

UNTITLED MINDY KALING/

LANG FISHER PROJECT

"Pilot"

#101

Written by

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COLD OPENINT. SUBURBAN HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

We start on a super tight shot of the face of a teen girl, DEVI (pronounced "Davey"). Her nose is scrunched up and she's grimacing.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This...is Devi Venkatesan.

We pop out wider to see that she is looking into the mirror and attempting to do some sort of complicated braid in her hair, while watching a video from some YouTube celebrity called the "Beauty Cutie". She is failing at it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She's a fifteen-year-old, Indian American girl from Sherman Oaks, California and it's her first day of sophomore year. And I...am legendary tennis superstar, John McEnroe.

FOOTAGE of John McEnroe from the 70's and 80's over noodley guitar music. There are action shots, he's holding Wimbledon trophies over his head, sexy ad campaign, etc.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Wow, I look great there.

Back to Devi who shuts her computer and gives up on the braid. She unclips the mall-bought extensions that she put in her hair and starts to brush her much shorter hair out.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Now, you may be asking yourself, why is sports icon John McEnroe narrating the story of an Indian American teenage girl? But just go with it. It'll make sense later, I promise. Now back to Devi.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - AUGUST 2001

We see a happy Indian man, MOHAN VENKATESAN, standing by a moving truck in an LA Lakers sweatshirt and high-water khakis. His wife, NALINI, stands next to him, looking fearful.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Her story starts back in 2001 when her parents Mohan and Nalini came to Los Angeles from Chennai, India, looking for a better life.

(MORE)

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JOHN MCENROE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Although, Nalini's only knowledge of America came from reruns of "Homicide: Life on the Street," so she was less enthused than Mohan.

A PAPER BOY throws a newspaper by them, and Nalini screams.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HOME - LIVING ROOM - YEARS LATER (2007)

Mohan watching tennis excitedly on the TV with a 4-year-old Devi cross-legged on the floor, watching him, smiling.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
 Devi was the apple of her parents' eyes, but was also the subject of their almost constant scrutiny.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HOME - YEARS LATER (2013)

Nalini and Mohan, with packed suitcases, pray in front of her household Hindu shrine. A 10-year-old Devi is impatient.

DEVI
 Do we have to pray every time we get on a plane?

NALINI
 If we crash before we get to India, whose fault will that be? Yours. Hundreds dead because of you.

DEVI
 Why do we even have to go to India?

NALINI	MOHAN
<u>Why do we even have to go to India?!</u>	Devi, just pray, please.

EXT. CHARITY BBQ - 2017 - DAY

Mohan and Nalini approach the buffet. A YOUNG TEEN starts to put ribs on their plates of corn, beans, and slaw. Nalini and Mohan shake their heads to refuse, but then turn around to see fourteen-year-old Devi sitting alone eating a huge rib with rib sauce all around her mouth. They give her reproachful looks.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
 They had raised an American teenager--

Devi looks over, still with a ring of BBQ sauce on her mouth, and longingly watches a couple of WHITE AMERICAN TEENS flirt with each other.

(CONTINUED)

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JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
--who wanted nothing more than to have a
normal American teenage life.

The teenagers see her looking at them and are creeped out.
They walk away.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
Sadly, that was not going to happen,
because shortly after the Sherman Oaks
High School charity BBQ -- I don't know a
better way to say this -- shit went
bonkers.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH AUDITORIUM - EVENING - FEW WEEKS LATER

Devi is playing the harp on stage with her freshman
orchestra. Mohan and Nalini watch from the audience.

NALINI
(worried)
She didn't practice enough.

MOHAN
She will be perfect.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
First, during her freshman orchestra's
rendition of Debussy's *Prelude to the
Afternoon of a Faun*, Mohan had a heart
attack.

From the stage, Devi hears a commotion in the audience and
looks out. Some people stop playing. Devi looks concerned.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
He died.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH SCHOOL POOL - DAY

GIRLS line up, listless, to take their mandatory swim test.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
And then six weeks after her father's
death, while taking her mandatory swim
test, Devi's legs stopped working.

Devi dives into the pool and sinks to the bottom. Her arms
thrash, but her legs don't move. A high school LIFEGUARD
dives in to save her. People scream.

INT. ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON'S OFFICE - DAY

An ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON sits with Devi, examining x-rays.

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CONTINUED:

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

There was no medical reason why her legs were not working. But, they were definitely not working.

The doctor shakes his head at Nalini. Devi sits sadly.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

So Devi was forced to embrace her new legless life.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Devi sits in a wheelchair in front of an assembly. PRINCIPAL GRUBBS gestures to an embarrassed Devi as everyone applauds.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Principal Grubbs pushes her, when two girls, FABIOLA (tall, African American, dressed like a Helpful Honda guy) and ELEANOR (Korean, dressed like a middle-aged drama teacher), offer to take over for the Principal. Devi looks relieved.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Her two best friends, Fabiola and Eleanor, took the news in stride. Well, maybe not in stride, but definitely in character.

