI

Can you just listen? (STEELS HIMSELF)  
I'm... (SAYS IT FAST) not going to be joining the family practice.

GITA

What are you talking about?!

RISHI

I took a job at the Bronx Free Clinic.

GITA AND MIKE SIT IN STUNNED SILENCE FOR A BEAT.

MIKE

Wow. That is... not a good idea. (TO ASHA) Anyway, that's what I mean by a pivot.

CUT TO:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE D

INT. CHIC RESTAURANT - A MOMENT LATER  
(GITA, RISHI, ASHA, MIKE)

SCENE RESUMES.

GITA

(TO ASHA) It sounded like he said 'The  
Bronx Free Clinic.'

RISHI

That's right. I got a job at the Bronx  
Free Clinic.

GITA

No, no, no, no, my friend. Just...no.

RISHI LOOKS AT THE CEILING, PAINED.

ASHA

I told him. Mom and Dad are going to  
lose their actual minds.

MIKE

What does that place pay?

RISHI

Not much. That's not the point.

GITA

Think about your future. You're going  
to want a house one day. So your kids  
can have room to play.

RISHI

I am so far from the idea of kids.

GITA

But you're having them. It's non-negotiable.

ASHA

I don't want kids but I'm going to have a few. Mostly because I don't want to argue about it with them.

GITA

When were you going to tell them?

RISHI

I'm not telling them. You are. (BEAT)  
Gold Card.

ASHA

Oooh! (TO RISHI) Good move.

GITA

Oh hell no.

MIKE

What's a Gold Card?

RISHI

Come on. I don't think I can do it.

GITA

No. You tell them yourself.

MIKE

The reason I ask is because I don't know what a Gold Card is.

ASHA

Gita once got--



GITA

Asha, do not.

ASHA

Gita, Mike is my husband. He is a member of our family and loves us unconditionally. (TO MIKE) Right?

MIKE'S EXPRESSION: "MAYBE." GITA HIDES HER FACE IN HER HANDS.

ASHA (CONT'D)

Twelve years ago Gita got married to a Mexican for two days and our parents got wind of it and Rishi convinced them it was a 'sorority gag.'

RISHI

For which I earned a Gold Card, which I am redeeming now.

MIKE

Wait. You've been married before?!

GITA

You cannot tell my parents. (TO ASHA)  
And saying 'a Mexican' is racist.

ASHA

How is it racist? He was from Mexico.

RISHI

Guys, please focus. Gita, You owe me.

MIKE

Does Jim know?

GITA

Of course Jim knows. He doesn't care.  
It was two days, to Adrian Sanchez  
from my dorm and we were drunk and his  
parents had it annulled.

MIKE

(STANDS) I gotta pee. (THEN) One  
question: why didn't you guys call it  
'a Black Card'? Because that's the  
highest card. Higher than Gold, higher  
than Platinum. Like, you could buy a  
helicopter with a Black Card--

ASHA

Mike.

MIKE STOPS TALKING, NODS, CROSSES OUT.

GITA

(TO RISHI) You tell them. Be a man.

RISHI

(PLEADS) You be the man. Please?

GITA

I'm not being the man. (TO ASHA) And  
you really shouldn't say 'a Mexican.'

ASHA

Why can't I say 'a Mexican'?

RISHI

Sisters! This is serious.

ASHA

(TO RISHI) Sorry. (CAN'T DROP IT) But if a person comes from Mexico then by definition he's 'a Mexican' and it is correct to call him 'a Mexican'!

SHE SAYS THIS JUST AS AN HISPANIC BUSBOY APPEARS.

ASHA (CONT'D)

(CLEARS THROAT) Buenos noches.

THEY ALL SMILE UNCOMFORTABLY. THE BUSBOY MOVES ON. RISHI TURN TO GITA.

RISHI

Gita, please. You're the oldest. You've known them longer. They listen to you.

GITA

(A LITTLE ANNOYED) No, they don't. I do everything around that office and they don't care. Who do you think got the Knicks? (RAISES HER HAND) Met the assistant coach's wife in my baby group. Do I get any credit? No.

RISHI

I don't know what I have to feel bad about. That I want to live my life in service to others?

ASHA

I think it's fine as long as the definition of 'others' is Mom and Dad.

GITA

Rish, they've lived here for thirty-five years, but let's not forget that at their core they are traditional Indian people. Raised in the nation of India. And some things don't change. Like, daughters don't count as much as sons. You are their son. And you have a duty to not let them down.

ASHA

See, I've let them down. (RE: MIKE) Is a white man from rural Ohio who they thought their daughter would marry?

