

Plain Folks

INT. CRAMPED HOME IN THE SUBURBS - NIGHT

Clothes and jackets litter a sofa. MOM (late 40s, thick braid and accent) is making rotis at the stove. SAALIHA (18, short hair and temper) bursts through the door in a Krispy Kreme apron.

MOM
(without missing a beat)
Give your dad this.

She swings open the microwave door, where a cup of milk has boiled over. MEHAK (15, mini-mom) appears from a bedroom.

MOM (CONT'D)
Namaz parli?

Mehak nods. Mom points to her, then the mess in the microwave. Saaliha is already halfway up the stairs as Mom pours the milk over a mug of tea.

MOM (CONT'D)
Ay lo!

SAALIHA
I need to leave!

Saaliha tsks, grabs the tea, pulls the bag out, and spoons in a heap of sugar. She hurdles to the TV room over stacks of bric-a-brac and hands DAD (early 60s, blank) the tea, as he watches a blaring Indian soap opera.

Mom's head pokes out of the kitchen as the main soap operator announces that she's actually her fiancé's identical dead twin.

MOM (V.O.)
Kia hua?

Dad grabs the tea without looking at his daughter or responding to his wife. Saaliha eyes the wall clock.

SAALIHA
Will you be ready to leave in half
an hour?

Before dad can not respond, ABRAHIM (20, only person in the universe) shouts over a banister from upstairs.

ABRAHIM
Lower the volume!

Dad lowers the volume without looking up. Saaliha continues.

SAALIHA

Orientation starts at 7AM. I have
to leave soon.

Saaliha looks over at the screen where the undead twin is now
trying to knife her hus-brother. Mehak jumps onto the couch
with her dinner. Dad hands Saaliha a now empty tea cup.

DAD

Tomorrow morning. It's too late.

SAALIHA

I have to be there at 7—it's
required. I can't be late.

Dad shakes his head.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Jacob needed me to close up today.
We were one short.

Saaliha deflates. Dad nudges the teacup at her again. She
takes it back to the kitchen and heads upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha stares down her bed, which is both two futons and
covered in clothes.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

She emerges with a suitcase.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She shoves rotis in a ziplock and keema in a tuppaware.

MOM

You're going NOW?

Before Saaliha can respond...

MOM (CONT'D)

Arshaaad! Drive her to school.

DAD (O.S.)

Tomorrow!

Mom looks satisfied.

MOM
Tomorrow.

SAALIHA
Can't. Have to be there at 7AM.

Mom looks worried.

MOM
Call me if you get sleepy.

Saaliha hugs her as Mehak leaps up from the couch to join the hug from behind. Her dirty dinner hands leave imprints on Saaliha's shirt.

SAALIHA
Ewww. Bye.

Saaliha leaves. The door closes.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The noises and lights from the house are muffled but still vibrant as Saaliha lugs her things.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Saaliha's vibing on the freeway. Singing her lungs out. A car pulls up alongside her, and a guy in the passenger seat looks in at Saaliha and smiles. She keeps her eyes on the road.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Saaliha calls her sister. No answer. Her call log shows all the outgoing calls to her mom and sister. She pulls up to an abandoned-looking gas station as the phone clock shows 1:30 AM. She looks around, unsettled.

Saaliha shuts off the car, keys in hand. She simulates a punch with keys between her knuckles.

SAALIHA
OW!

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

A nice-looking DESI MAN sits behind the counter, and Saaliha is relieved. She makes her way toward the bathroom at the back of the store.

A man in a cowboy hat stops in the aisle and eyes her. He smiles when she makes eye contact, hands grasping his belt.

Saaliha continues down the aisle. Is he following? Or is that her imagination? She finally grabs the bathroom handle, pauses, and abandons ship—making a beeline to the front of the store with her eyes down.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dawn breaks and illuminates empty Red Bulls and chips packets littering the front seat. A large road sign proclaims, "Welcome to Utah!"

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

A boiled egg, some soggy melon, and unintentionally dried pineapple chunks sit on Saaliha's lap in a brown takeout box. As seats start to fill in around her, she finally looks up from the her "Orientation Packet":

To her right, a row of sleepy white kids. To her left, the same. She squirms. Looks back to the packet. Then back up to scan the rows ahead of her. A sly fake yawn to check the rows behind.

We see the full auditorium now, a sea of white faces, with one brown dot marooned in the center.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Saaliha pulls her car up to a cluster of buildings on what is now a quintessential college fall day. She parks, checks her keys for the building number, and rolls out with her chipped suitcase laden with various duffels. She passes giddy families, snapping selfies and rolling in cart after cart of Ikea's fall collection.

INT. DORM KITCHEN - DAY

Saaliha plops her mom's food onto a paper towel, slides it into the microwave, and hits start.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Saaliha sifts through clothes, post-shower. She pulls out an unexpected prayer rug and beads and shakes her head, peeved.

She turns her head as a distant voice grows closer from outside the front door. Saaliha smiles.

INT. DORM KITCHEN - DAY

BRITTLEIGH (18, white, #blessed) and parents KANDRA and DOUG roll in with pristinely packed luggage. Kandra sniffs the air.

KANDRA

Welp. There's a smell in here. I'm guessing someone didn't clean very well.

DOUG

Well yeah, it's not like we're paying them **30 GRAND A YEAR!**

Kandra pokes around in cupboards and cabinets.

BRITTLEIGH

Guys, we have to leave in five if we want to make the full tour.

Kandra has broken out the Lysol spray.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Saaliha throws off her towel, jumps in some jeans and a hoodie, and heads for the door to hear...

INT. DORM KITCHEN - DAY

The microwave door opens. Brittleigh glances at the contents and rolls her eyes. She pops open the trash can and airlifts the food out of the microwave.

BRITTLEIGH

They cleaned everything but their plate.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Saaliha's smile gives way to horror as the sound of wet food hitting trash can liner echoes down the hall. She gasps in horror. Her eyes widen in horror. Her stomach growls in horror.

INT. DORM KITCHEN - DAY

BRITTLEIGH
Now let's go!

Brittleigh stamps her foot and motions her parents towards the door.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Saaliha sinks to the floor, existentially void.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Saaliha, wet hair and jacket over her hoodie, walks through fading evening light to the cafeteria brimming with people.

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Almost to the front of the line, Saaliha looks around at the happy, loud white families chatting and eating. Some look back. She tucks her hair further into her hoodie.

Now at the front: she has two options, tray to stay or brown box to go. She takes the box.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha eats in front of her laptop on one of those shitty college chairs somewhere between a rocking and dining chair. She's watching a day-in-the-life vlog of a brown girl attending NYU. She douses the bland food in Tapatío and shovels some into her mouth.

She peeks out her window, where she can hear laughter. A group of white kids are sitting at a fire pit outside.

EXT. ORIK HALL - DAY

An old, but stately building looms over the rest of campus like a dour patriarch. It's rugged masonry and ornate casements are more suggestive of an ivy league or a church than a mid-tier state school.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The walls are lined with portrait after portrait of severe-looking professors, regents, donors, bursars, and governors, dating back to the school's founding and glowering down from hand-carved wooden frames. Departmental honors and accolades pepper the plaques in-between.

Saaliha, in visible blush and a vintage suede jacket, sits alone on a bench in the dark, liminal space outside a basement classroom. She checks her phone: 6:30 AM. No one else around. She gets up and tries the knob.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Saaliha enters the door above the tiered, amphitheatre-style lecture hall. She descends to an inconspicuous middle seat and pulls books and binders from her tote bag.

Saaliha is tranquil, comfortable if not content in her usual state: alone. **But she is not alone.**

An extreme wide shot of the classroom shows the indistinct figure of a MAN, stout and severe, sitting up pin straight at a desk several rows back. Even at this distance, his drab but pristine settler garb is out of place. Unstuck from time.

Saaliha continues her idle futzing, heedless as the man raises a small gunny sack from somewhere beneath the desk and unties the cord. He reaches in and draws something to his mouth, surrounded by a halo of snow white beard. Again: Reach. Mouth. Reach. Mouth. Like popcorn. An unnatural CRUNCH, like stone on glass, grows louder with each bite.

To Saaliha, the room is so silent she could hear a pin drop, and so she does. A morsel of the stout man's snack eludes his white-bearded gob and drops to the ground, rolling and bouncing down through the stepped rows of desks.

CLINK. ROLL. CLINK. ROLL. Saaliha raises her head and glances around for the source of the sound, just in time to see it: some round bauble tumbling down from above. She stops it with her foot.

Saaliha raises and inspects it: a chipped bead from the prayer string packed her mother?

Her bewildered face is silhouetted against the pale, rough shirt and barrel chest of the man, who now looms over her from behind, head framed out but body straight on like a posed portrait.

CRUNCH. Saaliha hears it now.

SAALIHA

Oh my god!

She whips around just as...

BANG! A PROFESSOR IN A WOOL BLAZER bursts unceremoniously through the door, followed by a trickle of yawning, fleece-clad freshmen.

PROFESSOR BLAZER

Hello, hello. Some of you will flunk out of this class because it is too hard. If you have a feeling that's you, if you think you can't do the work, if you think you can't be in class at 7 every day, if you think you can't do the heavy reading, I would recommend dropping this class today...

Saaliha snaps to attention and opens a note doc on her well-loved laptop. A WHITE GIRL in and more than a full face of makeup sits down beside her.

WHITE GIRL

Oh. Do you have a pen I can borrow?

Saaliha offers one, before sheepishly offering...

SAALIHA

I like your eyeline...

The girl has turned around to playfully slap the arm of a Centineo type.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Saaliha sits in the same spot, possibly different classroom, with A PROFESSOR IN A BOW TIE and a different set of white kids.

PROFESSOR BOW TIE

How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World & Everything in It...

At this point, Saaliha is watching makeup TikToks in a second window. A CREEPY WHITE BOY leans over.

CREEPY WHITE BOY
I don't think you need all that.

Saaliha half-smiles, scooches away, and closes the tab.

 CREEPY WHITE BOY (CONT'D)
Your skin's the perfect color. It
doesn't need makeup.

 SAALIHA
Oh...

 PROFESSOR BOW TIE
You two lovebirds done making
dinner plans?

Saaliha's relieved, then annoyed.

CUT TO:

Same spot, different kids, Saaliha's dozing off behind her screen. Her face hits the keyboard and she wakes up to the exuberant energy of a WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE GARB.

 WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE GARB
We will be exploring all aspects of
the science of happiness. We will
engage with various disciplines,
including evolutionary psychology,
biochemistry, and even liberal
anthropometry...

A brown hand raises up in the audience, jolting Saaliha fully awake. The professor nods to hear the question from INDIA (19, Dougla Trini, loud and proud).

 INDIA
Professor MoonBear.

 WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE GARB
Just MoonBear, if you please.

 INDIA
I don't see in the curriculum
anywhere we dive into how income,
race, ability, or gender identity
affect happiness.

 WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE GARB
Point well taken, young scholar. I
would love to weave more social
sciences into the discussion, but
we will be primarily focusing on
hard science, just in this course.

INDIA

There is hard science that documents the effects of medical racism in this country. Is there no corollary in your field?

WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE GARB

Well, certainly you can infer...

Saaliha is enthralled as India shuts her laptop, shuffles past irritated and/or chuckling students, and heads for the exit. White Professor in Native Garb is aghast.

WHITE PROFESSOR IN NATIVE
GARB (CONT'D)

Oh dear. "Big yikes," am I right?

India doesn't look back as the door swings shut behind her, briefly framing Saaliha's face full of stunned admiration.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha, draped in hand-me-down sweats, frantically applies traditional kajal eyeliner, so of course she fucks it up.

SAALIHA

Goddammit!

As she licks a Q-tip to start over, she bumps the kajal and it rolls off of her desk and underneath the bed.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Ullu ka pattha!

Saaaliha dives to blindly grasp around beneath the low twin bed, now buried in embroidered quilts and a laid out pink and gold sari top.

Underneath the bed, the eye pencil rests just out of reach of Saaliha's outstretched brown fingertips. Audibly straining, she reaches out one more time to perfectly grab the kajal — **and a pale white hand silently snatches it and recedes into the dark.** Saaliha's hand grasps empty air.

BRITILEIGH (O.S.)

Uber's here!

Saaliha stands up, bumping her head on her desk.

SAALIHA

OW!!

We see over the shoulder of roommate Britleigh, who stands in the doorway in a modest party dress and sucks her teeth.