FABIOLA

One day, you will walk again. If not...I will build you legs.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Though the daughter of the 1994 Sherman Oaks High School homecoming king and queen--

We whip to the right to see a picture of Fabiola's very attractive parents in the school's trophy case.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

--Fabiola felt more at home in the company of the less glamorous robotics team.

INT. ROBOTICS LAB - SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - FLASHBACK

A GROUP OF NERDY BOYS watch Fabiola work on a small robot. She holds two wires together. The robot comes alive.

ROBOT

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FABIOLA

And hello to you, Gears Brosnan.

The boys burst into applause.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS FROM BEFORE

Devi's other friend Eleanor is now weeping inconsolably.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

And Eleanor? Well, she was a bit dramatic.

Eleanor throws herself on Devi's body.

ELEANOR

This is worse than if it were happening to me. In protest, maybe I won't use my legs, either.

Eleanor sits on the ground. Fabiola and Devi glance at each other and roll their eyes. Eleanor is sitting in front of a classroom door and it opens, she is forced to get back up.

INT. ELEANOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A distraught Eleanor's FATHER and her glamorous MOTHER sit across from 8-year-old Eleanor.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

The daughter of a dentist and an aspiring regional theater actress, Eleanor worshipped her mother and hoped to become the next Lea Michele.

ELEANOR'S MOTHER

Honey, you know I love you. But I love being an actress just a little bit more.

Eleanor looks shocked.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Her mom left them to do a regional tour of "South Pacific" and is still on it to this day.

EXT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - MORNING - CONTINUOUS FROM BEFORE

Devi, Eleanor, and Fabiola hang by their favorite tree.

FABIOLA

So, if they couldn't find anything wrong with your spine, does that mean that your brain broke?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

Kind of.

ELEANOR

Just like Blanche Dubois!

(Southern drawl)

"I've always depended on the kindness of strangers."

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Because they are an ethnically diverse group of academically focused...umm...I can't think of a better word for dorks, the rest of the school called them the gently racist nickname, "the UN".

INT. AP CHEM - MORNING - NEXT DAY

Devi, in her wheelchair, Fabiola, and Eleanor all head in and sit at a table adjacent to a smirking BEN GROSS.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

It was widely known to have been created by Devi's nemesis, Ben Gross.

BEN

Did you know that when you can't use your legs for no medical reason, it's called *psychosomatic*. Which my dad says means fake.

Devi glares daggers at him.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Ben Gross' father, Howard, whom he idolized, was a top entertainment attorney in Beverly Hills, which allowed Ben Gross to dine out for years on the fact that Blake Griffin was at his bar mitzvah.

INT. CHILDREN'S MUSEUM - LA - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ben gets his caricature drawn with Blake Griffin (whose face we don't see, but we see his drawing). He is psyched.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

And he and Devi have been vying for the #1 spot in the class every year since the first grade.

We see quick pops from first grade to high school at different events: science fair, mathletes, debate club, etc, where they alternate holding the first place trophy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

You might call them the McEnroe and Jimmy Connors of Sherman High School. Not to make this about me.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY - CONTINUOUS FROM BEFORE

Devi eats lunch with Fabiola and Eleanor.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

But the only thing Devi was more intense about than academics was... boys.

Devi looks up, and we follow her gaze to PAXTON HALL. Tall, handsome, athletic, whiter-than-white-bread, Paxton Hall.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Paxton Hall. The undeniably hottest guy at Sherman Oaks High School. I know it's a little weird for me to be saying that, but come on. Look at the kid's jawline.

Devi puts down her lunch and stares as he walks by. He looks her way but does not see her.

EXT. GELSON'S SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY - LATER

Nalini and Devi, in her wheelchair, leave the supermarket. Nalini starts to put the groceries in the car.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

And it turns out, that kid's hot face can actually work miracles.

Out of the corner of her eye, Devi sees Paxton and some of his FRIENDS smoking pot by a coin-operated horse. Devi strains to see Paxton better but can't because parked cars are blocking her view. Paxton walks out of her line of vision and a frustrated Devi STANDS UP TO SEE HIM BETTER. Nalini looks over and screams. The boys (including Paxton) hear screaming, and thinking they are in trouble, bolt. Devi stands, sighing disappointed. Nalini embraces her and cries.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Just like that, her paralysis was over.

INT. DEVI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Devi is where we left her, staring nervously into the mirror.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

So, today is Devi's second chance. Her second chance to have a normal American adolescence.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Can she walk through the front door of her high school with enough confidence that no one will remember her as "the paralyzed Indian girl whose dad dropped dead at a school function"? It's not likely, those things are pretty unforgettable. But with working legs comes a whole host of new possibilities. So, go get 'em Devi.

