

LEARNING TO DRIVE

by
Sarah Kernochan

REVISED 08/04/13

Time: Present day, month of May. Place: New York City.

1 EXT. DRIVING TEST SITE - LATE AFTERNOON

1

A small economy CAR proceeds down the street. Driving around a kiddy park and public swimming pool with kids in the background. The PLACARD mounted on top says "WINDSOR DRIVING SCHOOL." We hear a man's voice, with a soft East Indian accent.

MAN (O.S.)
Make a left.

2 EXT. DRIVING TEST SITE - STUDENT CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

2

ANGLE ON SIGNAL LEVER - A BOY'S HAND pushes it down.
STEERING WHEEL - BOYS' HANDS turn it counterclockwise.

MAN (O.S.)
Slow down. Execute a three-point turn.

THE CAR stops, makes a careful U-Turn.

POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD - approaching a line of parked cars. A man's FINGER enters frame, pointing to an empty space.

MAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
Park there.

THE CAR slides expertly into the space.

PASSENGER POV - DOOR OPENS, we see the distance to the curb: six inches. Perfect.

NEW ANGLE - Now we see the car's occupants. At the wheel, a 16-year-old BOY who looks 12. Beside him: a Sikh man, still handsome in his mid-50's, full beard and sky-blue turban. He holds himself erect and formal, wears a freshly ironed shirt and tie. He would seem severe if not for his great warm, brown eyes. This is DARWAN SINGH.

DARWAN
Mr. Yampolsky, you have followed all the rules. You will pass your test tomorrow, I am sure of it.

The boy DRUMS on the wheel, mimes dancing in his seat.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

DARWAN (cont'd)

(gentle but firm)

And after you get your license, I suspect you will buy the biggest, fastest car...and throw all the rules out the window.

(boy grins)

It's not a joke. Remember, driving is a freedom. I wish you to enjoy every kind of freedom, as long you don't hurt someone. So follow the rules. Will you promise me?

BOY

Okay, Mr. Singh.

3 EXT. WINDSOR DRIVING SCHOOL - LATER - MAGIC HOUR

3

Darwan parks the student car alongside others like it, behind the Windsor School storefront. He gets out, drops the keys in a locked box.

4 INT. WINDSOR DRIVING SCHOOL - MINUTES LATER - MAGIC HOUR

4

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN

We're watching a driving instruction film made in the 60's. A man (HAROLD SMITH) drives a wide convertible down a boulevard in L.A. He reviews the five principles of safe driving as they flash across the screen:

HAROLD SMITH

One: Aim High In Steering. Two: Get the Big Picture. Three: Keep Your Eyes Moving.

ANOTHER ANGLE - we're in a small classroom, where Darwan's BOSS is teaching Drivers Ed. Watching the film are a HOUSEWIFE, a couple of TEENAGERS, two IMMIGRANT MEN.

Darwan sticks his head in the room. His boss comes to the rear of the classroom where he hands Darwan his paycheck.

HAROLD SMITH (O.S.) (cont'd)

Four: Leave Yourself An Out. Five: Make Sure They See You.

5 EXT. TAXI COMPANY - LATER - NIGHT 5

TAXI DRIVERS gas up their CABS at a pump beside the garage. Darwan takes over a CAB from another driver ending his shift.

6 EXT. TAXI - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT 6

Darwan stands outside of his cab, finishing his supper of fritters and puffed bread from an Indian deli. A radio station plays INDIAN POP MUSIC. A KHANDA, a Sikh talisman, hangs from the rear view mirror.

ANGLE ON HIS ID CARD mounted on the Plexiglass barrier behind his head. We see his PHOTO and the name "SINGH, DARWAN."

WIDE EXTERIOR - Darwan's cab is parked near the entrance to the QUEENSBOROUGH BRIDGE where he can see the always-spectacular NIGHT SKYLINE OF MANHATTAN.

The "ON DUTY" SIGN on top of Darwan's cab LIGHTS UP. He pulls the taxi out and joins the line of CARS inching up to the bridge.

Close in on the cabs rooftop sign going on and off continuously, driving around the city. (As if picking up and dropping off passengers. Until...

7 EXT. STREET, EAST SIDE - LATER - NIGHT 7

MAN tears out of an upscale restaurant, his arm up.

Darwan stops. The man (TED) jumps in the back, SLAMMING the door.

8 INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT 8

MAN
Hudson and Jane! Quick!

Darwan throws the meter, touches his foot to the accelerator-- when the REAR DOOR FLINGS OPEN again. A Woman (WENDY) hurls herself onto the seat next to Ted. Both are in their 40's.

WENDY
How dare you run out on me!

TED
You threw a bottle at me.

(CONTINUED)

Darwan drives on, checking his rear mirror nervously. The woman's face is contorted with anger; the man is stoic.

WENDY

Brilliant maneuver! Inform me our marriage is over, in a public restaurant, so I can't make a scene -- and you thought that would work?! I wish my aim was better, you *bastard* ---

Her arm swoops out to hit him; he catches her wrist, throws her back.

DARWAN tries to distract them, to defuse the fireworks.

DARWAN

Excuse me, you said Hudson and Jane Street?

TED

Yes.

WENDY

(to Ted)

Is that where she lives? You cocksucker!

TED

I'm not going home with you.

The woman's fury gives way to tears.

WENDY

Why? Why? You can't just -- twenty-one years, Ted! How long have you been lying to me?

TED

I didn't lie.

WENDY

No, you just didn't say anything, so how could I possibly know anything was wrong, and now you blindside me --

Ted turns to her, his voice thick with rage, shaking his finger in her face.

TED

Blindside?! When do you ever notice anything, Wendy?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TED (cont'd)

On that rare occasion when you look up from your books or your fucking computer, you look right through me! I felt like a ghost!

WENDY

Well, I'm seeing through you now and you're a *prick*!
(more sobs; then:)
What is she, one of your students?

He looks out the window, ignoring her.

WENDY (cont'd)

That's as good as a yes. Bet you "supervised her orals"! Bet she was on her knees for that! God damn you --

She swings again, and WHOP! connects this time with his eye. He lets out a YELP, pushes her away, fending off her blows.

DARWAN'S EYES widen in the rear mirror, watching them struggle.

Ted breaks away, shouting to the driver:

TED

Pull over! Let me out here!

As the cab slows, Wendy clings to Ted.

WENDY

Please! Ted! Come home, we'll talk--

TED

It won't do any good.

WENDY

I don't understand -- why? Why?

The taxi stops near the curb.

Ted is out the door, SLAMMING it firmly. He thrusts cash at Darwan through the window.

TED

Take her to 600 West 98th.

Wendy throws open the door again to follow him. Ted pushes it closed, blocking it with his body as he calls to Darwan:

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (3)

8

TED (cont'd)

Go! Go!

Darwan pulls the taxi away quickly. The momentum bounces her back on the cushion, where she lets out a long, wounded WAIL.

Darwan maintains a pained silence as he drives the woman home. He glances now and then in the rear mirror to see her crumpled up and SOBBING without restraint.

9 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

9

Darwan pulls up in front of a narrow three-story brownstone.

DARWAN

We are here. Number six hundred.

Wendy stuffs a twenty in his tray and gets out. Her face is obscured but he can tell she's crying. As she stumbles to her door, Darwan jumps out with the money.

DARWAN (cont'd)

No, please. He paid me already --

But Wendy is already inside, and the door SLAMS shut.

10 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

10

Wendy flicks on the LIGHT and stands numbly in the hall. We get a better look at her. Fierce eyes in a soft, vulnerable face. Attractive but careless about her looks.

The hallway is lined with bookcases. Piles of messengered books and mail are on the hall table, and a bowl full of keys and coins. Seen through an open door, the living room is full of dusty Danish-modern furniture, and like the hall is cluttered with books, on shelves and on every surface.

Wendy's eyes fall to the two tennis racquets leaning against the wall. They lift to the framed PHOTO of her with Ted, a little girl (TASHA) between them, laughing on top of some mountain. She shakes her head in mute disbelief.

She walks mechanically to the coat closet. Removing her jacket, she hangs it up, then pauses at the sight of the empty hanger for his coat.

11 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

11

She opens the door, steps in, and stares at the bed.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

WENDY'S POV (FANTASY) - Ted lounges in bed, wearing an old t-shirt, grading test papers. He doesn't look up. RUNNING WATER O.S.... WE PAN TO THE OPEN BATHROOM DOOR. Ted's in there, his back to her, bare butt peeking from under the torn t-shirt, brushing his teeth, the faucet running.... FOOTSTEPS BEHIND HER O.S.

WENDY turns toward the sound, in the doorway.

WENDY'S POV - Ted's going downstairs, into the darkness...A beat...The front door CLOSES WITH A LOUD REPORT --

-- shattering her fantasy. She starts to hyperventilate, gasping for breath. Then she rushes past the empty bed, into the empty bathroom. We hear her VOMITING into the toilet.

12 EXT. TAXI COMPANY - LATER - PRE-DAWN

12

Back in Queens, Darwan returns the taxi. He removes his belongings, and checks the rear seat. He sees a PADDED ENVELOPE ON THE FLOOR. One of his passengers must have left something.

There is no name on the outside of the envelope. The flap is open. He slips his hand in and pulls out a new HARDCOVER BOOK. A letter is clipped to the dustcover.

We SKIM DOWN the letter as he reads. The letterhead is a book publisher, addressed to a WENDY SHIELDS, The New Yorker, "Enclosed is a copy of BEATITUDES for your review...." and an editor's sticky note on top reads: "Messenger to 600 West 98 St."

13 OMITTED

13

14 EXT. STREET, RICHMOND HILL - LATER - EARLY A.M.

14

The envelope tucked under his arm, Darwan walks wearily up a residential street; past small, drab one-family homes built in the 30's. Only a few other people are on the street this early, all bearded MEN in turbans like Darwan, jackets over long shirts: this is the Punjabi Sikh neighborhood in Queens.

Darwan enters the basement apartment of a two-story clapboard house, unpainted in a decade.

We TRACK WITH DARWAN through the one-bedroom apartment. He passes the open bathroom door where a SIKH MAN, barechested from his shower, winds his turban around his long hair which is knotted on top of his head.

Darwan glances inside a tiny bedroom, where ANOTHER SIKH MAN is asleep in the one bed. Darwan's 23-year-old nephew PREET, dressed in construction clothes, is rolling up his mattress on the floor.

DARWAN
(WHISPERS)
Preet.

The boy doesn't hear at first, his ears blocked by the earbuds from the iPod in his pocket.

DARWAN (cont'd)
Preet!

Preet looks up, smiling sheepishly as he pulls out the earbuds. He joins Darwan in the hallway.

PREET
Hey. I got another job. Big renovation, four weeks -

DARWAN
(interrupts; re: iPod)
Where did you get that?

PREET
I paid for it.

DARWAN
Preet, you must save your money.

PREET
(grins)
Uncle D, no. I must have music.

DARWAN
And turn that around.

Darwan is referring to Preet's head wrap which is knotted in the back gangsta-style.

DARWAN (cont'd)
If you can't wear it properly, then put on the *dastaar*. [turban]

15 CONTINUED:

15

Preet wags his finger playfully under Darwan's nose.

PREET

Uncle D, it's past your bedtime.

Darwan has to smile. He raps his knuckle on Preet's head and lets him go.