BRITLEIGH

Oh, you're not ready yet. I
wouldn't even bother getting too
dolled up TBH.

Reverse shot on Britleigh, hair extensions in meticulous Utah curls and face basted in bronzer.

Saaliha rubs her aching head.

SAALIHA

Thanks. Hey, do you have any-

BRITLEIGH

Ok, hurry hurry!

Britleigh lilts out into the hall. As Saaliha watches her go, **there's movement on the bed behind her. The gorgeous sari top is being pulled inch by inch down into the crack between the bed and wall. The last fringe disappears just as Saaliha turns back.**

She goes to the bed to look for her top, then tosses the sheets in increasing frustration.

SAALIHA

What the fuck?!

Britleigh chirps from outside.

BRITLEIGH (O.S.)

Sally-uh? If you want to get your
own car that's totes ok. You don't
even have to pay me back for this
one, even though we said we'd split
it.

Saaliha throws open her closet.

SAALIHA

COMING!

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Saaliha, in a white tank top, jeans, and an ornate beaded necklace, trails after Britleigh up a driveway toward the sound of shouts, crashes, hoots, and hollers. Britleigh chatters ceaselessly as she reapplies lip tint in her compact mirror.

BRITTLEIGH

-but Mikell told McKay that when she said she was saving her honor as a sister of certainty, she meant every last hole. So he took his 10 minute break from the Panda Express and proposed on the spot.

The story is lost on Saaliha.

BRITTLEIGH (CONT'D)

Couldn't you just die?

FWIP!!! THUNK!!! The sound of something whizzing past is punctuated with a splintering crack. The two girls turn to see an axe sunk into a bullseye painted on a propped up piece of plywood.

In the dim light of the yard, a cluster of male figures including A GUY IN A BANANA COSTUME laugh and clink bottles, gesturing to where their projectile narrowly missed the girls.

CRASH!

The sound of glass shattering rings out from the border of the yard. Saaliha turns to see a row of beer bottles lined up on the fence, one newly shattered. **A WEIRD GUY holding a hunting bow turns to stare back at her, looking like a cyclops in mirrored wraparound sunglasses. He exhales a cloud of vape smoke.**

Saaliha turns nervously away and keeps walking.

SAALIHA

Who did you say you knew here?

Britleigh is gone.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Britleigh?

A bloodcurdling scream echoes across the property. Saaliha's eyes dart to the imposing house silhouetted against the night sky. A "Don't Tread on Me" Gadsden flag adorns the facade.

The screaming voice is now yelling.

BRITTLEIGH (O.S.)

That's SO funny!!! I'm also named Britleigh!

Relieved, Saaliha steels herself and heads inside.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Peeling wooden skis.

Firearms in glass cases.

Yellowed, unframed national park posters.

Book spines with inscrutable LDS titles.

Flashes of corduroy and shearling.

A hand slips something into an unattended Solo cup.

A FADED GIRL sucks smoke from a reusable-water-bottle-shaped bong plastered with local stickers.

Everyone is caucasian unless otherwise stated.

White boy cloud rap booms out of blown out speakers as Saaliha stands terrified at the threshold of a sea of grinding, white bodies.

She takes a half step back as our view rotates around behind her, **and we see the ghostly white hand from earlier is now pressed to the small of her back. All it takes is the slightest shove and—**

SAALIHA

Hey!

Saaliha stumbles forward, colliding with the faded girl, whose jungle juice sloshes and spills on the ground.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Ohmygod, I'm so sorry...

The heretofore deafening chatter stops. In perfect sync, the partiers wordlessly revolve into formation of this classic tableau (all white except BRYSON, the one Pacific Islander guy). They stare at Saaliha in judgmental silence.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

I- Um. I'll get some paper towels.

Saaliha rushes off toward the kitchen, avoiding the death glares at every turn.

Her path through the hostile undergrads seems to constrict and compress as she goes, jostling her more and more as various ghoulish figures pop out of the crowd like haunted house scares:

- An extremely DRUNK GIRL clutches onto Saaliha's shirt.

DRUNK GIRL
Are you Indian? I mean, Native
Ameri-***BARFS INTO TRASH CAN***

- **BANANA COSTUME** holds out the roofied solo cup like the evil queen offering the apple.

BANANA COSTUME
Oh, I think this was yours...

- **MCKAY**, a clean-cut **MISSIONARY BOY**, jumps into Saaliha's path.

MCKAY
As-salāmu 'alaykum!

He eyes her up and down lasciviously.

MCKAY (CONT'D)
Punjabi or Gujarati?

Saaliha shoves past him-

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

-bursting into the open air of the kitchen just as the wall of bodies closes up behind her.

She spies the kitchen island laden with liquor, and immediately pours and throws back two shots.

She turns to survey her new surroundings, which contain a STRAIGHT COUPLE sloppily making out while straddling an expensive bike, a GIRL ANGRY CRYING on the phone, and the bow and arrow weird guy from outside. Still staring. Still vaping.

Saaliha pops open a beer and hoists herself up to sit on a small corner of empty countertop.

She glances down at a casserole dish full of funeral potatoes and grimaces.

The potatoes stare back in all their gloppy beigeness.

Later...

The eaten portion of potatoes has expanded to show the passing of time...

...but actually Saaliha is just working her way through a large slice on a paper plate.

Suddenly, her downturned face breaks into a flash of recognition.

Two GIRLS in brand new but freshly cropped university sweats walk over giggling. Saaliha starts to wave.

SAALIHA

Oh hey! You're in my-

The sweats girl she's addressing reaches past her to grab a handle of vodka, then turns and leaves with her friend. Saaliha stops waving, pretending to stretch instead. She hops up and walks over to the window.

She moves to the fridge and stares at the local magnets and wedding or mission reveal party invitations on it, then takes another shot on her way out of the room.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha wanders into a quiet, unoccupied room, lit only by a small window. Dusty moving boxes are stacked up next to folded lawn chairs. Saaliha takes one, plops down, and surveys the scrawled labels of the boxes.

One catches her interest: she slices open the tape with her keys and flips open the tabs-

A photo album. Saaliha boredly looks through photos of two boys in white button-ups and ties gallivanting through an Indian town. There's a photo of a local man sleeping in a charpai while the boys stand over him, flashing smiles and thumbs up.

SAALIHA

What the fuck?

INDIA (O.S.)

What the fuck?!

Saaliha turns, intrigued by the muffled, matching exclamation from the main room. She heads back out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha emerges back into the blaring drums and bass of the main party room.

INDIA (O.S.)

Who's DJ-ing this shit? I need them to die!

The white hand tugs hard on Saaliha's pant leg, trying to hold her back. But she follows the voice to see:

India from class, now dressed up in bright patterns, is pushing a GUY out of the way near the stereo, and trying to jab in her own phone aux cord from home. Holding her back is her friend FLOR (19, Mexican, transfem, piercings).

FLOR
Stop..fighting...you skinny devil!!

She drags India out to the dining room, away from **the crowd of angry BOYS forming around the commotion. They whisper to one another and gesture after the two girls.**

Saaliha stands watching all this unfold, until something on the floor catches her eye.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

India's flailing has mostly subsided as Flor releases her.

FLOR
No more for you, bitch! You're cut off.

Flor snatches a baggie of white powder from India's pocket.

India immediately starts swigging from a whiskey bottle. She comes up for air.

INDIA
Oh fuck!

She pats her chest and back of her neck.

FLOR?
What?

INDIA
My Africa necklace!

SAALIHA (O.S.)
Hey...

Saaliha stands in the doorway with something glittering in her hand.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Is this yours? It was halfway under the ice luge.

India runs over and throws her arms around Saaliha, whose face freezes in baby queer panic. Without thinking, she takes a whiff of India's floral perfume. Flor arches an eyebrow.

INDIA

Thank you!!! You're an angel sent
from the Calvin Klein outlet!

Saaliha looks down at her outfit self-consciously, as India hastily redons her gold necklace with a charm shaped like Africa. She turns and motions for Saaliha to fasten the clasp, and Saaliha sheepishly obliges.

Flor heads for the door.

FLOR

I'm going to grab some water...

INDIA

I want sparkling!

FLOR

You get holy. And you're buying me
scones on the way home.

India makes prayer hands and bows sagely.

FLOR (CONT'D)

What about you...

She looks to Saaliha expectantly.

SAALIHA

Saaliha.

She second guesses.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Or Sal. Water'd be great. Thanks.

Flor nods.

FLOR

Saaliha. I'm Flor.

She looks to India, who's twerking on a grandfather clock.

FLOR (CONT'D)

That is India.

She looks back to Saaliha.

FLOR (CONT'D)

Don't let her out of your sight.

Saaliha is already staring intently at India's happily cross-faded face as Flor walks off.

She's so transfixed that she almost doesn't notice **a book ("Independence, Education, and Strong Mothers (And Other Causes of Homosexuality)")** sitting on the edge of the clock above India's head. The white hand gives a final push and the book falls...

...and Saaliha smacks it across the room just in the nick of time. India cheers.

INDIA
Woooooooo! Shit starter!

Saaliha demurs.

SAALIHA
I'm more of a shit follower.

INDIA
So I'm shit?

They both laugh. India grabs Saaliha's chin and gives a BIG pour of whiskey straight into her mouth, until the returning Flor yanks the bottle from her.

FLOR
She'll choke, you psycho.

Saaliha sticks her tongue out, and shakes her head violently. Eventually looks up, a little dizzy.

SAALIHA
I'm cool.

India cracks up as Flor hands Saaliha a bottled water. As India leans against a wall to steady herself, she knocks a framed picture off of the wall.

The three girls look up at a cluster of similar framed photos, all depicting 1800s white settlers in identical, pressed church clothes. They stare dourly at the camera. India narrows her eyes and points at the settlers, going from one to another.

INDIA
They're all copies.

The music from the other room finally turns over to someone's Brat-esque summer playlist. India closes her eyes, and grooves to the music. Saaliha's mesmerized. Flor shakes her head.

FLOR
(under breath)
Here we go.

Saaliha's woozy now. Her hand clutches the dining table for stability, accidentally grasping India's. India pulls her back into the living room by the shoulder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Disco lights play across the center of the room **around which the brooding boys form an inward facing perimeter**. Saaliha and India, sloppy drunk, dance heedlessly into the center of this menacing dance floor.

Saaliha and India are close, hips both swaying together, hands and arms interwoven. The moment is pure ecstasy.

Flor, lost in the beat, performs her own industrial dance around her horny friends. One ALT ASIAN GUY with gauges eyes her closely from across the room, and she dials up the seductiveness accordingly.

In the periphery of Saaliha's POV, **the party boys advance and shrink the circle**, but India is all she can see. It's as if all the pulsing lights and sounds are radiating from India's being...

Someone cuts the music. SMACK. The reverberating sound of wood on wood. In the corner of the room, a wooden baseball bat has just fallen over unceremoniously, as if pushed. Out of sight, the white hand recedes under an armchair as the bat rolls over to the foot of a BOY. He picks it up. He chokes up on the grip.

FLOR

Time to go...

Flor grabs the oblivious lovebirds by the wrists and drags them toward the front door. **The mob of glowering boys advances in slow, lockstep pursuit, some with their Aryan girlfriends on their arms.**

India reaches toward the kitchen.

INDIA

My Jameson!

FLOR

I'll buy you another one!!!

Flor shoves India out the door.

SAALIHA

I'll get it!

Saaliha takes one step and absolutely eats shit, surrendering to gravity and lying prone on the floor. **As countless canvas sneakers and hiking boots advance into focus**, Flor pulls her up and out of frame.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

As drunken shouts build to a crescendo behind them, the three girls hobble across the lawn and into the adjacent field of tall dried grass.

INDIA

I have to-

FLOR

No you don't!

They run into the grass and duck as **thrashing motion and heavy footsteps seem to approach from every direction.**

Suddenly, a crash. The sounds of a fight breaking out back in the house. The thrashing recedes.

Flor breathes a sigh of relief. The night is still. Then: the sound of an extremely long piss.

INDIA

I did have to!

All three girls laugh. Flor goes to pull India up off the ground.

FLOR (O.S.)

Alright my beautiful, drunk children. Time for bed.

INDIA (O.S.)

Nooooo...party..party..party...

India is dry humping Flor's leg in protest.

Saaliha lies supine, staring up at the night sky. Lost in the easy, hazy euphoria of her first college party. She plays with a long piece of grass and smiles.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha sleeps as the world (and our view) spins around her. In her mind's eye we see India, rendered dreamy and goddess-like.