Devi gives herself a little nod in the mirror.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONEINT. NALINI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Devi has on her backpack. She is praying to the household Hindu shrine, where her father's picture now sits with several small statues of Hindu gods and a stack of her textbooks.

DEVI

Please let this year be different. Let people pay attention to me because of my dope-ass outfits and not my broke-ass legs. And let them notice how hilarious I am when I say things like that. Oh, and let me french a boy this year.

NALINI (O.S.)

Shame on you!

Devi turns her head to find her mother standing in the doorway holding a fresh garland of flowers.

DEVI

What?

NALINI

(shaking head)

What an inappropriate thing to say into your deceased father's eyes.

DEVI

I also asked for good grades!

NALINI

Yes, I'm sure you did. Now, grab your textbooks, we need to go.

She hangs the garland on Mohan's picture. Devi rolls her eyes and reaches for her textbooks. She accidentally knocks her geometry one off the shrine, but catches it before it hits the ground. Nalini gasps.

NALINI (CONT'D)

Devi! Textbooks do not go on the ground! Especially not after they've been blessed.

DEVI

It's fine. I caught it.

Devi puts her textbooks in her backpack. Nalini walks toward the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NALINI

Asking your father for frenching, and starting the new school year with textbooks on the floor--

DEVI

I. Caught. It!

Devi throws her backpack on and exits.

EXT. DEVI'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Nalini and Devi exit the house and walk down the ramp.

NALINI

Okay, so after school today you will go see your--
(with meaning)
--"tutor".

DEVI

Mom, we can call it "therapy" when we're at home.

NALINI

No, we can't. Mrs. Shah reads lips.

Both Devi and Nalini look across the street, and an ancient woman, MRS. SHAH, is looking out her window judgmentally at them. Nalini covers her mouth with her hand.

NALINI (CONT'D)

I don't want her telling the whole neighborhood that you have to go see a psychologist.

DEVI

I don't even think I really need to see a psychologist.

NALINI

Oh yeah? Tell that to your legs.

DEVI

My legs are fine. They're back to normal.

NALINI

It doesn't matter.

DEVI

But Dr. Ryan is such a cheesy loser.
(doing mean impression)
"Devi, how are you feeling? Are you feeling sad about your dad?"

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI (CONT'D)

Talk about your feelings. How do you feel about your feelings?"

NALINI

Devi, though your disrespectful impression of Dr. Ryan is spot on, you have to go. You were paralyzed for three months with no explanation. That was very scary for me, and I never want it to happen again.

Devi nods, "Fair enough." They walk to their car.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

In this particular Indian family, Caucasian people talking about emotions were held in very low regard. The only thing more frowned upon was the way Caucasian people liked to do extreme sports.

An SUV pulls up in the neighboring driveway. A handsome, 50-year-old man, ANDY, gets out. He wears a wetsuit and waves. Nalini waves back. He pulls out a surfboard and Nalini frowns. Just then, KAMALA (25, beautiful, but clearly fresh off the boat) pops out of the house.

KAMALA

Devi! I made you a lunch.

She approaches them with a brown lunch bag.

DEVI

Why? I eat in the cafeteria.

NALINI

That's very rude, Devi. Thank your cousin for making you a nice lunch.

KAMALA

I've seen you eating a lot of that Cinnamon Crunchy Toast--

DEVI

Uh, it's Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Kamala. It says so right on the box.

KAMALA

Oh, yes, I am sorry. Because you like it so much, I have made cookies with it and I have put them in the bag.

Devi tries to hide her salivation at this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEVI

Fine. I'll try your lunch, Kamala. But stop being so thirsty.

KAMALA

I am thirsty. Thank you for the suggestion. I will have a glass of water now. Have a wonderful first day of school.

Devi rolls her eyes hard.

INT. CAR - LITTLE LATER

Devi sits with Nalini.

DEVI

How long is Kamala going to stay with us?

NALINI

As long as it takes for her to finish her PhD. Why? Do you not like her? I think it's nice to have a third person in the house again.

DEVI

She's just so...Indian. Like the other day, she said she was going to "open" the TV instead of turn on the TV. It's like maybe she should get a PhD in how to talk normal.

NALINI

Devi, she is family and she is bettering her life. You could learn from her.

(under her breath)

I bet she doesn't let her textbooks fall to the floor.

DEVI

Oh my god. It never touched the ground, Mom.

EXT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - LITTLE LATER

Devi exits the car and walks into her school. Kids are trying not to look, but everyone's eyes keep dropping to catch a glimpse of her legs. She looks nervous. Just then, Ben Gross walks by her.

BEN

Nice to see you upright, *David!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

Nice to see you're still gross, Gross!

She sees Fabiola and Eleanor sitting by their tree and immediately affects a deeply confident air.

