

# **SQUARE ROOTS**

"Pilot"

by

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COLD OPEN

**OVER FOOTAGE** of COMIC BOOK BLOCKBUSTERS...

DAN (V.O.)

For some ridiculous reason, Hollywood keeps making countless movies about Superman and Batman and The Hulk and all those other fake superheroes who solve fake problems with their big stupid fists. You want to know who the real superheroes are? Engineers.

**VARIOUS IMAGES** of engineers doing their thing...

DAN (V.O.)

We solve real problems with our mind-fists. Let's see, how can I put this as humbly as possible? Engineers invented civilization. Don't believe me?

**EXT. THE STONE AGE - DAY**

A dozen hairy CRO-MAGNONS trudge around. Suddenly, they're attacked by a SABER-TOOTHED TIGER.

DAN (V.O.)

Back in the day when we lumbered through the mud getting eaten by everything...

As the panicking cave people get mauled, a peculiar CAVEMAN stops to ponder the mud, scratching his head.

DAN (V.O.)

One industrious caveman figured there had to be a better way. So he wondered,  
(broken cave-speak)  
"What if we make square mud lumps, then dry lumps under Great Fireball in sky?"

Our Caveman shapes the mud into BLOCKS to dry in the sun.

DAN (V.O.)

Thus was born the First Engineer. And he used his mind-fist to turn useless mud into useful bricks.

Our Caveman starts STACKING his dried mud bricks.

DAN (V.O.)

With which he built the first house.

The other cave people are now safe in the FINISHED MUD BRICK HOUSE as they TAUNT the saber-tooth tiger outside.

DAN (V.O.)

Which got us the hell out of the food chain. You're welcome, world.

**TIME-LAPSE THROUGH** major milestones in HUMAN INNOVATION.

DAN (V.O.)

And it only got better from there. Pyramids... aqueducts... Mars rovers... watching *Scandal* on your phone. All made possible by engineers. Suck on that, Avengers! Who, by the way, would be totally worthless without Iron Man... their engineer.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING**

DANEESH "DAN" DESAI (late-30s, Indian-American, always thinking) makes breakfast for his kids PAIGE (11, mixed) and OWEN (9, mixed).

DAN (V.O.)

As a proud engineer myself, I use my mind-fist on everything. For example, the average father wastes 2.7 years of his life waiting for toast to toast.

Dan sets the toaster then, seeing the world as a TECHNICAL SPEC, identifies three tasks: CHECK HOMEWORK... ORDER PRINTER TONER... REFILL SOAP. **QUICK CUTS:** Dan uses the "toaster wait" to do all three tasks. The TOAST POPS UP.

DAN (V.O.)

But I recapture that time. Like a Prius going downhill. And it doesn't end there. Like at the grocery store...

**INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY**

Dan considers TWO CHECKOUT LINES: one short, one long.

DAN (V.O.)

Easy choice, right? Wrong. Basic stochastic modelling tells me that "short" line has a fatal bottleneck.

Dan's TECH SPEC VISION spots a MAN READING A MAGAZINE in the short line, unloading his cart very slowly.

DAN (V.O.)

An *US Weekly* line-reader.

**FAST MO:** Dan gets into the long line which goes quickly while the short line gets stalled behind the line-reader.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY**

DAN (V.O.)

I even use my mind-fist to dominate guys  
who'd otherwise crush me in the paint.

Dan TECH SPEC ENVISIONS his shot, then sinks a GRACELESS-  
YET-PROFICIENT JUMPER over tall urban dudes.

DAN (V.O.)

But this gift is in my blood. You see, I  
come from an entire family of superheroes.

As we launch into **STYLISTIC CAMERA INTRODUCTIONS**, we **PUSH  
IN** on MUKESH (60s, Indian, uber-nerd) in front of HIGH  
VOLTAGE TRANSFORMERS.

DAN (V.O.)

My dad's an electrical engineer. So he  
takes the most efficient route. Like  
lightning through your heart.

MUKESH

(to camera)

Son, your face has gotten fatter. You  
should dilute everything you eat with  
half water.

**PUSH IN** on SEEMA (60s, Indian, loves polyester) in front  
of COMPLEX LAB EQUIPMENT.

DAN (V.O.)

My mom's a chemical engineer. So she  
understands the importance of strong bonds.

SEEMA

(to camera)

Do you know anyone who would create a  
good covalent bond with your sister?  
She's not getting any younger.

**PUSH IN** on LEENA (30s, Indian-American, wry) in a HazMat  
suit in front of INDUSTRIAL SMOKE STACKS.

DAN (V.O.)

And my sister's an environmental  
engineer. So she kind of hates people.

LEENA

(to camera)

Yeah, that's what the world needs. More  
breeders to pump out more snot-nosed  
carbon-makers.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT**

DAN (V.O.)

Then there's Ruth. My wife.

**CLOSE ON** RUTH (late-30s, White, confident), having a beer and pizza in bed like the devil may care.

DAN (V.O.)

Daughter of a biker... mother of two...  
not an engineer. Ruth and I first met in  
Mexico when she pushed me out of a plane.