Then.

Saaliha's smiling response turns sharply to pained unrest as something seems to tug at her head.

(In the dream, a bright, white light flashes, blinding India.)

In reality, the ghostly hand's fingers rake roughly through the thick waves of Saaliha's hair, leaving pin straight tresses in their wake.

(The light in the dream continues to strobe, white hot and unrelenting.)

Saaliha's prized necklace chokes her, pulling tighter and tighter until it splits, scattering tiny beads across the dorm room floor.

(An arm grabs India by the waist and pulls her into the light.)

Finally, the hand takes a firm grip with finger and thumb on both sides of Saaliha's strong, South Asian nose.

Absolute silence, as though the night holds it breath.

Then-

CRACK!!!!

Nothing but pure, burning light.

Viewed from above, twin rivulets of blood trickle down Saaliha's face like crimson tears.

A curtain of straight black hair perfectly frames her agonized expression as she whimpers but does not wake.

Viewed up close, the thick hem of a long woven garment drags roughly across the floor, out the door...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

...and down the hall, making scratchy sounds as it slides over the wood laminate and up to a closed door. The door creaks open.

INT. OTHER DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Britleigh is fast asleep. Full face of makeup. Arm dangling over the bed. The arm is gently lifted and set back on the duvet by unseen hands.

Close on Brittleigh's face, as the ever-present white hand gently strokes her hair and cheek.

Smiling down at the bed from every angle, filling the room with their pleated day dresses, black silk bonnets, and lace arm coverings, are a flock of perfectly identical, perfectly pious 1800s settler women. They're hueless, all black and white as though they stepped out of the portraits from the party house.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha chokes awake, coughing up blood.

INT. MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

A NURSE walks in. She picks up Saaliha's backpack from a chair, sets it on the ground, and takes a seat.

NURSE

Hello. What is your primary concern today?

Saaliha, seated on the paper table thing, is looking up to avoid dripping blood on the floor. The tissue she's using is already soaked.

SAALIHA

My nose.

The nurse looks at her, unmoved.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

I think it's broken.

NURSE

What happened?

SAALIHA

I fell.

The nurse starts typing notes on a desktop.

NURSE

How many drinks did you have last night.

SAALIHA

Zero.

The nurse stares. Saaliha stares back.

NURSE
Is that usually how much you drink?

SAALIHA
Yes.

NURSE
What about drug use?

SAALIHA
No.

NURSE
Sexually active?

SAALIHA
Not...currently.

NURSE
Men, women or both?

SAALIHA
...

NURSE
We need an accurate account of your
sexual history.

She doesn't look up from the computer.

SAALIHA
Men, I guess.

NURSE
Oral, vaginal, anal, digital or all
the above.

Saaliha squirms.

Beat.

SAALIHA
Oral and digital.

NURSE
History of trauma or sexual
violence?

SAALIHA
No. I fell.

NURSE
In the past.

SAALIHA

Not sexual. Not here.

NURSE

Ever report it to the police?

SAALIHA

No.. I.. I'm getting late for class.

NURSE

Oh, okay, let me get the doctor then!

EXT. STUDENT HEALTH CENTER - DAY

Saaliha walks out with a nasal splint supporting her bruised and battered nose. She holds a bill for \$3700. She walks past a young pregnant couple on their way in.

Saaliha's phone lights up with a FaceTime from Mom. She cancels the call and calls back.

SAALIHA

Mama. Internet nihen, what's up?
Good. Classes are good. Gonna need a job, I already have two parking tickets...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha sits on her bed with a textbook. Headphones in, surrounded by papers. Britleigh laughs loudly with a boy in the next room.

Saaliha reaches for a Cheeto at the edge of the bed, **but recoils when her fingers touch something fleshy. Slender white fingertips disappear just over the side of the bed as Saaliha's jolt sends her slipping and falling to the floor herself.**

Landing on her side facing the bed, Saaliha stares into near complete darkness. Until she can just make out the slight figure of a waifish woman in black, younger than the previous settler women, scratching the carpet in an erratic fashion.

The motion stops. **Then the figure crawls, scratching and snarling, towards Saaliha. Saaliha screams, jumps to her feet, and bolts out the door.**

INT. COMMON AREA - NIGHT

She runs to Britleigh's door and bangs frantically on it.

SAALIHA
BRITLEIGH!

BRITLEIGH (O.S.)
Oops haha.

She laughs more quietly as the spectre emerges from Saaliha's room into the hall. Saaliha runs out into the night.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Saaliha sprints through the empty corridor.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

The grounds are unnaturally quiet, save for Salluha's out-of-breath running, the rustling of leaves, and the distant sound of Britleigh getting laid.

Saaliha glances around, panicked, until the main dining hall building comes into view, lights still on. She runs faster.

INT. RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION - NIGHT

Saaliha sprints onto the help desk like a life raft. The two attendants, Tommy (19, Native, dressy clothes with traditional jewelry) and Beck (19, white, wheelchair for limb difference and snapback for swag).

SAALIHA
I..I.need campus security.

TOMMY
Okay, I'll need to tell them what the call is about?

SAALIHA
There's someone in my dorm!

TOMMY
Someone you don't know?

SAALIHA
Yes! A white lady.. but like, evil.

TOMMY
Have you met your roommate yet?

SAALIHA
It's not her! She was fucking
hiding underneath my bed!

BECK
Whoa. Hold up...

SAALIHA
Yeah, she was like some sort of
crazed..I don't know! She smelled
bad too.

Beck and Tommy exchange a knowing look.

BECK
Was she dressed like the lady on
the raisin box?

SAALIHA
YES!

Tommy pulls a heavy-looking black bag from under the desk.

TOMMY
Let's go!

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Tommy walks fast as Beck whizzes along in his motorized
chair. Saaliha is wiped trying to keep up.

SAALIHA
Is security meeting us there?

TOMMY
They won't do shit.

SAALIHA
How do you..

BECK
Cuz she's a cunt, and so are they!!

SAALIHA
You know her? Was she under your
bed?

As the trio reaches Salluha's door, Tommy removes a
collapsable nightstick from his bag and cracks it into shape.
Beck pours a pouch of ninja stars into his lap.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

What are-

TOMMY

Don't let her get in the closet.

BECK

Fire in the hole!

He keys open the door and the two boys charge inside.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Beck and Tommy burst into the room, and Britleigh gets up from her knees and screams while McKay pulls her hoodies over his crotch.

TOMMY

Housing and Res Ed. Here to verify
a resident complaint.

Britleigh slides a shot glass into the sink. She puts back a dangling bra strap and turns back toward the hall.

BRITLEIGH

Sa-lee-ya!!!

SAALIHA

Hey...

Saaliha sheepishly waves from the front door.

BRITLEIGH

Did you call campus security
because we were literally watching
a movie?

Beck nods at a retainer the floor.

BECK

Fallen soldier.

McKay scoops it up.

MCKAY

Thanks man.

McKay tries to dap up Beck, who has limited arm mobility. Basically awkward.

BRITLEIGH

Don't you knock or something.

TOMMY

The resident felt she was in danger.

Saaliha is mortified. Britleigh stares daggers at her.

SAALIHA

I thought I saw something...

McKay raises an eyebrow.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Not you! I think I overreacted.

She starts to shove Tommy and Beck out the door.

BECK

No! I've seen her too! That plain-and-tall-ass bitch! She took my OG kush! SHE TOOK MY OG KUSH!

TOMMY

Call us if you see anything!

Saaliha shuts the door, and faces the angry and bemused couple.

SAALIHA

I-

BECK (O.S.)

She'll come for your stash too!
Give it to me for safe keeping!

Saaliha gives up and scuttles down the hall, averting her gaze.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha flips on every light in the room, and combs every surface. Under the bed, the desk. The room is uncomfortably bright. She's hyperventilating a bit. Pupils dilated.

Beat.

She grabs a pillow and blanket and storms out.

INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Saaliha once again turns on all the lights, and makes herself a nest on the old, musty, mysteriously stained dorm couch.

She glances in every direction, eyes still wide while she recedes into the sofa with her blanket over her, never further from sleep. Britleigh's back to giggling.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Saaliha's wearing a vest and name tag, emblazoned with her misspelled name. She's getting a tour of the store from the MANAGER.

MANAGER
Here's English lit...

A student bumps into Saaliha as if she doesn't even exist. Saaliha doesn't react.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Here's Art History...

They walk to the edge of the store, a dimly lit and unglamorous section.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Oh, and the Mormon history section.

SAALIHA
I thought that was at the front.

MANAGER
That was LDS Studies. That's more religious studies, and this is more history.

They move on.

SAALIHA
Okay, I think I get the layout.

SUPERVISING CLERK
Great! Then let's get you started.

CUT TO:

At the checkout counter, Saaliha scans a thick textbook for a frazzled STUDENT.

STUDENT
Are you sure this is the sixth edition?

The cover says "Sixth Edition."

SAALIHA

Yes.

STUDENT

Can I sell it back at the end of the quarter?

A sign behind Saaliha says "Sell Back Your Books at the End of the Quarter!"

SAALIHA

Yes.

The register shows \$59.99. The student grimaces and fishes in their pocket.

STUDENT

Do you accept Panda Points® ?

Saaliha pockets the Panda Express coupons and glances around. She scribbles on a post-it.

SAALIHA

Go to this website. Download the PDF. Don't click on the big titties.

The student happily walks off as Saaliha's starts scanning an econ textbook for the next customer. She finally looks up.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Oh! Hey!

In the harsh light of the bookstore, India looks unrecognizably buttoned up. Literally. Her typical flowy, vibrant top has been traded in for a muted button up, and her normally curly mane is in a tight braid now.

INDIA

Hey.

She looks like she's seen a ghost. She avoids Saaliha's gaze.

SAALIHA

We met at the party, remember?

Saaliha touches India's arm. She recoils.

INDIA

Mmhmm.

She scoots the book closer to the till, glancing over her shoulder. Beat.

SAALIHA
 (whispering)
 You pee'd in the field?

India's expression is almost pained. She goes for her wallet.

INDIA
 Iwasreallydrunk! And high. I should
 not have been doing what I was
 doing last night.

Now Saaliha's the hurt one. She backpedals.

SAALIHA (WHISPERING)
 No, I'm sorry. Maybe I dreamed
 that. No—I wouldn't dream about
 that. Your pee.

India grabs her purchases, forces a smile, and leaves.

Saaliha closes her eyes and shakes with self-rage. Then she gets over it and flips the "Open" sign to "Closed" on her way out the door.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
 Taking my break.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Saaliha half-chases the aloof India to her Suzuki.

SAALIHA
 Hey. India!

India slows down and looks back. Her pathetic, blank expression shakes away Saaliha's butterflies.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
 Are you ok?

India turns again.

INDIA
 I have to go.

She yanks opens the car door, revealing Flor waiting in the passenger seat.

FLOR
 Hiiii Saaliha—OHMYGOD! What the
 fuck happened?

Saaliha instinctively grabs her nose, wincing at the pain.

SAALIHA

Hi! I don't know, actually. Did you see me fall while I was blacked out?

FLOR

Pobrecita! No, we got you back to your room. Maybe you fell out of bed?

Saaliha reflects.

SAALIHA

I have been doing that...and having weird dreams.

Flor gasps.

FLOR

Me too! I had a nightmare that I was going on a *hike*. And you, and you, and you were there.

She points to India, Saaliha, and the school's dancing tomahawk mascot that India has just hung on the mirror in plush form.

INDIA

You already said yes...

Flor groans, then reaches out to Saaliha.

FLOR

Come! Come come come! It's on the big mountain at 2.

Saaliha gives a thumbs up and heads back toward the bookstore.

SAALIHA

Ok!

India eyes Saaliha coolly in the rear view, but says nothing as Saaliha sadly meets her gaze.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

TRIPP (20, athletic but dorky) is wearing a Housing and Residential Education shirt and addressing a group of mostly underclassmen, either cliqued up or standing awkwardly. Saaliha rocks up, a little winded from the walk from the parking lot. She scans the crowd.

TRIPP

Thank you for joining us for the Annual Dining Table hike to the Desert College hillside letters. Please make sure you have appropriate shoes on and a fully-charged flashlight. We do not want anyone getting a faceful of bush this year.

Snickers from the crowd.

TRIPP (CONT'D)

It's not funny. Her hand-crank started to lose power. She couldn't find the button. If they hadn't shaved down the whole mound, she'd still be down there flickering.