DEVI (CONT'D)

What's up, bitches!

Fabiola and Eleanor both give her a look.

DEVI (CONT'D)

What? It's a really cool thing to say and I'm trying it out.

(then, off their looks)

Fine, I won't call you bitches.

(then)

Guys, this year is gonna be the best. You want to know why?

ELEANOR

Because you're walking again?

DEVI

What? No.

FABIOLA

Yeah, how do you feel not being in a wheelchair?

DEVI

(defensive)

I feel normal. Forget about the wheelchair. Like no one even remembers that. It's in the garage under a tarp.

Eleanor looks at Fabiola and then gingerly asks:

ELEANOR

Okay. Then why is this year gonna be awesome?

DEVI

Thank you for asking, Eleanor. Because I've made a plan for us to be more successful...socially.

Devi pulls out a notebook from her backpack.

DEVI (CONT'D)

Last year was not great for us. I admit that my paralysis was not helpful, but let's be honest, you two also could have raised your game.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEVI (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to be a woman who doesn't support other women, but Fabiola, you look like an employee from Best Buy today.

Fabiola is in a polo with the school logo on it and khakis.

FABIOLA

The robotics team has a meet. This is my uniform. They're designed for utility, not glamour.

DEVI

But that begs a different question. Do you need to be on the robotics team? If you love competition so much, why not do something like basketball. Your height and...

(catching herself)

...other stuff might make you good at it.

Fabiola gives her a look.

FABIOLA

You know I'm bad at sports because of my scoliosis.

DEVI

I'm just saying a jock in our group could be very useful to us, but if you want to continue building robots, fine, drag us into sci-fi hell with you.

FABIOLA

I'm gonna be so rich one day, and you're gonna regret throwing so much shade at robotics.

DEVI

(turning on a dime)

Oh my god, I can't wait for you to be rich. Would you have a robot butler?

FABIOLA

(also excited)

Nuh-doy, that's the first thing I would build.

DEVI

Awesome.

(getting back on track)

But in the meantime, maybe you guys could get cooler uniforms?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FABIOLA
I'll look into it.

DEVI
Thank you so much. And Eleanor, is it possible for you to just chill out on your spontaneous show tune singing?

ELEANOR
(singing)
Unliiiiiiiikely!

Devi looks down at her page which has three columns: Devi, Fabiola, and Eleanor. Under her name, the word "walking" is checked. She puts x's by "basketball" under Fabiola's name and "no more singing" under Eleanor's name.

DEVI
Well, you guys might be fine being called the UN for another year. But I'm not. So, if you're not going to change your extracurriculars or personalities, we'll have to go to Plan B, which is boyfriends.

Fabiola chokes a little on her soda.

FABIOLA
What?

DEVI
Follow me, please.

EXT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - COURTYARD - LITTLE LATER

Devi, Fabiola, and Eleanor look out to the hoards of teens congregating before classes.

DEVI
I would like to submit to the panel, Rachel Micklenburg.

They look across the courtyard at a sort of messy girl, RACHEL, sitting alone on the ground eating a Twizzler.

DEVI (CONT'D)
Where do you think she is in the social hierarchy in relation to us?

ELEANOR
Definitely below us, due to her pungent BO.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

You are incorrect, she outranks us. And the reason is trudging towards her at ten o'clock.

All three girls turn their heads to the left. A schlubby nerd with patchy facial hair, CLINT, is walking towards Rachel.

DEVI (CONT'D)

She has a boyfriend. Clint Ohanian. And I think they have had sex.

Rachel and Clint begin to furiously make out.

DEVI (CONT'D)

Yeah, they've definitely had sex.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The girls stand outside the doorway of their first period class. The bell rings and students file in.

DEVI

So, I have decided we all need boyfriends. I have chosen attainable, yet status-enhancing people for each of us and they are all in our first period class. Fabiola, I have paired you up with Alex Gomez.

ALEX, short but cute, pals around with two other guys.

FABIOLA

I can't go out with Alex Gomez. I've never spoken to him, and he's like a foot shorter than me.

DEVI

Yeah, but he has a hot face. You'll be like Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise.

FABIOLA

They didn't work out.

DEVI

No, but their coupledom helped launch them each to fame. And Eleanor, you're gonna date Boris Koslov.

BORIS sits in the back of the room looking a little drunk.

ELEANOR

The Russian exchange student who brings vodka in his lunch?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

Yeah, he's international and sexy. You could write a play about it.

Eleanor thinks this over and then nods.

ELEANOR

Hm, intriguing.

FABIOLA

Who are you going with?

DEVI

Jonah Sharpe.

JONAH is dressed very dapperly.

ELEANOR

Jonah Sharpe is gay.

DEVI

But he's not out yet and he's pretty popular. I'm happy to be his beard for a little while, until I can use him as a springboard to a better boyfriend.