GITA

Don't forget the tragedy of Jim. Father to their grandchildren, yes. But my kids' last name is Smith.

ASHA

And mine is Jablowski. Think about how that sounds to them: Asha Jablowski.

GITA

Mom and Dad love Jim and Mike, but they've bent as far as they can bend.  
(MORE)

GITA (CONT'D)

Which means you need to pull your head out of your ass and work with your family and marry an Indian girl and have lots of full-blooded Indian kids with the last name Panda.

RISHI

I'm not going to live my life out of duty. No. I'll just tell them and they'll just have to accept it. They can't make me. What will Mom do?

GITA

Mom will set herself on fire.

ASHA

Okay, look. I think what you're doing is great. Inspirational, even. (THEN) I myself would rather chew tin foil than work at the Bronx Free Clinic.

RISHI

So it's not that inspirational.

ASHA

But if you've actually made up your mind to do this, you can't go at it head on. Dad's softer and, frankly, not as sharp. I think you tell him first.

GITA

She's right. He's your entry point.  
Because if Dad drops dead, you'll still  
have one living parent and have a  
pretty good idea what to expect going  
forward. Then it's a decision about  
whether you want to be an orphan.

ASHA

(TOASTS) To the death of our parents.

RISHI DRAINS HIS CHAMPAGNE AS WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. DRIVING RANGE - THE NEXT DAY

(OM, RISHI)

RISHI AND OM GETTING SET UP AT A TEE, WITH A BUCKET OF BALLS.

OM

I find golf very relaxing. I have only been playing for a short time, since you've been away. But I am finally getting good at it.

RISHI

Well, I'm happy to try.

OM

Yes. That is the key to longevity. Trying things. For instance, when I was at Dr. Chandershakur's birthday party, he pulled me aside and insisted I eat a marijuana-chocolate. Have you heard of these 'edibles?'

RISHI

(BEAT) Yes, I've heard of 'edibles.'

OM

I was afraid I would have a freak out, but he insisted it was a 'body high' and it helps him relax. He has a very stressful practice. Cardiology. People always having heart attacks, dying and so on. So I ate one.

RISHI

Wow, Dad. Really? Weed?

OM

It is not 'weed,' it is edibles. My point is I tried something and I liked it and the world did not come to an end.(SERIOUS) Just FYI, Dr.

Chandershakur has a daughter, Priya. Single. Pediatrician.

RISHI

Dad, I don't want to be set up. That's not how I want to meet women.

OM

I understand. But you must try things, remember? If you want to get married to her, I can make it happen. (WINKS) Let me know.

RISHI HANGS HIS HEAD. OM GETS INTO HIS STANCE, DEMONSTRATING.

OM (CONT'D)

It is all in the hips. Remember that.

RISHI

Dad. There's something I should have told you. And I don't know if it's the right time, but I want to--

OM TAKES A SWING AND THE BALL GOES SKITTERING AWAY. HE CURSES IN HINDI UNDER HIS BREATH, THEN FORCES A CASUAL SMILE.



OM

See? I lifted my head. You shouldn't lift your head. (PLACES ANOTHER BALL ON A TEE) Did you see Nikki Haley give the North Koreans hell at the UN? (SWINGS, CURSES IN HINDI) She's Indian, you know.

RISHI

I don't want to talk about successful Indians right now.

OM GETS ANOTHER BALL FROM THE BUCKET, SETS IT ON A TEE.

OM

Bobby Jindal, Indian. CEO of Google, Indian. CEO of Microsoft. Nokia! Adobe! Pepsi! We are doing very well.

RISHI

Dad, I've told you, there is no 'we.'

OM

Indians in America are contributing! (SWINGS, CURSES) We are, how do you say? 'All up in this house.' Okay. Try.

HE SETS A BALL ON THE TEE FOR RISHI. RELUCTANTLY, RISHI TAKES HIS STANCE. SWINGS AND HITS IT PERFECTLY.

RISHI

(SURPRISED) Hey! Was that good?

OM

(JEALOUS, ANNOYED) You made several mistakes. Stand aside.

OM SETS ANOTHER BALL ON THE TEE. HE TAKES PRACTICE SWINGS.

OM (CONT'D)

We all came here and made the U.S. our home. And we are showing that we belong. It is one thing to come and another thing to add. We must add. Your mother and I have added. And you and your sisters are adding. Making this country a better place. It makes me feel like I own a piece of America, understand? That my family adds.

RISHI

(MAYBE AN OPENING) Well, there are lots of ways to add, right? You can build a successful medical practice. Or maybe you can help your community.