India and Flor are easily spottable in the crowd. Saaliha breathes a sigh of relief and makes her way to the bobbing, black-haired heads.

TRIPP (CONT'D)

We come here to celebrate the founding of our university. Here, where president Phillip Tall convened with his warriors of light to build their bushel on a hill. In this meeting they set their intention to bring knowledge and healing to the valley, and laid the first stone for the construction of what is today the residence hall center.

Saaliha makes it to Flor and India, and Flor proffers a vape. Before Saaliha can accept, India swipes and pockets the pen, annoyed. She moves slightly forward in the crowd, closer to Troy's droning, as Flor and Saaliha exchange a look.

SAALIHA

Has she been different—

FLOR

Since the party? YES! She stayed in her room for like a full day and then came out all sweaty and ate a pot of plain oatmeal. I think she has mono.

TRIPP

Girls in the back...

Tripp and the crowd are staring at Flor Saaliha.

TRIPP (CONT'D)
This is a private event.

Flor rolls her eyes. India interjects politely.

INDIA
We go to the D.

Flor gives her a perplexed look.

TRIPP
Oh, great! Happy to have you.
Anyways, let's get started.

Flor and Saaliha look around as the rest of the crowd sips on university-branded water bottles. Saaliha addresses a nearby cluster.

SAALIHA
Excuse me...

No one acknowledges her. Flor grabs a bottle from a weak-looking freshman, and points to his friends.

FLOR
Share.

Everyone starts their way up the mountain. Only the sound of boots crunching leaves, and wind blowing through jackets and hair, pierces the eerie veil of quiet that falls over the group. There's a trance-like quality to the hikers, as the brushes seem to make way and unnatural sunlight breaks through the dusk to light a path.

Flor and Saaliha are weirded the hell out, but dare not break the silence. They check in via glances, in-between shielding their eyes to find their footing, and surveying the transcendental calm on the faces all around them, including India's.

Saaliha slips on a rock and falls to the ground, scraping her knee, but a burly arm hoists her back up and into the flow as quickly as she fell. She tries to examine her cut, but the crowd forces her forward. She can no longer see Flor.

Shadows of branches encroach from behind as the sun meets the horizon, just touching Saaliha's neck as the mob surges on into the shrinking but intense circle of light. Crunch, crunch, crunch. Cracks form in the ground beneath the stampeding hiking boots as they make their final ascent to the letter "D" on the mountain face.

There's a collective gasp and murmur a little ahead of Saaliha. She fights her way forward to see what's happened. **Flor is collapsed on the edge of the trail, sweaty and flushed.**

SAALIHA

Hey! Someone get help! Hiker down!

Saaliha fans Flor's face with her hand. **The white hand of a STUDENT HIKER grabs her shoulder.**

STUDENT HIKER

Emergency services can't come here.
It's sacred land.

SAALIHA

What?! Are you high? This is a
public school!

India appears at Flor's side, calmly pouring water into her mouth as she drifts in and out of consciousness. **Tripp's disembodied voice rings out from the mountaintop.**

TRIPP (O.S.)

This happens every year with at
least one student, don't worry.

Saaliha is hysterical, tearing up.

SAALIHA

What are you talking about? What
about the bush girl?! Help me lift
her up! Fuck!

She can barely see, the sunlight pierces through the shoulders and arms of the crowd, blinding her every time she looks up.

Flor gasps for air, struggling to breathe. Saaliha hoists her up by the armpits, not strong enough to lift her completely.

TRIPP (O.S.)

She's fine!

SAALIHA

No! I'm taking her down!

The bodies forms a wall, blocking Saaliha's path. Pale, ghostly hands burst from the cracks in the ground, pulling Flor down. Saaliha screams.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Don't touch her!

Saaliha stomps on the hands, while Flor struggles to stay conscious. **India has stepped back into the crowd.**

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
What are you doing?!

Saaliha hauls Flor to her feet and sling her arm across her shoulder with pure adrenaline. She stumbles, as Flor finally comes to enough to stabilize them both.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Go! Just go!

The crowd begins to sing as Saaliha shoves one Patagonia'd body after another out of the way, clearing a path back down.

CROWD
*They the builders of the nation
Blazing trails along the way
Stepping stones for generations
Were their deeds of ev'ry day*

Saaliha's in tears, blood dribbling from her splinted nose. Flor is flushed and exhausted, fighting not to collapse.

CROWD (CONT'D)
*Building new and firm foundations
Pushing on the wild frontier*

Saaliha and Flor make it down to the foot of the mountain, and Flor starts regaining her strength. Saaliha, bloody and tearful, takes one final backward glance and sees India shoulder to shoulder with two other hikers. She's listlessly lip sync's the song.

CROWD (CONT'D)
*Forging onward, ever onward
Blessed, honored Pioneer*

INT- RESIDENCE HALL CENTER- DAY

Saaliha rushes through a group of students playing ninja, smacking their hands away as she drags a flushed Flor by the arms.

Tommy and Beck are behind the help desk again, helping.

STUDENT
Oh c'mon man! \$50 is insane.

TOMMY
Agreed. That's why the first three lockouts are free.

STUDENT

I come here all the time. I'm a regular!

BECK

That's a good point lowkey.

There's a commotion in line as Saaliha pushes past other aggrieved youths. Beck and Tommy spot her, see half-conscious Flor, and wordlessly put up the "Back in 5 minutes" sign and whisk them both away from the crowd.

INT. MAILROOM - DAY

Saaliha props Flor up on a stool.

BECK

I've seen this happen before.

SAALIHA

To who?

BECK

Me. I was astral projecting. What'd she take?

SAALIHA

Nothing! She was normal when we started the hike.

Tommy and Beck nod knowingly. Tommy rummages through his tote and pulls out a tea bag.

TOMMY

I'll be back.

SAALIHA

Where're you going?

Flor starts hyperventilating, unable to catch her breath.

BECK

Take an edible from the top pocket of my backpack.

Beck does a 180 on his chair, and Saaliha complies, pulling out a loose gummy. She feeds it to Flor, who chews.

BECK (CONT'D)

You'll feel better in 15. What flavor'd you get?

Flor's voice is weak

FLOR
Cat hair...

SAALIHA
She's talking!

Saaliha nearly collapses with relief. Tommy walks back in with a cup of steaming tea. He blows on it and hands it to Flor.

TOMMY
Green ephedra. It's good for a bunch of things.

Flor sips, while Saaliha looks at Tommy and Beck expectantly.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
I went on that hike too.

Saaliha instinctively looks to Beck.

BECK
That's how I ended up in this chair.

SAALIHA
Oh my god!

TOMMY
That's not true. But **I** almost fell of the edge, and cut my shin so bad you could see bone.

Saaliha's horrified.

SAALIHA
Did you see...

She doesn't want to finish the thought, but Tommy nods.

TOMMY
Actually it didn't feel like I fell. It felt like I was pushed.

Beat.

SAALIHA
What's out there?

Beck and Tommy are at a loss. Flor has drifted off to sleep. Tommy takes her empty cup.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
You don't know either, do you?

Saaliha turns to leave.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get her a blanket.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Saaliha marches resolutely through rows of cars, but every few seconds a paranoid glance gives lie to her tough front. She turns to check a half-heard sound and stumbles over a divider, dropping her bag and sending a lip gloss skittering into the darkness.

SAALIHA
Fucking tote bags!

She scrambles after the gloss, peering underneath a parked luxury crossover it seemed to roll toward. She psychs herself up for the task at hand, gets down on all fours and dives under the truck, feeling around in the dark. No dice.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey!

Saaliha's startled under the car. She pulls herself up from under it.

SAALIHA
I'm sorry. I dropped my-

The man is approaching from around the car. Saaliha scuttles backwards until she's pinned between two car door mirrors.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Is this yours? I think you dropped it.

It's dark, and she squints to see the man's hand extended, holding something indiscernible.

SAALIHA
Oh yeah! Thanks I-

Suddenly she spots it—right under her nose on the concrete. The lip gloss.

Panic. Without a word, Saaliha shimmies between the two cars, creating some distance between her and the man.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Never mind! That's not mine.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

You sure?

Saaliha turns away, starts speed walking further into the lot. Looking back periodically.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Wait...

The man shuffles closer to her now. Saaliha picks up her pace and jogs forward. Sweat collects on her upper lip and pits. But the footsteps behind her are loud and getting faster.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hang on..

Saaliha's in fight or flight mode, breaking into a full jog just as—salvation! Another figure at the edge of the darkness ahead, walking across the lot toward the treeline. Stout and in some kind of hat. A parking attendant or groundskeeper? Saaliha shouts, hoarse and desperate.

SAALIHA

Hey! There you are!! I couldn't find you; I'm parked back there!

Seen up close, the figure tilts their head into shadowy half-view, slurping up the chain and pendant of India's Africa necklace. The man from the lecture hall.

Saaliha wheezes as she slows toward the stranger, palpably relieved.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

What's up? Are we getting froyo or—

In an instant the man rears up and turns on his heel, and everything is light. A halo of day encircles his form in the dead of night, as if God himself flicked on the switch. Saaliha screams.

MAN'S VOICE

Oh fuck!

Saaliha's random man pursuer shields his eyes and runs back into the darkness. Saaliha falls backward to the ground. The glowing man drops something that glimmers.

A look of recognition from Saaliha: it's India's Africa necklace. She jolts up and runs for dear life as the impossible, searing corona fades back to black behind her.

She mashes her key fob until she finally hears a chirp. She closes in on her car, flings open the door and connects her phone as she dives into the driver's seat.

Saaliha reverses out of the spot like a bat out of hell. She drives out of the parking lot, down the hill, into the town center.

Saaliha takes heaving, panicked breaths. She wipes away tears frantically to keep her eyes on the road. She looks in the rear view mirrors, making sure she isn't being followed.

She passes a "Jesus Saves" billboard with Christ staring down at her passing car.

SAALIHA (UNDER HER BREATHE)

Shit.

Saaliha dials her phone.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Mom, can you recite the Ayatul
Kursi to me?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha cowers under the covers holding a calligraphied necklace in one hand and a prayer bead in the other.

Saaliha sleeps, albeit fitfully.

The night is peaceful, all things considered.

Until...

It's barely audible at first, but the sound of muffled tears starts to filter through the wall. Someone's crying in the dorm.

Saaliha tosses, turns, and finally opens her eyes. She props herself up and listens. The sobbing goes from vigorous to more muted to vigorous again. Saaliha half yells.

SAALIHA

Britleigh?

Saaliha gets up out of bed and walks to the edge of the mud circle. She hesitates, putting on slippers but not moving, until there's a louder wail.

Saaliha rushes out of the circle and out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Saaliha speeds down the hall as the crying reaches fever pitch. She bangs on Britleigh's door.

SAALIHA
Britleigh? Britleigh?!

BRITLEIGH (O.S.)
Saaliha?

SAALIHA
I'm coming in!

Saaliha bursts, having picked up a t-shirt cannon somewhere along the way. Britleigh is ensconced in her down comforter, unseen.

The only light is from a single scented candle. Saaliha fumbles for the light switch.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
What's going on?

Britleigh's voice takes on a strange timbre.

BRITLEIGH (O.S.)
You...you'll be going to the outer darkness!

Saaliha is weirded tf out. She finds the switch, flicking it back and forth to no avail.

SAALIHA
I'm sorry? What..?

Britleigh rises up until she's standing on the bed. As the blankets fall away, it's clear that she's still passed out asleep, but her mouth moves like a ventriloquist dummy.

BRITLEIGH
Weeping, wailing..

Behind a terrified Saaliha, in each corner of the room, the bonneted settler women stand muttering under their breath.

Eyes still closed, Britleigh smiles wide to reveal a mouthful of rotting teeth.

SAALIHA
WHAT THE FUCK.

Britleigh whispers.

BRITLEIGH
To your endless torment!

She leaps from the bed, gnashing her freakish teeth like a rabid dog as she pins Saaliha to the floor. The settler women begin to close in.

SAALIHA
AAAAHH! HElp!!! HeLp!!!!

Britleigh chomps down on her forearm.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Waauahahaaggh!!!

A settler woman bends down and wraps the lace edge of her dress around Saaliha's face. Saaliha's pained howls are choked away in the dark as her eyes roll back in pain.

She flails and pulls hard on the leg of the woman suffocating her, sending her tumbling into Britleigh, who releases her bite.

Saaliha grabs the t-shirt gun and smacks Britleigh in the face with the butt end, then stands and turns to find the door she entered through has disappeared.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
What?!