FABIOLA

You know you sound like a sociopath, right?

DEVI

Sociopaths get shit done, Fab. Now go sit next to your marks and flirt like your lives depend on it. Sophomore year is gonna rule!

Devi marches into the classroom. Fabiola turns to Eleanor.

FABIOLA

I think I have to tell her.

ELEANOR

No way. Her mind is very fragile right now. What if she freaks out and is paralyzed again?

Fabiola nods and they enter.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The girls sit next to their respective marks.

DEVI

Hey Jonah. Cute sweater.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONAH

Thank you. I made it myself.

DEVI

Oh my god, you're so talented.

Ben Gross clocks Devi flirting with Jonah. Just then, in walks the teacher, MR. SHAPIRO, 30-something, liberal guy who's wearing a scarf with a t-shirt.

MR. SHAPIRO

Good afternoon, you young brilliant minds. Welcome to "Facing History and Ourselves". This is not going to be your typical history class. You guys will have the chance to educate me as much as I get to educate you.

He leans on a student's desk.

MR. SHAPIRO (CONT'D)

We're gonna be talking about difficult subjects like...

(looking at Fabiola)

...slavery and...

(looking at Ben)

...the Holocaust. Think of this as a ride on a tour bus through the darkest parts of our past--

Just then, Paxton enters. Devi's jaw drops as Paxton takes the seat right in front of her.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Paxton Hall had gotten even hotter over the summer and lucky for Devi, his extreme badness at school meant that he was forced to retake this class which he failed last year.

DEVI

Fuuuuck.

The class turns to look at her. She is embarrassed. Mr. Shapiro inhales deeply. Devi braces to get into trouble.

MR. SHAPIRO

Fuck is right, Devi. Everyone should feel free to swear in this class, because sometimes you need brutal language to describe humanity's most horrific atrocities. Fuck is right.

Devi smiles weakly.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

The bell rings and students empty out into the hallway. Paxton emerges and immediately stops to tie his shoe. Devi follows him out and opens her mouth to talk to him, but nothing comes out. Just then, Mr. Shapiro pokes his head out.

MR. SHAPIRO

Ben? Devi? Can you come back in here please?

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Devi and Ben walk back into the classroom.

MR. SHAPIRO

I am honored to have you two wild thinkers in my class, but in the past, the competition between the two of you has not been, useful to the learning environment of others.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - FLASHBACK

Devi is in her wheelchair, she looks at Ben and holds up a test that has a 98 on it. Ben gives her a smirk and holds up his test that has a 99 on it. Devi's eyes go wide.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Now one thing I have not mentioned is that Devi has what you might consider a short fuse.

Devi lets out a little snarl and smashes a beaker on the ground making everyone scream.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Yeah, she's a hothead.

QUICK FLASHES of Devi overreacting when Ben has done better than she. Her slamming a book on her desk, her kicking a locker, her knocking her harp over.

INT. CLASSROOM - BACK TO SCENE

MR. SHAPIRO

Do you think you can set aside your rivalry for the good of the class?

BEN

Yes.

DEVI

If he can, I can do it even more.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Devi starts to walk away from him, but Ben catches up.

BEN

Man, David, watching you flirt with Jonah was just about the saddest thing I've ever seen, and I saw my dad run over our cat. You know he's gay, right?

DEVI

Your dad? No, I didn't. That's so interesting.

BEN

I know what you're up to. Trying to find some suckers to be the boyfriends of the UN. Good luck.

DEVI

You know what? You shouldn't call us the UN. It's racist and offensive. My friends and I are more than just the color of our-

-

BEN

What? Oh, like the United Nations? No, no one calls you the UN because of that. We call you the UN because you're unfuckable nerds.

Devi's mouth drops. A cute girl waves at Ben. He goes to her.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. DR. RYAN'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Devi sits in silence across from DR. RYAN (38).

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

This is Dr. Theodore Ryan. Devi's pediatric therapist and a man who currently may have the hardest job in the country.

DR. RYAN

You know, it's fine to be contemplative. I find silence a rather beautiful thing. It can be very meditative--

DEVI

It's not silence if you're talking!

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

See, hothead. Told ya.

DR. RYAN

Devi, we don't have to talk about your dad. We can talk about anything. You're clearly upset.

Devi looks up at him and starts to talk.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Devi used this invitation to rant about Ben Gross's true meaning of the UN. She had been reeling from it all day and had spent the whole afternoon confirming that what he'd said was true.

INT. SHERMAN OAKS HIGH - FLASHBACK

B-ROLL of Devi approaching a group of girls at their lockers. They nod, feeling bad for her.

B-ROLL of Devi approaching the track team. One GIRL does a high jump and Devi leans over her on the mat. The girl nods uncomfortable.

B-ROLL of Devi entering a LATIN CLUB meeting. The kids are in togas. Devi talks to one kid. He nods guiltily. Devi is devastated.

