

Deepa the Saint  
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## Cast

Deepa – 13 years old

Sabs – mid 30s

Tej – 13 years old

Zane – 14 years old

Uncle Bijesh – 30s

All characters are British Asian, from Leicester.

### Scene One

*Darkness. A match is lit by Deepa, sitting cross-legged on the floor in her Justin Bieber nightie. She speaks to a higher power.*

Deepa: I was on the 31 going into town. I sit near the back, 'cos that's where Zane and his mates sit after school. I'm not fussed, but Tej's got a thing for him so she always heads back there. As if he ever notices. They've got a lighter, one of those cheapo ones, 12 for a quid off the market, and they're daring each other. "Hold it. Long as you can. Go on." Pathetic. Can't even last three seconds, but you'd never know, way they're all whooping and egging each other on. They start on Kira to have a go, 'cos she's got tits and they all fancy her. She's loving the attention, but no way she's going near that flame. *(Beat)* I want to touch it. Not to impress them, couldn't care less about them. I just want to touch the fire. I want to...feel it. I reach out and Tej tries to stop me. They all start to laugh. A girl? How long's a girl gonna last? They don't know my name, even though I sit with Zane's brother in maths and I used to go to his birthday parties when we were little. He holds out the lighter, trying to scare me. I put my hand over the flame. One second, two seconds, three seconds. Already beaten their record. Five seconds. Six seconds. Tej is pulling at my sleeve, telling me to cut it out. But I don't want to, it feels...nice. Nine seconds. Ten seconds. I can't hear any of them anymore. I feel you, for the first time. Your fingers reaching out to me. Sizzling. Sparking. I'm trying to grab them. It's like they're lifting me up and I'm floating. I want to float forever. Thirteen seconds. Fourteen seconds. Fifteen seconds.

*The sound of someone whimpering offstage. She blows out the flame.*

### Scene Two

*A week later. Deepa's bedroom. Sabs helps a tired and weak Deepa into bed. He holds a paper bag from the chemist.*

Sabs: Why didn't you tell her about your cramps?

Deepa: I'm not getting cramps.

Sabs: You have a tummy bug, you get cramps.

Deepa: So it's not a tummy bug.

Sabs: What is it then?

Deepa: How am I supposed to know? I'm not a doctor.

Sabs: She doesn't think there's anything wrong with you.

*Sabs takes some electrolyte powder from the paper bag and pours some into a glass of water on the bedside table.*

*(handing it to her)* Here you go.

*Deepa pushes the drink away.*

Deepa: That's what she said? When she made me sit outside?

Sabs: She didn't make you/ sit outside.

Deepa: /Yes *she did*.

Sabs: Said she couldn't find anything...*physically* wrong with you.

Deepa: Right.

*Deepa finds the TV remote.*

Deepa: Can you turn on the TV?

Sabs: No, this is important.

*He pulls a leaflet from his pocket and hands it to her.*

Deepa: What's this?

Sabs: Doctor gave it me.

Deepa: *(reading the front)* 'Eating Disorders in Children and Young People.'  
I'm not anorexic.

Sabs: She said there's all this pressure, with school, and TV shows. Sites where girls egg each other on to get thinner, and thinner...

Deepa: I'm not anorexic.

Sabs: So you can eat something.

*He takes a packet of biscuits from the bedside cabinet and opens them. Just the smell makes her heave. Deepa shakes her head.*

Just a couple of bites, Deeps? Please?

*Deepa takes one and tries to chew, fighting her impulse to gag. Her gag reflex wins. She spits it out onto Sabs' hand. Sabs tries to hide his concern.*

*(of the electrolyte drink)* Okay, then, they said just to sip this every 20 minutes or so.

*She takes a sip. Sabs waits for a moment, scared to push it. Beat. Deepa motions for another sip. He holds up the glass for her again. She takes a longer sip. A hopeful beat. Then Deepa starts to convulse. She knocks the glass from Sabs' hand and it flies*

*into the air. She spits the squash out violently.*

Deepa: I don't want anything.

*He clears up the mess.*

Sabs: That Zane lad rang again this morning. That's three times this week.  
...Never heard you mention him?

Deepa: ...He's Anil's big brother.

Sabs: Anil Solanki? Haven't been mates with him since you were a kid?

Deepa: I'm not mates with him.

Sabs: So what should I tell him?

Deepa: I don't know.

Sabs: Is he bothering you?

Deepa: I'm tired.

*She turns over and pulls up the covers.*

Sabs: Right. So... (I'll go)..?

Deepa: Put the telly on, dad. I don't like it too quiet.

*Sabs reluctantly puts on the TV and exits. Deepa takes out a small, clay diya lamp hidden in her bedside table. She takes a box of matches and carefully lights it. She rests it on the bedside table, gets back into bed, and lies down, gazing at the small flame.*

### Scene Three

*The next afternoon, Deepa is in her bedroom with Tej, her best friend, watching free running stunts going wrong on Tej's phone.*

Tej: Oh, shit, didn't see that coming, did he?

*Tej gets up, jumps across the room, and does a pratfall, mimicking the boy's expression. They both descend into laughter.*

There's one where this girl tries to do that wall, in the car park at the Four Corners centre. You know the one? She misses her footing half way up, and like, slides down really slowly...

*Tej grabs her phone to find the video.*

What's up with your dad?

Deepa: How'd you mean?

Tej: He dropped a bowl in the kitchen and he looked like he was gonna have a breakdown or something.

Deepa: Don't say that.

Tej: He was though. (*impression of Sabs crying with a dustpan and brush*)

Deepa: He's fine. Just got... too much time on his hands.

Tej: Hasn't he found anything yet?

Deepa: Keeps getting knocked back. But "the right job finds you, not the other way round, right, Deeps?"

Tej: Keep finding mum crying in the garden.

Deepa: What's up?

Tej: She's got this virtual PA gig. Pays about five quid an hour, and someone rings up to shout at her every fifteen minutes.

Deepa: Nightmare.

Tej: And uncle Bijesh has been evicted so now I have to share with her and sit across from his stupid face at breakfast.

Deepa: He that bad?

Tej: He's gross. Spends like, half an hour coughing his guts up every morning so I can't get in the bathroom. Then when I do, he hasn't rinsed the sink the properly and there's like, this disgusting yellow slime all over it and I have to wash it away, like (*mimes cleaning the sink while gagging*).

Deepa: What's up with him?

Tej: He's a freak? When he's not coughing up his guts he's *praying*.

Deepa: Praying..?

Tej: He's got these beads. Swear he even does it in front of the telly. I'll be like, 'scuse me, can't I even watch Love Island in peace? He's got *zero* respect, yeah? Thinks he's the second coming or something just 'cos he collects clothes for charity.

Deepa: What charity?

Tej: Street kids in India, something... blah blah blah. (*brightens*) Here it is!

*She hands it to Deepa. They watch, laughing.*

Zane films them and picks out the funniest bits.

Deepa: Why?

*Deepa grows quiet at this. Tej doesn't notice.*

Tej: For his Youtube channel. He's really into films, y'know? Proper ones. Boogie Nights, stuff like that. Wants to be a director when he grows up.

Deepa: Good luck with that.

Tej: *(Checking her phone as it buzzes)* Oh shit, look, got another comment.

Deepa: *(reading the comment)* "Shut your face, bitch. Why don't you eff off and contour your arse?"

*Tej descends into giggles.*

You're *(reading)* 'KardAsian 100,000?'

Tej: KardAsian one million.

Deepa: You need another zero.

Tej: *(checking her phone)* Oh, right...

*Deepa reads some more of the comments.*

Deepa: You called her a bare loser?

Tej: Gotta find something to fill the time while you're bunking off.

Deepa: I'm not.

Tej: You don't look poorly. My auntie got gastroenteritis and she was sick for two weeks, and she couldn't keep anything down. Not even, like, a sip of water? And she went this, like, weird yellow colour? Plus, she stank. Like properly stank. Breath like diarrhea. It came off her skin and everything, like this horrible, disgusting stench. But you don't have that. You look alright.

Deepa: Thanks.

*Tej takes two cans of coke and a bag of fun sized Milky ways out from her bag.*

Tej: Bought double?

Deepa: Don't want any.

*Tej starts on one of her Milky Ways. Deepa baulks, seeing the food. Tej waves the chocolate in her face, giggling. Deepa pushes her away.*

Tej: You just staying in bed all day, then? Not eating?

Deepa: ...Pretty much, yeah.

Tej: What about when you need a piss?

*Beat.*

Deepa: Dad brings up this old casserole dish we're using.

