

Autumn

by

Akhand Dugar

650/799-6859

akhandd@freestyleacademy.rocks

FADE IN:

MONTAGE-Camera constantly crabbing right across sets, which almost look like rooms in a doll house. Operatic music for soundtrack.

- 1) RAMESH, an Indian man in his mid 50s, is cutting hair in his barbershop.
- 2) REEMA, an Indian woman in her mid 50s and Ramesh's wife, is in her front-yard garden, picking two very small tomatoes off the vine she has growing. She turns around and walks back to her house.
- 3) Ramesh is sweeping hair on the floor of the barbershop.
- 4) Reema is in the kitchen, with a glass of ice water. She looks out the window and rushes to the door, letting in ALAN, a man of around her age. Reema quickly closes the door. They rushedly kiss.
- 5) Ramesh is at the cash register in his barbershop, ringing a customer up.
- 6) In her bedroom, Reema is lying under the covers as Alan gets dressed.
- 7) Ramesh, inside the barbershop, puts all his hair-cutting equipment away.
- 8) Reema is standing on her porch as Alan leaves.
- 9) Ramesh, outside the barbershop, locks up and gets in his car.
- 10) Reema, in the kitchen, sets the table with lamb curry, rice, and the two tomatoes she picked earlier. Ramesh enters right as she places the last dish on the table.

END OF MONTAGE, stop soundtrack

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Reema is washing carrots in the sink. She looks up, and sees a dying tree. It still has around a quarter of its leaves, but it's losing them fast.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Ramesh and Reema sit down to dinner in their average-looking dining room. Throughout the meal, they glance between their food and each other, always expecting the other to say something.

Reema serves her husband, then herself. Ramesh doesn't begin eating until his wife does. Ramesh eats with his hands, while Reema uses a spoon.

RAMESH
(awkwardly laughing)
With a spoon?

Reema looks up at him, half smiles, and looks back down at her food.

RAMESH
How was your day?

REEMA
(looking down)
Fine.

Reema looks up suddenly, trying to look more natural. She smiles.

REEMA
Fine.

Ramesh finishes eating. He gets up and puts his plate in the sink. Reema continues to eat. Her eyes follow him around the room. He puts his plate in the sink, then goes to use the restroom down the hall. He leaves the door open, and Reema can see into the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Ramesh and Reema are watching television in their den. The lights are off, and an old sitcom is playing. Ramesh laughs loudly with the laugh track.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ramesh and Reema are brushing their teeth at a double sink in their brightly lit bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ramesh and Reema are sitting up in their bed. Ramesh is watching cricket on his phone, sans headphones. Reema is scrolling through Facebook.

Reema finds a post by Alan.

INSERT - REEMA'S FINGER HOVERING OVER THE "LIKE" BUTTON.

Reema looks to Ramesh, then back at her phone. Ramesh is laser-focused on his phone.

INSERT - REEMA LIKES THE POST. SHE CONTINUES SCROLLING.

Reema puts her phone on her nightstand. She rolls over, facing away from Ramesh, and closes her eyes.

Ramesh looks over, then turns off the bedroom lights, turns down the volume on his phone, and continues watching. Reema lies awake.

INSERT - REEMA'S FACE. HER EYES ARE OPEN.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - AFTERNOON

Reema is in the den watching television. The gate outside her house CREAKS. She looks out the window and sees Alan entering her front yard. He is holding a bouquet of flowers. She rushes to:

THE FOYER

She looks up and down the street while pulling him inside. They kiss, and remain close to each other. They act awkwardly and SPEAK OVER EACH OTHER.

ALAN

Hi, hi--

REEMA

(bashfully laughing)

Oh, thank you--

ALAN

--happy birthday--

REEMA

--you remembered--

ALAN

--oh well--

ALAN + REEMA

Facebook.

They both laugh awkwardly and look at each other for a beat.

With unnatural movement, she smells the flowers. She sneezes once, then twice.

ALAN

I- I think you're having an allergic reaction.