OM TAKES HIS STANCE AGAIN, CONCENTRATING, BUT STILL TALKING.

OM

I tell you, when we decided to take Dr. Springer's offices your mother was so proud! So complete! She and I came here with nothing but our education.

HE SWINGS AND CURSES AS THE BALL GOES OFF WEAKLY TO THE LEFT. HE OPENS A BOTTLE OF WATER AND DRINKS, A LITTLE WINDED.

OM (CONT'D)

And we worked hard and sacrificed. We left our families behind and we built something here. For you.

(MORE)

OM (CONT'D)

One day your mother and I will be dead  
like your mother's *thaae*. They will  
place our lifeless corpses on the  
funeral pyre and cremate--

RISHI

Yes, I understand.

OM

And it feels good knowing what we have  
built will be in the capable hands of  
our son. It gives us peace.

OM TAKES ANOTHER BALL FROM THE BUCKET AND SETS IT ON A TEE.  
HE TAKES HIS STANCE, READY TO HIT IT. FOCUSED.

OM (CONT'D)

As you get older, peace becomes very  
important.

HE SWINGS, SHANKS IT, ISSUES LOUD, EXTENDED CURSES IN HINDI  
AS WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. PANDA HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

(PUSHPA, GITA, RISHI, OM, ASHA, MIKE, MRS. DR. KATAKIA, MR. DR. KATAKIA, MINA, MAYA, NGOZI, PATIENT)

RISHI SITS WITH ASHA, MIKE, GITA AND OM, EATING. PUSHPA STANDS AT THE STOVE, COOKING. OM HAS THE CROSSWORD OUT. EVERYONE IS TALKING, EATING. PUSHPA PUTS A HOT ROTI SHE JUST MADE ONTO RISHI'S PLATE.

PUSHPA

My *thaae* used to make me roti like  
this. She taught my mother, my mother  
taught me and I will teach your wife.

HEADS BACK TOWARD THE FRIDGE. GITA, SEATED NEXT TO RISHI,  
HITS HIM UNDER THE TABLE.

GITA

(SOTTO, TO RISHI) You didn't tell Dad,  
did you?

RISHI

(SOTTO, TO GITA) I couldn't find the  
right moment.

PUSHPA

(TEARING UP) Roti connects us all,  
down through time.

GITA

(SOTTO, TO RISHI) There is no right  
moment anymore. We're way past that.

OM LOOKS UP FROM HIS CROSSWORD, ASKS ASHA:

OM

Star of 'Training Day.' Blank  
Washington. Six letters. George?

ASHA

No, Dad. It's not George.

GITA

(SOTTO) This is irresponsible.

RISHI

(SOTTO) You know what's irresponsible?  
Welching on a Gold Card! It's sacred.  
Society falls apart without structure.

ASHA

George Washington wasn't an actor.

OM

He was first president, I know that.

GITA

(SOTTO, TO RISHI) Just because you're  
the baby of the family doesn't mean  
you can be an actual baby. And you, my  
friend, are being an actual baby.

RISHI

(SOTTO) Fine. I'll tell them.

GITA

(SOTTO) Right now. Just say it. Rip  
off the bandaid. We all know CPR.  
Whatever happens, we can revive them.

RISHI TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND STANDS UP TO SPEAK.

RISHI

Guys, I have something to say.

OM

I just know there is a big film star  
named George something. It fits.

MIKE

You mean George Clooney?

OM

No. The other one. From Oceans Eleven.

ASHA

Dad, that's George Clooney.

OM

(LONG PAUSE) I don't think so.

RISHI

Actually, you know what? The correct  
answer is George Washington. The star  
of 'Training Day' was George  
Washington.

OM FILLS IN THE CLUE, FROWNS.

RISHI (CONT'D)

Can everyone just listen to me?

ALL EYES TURN TO RISHI. GITA GIVES HIM A MEANINGFUL LOOK.

RISHI (CONT'D)

I realize there's a lot going on and  
that Mom lost a dear relative, but--

THE DOORBELLS RINGS.

RISHI (CONT'D)

--maybe it can wait.

PUSHPA EXITS TO ANSWER IT, CALLS OUT TO OM AS SHE'S WALKING.

PUSHPA

Om. They are here. Come.

RISHI

Who is here?

OM

(MUTTERS) "Om come." "Om sit." "Om stay." Next will be "Om play dead."

HE EXITS. ASHA TURNS TO GITA.

ASHA

I think he needs help.

GITA

Well, it's not going to be from me.

RISHI

Gita's right. I have to do it. I just have to say it.