**PHOTO** of a terrified Dan FALLING OUT OF A SMALL PLANE.

DAN (V.O.)

In her defense, she was an eager stranger  
behind me, and I was allegedly holding up  
the skydiving jump line with my very  
rational fear of plummeting to death.

**PHOTO** of Ruth jumping out behind Dan, all smiles.

DAN (V.O.)

Anyway, she bought me a margarita after  
landing on my back and that was that.

Dan climbs into bed and gives Ruth a KISS.

DAN (V.O.)

But if engineering is my superpower...

DAN

FYI, my love, you reversed the trash barrel  
order. The recycling should be closer to  
the house and the yard waste closer to the  
hedges to optimize barrel flow.

RUTH

(laughing)

Now I see how you "optimized" your way to  
being a virgin 'til you were thirty.

DAN (V.O.)

...Ruth is my kryptonite.

DAN

(tone of correction)

Twenty-eight.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT**

As Dan and Ruth put on their coats...

RUTH

Hurry up, kids! We're walking to Ba and Dadas for dinner!

Dan notices a LAMP near their rock garden water feature.

DAN

Honey, why'd you plug the lamp there when there's an equidistant plug farther from the water?

RUTH

Just so I could hear you say...  
(seductive tone)  
"Equidistant". Soooo sexy.

Ruth runs her hand through his hair. Dan melts, then...

DAN

Wait... are you making fun of me?

RUTH

Of course. I just plugged it where I plugged it. Life goes on.  
(calling off again)  
HUSTLE OR STARVE!

Paige and Owen come bounding down the stairs.

PAIGE

Sorry. I was practicing.

DAN

Hexadecimal division or Boolean algebra?

PAIGE

(mimes guitar)  
Power chords over Fetty Wap.

DAN

I don't know what any of that means. But remember, the entrance exam for the Precocious Math Program is next week.

PAIGE

Um... about that. Not sure if I want to do Precocious Math.

DAN

What?!

PAIGE

It's soooo intense. Three hours after school? I'd rather do Rock Camp. It's at the same time.

DAN

You're not doing Rock Camp instead. You're a Desai.

PAIGE

But Dad... music is math.

DAN

Doesn't mean I'd ever walk into a skyscraper designed by Fatty Whip.

RUTH

Fetty Wap.

DAN

Like that name's any less absurd.

RUTH

Baby... sweetie... pudding... I'm gonna need you to brace yourself. But not everyone wants to be an engineer.

(hugs Dan tight)

Shhhhh... it's okay... just breathe.

DAN

Ha-ha. But seriously, Paige is at a pivotal age. The academic track she takes now will set the tone for the rest of her schooling. Thus her life.

RUTH

Exactly.

PAIGE

Exactly.

OWEN

Don't worry, guys. I probably won't even have a shot at Precocious Math.

DAN

Why are you so proud of that, Owen?

OWEN

Because then we won't have to argue about it. The O-Man just saved us all a fight. That's called love.

DAN  
(to Ruth, re: kids)  
Let's just agree now. She's mine, he's yours.

**INT. MUKESH & SEEMA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER**

Dan, Ruth and the kids sit with Mukesh and Leena as Seema carefully TITRATES curry into bowls with lab equipment.

RUTH  
Need some help, Seema?

Seema ignores Ruth. Ruth turns to Dan, exasperated.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
Does she even know I exist?

DAN  
She's just in the zone trying to hit the ideal ratio of rice to vindaloo.

SEEMA  
Remember, Leena. Cooking is the ultimate aphrodisiac. If done with precision, it can lure any man.

LEENA  
Thanks, Betty Beaker.

OWEN  
Can I have Lucky Charms instead?

MUKESH  
Lucky Charms are a cancer!

RUTH  
You're confusing cancer with cavities.

MUKESH  
It's not the sugar, it's the message. Lucky Charms. The whole notion of "luck" and "hope" and "when you wish upon a star" is what makes American kids fat, lazy, and last in the world.

DAN  
Hear that, Paige? That's why you're doing Precocious Math.

MUKESH  
Of course she's doing Precocious Math! Why is that even a question? What cereal have you been feeding her?



RUTH  
(to Paige)  
Mukesh Dada may not have a balanced  
perspective. Remember *Whiplash*?

**INT. MOVIE THEATER - (FLASHBACK)**

The family watches the *Whiplash* scene where J.K. Simmons  
slaps the shit out of Miles Teller. The audience GASPS.

MUKESH  
I don't understand what's so wrong about  
this. That boy is going to be a much  
better drum person now.

**BACK TO SCENE:**

MUKESH  
That theater was full of people raised on  
Lucky Charms! I tell you, what they  
should make is Hardworking Charms.

Owen CLOCKS THIS, intrigued. Paige rolls her eyes.

PAIGE  
Yay. Free slide-rule in every box.

MUKESH  
Nothing's free! You have to work for it!

Dan nods. Ruth and Paige just share a look.

**INT. MUKESH & SEEMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER**

As the five adults clean up, Seema turns to Leena.

SEEMA  
What about applying to *The Bachelorette*?  
They've never done an Indian.