Tej: Urgh? You serious?!

Deepa: Yeah, I sort of have to balance? I can only get one cheek in though, so it can get a bit messy...

*Tej realises she's taking the piss and whacks her with the pillow.*

Tej: So when did you last eat? Been off since Monday.

Deepa: Monday, then.

Tej: Shit, that's...more than a week.

*Deepa shrugs. Tej stops to look at her in awe. Beat.*

Will you teach me?

Deepa: Teach you what?

Tej: How to stop eating?

Deepa: I'm *poorly*.

Tej: Then show me how to do the other thing?

*Deepa sighs wearily. Tej repeatedly clicks the lighter on and off.*

*(pulling out a lighter)* How can I keep telling everyone it was for real if I don't know how you did it?

Deepa: You don't have to tell them anything.

Tej: Got your back, okay? No one's getting away chatting shit about you.

Deepa: ...Thanks..?



Tej:               *(of the lighter)* Go on. Does it hurt?

Deepa:           No... I mean, it didn't...

Tej:               So *show me*.

Deepa:           *No.*

*Tej checks the palms of Deepa's hands really carefully.*

                    You know there's nothing there.

Tej:               So that's it? Pull one Dynamo stunt on the bus, and...drop the mic?

Deepa:           Give it a couple of weeks, everyone will have moved on. Kira'll...get a new bra, or something.

Tej:               *(deeply concerned)* Oh shit, you're right.

*Deepa takes the lighter from her and pointedly returns it to Tej's bag.*

                    You don't get it, Deepa. Everyone's been asking after you. *Zane's* been asking after you.

Deepa:           ...He's been ringing.

*Tej almost falls off the bed she's so shocked.*

Tej:               Here? What's he said?

Deepa:           Dad's been taking messages.

*Tej is finding it hard to take this in.*

Tej:               Zane Solanki's ringing you and you haven't been taking his calls?!

Deepa:           I'm not well, I told you.

Tej:               Starting to think you *really* aren't.

*Tej gets up to throw her Milkyway wrapper in the bin, and finds the diya lamp on the bedside table.*

                    What's this?

Deepa:           Get out of my stuff, will you?

*Deepa jumps out of bed and grabs it, quickly putting it away in the drawer. Tej stares at her – she seems fine.*

Tej: Sorry...

Deepa: It's... it's just really delicate. Breakable, y'know..?

Tej: What you trying to pull, Deeps? You seem... fine.

*Deepa slowly gets back into bed.*

Deepa: Nothing.

Tej: Let me in on it? Know you can trust me?

Deepa: I'm just tired, yeah?

Tej: Oh right, you're probably expecting a call, aren't you? If you can be arsed to take it?

*No response from Deepa. Tej pads over and gives her a hug.*

Bell me?

Deepa: I will.

*Tej leaves.*

#### Scene Four

*A few days later. Deepa's room. Sabs arrives home in a terrible mood, carrying a plastic bag. He finds her watching TV, marches over and turns it off.*

Sabs: Time you snapped out of this, Deeps.

Deepa: Thanks for the advice, dad.

*He opens the curtains and then the window.*

Sabs: Been hearing talk about you, something happening on the bus a few days ago..?

*Deepa freezes.*

Is it true? Something with this Zane boy..? And a lighter?

*Deepa doesn't answer.*

God forbid you'd tell your own dad, right? Have to hear all this second hand from Anil and his buddies.

Deepa: What you talking to them for?

Sabs: To get some answers. Why'd you think?

Deepa: You going round interrogating Year 7 kids, shaming me?

Sabs: *I'm* the one who should be ashamed. Had enough of this. There's nothing wrong with you. You're going back to school on Monday.

Deepa: Fuck you.

Sabs: Don't... You don't talk to me like that.

Deepa: Mum wouldn't make me.

Sabs: She would've sent you back last week. Sooner even.

Deepa: *She* would've understood.

Sabs: She wouldn't have appreciated people gossiping about us.

Deepa: Who gives a shit about them?

Sab: I do. So should you. That's what community is, Deeps. And stop swearing.

Deepa: Fuck community.

Sab: Oi. I mean it. (*Beat, of the plastic bag*) Look, I've got crisps, I've got a pasty, I've got biscuits.

Deepa: I'm not hungry.

Sabs: You're going to eat something right now. Because if you don't eat you won't get better and you've missed over a week of school, now.

*He sits down beside her and takes the pasty out. Deepa heaves as the smell hits her.*

Just a bit, come on. It's lamb.

*He holds it up to her mouth.*

Deepa: (*pushing it away*) I'm not hungry.

*Some of the filling spills on the duvet.*

Sabs: It's your favourite, come on.

*He holds it up to her mouth again.*

Deepa: Don't want it.

Sabs: Just one bite, for me. It's delicious. Come on.

Deepa: *You* have it, then.

Sabs: I bought it for *you*.

Deepa: No you didn't. You got it from Four Corners

Sabs: ...What?

Deepa: You get everything from the food bank. Think I don't know that?

*Sabs doesn't know what to say.*

Ooh, pasties. Some do gooder thought we'd piss ourselves with gratitude.

Sabs: I didn't. I...wouldn't...

*She impulsively grabs the pasty and shoves it towards his mouth.*

Deepa: You eat it. Go on, dad, you eat it.

Sabs: *(turning his face away)* I don't want it.

Deepa: *(pushing it into his mouth)* You like it so much, you have it. Go on, eat it. You need to eat, too, don't you?

Sabs: *(spitting it out)* I'm not hungry.

Deepa: *(catching the falling crumbs and trying to shove them back in his mouth)* Eat it. Go on, eat it.

*Sabs backs away.*

Sabs: I don't want it, Deeps.

Deepa: *(impersonating Sabs as she tries to push the food into his mouth)* "Eat it, Deeps. I love you, Deeps. What will everyone think, Deeps?"

Sabs: I don't want it. Stop it. *Stop it.*

*He stumbles onto the floor, holding his hands over his mouth. Deepa pushes his hands away and forces the food in. Sabs begins to gag. Deepa backs away, scared by what she's done. Sabs spits the food out.*

Deepa: I'm, I'm sorry.

*Long, tense beat. Sabs cleans his face. Deepa retreats back to her bed and pulls up the covers.*

Sabs: I didn't get the job.

Deepa: ...Oh.

*Beat.*

Sabs: Something will turn up. This is just a...bad patch. We'll get through it, and we'll be stronger for it.

Deepa: Or this is it. This bad patch is our lives, and the only reason we're not kicking off is 'cos we're *hoping* things might get better. One day. Maybe. And if that does happen, we don't want to be in the shit for being troublemakers. We want to be the people who were all hard-working, and positive.

Sabs: Don't want to hear you talking like this, okay? You're young, you've got your whole future ahead of you.

Deepa: Have I?

Sabs: You're smart, Deeps, you're...bright as anything. Don't want to waste that.

Deepa: How'd you know?

Sabs: Mrs Daniels tells me. All your teachers tell me.

Deepa: Did they say you were bright? At school?

Sabs: Yes... Some of them.

Deepa: What's it done for you?

Sabs: I count my blessings.

Deepa: Can't take you long.

Sabs: I have *you*.

*Deepa snorts with derision.*

Sabs: You need qualifications to be an astronaut.

Deepa: I don't want to be an astronaut.

Sabs: Archaeologist, then.

Deepa: *Palaeontologist*. They're the ones who do the dinosaurs.

Sabs: There you go, then.

Deepa: Don't want to work with dead things all day.

Sabs: That's fine, Deeps. That's your choice. You need an education or you don't have choices.

Deepa: People just pretend to have choices. So they feel better.

*Deepa gets out of bed, pulls the diya lamp out from its hiding place, and lights it.*

Sabs: What're you doing?

*She places it on the bedside table, then sinks to her knees and bows, prostrate.*

Deepa: Pray with me, dad.

Sabs: ...What?

Deepa: Like mum used to do. ...Pray for a job.

Sabs: Doesn't work like that.

*Deepa turns away from him, disgusted. She slowly loses herself in contemplation.*

Deepa?

