

SCRIPT TITLE

AALIA

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Based on, If Any
ORIGINAL

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EXT. FIELD - SUNNY DAY

It's a sunny day, Aalia (8) freely runs in the green fields as if she is flying. She's visibly very happy and wears a orange flowery dress.

A loud sound of a airplane crosses from above her head. She stops to look at it and covers her ears and squints to look at it. The airplane goes behind the mountain and out of sight. Aalia just stands there awestruck by the whole phenomenon.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - AALIA'S BED - BEFORE SUNRISE

Aalia, an 8 years old tribal girl wakes up, rolls her blanket and sits on her bed. She takes out some newspaper/magazine clippings from under her pillow. These are the pictures of a female astronaut (Kalpana Chawala - India born American) smiling in an orange space suit holding a helmet in a rocket. The other pictures are of an airplanes, cities, Eiffel tower and some more people. Aalia touches them and admires them all.

She takes out a paper rocket from under her bed and places it on the wooden shelf next to it. She is awkwardly very quiet and wears some run down clothes.

She takes out her notebook and does her school work studiously. A photo of her father and herself hangs on the wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - BEFORE SUNRISE

Its still dark in the hills of Uttarakhand (Northern state of India). It's a small old mud house, white painted with the makeshift roof (Roof made of husk and bamboo covered with tarpaulin) on it. The sound of the roosters crowing echoes.

Aalia brings some tree branches from behind the house and feeds the cattle. She picks up a heavy axe and cuts some wood into pieces and takes them back inside the house. Her mother speaks from inside the house in a tired voice.

MOTHER (OFF SCREEN)

(Cold)

Have you put on the milk to boil?

(Dudh chada diya?)

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Aalia pours some tea in a steel glass for herself and takes a bite of a biscuit. She is in her patched old school uniform and frayed black school shoes.

She combs her younger sister's hair. Her name is Aahana (4) as the sister just stands there looking up at Aahana.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

The sun has come up. Both the sisters leave the house to go to school.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MORNING

Aalia and Aahana quietly walks side by side on the treacherous road. There comes some boulders. Aalia helps Aahana climb the boulders. Their uniforms get dirty. Aalia leads Aahana's again to the school.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - COURTYARD - MORNING

It's a makeshift school with an open courtyard and a huge tree in the middle. There are some classes on the sides. As the school bells rings, the kids rush to their classes.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - SCHOOL - MORNING

Aalia sits quietly on her seat in the front row in the middle. She takes out a paper and starts to make an airplane out of it. The kids in the back are cracking jokes about her appearance as she just looks at her shoes which are in bad condition. She notices a magazine on the seat next to her and slowly picks it up.

She checks out the pictures in the magazine on her lap and tears a page from it. A boy (Sonu) who's magazine it is snatches it back from her and angrily looks at her.

Sonu is about to hit her but the teacher walks in. Everybody rushes back to their seats and greets the teacher.

The teacher signals them to sit and starts to write on a board.

Aalia sits there uncomfortably. She also takes out her notebook and gets ready to show her homework.

A paper ball hits her head and rolls towards the teacher's feet. Aalia turns to look at the boy who has hit her. They are teasing her from the back. The teacher turns to look at it and looks at Aalia sits there looking guilty and does not make an eye contact. He makes a disgusted face to see her and asks her to stand.

He puts the paper ball in front of her but she just keeps looking down.

TEACHER

(Angry/Demeaning tone)

Look at you! I am sure you have not done your homework.

(Homework to kiya nahi hoga.)

He then asks her couple of questions. She is taken aback by his tone and stands there silently while staring at the ground.

She waits for a moment and then brings out hand/palm. He smashes her palm with the thin wooden stick couple of times. Aalia does not react a bit which irks the teacher more and he hits her one more time.

The teacher then notices her notebook and sees her homework. He realises his mistake for beating her but comments on her bad handwriting instead. He mumbles something 'Like father, like kids'.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

How will somebody read this bad handwriting?

(Itne bure se likha hai, kuch samajh nahi aa raha.)

The other kids laugh at her repeat after the teacher - "Jaisa baap,... (Like father)".

The teacher stares at the kids and everyone gets quiet.

Aalia keeps staring at the ground as the teacher gets back to the board.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - COURTYARD - DAY

Aalia walks to her younger sister, who's waiting for her near the tree. Aahana looks at her and holds her hand. Aalia avoids an eye contact.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - HILLS - DAY

Aalia quietly walks as Aahana keeps checking on her time to time.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - HILLS - DAY

As they walk back from the same path, Aalia notices Sonu along with 2 other boys from her class. All of them stare at her as both the sisters cross them and takes the bridge to go the other side.

Sonu's friend kicks in the mud as the girls walk a little further. They laugh and starts to ease both of them again.

SONU

'Take you dumb looking sister from here, you both look clumsy like the people from you community', 'looks like you also turn out to be a thief like your father'.

(Nikal ja apni pagal behen ke saath yahan se. Apni baap ki tarah tu bhi chor banegi kya?)

On hearing this, Aalia stops. She leaves Aahana on the other side of the bridge and walks back toward the boys. They all get ready and pounces on her as soon as she reaches them. She falls on the ground. Sonu beats her as Aalia takes the blows but doesn't react. The other boys also kick her in the legs.

Aahana breathes heavily as she watches this from the distance.

As soon as one of Aalia's hand breaks free, she hits Sonu on the face and he falls. She jumps on him and punches & kicks him multiple times and tears his shirt. Seeing this, the boys are taken aback while Sonu cries for help. Aalia picks up a stone to hit him but changes doesn't do it. She just stands there alone in anger while the 3 boys gather themselves. Aalia then notices the magazine and picks it up and leaves.

SONU (CONT'D)

Look at this thief. I will complain about this. Get ready for another beating tomorrow.

(Dekha chor chor. Kal masterji se pitwata hu tujhe. Bhag yaha se.)

Sonu shouts 'He will complain to the teacher about this and she should get ready for another beating at school tomorrow'.

Aalia grabs Aahana's hand and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Both of them reach the house and stands at the gate. Aalia's clothes are full of dirt and she has some bruises on her arm and her face. Aahana looks at Aalia's bruised hand and then looks at her.

MOTHER (OFF SCREEN)

Why have you come so late? There is so much work to do. Who will do it?

(Kaha itni der laga di? Saara kaam kaun karega?)

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Aalia stands facing the wall in her school clothes. She looks at her notebook for sometime and then tears it apart in frustration.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

The sun is going down. Their washed school uniforms hangs from the rope. Aalia comes from the back of the house with some straws to feed the goats. She goes to cut the wood with the heavy axe and goes back inside.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The food is being served on their plates. All of them get a meagre amount of rice and sliced potato curry with some green leaves. Aalia squats looking at the food plate while Aahana eats the slice of potato.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aahana gives Aalia her notebook which is now improperly taped.

Aalia who is sitting on the floor while washing the dishes looks at Aahana for a brief moment and then takes the notebook.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - BED - NIGHT

Aalia tucks Aahana in bed and looks at her notebook and fixes it as Aahana is fast asleep.

She looks at her notebook and takes out her collection of magazine/newspaper clippings and looks at them one by one. After a moment she adds some more to the collection from the new magazine.

She is fixated on the female astronaut in the orange space suit. She picks up the paper rocket and ties it with the white thread and hangs it from the roof next to the bulb.

The rocket moves from left to right cutting the light from the bulb on Aalia's face from time to time as she looks at the rocket dangle in air.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - BED - NIGHT

It's dark, Aalia is fast asleep as we hear her heavy/tired breathing.