LEENA  
Stop trying to arrange a marriage for me!  
The last guy you set me up with was a  
dentist/stand-up who loved his own jokes. I  
wanted to throw sulfuric acid on his giant  
snow white veneers. Do you even know my  
type? Do you even know me?

RUTH  
Just join Tinder and get your slut on, girl.

DAN  
Tinder? Their algorithm's a joke. Binary  
left-right swipe on a photo? Chimp level.  
(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Like letting an eleven-year-old make her own decision about Precocious Math.

RUTH

Nice, Dan. Very subtle.

MUKESH

Too subtle! He means it's stupid.

SEEMA

Daneesh, can you help me by creating a marriage equation to compute the ideal mate for Leena. Like you did when you were looking for a spouse.

RUTH

Wait... what? You made an equation to figure out whether to marry me? Dear lord, is there no end to your nerdism?

DAN

(tenses up, nervous)

It was nothing really. Forget it.

RUTH

No, no... this I gotta see.

DAN

No you don't.

RUTH

Now that you're dodging, yes I do.

DAN

It's... um... on an old drive somewhere.

RUTH

Well, good thing you made us go full-blown cloud last year. Think you said, "globally accessible from any device."

Ruth looks around then hands Dan an iPad off the counter.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Here's "any device". Get accessin'.

Having no choice, Dan reluctantly pulls up an EXCEL FILE and RAPIDLY SCROLLS through.

DAN

See... just raw data. Nothing to see.

(quickly changes subject)

So, Mom, which test tube is dessert?

Ruth SNATCHES the iPad from Dan and scrolls at a much slower rate to actually see it. Dan looks uncomfortable.

RUTH  
(off spreadsheet)  
"Simulation Result: Incompatible.  
Conclusion: Do Not Marry."  
(to Dan)  
WHAT THE FUCK?!

DAN  
(beat, to Seema)  
We'll take those test tubes to go.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER**

Ruth stares at the iPad in bed as Dan gets into his PJs.

RUTH  
I don't even know who to be mad at. You?  
Microsoft Excel?

DAN  
It was just a simulation. You know,  
simulations also concluded that  
bumblebees can't fly. And yet? Which  
means smart analysis requires looking  
beyond the numbers... my sweet bumblebee.

RUTH  
The fact you turned me into a spreadsheet  
in the first place is horrible enough. I  
got your name tattooed on my ass after  
three dates!

DAN  
Technically, just the letter "D". Which  
still left the door wide open for a Dave  
or a Derek... even a Darlene.

RUTH  
I bet Dave-Derek-Darlene wouldn't have  
needed some ridiculous equation  
simulation whatever.

DAN  
Whoa. Flawed maybe... but "ridiculous"?  
Match.com, eHarmony, that all-farmer dating  
site -- billion dollar companies. Based on  
algorithms not even half as thorough as  
mine. I used over 200 metrics!

Ruth looks over the spreadsheet metric names.

RUTH

"TV Show Preference Congruency"?

DAN

You scored very high. It's why we've never had a DVR fight.

RUTH

"Bladder Synchronization Frequency"?

DAN

Do we not agree on every road-trip pit stop? We're basically pee twins. Huge plus in a life partner.

RUTH

I'll give you that.  
(then, off spreadsheet)  
What's an "Interracial Coefficient"?

DAN

There are certain factors associated with marrying outside your race.

RUTH

And you turned it into a scientific measurement? Paging Dr. Mengele!

DAN

Are you calling me a Nazi?! I take issue with that. Especially since it's white people who let Nazis ruin the swastika.

RUTH

Oh god.

DAN

For thousands of years, Indians used it as a symbol of peace, goodwill, and the four quadrants of the Cartesian plane. The perfect nexus of karma and math. Ruined forever by ignorance!

RUTH

That's what you're going with? The swastika defense?

DAN

Nearly destroyed our wedding.

**EXT. PARK - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

Dan (in a gold turban) leads a vibrant INDIAN WEDDING PROCESSION through a park.

He holds aloft a festive COCONUT painted with a traditional RED SWASTIKA. Suddenly, Dan is tackled out of nowhere by a SWAT TEAM.

SWAT CAPTAIN  
Neo-Nazi down! Neo-Nazi down!

**BACK TO SCENE:**

DAN  
SWAT really needs to train in context clues.

RUTH  
(off spreadsheet)  
"Intellectualization Factor: Questionable"?  
Oh my god. You think I'm dumb!!!

DAN  
Of course not! Don't be dumb.

RUTH  
You just said it!

DAN  
That was in self-defense. But the actual metric in question refers to the fact that I don't think you always fully think things through. Colossal difference.

RUTH  
Not to us dummies! But honestly -- why am I even surprised? It's your family motto. *E Pluribus Everyone's Dumb*.

DAN  
Now you're exaggerating.

RUTH  
So we're just gonna forget the India trip when your mom introduced us to her third grade math teacher?

**INT. INDIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY - (FLASHBACK)**

Seema introduces the Desai family to a tiny 95-year-old INDIAN WOMAN. But not by their names.

SEEMA  
(in Hindi, subtitled)  
This is my husband, electrical engineer. My son, mechanical engineer. My daughter, environmental engineer.