*No response. Sabs backs out of the room.*

*Sabs sits on the floor in his bedroom, the small domestic shrine on the floor beside him. He struggles to light a joss stick to present to the goddess effigy, then gives up and uses the match to light a cigarette instead. He smokes in silence for a moment.*

Sabs: *(to Chandra)* ...Remember when she was little, love? Really little. 2 or 3? Remember what a temper she had? If we ever dared say 'no' to her, she'd just...go...(mental). That time in Tesco's. Rolling around on the floor, kicking her little legs, bawling her eyes out next to the crisps. *(chuckles at the memory)* Embarrassing. No talking to her. Just had to... wait until she calmed down. Look like shit parents. *(Beat)* Couldn't have got through that without you, love. Both of us sat there like lemons, trying not to laugh. Not *at* her, just... Kids. Fuck. *(beat)* Then she started holding her breath... Remember? First time we just gave in – got her the ice cream, fine. But then she started doing it all the time. How'd she do it, love? Hold her breath for like...a minute, 2 minutes. Timed myself once, you know that? Wanted to see what it was like. Lasted 30 seconds. She could do it 'til she blacked out. That's when we should've known... Deepa. She's just...she's not like other kids. Is she? So what do I do? What would you do..?

### Scene Five

*The next day. Deepa sits up in bed, dressed. Sabs has put two chairs next to the bed for him and Tej's uncle Bijesh. Bijesh is in the middle of a coughing fit. A shopping bags of clothes are on the floor.*

Bijesh: *(struggling to speak)* You...don't...have...a...cat...do...you..?

Sabs: No.

*Bijesh continues his painful looking coughing fit. Sabs pours him a glass of water. Bijesh holds onto it tightly, coughing too hard to even take a sip. He finally manages to suppress it and drinks.*

Bijesh: Shiiiiit. Hasn't been this bad for a while.

Deepa: Just had some joss sticks on the go.

Sabs: *Deep's.*

Deepa: Didn't realise. Sorry.

Bijesh: At the start I sounded quite cool, y'know, bit Clint Eastwood? Now I just sound fucked.

*Awkward beat.*

*(taking a box out from his rucksack)* Bought prasad from temple. Nabbed the best ones. Chocolate burfi. Couple of pista ones too.

Sabs: *(to Deepa)* Love those, don't you?

*Bijesh offers her the box.*

Deepa: I'm alright, thanks.

Sabs: She's been poorly.

Bijesh: You and me both, mate. Be dead in five years.

Deepa: For real?

Sabs: *Deep's...*

Bijesh: Look at this.

*Bijesh takes off his shoes and socks.*

Used to have nice toes. Slender toes. A *dancer's* toes. Now they're big and wide and ugly. It's called 'clubbing'. And I have *not* been doing any of that since I got this shit storm diagnosis. Believe. Excuse my language.

Sabs: *(of Deepa)* It's okay, she's heard worse.

Bijesh: Course. *(to Deepa)* Chandra had a mouth on her, didn't she?

Deepa: You knew mum?

Bijesh: Volunteered with her, just for a few months, but you know your mum. She made a bit of a mark.

Deepa: What kind of mark?

Bijesh: Made me realise we have to remake the world how we want it to be. Piece by piece. No matter how long it takes. Probably said inspiring shit like that to you all the time. All my mum ever says is ‘when you gonna get a job?’ and ‘when you gonna find a nice girl?’ Like it’s that easy when you sound like I do.

Deepa: It was more that she’d... You know, she knew how to listen..? She could tell when something was wrong.

Bijesh: Good ones always die young, eh?

Sabs: It was Deepa’s idea to ask you round.

Bijesh: *(to Deepa)* Take after her, then? Big heart.

Sabs: *(of the shopping bags)* Just hope some of it can be of use.

Bijesh: Sure thing.

*Bijesh starts to take out the clothes, appraising them. He pulls out one of Chandra’s salwars from the bag.*

Oh, isn’t this...(Chandra’s)..?

*Sabs quickly grabs it from him.*

Sabs: That shouldn’t be in there.

Deepa: *(to Sabs)* She’d want him to take it.

Sabs: We can talk about this later.

*Deepa struggles out of bed. She’s a bit unsteady at first. Sabs tries to help her but she shrugs him away.*

What’re you doing?

*She starts to go through the bags herself.*

Deepa: This one too.

*She hands another salwar to Bijesh.*

Bijesh: She wore this one quite a lot, didn’t she? Sure I recognise it...

Sabs: *(taking it back)* Look, we’ve got loads of other stuff to donate.

Bijesh: No probs, man. That’s cool.

Deepa: They don’t even smell like her anymore. Just stink of mothballs.



Sabs: They're not yours to give away.

Deepa: What if they help get a kid off the streets? It's called leaving a legacy, dad.

Sabs: *(to Deepa)* Stop showing off.

Deepa: I'm not.

Bijesh: *(handing it back)* Maybe one day you'll wear it. Or, have a daughter. And she'll wear it.

Deepa: You take it.

*She continues rooting through the bag. She comes across some leaflets and books and starts to flick through them.*

Sabs: What're those?

*Deepa holds them up – spiritual pamphlets and a book, 'All is Light and Fire'.*

Bijesh: Oh, yeah, I've got that one, from temple.

*Deepa hands a couple of the leaflets to him.*

*(reading one of them)* This one's by this guy who got lost in the mountains, Utter Pradesh. His family thought he was dead, but he turned up again about five years later.

Deepa: "Prahlad Jani is a 'breatharian'. His spiritual connection with the force that sustains him has no parallel."

Bijesh: Yeah, heard Indian Defence Research studied him.

Sabs: *(to Bijesh)* Don't believe this rubbish, do you?

Deepa: *(of the book)* They was mum's.

Sabs: She only had them for a laugh.

Deepa: Don't remember her laughing at them.

Sabs: There're a lot of things you don't remember.

Deepa: Like you know so much.

Sabs: What's that supposed to mean?

Bijesh: I'd better get going... You've been so generous. Thank you, this will make a real difference.

*He puts the clothes back into the bag. Deepa stuffs Chandra's salwars in too.*

Deepa: And these.

Bijesh: I don't, um...(need them) Honestly, this is *loads*.

Deepa: *(to Sabs)* I want him to take them.

Sabs: Of course. All for a good cause, isn't it?

*Awkward beat.*

*(to Bijesh)* Keep us up to date with your project, yeah?

Bijesh: For sure. I'll give you the website link, all that shit.

Sabs: *(of the bags)* Let me give you a hand.

Bijesh: It's okay, I'll see myself out.

*Deepa gets back into bed with the book and leaflets. She pours over them, intrigued.*

Sabs: That was nice of you.

*Deepa doesn't respond.*

Just hope you don't regret it.

Deepa: What's that supposed to mean?

Sabs: Haven't eaten properly for days. Not sure you're thinking straight.

Deepa: ...They're just some old salwars.

Sabs: They're not though, are they?

Deepa: If you wanted to keep them, you should've said.

Sabs: So I could be the monster denying little kids?

Deepa: If it was that important to you, you should've voiced up.

Sabs: Too late now.

Deepa: Catch up with him, then. Tell him you've changed your mind.

Sabs: Gotta be joking.

Deepa: You're a coward.

Sabs: What did you say?

Deepa: It's always someone else's fault. Usually mine.

Sabs: ...Only thing I blame you for is being too stubborn to eat.

Deepa: I'm poorly.

Sabs: With what, Deeps?

*Deepa returns to Chandra's book.*

Has something happened? Did something happen with... this boy?  
This Zane guy?

*Tense beat.*

He your boyfriend?

Deepa: *No.*

Sabs: ...Why's he so interested in you, then?

Deepa: He's not.

Sabs: Never heard of him and suddenly he's ringing everyday..?

*Beat.*

Ever since this... *thing*, on the bus. *(Beat)* Is... Is that it..? Is it something to do with the... the bus..?

*Beat.*

...Did he do something..?

*Deepa nods quietly. Sabs is very scared.*

Sabs: So... Right... So... You... You didn't tell me.

Deepa: Didn't think I could.

Sabs: So now you can. You *should*.

Deepa: I 'should'?

Sabs: I'm your dad, aren't I?

*Deepa puts the book down and tries to meet his eye, but he can't look at her. She gets out of bed and stands in front of Sabs. Sabs finds it hard to meet her eye.*

...You know... You know you can talk to me..?

*Deepa starts to cry.*

Come on, Deeps. I'm your dad. I'm not... I'm not a... mind reader.

*Heavy beat. Deepa returns to her bed, broken. The moment has passed.*

Deepa: Doesn't matter.

Sabs: ...You sure?

*She picks the book back up. Sabs backs out of the room. He knows he's failed.*

### Scene Six

*The next evening. Tej and Deepa are sprawled on the bed in Deepa's room, watching a video on Deepa's phone.*

Tej: What the fuck is this?