INT. DR. RYAN'S OFFICE - BACK TO SCENE

Devi is talking passionately.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

It was corroborated by persons from three entirely different social groups: 2nd tier popular girls, Track & Field, and Latin Club. I'm an unfuckable nerd.

DR. RYAN

Sometimes people can say things, and they don't realize how much it can hurt someone.

DEVI

Yeah, no shit, Sherlock.

DR. RYAN

Like that, for instance. Now, when you heard this news, did you feel a numbing sensation in your legs or any other appendage?

DEVI

No, my paralysis is so last year!

DR. RYAN

It was four months ago, but okay--

DEVI

Sometimes weird shit just happens, didn't you ever watch the *X-Files*? Get it through your head: not everything is about my paralysis.

DR. RYAN

What did we say about saying things like, "Get it through your head."

DEVI

You said not to say, "Get it through your thick skull!"

(off his stern look)

I'm sorry. I'm just very upset.

DR. RYAN

You've been having a hard time communicating with me. I'm going to give you a grief journal. You can put your thoughts in here. No one can censor you, it's completely, 100% private.

He produces a composition notebook and hands it to Devi. She takes it, dubious.

INT. SIZZLER RESTAURANT - LATER

Nalini, Kamala, and Devi are at Sizzler.

NALINI

Today, I removed a cyst the size of an avocado from a woman's neck and didn't puncture it. Everyone applauded.

DEVI

Mom! I don't want to hear about dermatology stuff when I'm eating, unless it's about cool things like Botox.

NALINI

You know I don't do Botox. I am a medical doctor. I do not freeze rich white women's faces.

DEVI

If you did, we could have a Porsche Cayenne like Ben Gross's dad.

NALINI

I'm very happy with my Subaru Forrester. Why are you so grumpy, kanne? Did something go wrong on your first day?

DEVI

(lying)
No. It was great.

NALINI

Speaking of great, I actually just received great news. My sister and brother-in-law have found a terrific boy for Kamala to marry.

KAMALA

They did?

NALINI

(to Kamala)
Yes! His name is Prashant and he is an engineer just like you. Isn't that perfect?

Nalini shows a photo to Kamala who forces a smile.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

It was expected of Kamala to have an arranged marriage after she finished her studies abroad.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And Devi, very absorbed by her own drama,
failed to see the clear lack of
enthusiasm on her cousin's face, and was
immediately consumed by jealousy.

DEVI
Well, that's just fantastic. Kamala does
nothing and gets a full husband in the
mail. At least someone at this table
isn't an unfuckable nerd.

NALINI
(gasps)
Devi, such language. Go to the car. No
more Sizzler for you.

Devi exits.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Devi's glumly doing homework on the dining room table.

MOHAN (O.S.)
Devi! Devi, come here.

Devi is astounded. She walks around the corner and sees her
dad watching TV on the sofa. She gasps.

MOHAN (CONT'D)
Sit down. I want to show you something.

He's watching an old tennis match of John McEnroe.

MOHAN (CONT'D)
This is John McEnroe. He is my favorite
player of all time.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
See? I told you it would make sense
eventually.

MOHAN
He doesn't let anyone push him around.
Look at him giving it back to that
umpire. He's a firecracker just like you.

Devi bursts into tears.

MOHAN (CONT'D)
Kanne, what is it?

DEVI
Dad, I think I might be ugly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOHAN

What nonsense! I am looking at you right now and you are the most beautiful woman in the world.

DEVI

No, Kamala's beautiful. And a boy at school said that I was un...he said something mean to me. I'm starting to think I should give up on ever being happy in high school.

MOHAN

Absolutely not! That boy is clearly an idiot like this umpire. Do you think McEnroe would let that umpire tell him he's not beautiful? No, he would fight back. That's why he's so successful.

DEVI

So I should fight Ben Gross?

MOHAN

No, you fight back with your spirit, little one. You show them how beautiful you are by believing you're beautiful.

DEVI

Thanks, Dad. I'll try.

(then)

Wait, what're you doing here?

MOHAN

This is my living room.

DEVI

No. I mean, you died.

MOHAN

Oh that. Yes, I'm better now.

Off of Devi's hopeful look.

INT. DEVI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Devi gasps, waking up in bed. It was all a dream. Devi glances at the grief journal but turns off the light.

INT. DEVI'S BEDROOM - MORNING - NEXT DAY

Devi puts on a skirt, little sweater, and heels. "Beauty Cutie" is on YouTube again as she flat-irons her hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

So the next morning, after spending 90 minutes consulting a youtube makeup tutorial, Devi decided she would not look like, pardon my French, an unfuckable nerd.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kamala and Nalini are very surprised when they see her.

NALINI

Well, someone put in a little effort this morning.

Kamala stares at her, wowed.