Seema then SKIPS OVER RUTH and goes to Paige and Owen.

SEEMA (CONT'D)  
(in Hindi, subtitled)  
And our two future engineers.

**BACK TO SCENE:**

RUTH  
I don't know Hindi, but I knew to cry.

DAN  
My mom was the first woman in her village to go to engineering school. She was just showing off what she did with that.

RUTH  
Fine, whatever. But maybe the problem isn't that I under-think. It's that you over-think. You know, not everything in life has to be analyzed to death.

DAN  
When do I do that?

RUTH  
Not counting your marriage equation?! Your whole "Precocious Math will define the rest of Paige's life" thing! Same mind set. If you ask me, Rock Camp could--

DAN  
Let me guess, "Give her the confidence and independence to make bold decisions when she's thirty blah blah blah."

RUTH  
--Be fun. She's a kid, Dan. Not everything has to be engineered ten moves ahead.

DAN  
I strongly disagree.

RUTH  
(digging in)  
Right back athca'. My sweet bumblebee.

DAN (V.O.)  
Somehow an ancient spreadsheet has triggered a battle for my daughter's soul. Damn... how did I not see this coming?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NEXT DAY**

Owen sits with Mukesh as Paige noodles on her GUITAR.

OWEN

So I googled "Hardworking Charms" and there's nothing like it out there. We're on the ground floor of a brand new breakfast genre.

MUKESH

You want to turn my metaphor into an actual business?

OWEN

Too crazy?

MUKESH

Not at all! That's the spirit I admire. You have to strive to thrive!

Dan crosses in, sensing an opportunity.

DAN

So true!

(to Paige)

You know, when Dada was your age, he walked a hundred miles to a library in New Delhi to teach himself calculus.

PAIGE

(sensing his agenda)

Gee, Dad. Seamless transition.

MUKESH

But he's right! It was during a monsoon. I even got malaria.

DAN

Hear that? The man almost died for math. And you're passing up a well-funded, gifted math program that has at most very few mosquitos? That doesn't sound like my sweet brilliant Paige. The apple of my eye. The sine of my cosine.

Dan looks to Paige with LOVING EYES. We can sense Paige actually feels a little pull towards her dad who wants nothing but the best for her.

PAIGE

I mean...

DAN

So let's just start by signing you up for that Precocious Math Exam. No pressure.

(on iPad)

I happen to have the website bookmarked and your social security number already filled in. Just need you to e-sign here.

Ruth approaches.

RUTH

Stop! It's a trap! Don't let them pull you towards the Dork Side of the Force.

(to Dan and Mukesh)

Brain shaming me is bad enough. But tag team brain shaming Paige??? Shame on the both of you!

MUKESH

For the record, this was not planned. He just piggybacked on my inertia. Like a superconducting pendulum in The Large Hadron Collider that --

RUTH

I got it.

As Ruth pulls Dan out of the room...

RUTH (CONT'D)

No more sneaky nerd recruiting for you.

OWEN

Can we please get back to my burgeoning cereal empire?!

Owen holds up a "Hardworking Charms" SALES PIE CHART with "Asians" being the biggest demographic slice by far.

OWEN (CONT'D)

It's an easy sell to the Asian kids at my school. There's a violin in every locker.

MUKESH

I see you've done your market research. Impressive. But before we continue, what's in this for me? What's my cut?

OWEN

My eternal respect.

(off Mukesh not fully sold)

And a hug.



MUKESH

Deal.

They exchange a PROFESSIONAL HUG.

MUKESH (CONT'D)

Okay. Down to business. We can synthesize charms with edible glucose from Seema Ba's lab, but we need shapes that emblemize the spirit of hard work. What about tiny Pi symbols?

OWEN

Genius!

MUKESH

Graphing calculators... Nobel Prizes... intellectual fulfillment...

OWEN

Not really sure how to do that last one as a marshmallow. What about glasses?

MUKESH

Great idea! If we want to call them "Obvious Charms".

Owen is reminded that Mukesh does not mess around.

**INT. RESTAURANT - NEXT NIGHT**

Seema and Leena sit at a cozy table for two.

SEEMA

I don't get it. Why are we wasting money eating out? There's food at home.

LEENA

I thought about it, and truth be told, I don't hate the idea of you taking an interest in my love life. The numbers are staggering -- parent involvement leads to the highest success rate. I mean, you and dad were arranged, and look at you. But for you to help find someone that works for me, you have to know me better. Which is why -- step one -- we're going to date first!

SEEMA

You don't think I know you? I know you. You're afraid of turtles, you wet the bed until you were nine, and you love Garth Brooks.

LEENA

Garth Brooks?

SEEMA

You went to his concert.

LEENA

In 1996?! And I didn't even go. That was just a cover story for what I really did that night.

**EXT. DARK FIELD - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)**

YOUNG LEENA (15), in all black, comes to a FENCE marked "OAKBROOK NUCLEAR FACILITY". She looks in her backpack.

YOUNG LEENA

(sotto)

Crap! Forgot the wire cutters!