Deepa: *Watch.*

Tej: Nice dancing. Hey, we should put a Taylor Swift soundtrack over it – be *bare* funny.

Deepa: Just shut up and watch.

*Tej watches for a moment, bored.*

Tej: Where did you find this, anyway? Boringindianbitches.com?

Deepa: She's not boring. *Listen.*

*Deepa turns up the volume. The tinny sound of a crowd chanting on the video.*

That's her. They're chanting her *name*.

Tej: *(laughing)* Seen some of these comments? "Unseen outtakes from Shilpa Shetty's appearance on 'I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here.'"

*Tej cracks up with laughter.*

Deepa: How is that funny?

Tej: Shilpa Shetty. You know? Think she was on 'Strictly'?

*Deepa turns off the video.*

Who sent you that?

Deepa: *No one.* Read about her in this book.

Tej: What book?

*Deepa chucks "All is Light and Fire" at her.*

Deepa: It was mum's.

*Tej flicks through it.*

How's your uncle Bijesh?

Tej: Who cares?

Deepa: Is his cough any better?

Tej: I dunno.

Deepa: Living with him, aren't you?

Tej: Try not to pay him that much attention.

Deepa: ...Ask him, yeah?

Tej: If I knew you were so desperate for company I'd have come over yesterday.

Deepa: I'm not.

Tej: Just so bored you're hanging out with Uncle Bijesh and watching hindu nutters on youtube?

Deepa: It's better than those boring freerunning videos Zane does.

Tej: No, 'cos they are *amazing* and *hilarious* so no, no way.

Deepa: Least she's trying to help people.

Tej: Help people?

Deepa: They're chanting her name for a reason. She's giving them... *hope*.

Tej: Only she can fleece them.

Deepa: *Bullshit.*

Tej: Uncle Bijesh went to see this sadhu in Sutton Colefield. Gave him 250 quid and the next week he was in hospital getting his airways sunctioned. Gross.

Deepa: Just 'cos there are... *cowboys* out there, doesn't mean there aren't also/real

Tej: /Indians? (*laughs at her own joke*)

Deepa: *Real* people, the *real deal*.

Tej: Sweet, you'll be into it, then. Zane had an idea. He wants to film you doing the lighter thing. Post it on Youtube.

*Deepa looks at her as if she's mad.*

He's got like, a *thousand* subscribers, yeah? Reckons they'd go batshit for it. Says there's 'nothing like it on the internet'.

Deepa: I'm not doing it again.

Tej: He's got advertisers. Says he'll split the takings with us 50/50.

Deepa: 'Us'?

Tej: We can blur your face, if you like? 'Privacy' and all that.

Deepa: No.

Tej: He uploads it, people pass it on, it goes viral. We'll be minting it. Go on, Deepa.

Deepa: I said *no*.

Tej: Why not?

Deepa: Because... it's not the sort of shit you... mess around with, yeah?

Tej: ...What's that supposed to mean..?

Deepa: Like... powers we...don't understand.

Tej: Um... *Okay*. So, you think you're like...Wonderwoman or something now?

Deepa: I can't, because I don't know how I did it, okay? Must've like...gone into a trance, or something.

*Stunned silence from Tej.*

Tej: But you seemed dead...confident?

Deepa: ...Did I?

Tej: You don't remember?

*Deepa shakes her head.*

I mean. You did get this weird look.

Deepa: Weird how?

Tej: Sort of like...like the one my brother gets when he's been out with his mates all night. Like, you'd had six pints and a couple of cherry bombs. Like, you were really, really focused, but with this weird sort of smile.

Deepa: I was smiling?

Tej: You didn't look like *you*. Everyone was shitting it.

Deepa: Were they?

Tej: Totally.

Deepa: Even Zane?

Tej: Like, he was pretending to laugh and that, but I could tell he was scared. I'll film you and you can see yourself.

*Tej pulls out a lighter.*

Deepa: You better go, it's getting late.

Tej: Come *on*, Deepa?

Deepa: Maybe next time.

Tej: Don't do that.

Deepa: What?

Tej: You don't have to treat me like a kid all the time.

Deepa: I don't.

Tej: We never used to have secrets.

*She reluctantly puts away the lighter. Tej leaves.*

Scene Seven

*The next day. Tej and Bijesh stand by the door in Deepa's room. Bijesh holds a plastic bag of clothes. He's wheezy and struggling with a cough.*

Tej: What's up, Deeps?

Bijesh: *(to Tej)* I bought the clothes back.

Deepa: Keep them.

Bijesh: Where's your dad?

Deepa: He's out.

Bijesh: Right... Okay. I don't think I should be... here. Must've... got mixed up or... (something)

*He puts down the bag and starts to back away.*

Deepa: I said to keep the clothes.

*She takes out the diya lamp.*

*(to Tej)* I'll do it again, but don't record it, okay?

Tej: For real? *(quietly to Deepa)* Why'd you want him here, though?

Deepa: *(to Bijesh)* I can help you. I think.

Bijesh: You've... done enough already. Thanks. Thank you. *(of the clothes)*  
This means a lot.

Deepa: You need to like... pray...

*Tej bursts into laughter.*

Bijesh: Pray..?

Deepa: Dad doesn't get it. But... it makes me feel... better.

Tej: You taking the piss?

Deepa: Not just in my head. But... here too. *(motions to her chest)*

Bijesh: ...You... want to *pray*..?

Deepa: I get this, like, surge of energy?

Bijesh: Energy?



Deepa: And I do feel shit. Sometimes I feel really, really shit... but then I light the flame and something else takes over... Light... and... heat...

Tej: You said you didn't know how you did it.

Deepa: I don't. I'm not saying I understand it. *(to Bijesh)* You feel like shit too, don't you?

Bijesh: ...Um, yeah...

Deepa: I pray to the god of fire, and he helps me.

Bijesh: Agni..?

Deepa: Who?

Bijesh: That's his name.

Tej: This is jokes, right? Come off it.

*Deepa lights the diya lamp and places it on the floor. Tej is intrigued.*

Can you do it with that..?

Deepa: Yeah.

Bijesh: Maybe w should go, uncle. This is a bit weird.

Tej: No... Just... Give her a minute.

Bijesh: *(to Deepa)* I don't understand..? You think you can help..?

*Deepa kneels on the floor in front of the diya lamp. Bijesh also gets onto his knees. They look to Tej.*

Tej: Er...

*Deepa pushes her hand into the flame and holds it there, unflinching. Tej watches from the door, transfixed.*

Bijesh: What're you doing..?

Tej: She's done it before.

Bijesh: I thought she wanted to pray?

*Deepa drifts into a trance state.*

Oh my god...

*Sabs enters.*

Sabs: (to Tej) What the hell's going on?

Tej: (to Sabs) She said to come over. I don't know, I'm sorry...

Sabs: Deeps..?

*He tries to move her away from the flame. She pushes him away. He's surprised by her strength. She rises to her feet and slowly starts to dance. At first her moves are similar to the sadhvi in the videos, but they gradually become something different – free and joyous moves all her own.*

What're you doing?

*She smiles serenely at him, spinning faster and faster.*

Deepa? Stop this.

Bijesh: (mumbles) I magnify the Lord, the divine, the offerer... who brings us riches, food in abundance, and hero sons to gladden our hearts. (looks up at Deepa) And daughters. Hero daughters.

Sabs: (to Tej and Bijesh) You should go. She's sick. She's really sick.

Tej: She doesn't look... sick...

Bijesh: (to Deepa) She's full of energy. Full of light.

Deepa: Energy. Light. Energy. Light. Energy. Light.

*She spins faster as she chants.*

Sabs: (to Deepa) You're going to hurt yourself.

Bijesh: She's fine. She's more than fine. Look at her.

Deepa: Energy. Light. Energy. Light.

Sabs: What's she doing?

Bijesh: Anywhere can be a temple. She's made *this* a temple.

Sabs: What're you saying, Deeps?

Bijesh: She's speaking in tongues. To a *higher power*.

Sabs: ...What?

Deepa: Energy. Light. Energy. Light. *Fire*. Energy. Light. *Fire*. I ask him to heal you.

*She points to Bijesh as she spins, faster and faster.*

Sabs: *(to Bijesh)* Go. Please. Just go.

Bijesh: Listen.

*He grabs Sab's hand and puts it to his chest, inhaling deeply and clearly.*

Do you hear that? I can breathe! *(He takes in another long, clear breath)* My shitty lungs! I can breathe, I can breathe again.

*He drops to his knees and worships Deepa in full supplication, bursting into tears of elation.*

Sabs: What the fuck..?