As Preet exits for work, Darwan proceeds into the living room, where a THIRD SIKH MAN is rising from his bed on the couch. Too tired to talk, Darwan nods at him, taking his place on the couch while the other man pads, yawning, to the bathroom.

Darwan PLACES THE PADDED ENVELOPE CAREFULLY ON THE TEA TABLE, then burrows under the blanket. Darwan then starts unravelling his turban.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

16A INT. NPR RADIO STUDIO - DAY

16A

An ENGINEER makes last minute adjustments to LAVALIER MICS on a public radio HOST (50's) and his three guests: HOWARD (70), ROSE (55) and WENDY, all seated at a round table.

Wendy has made an attempt to pull herself together, but she seems harried and unfocussed. Self-medication: a very tall takeout container of COFFEE she's downing.

The Engineer exits to the glass control BOOTH. Rose leans over to whisper to Wendy.

ROSE

I heard about you and Ted. I'm really sorry.

WENDY

(recoils)
You heard what, exactly?

ROSE

(on the spot)
Well - that you -

WENDY

We're just taking a *breather*, for God's sake.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

(over squawkbox)
Standby.

The Engineer signals the Host to begin.

HOST

Joining me for today's topic "Are Critics Necessary?" are three columnists from the New Yorker: film critic Howard Mintz, art critic Rose Belknap, and Wendy Shields, who reviews books. Let's start with Wendy. No child dreams of becoming a literary critic, so what led you to it?

WENDY

I wanted anything to do with words. I grew up in a house that was far from peaceful, and books just...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16B CONTINUED:

16B

WENDY

Remind me to change the locks. God,
every time I open up the magazine
I'm going to see her name -

DING: an elevator arrives. Rose leaves frame to catch it.

ROSE

(over her shoulder)

Are you heading to the office?

ANGLE ON WENDY - she doesn't respond for a half-beat, rooted to the spot, as the shock enters her heart.

WENDY

(distantly)

No, I'm going to work at home...for
a while...

17 INT. STUDY - WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY

17

Wendy sits in an easy chair, humped over a book, rapidly reading and making notes. There are stacks of review books everywhere. It's dark and hermetic; her computer SCREEN GLOWS on the desk, amid coffee-stained mugs, plates with food crumbs.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mom?

Wendy looks up.

18 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER - DAY

18

Wendy comes down the stairs. Her daughter (TASHA, 19) stands at the bottom, having just let herself in.

WENDY

Tasha!

TASHA

Hi, Mom.

Wendy embraces her daughter.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

I didn't expect you so early,
sweetheart.

TASHA

Have you got any quarters? I have
to feed the meter.

Wendy digs in the bowl on the hall table for change.

WENDY

You must have had a long drive.

TASHA

Five hours. Fantastic weather. I
listened to Vampire Weekend the
whole way.

WENDY

(giving her quarters)
Ugh, not one of those stupid
paranormal books.

TASHA

(LAUGHS)
It's a band. You're such a ditz.

19 INT. KITCHEN, WENDY'S HOUSE - LATER - DAY

19

The counters are cluttered with takeout cartons and dirty
dishes. As her daughter chatters, Wendy washes out two mugs
while the water kettle heats up.

TASHA

They don't use any chemical sprays
or fertilizers. I love being up in
the tractor, I love the air and the
smells, I love *dirt*. Growing up in
the city I always thought dirt was,
like, grime. But their dirt is
alive, you know, it's rich, it's
nourishing --I just want to eat it.

WENDY

Nostalgie de boue, is what the
French say.

TASHA

(rolls her eyes)
Whatever. I want to skip the fall
semester so I can stay for harvest.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Did you ask your father?

The question hangs there. The kettle WHISTLES. Wendy makes no move, as if she doesn't hear it. Finally Tasha turns off the fire. The WHISTLE DIES. Tasha pours water in the mugs.

TASHA

He said to ask you.

WENDY

Stands to reason, seeing I'm the one paying your tuition. Well, do as you like. Vermont suits you. You look dangerously healthy.

TASHA

Mom, come stay with me. They'll put you up on the farm. It's a great place to write.

WENDY

The train's clear over on the other side of the state, and I can't very well drive up without a license.

TASHA

So get one!

WENDY

Tasha, please let's not get into that, not again, not now.

TASHA

But don't you want to get away? There's so many memories in this house --

Tasha's voice catches. Her eyes fill up with tears.

WENDY

Baby...

Wendy puts her arms around her daughter, stroking her back.

WENDY (cont'd)

Why are you crying?

TASHA

When I think of you and Dad not together, it's so sad. And you're here all alone --

WENDY
But I'm fine.

Tasha sniffs back tears. Wendy absently hands her a crumpled napkin with traces of duck sauce from the table.

TASHA
(pushes it away)
Eew.

WENDY
Please don't be so upset.

TASHA
I thought *you'd* be upset.

Wendy sets a tray as she breezily dismisses Tasha's concern.

WENDY
We've weathered this before. Every seven years, the itch comes over him. He gets restless, does something juvenile. So, at twenty-one years, we're on our third itch. Or it's male menopause. Instead of buying a a motorcycle, Daddy decided to give adultery a spin.

As she heads into the living room with the tray:

WENDY (cont'd)
Tell you what, when he comes home, we'll drive up to visit you.

The living room is as dark as the study, the couch covered with newspapers, the coffee table with unopened mail and dirty plates. Arranging the tray on the table, Wendy sits, but Tasha remains standing.

TASHA
Mom...Dad's not coming home.

WENDY
Look around. He didn't take his books. What does that tell you?

TASHA
He said he filed for a separation already.

Wendy covers her shock by pouring tea.

WENDY

And he uses *you* to deliver that message? Nice of him to manipulate you.

She sips her tea but it burns her tongue. She BANGS her mug down and erupts.

WENDY (cont'd)

I hope she knows she'll have to pay for his keep. Because he is a *loser*. In twenty years he couldn't get tenure. How anyone besides me could consider him romantic material is stupefying.

TASHA

So you *are* upset.

WENDY

No I'm not. I'm disgusted.

Beat.

WENDY (cont'd)

You're staying for dinner?

TASHA

Actually, I said I'd eat with Dad.

WENDY

(fury rising again)

So this is just a visit. You're popping by to see if Mom's a basket case? And then run that message back to him? Thanks. You can go now.

Wendy gets off the couch, striding to the door.

TASHA

Mom -- ?

WENDY

I mean it. I have work to do.

TASHA

I just got here --

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

WENDY
 (exits)
Leave me alone.

Tasha is left staring in disbelief. O.S. Wendy's study DOOR SLAMS.

21 INT. STUDY - WENDY'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER - DAY

21

Wendy heaves back in her armchair, snapping open a book. Then she hears the FRONT DOOR CLOSE O.S. Tasha has left.

Wendy's pride deflates: She lets the book slide to the floor, and covers her face in her hands.

21A INT.

21A

22 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY

22

Still in her bathrobe, Wendy is face down on the bedcovers, passed out. There are open WINE BOTTLES AND A SMUDGED GLASS on the night table.

The DOORBELL rings O.S.: DING-DONG.

23 INT. FRONT HALL - MINUTES LATER - DAY

23

Hair matted, bathrobe askew, Wendy opens the door. She peers blearily at the solemn bearded man in a scarlet turban on her doorstep. He hands her a padded envelope.

DARWAN
 You left this in my cab.

WENDY
 Oh. Okay. Just a minute.

She puts the envelope on the pile of books on the table, and brings the change bowl to the door, scooping a handful of change to give to him. She stops, seeing his look of dismay.

WENDY (cont'd)
 What am I doing? That's pathetic.
 (replaces bowl)
 Let me get you some real money.

DARWAN
 I don't want anything. I like to help.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

WENDY

(laughs mirthlessly)
 You like to help? That's
 impossible. You can't be from New
 York.

DARWAN

Yes, I am. From Queens.

WENDY

That's not New York. But you're
 very nice, and I thank you. Are you
 sure I can't give you something?

He shakes his head, bowing slightly, his palms together. Then he turns, heading back to the car double-parked in front of her house. More awake now, she focusses for the first time on the placard mounted on his car: "WINDSOR DRIVING SCHOOL."

24 EXT. STUDENT CAR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

24

He buckles his seat belt and STARTS THE CAR. Suddenly, she's there at the window. He rolls it down.

WENDY

Do you have a card?

25 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

25

Wendy talks on the phone to Tasha. She has DARWAN'S CARD in her hand.

WENDY

Baby, I'm sorry for what I said.
 You're right, I need a change of
 scenery. So guess what? I'm going
 to get my license, buy a car, and
 drive up to see you, sweetie. And
 we'll eat some dirt together, OK?

26 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

26

Darwan sits alongside Preet and two of his ROOMMATES on the couch, watching a CRICKET GAME on TV. The third ROOMMATE irons his shirts on the table.

They might be a bunch of guys watching the Super Bowl, but instead of baseball caps they wear the Sikh at-home headcover, a simple dew-rag knotted on top;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

instead of nachos and beer they nurse glasses of strong sweet tea, snacking from a bowl of dried chickpeas.

(CONTINUED)

- 26 CONTINUED: (2) 26
- And the atmosphere is not so convivial: they are four men without women, and far from home.
- 27 EXT. TEMPLE (GURDWARA) - LATER - MORNING 27
- Darwan enters the temple.
- 28 INT. TEMPLE (GURDWARA) - CONTINUOUS - MORNING 28
- He removes his shoes, inserting them in a cubbyhole. OTHER SIKH WORSHIPPERS are doing the same. He follows them into:
- 29 INT. PRAYER ROOM, GURDWARA - CONTINUOUS - MORNING 29
- This is a long, carpeted room. MEN in turbans and WOMEN with scarves sit on the floor meditating, praying, or listening to the MUSICIANS SINGING verses from the Holy Book (*Granth Sahib*) which lies open on a low platform next to them. A WORSHIPPER sits before the Book, reading its Punjabi text; ANOTHER flicks a horse-hair switch above him (traditionally, to ward off flies and dust).
- Darwan approaches the book with palms together (*namaste*), kneeling and bowing.
- The Worshipper rises and takes his turn with the switch, while Darwan sits before the Book and reads...
- We hear the sound of the music playing. We also see kids ages six or seven seated in an a spacious room taking a Tabla class with an Old Tabla Teacher.
- 30 INT. COMMUNAL ROOM, GURDWARA - MINUTES LATER - MORNING 30
- Darwan shares tea, food and CHAT with other WORSHIPPERS (eating communally is traditional following prayers).
- 31 I/E STUDENT CAR - LATER - DAY 31
- Darwan is driving along a park in Queens. He glances at a KOREAN COUPLE posing for wedding pictures before a fountain.
- His CELL RINGS. He pulls over to take the call.
- DARWAN
(into phone)
Okay...I have no one at three...

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

He opens his assignment book, starts writing.

DARWAN (cont'd)
Manhattan?...

While the person on the other end talks, he watches the Korean couple change poses, beaming for the camera.

He snaps back to the phone call when he hears a name:

DARWAN (cont'd)
Wendy Shields? Oh, yes.

32 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY

32

Darwan waits at the front door, his ear to the intercom. A blast of STATIC, then Wendy's voice:

WENDY
(INTERCOM filter)
Who is it?

DARWAN
Darwan Singh. For your driving lesson, please.

WENDY
Oh my God...

INTERCOM BUZZES him in.

33 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER - DAY

33

Darwan gazes around, noting the clutter and the dust.