She takes out EGGS and throws them OVER the fence anyway. They SPLAT barely two feet away on the other side, comically short of the NUCLEAR PLANT in the far distance.

**BACK TO SCENE:**

LEENA

They still got the message.

SEEMA

Hare Rama, is that how you became a hippie?!

LEENA

If by "hippie", you mean a PhD in Nuclear Waste Management from MIT, then yes.

SEEMA

I had no idea.

LEENA

Which is why we need this. You get to know me, you get to know my type.

SEEMA

Gotcha.

(beat)

What about black men? Yay or nay?

Leena just drops her head. This will be a process.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME**

Dan enters to a ROCK MASH UP of Fetty Wap's "679". He sees Paige on her electric guitar, another kid on drums, and a third kid on turntables. Ruth plays tambourine.

DAN  
(yelling over music)  
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!

RUTH  
(yelling over music)  
I SIGNED PAIGE UP FOR ROCK CAMP! THIS IS  
THEIR HOMEWORK!

Paige climbs up onto her amp.

PAIGE  
(yelling over music)  
DAD, YOU'RE STANDING IN THE SPOT WHERE I  
JUMP OFF MY AMP TO!

Dan PULLS THE PLUG on her amp.

DAN  
Get down. You're gonna break your leg.

PAIGE  
Sweet! I'd take a cast for that story!  
(off Dan's glare, to kids)  
Let's take a Fig Newton five, folks.

The "band" heads off. Dan turns to Ruth, upset.

DAN  
I can't believe you! You obliterated any  
chance of Precocious Math! This is pure  
guerilla warfare!

RUTH  
Actually... it's good parenting. Why?  
Because before you pulled the plug, maybe  
you noticed your daughter was smiling  
from ear to ear. Or does joy not fit  
into your spreadsheet?

DAN  
Cheap shot.

RUTH  
See, Dan. Your problem is that you can't  
control every aspect of her life. And  
that maybe, juuusst maybe... Paige takes  
more after me than you.

DAN

Cheaper shot.

RUTH

But no matter how hard you try -- you can't force a cool peg into a nerd hole.

DAN

(knows Ruth all too well)  
How long you been sitting on that one?

RUTH

(giddy to finally cash in)  
Since she was born!

Ruth smile and walks off, shaking her tambourine. A red-faced Dan takes deep, calming NOSTRIL BREATHS.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NEXT DAY**

Dan plays hoops with APPELBAUM (30s, hip-hop Jew) and JAVIER (20s, Latino) -- whom we'll have seen in the Cold Open. Appelbaum feeds the ball to Dan. Dan lines up his "technically proficient" shot and... misses horribly.

JAVIER

(to other team)  
Time out!

The three head to their water bottles.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Yo, DD. If I wanted to lose, I would've drafted my 4-foot-2, 300-pound abuelita.

DAN

Sorry. My mind's not focused. I'm having major friction with Ruth.

APPELBAUM

Bro. There's all kinds of stuff for that. Any pharmacy, hell even most gas stations carry something.

JAVIER

A-baum's right. The lube game's crazy these days. Choices.

APPELBAUM

You just not getting her there? My girl melts when I work her ears. Like this...

Appelbaum SENSUALLY RUBS Dan's ears between his fingers.

DAN

Stop it! I don't mean literal friction.  
We're locked in an epic battle for  
Paige's soul.

(dramatically)

Maybe even my entire way of life.

APPELBAUM

(sighs at the drama, then)

Okay, I'll bite. What happened?

DAN

We started at marriage equation then  
escalated to Rock Camp.

JAVIER

Now you're just stringing random words  
together. Are you having a stroke?

DAN

No. All I want is my wife to think  
things through and my daughter to use her  
brain. Is that so wrong?

APPELBAUM

You actually said that? To their faces?

DAN

More or less.

JAVIER

Man, lube's the least of your problems.

DAN

Wow. You're right. I can't say that.  
(beat)

I have to show it!

APPELBAUM

Yep. That's what people love. To be  
shown how dumb they are.

**INT. MUKESH & SEEMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Mukesh finishes making a batch of marshmallow Pi symbols  
with Seema's lab equipment. Owen enters, despondent.

MUKESH

So, how many did we sell on day one?

Owen empties his backpack of a dozen "Hardworking Charms"  
boxes (Photoshopped single-serving Lucky Charms boxes).

OWEN

Zero.

MUKESH

Zero? But you're a natural salesman.  
You could sell beef jerky to a Hindu!

OWEN

Oh, I was sold out by homeroom. But my principal undid all that. Something about selling "non-FDA approved food" on school grounds. Gave me a detention.

MUKESH

Detention?! For entrepreneurship?! This is exactly what's wrong with this country! Don't worry, we're going to fight this!  
(hands him safety glasses)  
But first put on these goggles. For some reason, my last batch of charms exploded.

**INT. BAR - NIGHT**

Leena and Seema are out bonding again over drinks.

SEEMA

(to bartender)  
Mojito for me. And for my daughter...  
(off Leena's encouragement)  
Gin martini with a twist... extra vermouth?

LEENA

(proud of Seema)  
It's like you've known me my whole life!