Deepa: I speak to Lord Agni.

Sabs: I don't understand.

Deepa: I'm a mataji.

Sabs: What?

Deepa: A *sadhvi*.

Sabs: I don't understand..?

Deepa: I'm a saint.

Bijesh: Deepa is a saint.

*Blackout.*

### Scene Eight

*Weeks later. Deepa sits expectantly on the floor of her bedroom, wearing a simple white cotton salwar kameez, the diya lamp burning in front of her. Deepa focuses on the lamp and slowly lowers her hand down onto the flame. She begins to dance. She greets a string of devotees seeking her help in return for various offerings.*

Deepa: *(direct address)* It's okay, Mr Chowdry, your time in the dole queue's coming to an end. You won't have to move in with your brother...

*She continues to spin.*

Miss Singh, your mum's finally getting her op next week. She'll be on her feet again in no time.

*She dances faster and faster, entering a trance state.*

Mr Greening. I know you haven't told anyone. I know you're too scared. I won't pretend, it's going to be rough for a while, But your wife's going to be okay. She's going to come through this and you'll both be stronger for it.

*Deepa dances until she's exhausted, then slows to a stop. A pause, then she stretches up to the sky, radiant, glowing in the light of the diya lamp.*

*Sabs enters and starts to tidy away the array of offerings – car keys, laptops, mobile phones, even a flat screen television.*

Sabs: We need to sell some of this stuff, Deepa. We're running out of room.

Deepa: I've told them Lord Agni isn't interested in... *profiting* from their bad luck.

Sabs: They won't take it back. They think it won't work then.

Deepa: So... donate it to charity. I don't know... Bijesh's charity.

*Beat.*

Sabs: The credit cards are maxed out, Deepa.

Deepa: Here it is.

Sabs: I can barely cover the minimum repayments.

Deepa: Laughing all the way to Cash Converters.

Sabs: I'm just trying to be practical.

Deepa: None of this (*of the offerings*) has got anything to do with me. Agni doesn't care if we get money, or presents. Agni only cares about love and devotion.

Sabs: Okay, that's great – what about some lunch?

Deepa: I don't feel pain, or thirst, or hunger. I don't need *anything* you need.

Sabs: *Everyone* needs food and water, Deepa.

Deepa: I used to. Not any more.

Sabs: I'm your dad, I know you better than anyone.

Deepa: It's not your fault. You're just too...small. It's like trying to make an insect understand...I dunno...*gravity*. Or...*evolution*.

Sabs: I know if you've got a brain tumour, you need a doctor. Not a dancing teenager.

Deepa: I'm tired. You can go.

Sabs: Course you're tired. You can't go on like this.

Deepa: Today? Today was *nothing*.

Sabs: More than 50 people showed up. You didn't have a break until gone 6.

Deepa: What's up, dad? Worried your cash cow's going to get worn out?

Sabs: I'm worried my daughter's overdoing it. There was a queue out the door at lunchtime. Had to turn some of them away.

Deepa: We need somewhere bigger, then. A hall or something.

Sabs: A hall..?

Deepa: Yeah. Like the one at temple.

Sabs: They won't let you do this at...*temple*.

Deepa: Why?

Sabs: Why'd you think? Imagine what the press they'd get.

Deepa: Community centre then. It doesn't matter to me. ...Everywhere is my temple.

Sabs: I'm not having you dancing around for a crowd of strangers in some hall.

Deepa: They won't be strangers, they'll be my followers.

Sabs: I'm not letting you parade around for some...*mob*.

Deepa: How long do you think you can keep me locked in here?

Sabs: I'm not... I haven't *locked* you in – you're... you're the one who doesn't want to leave.

Deepa: Are you ashamed of me?

Sabs: How can you say that?

Deepa: Finally know how I feel.

Sabs: I'm not listening to this. This isn't... you.

Deepa: This *is* me. Finally. And you can't keep me away from my people.

Sabs: 'Your people'?

Deepa: The ones who actually care about me. If you don't sort it out, they will. And *everyone* will come.

Scene Nine

*Days later. A stand off between Deepa and Sabs in the main hall of Four Corners Community Centre. Bijesh stands on a chair, in the middle of hanging a 'Deepa' banner across the entrance.*

Sabs: Come home, Deepa.

*He tries to take her by the arm, but she struggles.*

Deepa: Get off me.

Bijesh: Let go of her and there doesn't have to be any trouble.

Sabs: ...She's my daughter – why'd I want any 'trouble'?

Bijesh: Exactly. That's a great attitude you got there, so just let go and everything's A OK.

*Sabs lets go of Deepa.*

Sabs: *(to Deepa)* What if some nutter walks in and tries to... I don't know... tries to stab you. Or... chuck acid at you?

Bijesh: *I'll* be on the door.

Sabs: You? Bronchitis Bijesh?

Bijesh: I'm better now. I'm *completely* better. Sadhvi has given me back *my* life. I would do *anything* to protect her.

Sabs: ...You don't have to do this, Deeps.

Deepa: I want to. *Agni* wants me to. And he's with me all the time, so you don't have to worry, okay? If that's what this is. *(handing some notes to Bijesh)* Can you read this before I come on?

Bijesh: Okay.

Deepa: Need someone to introduce me.

Sabs: What about me?

Deepa: You're going home.

Sabs: I'm not leaving you here.

Deepa: I'm staying.

Sabs: Then I'm staying.

*Sabs takes a seat.*

Deepa: *(to Bijesh)* Keep an eye on him.

*Bijesh continues hanging the banner.*

Bijesh: Got almost 500 people confirmed. Plus I put the word out at temples in other cities. Nottingham, Loughborough, Birmingham, Wolverhampton... And I was thinking, if there's an overflow into the car park we could set up a video feed so they can watch/ it outside.

Deepa: /No cameras.

Bijesh: Thought it might be a way of making them feel part of/ the event if they can't get in.

Deepa: /No cameras. If we let anyone film it'll end up on online with people taking the piss.

Bijesh: If *anyone* were to disrespect you, *I* would personally hurt them. *Very* badly.

*Tej enters, a large bag on her shoulder.*

Tej: *(lifting up Deepa's hands)* Put your hands over your eyes.

Deepa: What is it?

Tej: Surprise. Go on.

*Deepa reluctantly holds her hands over her eyes. Tej unzips her jacket with a flourish, revealing a screen printed image of Deepa's face on the front of her t shirt.*

Ta daaaaa.

*Tej beams and poses. Deepa stares, incredulous.*

What do you think?

Deepa: Anyone seen you in that?

Tej: Wanted you to be the first.

Deepa: Good. We can chuck it and never talk about this again.

*Tej takes off her jacket and offers up the t-shirt sleeve for Deepa to feel.*

Tej:            Feel it - quality. Thought we could say, like, a fiver?

Deepa:        You've got to be joking?

Tej:            Tenner, then? Don't want to undersell ourselves, yeah?

Deepa:        Sell ourselves to who?

Tej:            Merchandise, Deeps. You got this captive market and you haven't even got any merchandise.

Deepa:        What is that picture..? Is that the one from..?

*Tej bursts into laughter.*

Tej:            Year eight.

*Deepa pulls the t-shirt taut to have a better look.*

Deepa:        You used the school photo?

Tej:            You're like, all innocent and pure. It's cute, Deeps. Everyone said so.

Deepa:        It's not right.

Tej:            You're putting in all this work, you deserve some payback.

Deepa:        What work?

Tej:            All this energy. And, like...sacrifice, and that. Think about it. Tenner a pop for these. And...

*She pulls out a cloth bag from her rucksack and unfolds it. The same image of Deepa's face. Deepa groans.*

Fiver for these.

*Tej pulls out a poster and proudly unfurls it. The same image of Deepa's face. A bigger groan from Deepa.*

Not sure whether to go matte or that shiny gloss paper for these – what do you think?

*Diplomatic pause.*

Deepa:        ...They're great, Tej. Really...professional.

Tej:            Mum says she's never seen me so focused.

Deepa:        They must've taken a lot of... effort.



Tej: Been up late past three nights. She let me use the garage. Told her it was Art and Design coursework.

Deepa: You can't sell them, though.

Tej: Why?

Deepa: People aren't coming here to *shop*.

Tej: You've got a new fucking Sony.

Deepa: I tell them they don't have to bring stuff.

Tej: Shit, hold up. Gonna split the profits with you, yeah?

Deepa: I don't want the money.

Tej: Right... Suppose you're not so hard up anymore? Now you're 'a *saint*'.