Wendy arrives at the foot of the stairs: pallid, wearing black sweats this time, her reading glasses atop her head and tangled in her hair.

WENDY
I completely forgot. Anyway I've changed my mind about lessons.

DARWAN
Why, if I may ask?

WENDY
Look, I'll pay you for today. I'm really sorry.

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN

Don't pay me. But I will ask a small favor from you.

WENDY

Well...of course.

DARWAN

Come sit in the car. The driver's seat. So you get used to it.

WENDY

Uh, I'm in the middle of work.

DARWAN

Let me do my job just a little.

34 INT. STUDENT CAR - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

34

ANGLE ON KEY IN CAR IGNITION - WENDY's hand turns it CLOCKWISE -- one click.

DARWAN (O.S.)

First position turns on the electrical system. Now second position...

Wendy turns the key further. The motor THRUMS to life. ANGLE ON MIRRORS - REAR, LEFT SIDE, RIGHT SIDE.

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)

Next, you have three mirrors. Rear view, left, and right --

WENDY

(interrupts)

I really don't need to learn this. My husband drives.

DARWAN

I never learned to cook because I thought my mother would always be there to cook for me. She is gone, and I am here, so I make my own food.

WENDY

(drily)

Your point?

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN

(smiles; shrugs)

No point. So: check your three mirrors. Then turn your head to see the blind spot.

ON WENDY - her hands are tight with tension on the wheel. Darwan coaches her from the passenger seat.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Put on your left signal.

Wendy gropes for the signal post and turns on the wipers instead.

WENDY

Damn. Where is it?

He indicates the signal. She flicks it down.

DARWAN

Now turn the wheel all the way to the left.

(she obeys)

Now the gas pedal.

The car moves forward a mere foot -- she brakes suddenly.

DARWAN (cont'd)

What's the matter?

WENDY

We're moving.

DARWAN

That's good.

WENDY

I think I don't like this.

DARWAN

(twinkles)

Well, you have to go forward now because I haven't taught you how to back up. Check your mirrors again. Turn your head...

As she turns her head, an AMBULANCE SCREAMS past.

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

WENDY

Jesus!

DARWAN

Nothing will happen. I am always
here with the other brake. Now.
Press your foot --

WENDY'S FOOT JABS THE ACCELERATOR.

THE CAR LEAPS forward.

DARWAN'S FOOT PRESSES HIS SAFETY BRAKE, STOPPING the car.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Press the pedal *gradually*. Down,
and release.

THE CAR JERKS further into the lane.

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)

Straighten the wheel.

THE TIRES swivel straight.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Press the pedal. Gradually...

WENDY'S FOOT presses gradually down...on the brake.

DARWAN (cont'd)

The pedal, not the brake.

THE CAR creeps forward.

OVERHEAD SHOT - Slowly the car joins traffic.

WENDY (O.S.)

(whimpers)

Where am I going?

DARWAN (O.S.)

For now, it's simple: just go
straight.

35 OMITTED

35

36 EXT. STREET - RICHMOND HILL - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

36

Darwan walks with Preet, carrying groceries. Preet's CELL
PHONE CHIRPS. Stopping, Preet checks his messages.

(CONTINUED)

PREET

Mom sent another photo.

Darwan looks over Preet's shoulder at the screen.

ANGLE ON CELL SCREEN - A CANDID PHOTO OF AN PUNJABI WOMAN, about 40, gazing stiffly at the camera as if for a passport picture.

DARWAN

She looks sour. She would complain a lot.

PREET

Every time you find something wrong. How many more years until there's no one left and you're still alone? In your head, I think you're still in prison, Uncle D.

DARWAN

(roughly)

Be quiet! Never speak to me like that again!

Cowed, Preet shuts up.

DARWAN (cont'd)

You were just a skinny scared boy when I took you in. I promised your mother to help you and now you give me cheek, and disrespect.

They walk for a beat in silence. Cooling off, Darwan manages a smile.

DARWAN (cont'd)

You were stinky, too. Smearred all over with garlic paste.

PREET

(grins)

They told me it would keep the rattlesnakes away in the desert.

DARWAN

It's a wonder the border guards didn't smell you coming.

PREET

But it worked!

37 I/E STUDENT CAR - ANOTHER DAY

37

With Darwan beside her, Wendy guides the car slowly up Broadway, where TRAFFIC is convoluted and aggressive.

DARWAN

Teach yourself to see everything.
Your eyes should go from sidewalk
to sidewalk, and one block ahead.

A MONTAGE OF IMAGES FROM THE ROAD AHEAD - LANE MARKINGS,
TRAFFIC LIGHTS, CONSTRUCTION BARRIERS...

DARWAN (cont'd)

You see the markings on the road,
the lights, you read the signs...

RAPID-CUTTING SEQUENCE OF SHOTS OF SIGNS: "QUIET ZONE," "ONE
WAY," "NO LEFT TURN 4 PM TO 7 PM," "ALTERNATE ROUTE," "TO
EAST SIDE," STREET NAMES, SIGNS WITH SYMBOLS, ARROWS, BLOCKED
ARROWS --

WENDY (O.S.)

There's too many to read.

DARWAN (O.S.)

It comes with time.

POV - PASSING PEOPLE: A WOMAN WITH STROLLER steps off the
curb; a DELIVERY MAN opens his van door; a SKATEBOARDER
curves across the lane; KIDS around an MISTER SOFTEE TRUCK...

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)

Be aware of living as well as non-
living things.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
When you see a person ahead, try to
guess what they'll do next...

A BICYCLE MESSENGER APPEARS OUT OF NOWHERE, CUTS IN FRONT of
the car. Wendy YELPS, pumping the brake.

DARWAN (cont'd)
...and *smoothly* adjust so you can
stay out of their way. The driver's
biggest problem is Everyone Else.
You can't always trust people to
behave properly.

WENDY
(mutters)
Ain't that the truth.

PAN TOWARD WENDY'S EYES, dutifully sweeping the street ahead: up, down, side to side...

WENDY'S POV - PANNING TOWARD HAPPY COUPLES eating at sidewalk cafes, young couple kissing on the curb. A male gay couple holding hands and an old couple arguing.

SAFETY BRAKE - DARWAN'S FOOT comes down hard.

DARWAN

That's a red light.

Wendy snaps to attention, looks up: sure enough, she almost went through a RED LIGHT. She jokes to cover up her embarrassment.

WENDY

Isn't it strange, that red has come to mean "stop" and "danger"? It strikes me that stopping is when you're safe, whereas going is dangerous.

DARWAN

Don't talk, Wendy. When you talk, you don't see.

He points her eyes up. The LIGHT IS GREEN. Cars behind HONK. Wendy drives on, trying to stay focused.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Get in the left lane.
Slow...Signal.

WENDY gropes, finds the signal this time.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Read the signs...See everything...

WENDY'S POV - STREET AHEAD, PANNING FROM SIDE TO SIDE

DARWAN (cont'd)

Stop. Watch the light.

WENDY'S POV - ON THE RED TRAFFIC LIGHT, then PANNING DOWN TO SEE:

TED (FANTASY) crossing the intersection ahead with his arm around a YOUNG WOMAN.

WENDY

Ted...!

Ted and the Young Woman pass from sight. Then Wendy turns her head and...

TED IS THERE BESIDE HER WINDOW, gazing at her impassively.

WENDY (cont'd)
Don't you love me anymore?

He shakes his head: no.

WENDY (cont'd)
But why? How did I fail you? What
should I have done?

When he opens his mouth to speak, the voice is Indian-accented.

TED
(DARWAN'S VOICE)
Pay attention!

SMASHCUT TO:

Ted is gone, Darwan is beside her.

DARWAN
The light.

He's pointing up to the GREEN LIGHT.

Rattled, she tromps on the pedal and the CAR LEAPS FORWARD.

DARWAN BRAKES on his side. The car avoids hitting a JAYWALKER with his iPod on loud.

WENDY
Oh my God!

She drops her hands to her lap helplessly with a GROAN of frustration; lowers her head.

DARWAN
Why didn't you see him?
(beat)
Were you wandering?

WENDY
(looks up)
I'm never going to be good at this.

DARWAN
Every time it will get easier. Now,
drive on.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY
 (in a child's voice)
 I can't.

DARWAN
 Take the wheel. Press the pedal.

She puts her hands on the wheel, then shakes her head no.

WENDY'S POV - THE VIEW THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD GOES BLURRY,
 WATERY...Is it raining? No, it's:

WENDY'S EYES FILLING UP WITH TEARS.

WENDY
 Can you drive me home?

DARWAN
 (firm)
 No. You will do it, and I will
 help.

Darwan and his nephew Preet huddle around his cell phone.
 Darwan is talking to his sister RASBIR (Preet's mother, mid-
 40's) on FaceTime: she is seen in closeup on the phone's
 screen.

RASBIR
 She's not young but she can still
 have one or two children.

DARWAN
 Why hasn't she been married?

RASBIR
 She was engaged once but the police
 shot her fiance, just like they did
 to our Sameer. Then her father was
 ill for a long time and needed her
 at home. Now he's dead and she has
 nowhere to go.

PREET
 (to Darwan)
 She's perfect!

RASBIR
 She's the best one for you, Darwan.
 And very nice-looking. Did you like
 the photo?

DARWAN

Yes, but can I talk to her and see her like we're doing?

RASBIR

She won't come to the phone. She thinks you'll see she's too old. She says, "He won't like me."

PREET

He won't, Mommy!

DARWAN

I'll think about it. Rasbir, please...take the phone to the window. Show me the street, the sun, the sky, everything.

RASBIR

(shakes her head sadly)

Bahpe [brother], it's night time here.

B38

B38

(MORE)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

RASBIR (cont'd)

38

38B EXT. HIGH LINE FICKR POOL - DAY

38B

Wendy and her sister DEBBIE pick up their SHWARMA lunch from a FOOD TRUCK.

DEBBIE

Well hallelujah, sis, it's about time you learned to drive.

WENDY

I'm just doing it for Tasha, not because I need to.

As they move to a pair of wooden chaises to sit and eat:

WENDY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

But you *have* to drive, Debbie, you're in the suburbs. Here I have the subway, buses, taxis...

(they sit)

I also used to have a husband who drove.

DEBBIE

(shakes her head)

Ted. Such a creep - but you know? I can believe it. On my street alone we've had three divorces caused by philandering.

WENDY

(starts eating)

Oh well, *Greenwich*.

DEBBIE

(inspecting the shwarma)

What I don't understand is: how can they cheat on their wives and still live with themselves? I mean, it's like pissing in the pool. Maybe nobody saw you do it, but *you* know the yellow's in the water. And you have to swim around in it, pretending it's clean.

Debbie manages to give Wendy the giggles.

WENDY

And how do they find all these sluts? Is there a vending machine?

(CONTINUED)

DEBBIE

I call them Play-Doh Bunnies. The guys can mold them into whatever they want. Teach them tricks. Like waking them up every morning with a blowjob.

WENDY

(sad again)
Maybe that's all Ted ever really wanted.

DEBBIE

(tries a bite of the shwarma)
Honestly, it's *nirvana* for them.

WENDY

(mouth full)
Then why don't we do it?

DEBBIE

It's too much work. Why do you think they call it a job?

The two break up, laughing harder and harder, trying to keep their food from flying out of their mouths.

39 INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

39

Wendy meets with her divorce ATTORNEY at a table in an empty conference room.