DEVI

Kamala, in this country it's considered rude to stare.

Devi grabs her lunch from out of Kamala's hands and leaves.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

As she walks, people look at her, impressed. She smiles a cocky smile and then, instantly eats it and falls down.

DEVI

Motherfuck!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Devi enters with a big bandage on her knee. She sits down. Paxton turns and smiles at her. Devi smiles nervously back, and Paxton turns back around. Ben Gross notices.

BEN

You're getting your knee blood on the chair. It's unsanitary, you could have AIDS.

DEVI

I thought I was unfuckable, how could I have AIDS?

BEN

Easy. Blood transfusion.

DEVI

Or intravenous drugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

You wish you were cool enough for intravenous drugs.

DEVI

Oh, intravenous drugs are cool now? I didn't know you were like a West Virginia tweaker. I guess you're skinny enough.

BEN

At least one of us is skinny--

MR. SHAPIRO

Enough! We talked about this yesterday. How will we ever mend the conflict of our past if the conflict of our present rages on?

DEVI

Boo.

BEN

That doesn't mean anything.

MR. SHAPIRO

Both of you go to the principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL GRUBBS OFFICE - DAY

Devi and Ben stand in front of Principal Grubbs.

PRINCIPAL GRUBBS

So, you two made it one day without fighting. How impressive. You will both report here after school to do some unpaid labor for the office, starting with wheeling these new monitors to the computer lab.

She points to a large stack of computer monitors.

BEN

I was going to see my girlfriend, Shira's field hockey practice. I told her I'd support her. I'm sure Devi could do whatever, because she has no boyfriend.

PRINCIPAL GRUBBS

Oh what a knight in shining armor. You need to go to the girl's field hockey, because you're so supportive? Are you sure it's not because you want to watch a dozen girls run around in sports bras?

Ben is busted. Devi laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRINCIPAL GRUBBS (CONT'D)

What are you laughing at? Who needs to wear six inch stilettos to biology? Do you think you're Erin Brockovich?

(off Devi's face)

Get your acts together. There's plenty of room for both of you to go to good colleges. But not if I personally call all the Ivies and tell them not to admit you.

They look scared.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Devi and Ben push dollies of monitors down the hallway.

BEN

You know, guys don't like a lot of makeup and stuff on girls, they just want girls to look natural. Jeans and a fitted t-shirt.

DEVI

Ew, I just rolled my eyes so hard I became blind.

BEN

Fine, don't listen to me. You seem to be doing great with the guys on your own.

DEVI

God, why are you so interested in my personal life?

BEN

What personal life?

They turn into the computer lab.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - CONTINUOUS

They enter and turn on the light, and find Fabiola making out with OLIVER, his hand up her shirt. Devi gasps, releasing her dolly so all of her monitors fall over and shatter.

DEVI

Oliver, get off my friend! Help! A nerd is molesting another nerd!

FABIOLA

He's not molesting me! He's my boyfriend. We've been together since the summer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

You have a boyfriend, and you kept it
from me and Eleanor.

FABIOLA

Eleanor knows.

(off Devi's look)

I'm sorry. I just didn't know how you'd
react. You know with the legs and
everything, I didn't want to upset you.

This hits Devi hard. She covers.

DEVI

Well, lucky for you I'm not upset at all.
I am very happy for you and Oliver. What
an amazing couple you make. I need to go
find the maintenance staff to clean up
all these shattered monitors. Excuse me.

Devi leaves. A beat. We hear her scream off camera.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEEXT. DEVI'S HOUSE - LATER

Devi storms down the street. She hard kicks some kids' soccer ball far away from them.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

When you're a normal person, with genuinely balanced reactions to things, it may be hard to understand why we hotheads fly off the handle.

INT. DEVI'S HOUSE - FOYER

She bursts through the front door and stomps up the stairs. Kamala looks around the corner concerned.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

For me, it's a reasonable reaction to the general stupidity and blindness of most tennis umpires.

INT. DEVI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Devi storms through the door, fuming. She paces back and forth, occasionally knocking stuff off her desk.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

For Devi, it's a warranted response to the traitorous girls she thought were her best friends.

(starting to spin out)

How could Fabiola have a boyfriend, and not tell her about it? And why would she tell Eleanor? Does she think Devi's too unhinged to handle it? Or that Devi would be jealous of her? That's insane. Devi doesn't want Oliver Chang. He's a loser with bad pants who never leaves the computer lab, and Devi would rather never hook up with any man for the rest of her goddamn life than suck face with that motherfucking dork!!!

Devi throws her geometry book through the window. It lands outside on the lawn.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

And that's how it happens folks. That's how we hotheads boil over.

Devi looks out the window right as Nalini and Kamala enter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NALINI

What was that? What happened to the window?

DEVI

A bird hit it.

KAMALA

Oh no! Where is the bird?

DEVI

It flew away.