GITA

Though maybe wait. Jim's just putting the girls down for their nap and Mom's screams will wake them up.

RISHI

No one's going to scream.

ASHA

I think it's going to be more of a moaning. Like: (MOANS). And then:

ASHA MOVES HER HAND, LIKE A FALLING TREE.

PUSHPA AND OM RETURN WITH THREE (INDIAN) GUESTS. A MAN AND WOMAN, 60'S, AND A YOUNGER WOMAN, 20'S.

RISHI

(SOTTO, TO GITA) Dear god. Here we go.

GITA

(SOTTO) I told you to let me handle  
the wife search. But no.

PUSHPA

I believe you've all met Dr Katakia.  
And his wife, also Dr. Katakia. At Dr.  
Reddy's Diwali party? Remember?

ASHA, MIKE AND GITA STAND, PRETENDING TO REMEMBER, NODDING  
AND SMILING. NOW RISHI STANDS, TOO.

PUSHPA (CONT'D)

(FOR RISHI'S BENEFIT) And their  
daughter Mina. Mina, this is Rishi.

MINA SMILES UNCOMFORTABLY. PUSHPA ARRANGES THE SEATING AROUND  
THE TABLE. SHE PULLS OUT A CHAIR NEXT TO RISHI.

PUSHPA (CONT'D)

Mina, you sit here.

RISHI AND MINA SMILE AWKWARDLY AT EACH OTHER AND EVERYONE  
TAKES THEIR SEATS. OM DISHES OUT FOOD FOR THEM.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

Very sad to hear about your *thae*.

PUSHPA

Thank you. She was a saint.

A LONG BEAT.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

Mina has just completed her residency  
in pulmonary medicine. Right, Mina?



MINA

(AWKWARD) Right.

A BEAT.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

Albert Einstein Medical Center.

A BEAT. RISHI NODS POLITELY.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

She has been asked to join the staff  
at Mt. Sinai.

RISHI NODS. SHE NODS. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, NODDING.

PUSHPA

Rishi has just come home from  
Cambodia. For one year he was away.  
Doctors Without Borders.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

Very admirable.

A BEAT.

OM

He is a very good boy. Good heart.

PUSHPA

And now that he is back from doing his  
good deeds, he is joining our family  
orthopedics practice.

A LONG BEAT. ASHA STEPS IN FOR THE ASSIST.

ASHA

(TO RISHI) How do you like your new  
office?

RISHI

I like it fine. Thank you.

ASHA

Well, it'll be nice to settle in  
tomorrow. (BEAT) At nine AM. (BEAT)  
When you start work. (LONG BEAT)  
Unless you have something else  
scheduled at--

RISHI

(STANDS) Actually, I have something to  
tell you. All of you. (TO THE  
KATAKIAS) I'd like to apologize in  
advance for what you'll experience in  
the next few minutes. (TO HIS PARENTS)  
Look, I don't know any other way to  
say it, but I'm... not going to join  
the family practice. I've taken a job  
at the Bronx Free Clinic.

THE KATAKIA PARENTS EXCHANGE WORRIED LOOKS.

PUSHPA

(TO MIKE) What is he saying? It  
sounded like he said 'Bronx.'

RISHI

I did say 'the Bronx.' The Bronx Free  
Clinic (SWALLOWS) I start tomorrow.

PUSHPA

(TO OM) Is he serious? (TO RISHI) You cannot be serious. Is this a gag?

RISHI

A 'gag'? No.

ANOTHER LONG BEAT.

PUSHPA

You are ruining your life! (TO OM) He is ruining his life! Tell him!

OM

You are ruining your life!

PUSHPA

Your children will starve! They will have to eat garbage!

JIM ENTERS, TAKES IN THE SITUATION FOR A BEAT, TURNS AROUND.

RISHI

I don't want to spend my life putting casts on Knicks.

PUSHPA

Putting casts on Knicks paid for this house! Paid for your tuition!

OM

Actually, we have only just started putting casts on Knicks. (OFF PUSHPA'S GLARE) But your mother's point has been made.

PUSHPA

Do you think a quality girl like Mina,  
will marry a man who works in a  
clinic?

OM

*Beta*, now is the time to start  
building your life. A good job, a  
wife, children.

OM TIPS HIS HEAD MEANINGFULLY AT MINA, WHO SMILES QUEASILY.

RISHI

I never said anything about finding me  
a wife. (TO MINA) I'm really sorry.  
I'm not into the whole arranged  
marriage thing.

MINA

(MORTIFIED) It's totally fine.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

(STANDS) Well, that's that.