WENDY

He wants "*support*"?!

ATTORNEY

Or a twenty-five percent share of your income. He claims he supported you while you pursued your career. I know, I know --

He raises a hand to forestall her rage; it doesn't work. She POUNDS the table with her fist.

WENDY

This is a man who was jealous of my career! Who criticized everything I did, to undermine me!

(CONTINUED)

ATTORNEY

Wendy, it's normal. Each side asks for the outrageous, and they come together in the middle. Don't take it personally.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Don't take it - ha! Ha ha ha ha!
Just give him everything! If he
agrees to be castrated.

He waits for her to finish venting. His CELL PHONE VIBRATES
on the table. He glances at the ID, then checks his notes.

ATTORNEY

He'll let you stay in the house if
you buy him out.

WENDY

I can't possibly afford that.

ATTORNEY

Or split fifty-fifty if you sell.

WENDY

I have to move out?! I *am* that
house. It's like asking me to move
out of *me*.

ATTORNEY

Maybe it's too big now?

WENDY

I can't believe this. It's where we
raised Tasha, where we were
happy....

Her voice trails off. She realizes the word "happy" is now
moot. Obsolete.

WENDY (cont'd)

Okay. It's where we were idiots,
and squandered our marriage, and
never made love when we should have
and never fought when we should
have, and we read and read and read
and went totally fucking blind -
and I want my house! I want to stay
where I am!

Returning to his apartment, Darwan sees an American MAN
leaning against a black CAR parked in front. Waiting.
Something about him makes Darwan tense up instinctively.

41

INT. OUTSIDE DARWAN'S APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER - MAGIC HOUR

41

Pausing outside his door, Darwan hears MEN'S VOICES within speaking English.

TIGHT ON DARWAN - His face is suddenly bathed in sweat, his breathing ragged.

XCU - HIS HAND goes slowly to the door knob. Before he can turn it:

THE DOOR BANGS OPEN. Two of Darwan's Sikh Roommates emerge, escorted roughly by two official-looking men (IMMIGRATION AGENTS). His roommates look at Darwan with helpless dread as they are rushed past.

A third AGENT brings up the rear, stopping short when he sees Darwan.

AGENT
(flashes badge to Darwan)
I.N.S. Who're you?

DARWAN
I am Darwan Singh. American
citizen.

AGENT
Let's see your papers.

With unsteady hands, Darwan removes his driver's license from his wallet. The Agent examines it.

AGENT (cont'd)
How come they let you in, Darwan?

DARWAN
Political asylum.

AGENT
(checks the year)
2000...you got in just under the
wire.

The Agent brusquely hands back the license and exits.

Left alone, Darwan rushes into the living room. His roommates' half-finished tea stands on the table. An INDIAN SOAP OPERA still plays on the TV. The closets stand open, their contents strewn on the floor, the sofa upended, indicating a forcible search of the premises.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

DARWAN
 (to himself; frantic)
 Preet...

There's a faint NOISE on the other side of a wall.

DARWAN (cont'd)
 Preet!

42 INT. BATHROOM - BASEMENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

42

As Darwan rushes in, the cabinet door under the sink THROWS OPEN. Preet is inside, extricating himself from the vanity where he hid by contorting himself into an impossibly tight ball. He spills onto the bath mat, one foot still stuck in the plumbing. Darwan helps him up.

PREET
 (shaken)
 I thought they got me this time.

DARWAN
 They took Teji and Raam. Thank God
 you're safe.

PREET
 Only 'til next time.

43 INT. BEDROOM - BASEMENT APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

43

The bedroom's a mess, too, from the agents' search: clothes all over the floor and the bed upended. Preet stuffs his few belongings into a duffel while Darwan pleads with him.

DARWAN
 I'll find us another place -

PREET
 I'm going to live with my
 girlfriend in Chinatown.

DARWAN
 (taken aback)
 You have a girlfriend?

PREET
 They won't look for me if I'm with
 her. She's Jewish.
 (off Darwan's shock)
 Uncle D, you knew I would go
 sometime.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

DARWAN

This is a very poor decision. My
sister will blame me.

PREET

I tell her, Mom, this is America. I
can do what I want. As long as they
don't ask for my papers.

44 INT. LIVING ROOM - BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - MAGIC HOUR

44

Darwan is left alone in the dishevelled apartment. He makes
no move to clean up. As night falls, he remains leaning
against the wall, thinking.

45 INT. PRAYER ROOM, GURDWARA - MORNING

45

Darwan sits in prayer. His attention is drawn to:

AN OLDER SIKH MAN praying with his WIFE alongside him. Their
lips move together.

46 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY

46

Darwan waits in the student car in his customary spot, parked
at the hydrant in front of Wendy's house. A lovesick INDIAN
BALLAD plays on his radio. He hardly hears it, still deep in
thought.

Wendy bursts from the house, her hair chaotic, glowering with
anger over her divorce.

47 I/E. MOVING STUDENT CAR - DAY

47

The student car creeps through Harlem to Washington Heights.
Wendy's attention is everywhere but the road.

DARWAN

Point your eyes at the middle of
the lane. The same as a gun. Your
peripheral vision sees all the
rest.

ANGLE - PASSING A PAIR OF STREET TOUGHS. They spot Darwan
with his turban.

TOUGH KID

(yells)

Osama! Thought we killed you!

(CONTINUED)

The Kid HIT the hood of the car as it stops at the crosswalk.

WENDY
 (YELLS out window)
 Shut up, asshole!
 (to Darwan)
 Does that happen to you a lot?

DARWAN
 Every day. People try to push your
 buttons. You don't engage with
 them. Especially when you drive.

She comes to a stop at the intersection.

DARWAN (cont'd)
 You are on top of the crosswalk.
 Next time stop where you can see
 the lines.

ON WENDY - grits her teeth. The constant stream of criticism,
 even delivered in Darwan's neutral tone, is getting to her.

Traffic moves again. Suddenly a SPORTS CAR ZOOMS past, angles
 abruptly in front of her, inches from the bumper, cutting her
 off. Wendy POUNDS THE HORN.

WENDY
 God damn it!

DARWAN
 Don't lean on the horn. It's not a
 boat. Just a short tap.

WENDY
 Why do men have to do that? Wag
 their balls in your face.

DARWAN
 (controls his shock)
 I think it is time to discuss road
 rage. You must learn to be calm and
 relaxed, not only to drive but in
 your life as well.

WENDY
 And how do *you* manage that?

DARWAN
 Prayer helps me. I pray every day.

WENDY

I unfriended God a long time ago...
Guess you've got lots of friends up
there. All those gods of yours.

DARWAN

I am not Hindu. I am a Sikh.
We have only one God, like yours.

WENDY

Then I'm mad at your God, too.

He says nothing. She turns her head to glance at him. He's
impassive, as if he didn't hear her, focusing only on the
road.

WENDY (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

DARWAN

Eyes forward.

The car passes through the narrow tree-lined streets of
CASTLE VILLAGE. TUDOR HOUSES. A RABBI crosses the street;
ELDERLIES walk their DOGS, KIDS in Catholic uniforms return
from school.

DARWAN

Be careful to see every person
before you. They may not have the
right of way but you are the one
driving a deadly weapon...

He looks over. Wendy has a glazed look he has come to know
well. She doesn't notice she's rolling right through a STOP
SIGN.

DARWAN'S HAND WRENCHES THE WHEEL FROM HER.

THE CAR pulls over to the curb.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Where were you just now? You don't
seem to notice anything.
Observation, Wendy, observation.
This is your weakness.

WENDY

(snaps)
Are you channeling my husband?

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN

Tell me why you want to drive.

WENDY

To go somewhere else.

DARWAN

And how do you want to get there?

WENDY

(off-guard)

"How"?

DARWAN

You want to arrive in one piece? Or two pieces? Or three?

WENDY

(looks away; haughtily)

Don't patronize me.

DARWAN

Look at me.

The urgency in his voice makes her turn back to him. She is surprised to see the depth of compassion in his eyes, although she has spent the lesson baiting him.

DARWAN (cont'd)

It doesn't matter what is going on in your life out there, you must shut it out. When you are here, when you are at the wheel of a car, this is all there is. Your life: right now. So take care of it, please.

FADE OUT.

49 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY

49

Wendy opens the door for a CLEANING CREW.

50 I/E. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY

50

Darwan unlocks the door to basement apartment.

LATER - Working shirtless, runs a dry vacuum over the floor...cuts and lays carpet....

He hangs a mirror...a shower curtain...

(CONTINUED)

- 50 CONTINUED: 50
Preet helps him haul a king-size mattress through the door....
- 51 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY 51
The cleaners attack the house. Wendy tosses clutter into garbage bags...
KNOCK-KNOCK O.S.
- 52 I/E. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY 52
Darwan opens the door, and his FRIENDS lug in boxes of electronic equipment.
- 53 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY 53
Wendy lets the cleaners out. She turns: everything is neat and spotless.
- 54 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - LATER - DAY 54
Standing before the mirror, Wendy checks her dress. It looks new.
- 55 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - DAY 55
It's done. A big FLAT-SCREEN TV is perched on a cabinet along with a DVD PLAYER, SPEAKERS and SUB-WOOFER. Everyone's very excited. Darwan plays with four remotes, trying to turn the TV on. At last, the image ignites on the screen.
DING-DONG O.S. The doorbell.
- 56 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER - DAY 56
Wendy opens the door. It's Ted. Apparently she's been expecting him.
- TED
Hi.
- He's braced for a fight, but instead she smiles cheerily.
- WENDY
Come on in.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

He steps in, registering surprise at her makeover.

TED
You look fine.

WENDY
Therefore I am.

57 INT. LIVING ROOM, WENDY'S HOUSE - LATER - DAY

57

Ted's reaching down his books from the bookcase, filling up cartons. Wendy is curled up on the couch, watching.

WENDY
Do you think books miss their owners? They pine, they waste away?

TED
Or they get a new haircut and hit the singles scene.

WENDY
So many choices, when you're single.

He's silent, won't touch that, his back to her as he reaches more books down.

WENDY (cont'd)
Should I look for a two or three-bedroom apartment? High-rise or low-rise?

TED
We're looking for a place in Nyack.

She shifts uncomfortably, her heart sinking.

WENDY
That's a long commute.

TED
I enjoy the drive. I love a big bridge over a big river. Human genius vaulting over the primeval ooze.

WENDY
Really.
(re: books)
You're leaving me "The Joy of Sex"?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

TED

It's yours. I gave it to you for Valentine's.

WENDY

I don't remember reading it.

TED

You put it in a drawer.

WENDY

Well, toss it here.

(he does)

Let's see if there's anything we didn't cover.

(checks table of contents)

Missionary, check. Standing, check.

Rear entry, check. Wait. Did we do "The Viennese Oyster"?

Without responding, he hefts a carton and exits.

58 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

58

Ted finishes loading his double-parked car with cartons.

59 INT. LIVING ROOM, WENDY'S HOUSE - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

59

When Ted re-enters, Wendy has put a box full of photographs on the coffee table.

TED

Guess that's it.

WENDY

Here're some photos I found, you might want.

TED

I'm double-parked.

Wendy's smiling at a photo she's picked from the pile.

WENDY

This one's from Moose River.

Lured over, he sits beside her on the couch as she hands him the photo. He grins at the image.

TED

Natasha was what, six?