Deepa: It's different. I'm not just ripping people off. Bijesh says his lungs have never been better.

Tej: Whatevs.

Deepa: The Chauhans didn't get evicted.

Tej: They consolidated their debts and Mrs Chauhan got a part time job at that place on the high street.

Deepa: There you go, then.

Tej: You think that was you..?

Deepa: You don't understand.

Tej: All we need is a table in the corner. We can look after the business side of things.

Deepa: 'We'?

Tej: Zane says he'll help out.

Deepa: He's not coming?

Tej: He's meeting me here at seven.

Deepa: *Meeting* you..?

Tej: You jealous?

Deepa: *No*.

Tej: Come on, you're a bit jealous, admit it?

Deepa: I'm *not*.

Tej: We been sitting together at lunch.

Deepa: I won't let him in.

Tej: Why..?

Deepa: Because... (I don't want to see him)

Tej: Zane Solanki's asked *me* out and you're trying to screw it up?

Deepa: You can't trust him, Tej.

Tej: Trust him to what?

Deepa: He's not a...nice guy.

Tej: Wooh, hope not. We'll see, eh?

Deepa: I mean it, Tej.

Tej: What the fuck, Deeps? Shit, you *are* jealous.

Deepa: *No*.

Tej: I've wanted to go out with him *forever*.

Deepa: You don't know him, I mean, *really* know him.

Tej: And you do?

*Deepa doesn't know what to say.*

You got your whole saint thing, yeah? Can't you just be happy for me?

Deepa: He's just using you.

Tej: Using me for what?

Deepa: To get to me.

Tej: Know this is gonna come as a massive shock, Deeps. But not everything is about you.

Deepa: Didn't mean it like that...

Tej: Liked it better when you weren't a saint. Least then you weren't a bitch.

*Deepa stares up into the lights as Bijesh flicks them on.*

*That evening. Deepa's devotees, heard off stage, crowd around her, cheering. Bijesh*

*joins her on stage.*

Crowd:           Deepa! Deepa!

*The crowd's chanting continues through Bijesh's speech.*

Bijesh:           *(shouting to be heard)* You've probably heard of Baba Jagrati of Palanpur. 12 years ago, he bound his calf to his thigh so tightly it withered, and he spends most of the day standing. The Lord Shiva came to him when he was a child, offering spiritual insight in return for his right leg. But his left leg is now so powerful, when he stamps on the ground it causes an earthquake through all of Gujarat.

Then there is Chaitanya in Syhlet. He restored his grandmother's sight after they were reunited after a flood. His family witnessed the cataracts falling from her eyes 'like scales'. Another woman's devotion to him has cured her of breast cancer.

But you are lucky. You don't have to travel to Gujarat, or Syhlet, to find hope and spiritual power. Deepa is right here. Your neighbour. Your sister. Your daughter. She finds sustenance and power in the heat of Agni's fire. And she will lead you towards a more hopeful future.

*The crowd's ecstatic adoration can be heard, off stage. Bijesh holds the diya lamp out to Deepa. Deepa holds her hand over the flame, absorbing the pain without flinching. The crowd grows silent with expectation and wonder. Deepa slowly begins to dance.*

Deepa:           *(as she spins)* It's okay, Tara. They let your mum out this morning. Ring her.

*She spins.*

Mr Owen, they've got it wrong, you don't have to pay back any of your tax credits. Bin that Wonga application.

*She spins.*

Nandini, your landlord's been shopped to the authorities. He won't get away with it anymore.

Crowd:           *(off stage)* Deepa! Deepa!

Deepa:           Now I want to know – is Zane Solanki here?

*Cheers and shouts from the crowd.*

Can anyone see Zane Solanki? If so, show him to me.

*The crowd slowly parts to reveal Zane, standing at the back with Tej, filming Deepa on his phone.*

*(off stage)* Deepa. Deepa.

*Deepa slows down, her rage growing.*

I'm sorry, Zane. No filming allowed.

*She starts to spin with renewed vigour. The crowd grow wild and chaotic.*

Crowd: (off stage) Sadhvi! Deepa! Our saviour! Deepa!

*Deepa enters a trance state. At the back of the hall, Zane sways, light-headed. He stumbles, almost falling. Tej catches him.*

Tej: Whoah, you alright?

Zane: Yeah, yeah... No...

*Zane starts to vomit and collapses on the floor, his body spasming. Tej screams. Deepa gazes up the sunlight streaming in from the window with ecstasy as she spins. Petals rain down on her.*

Crowd: (off stage) Deepa! Deepa!

*The light gets brighter and brighter. Deepa dances towards it, as if controlled by an unseen force. She slowly sinks to her knees, having to shield her eyes from Agni's fierce flame. She reaches out to Agni, and spasms, as if electrified. She stretches back onto the floor, in a trance. Her movements become uncontrolled and frenetic as her dancing becomes stranger. She starts to glow.*

### Scene Ten

*A back room at Four Corners Community Centre. Sabs and Tej carry Zane in and lie him down on the floor. Tej drapes her jacket over him.*

Sabs: (feeling his forehead) Take it off, he's burning.

*Tej takes away the jacket.*

Tej: I don't know what to do.

*She grabs a bottle of water and holds it to his mouth.*

Zane: No, no.

*He turns his face away and splutters the water out.*

Tej: One minute he was fine, next he was twerking about on the floor...

*Sabs stares down at Zane.*

Sabs: (to Tej) This is 'Zane'?

Tej: Yeah.

Zane: (to Sabs) Who're you?

Sabs: Deepa's dad.

*Zane tries to get up but he's too weak.*

Tej: (to Zane) Easy.

Zane: It's alright. I'm alright.

*Bijesh helps Deepa in. She's still weak.*

Sabs: I need to get you home, Deeps. (to Tej) You should call 999.

*Tej takes out her phone and starts to call 999. Deepa grabs it from her.*

Deepa: He doesn't need an ambulance.

Tej: But... he's had, like, a fit or something..?

Bijesh: Sadhvi will help him.

Sabs: No way.

Deepa: (to Sabs) I don't need you, dad. Just leave. (to Bijesh and Tej) You can *all* leave.

Zane: (to Tej) Give us a minute, babes.

*He pulls her down and gives her a long kiss. Tej giggles.*

Tej: Sure you're okay?

Zane: What do you think?

Sabs: (to Deepa) I'm just outside.

*Bijesh, Tej and Sabs exit.*

Zane: Alright, Deeps?

Deepa: You're the one who looks like shit.

Zane: You pissed at me?

Deepa: 'Pissed' at you?

Zane: You haven't been answering my calls, and then Tej tells me you've been saying shit about me.

Deepa: You for real..?

Zane: You're not into me, okay, I'll leave you alone. But what's it got to do with Tej?

*Zane fidgets, discomfited by Deepa's accusatory gaze.*

Deepa: She's my friend. I'd do anything to protect her.

Zane: Look, what happened... You're not trying to make out...(I forced you)? I mean, you don't think I...(forced you)?

*Deepa glowers at him. Zane acknowledges the unspoken accusation.*

It was the middle of the fucking day – why didn't you shout for help, then? Why didn't you kick me in the balls?

*Deepa falters, unable to answer.*

You're something else, you know that? Three months ago no one even knew who you were.

Deepa: They do now, don't they? And now the whole town's seen you puke your guts over your Adidas.

Zane: Trying to make out that was you? As if.

Deepa: Think what you like.

Zane: Not scared of you.

Deepa: You haven't seen anything yet.

*Zane manages to pull himself to his feet.*

Zane: If you spread shit about me, I will end you.

### Scene Eleven

*Sabs waits for Deepa outside. He watches Tej help a fragile Zane walk across the car park. Deepa joins him. She holds onto the doorframe, desperate to appear strong. Zane glances back at her and she glares at him. She sinks to the ground as soon as he and Tej exit, unable to keep up the act.*

Sabs: Love...

*He holds out his hand to help her.*

Can we go home?

*She accepts it.*

Deepa: ...Okay.

*They pass Zane, speaking to a local TV news crew outside the community centre.*

Zane: Deepa Ghose? Yeah, I know her. My little brother sits with her in maths. Everyone knows about her. Like, this one time, she smashed the fire alarm at school? And the teachers were shit(ting it)...very concerned, because they knew there wasn't a drill scheduled. And we could all tell they were...concerned, so we were...very concerned too. And it turned out there wasn't a fire, and she knew there wasn't a fire. She just wanted the attention. *(Disbelief for the camera)* Feel sorry for her, really. Everyone does. There's just her and her dad, and they're hard up, y'know?