She suddenly notices all the settlers, including the younger one who snickers at her from under Britleigh's bed.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Oh god. Allahu laa ilaha illa-
AAAAAHHH!

Britleigh bites into Saaliha's shoulder, drawing blood. Saaliha pushes her away and fires a cheaply made spirit shirt that wraps around Britleigh's head, sending her stumbling backward into a dresser and onto the floor.

Britleigh's hair feeds into her motorized paper shredder, which starts to pull and shred as she screams.

BRITLEIGH
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGHHHHHH!!!

Saaliha runs to the window and undoes the latch. She pulls herself onto the lawn and sprints away from the dorm, away from Britleigh's frenzied screeching.

SAALIHA
FUCK!! UTAH!!!!

INT. RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION - NIGHT

Saaliha hides behind the abandoned help desk as lights and sirens cut through the night.

CUT TO:

INT. RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION - DAY

Dawn breaks through the shutters of the RHA office as Beck whirs over to the desk to open up shop. His wheels stop short alongside the desk, foregrounded over Saaliha's wide-awake face like a cage. She huddles unblinking on the carpet.

BECK

Whoa! You can't be sleeping under there! I have dibs!

Saaliha gets up, dark circles under her eyes.

BECK (CONT'D)

Are you ok, dude?

Saaliha stares at the wall. She's wearing the shirt from the night she left home, still stained with her sister's grubby handprints.

Saaliha lowers her guard finally and hugs him. After a beat she pulls away.

SAALIHA

I need your white ass to come with me.

INT. RESIDENT HOUSING ASSOCIATION OFFICE - DAY

Large windows facing the dorms and the mountains behind them. Desk with name plate: BRITTA HINCKLEY, Assistant Director of Residence Hall Services. Behind it, BRITTA: mid-thirties, peaked in grade school engergy. Wearing those Taylor Swift friendship bracelets.

There's "Safe Space" sticker on a cork board, alongside pictures of Zion hikes with persumable students and ski trips with all other white women. A family photo with young, blond kids and a lanky husband.

BRITTA

Seliya?

Britta is looking at her with a blank smile.

BRITTA (CONT'D)
Hinckley Hall?

SAALIHA
Yes, room 421. My roommate is
Britleigh Spencer.

Britta's smile drops.

BRITTA
We've been looking for you.

SAALIHA
She attacked me last night.

Beck swallows nervously.

BECK
She bit her.

Britta begins to dial a number on her phone.

SAALIHA
I don't feel safe...

BRITTA (ON THE PHONE)
I have her, Britleigh's room
mate...mmhmm.. yes, I'll have her
here.. thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. RESIDENT HOUSING ASSOCIATION OFFICE - DAY

A POLICE OFFICER has arrived.

POLICE OFFICER
She was unconscious when we found
her. She hasn't been able to
provide a statement.

SAALIHA
I didn't do that to her!

POLICE OFFICER
I highly doubt that Britleigh will
corroborate your story. You make
sure to be available when we need
you next.

Saaliha nods. Beck and Tommy wait nearby.

TOMMY

Just let her go already. You got what you need.

The officer waves them all off and Tommy steers Saaliha away. He shoots Britta a look.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

She'll need temporary housing.

Britta sighs with a stern expression.

EXT. DORM - EVENING

Tommy, holding a box of odds and ends, holds the dorm door open with his foot. Beck carries a pile of clothing on his lap, while Saaliha drags a suitcase in and up the staircase.

INT. DORM - EVENING

Flor is making their way out of the dorm she shares with India.

FLOR

I'm not saying Nick Galifianakis doesn't look good. It just would have been nice if one of the Masters of the Universe was a twink...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Saaliha stops in her tracks. She makes eye contact with India, sitting on the bed as the door shuts.

FLOR

Saaliha!! You moving in? Ugh, I want to help but those fuckers took my hormones and I'm feeling like ass.

Saaliha comes to and sees that Flor is still looking wiped out. She calls over her shoulder.

SAALIHA

No need!

FLOR

Text me your room number! I'll bring some caf Jell-O Salad!

Saaliha laughs and flips her off. Tommy and Beck follow her.

BECK

I want some...

TOMMY

Sometimes I forget you're also from here.

Beck seems pleased with himself.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

But then you remind me.

Beck is crest-fallen.

INT- SCHOOL BUILDING- DAY

Saaliha trudges through the empty hall, as one of Professor MoonBear's rambling stories echoes tinnily from the far door. Something catches her eye.

Saaliha stops, frozen in front of a pastoral scene rendered in vibrant oil paint. A colossal panorama on canvas stretching from floor to ceiling. It's always been here, looming but never of note.

Until now.

A dozen settler women are somberly seated, each indistinguishable from the next in their black silk dresses. And in the foreground, eye-to-eye with Saaliha herself, the youngest among them.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

As students stand up and head for the exit, Saaliha is perched in her usual middle row seat of the sloped lecture hall, staring down at:

India. Front row, center seat. Laughing and comparing papers with Professor MoonBear. Double dutch braids. Free People peasant top.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

India exits the classroom, smooths her blouse, and checks her phone. One text from "Angel from party " that reads "I'm waiting outside don't freak out". India squints, reserved.

SAALIHA (O.S.)

Did you get my text?

India turns and finds her face inches from Saaliha's. Saaliha's eyes are bleary from lack of sleep. India jumps back and pulls back a fist.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

I wanna help you. I know something fucked up happened to you after the party.

India starts to walk away.

INDIA

I'm good.

Saaliha grabs her hand.

SAALIHA

The pilgrims. I saw them too. Under my bed, and in my roommate's room, and coming out of the ground on the mountain- And there!

She points to the giant painting.

India looks overwhelmed, but doesn't release Saaliha's hand. Instead she glances around for onlookers before yanking her into a single bathroom that looks like it's been unchanged for a century.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Saaliha whispers conspiratorially as she checks the stalls for eavesdroppers.

SAALIHA

Did they threaten you?

India grabs Saaliha, pins her to the wall, hard, and claps a hand over her mouth. Saaliha grunts, but it doesn't sound pained.

INDIA

Leave me alone. Turn around.

Saaliha obediently faces the wall as India squats on the toilet and opens the floodgates.

INDIA (CONT'D)

I don't know you. If you're the
clingy blur that I half remember
from that tweaker hillbilly
hoedown, then you did not make any
kind of impression that would
explain all this extraness.

The piss stream finally ends. Saaliha, still turned away,
looks hurt.

SAALIHA

It's possible to be too hydrated,
you know. And what do you mean.

India zips up, marches over, and angrily starts washing her
hands.

INDIA

You stalking me like a lost kitten,
giving me those sad eyes because I
don't want to hang out, cornering
me outside my classes-

Saaliha can't believe what she's hearing.

SAALIHA

Stalking?! I'm in that class! You
came into my work! I'm trying to do
something about the vampire
tradwives from that fugly painting
and their large husband. And I know
they did something to you to,
because if that wasn't true you
would have said so by now, and I—

She pulls off her hoodie and points to her neck.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

I could use some help too.

India turns away at the sight of Saaliha's missing chunk.
Saaliha grabs her by the shirt.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Please don't ignore me anymore.

India pushes Saaliha away, ripping open her sweater and
revealing a matching wound along her collarbone. Both girls
are breathing heavy. India covers herself back up.

INDIA

I was being polite! But for the
record, yes, you are just insane!
(MORE)

INDIA (CONT'D)

And none of what you're saying
makes any sense!

It's a full-on screaming match at this point.

SAALIHA

YOU'RE acting insane! You're
gaslighting me like you weren't
fucking cool literally three days
ago! Like you weren't ditching
class, and snorkeling coke, and
fighting frat guys to play horny-
ass R&B so you could rub your ass
all over MY PUSSY, BY THE WAY!
After all I did was return your
cheap Africa necklace, which you
should keep better track of!

Saaliha fishes the necklace out of her pocket and holds it
out.

INDIA

You crazy hoe...

SAALIHA

I didn't *steal* it! The Jesus guy
was eating it or something.

India swipes it from her hand. Saaliha watches as India
stomps off toward the exit. When she's almost clear, Saaliha
calls out.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Flor could have died!

India stops in her tracks. She turns around to have the final
word.

INDIA

So could I.

Saaliha holds her gaze, but less resolute now.

INT. SAALIHA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha sits in a sparse room texting Beck.

SAALIHA

Where you at?? I'm freaking out by
myself.

BECK

Coming! I can't see my ramp, it's
so fucking dark!

Saaliha looks out her window expectantly. She dials a number.

SAALIHA

Ami, kia haal hai? Mehak kaisi
hai?... Acha.. Aur Ibrahim?... Good.
And dad.. is he behaving?

Saaliha swallows when she asks. Beat.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Are you sure?...okay, okay.. I was
just checking.

A knock at the door.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Acha. Acha. I have to go. Bye.

Saaliha opens the door to a very drunk Flor and India.

FLOR

Hooty-hoo neighbor, would you care
for some libations?

Flor flashes a case of beer and bottle of vodka from a
backpack. Saaliha gleefully let's them in. She turns to
India.

SAALIHA (WHISPERING)

I thought I was *insane*.

India flicks Saaliha's nose flirtatiously.

INDIA

That's what I like about you.

CUT TO:

Shots, more horny dancing, flickering fairy lights.

Thud. Something bumps Saaliha's door, making the girls yelp.

BECK

LET ME IN!

Beck sounds distressed. The girls shoot each other a look.
Flor rushes to the door, brandishing a vodka bottle as a
possible weapon. She flings the door open as Beck rushes in.

BECK (CONT'D)

I just saw—

Beck is out of breath.

INDIA AND SAALIHA

What?!

BECK

Tommy...he...

FLOR, INDIA, SAALIHA

WHAT?!

Bang, bang, bang. Someone is pounding on the door.

TOMMY

Open up! Beck please!

BECK

Don't let him in!

SAALIHA

What happened?

Flor is still holding the bottle.

INDIA

What'd he do?

BECK

Tommy wore clogs to work, like a Dutch kindergartener.

Tommy busts in the room.

TOMMY

Fuck you. These are perfect for a cloudy day, just in case it rains.

They all laugh and razz Tommy. More shots.

Knocking at the door.

TRIPP (V.O.)

Housing! Open up.

India shushes everybody loudly. Tommy grabs the alcohol and shoves it into a drawer. Everyone straightens themselves up just as Flor open the door.

TOMMY

Hey Tripp! Whatsuuup.

Tripp looks suspiciously at the crew of brown faces (and Beck).

TRIPP
Noise complaint. You folks wouldn't
be drinking on campus would you.

India pops up from the bed and salutes.

INDIA
No sir! Absolutely not.

Flor pulls her back down.

FLOR
No, definitely not. Did someone say
they saw us drinking?

TRIPP
Heard. They heard loud noise and
people shouting "Shots, shots,
shots."

TOMMY
That's just a turn of phrase used
by many POC. People of...

TRIPP
..color.

TOMMY
We were just roasting and razzing
each other, and so someone might
have claimed "shots" were fired.

Tripp looks satisfied.

TRIPP
Let's just keep it down. I don't
want to have to write you up.

India nods sarcastically.

INDIA
I'm sure...

INT. DINING HALL - DAY

Saaliha peels her waffle from the waffle machine and heads to the table to join Flor, Tommy, and Beck, who are hungover and chowing down on waffles, eggs, and coffee. A groan here and there. India is notably absent.

Saaliha spots Britta the assistant director staring daggers at her from across the cafeteria. Britta says something to some other administrators, whispers ensue, and people from the table turn to look at Saaliha.

SAALIHA
I'm so fucked.

TOMMY
Are you talking about Britta or the ghost colonists?

SAALIHA
We've gotta do something, right?

Saaliha sits pensively at a long table, fingers steepled.

Bryson, the one Pasifika guy from the party sits down at a table near them.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Hey! You're brown. Will you help us exorcise the racist ghosts?

He looks around.

BRYSON
No, I thought this was brunch.

Saaliha and company look at each other.

SAALIHA
It is... Do you know about the racist ghosts?

He nods.

BRYSON
Mmhmm.

SAALIHA
Do you care? Does it bother you?

BRYSON
Nah, nah. They look after my dad's flower shop and, like, bring us gold bars. You just gotta dress white and go to church and stuff. You want a pamphlet?

SAALIHA
GET OUT OF HERE!!!

BECK
BOOOOOOO!!!

FLOR
HISSSSSS!!!

Tommy throws a waffle as Bryson flees his table.