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

She was eight, the cabin was six.
Degrees below zero.

TED

(LAUGHS)

First and last camping trip.
(re: next photo)
Halloween?

WENDY

(swats him playfully)

No! Shoulder pads were in then.

Ted looks at a few more pictures. Wendy watches him carefully. Sighing, he puts them down, suddenly deflated.

TED

This is hard.

WENDY

Yes.

Beat.

WENDY (cont'd)

I'm finding I can do hard things.
I'm learning to drive, you know.

TED

That's a scary thought, Miss McGoo.

WENDY

I can drive, I can keep a clean
house, I can doll myself up, I can
bake a cherry pie...

She slides to her knees in front of him.

WENDY (cont'd)

I can give you what you need.

He's frozen, unsure this is really happening, as she reaches to undo his belt buckle.

WENDY (cont'd)

I can make you love me again.

TED

Wendy -- this just isn't you.

She smiles seductively, parting his fly.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (2)

59

WENDY

Why not me?

TED

(laughs nervously)

Since when did you become
lapdancer?

She reaches inside his pants and bends her head...He pulls her hands away from his open fly.

TED (cont'd)

Sweetheart, don't...

WENDY

God! To hear you call me that again
is wonderful.

She goes for his mouth, bringing her lips to his --

O.S. BEEP-BEEP-BEEP: a truck backing up on the street outside; then the ROAR OF HEAVY MACHINERY. Ted bounds off the couch.

TED

Holy shit!

60 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

60

The OPERATOR of a city TOW TRUCK is just putting the big hook in Ted's front bumper.

Ted runs into the street, YELLING in protest.

WENDY IN THE DOORWAY watches, demoralized...then shuts the door.

DARWAN (O.S.)

No. No. She is not this kind of
woman.61 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - QUEENS - DAY

61

PREET and his Uncle are sitting in the apartment looking through a lingerie catalog at women dressed in scanty panties, saucy push-up bras, peekaboo satin nighties...

PREET (O.S.)

How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

DARWAN

She will be modest, I think. This would shock her.

PREET

Trust me! All women, they want these things.

DARWAN

No.

PREET

(follows, teasing)

And what about you, Uncle D? Don't you want it?

DARWAN

I don't want her to get the idea that this is how I think of her. It's disrespectful.

PREET

(exasperated GROAN)

It's bad enough you don't understand women. But you don't even understand yourself.

DARWAN

I'll wait for her birthday.

62 EXT. WENDY'S STREET - DAY

62

ANGLE ON TIRES of student car ROLLING BACKWARD slowly.... They swivel sharply, still backing up...then with a JOLT, THEY MOUNT THE CURB.

WENDY

Oh shit, oh shit...!

63 I/E. STUDENT CAR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

63

Wendy leans her head against the wheel in frustration.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

I'm so lost.

Darwan taps her on the back gently. She turns to him.

DARWAN

Wendy, how do you know if you've put in enough salt and pepper when you are making a beef stew?

WENDY

You taste it?

DARWAN

Right. So what do you do if you've lost track of the way the car is pointing when you parallel-park?

WENDY

You taste it?

DARWAN

You just let the car move back a tiny bit and see which way it goes -- you taste the direction.

WENDY

And then you correct the seasoning?

DARWAN

Right. You adjust a little bit, and a little bit -- and now I've made myself hungry. I will go home and make myself a curry.

She smiles wanly, preoccupied.

DARWAN (cont'd)

You look very nice today.

She looks at him as if seeing a man for the first time.

WENDY

Thank you.

LATER

He writes her receipt on the hood of the car while she writes a check. As they make the exchange, he looks as if he wants to say something but has lost his courage. Then he blurts:

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN

Wendy...what does a woman like for a gift?

WENDY

I don't know, candy, flowers...
Speaking for myself, a book of poetry.

DARWAN

(brightens)

Ah!...

WENDY

My husband gave me that on our first date and every anniversary. He'd mark a certain love poem and ask me to read it while he lay his head in my lap.

(wistfully)

It was the perfect gift.

DARWAN

Yes, a fine idea.

WENDY

(rips check out of book)

What about you? What present do you like?

DARWAN

(LAUGHS; accepts it)

A check, of course.

64 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

64

Darwan carefully wraps a small book in gift paper.

LATER

He puts the final touches on his new home, hanging a picture of the Sikhs' Golden Temple; another of the First Guru, father of Sikhism.

PAN TOWARD THE LAST PICTURE he's hanging: of his parents, HIS FATHER posed stiffly, proud in his white turban; HIS MOTHER languidly leaning her head on her hand and smiling warmly.

65 INT. LIVING ROOM - WENDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

65

ANGLE ON MOROCCAN TABLE LAMP with ornate stained glass shade.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

WENDY (O.S.)
 (into phone)
 How can you claim the Moroccan lamp
 as a pre-marital asset?!

WIDEN ANGLE TO INCLUDE - WENDY pacing with the cordless
 phone, and brandishing a page from a legal document.

WENDY (cont'd)
 (into phone)
 We bought it together, Ted!
 (tears page in half)
 Hear that? I'm tearing this in
 half. Now you can shove it up both
 your ass and your lawyer's!

66 I/E STUDENT CAR - DAY

66

It's a sweltering day: muggy, yellowish sky. Even with the
 windows rolled down, Darwan and Wendy are drenched in sweat.

She drives east along Central Park South, passing
 SKATEBOARDERS with their shirts off; JOGGERS pouring Evian
 over their heads; mobs of CHILDREN around the ICE CREAM
 SELLER. HORSES with drooping heads hauling carriages of
 TOURISTS. A PEDI-CAB DRIVER pedals stoically in the heat
 alongside her.

WENDY
 Why don't you have air-conditioning
 in this heap?

DARWAN
 The school buys the cheapest cars.
 I will take you someplace cooler.

He smiles mysteriously.

67 EXT. 59TH STREET - MINUTES LATER - DAY

67

Wendy waits in heavy traffic at a stoplight. Looking ahead,
 she realizes that the street ascends straight into...

WENDY
 Oh my God! It's a bridge!

DARWAN
 Yes. Today you are going over a
 bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The LIGHT CHANGES. But Wendy is frozen.

WENDY

I can't!

DARWAN

Just keep going.

(CONTINUED)

The car behind her BLASTS its horn angrily.

WENDY
I'm afraid of heights!

DARWAN
We'll take it slowly. Now go straight.

WENDY
Please don't make me do it.

The HONKING GROWS as more cars join in.

DARWAN
Wendy, you must move.

The car creeps forward. The LIGHT CHANGES before she has reached the opposite side of the intersection. Now the CROSS TRAFFIC APPROACHES and she's "blocking the box." More HONKING. Wendy and Darwan shout above the noise:

WENDY
Why are you forcing me to do this?!

DARWAN
Because I know what you can do better than you!

His calm obstinacy infuriates her, but there's no choice: she must drive ahead, and that means mounting the bridge. Her fingers tighten on the wheel.

GREEN LIGHT. She drives forward, slow as a tortoise.

The student car creeps over the bridge, the East River stretched out below.

DARWAN (O.S.)
Don't look down. Focus on the center of the lane, and it's just another road. Except it's in the sky. Think of yourself as a bird. You are floating on the wind. Feel how happy it is, how easy --

WENDY (O.S.)
Darwan, this is *terrifying*!!

68 CONTINUED:

68

DARWAN (O.S.)
 Fear is a good thing. If you are
 afraid, then you will pay more
 attention. No more tuning out,
 Wendy.

69 I/E STUDENT CAR - LATER - DAY

69

They've arrived in Queens. Wendy is a wreck.

DARWAN
 Congratulations. You can let go the
 death grip now.

WENDY
 Oh my God, I never want to do that
 again!

DARWAN
 But you have to drive back.

WENDY
 No, you will drive us back.

DARWAN
 No way. I'm happy here in Queens.

70 EXT. QUEENS - SEQUENCE OF SHOTS - DAY

70

MONTAGE OF QUEENS NEIGHBORHOODS, as Wendy drives through;
 Darwan and Wendy converse O.S.

DARWAN (O.S.)
 Queens is part of New York, too.

PASSING an Asian district, where throngs of SHOPPERS stroll
 under signs in Chinese, Thai, Singaporean, Malaysian; past
 karaoke bars, Chinese herb shops...

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
 We don't have skyscrapers and Times
 Square and Trump palaces.
 We only have...more people.

PASSING the "African Poetry Theater," PEOPLE on the street
 wear dashikis and doo-rags...

DARWAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
 Many different people. Families.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (O.S.)
You have your family here, too?

DARWAN (O.S.)
Just my nephew, my sister's son.
She lives in Punjab.

PASSING under the arcade of the elevated subway line, we see LATINOS -- Filipino, Ecuadorian, Peruvian -- on the street, open produce markets with Spanish signs...

WENDY (O.S.)
Your parents?

PASSING A PARK where a group of East INDIANS have gathered at a small stream, scattering a deceased person's ashes.

DARWAN (O.S.)
They're dead.

OUT THE WINDOW - TAIWANESE KIDS flying MODEL PLANES in the park.

PAN UP TO SEE A JUMBO JET ROAR low above the treetops, headed for JFK Airport...

71 I/E STUDENT CAR - LATER - DAY

71

Wendy swerves the car onto a small street of huddled cottages: a working-class neighborhood.

DARWAN
(frowns)
I didn't tell you to turn.

WENDY
(grins)
I'm showing you *my* Queens. This is where I grew up.

DARWAN
You're from Queens?!

After a double-take, he bursts out LAUGHING.

DARWAN (cont'd)
You played a good joke on me.

WENDY'S POV - PASSING an old heap at the curb. In the driver's seat is a MAN in a Mets' cap, smoking.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Dad used to sit in his car, just like that, listening to the ball game on the radio, whenever my mother kicked him out of the house. Which was pretty often. He took off one day and we never saw him again. My sister and I were left alone to raise our mother.

Wendy picks up some speed as she continues talking.

WENDY (cont'd)

...I had scoliosis so I had to spend a year in a cast in bed. That's when I got into books. They were my ride.

Darwan takes his eyes off the road to watch her in profile.

WENDY (cont'd)

"Smarty Wendypants" he called me. He would've been proud to see me go to Barnard.

SEAGULLS are in the air. The car is headed for the beaches of Far Rockaway. MANHATTAN is seen across the water, with its clutter of skyscrapers, through heat haze...

WENDY (cont'd)

I can't believe you got me here. I'm allergic to Queens.

DARWAN

There will be a reward.

72 OMITTED

72

73 INT/EXT STUDENT CAR- BOARDWALK, FAR ROCKAWAY - LATER - DAY

73

Wendy parks in the lot near the boardwalk, and the long strip of beach where the whole MELTING POT of Queens comes to lie in the sand and play in the waves.

Wendy relinquishes the wheel with a GROAN.

DARWAN

(jumping out of the car)
Wait here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON WENDY - watching him stride onto the boardwalk. She turns the RADIO on, tuning it until she gets a BASEBALL GAME. She smiles to herself, then looks up.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY'S POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD (FANTASY) - A man in a Mets' cap stands in front of the bumper, smiling back at her. It's WENDY'S FATHER, as she imagines him.

WENDY

Hi, Dad. Well, here I am. Sitting in your seat, and the Mets are playing Arizona.

FATHER'S VOICE

Good for you, Wendypants . About time you took the wheel.

WE PAN TO THE PASSENGER SEAT, where her father has reappeared, sitting beside her.