*Zane affects concern and pity for the camera.*

### Scene Twelve

*That night. The stage darkens. A cold wind blows into Deepa's bedroom, now bare of all comfort and decoration. Deepa does her stretches, her shadow long in the light of the diya lamp. She's drawn to the bin. Her stretching takes her closer and closer towards it. She reaches in, pulling out a shiny red apple. She gingerly sniffs it, as if she's never seen one before. Beat. She holds it to her nose and inhales, deeply this time. Beat. She turns it over in her hand, inspecting it. Feels the skin against her face. She licks it. Beat. Licks it again. Beat. She stares at the diya lamp, unsure of herself. A knock at the door. She quickly throws it away. Sabs enters and sees the apple rolling under Deepa's bed.*

Deepa: What do you want?

Sabs: Someone's here to see you.

*Tej enters, a rucksack on her back.*

Tej: Hiya.

Deepa: *(to Sabs)* You shouldn't have let her in.

Sabs: She's your friend, Deepa.

Tej: *(unloading 'Deepa' merch from her bag)* Dunno if you can do anything with it? Felt wrong to just chuck it.

Deepa: Burn it.

Tej: If you like. Whatever. Just... trying to tell you I'm not gonna sell it.

*Deepa picks up one of the T shirts, and sits down.*

Sabs: *(to Tej)* We'll find a use for them. Thanks Tej. You two must have a lot to catch up on...

*Sabs nods at Tej, and exits.*

Deepa: How's Zane?

Tej: It's over. Minute he said all that crap about you.

Deepa: You've wanted to go out with him... *forever*.

Tej: Screw him.

Deepa: He still a mess? Puking and stuff?

Tej: Had a couple of days off but he was back at college yesterday.

Deepa: ...He's okay?

Tej: Trying to make it out it was some dodgy chicken. Twat. You did that to him though, didn't you?

Deepa: ...I don't know anymore.

Tej: For real you did. I get it now, Deeps. Why else would he be throwing shade about you online?

Deepa: That's what he does. What he always does.

Tej: You can't let him get away it, Deeps.

Deepa: What am I supposed to do? Only my believers matter.

Tej: Are they still coming round?

Deepa: No, but... I speak to them through Agni...

Tej: How about giving Agni a hand, yeah? Do a video. Wipe the smirk off Zane's stupid face.

Deepa: My own video..?

Tej: Better than his amateur bullshit. Making cash off it, calling you a fake. *You* put something up there, it'll go viral like that (*clicks fingers*)

Deepa: Reach new people, you mean..?

Tej: More than this shitty little town. Screw them. You'll help people *everywhere*.

Deepa: Places where they *really* need me.

Tej: 100%

Deepa: ...Okay.



*Deepa gets the diya lamp and lights it. She gives Tej her phone and Tej lies on the floor to get the best angle.*

*(breaking her concentration)* How's that?

Tej: Look fierce, man.

*Tej hits record. Deepa reaches out for the flame. It hurts. She pulls her hand away.*

What's wrong?

Deepa: Nothing. Keep recording.

*She tries again, prepared for the pain this time. She manages to hold her hand in the flame for a few seconds then has to pull it away.*

Tej: Are you okay?

Deepa: ...Something's wrong.

Tej: Just fake it.

Deepa: Can't do that.

Tej: Yeah, you can.

*Deepa drags herself up and starts to spin. She's weak but she tries to dance. She stumbles and has to pick herself up from the floor.*

*(trying to help her)* Shit. Maybe this wasn't a good idea.

Deepa: I'm fine. Just keep going. Just keep going. *(muttering to herself)*  
Energy. Light. Energy. Light... *Energy... Light... Energy... Light...*  
*Come on... Please...*

*Deepa spins and spins, affecting a trance state. She finally stops, exhausted. The exertion makes her dry heave.*

Tej: Shit, Deepa, you okay?

Deepa: I can't feel him anymore.

Tej: Who?

Deepa: Agni. Who'd you think?

*Sabs enters with juice and biscuits.*

Tej: *(to Sabs)* I'm sorry.

Sabs:           Deeps..?

*He tries to hold her but she pushes him away.*

*(of the phone and the diya lamp)* What are you doing?

Tej:           It was my idea.

Sabs:           *(to Tej)* I invited you here to... hang out, be... normal. I thought you were her friend?

Tej:           I'm her best friend.

Sabs:           Then why're you letting her do this to herself?

Tej:           ...I dunno...

Deepa:          Agni just needs to find me again.

Sabs:           Find you..?

Deepa:          I'm hungry.

Sabs:           Then eat, Deepa, *eat*.

Deepa:          He's testing me. He's left me, and now I'm hungry, and now I'm losing my power, and I need to fight this or he'll never come back.

Sabs:           If you're hungry you should eat.

Deepa:          You want to stop me from helping people. You want everything to be hopeless so you feel better about yourself. You need everyone to suffer with you or you'll have to face the fact you're a failure. Mum would be ashamed of you. Mum would hate you for this. She'd hate you.

Sabs:           Enough of this shit.

*Sabs grabs the phone from Tej and smashes it on the floor, stamping on it again and again. He tries to do the same with the diya lamp but Deepa snatches it from him. Tej is scared.*

Deepa:          I feel the sunlight coming in from the window, and it's part of me. I look up into the sky, and I feel the energy reaching right into my core. The power flows through me. *His* power. *My* power. And it scares the shit out of you, but you can't stop it. You can't.

*The sound of breaking glass outside, then teenagers laughing. Tej looks out the window.*

Deepa: Who is it?

Tej: Just some twats from year 5.

*Sabs pulls Tej away. Another missile is thrown at the house.*

Deepa: I'm not scared of them.

*The sound of more breaking glass.*

Tej: Shall I call the police?

Deepa: No. Just ignore them. They're nothing...

Teenagers: *(singing off stage)* Deepa is a nutter, Deepa is a nutter, Deepa is a nutter, Deepa is a nutter.

*Their voices fade as they run off, laughing.*

Sabs: It's time to stop all this, Deeps.

Deepa: I'm not letting them push me around.

Sabs: This was bound to happen. Prancing around, burning yourself...

*Deepa hits him.*

Tej: Deeps...

Deepa: *(to Sabs)* I wish mum was here and you... weren't.

Sabs: Yeah, well... Sometimes so do I.

*Awkward beat.*

*(to Tej)* I'll run you home.

*They go to leave. Tej speaks quietly to Deepa.*

Tej: I'll tell everyone, Deeps. I'll put them right.

Deepa: How?

Tej: Got a few ideas.

*Tej exits. Sabs pauses at the door.*

Sabs: Deeps...

Deepa: What?

Sabs: ...I'll be back soon.

Deepa: Right.

*Sabs exits. Deepa pushes her bed up against the door. She strips the posters from the walls and stuffs them in the bin. She starts flinging the books and magazines from her shelves in the bin too, then the clothes from her wardrobe.*

*Tej speaks into a microphone for the local TV news.*

Tej: *(Making it up as she goes along)* First the mobile reception went down. Happens sometimes. Town's in a weird dip, and sometimes the signal goes in and out. But it went on, and on, and on. Then it was the... wi fi. People started ringing the phone companies, asking what the hell was up. Engineers came out... they couldn't find anything. And then the satellite went down. It was the last 3 overs of a test match, and India only needed 18 runs to win against England, 5 wickets in hand. My dad was bare narked. That's when the ants came. Big ones. Giant ones. With wings.

*Hard black insects fall from the sky. Deepa leans back, allowing them to cover her, lost in a trance.*

### Scene Thirteen

*Early the following morning. Sabs is alone in the kitchen. He watches a video of Deepa on his phone. She spins round and round, pretending to be in a trance. He touches Deepa's face on the screen. He types a comment beneath the video.*

Sabs: Deepa... *(he deletes this)* ...Sadhvi... *(he deletes this)* I'm your dad... I'm... *(deletes this)* I read the book, Deeps. I read it and I don't understand. 'Cos none of this... fire and dancing... is in there. All of this came from... you... *You...* I messed up. I know I messed up... but I'm your dad... I've spent so long trying to hold everything together... *(deletes this)* Trying to... *look* like I was holding everything together... But... it's all... fallen apart... And I've lost the only thing that matters... *(deletes this)* You're the only thing that matters, Deeps.

*Sabs reads back his words. He starts to cry. Then deletes it all.*

*A cold wind blows into Deepa's bedroom, now bare of all comfort and decoration, the door barricaded. Deepa sits calmly on the floor watching the same video of herself, and types a comment as AgnisFlame.*

AgnisFlame: OMG. Check this out. She's actually GLOWING!