PUSHPA

No! Please. Sit. Eat.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

The boy is not interested. What is  
there to sit? (TO MINA) Mina, come.

OM

Please. You have come all this way.  
Let us all finish our brunch.

AFTER A BEAT, THE KATAKIAS RELUCTANTLY SIT BACK DOWN.

OM (CONT'D)

The boy just has jet lag.

RISHI

It's not jet lag.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

(TO MINA) Don't worry, *beta*. There are many nice boys we can match you with.

MINA

(THROUGH GRITTED TEETH) It's fine.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

Good boys. From good families.

ASHA

(OFFENDED) Excuse me. Are you implying this is not a good family?

MR. DR. KATAKIA

He was sold as a marriageable boy--

RISHI

I am not something to be sold.

MINA

(BLURTS) I have a boyfriend!

THE KATAKIA PARENTS ARE STUNNED. GITA SHAKES HER HEAD.

GITA

(RE: MINA) She doesn't sound all that marriageable, either.

MRS. DR. KATAKIA

(TO MINA) Who is he? You met him at the hospital? Another resident?

MINA

No. He works in a bookstore. And I love him. His name is Nathan.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

(ALARMED) Nathan?!

PUSHPA

(TO RISHI) Have you no respect?

RISHI

Of course I do. I know how much you've done for me. And I'm grateful for it.

PUSHPA

I am glad my *thae* is not alive to hear about this.

RISHI

Mom, I understand that all you and Dad want is for me to be able to stand on your shoulders. So you have every reason to expect I'd come back and work with you. But--

OM

We took the whole eighth floor!

RISHI

I'm aware. Look, before I went away, I didn't know why I became a doctor. I just did. Family tradition, maybe. I'm a Panda. Pandas become doctors.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

Indians become doctors, true.

RISHI

But when I was in Cambodia, I realized I became a doctor to help people. And not just people with money. People that aren't as lucky as I am, who didn't get the chances I've gotten, and so maybe aren't as well off. Working at the Clinic is how I can help them.

PUSHPA AND OM SEEM TO SOFTEN. THERE IS A MOMENTARY SILENCE.

MR. DR. KATAKIA

(TO HIS WIFE, WORRIED) Nathan does not sound like an Indian boy's name.

MINA

He's not Indian, he's from Mexico.

GITA

(TO ASHA) See? That's the way you should say it. "From Mexico."

THE ARGUMENT RESUMES AS WE...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

INT. BRONX FREE CLINIC, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

(RISHI, NGOZI, MAYA, PUSHPA, PATIENT)

RISHI APPROACHES NGOZI AT THE APPOINTMENT DESK AND FILLS OUT SOMETHING ON HIS CLIPBOARD. NEXT TO HIM, A BUCKET CATCHES A LEAK FROM THE CEILING. HE LOOKS AT THE BUCKET, THEN NGOZI.

RISHI

Are we getting a roofer in soon?

NGOZI

Roof repairs are not in the budget.

Buckets are in the budget.

MAYA CROSSES IN WITH PUSHPA AND SAVITA, AN ATTRACTIVE INDIAN WOMAN, LATE 20'S, AND SAVITA'S MOTHER.

MAYA

Dr. Panda, you have visitors.

RISHI

(SURPRISED, NOT PLEASANTLY) Mom.

You're here. Why are you here?

PUSHPA LOOKS AT THE DRIPPING CEILING, THEN AT MAYA, THEN BACK TO RISHI. UNCOMFORTABLE, MAYA BACKS AWAY AND CROSSES OUT.

PUSHPA

'Why are you here' is not a polite way to greet your mother.(THEN) This is my friend Mrs. Reddy and her daughter Savita. (BEAT) Savita has just finished her residency at Johns Hopkins.

RISHI

Ah. (BEAT) Congratulations.



PUSHPA

We are going to have lunch and thought perhaps you would like to join.

A LONG UNCOMFORTABLE BEAT.

RISHI

(TO SAVITA) I'm sorry, but I have patients waiting. (TO PUSHPA) Maybe another time?

SHE LOOKS RISHI STRAIGHT IN THE EYE.

PUSHPA

Yes. (SMILES TIGHTLY) Another time. Definitely.

INT. BRONX FREE CLINIC, EXAM ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER  
(RISHI, PATIENT)

RISHI ENTERS TO FIND THE PATIENT ON AN EXAM TABLE.

RISHI

Okay. Sorry about the wait. Busy day.

PATIENT

Are you Indian?

RISHI

Yes. Yes, I am.

PATIENT

A lot of Indians are doctors, huh?

RISHI

(NODS) Yep.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW

\*