WENDY'S FATHER

(pats the dashboard)

A car's the greatest thing in the history of human invention. Forget your house, you could move in here. Sleep in the back. Heat up a TV dinner in the engine. Here's your shower.

He switches on the WIPER FLUID, spraying the front window. She GIGGLES.

WENDY'S FATHER (cont'd)

Pee in the gas tank. And when the spirit moves, you just drive away.

ON WENDY - not laughing anymore.

WENDY

Like you drove away, Dad? And never came back.

A KNOCK ON THE DRIVER'S WINDOW makes her turn her head. Darwan is there, holding two ice cream bars.

DARWAN

Here is your reward.

TRACK WITH WENDY AND DARWAN eating ICE CREAM BARS as they stroll away from the SUNBATHERS.

WENDY

You have a masters, really?

DARWAN

I was a university professor, like my father.

WENDY

Then why do you teach driving?

DARWAN

For a better job I would have to take off my turban, shave my beard. People think I look dangerous. But this is how I know who I am. And here it is too easy to forget.

WENDY

Don't you go back for visits?

DARWAN

I can never go home to India. It's part of political asylum. I could not see my father before he died last year.

WENDY

I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to my dad either.

DARWAN

I missed my mother's funeral, too, but that was when I was in prison there.

WENDY

(taken aback)
Why?

DARWAN

For nothing. For being a Sikh. The police had already killed my brother. They said he was a terrorist, and they had to shoot him because he ambushed them, but it was a lie. Then they punished the rest of the family. All of us were tortured, my father, my uncle, even my mother. They let my sister alone because she was too young. Back then there was no justice for Sikhs.

WENDY

How long were you in prison?

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN
A long time.

CONTINUED: (3)

His tone is carefully placid, but a shadow passes over his face. He stares at the waves. Wendy can tell the subject is closed.

He returns to the present, as if switching something off.

DARWAN (cont'd)
But here is the ocean. Punjab is
nowhere near water.

The SKY HAS GONE DARK. RUMBLING O.S. A summer THUNDERSTORM is gathering. Darwan glances at his watch, suddenly alarmed.

DARWAN (cont'd)
It's very late!

WENDY
I have time.

He turns to rush back to the car.

DARWAN
We have to get you back to
Manhattan.
(to himself)
Oh my God...

75

I/E. INTERSECTION - QUEENS - LATER - MAGIC HOUR

75

Heavy traffic. The student car stops at a light at a big intersection. THUNDER GROWLS; LIGHTNING FLASHES. The SKY GOES DARKER.

PEDESTRIANS cross in front of her car. Among them is a MAN IN A METS' CAP. He pulls his windbreaker hood over his head, obscuring his face.

WENDY
(softly)
Dad...?

DARWAN
Turn on your lights.

WENDY
(looks around)
Where? Where?

He snatches her hand and puts it on the light dial. He is being unusually impatient and brusque with her.

DARWAN
Dial to the next position.

She returns her eyes quickly to the intersection.

WENDY'S POV - The Man in the Met's cap is gone.

WENDY turns her head. The Man APPEARS beside her open window. His windbreaker hood is pulled down; his face is in shadow.

WENDY
Dad!

He doesn't move.

WENDY (cont'd)
Just tell me one thing, please, Mom said it was an accident, but - did you do it on purpose? Did you want to die? To get away from us? From me?

She's CRYING now. DARWAN'S VOICE CUTS THROUGH, incongruously.

DARWAN (O.S.)
You have the light! Go now!

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

WENDY
(to Man)
Did you ever love me?

The Man pulls back his hood suddenly. LIGHTNING FLASHES, revealing HIS FACE IS CRUSHED, A BLOODIED MASS from impact with a windshield.

WENDY SCREAMS! Simultaneously, a CRACK OF THUNDER! And -

76 I/E STUDENT CAR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

76

HER FOOT HITS THE BRAKE!

HER BRAKE LIGHTS FLASH -- too late. The CAR BEHIND BARRELS into the rear of the student car:

CRASH! Wendy and Darwan are thrown forward against their seat belts.

THE REAR BUMPER of the student car crumples.

ANOTHER CAR REAR-ENDS THE CAR BEHIND HER: SMASH!

The force of the second collision forces the first car even further into Wendy's rear. THE TRUNK CAVES, THE LID POPS OPEN. Even the "WINDSOR DRIVING SCHOOL" placard on the roof is knocked to one side.

77 The skies open. SHEETS OF RAIN DELUGE the scene.

77

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

78 I/E STUDENT CAR - CONTINUOUS - MAGIC HOUR

78

Darwan is beside himself, yelling at her:

DARWAN
Why did you stop?

Wendy cowers in the driver's seat.

WENDY
I don't know --

DARWAN
Oh my dear God -- pull over!

WENDY
(throws her hands up
helplessly)
I can't!

HIGH ANGLE - OUTSIDE CAR

Darwan runs around to take the driver's seat while Wendy slides over. Traffic is backed up behind the crash and HONKING belligerently.

(CONTINUED)

Darwan drives the wounded car over to the curb. The other vehicles follow suit.

A DRIVER AND PASSENGER (BOTH DRIVER and PASSENGER) get out to inspect their crunched hood, and bumper.

Darwan jumps out of the student car without a word to Wendy. He approaches the other driver. The Driver is furious.

DRIVER

I just got through paying for this car!

DRIVER is enraged, spotting Darwan's beard and turban.

DRIVER (cont'd)

Fucking Arab asshole!

DARWAN

Please, it was my student --

DRIVER

Go back to your fucking cave!

PASSENGER

Stop!

Driver punches his Darwan's turban off; KICKS the side of the student car, leaving a dent. PASSENGER restrains DRIVER; Darwan, humiliated, scrambles to retrieve his turban from the ground where it has unraveled. His long hair (which has never been cut, according to Sikh tradition) swings free, a skinny rope uncoiling to the small of his back. He looks suddenly, shockingly, naked without the turban.

PASSENGER (cont'd)

Stop! Can we just do the insurance cards and get the fuck outa here!

INSIDE STUDENT CAR - Wendy sits stunned.

The PASSENGER DOOR WRENCHES open. DARWAN reaches in, his long hair hanging; he tosses the muddied turban in, YANKS open the glove compartment, extracts his INSURANCE CARD AND REGISTRATION with trembling hands, and SLAMS the door shut again.

A POLICE CAR arrives on the scene, its ROOF LIGHTS are twirling.

A COP gets out and approaches the huddle of MEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARWAN'S POV - THE COP'S BADGE moving closer...

ON DARWAN - his eyes instinctively fill with fear; he becomes short of breath.

MINUTES LATER

His report pad out, the cop interviews the Drivers.

COP
What happened first?

DRIVER
(indicates Darwan)
He stopped for no reason.

DARWAN
It was a student driver, sir...

The Cop notes Darwan's turban and his unease.

COP
Where you from?

DARWAN
Richmond Hill.

COP
Yeah, but where're you *from*?

DARWAN
India.

COP
You got papers?

DARWAN
(produces ID)
I am an American citizen.

Cop scrutinizes Darwan's ID and license.

COP
Stay here.
(to Driver and Passenger)
Get in your car and have your
license and registrations ready.

The Cop takes Darwan's papers back to the police car.

BACK IN THE CAR - Wendy senses Darwan is in trouble.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY JUMPS OUT, intercepts the Cop.

WENDY

Officer, it was my fault. I was driving.

COP

Remain in the car, ma'am.

WENDY

(belligerent)

I have two words for you: Racial. Profiling.

(to Darwan)

Are they harassing you?

DARWAN

(exasperated)

Wendy, stay in the car.

COP

This is a no-fault accident, ma'am. I'm just filling out a report.

LATER - NIGHTFALL

ANGLE ON DIGITAL CAR CLOCK - as the minutes shift.

WENDY, in the passenger seat, keeps glancing back.

WENDY'S POV - Darwan paces, talks on his cell phone, gesticulating.

LATER - DRIVER and his Passenger leave in their car.

Darwan waits, seated on the curb, his head bowed.

The Cop leans into his police car, conferring with his PARTNER inside. Darwan looks on anxiously.

WENDY'S EYES fall to the rear seat. There's a hand-lettered cardboard SIGN reading "JASLEEN KAUR", a bouquet of FLOWERS wrapped in cellophane, and a gift-wrapped BOOK. She has a sinking feeling he bought them for her.

The Cop returns, handing back Darwan's papers and the accident report.

Everything happens very fast: the sky opens; TORRENTIAL RAIN POURS down in sheets;

SECONDS LATER

(CONTINUED)

Darwan gets in the student car, stuffs the papers in the glove compartment. But not before getting soaking wet from the rain.

WENDY
Is everything okay?

Not responding, he catches sight of the clock, and becomes even more agitated.

DARWAN
Put on your seat belt.

WENDY
(repeats)
Is everything okay?

DARWAN
What is "okay"?! I have a car
bashed up to hell and my boss angry
at me!

The car is still parked as DARWAN collects himself from the recent activities. The rain continues.

WENDY
I'll pay to have it fixed.

DARWAN
You pay nothing. The school has insurance. But the five-hundred dollar deductible, who pays that? I do! Do you know how much I work for five hundred dollars?

WENDY
I can give you that.

DARWAN
I cannot take your money. That is not how I am. What were you doing? All you have to do is drive straight through an intersection, everything is clear -- and you stop!

WENDY

My mind went somewhere, just for a second.

DARWAN

Bad things happen in just one second! You can lose everything! And you don't get another try!

WENDY

(defensive)

I was thinking. I'm an intellectual.

DARWAN

You can think about anything you want when you write, but when you drive you think only about driving!

(brusquely)

I don't have time to take you home now. I have to pick up somebody at the airport, and I am very late.

He quickly pulls the car away from the curb and races through the AMBER LIGHT, joining the traffic

80 INT. JFK "PARKING LOT" - A LITTLE LATER - NIGHT

80

Parked the parking lot, Darwan yanks down the rear view mirror to fix his turban, stuffing his hair haphazardly inside and frantically winding the cloth around his head. Wendy looks on mutely as he grabs the sign, flowers, and gift from the back seat of the student car. He jumps out, leaving Wendy inside the car.

DARWAN

(curt)

Stay here!

81 EXT. JFK "AIR INDIA TERMINAL" - MOMENTS LATER

81

An Air India flight has arrived; the last of the TRAVELLERS are leaving: women in vivid saris and men in Nehru suits. Darwan holds his sign aloft, searching the travellers' faces in vain.

(CONTINUED)

His turban is askew, and the end of the soggy cloth has come loose, hanging over his eyes so he has to swat it away.

The pavement empties. Then DARWAN spots a small, plump 30-something INDIAN WOMAN about 50 feet away, sitting alone on her LUGGAGE; on her lap is a clear plastic garment bag with a long ornate red gown inside.

He holds up his sign hopefully, but she makes no sign of recognition.

As he approaches her, she glances up, bleary from the flight.

DARWAN
Jasleen?

JASLEEN
Darwan?

She seems a bit stunned. He realizes he could not look worse, dishevelled and drenched, his shirt sticking to his skin, his turban askew and unravelling.

DARWAN
Hello. Did you not see my sign?
(she looks confused)
Never mind. Here is for you.

He hands her the flowers and the wrapped gift.

DARWAN (cont'd)
Please, open it.

She unwraps the paper. She stares blankly at the book inside.