NALINI

After breaking a window with its body?

Nalini walks to the window and sees the book on the lawn.

NALINI (CONT'D)

Devi! How could you? Your geometry book that was blessed by God!

DEVI

The bird must have done it.

NALINI

Devi!! You are lying with the mouth I put food in!

Devi runs out of the room.

INT. DEVI'S HOUSE - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Devi, upset, runs down the stairs.

NALINI (O.S.)

Devi! Come back here!

EXT. DEVI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Devi runs down the street.

EXT. SHERMAN OAKS STREET - LITTLE LATER

Devi is now walking and looking bummed out. It is dark out now. She enters:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist is gone, so Devi bursts into Dr. Ryan's office. He is dressed in gym clothes.

DR. RYAN

Devi? We don't have an appointment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI

I know, but I'm ready to talk.

DR. RYAN

I was just about to head to the gym.

DEVI

Oh so you'd rather go do the elliptical than help a teen in crisis. My dad died, dude!

DR. RYAN

Okay, okay. What's going on?

DEVI

One of my best friends has had a secret boyfriend that she and my other best friend have been keeping from me.

(beat, then)

Everyone in school already thinks I'm a freak because my legs stopped working last year. And now I know Fabiola and Eleanor think I'm a freak too.

DR. RYAN

How does that make you feel?

DEVI

(snapping)

It doesn't matter how it makes me feel! It matters how it makes me look. Ben Gross was there and saw the whole thing!

DR. RYAN

Why does Ben Gross matter so much to you?

DEVI

He doesn't. I mean, his GPA does, but he as a person can suck my d.

DR. RYAN

M'kay. Well why don't we try to unravel these feelings a bit--

DEVI

Dr. Ryan, I don't want you to *Silver Linings Playbook* this. I just need to know how to get a boyfriend. If I had a boyfriend, I would be happy and normal.

DR. RYAN

Devi--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEVI

I had this whole strategy. I found the exact right boys that each of my friends should date, so that we could be cooler.

DR. RYAN

But were you even interested in the boy that you chose for yourself?

DEVI

No. I think he's gay, but he probably won't come out until next semester when we have to take a health class called "Acceptance and Community". I could be his beard until then, which would show people that I am someone who can be a suitable girlfriend.

DR. RYAN

Devi, why do you care so much what people think?

DEVI

Because I'm a teen! What else am I supposed to care about? I don't have bills to pay.

DR. RYAN

Devi, I want you to care about what you want. I think you're hiding behind this boyfriend strategy. Go for someone you have a connection with and he'll be attracted to you because you're you. But stop obsessing about boyfriends and who's got them. A boyfriend won't make you happy.

Devi takes this in.

DEVI

Oh my god, Dr. Ryan, you are so fucking wise. I don't need a boyfriend to be happy. I need something bigger. Something that will really show them all.

DR. RYAN

No, it's not about showing anyone--

DEVI

Thank you so much for being the beacon in my storm, sir.

She leaves. Dr. Ryan sighs.

EXT. SHERMAN HIGH SCHOOL - LITTLE LATER

Devi runs. Stops. And then walks into the high school.

INT. SHERMAN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LITTLE LATER

Devi waits outside of the boys locker room. The varsity men's swim team emerges. Devi takes a deep breath. Paxton comes out last. He doesn't see her.

DEVI

Paxton?

He turns to her, looking confused. She approaches him. The other swimmers exit, so Paxton and Devi are alone.

DEVI (CONT'D)

Hi, you don't know me, but my name is Devi, like the nickname for David but spelled differently because I'm Indian. Anyway, I sit behind you in your history class.

(off his blank look)

And I was also paralyzed last year.

(off his nod)

Oh, okay, you are familiar with that, great. Well, someone told me recently that I should go after what I want. I know that you have a girlfriend and that we don't know each other, but I am very attracted to you and I was just wondering if you would, um -- also I wouldn't tell anyone if you said yes to this -- but, um, would you want to take my virginity sometime?

Paxton just stares at her. The pause is excruciating.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)

Devi thought to herself, "What the fuck have I done?" She felt like that fake bird that had flown through her window.

Devi opens her mouth to say something but before she can:

PAXTON

Yeah, sure.

Her eyes go wide.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

But I can't do it tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEVI
Of course not. I'm busy, too.

PAXTON
Alright. Bye.

He heads out, leaving Devi stunned.

INT. DEVI'S BEDROOM - LATER

Devi walks into her room in a daze. The window has been duct-taped shut, and her geometry book is on her bed.

JOHN MCENROE (V.O.)
Devi sat in a stupor. For the first time she had something she wanted to write in her grief journal.

Devi grabs her grief journal and in it, she writes in huge letters: "I'm gonna have sex with Paxton Hall!!!!!!!!!" We pull out through the duct-taped window.

END OF EPISODE