REEMA

No, I don't have have allergies.

ALAN

Well, maybe it's a new allergy, or--

REEMA

No, I'm telling you, I've never had--

ALAN

--I mean, they're finding new allergies all the time--

REEMA

--Alan, I'm telling you, there's no allergies or anything--

ALAN

--Maybe pollen, or something--

REEMA

--Alan!

They both go quiet. Reema looks down and away.

ALAN

Hey, let's, uh, get a vase for these.

REEMA

Yes. Yes, I'll go put these in a vase.

Reema leaves to go put the flowers in a vase. Alan looks down and sighs.

Reema walks past the window, looks out, and sees that the tree has lost more leaves. It is at just a dozen or so of its original level now.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFEWAY - EVENING

Ramesh is at the bakery section, selecting a cake. He is looking at each cake carefully, and intently.

CUT TO:

THE PARTY SECTION

Ramesh is browsing cards. He picks a card up, inspects it, and sets it down. He picks another card up, inspects it, and places it in his cart.

Ramesh moves on to the candles. He inspects two packs of candles before choosing the second.

Ramesh does the same for balloons and flowers.

CUT TO:

THE CHECKOUT COUNTER

CLERK
That'll be \$37.31.

Ramesh hands the clerk his credit card.

CUT TO:

RAMESH'S CAR

Ramesh is driving home. A hindi song starts on the radio. He turns up the volume and begins to sing along. While he is turning up the radio, he looks up and SCREECHES to a halt.

Alan is standing in the road like a deer caught in headlights; he was jaywalking. He jumps backwards.

Ramesh pokes his head out the window.

RAMESH
Are you okay?!

ALAN
Fine, fine, sorry, sorry.

RAMESH
Use the crosswalk.

ALAN
Yes, sorry, sorry.

Alan finishes crossing the road. Ramesh drives off, shaking his head.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ramesh is lighting the candles on the cake in the dark dining room.

REEMA (O.S.)
(excited)
Can I come out?

RAMESH
Almost! Two minutes!

Ramesh finishes lighting the candles on the cake.

Ramesh walks to the exterior of the bedroom. He tells Reema to come out. Ramesh covers Reema's eyes with his hands and begins to lead her to the dining room.

Reema sees the birthday decorations and smiles. She hugs Ramesh and laughs.

RAMESH
 (singing)
 Happy Birthday to you, happy
 birthday to you, happy--

Reema's laughter turns into tears. She begins to cry.

RAMESH
 --birthday dear Reema, happy- what,
 what happened? Everything--

REEMA
 I'm fine, I'm--

RAMESH
 --okay? Are you sure?

REEMA
 --fine, yes, yes, I'm fine.

Reema wipes her tears away. She laughs, but it's artificial.

REEMA
 (cry-laughing)
 Come on, come on, let's finish it.

REEMA
 (singing)
 Happy birthday, dear--

Ramesh joins in.

RAMESH + REEMA
 (singing)
 --Reema--

RAMESH
 (singing)
 --Happy birthday to you.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ramesh is brushing his teeth in the bathroom. Reema is in bed looking at a photo album: pictures of her wedding.

Ramesh finishes brushing and gets into bed. He begins watching cricket on his phone. Reema puts the photo album to the side and looks at Ramesh. She smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alan and Reema are lying under the covers of Reema's bed. Alan is on his phone, while Reema stares at the ceiling.

ALAN
Is everything okay?

REEMA
Yes yes, fine. Just thinking.

ALAN
About what?

REEMA
I don't know.

ALAN
Hm.

Alan resumes scrolling on his phone, but he steals glances to Reema.

ALAN
Something Ramesh did?

REEMA
What? No, no.

ALAN
You know, that jerk almost ran me over last night.

REEMA
(mumbling)
He's not a- he isn't a-

ALAN
Huh?

REEMA
He's not a jerk.

ALAN
I mean I wasn't trying to--

REEMA
Nevermind, never--

ALAN
--insult him or anything, but--

REEMA
--mind, Alan, seriously, don't mind--

ALAN
--okay, okay, sorry.