DARWAN (cont'd)
These are beautiful poems for you
to read. William Wordsworth!

JASLEEN
(ill at ease)
Thank you, mister.

DARWAN
(LAUGHS)
No mister! We will speak only
English now, for practise. You will
learn fast.

She gives him a box of Indian candy from her tote.

81 CONTINUED: (2)

81

DARWAN (cont'd)
Thank you. I have not tasted these
in twelve years!

He waits for her to say more, but she's like a deer in the headlights.

DARWAN (cont'd)
Now I will show you New York!

He offers to take her garment bag, but she won't release it. He picks up her three suitcases, staggering to the car. She follows, arms full of flowers, garment bag, and poetry book.

82 INT. JFK PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

82

As they approach his car, he's acutely aware of what she sees: the dented door, the smashed rear, the placard askew; and an attractive middle-aged Caucasian woman waiting beside the vehicle.

DARWAN
(flustered)
It's a little accident we had.
That's my student, Wendy. Wendy,
this is Jasleen.

WENDY
Hi.

Jasleen looks at her suspiciously.

JASLEEN
Hello, miss.

WENDY
(tactfully)
I'll get in the back.

Wendy is hunkered in the rear. Darwan piles Jasleen's luggage to the ceiling next to her.

DARWAN
(to Wendy; petulant)
I cannot put these in the trunk
because it is filled with rain.

His movements are nervous; he is now so upset he seems unhinged. He goes to take the garment bag from Jasleen, who first clings to it.

(CONTINUED)

JASLEEN
I want - careful!

DARWAN
No problem, it will be safe.

Darwan hands the bag to Wendy in the rear seat as Jasleen climbs into the passenger seat.

DARWAN (cont'd)
(to Wendy)
Hang this on the hook.

As Wendy hangs the bag on the hook over her door, Jasleen turns her head to watch, frowning.

JASLEEN
My dress...

DARWAN
(climbs into driver seat)
It's her wedding dress.

WENDY
(to Jasleen)
Oh, you're getting married?

Jasleen doesn't answer.

DARWAN
Speak slowly so she understands.

WENDY
(to Jasleen)
You get married?

DARWAN
Yes. Tomorrow. We are very happy.

Wendy is stupefied.

WENDY
You two?

As he pulls the car away from the curb:

DARWAN
(to Wendy; hotly)
Yes! Can you imagine how embarrassing this is?
(voice reaches a SHOUT)
(MORE)

DARWAN (cont'd)

I look like a drowned dog, I have
to pick her up in a pile of junk --
*this is not how our first meeting
was to be!!*

He is speaking so fast, Jasleen can't understand; she can only cringe against her door, witnessing his anger with no idea of the cause.

The car heads out of the parking lot.

DARWAN (cont'd)

(to Jasleen)

We must take Wendy home first.

(gestures out window)

Look, here is America!

Jasleen sees nothing outside but bleak concrete and sterile streetlights through a scrim of humid exhaust.

WENDY

Excuse me, you've never met her?

DARWAN

She's from a village near where I
grew up. My sister picked her out
for me.

WENDY

(sitting back)

If my sister picked me a husband,
he'd be some dickless Republican
banker.

DARWAN

(sarcastic)

Yes, you are better off!

(mutters)

That's why you're alone and crazy.

WENDY

Listen, just drop me at the subway.

He SWERVES around ANOTHER CAR, thrusting the women against their doors, while he shakes his finger back at Wendy:

DARWAN

No! You are my guest! You don't
understand, this is how we are, we
do everything for our guest before
we think of ourselves! This is the
Sikh way!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: (3)

82

DARWAN (cont'd)
 (to Jasleen)
 So, am I the way you pictured me?

WIDE EXTERIOR ANGLE - The maimed student car drives out of frame, its trunk lid bouncing up and down.

83 OMITTED

83

84 OMITTED

84

85 OMITTED

85

86 INT. TEMPLE (GURDWARA) - NEXT DAY

86

DARWAN and JASLEEN stand before the *GIANI*, or priest, and the HOLY BOOK. Members of the WEDDING PARTY, all Darwan's friends, are dressed in a riot of colors: flame, fuschia, saffron, emerald; the men in turbans and long shirts of rainbow hues.

Jasleen, heavily made up, with henna'd hands, wears her scarlet wedding dress and gold bangles; Darwan wears a scarlet turban and ceremonial sword.

Darwan holds one end of a saffron sash, Jasleen the other, as he leads her four times around the Holy Book. The Priest and MUSICIANS SING the sacred couplets which accompany each tour:

PRIEST
 (first round)
 "Thus the Lord imprints the duties
 of married life..."

Preet grins, winks at him as he passes by.

PRIEST (cont'd)
 (second round)
 "Thus the Lord leads you to your
 Divine Guide..."

Jasleen follows three steps behind Darwan, staring at her feet so as not to trip.

PRIEST (cont'd)
 (third round)
 "Thus God's love fills your
 mind..."

(CONTINUED)

- 86 CONTINUED: 86
- She timidly lifts her eyes to the back of her groom, his square shoulders, his confident stride.
- PRIEST (cont'd)
(fourth round)
"Thus you find the fruit of your heart's desire in God's name."
- 87 INT. TEMPLE (GURDWARA)- COMMUNAL SPACE - NIGHT 87
- The wedding GUESTS dance exuberantly, under colored LIGHTS, to the loud "BANGHARA" MUSIC from a BOOMBOX.
- DARWAN is dancing, too. JASLEEN looks on shyly from the sidelines. Her eyelids droop: she's very tired and she doesn't know anyone.
- 88 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHT 88
- Jasleen waits in the bed. Darwan, his back to her, unwraps his turban....
- WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
It's a always a trade-off...
- 89 INT. APARTMENT - DAY 89
- The WOMAN'S VOICE CONTINUES: it's a BROKER showing Wendy around an empty sun-filled apartment.
- BROKER
You want a lot of light, you have to sacrifice on space. Or you buy a bigger place, and sacrifice your light...
- Wendy wanders about without enthusiasm, not really listening.
- 90 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY 90
- Jasleen unpacks her cosmetics on Darwan's bureau.
- She hangs her scarves next to his ties.
- She arranges a FRAMED PHOTO OF HER PARENTS next to his.
- LATER

(CONTINUED)

- 90 CONTINUED: 90
- Jasleen gazes up at the waning light in the street-level window, where she can see the FEET OF PASSERSBY going to and fro.
- 91 INT. LIVING ROOM - WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY 91
- Wendy's taking books from the shelves to pack in open cartons. A tragic OPERA plays faintly on a PBS station. Wendy's mood is correspondingly stormy.
- WE FOLLOW HER FEET as she approaches a box, then LINGER ON A BOOK lying open on the floor. It's the YELLOW PAGES, open to "DRIVING INSTRUCTION." A few ads are half-heartedly circled. When her feet return to frame, she abruptly KICKS the book aside.
- She carries the GLASS-SHADED MOROCCAN LAMP to a box filled with bubble wrap. She raises the lamp carefully, turns, and with all her force SMASHES it on the floor.
- She throws herself onto the couch, curling into a ball, her hands covering her head. Then she hears a FAINT NOISE O.S.: something brushing against the front door. Retreating FOOTSTEPS on the stoop outside.
- 92 INT. FRONT HALL - WENDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT 92
- LOW ANGLE - A folded note rests on the floor, slid through the mail slot on the door. WENDY'S HAND PICKS UP THE NOTE.
- WENDY unfolds the letter and reads. Takes a deep, grateful breath.
- 93 EXT. WENDY'S HOUSE - DAY 93
- Darwan waits in his usual place, parked at the fire hydrant. He's in a different student car. He checks his watch.
- Wendy comes out of her house at last. He jumps out and meets her halfway, escorting her down the stoop, grinning.
- DARWAN
You make me wait. Punishing me?
- WENDY
(coy)
Maybe.

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN

Well, I'm happy we will finish what we started. I will not let you fail your license, Wendy.

Approaching the car:

WENDY

How was the wedding?

She can't help the hint of jealousy in her voice. He doesn't notice.

DARWAN

It's a very, very beautiful ceremony. It says when a man and a woman marry, they become one spirit. We think and feel the same, there's no difference between us.

WENDY

You don't mention love.

DARWAN

Of course. Love is the one road to God. God doesn't want anyone to be alone.

She raises a sardonic eyebrow. He opens the driver's door for her to get in.

94 INT. STUDENT CAR #2 - CONTINUOUS - DAY

94

She goes to turn on the ignition key.

DARWAN

Seat belt first.

As she pulls the seat belt across her chest:

WENDY

So what's it like to wake up married to a complete stranger?

DARWAN

I think you don't approve of arranged marriage. Check your mirrors.

(as she does so)

I'll try to explain. We hold our families very close. They know you better than anyone else.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

DARWAN (cont'd)
They're more objective about who's
the right person for you.

She TURNS ON THE ENGINE, puts on her signal light.

DARWAN (cont'd)
If you're left to your own devices,
there's more chance you'll pick the
wrong one. You choose for your ego.

WENDY
I don't know what I believed about
marriage.
(as she pulls out)
Except that it would always be
there.

95 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY

95

Jasleen irons Darwan's shirts; glances now and then at the
curious images on TV, where a hefty WOMAN tearfully smacks
and punches a beefy GUY beside her on a Maury Povich-type
show. The subtitle, which she can't read, is: "HER BOYFRIEND
MAKES HER WATCH HIM HAVE SEX WITH HIS WIFE."

LATER

Lying on the couch, she watches "SESAME STREET," featuring
the letter "P." A short animated sequence teaches the word
"Peligro" (danger). Jasleen mouths the word:

JASLEEN
Peligro.

96 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - MAGIC HOUR

96

She cooks dinner, enjoying INDIAN RAP MUSIC on the stereo.

ANGLE ON BASEMENT WINDOW - DARWAN'S TAXI pulls up.

DARWAN enters, between shifts. Without asking her, he turns
the MUSIC OFF. He looks over her shoulder at the pot on the
stove.

DARWAN
More tomatoes make a nicer color.

JASLEEN
I not have.

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN
 (gently)
 Jasleen, I give you money. You can
 go out and buy tomatoes.

JASLEEN
 I not know where.

DARWAN
 Just walk down the street, there
 are so many stores.

She lapses into silence. They are awkward with each other
 still: he's aloof and formal, she is reticent.

A LITTLE LATER

She serves dinner. He tastes her cooking. She waits for his
 approval.

DARWAN (cont'd)
 A little too much ghee.

She sighs.

JASLEEN
 I try no much.

DARWAN
 If you don't have conversations
 with people outside, how will you
 pick up English?

JASLEEN
 TV.

DARWAN
 Then tell me what you learned
 today.

JASLEEN
 (smiles with pride)
 Peligro.

DARWAN
 (LAUGHS)
 That's Spanish, not English.

LATER

At the basement window, Jasleen watches Darwan's feet
 approach his taxi at the curb. He gets in and drives off.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: (2)

96

LATER - NIGHT

Curled on the bed, Jasleen surfs the TV channels. PAN TOWARD SCREEN:

IMAGES OF AMERICAN WOMEN: A NEWS ANCHORWOMAN...A FEMALE ATTORNEY ARGUES A CASE...JUDGE JUDY BANGS THE GAVEL...AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL...HOUSEWIVES OF WHATEVER having a cat fight...HILLARY CLINTON...