BECK (CONT'D)
They're all connected. That's the thing.

FLOR
The Dean of Students is literally a direct descendant of the founder.

SAALIHA
Well who here is an adult and not a narc or a nepo ghost?!

CUT TO:

INT. MOONBEAR'S OFFICE - DAY

The office in Orik hall has a bunch of photo's of Moonbear getting awards for diversity work. Degrees. PHD in Psychology.

She's eating an egg salad sandwich out of a plastic sleeve at her desk, while she talks to Saaliha and Flor.

SAALIHA
We're not safe. We've been attacked, more than once, by something that wants to kill us...or change us...or scare us away. I'm not sure but I know you must have heard about this before. You've been here forever.

MOONBEAR
I'm not *that* old.

SAALIHA
Professor!!

Moonbear throws up her hands.

MOONBEAR
Ok! Jeez. Please don't call me that.

She lowers her voice, and for a moment looks genuinely frightened.

(MORE)

MOONBEAR (CONT'D)

Yes, I've been present for the adjudication of...similar complaints before. But only as a number. And I can tell you it's not going to go your way.

FLOR

What do you mean? What happened.

MOONBEAR

Oh, a potpourri. Some kids get the message and ride out the four years. Some go home.

SAALIHA

You know they went home?

MOONBEAR

I know they're not here. And neither is Barb Crawford, who did not get the message. And she had tenure! And she was y'know, Black. Not for nothing.

FLOR

You're on the Diversity Adversity Committee! This is your job.

MOONBEAR

My job is to be fired! And replaced by a 25-year-old neocon warrior poet with a fish bumper sticker and a gun. Is that what you want? Listen—

She lowers her voice yet another decibel.

MOONBEAR (CONT'D)

I lied. I am that old. You're in a much better position than I am to make a change, believe it or not. You gotta go outside the school. The press or the Trevor Project or whatever the hell. It's what I'd tell my daughter to do.

Saaliha and Flor shoot her a disgusted look and leave.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha slowly wakes, blinking her eyes in the groggy darkness of whatever time it is. The curtains are closed tight.

She lays motionless on her back and stares up at the ceiling.

Eventually, with much effort, she rolls onto her side and produces her phone from somewhere under the covers.

Her face is bathed in the glow of the screen as she swipes through snippets on some feed or another.

- "Crushed under the rubble-"
- "Driven into the crowd-"
- "Recovered at sea-"
- "Groomed by sitting U.S. Senator-"
- "Winds now reaching-"

Saaliha closes the app and sits up. She trudges over to her to closet and listlessly grabs a black dress.

INT. PRESIDENT'S HALL ENTRY - NIGHT

Saaliha enters a well-lit event space; probably what the West Wing looks like. Chandeliers, deep red carpets, oil-painted portraits of white men. She hands her puffer to a coat check person.

INT. MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Old, stuffy rich people and young students of color mingle in a room framed by a set of spiral staircases. Saaliha checks herself out in an ornate, vintage mirror. She scrubs some foundation off of her nose split, and adjusts her dress to cover up her now infected bite wound.

A lady in pearls, JUDITH, approaches Saaliha.

JUDITH
Are you one of the scholarship
kids?

Saaliha sighs decretely and plasters a fake smile on her face.

INT. MAIN DINING ROOM- NIGHT

Glasses and silverware clink. Saaliha "enjoys" a plate of unseasoned, cold food. A waiter makes the rounds.

WAITER
Apple cider or sparkling water?

SAALIHA

Regular water is fine, thanks.

Saaliha looks around and for the first time since the previous night, sees India seated across the room in a muted party dress. India looks away, embarrassed and...injured. Her arm is in a sling. Saaliha gets up.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Saaliha goes into a stall, takes out two mini fireballs from her purse, and chugs them.

SETTLER WOMAN (V.O.)

You wretched thing.

A mirror shatters outside the stall.

INT. MAIN DINING ROOM- NIGHT

Saaliha enters shakily, making her way to her chair. DESMOND, a middle-aged man in the middle of the room is mid-speech.

DESMOND

...and he turned the profits from those quarries into more quarries, and then the profits from those quarries into even more quarries, and then he used the profits from those quarries to send me here. But you all get to attend this fine institution for free. Talk about lucky!

Saaliha laughs out loud. People look.

SAALIHA

Haha...

Judith whispers venomously from the next table.

JUDITH

It's true. You should be so grateful.

Saaliha sticks out her tongue.

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Oh, you wretched thing.

EXT. PRESIDENT'S HALL - NIGHT

A downtrodden Saaliha walks across a uncannily manicured lawn. **She hears fabric dragging behind her. She turns. Nothing. She walks past a school building and sees a settler woman in the reflection of a window. Saaliha regards her silently, terrified, drunk, angry, and unsure what to do. The ghost stares silently back.**

Saaliha takes off. A hand snatches at her from another open window, splitting and spilling blood from her bloated wound. She puts pressure on it as she runs.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Saaliha, Tommy, Flor, and Beck approach an abandoned cineplex, complete with boarded up windows and yellowed movie posters for "RBG" and "Love, Simon".

The letters on the marquee have been rearranged to spell out "Deescalating Spirits in America".

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The inside of the main theater is a hive of activity, as hipster postgrads swig coffee, man copy machines, and generally appear busy, ducking in and out of rows of movie seats

A live tracker projected onto the movie screen has lines for "Spiritual Activity", "Happenings", and "Financial Support".

AMIR (30s, lightskin, Warby Parker) and MANISHA (30s, Desi, Converse) approach the visiting students.

MANISHA

Tommy! Has your grandmother reconsidered the speaking engagement?

TOMMY

Hi, Manisha. No, she says she won't do free magic on the street like Criss Angel Mindfreak.

Manisha laughs with her mouth, but not her eyes.

Amir extends a hand to Saaliha.

AMIR

Amir X.

SAALIHA

Saaliha.

AMIR

Salam, my sister in christ.

Saaliha nods.

SAALIHA

Wa alaykumu s-salam. We have a ghost problem.

FLOR

Zombies too.

BECK

They took my OG kush.

Amir nods gravely.

AMIR

Unconscionable. We'll be getting your lick back, my differently abled friend. Y'all students at the D?

The kids nod.

MANISHA

We've been getting reports and complaints from Deseret for years, but they won't let our people anywhere near campus. If you can get us escort to the celestial nadir, we'll engage the enemy.

Amir pounds his fist into his hand.

AMIR

Each one bust one.

As Flor and Beck discuss things further with Manisha and Amir, Nathan pulls Saaliha aside.

TOMMY

Do you see what I'm saying?

SAALIHA

I think they seem legit. Look!

She points to the live tracker. Happenings has ticked down by one.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

They're reducing happenings. That's what we need.

TOMMY

I just get a bad vibe. Celestial nadir? What is that?

Amir is saging Beck's wheelchair. Nathan frowns.

SAALIHA

I don't know. If they can't do it, they can't do it. But we need all the resources we can get. We can't let what happened to Flor happen again.

Tommy looks at Flor, who's nodding off in one of the theater seats.

TOMMY

Yeah ok. I have an idea.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

DR. OROZCO (50s, white, business formal) reads through the stack of papers in her inbox as she wraps up a phone call. The nameplate on her desk includes "Vice President for Student Affairs."

DR. OROZCO

No, we have made our official position very clear: the downstream investments of our affiliate program members are neither disclosed nor endorsed within the confines of our research partnerships. Hmm? Oh you want us to have MORE ties to Israel... Uh huh. Mmhmm. Alright, have Abigail set a lunch. Buh bye.

She hangs up the phone and raises her glasses to closely inspect a form.

DR. OROZCO (CONT'D)

Tommy!

Tommy appears around a corner.

TOMMY

Yes, Dr. Orozco?

DR. OROZCO

What is this? Deescalating Spirits in America? I told you before: all the Avatar stuff happens at the pow wow.

TOMMY

No, no, it's actually a um...a speaker. A controversial one, so you might want to do some research.

She massages her temples.

DR. OROZCO

Controversial how?

TOMMY

You name it. Natalist, nativist—not like, me, native. He was just saying on his video podcast how-

Dr. Orozco waves a hand.

DR. OROZCO

Yes, alright, get him a security detail and a muffin basket. Scramble the marketplace of ideas psychos. Yadda yadda.

Tommy scurries down the hall.

DR. OROZCO (CONT'D)

And shake down every donor with a Cybertruck! Tell 'em don't act like I never did anything for 'em!

She pours and pounds a Blue Bottle coffee can.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Manisha and Amir direct several of their UNDERLINGS as they set up both dubious-looking electronics and a pastiche of quasi-traditional arcana.

MANISHA

Power to spectrometers 2 and...3. 2 and 3. Holding. Thank you.

AMIR

Hey! Hey! I said a pentacle! That's a triangle. You're 'bout to summon Earth, Wind, & Fire.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beck, flanked by Saaliha, Flor, and Tommy, wheels up to a large step separating the classroom door from the rest of the building. The other step up.

BECK

See you on the other side.

He daps up Tommy and salutes the others.

Flor snaps and Saaliha gives a thumbs up as they head inside with Tommy.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The three friends enter quietly as Tesla coils and incense fill the air. Manisha rushes over.

MANISHA

Oh! Oh! Would you guys mind just coming in one more time? Taking a boomerang for social.

Saaliha, Tommy, and Flor walk awkwardly out and back in.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

And look scared!

Saaliha and Tommy don't look that scared, but Flor works the angles and gives several scared options.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

Aah! Love it! So fun.

She hands her phone off to an INTERN and claps her hands.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

Ok! So, rundown of events. We invoke the spirits that curse these grounds, ties that bind, parlay of the North Star, yadda yadda yadda.

Tommy shakes his head.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

And you folx get a front row seat to the exorcism of the century! Literally. Please take your seats.

They shuffle into the front row as Amir finishes sticking Japanese *ofuda* onto every available surface.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

Places, people!

The underlings all settle as Manisha is handed off a selfie stick and joined by Amir.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

What's up, purgation nation? We're coming at you live from a five-thousand-year-old-

TOMMY

200!

MANISHA

Two-thousand-year-old bastion of white settler-colonial oppression.

AMIR

We're in the belly of the beast, on the front lines, fighting for your rights and freedoms. So make sure you smash that like button, subscribe on YouTube, and give us a five-star rating and review wherever you get your podcasts.

MANISHA

Thank you to ghostmogger, ectodumpster, and CrowleyArmy for the gifted subs, and use coupon code...

A chill breeze blows through the room, ruffling Saaliha's hair and whipping away some of the ofuda. Saaliha looks around to see that all the window's are closed, then down to see Flor's hand clasping hers tight. Flor's sweating again.

FLOR

I'm scared.

Saaliha grips tightly and takes Tommy's hand too.

SAALIHA

They know what they're doing.

TOMMY

They don't.

Tommy is glassy-eyed. Unnaturally calm as he stares at the center of the room, at something that isn't there.

SAALIHA
How do you know?

TOMMY
I just do.

MANISHA
...and without further ado...

SAALIHA
Wait!!!

Saaliha jumps up out of her seat, **and is forced back down, hard. Something unseen holds her in place. She can't open her mouth.**

Manisha is fully locked in, drawing glyphs in the air with her free hand.

MANISHA
...we seek your audience, denizens
of the air!!

The lights in the room dim slightly as Amir approaches the center, humming and holding aloft a huge black candle.

Flor looks quizzically at Saaliha, who gesticulates in a panic.

Amir sets the candle down at the center of a star drawn on the floor, inside a near circle of dark crystals. He produces one final crystal from a pocket and completes the ring.

MANISHA (CONT'D)
Appear before us, in good faith,
that we may know your face! *PACTA
SUNT SERVANDA!*

Amir strikes a match.

AMIR
Grand rising, you expired crackers.

He carefully lights the candle.

Nothing.

Then...

The lights in the room, all the candles, Tesla sparks, ring lights, and monitors, all dim to black in perfect sync. Total darkness.

Tommy heaves a deep sigh.

TOMMY (O.S.)
It's too late.

An ear-splitting scream of pain rings out in the dark.
Screams and shouts of fear follow.

SAALIHA (O.S.)
FUCK!! What was that?

FLOR (O.S.)
Someone get a light!

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Here!

A phone flashlight flicks on, and in the narrow halo of it's beam lies **Manisha, left arm and shoulder dangling by a thread of sinew as blood gushes from the gap in her split torso. Two stoic settler women cease ripping her in two and skitter of like cockroaches.**

Everyone screams.