There is silence.

ALAN

I mean, if you don't think he's a jerk then why you even- why are we even- you know?

REEMA

I don't know. I seriously don't know.

ALAN

What, are we not serious, or something?

REEMA

What do you mean? Alan, this is an-

REEMA

(quietly)
Affair.

Alan sits up.

ALAN

You can't even say it?

Reema sits up.

REEMA

What?

ALAN

You can't even say that this is an affair? What, are you afraid the room's bugged or something?

REEMA

That doesn't even make sense, if the room was bugged-

ALAN

(angry)
That's not the point!

Reema looks away.

Alan sighs.

ALAN

Look, I'm sorry-

Reema keeps looking away, ignoring him.

ALAN

(annoyed)
Why I am I even the bad guy? You just, just, stomped on my heart!

Reema says nothing.

ALAN
You know what I think?

Reema whips her head to look at him.

REEMA
(angrily)
What?

ALAN
I think you just need a little
nudge.

REEMA
What are you talking about? Little
nudge.

ALAN
A little nudge in the right
direction.

REEMA
What's the right direction?

ALAN
(shouting)
Realizing that you should just be
with me!

REEMA
(shouting back)
Don't raise your voice! This is my
house, I won't have you-

ALAN
Fine, I'll leave! And I'll go
straight to the damn barbershop to
tell Ramesh.

Reema suddenly pales.

REEMA
(quiet fury)
Don't you dare.

ALAN
Stop screwing with me!

REEMA
(yelling)
Don't you bloody dare!

ALAN
Screw you.

Alan leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Alan is sitting in his car, watching Ramesh through the barbershop window. Ramesh is cutting a mans hair.

Ramesh finishes cutting the mans hair. Alan gets out of the car and walks to:

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Ramesh is vacuuming the hair off the floor.

RAMESH

One moment, take a seat, I'll be right there.

Alan walks over to the chairs, but remains standing. He's nervous. He taps his foot, shrugs his shoulders, licks his lips.

Ramesh turns around and squints his eyes.

RAMESH

Ready.

ALAN

Oh, uh, actually-

RAMESH

Come on, take a seat. More customers will come.

Alan, looking confused, walks over and takes a seat.

As Ramesh drapes the cape over Alan, he squints and cocks his head.

RAMESH

Do I know you?

ALAN

Uh, um-

RAMESH

Hm.

Ramesh starts cutting Alan's hair, and humming.

Alan looks straight ahead into the mirror.

ALAN

So, uh-

Ramesh roughly pushes his head to one side to get a different angle, continuing to hum. Alan looks uncomfortable.

ALAN

Actually, Ramesh-

RAMESH

You know my name? Where'd you find it? On Yelp?

ALAN

Um-

RAMESH

You know, I recently got an award from yelp.

Ramesh gestures towards the window, where a sign saying, "TOP LOCAL BUSINESS!" with the Yelp logo on it hangs.

ALAN

Yeah, that's great, man, but-

RAMESH

They give it to only the best. I mean I don't mean to brag, but-

ALAN

(forcefully)

Ramesh, I'm having an affair with Reema!

Ramesh stops. It's pin-drop silent; the only sound is the hair clipper BUZZING.

Alan gets up quickly, and hair goes everywhere. He turns around and looks at Ramesh.

Ramesh looks like a deer caught in headlights; surprised, and confused. But he also looks like he's already been hit by a car.

Alan, hair half-cut, rushes out of the barbershop. Ramesh just leans on the barbers' chair, looking down.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Reema is packing a suitcase, rushedly, tears streaming down her face. She's stuffing things in; clothes, jewelry, photos.

She zips up the suitcase and throws it down.

Her phone buzzes: an alert from Uber. She picks the suitcase up and goes to the car.

The driver gets out and helps her put the suitcase in the trunk.

Reema gets out of the car, looks out the window and sees the tree. There is just one leaf left, and it falls.

END