*Zane enters his bedroom with a laptop and sits down. He writes a comment below as Rickter Skale.*

Rickter: Shut up u stupid twat. She's flayling about like a total mong. Where the hell u get she's glowing from?

AgnisFlame: She *is* glowing, and if you can't see it, probably means your eyes need testing as bad as your IQ. *(beat)* Lol.

Rickter: Only an idiot would fall for this girl's BS. That makes u the stupid one, fuckwardo.

AgnisFlame: I'm here with three of my friends, and we can all see her glowing. Maybe you're the remedial who needs help? Try a suppository.

Rickter: Fuck u, bitch.

AgnisFlame: Fuck you twice, wasteman. She's for real, and she'll prove it.

Rickter: Oh yeah? How's she gonna do that?

AgnisFlame: Meet her in the car park where it all started.

*Beat.*

Rickter: Who is this?

AgnisFlame: A lighter. Your hand. 15 seconds.

Rickter: This is jokes.

AgnisFlame: What's the matter, sweetie? Scared?

*Beat.*

Rickter: I'd show her up for the fake and bake she is. Big time.

AgnisFlame: So be there.

*Deepa closes the chat. She talks to Tej on a new thread. Both girls alone in their bedrooms.*

Deepa: Do you think he'll come?

Tej: It's Zane. He'd rather die than have people think he's chicken shit.

Deepa: Yeah. You're right.

Tej: So, when and where?

Deepa: You don't have to come, Tej.

Tej: That's jokes. You know I got your back.

Deepa: Yeah. I do. But... it's something I have to do... alone.

Tej: Won't be up in your faces or anything. I can hide round the corner.

Deepa: No. I need to face him by myself.

Tej: How're you gonna record it, then?

Deepa: ...I dunno...

Tej: You've gotta record it, yeah?

Deepa: I guess.

Tej: He's gonna bottle it, Deepa. You need to get it all on video. Otherwise he's gonna BS his way out of it, like usual.

Deepa: ...Yeah... You're right.

Tej: You sure you don't want me to come? I can borrow Bij's video camera.

Deepa: No. No. I got this.

Tej: I'll be watching. Need anything, just DM me.

Deepa: I will.

*She ends the chat. She lights the diya lamp, and stretches, her shadow long in the light of the flame. She can't concentrate. She's drawn to the bin. She roots around and finds the same apple, now drying and wrinkled. She bites into it hungrily, then spits it out with revulsion. She turns her attention to the flame, trying to focus.*

Deepa: *(muttering over the flame)* The power I hold in my hand is... bigger than this whole city... The power I hold is... bigger than this island. Bigger than... The power I hold in my hand is... than this island. Than this whole island...

*Deepa pushes the bed away from the door, with some effort. She catches her breath, steeling herself, then exits.*

*An hour later, Sabs enters Deepa's bedroom and finds it empty.*

Sabs: Deepa? Deepa..?

*He runs to the door.*

*(shouting onto the landing)* Deepa..?

*No answer. He checks his phone, panicking. No messages. He rings Deepa, but she's left her mobile on the bed. Sabs checks the video she's put online again and sees the*

*comments.*

Scene Fourteen

*Deepa carefully sets out her diya lamp, and her copy of 'All is Light and Fire' in the car park behind Four Corners Community Centre. She sets up her phone on a tripod, and checks the framing. Then she waits. Zane enters, drinking a takeaway milkshake.*

Deepa: Thought you were too shook.

Zane: As if. Stopped off for a burger. *(sucks on his shake)* Want some?

Deepa: No thanks.

Zane: Looking skinny.

Deepa: I'm fine.

Zane: Kind of suits you thought. *(of the phone)* What's this?

Deepa: What's the matter? Thought you were always looking for new content?

Zane: ...Whatever.

*Deepa lights the diya lamp and holds it out, her hand shaking.*

Deepa: You go first.

Zane: Sure you're up to this?

Deepa: Wouldn't be here if I wasn't.

Zane: You don't look like a saint.

Deepa: Maybe 'cos you've never seen one before.

Zane: Look like shit.

Deepa: You know what I can do.

Zane: I know you're full of shit.

Deepa: You *collapsed*. Everyone saw.

Zane: Bit of Gaviscon, I was hundred percent.

Deepa: Tej saw. She says you pissed yourself.

*Beat.*

Zane: Bitch is a liar.

*Deepa laughs. She holds out the flame again, more confident now.*

Zane: ...You've always been so quiet and shit.

Deepa: Maybe you just talk too much.

Zane: Never seemed that bothered with us.

Deepa: 'Us'?

Zane: Me and my bros. Not like Tej.

Deepa: ...Shouldn't have fucked with her.

Zane: Oh yeah. Shit, that girl is a *freak*.

Deepa: You're stalling.

*Zane finishes his milkshake and tosses away the cup. He rubs his hands together, and holds one close to the flame.*

*Closer.*

Zane: Chillax, bitch.

*Deepa shoves the flame closer to his hand.*

Deepa: We're not here to fuck around, okay?

Zane: I'm doing it, I'm doing it...

*He tries to push his hand further into the flame, but it's too painful. Deepa starts to laugh at him.*

Deepa: *(to the camera)* It's official. Zane Solanki has bottled it.

Zane: Shut up.

*Deepa grabs her phone and pushes it closer to his face.*

Deepa: You're not a tough guy. You're a pathetic piece of shit.

*Zane shrugs.*

Zane: Whatever. This is a joke.



Deepa:           *(checks her phone)* More than 500 people watching right now.

Zane:            So what? Some fuzzy shit on the internet? Doesn't prove a thing.

*He turns to go. Deepa follows him.*

Deepa:           Turns out your spirit's as tiny as your dick.

Zane:            You should know, sket.

*Deepa impulsively pushes him. He's taken unawares and falls to the ground, but laughs it off. She stands on his hand.*

Cut it out.

*She presses her heel into his palm. It hurts but he tries to hide it.*

Deepa:           *(rehearsed)* The power I hold in my hand is bigger than this whole city. Bigger than this island. I will...I will make your eyes bleed. I will...make your brain heat up, until it boils in your head and dribbles out of your ears like pink soup. I will make your body shrink until it pulls away from your skin and you fall out of yourself. Like...a worm. Like a maggot. And I will stand over you and watch as you squirm and twitch on the floor. And I will feel...nothing for you.

Zane:            You're fucking cracked, you know that? Mental bitch.

*Deepa lights the flame and puts her hand into it. It's excruciating, but she makes herself hold it still. Zane grows scared.*

Zane:            Okay, okay...

*Deepa's hand is burning and blistering.*

I get it, I get it. Stop.

*Deepa won't. She's crying with pain. She looks at the sky.*

Deepa:           Fuck you.

Zane:            You can stop it, now.

Deepa:           I don't need you. I don't need anyone.

Zane:            Stop it, Deepa. *Stop.*

*He pushes her away and manages to get up.*

Deepa:           Now your turn.

Zane: Fuck this.

*He tries to leave. She grabs him, and forces flame onto his hand. He tries to get away but she kneels on his arm, pinning him to the floor. He howls with pain as they grapple.*

Let go of me, you fucking bitch.

Deepa: Your turn, it's your turn.

Zane: Let go of me, let go of me.

Deepa: You're scared.

Zane: I'm not. Let go of me. Let go.

Deepa: You hurt me but you can't take it.

Zane: I didn't do anything.

Deepa: Now it's your turn.

*She holds the lighter to his face. He screams.*

Zane: I'm sorry. Okay? I'm sorry.

Deepa: You hurt me. Admit it.

Zane: I'm sorry. Get off. I'm sorry, okay?

Deepa: You lied.

Zane: Yeah. I did. I lied, I lied...

*Sabs runs in.*

Sabs: Fuck. Deepa...

*He grabs her and gently pulls her off Zane. Zane rolls over, clutching his face.*

Shit. Shit. Deeps... I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Deepa: (to Zane) Admit it. Admit it.

Zane: ...I fucked up, I fucked up...

*Deepa collapses into Sabs' arms. He holds her tight, checking her face, looking her over to make sure she's okay.*

Sabs: I get it. I get it, now. I'm sorry Deepa.

Deepa: He's gone, dad. Agni's gone, and he's never coming back. I'm nothing without him.

Sabs: You don't need him You don't need any of this. You're everything, just as you are.

Deepa: I'm scared.

Sabs: I know. But I'm here. I'm here. I'm here.

***Ends***