As the bartender discards ice from a finished cocktail...

LEENA (CONT'D)

You're just going to waste that ice? It takes 230 BTUs to make a single cube. You just tossed out like half a tree.

Leena leans over the bar, grabs the ice from the trash, and drops it into the bartender's fresh ice bin.

LEENA (CONT'D)

See, Mom? I'm not choosy. It's just that people suck.

SEEMA

I really am learning volumes about you. And in the spirit of getting to know each other -- you were wrong about me.

(MORE)

SEEMA (CONT'D)

The other night, you said your dad and I were arranged. But actually... I was arranged to someone else.

LEENA

What?! How am I just finding out about this?! Who?!

SEEMA

My uncle's neighbor's son. Pram Agarwal.

LEENA

So then why didn't you marry this Pram?

SEEMA

I was going to. But then I met your dad on the first day of college.

LEENA

And you immediately fell in love?

SEEMA

No no no. Your dad was a total jerk. He assumed because I was a woman, I was the dean's daughter or something. But then I scored higher than him on our first exams. He told me he wasn't sure if he wanted to marry me, or jump off a bridge.

LEENA

Knowing Dad, I assume the only reason I was born was because there were no bridges at your school.

SEEMA

(laughs)

I like going out with you.

They CLINK glasses. Suddenly, a MAN walks up to order.

MAN

Gin martini, twist, extra vermouth.

(hands bartender paper bag)

And can you recycle this? Some idiot tossed it out his car window as I was walking in. People are the worst.

LEENA

People are the worst!

MAN

Like "the world needs a cleansing rain" worst.

LEENA

Wash it clean!

They share a smile -- misanthropic flirting at its best.

MAN

Hi. I'm --

SEEMA

Get lost, buddy! She already has a date!

The Man recoils and moves off. Seema turns to Leena.

SEEMA (CONT'D)

Now... where were we?

Off Leena's "uh oh, my mom's a jealous lover" look.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - FOYER - LATER**

Ruth enters a house in STRANGE DISARRAY. Dan approaches.

RUTH

What the hell happened here?

DAN

You think I'm always obsessed with thinking too many steps ahead? Over analyzing, overly efficient, not letting things just happen? Well...

(a la Walt Disney)

Welcome to a world without the joys of efficiency and forward planning! A world where my intelligent suggestions for life, love, and family don't exist. A world where things aren't fully thought through. I call this world "Ruth Land"!

RUTH

Why not "Ruth World"?

DAN

Because that name would be fully thought through.

(then, re: disarray)

Notice how the pictures are unevenly hung because they were put up willy-nilly. That heavy frame fell off and shattered because no one took the time to use a stud finder. Over there is a wasteland of permanently egg-yolked dishes because my pre-soak methodology doesn't exist in this hellish dystopia --



RUTH  
Are you for real?

DAN  
Wait for it. Because here's...

Dan gestures to Owen -- "lifeless" on the floor next to the rock-garden water-feature.

DAN (CONT'D)  
YOUR DEAD SON! He was electrocuted when he tripped over a lamp cord that was plugged in dangerously close to open water.

OWEN  
(opens one eye)  
Sorry, Mom. I'm hemorrhaging cash on unsold cereal inventory and Dad pays.

RUTH  
(glaring at Owen)  
Go.

OWEN  
Going.

Owen scoots off.

DAN  
But that's not even the best part.

Dan then gestures to a CHALK OUTLINE of a girl's body with a NEEDLE IN HER ARM and a GUITAR in her hand.

DAN (CONT'D)  
This is where the police found your "rock star" daughter. Because instead of math... she chose meth!

Ruth looks at the chalk outline for a beat.

RUTH  
(calling upstairs)  
THANKS FOR NOT ACTUALLY TAKING PART IN THIS LUNACY, PAIGE BABY!

PAIGE (O.S.)  
(from upstairs)  
YOU'RE WELCOME, MOM!

Ruth then turns to Dan.

RUTH

And what are you saying with all this, Dan? That my choices are so stupid, it's going to kill our kids?! That's a really beautiful message for your wife!

(a nerve clearly touched)

Well sorry I don't have a million degrees like your whole family! Sorry I barely made it through a shitty state school! You know, I've always felt "less than" around all of you, but now you've very clearly shown me that my opinion about how we run our lives or raise our kids doesn't matter at all! What's my use then?! Just some empty breeding vessel?!

DAN

Ruth --

RUTH

Oh, and God forbid our daughter follows me down the idiot hole! Because then she'll be worthless too!

DAN

That's not what I'm saying --

RUTH

(eyes wet, wounded)

That's exactly what you're saying! But have you even stopped to think that your endless brain shaming makes me feel like I'm not even needed?! That I bring nothing to any of this?! But I guess that's the case because apparently Ruth Land is a total disaster and all we ever need is Dan Land -- the Nerdiest Place on Earth!

Ruth storms off, hurt to the core. Dan looks on, realizing he went way too far in his indictment of her.

DAN (V.O.)