MANISHA
What...happened...

The ASSISTANT holding the light yelps as they're blindsided by something in the dark, sending the phone flying and plunging the room back into oblivion.

FLOR (O.S.)
Saaliha!

SAALIHA (O.S.)
I'm here! Tommy?!

AMIR (O.S.)
No, no, no!!

TOMMY (O.S.)
pike way ne

Lights on. Suddenly all the light sources burst back to life, just in time to illuminate Amir floating almost to the ceiling of the lecture hall, thirty feet above the ground, cradled in the arms of the soaring white-haired man.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
to way qui ook

The man hold his arms out like a cross and Amir plummets just as the lights are snuffed again. There's an impossibly loud crash and the cracking of bone.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
pike wah vah num

BECK (O.S.)
 Hey! What's happening?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beck yells, totally freaked out but trapped outside in his chair.

BECK
 Tommy?! What was that sound?!

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Somewhere in the dark, Flor cries out through tears.

FLOR
 (O.S.)
 We have to help them.

SAALIHA
 I can't see! Don't move!

In a corner of the room, a soft glow builds as Manisha's intern is levitated over a bed of candles, surrounded by chanting settlers. The flames intensify and her flesh starts to melt like wax.

INTERN
 NO, PLEASE!

Her screams split the air and then fade with the flames as quickly as they came.

FLOR (O.S.)
 The door's locked!!

SAALIHA (O.S.)
 Beck!!! Get help!!

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beck frantically works the controls of his chair. No response.

BECK
 Something's wrong! I can't move!

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The projector screen above the professor's podium lights up with a Sunday school cartoon.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Boys and girls must heed their
elders in all things. And the lord
will repay the good and mild a
hundred fold.

The final STAFFER scrambles over Amir's mangled and splattered remains, pursued by the settler women gliding beatifically in single file. They see Flor and Saaliha huddled at the door.

STAFFER

HELP ME!!

CHILD SINGERS (V.O.)

*Seen not heard
Still not bold
He'll repay a hundred fold*

The settlers encircle their victim, swirling around them as the child voices giggle.

The screen skips with an old-timey beep to "The End" over black, then sputters out. All is dark, and finally quiet.

Flor's choked back tears break the silence. Saaliha voice quivers in barely a whisper.

SAALIHA (O.S.)

Shhhhh. Shhhh. Please.

All is quiet for a few moments, until a weak, tired voice breaks the silence.

MANISHA (O.S.)

Hello?

A perfect pillar of sourceless light descends onto Manisha, who lies in a puddle of her own viscera. She stares at nothing and hears something.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

They say...

Tears fall down her cheeks.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

We strayed too far from the
light...

More pillars of light, bathing the broken, distended bodies of Amir and the others.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

But...

She turns to face the exit.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

You can still be made clean...

More light piledrives down on Saaliha and Flor, who shield their eyes and wince in pain.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

If you promise to be good...

Manisha lets out a sob as Saaliha and Flor writhe on the ground, trapped in the blazing light. Her voice cracks.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

They'll even fix me...

Her wounds begin to stitch themselves closed as the lake of blood recedes into her body. The bones crack in protest as they reset and reattach themselves.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!

Manisha pants and strains, made whole again.

The light on Saaliha and Flor softens and cools, and they catch their breath.

Manisha's voice has regained it's strength.

MANISHA (CONT'D)

They just want...him...

She points into the dark and a final column of light descends, but in the center a patch of darkness remains. Still in his seat, Tommy holds his legs to his chest as the settler women stand over him in a circle and stare down. Looking but not touching.

SAALIHA

FUCK YOU!!!!

FLOR

NOOOO!!!!

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Tommy!!!

Saaliha and Flor jump to their feet. They try to move but are trapped like mimes within the column's unseen barrier.

They bang their fists desperately against it. Saaliha screams at Manisha.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
 YOU SELFISH BITCH!!! I'LL KILL
 YOU!!!!

Flor shoulder barges the invisible wall to no avail.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beck is panicked.

BECK
 What's happening? What are they
 doing to him?!

Beck hurls himself out of his chair and crawls to the door.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Manisha's tears have dried up. She turns away from the girls, and nods shakily.

SAALIHA
 NO!!!!

Starting with the furthest out, the pillars of light begin switching off like spotlights.

Tommy holds his head in his hands. He parts his fingers to stare at the only other light left. The one holding his friends.

The darkness around Tommy dissipates, and out from the shadows steps the white-bearded man. He has shed his colonial garb and stands now bare-chested in sackcloth, shackles, and chains.

His face, revealed fully in the light, is mournful but serene. Tears stream down from eyes like fire.

Saaliha and Flor wail and pound silently on the barrier, their screams bottled away from the room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beck claws at the door.

BECK
 No! Please!!

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Like Saturn devouring his son, the man takes hold of Tommy, opens his mouth, and bites down.

Black.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRIBAL COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Hot. Bright. Saaliha sits alone at a picnic table in a baseball cap, jacket, and sunglasses. Not a square inch of skin touches the light.

The sun beats down on the large crowd of Tommy's family, friends, and neighbors sitting and talking over fry bread and barbecue.

Tommy's high school self, dressed in traditional fancy dance regalia, beams in the glossy photo at the center of a shrine overflowing with snacks atop a colorful woven blanket.

At the other end of the wake, mourners line up to collect keepsakes from a table laden with Tommy's things.

Calloused hands drop Airheads onto the blanket.

Tiny fingers grab a knockoff Transformer.

An auntie sets down a cup of coffee.

A teen takes an armful of *Calvin and Hobbes*.

Flor tearfully unbags a plate of jalapeño poppers, soggy from the drive.

Beck, solemn in a suit and tie, pockets Tommy's ID lanyard.

Beck's signature hat hangs from a corner of the shrine.

EMELINE (80s, Ute tribe, draped in a shawl) takes a seat across from Saaliha. She sets down her own plate, places one in front of Saaliha, and talks as she eats.

EMELINE

My grandson is dead.

Saaliha doesn't remove her hat or glasses.

SAALIHA

I'm sorry for your loss.

Emeline nods.

EMELINE

Thank you. The ones who did it,
they're dead too.

Saaliha nods placidly.

SAALIHA

And the one who invited them is at
an AAPI wellness retreat in
Martha's Vineyard.

EMELINE

Okay. So who does that leave?

She stares at Saaliha and slurps a spoonful of baked beans.

INT. MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

Flor, sweating and shivering, waits on the paper table thing
in the same room where Saaliha was treated earlier. The same
nurse enters, mid-sentence talking to someone behind her.

NURSE

Yeah, I'll tell them.

The nurse turns to Flor.

NURSE (CONT'D)

So yes, like I said, there's been a
policy change.

FLOR

But I've *been* getting them here.

The nurse checks her clipboard.

NURSE

Yes, I can see that. But the Board
of Trustees has decided that going
against state guidance would create
an unfair risk to students and
teachers. Effective immediately.

Flor gets up, then steadies herself as she starts to feel
lightheaded.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Do you need assistance out?

FLOR

No.

Flor marches out and heads for the exit, knees wobbling.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Beck, hatless, rolls up to a class building that's several steps above ground level. He stares down at a dusty outline on the ground, where a ramp has clearly been removed. The bow tie professor from before spies Beck from the window and rushes out.

PROFESSOR BOW TIE
Ah! Mr. Young. There's been an
infrastructure change as you can
see.

The professor opens the door and shouts to the rest of the students.

PROFESSOR BOW TIE (CONT'D)
Will someone sizable please come
help me lift Mr. Young inside?

Beck reverses, wheels around and heads back the way he came.

PROFESSOR BOW TIE (CONT'D)
Mr. Young Mr. Young!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The professor in a wool blazer takes attendance.

PROFESSOR IN A WOOL BLAZER
Anjum?

He scans the rows of students on their phones.

PROFESSOR IN A WOOL BLAZER (CONT'D)
Anjum?

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The manager scans t-shirts and Stanley cups for one student as two more wait in line.

They look annoyed, and stop in-between customers to open ChatGPT and enter a prompt:

"Write a text to employee who missed multiple shifts in a row. Make it firm + scolding but also friendly and so they won't get mad at me."

The output starts: "Hey bestie! Your attendance..."

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Orozco is on the phone again, coffee can in hand.

DR. OROZCO

No, NO! He did not DIE on campus.
He was FOUND on campus.....
How should I know?!

A memo with Saaliha's name sits at the top of the desk inbox. Dr. Orozco picks it up and squints.

DR. OROZCO (CONT'D)

Kinsley!

INT. INDIA'S ROOM - DAY

India, clad in her newly typical whitewashed attire, answers a Facetime call. The other camera is swiveled around to show a crowded living room. Young siblings and cousins chase each other in circles or play dance games on a Nintendo Wii. Men sit arguing on sofas over tea and pholourie while chutney music blares in the background.

India's mother, RUTHIE (50s, bright patterns and brighter smile) shouts over many other ebullient greetings.

RUTHIE

India! We got the packages.

INDIA

Oh good! They should have been
there days ago, I'll do express
next time.

She pivots to show the kids fighting over several LEGO sets.

INDIA (CONT'D)

Share. *Share!*

Ruthie slides a box of cookies onto the mens' low table; a few look up and smile but most keep on debating. Ruthie turns to someone off-screen.

RUTHIE

Put the rest in the kitchen.

India's AUNTS, SISTERS, and COUSINS jostle to fill the screen and pepper India with questions:

- "India, did you write George's recommendation for the summer program?"
- "Marsha's niece said her neighbor saw you at a party?"
- "How much can you put in for Bas and Lakshmi's reception?"
- "Girl, why are you dressed like Sara Bareilles?"

Ruthie shoos everyone away and runs off with the phone.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Ignore them! Ignore them!

India smiles, relieved.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Forget about us and study in peace!

India's smile fades as she sets down the phone. She looks over to Saaliha, who stands by the door.

INDIA
What?

Saaliha looks at India's melancholy face. She's conflicted.

SAALIHA
Never mind. It's not important.
You're definitely going home this
weekend though, right?

India nods. Saaliha looks relieved.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)
Cool, cool.

Saaliha goes to leave. India second-guesses what she's about to say, but does it anyway.

INDIA
I'm sorry about Tommy.

Saaliha winces.

SAALIHA
I'll see you around.

She takes off without looking back.

INT. RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION - DAY

India lugs her overnight bags past the help desk, where two new attendants, the two sweats girls from the party, are talking to a BLACK STUDENT.

GIRL 1

Woooooow. You don't like our music?

BLACK STUDENT

No, it's not like that! It's just my friend's birthday and I thought we could switch it up, y'know?

GIRL 2

We can't put on anything with swears.

GIRL 1

Plus this is our pregame playlist and we've literally never gotten a complaint in 3 days.

GIRL 2

Sounds like a you problem.

India clenches her fist. She turns around and heads back the way she came.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Saaliha, bundled in a black jacket and scarf, walks alone through trees and eerie twilight as the last sliver of sun disappears beneath the horizon. Strong winds whip at her clothes and hair.

Far ahead near the main buildings, a cluster of lights glows and flickers. A chorus of voices rises above the sound of the wind.

STUDENTS (O.S.)

*God be with you till we meet again
By his counsels guide, uphold you
With his sheep securely fold you
God be with you till we meet again*

A large crowd of students is gathered in the quad, holding candles and singing. They stand facing a blown-up photo of Tommy from the housing department website, smiling politely in a university polo.

STUDENTS (CONT'D)

*Till we meet, till we meet
Till we meet at Jesus' feet
Till we meet, till we meet
God be with you till we meet again*

Saaliha filters into the back of the crowd, the only one not holding a candle. She stares sadly at Tommy's picture just like everyone else. Or that's how it looks from the back.

From the front, her face doesn't look sad. Not at all.

Quietly at first, from the edges of the gathering, but then louder and more frequent, cries of shock and panic go up. Everyone turns around to look. Except Saaliha.

Orik hall is on fire...

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Screams erupt from the gathered students and faculty as sizable flames rise from the four corners of the building. People start stampeding in every direction, dropping candles that ignite the thin layer of potassium permanganate that no one had noticed scattered on the ground.

The podium holding Tommy's picture goes up like a matchstick.

Saaliha calmly wades into the streaming bodies and disappears.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Flor carefully unspools chains of DIY road spikes across the road to campus.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

A frantic Dr. Orozco grabs Professor Bow Tie as he attempts to flee.

DR. OROZCO

Get the fire extinguishers!