In technical terms, this is a total system collapse due to catastrophic component failure. But in layman's terms, it's ass-head husband asses it up.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

**INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Mukesh sits with Owen across from Owen's PRINCIPAL (40s).

PRINCIPAL

Now, Dr. Desai, we usually only discuss these matters with students' parents. But after I got to page 34 of your 196-page email, I figured both our time would be better served with a face-to-face.

MUKESH

I just came here to say one thing...  
YOU ARE DESTROYING THE FUTURE!

(then, going off)

When you stifle innovators like Owen with your myopic rules, you stifle progress. Did Nikola Tesla listen to Edison's rules of direct current? No! Did Marie Curie listen to the rules of not carrying unshielded isotopes in her pocket? Hell no! Sure she died horribly from heavily-radiated bone marrow, and Tesla died penniless under the vengeful boot of Edison. But first they changed the world. So how dare you give my grandson a detention for trying to elevate the painfully average masses with a brave new cereal?!

PRINCIPAL

Because this was one of the "charms".

The Principal holds up a PINK MARSHMALLOW SWASTIKA.

MUKESH

Well... I can see your reservations about that, Principal Rosensweig.

(going off again)

But swastikas represented the nexus of karma and math loooong before --

**INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Mukesh and Owen exit the Principal's office in shock.

OWEN

Five day suspension?! You made it worse!

MUKESH

I'm so sorry. But your principal needed to hear the truth.

OWEN

I'm going to miss a whole week of school!  
(spiralling)  
Fall so far behind... gonna have to work  
through Christmas... so long Spring Break!

Mukesh considers Owens predicament.

MUKESH

Look at me. We made a business hug.  
Business. Hug. And I for one will not  
violate the terms of that hug. I will  
get you through this. I promise.

OWEN

Really?

MUKESH

Trust me, after a week of my home-  
schooling, you'll come back light-years  
ahead of these clowns. You could  
probably be a teacher.

Owen smiles and hugs Mukesh.

MUKESH (CONT'D)

What are the terms of this hug?

OWEN

Nothing. Just a hug hug.

Mukesh smiles.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - HALLWAY/PAIGE'S ROOM - NIGHT**

As Dan walks down the hall, he hears RANDOM GUITAR CHORDS  
coming from Paige's room. He stops at her door to see.

PAIGE

(singing over minor chord)  
*...it's never forever.*  
(tries a major chord)  
*It's never forever.*

Paige scribbles it down. Dan realizes she's WRITING A  
SONG. Basic, but not bad. Most importantly, she's deep  
in the zone, loving it. Dan watches for a bit, smiling.

**INT. ULTRA MODERN RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Seema and Leena sit at a table for two.

SEEMA

This place is great. They cook everything with magnets.

LEENA

Mom... there's no easy way to say this so I'll just say it. We're through.

SEEMA

What do you mean?

LEENA

We've had an amazing time together. I learned about you. You learned about me. So if you want to set me up again, I'm open. But the thing is, I really can't be dating you anymore. For a host of reasons.

SEEMA

But... now that I know you so well, I don't think anyone's good enough for you.

LEENA

(touched, welling up)  
Awww, Mom!

SEEMA

(also welling up)  
It's true!

Mother and daughter lovingly clasp hands. A beat.

LEENA

But we still have to break up.

SEEMA

You're right.

Seema gets up to leave.

LEENA

You don't have to go now.

SEEMA

It's for the best.  
(then, turning back)  
See you in the car.

**INT. DESAI HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER**

Ruth reads in bed. Dan enters.

DAN

Hey. Can we talk?

RUTH

What now? I didn't wrap the garden hose clockwise which is somehow gonna turn Owen into a serial killer?

DAN

I just saw something amazing. Paige was writing a song. Like a real song. Made me realize... that's what happens when you don't try to engineer everything. It leaves room for surprises.

(then)

And that's what you bring. To our kids. To our life. To us. That's why I married you.

Ruth's expression softens. Dan sits next to her.

DAN (CONT'D)

Look... I'll never be able to shut off my brain if I see a way to help make our lives better. That's the reason why I ever say or do anything.

RUTH

But sometimes you're so smart, you circle back to stupid. A lot of times by making me feel stupid.

DAN

And I'm sorry for that. It's just growing up, my parents taught me only one thing truly overcomes. Not prayer, not money, not "good vibes" -- just your brain. It's what got them to America after growing up with nothing. I mean, my dad studied about electricity by candlelight. And my brain is what got me through growing up as an awkward Indian kid who couldn't even do one push-up.

RUTH

Aw. Sad.

DAN

I'm serious. Once... these mean kids in our neighborhood threw dead rabbits on our roof. Know what we did?

RUTH

Firebombed the racist a-holes back to hell?

DAN

No. Because my mom said retaliation would create a Negative Feedback Loop. So instead we transformed their vandalism into delicious rabbit tikka masala and dropped it off on their doorstep. We never had a problem with them again.

RUTH

Wow... kinda love that story.

DAN

(points to his head)  
That's why we're all about using this.  
(then, contrite)  
But I know I'm not always right. And you're right in ways I can never be.

RUTH

But you never act like I'm right. I never feel it from you. We're a team here, man. To paraphrase Fatboy Slim,  
(singing)  
*You have to praise me like you...*  
(bleating like a sheep)  
*...shou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-ld.*

Dan laughs, then hands her an iPad.