PROFESSOR BOW TIE

Oh, um...

DR. OROZCO

GO!

She shoves him toward the nearest building.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The professor wheezes as he runs down the hall until he finds a glass emergency case. He grabs the hammer but stops when he sees that there's nothing inside.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

India speeds down the road in her Ford Fusion full to the brim with fire extinguishers. She's tense but less stolid than she's looked in a long time.

She peers ahead into the darkness.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The professor, sans extinguisher, coughs and glances around as smoke fills the room.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Students and faculty flee in terror, as Saaliha turns to head off campus.

A voice calls out behind her.

MOONBEAR

Stop!

Saaliha turn around to see MoonBear, the white professor in native garb, hailing her.

MOONBEAR (CONT'D)

What have you done?

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

MoonBear clutches her turquoise.

MOONBEAR

Oh my god! I didn't know... I would never have condoned... I have no choice but to-

Saaliha punches MoonBear in the face and she goes down like a kettlebell.

Saaliha turns to leave.

BRYSON (O.S.)
There! Over there!

In the distance, Bryson is pointing out Saaliha to some campus rent-a-cops, who start jogging over.

Saaliha takes off as the night winds feed the fires that advance on the unconscious MoonBear.

EXT. CAMPUS LAWN - NIGHT

Having evaded her pursuers, Saaliha sprints across the dewy, overwatered lawn, away from the column of smoke.

As she runs, glimpses of panicked staff and students fly by through the ash and debris. One individual in a pompom beanie locks eyes with the fleeing Saaliha.

BRITLEIGH
YOU!!!!

Saaliha squints. Britleigh runs over and spear tackles her.

BRITLEIGH (CONT'D)
GRAAAAAH!!!!!!

The two roll over the grass until Saaliha heaves Britleigh off of her and moves to run again.

BRITLEIGH (CONT'D)
You!

Britleigh points an accusing finger.

SAALIHA
Yes, me.

Britleigh holds her arms out to block Saaliha's presumed attempted escape.

BRITLEIGH
I tried to be NICE to you. Even after you got wasted and caused a huge scene at the first big party of the year. And then you got jealous and called in those weird housing guys while we were literally just watching TV. And worst of all-

SAALIHA
I already know you're bald under there.

Britleigh rips off the hat in dramatic fashion, revealing her burned and barren scalp.

BRITLEIGH
You did THIS to my HAIR!!! My
HAIR!!!!

SAALIHA
You said I had a big hairy ass and
then literally ate part of my arm!

At this point both girls are gesticulating incredulously.

BRITLEIGH
I was sleepwalking! Somnambulism
affects over 8 million people every
year!

SAALIHA
You seem to remember it pretty
well!

BRITLEIGH
It was like Get Out! I was in the
sunken place.

SAALIHA
Oh my god...

BRITLEIGH
Shut up! You were too much of a
coward to come back and talk things
out. Or, I don't know, help me
clean up? Hello? But...

Britleigh pulls out a sword of all things

BRITLEIGH (CONT'D)
I knew I'd see you around.

She whips the blade around with flamboyant expertise.

BRITLEIGH (CONT'D)
Iaido third dan since 2023.

She charges at Saaliha, who pulls out a gun and shoots her,
center mass.

SAALIHA
Concealed carry at state
universities since 2021. Pretty
crazy.

Britleigh lies crying on the ground. **A chorus of screams, and one guttural below, ring out from every direction.**

BOOM! A blinding, deafening explosion renders everything hot white. When vision hazily resumes, the white-haired shirtless giant stands looming sorrowfully over Saaliha, flanked by a coterie of his brides.

But in the light of the flames engulfing Orik Hall, he seems pained. His breathing is labored.

He speaks in a sad, terrible voice like driving rain.

ABINADI
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO OUR CHILD?

Saaliha points the gun at Britleigh again.

SAALIHA
Oh, was that yours?

Abinadi keeps his distance. A dawning of recognition mixes in with the rage on his face.

ABINADI
KING NOAH. THOUGH YOU COME IN THE
GUISE OF THIS MONGOLIAN WHORE, I
KNOW YOU YET. STILL YOU BEDEVIL THE
BLIGHTED, THE PERVERTED, THOSE
CURSED BY GOD WITH SKIN OF
DARKNESS. TEMPTING THEM TO INIQUITY
AND INDULGENCE.

Saaliha picks up a stick and pokes Britleigh in her bullet wound. She and Abinadi both wince in pain.

SAALIHA
You don't look so good.

The settlers circle around threateningly.

ABINADI
REPENT! IT IS NOT TOO LATE!

SAALIHA
It is.

She fishes in her pocket for a handful of DIY igniters made of matches taped to cigarettes. She scatters them on and next to Britleigh, then pours out another mini fireball.

ABINADI
NO!

Saaliha fires another round at point-blank range into the igniters, lighting them up with the muzzle blast and causing Britleigh's clothes to catch fire.

The ghosts scramble over to try and aid their now unconscious progeny. Abinadi weeps and writhes in pain over her bloodied and burning form.

Beck rolls up in his chair, eyes roiling with rage at the pale giant. Saaliha sits down on Beck's lap.

BECK

We're gonna blow your great-great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter's shit smooove off.

Abinadi lunges for the pair but Beck whizzes off with Saaliha in tow.

ABINADI

YOU THINK THAT STRIKING DOWN THE CHOSEN PEOPLE, BURNING THE BEACON OF KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION, WILL STRIP ME OF MY LORD'S FAVOR?

Saaliha calls back.

SAALIHA

Yes!

ABINADI

YOU WILL KNOW THE OUTER DARKNESS!

SAALIHA

No I won't!

Her voice fades over the horizon.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

India's steps out of her car in front of the nicest house on a sleepy suburban street. **She's holding a butcher knife. She strides through the dark and up to the door like a movie slasher.**

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Britta Hinckley is sheltering in place, quaking under her desk on an otherwise abandoned floor.

Somewhere an elevator dings.

Tears gather at the corners of Britta's eyes. She makes some mental calculations, steels herself, and crawls as fast as she can out of her office and into the hallway.

The whirl of a wheelchair echoes down the hall.

Britta scrambles in the opposite direction, stumbling to her feet as she goes until—

She's yanked back down to the ground by her hair. Saaliha holds the muzzle of her gun to Britta's throat. Hayden rolls up and sparks up his lighter.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

THE DEAN OF STUDENTS (Middle-aged, white, posh) polishes off a glass of scotch and a leather-bound book in a comfortable study. He gets up and meanders over to a classy wet bar for a refresh.

In his addled state, he doesn't notice India's knife-wielding silhouette darting behind his back and into the room.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Flor listens to a podcast on her phone's speaker and admires her tire spikes from a safe distance. As fire engine sirens whine in the distance and grow closer, she turns up the volume.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Britta pleads through tears and snot.

BRITTA

Please! Please! No! I'm sorry! I was wrong!

Saaliha takes a deep breath, feathers the trigger and averts her eyes. Just enough to see...

A light flickers on, illuminating part of a long hallway. Abinadi stands, silent and stern. His voice is barely above a whisper.

ABINADI

REPENT.

He motions behind him and more lights go up, shining down on two figures hanged by thick rope but still moving.

Moving because they are prodded and pierced by the cavorting settler beneath their feet, wielding pitchforks and scythes.

The figures are humanoid, but strange. One large, one small, and reddish. Saaliha squints and draws a sharp breath.

The dangling beings are human indeed. But flayed of skin, muscle and sinew exposed from head to toe. And as they rotate lazily on their ropes, the fleshless faces of Saaliha and Beck scream out in pain.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

There's a rustling in the grass. Flor silences her phone and turns to look.

Something is moving, but too low and far to see. She ambles through the brush until...

Flor shrieks, only briefly drowning out the moaning of her wracked and distorted double lying supine on the ground. Gleeful settlers twist and knead her limbs like clay as she whimpers in agony.

Flor screams again as Abinadi places a hand on her shoulder.

ABINADI

REPENT.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The dean settles back into his armchair.

India advances out of the shadows, knife raised, but a motion in a side room catches her eye.

We do not see what India sees, only terror reflected in the brown rings of her irises.

ABINADI

REPENT.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Saaliha backs frantically away from the hallway as the lights flicker back to darkness. Britta looks up, equal parts shocked and relieved as Saaliha and Beck take off back toward the elevator, both sobbing in terror.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Flor desperately reels the spike traps off of the road just in time for the lights and sirens to whiz past, illuminating her stricken, tear-stained face.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The dean closes his latest book and allows his head to loll and his eyes to drift closed.

From his perspective, we see the dimly lit room. Then his closed eyelids. Room. Oblivion. Room. Oblivion. **India.**

She lights upon him like a harpy from hell, stabbing him again and again before he can cry out, shield himself, or even say a prayer. We stay with his view as blood fills his eyes and his body slides to the floor like a popped balloon.

The last thing he sees, before one final closing of the eyes, is India keeling over and vomiting all of her blood out onto the carpet.

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

Beck, now hatless with grown-out hair, wheels his way down alongside a row of young vegetables in the school's community garden. He heaves a bag of soil onto a stack and spins around to head back the other way.

Another volunteer, DENISE, flags him down.

DENISE

I think the rabbits chewed through the plastic fencing again.

She smiles sheepishly and holds up a half-eaten carrot. Beck nods sagely and takes the carrot.

BECK

The carrots won't take this lying down. War is coming.

Denise laughs flirtatiously.

DENISE

Are you going to Good Trouble after?

Beck nods again and takes a bite out of the carrot.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Flor and a gaggle of queer club kids dance and sweat, drinks in hand, at the center of a bass-blasted, bestrobed dance floor.

Flor shakes out her hair and leaves the beat behind, almost falling over from the volatility of her movements. KŌHEI, the guy who spotted at her at the first house party, catches and steadies her, chuckling as she bursts into a fit of giggles.

He gently leads her off of the floor and over to a glass of water.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Beck, Denise, and some other friends from the garden stroll down the sidewalk past other queer bars and clubs.

Kōhei gets into an Uber and extends his hand to help Flor in.

Beck rolls right past Flor, impossible for either to miss the other. No acknowledgment. Not even a glance.

Beck rolls into a bar and Flor shuts the car door.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Saaliha catches a ring of keys out of the air next to a sign reading "Carson City Cargo". She's rocking matching grey work pants and shirt, and a trio of similarly dressed TEAMSTERS laugh as they wander off down the street. One calls back to Saaliha.

TEAMSTER

If you can fuck up locking up, I'll
be impressed!

Saaliha smiles passive aggressively. She turns and heads inside.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Saaliha sorts through keys and locks up one exit door. Then walks a ways and does another. Then heads for a third—

A scraping noise, like a metal chair on concrete, rings out distinctly from the far wall.

Saaliha stops short, blood running cold. She looks around. She waits. Nothing.

Then—

SCRRRRAPE

She's not hearing things. Saalihs speed walks toward the final exit, willing her work boots away from the noise. **The sound stays in one spot, but comes faster and faster, as if pleading desperately.**

SCRAPE. SCRAPE. SCRAPE. SCRAPE. SCRrrrrrrrrRAAAPE.

Saaliha stops. She closes her eyes. Maybe she's praying, maybe she's deciding. Maybe she's relieved.

She turns and heads toward the origin of the sound.

Along the wall is a row of identical side rooms. **The scraping starts again, softer this time. Just enough to locate.**

Saaliha moves forward and opens the door.

The nondescript room is empty, with one notable exception. A slim figure is setting alone at one of those uncomfortable school desks with the closed side bar. They're facing away from Saaliha and engrossed in whatever they're doing, maybe writing?

It's a fight to summon the words:

SAALIHA

Hello?

No response. Saaliha moves closer.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

The girl scrawls faster but doesn't look back.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

I don't think you're supposed to be in here.

Her long blonde hair overflow their shoulders onto a prim school dress.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Britleigh?

Saaliha moves to grab the girl's shoulder but she shrugs her off.

Saaliha moves around to the front, and collapses to the ground in terror.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

No.

India is a model student. Her straight, gold locks frame piercing blue eyes fixed on a weathered page. The blood that ran down her front has long dried.

Two sets of arms in tweed coat sleeves appear on either side of Saaliha and hoist her back up as she struggles to speak. The arms in mottled, swollen hands with razor sharp claws.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

Wait! WAIT!

The arms pull Saaliha roughly back to the exit and shove her out the door.

SAALIHA (CONT'D)

When—

The door slams shut.

CUT TO BLACK.