RUTH (CONT'D)

What's this?

DAN

Praise. I added 100 more metrics to my equation for all the great stuff you learn about someone after marrying them.

Dan grabs the iPad and hands it to Ruth.

RUTH

(reading metric names)  
"Fun Even When Stuck in Cabo Airport with Screaming Infant for 18-Hours Factor"...  
"Scares Neighbors Into Finally Taking Down Christmas Lights Quotient"...  
"Willing to Have Sex With Flu-y Husband Multiplier"... --

DAN

And honestly, that doesn't even scratch the surface of how amazing you are.

RUTH

(keeps reading)

"Conclusion: Incompatible. Do Not Marry." Seriously?! Still?! What's wrong with this thing?!

DAN

Turns out it's the most rigorous equation ever. So I tested out other couples for reference. Brangelina's simulation ended in childless divorce. Barack and Michelle ended in a murder-suicide. Seems from an engineering perspective, marriage is an impossible system.

RUTH

Which means?

DAN

Which means for us to be doing as well as we are -- we're bumblebees, baby!

Ruth laughs and pulls Dan in for a kiss. After a moment, Dan AWKWARDLY RUBS Ruth's ears like Appelbaum showed him.

RUTH

What are you doing?

DAN

Nothing.

**INT. MUKESH & SEEMA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

We're at their big weekly FAMILY DINNER. Seema and Leena check out guys on TINDER.

LEENA

What about this guy? He looks pretty fed-up with society.

SEEMA

He also looks like a moron. Not good enough for you. Next.

Leena SWIPES LEFT as Seema keeps dinging guys.

SEEMA (CONT'D)

(off subsequent photos)

Moron... moron... moron... isn't there some sort of IQ Tinder?

Mukesh and Owen both light up.



OWEN

IQ Tinder? Now that's a business.

MUKESH

We'll write the code as part of your home schooling. Paige, you should join us. Learning machine logic will help with your Precocious Math entrance exam.

DAN

Actually, Dad, she's doing Rock Camp instead.

MUKESH

(beat)

Where the hell is my son?

DAN

Paige is free to use her brain however she wants. As long as she uses it.

PAIGE

Thank god. Because no guy asks any girl in Precocious Math to go anywhere.

RUTH

Wait, that's why you don't want to do it?!

PAIGE

I don't want to be some outcast who never goes on a date.

RUTH

Oh my god. That's ridiculous! This family's full of smart women. Your Seema Ba was the first woman in her village to go to engineering school. How badass is that?

LEENA

Mukesh Dada actually threatened to jump off a bridge if he didn't marry her.

DAN/RUTH/OWEN/PAIGE

Really?!

MUKESH

Seema, what lies have you been spreading?!

Seema gives him a look -- "You know it's true."

RUTH

Listen up, I'm not letting you punk out of being smart for what some idiot boy might think. You're doing Precocious Math.

PAIGE

But Rock Camp --

RUTH

Can wait 'til summer. End of story!

PAIGE

Yes, Mom.

SEEMA

See? This is why I told Dan to ignore his equation and marry you!

RUTH

Wait... you told him to marry me?

SEEMA

Of course! You bring so much.

RUTH

(suspicious, to Dan)  
Did you coach her?

Dan nods "no" -- just as surprised.

RUTH (CONT'D)

(to Seema)

Wow. Thank you. I mean, usually you just ignore me and make me feel like --

SEEMA

Look at those hips. Geometrically perfect for making babies!

Ruth just BALLS HER FIST. Dan grabs it, "praying" to cover.

DAN

(head bowed solemnly)

Thank you, food science engineers, for the bounty of GMOs we're about to eat. You give us the miracle of tomatoes in winter. Amen.

They dig in as we're taken out by Huey Lewis' "*Hip to Be Square*".

DAN (V.O.)

I'll admit that being in this family sometimes makes you want to make a fist. But no matter what challenges we face, there's no problem we can't solve with our mind-fists.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

**CLOSE ON** an iPhone screen.

A **GRAPHIC** tells us we're on the "IQ TINDER" APP.

We see the following profiles:

**PHOTO** of Dan on the court, mid-jump-shot.

IQ: 165

ABOUT: Y'all ready to get mind-fisted at the rim?

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Ruth on a motorcycle, flipping us the bird.

IQ: Seriously, who gets this tested?

ABOUT: I (heart) nerds.

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Paige rocking out, jumping off her guitar amp.

IQ: 165

ABOUT: Currently recovering from a broken leg.

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Owen in a tux, flashing his winning smile.

IQ: 748

ABOUT: I can fool any IQ test or polygraph.

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Leena at a bar, patting an empty stool.

IQ: 163

ABOUT: Hate people, too? Then this stool's for you.

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Seema cooking with chemistry equipment.

IQ: 179

ABOUT: Thanks, but I've already had my pick of men.

*Swipe!*

**PHOTO** of Mukesh, arms wide open.

IQ: 177

ABOUT: Will work for hugs.

*Swipe to BLACK.*

END OF PILOT