LATER - MORNING

Darwan returns from his taxi shift. Jasleen wakes when he crawls into bed next to her; he falls immediately asleep.

She pulls the divider curtain closed on him and retreats to the TV. "MY LITTLE PONY" is on.

97 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

97

Wendy's sister DEBBIE (about 5 years younger) and her HUSBAND are having cocktails with a male FRIEND at a table for four.

Wendy arrives, breathless. Kissing her sister and brother-in-law briskly:

WENDY
Sorry I'm late.

The Male Friend stands to pull out Wendy's chair for her.

DEBBIE
(to Man)
My sister is never on time.

DEBBIE'S HUSBAND
Wendy, this is Peter Hines. A squash buddy of mine. He annihilates me once a week.

PETER (50-60) has a raffish smile; handsome; impeccable presentation: all buffed and bespoke.

WENDY
Hello.

She glares at her sister. She was not expecting the extra male.

A LITTLE LATER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter is studying the wine list avidly while the WINE STEWARD stands by.

PETER

How does a '91 Meursault sound to everyone?

DEBBIE

Great!

Wendy hisses to her sister:

WENDY

Debbie, I told you not to do this.

DEBBIE

So he's a banker. He's also an opera buff and a gourmet.

WENDY

What is his political affiliation?

DEBBIE

I have no idea! He was hard to wrangle for this dinner, a lot of women are after him. Honey, you've got to get back in the saddle.

WENDY

And roll in the hay? I love these dude ranch metaphors coming from a Connecticut matron.

DEBBIE

Matron?! You could do with a hormone upgrade yourself.

The sisters GIGGLE.

ANGLE ON PETER'S PLATE - TWO HOURS LATER - the remains of a fish and baby vegetables. PAN UP TO PETER in conference with the CHEF, whom he has summoned from the kitchen to find out the ingredients of the fish dish.

PETER

White wine...lemon grass...
cardamom?

CHEF

Ah, monsieur knows his stuff.

PETER

And, let me take a wild guess,
fennel seed?

(CONTINUED)

Peter winks at Wendy, but she has a goblet of wine up to her face.

CHEF
Very close. Anise.

PETER
You're a genius.

He tries to slip the Chef a \$100 bill.

CHEF
(embarrassed; retreats to
kitchen)
No, no. Please, enjoy.

DEBBIE
Peter, I don't know how you taste
all that. Wendy, isn't he amazing?

WENDY
Uh-huh.

LATER

They're on dessert: profiteroles and sorbet. Wendy sticks with the wine. Peter leans closer to her, his tone intimate.

PETER
You have no idea how much I envy
you. I'd love nothing more than to
live a life of the mind.

WENDY
I'd like something to take my mind
off my mind.

PETER
That's why I do yoga meditation.
Tantric yoga, actually.

WENDY
I do Ambien.

PETER
(LAUGHS suavely)
I knew you'd be witty. I love your
reviews. By the end I always feel
like I've read the book.

WENDY
That accounts for the drop in
sales.

(CONTINUED)

97 CONTINUED: (4)

97

PETER

Oh, I download ebooks all the time.

WENDY

I like to hold a book in my hands.

PETER

Me too. When it's the right book.

He guides a spoonful of sorbet to her lips.

PETER (cont'd)

Try the blood orange.

98 OMITTED

98

99 INT. WENDY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

99

ON WENDY'S FACE - tense and miserable, as Peter thrusts into her slowly, methodically, punctuating each stroke with "Mmm"'s and "Ooo"'s and weird chortles, as if he's enjoying a good fondue.

LATER

Another position, same rhythm, same sounds. Now she's getting sore.

LATER

Another position. She glances at the bedside clock: two a.m. Now she's alarmed.

WENDY

Aren't you ever going to come?

He stops, smiling affably.

PETER

No. I practise Tantric sex.

WENDY

Can we stop, then?

PETER

Sure.

He pulls out, lying beside her. She feels like she's been flattened by a truck.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Jesus.

PETER

I was trying to make you come again.

WENDY

I'm too tired. But thank you.
(beat)
So, when were you planning on coming?

PETER

Maybe next time. Or next time after that. What are you doing Thursday evening?

WENDY

I have a driving lesson.

PETER

How about Sunday? I could come on Sunday.

WENDY

Well...

PETER

What's the matter?

Peter raises up on his elbow, reads her face.

PETER (cont'd)

Oh. You have someone.

WENDY

Yes. I do.

100 I/E STUDENT CAR #2 - RIVERSIDE DRIVE - MAGIC HOUR

100

Wendy's car slides cautiously into faster-moving TRAFFIC on Upper Riverside Drive where it becomes four-lane.

DARWAN

You seem more comfortable now at higher speeds.

She doesn't respond. She's withdrawn, depressed, her usual spikiness gone.

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN (cont'd)
It's time to put on your lights.

100 CONTINUED: (2)

100

She finds the light dial.

HEADLIGHTS GO ON.

SHAFTS OF LIGHT from oncoming cars' HEADLIGHTS slide over their faces.

DARWAN (cont'd)
If the bright lights bother you,
change the mirror.

He flicks a switch on the rear-view mirror, darkening its reflection. She says nothing.

DARWAN (cont'd)
You're very quiet tonight.

WENDY
Just focussing.

DARWAN
That's good. Make a right.

But he misses her combative energy. He steals a look at her sad profile, wonders what he could say to make her re-appear.

ON WENDY - lost in thought.

TED (O.S.)
The streetlamps look so shy in the
twilight.

WENDY'S POV (FANTASY) - PAN TO THE PASSENGER SEAT where Ted sits instead of Darwan.

TED (cont'd)
Like they've arrived too early at a
party. And they stand outside,
looking up at the shadows on the
shade, deciding whether to go in.

WENDY
It gets dark too fast for me these
days. Does it make you sad, too?

TED
(nods; softly)
Mm. We feel the end of life. The
goodbye.

ON WENDY - She turns to him in anguish.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED: (3)

100

WENDY
 God, Ted. Will I ever be free of
 you?

HER POV - Ted points ahead.

TED
 (DARWAN'S VOICE)
 Pass him.

WENDY - her attention goes back to the four-lane road.

DARWAN (O.S.)
 Put on your signal. Give it the
 gas.

WENDY'S POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD - gaining on the car in front,
 pulling to the left. As she passes, she sees TED IN THE CAR,
 giving her a little wave. And then she's ahead of him, and
 he's gone.

DARWAN (cont'd)
 Very good. You only need a little
 courage, and a little gas.

101 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

101

Darwan is READING A POEM out loud, from the book he gave
 Jasleen. They are on the bed together.

DARWAN
*"A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd/ To
 warn, to comfort, and command;/ And
 yet a Spirit still, and bright/
 With something of angelic light."*
 (beat)
 Did you like that?

JASLEEN
 (lying)
 Yes.

DARWAN
 Now you read this one to me.

He chooses a page, hands her the book, and lays his head in
 her lap with a contented sigh of expectation. He waits.

ANGLE ON PAGE - A TEAR falls on the page of text.

Darwan hears her SNIFFLE. He sits up. He sees her tear-filled
 eyes staring uncomprehendingly at the open book.

(CONTINUED)

DARWAN (cont'd)
Don't tell me you can't read
English.

JASLEEN
I am fourteen *Baba* [father] take me
from school.

DARWAN
My God...

He doesn't disguise his dismay. She flings the book against
the wall.

JASLEEN
No thing I do is good for you!

DARWAN
Calm down --

JASLEEN
(screams)
What you want?! What I do?!

He loses his temper in turn.

DARWAN
You don't go out, you don't try to
learn anything about America! You
should be curious! You have a mind!

JASLEEN
Like Wendy!

She jumps off the bed, heading into the bathroom.

DARWAN
Wendy? Why are we talking about
Wendy?

He gets up to follow her. The bathroom door SLAMS. Darwan
talks through the door.

DARWAN (cont'd)
Jasleen, please...tell me why
you're so unhappy.

JASLEEN (O.S.)
You don't never here! What you do
all the time?

101 CONTINUED: (2)

101

DARWAN

I am working. I want a good life
for our family.

INSIDE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS - Jasleen is huddled against the
door.

JASLEEN

You don't want with me. I am
stupid. I cook too much ghee.

102 EXT. DRIVING TEST SITE, BROOKLYN - DAY

102

Darwan and Wendy are standing on the sidewalk in front of the
pool with kids in swimming in the background. There are a
couple of CARS ahead of Wendy, everyone waiting for a driving
test.

DARWAN (O.S.)

If you accumulate more than thirty-
five points, you fail. Now, what
things in the test are worth
fifteen points?

WENDY (O.S.)

Parallel parking, broken U-turn...

DARWAN (O.S.)

What else?

WENDY

(a bundle of nerves)
Going too fast.

DARWAN

Or too slow. What else?

WENDY

Not observing right of way.

DARWAN

If you fail any one of the fifteen-
pointers, you automatically fail
your test.

WENDY

Are you sure I'm ready?

DARWAN

Wendy, don't forget what I know:
you are a very determined woman.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

My daughter calls me *mujer de metal*. Iron Woman.

DARWAN

Iron Woman. Does this mean you will do my shirts?

They LAUGH.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Now tell me. What kind of car will you buy?

WENDY

Something cheap. My divorce is costing a fortune.

VOICE

Ready for you.

Wendy is startled to realize the Examiner is behind her.

WENDY

Oh my God...Darwan!

DARWAN

If you get nervous, just listen. You'll hear my voice telling you what to do.

EXAMINER

Pull away from the curb, please.

He pats her shoulder and withdraws: she's on her own. From Darwan's POV we see the student car pull away.

103 OMITTED

103

104 I/E. THE DRIVING TEST - SEQUENCE OF SHOTS

104

EXAMINER

(curtly)

Start the car.

Wendy's pulls out of the parking space and drives.

WENDY

I don't belong on the road. I'm
only trained to do one trick:
ignore everything and everybody
around me.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (cont'd)

You know, there's a reason some people are alone: *because they deserve to be*. I ignored my husband. I ignored my daughter. No wonder he cheated on me. I mean, I openly cheated on *them*. Because my first and foremost love was for words. Words! I wrapped myself in them. And then I look at you.

He glances up.

There's a thousand things in this world to divide two people, but you and Jasleen manage to be one spirit. Whew!

(calls to WAITRESS)

Miss!

She gestures her glass for a refill, well on her way to a good drunk. Then she leans in closer.

WENDY (cont'd)

Just tell me: if she ever disappointed you, if she ever fell short in some way...would you ever cheat on her?

DARWAN

No. I would never.

WENDY

Well, Darwan, you're a good man. You give me faith.

He drops his eyes to his coffee. In the silence, the waitress sets down Wendy's wine and departs. He doesn't look up.

WENDY (cont'd)

I don't even want this.

She pushes her glass away abruptly.

DARWAN

(softly)

I don't know how to talk to her.

(CONTINUED)

Her turn to be silent. Almost afraid to breathe, she waits for more.

DARWAN (cont'd)

She's not educated. We don't like the same things at all. She's scared of America. She's scared of me. She hides. You know words, Wendy. What do I say?

She thinks. When she speaks at last, it's from the bruised heart.

WENDY

That you'll never stop trying. That you'll fight for her. Every day, you'll try to cross the divide. Tell her *she's worth it*.

DARWAN

Is this what you wanted to hear from him?

She SIGHS, averting her eyes to hold tears at bay.

WENDY

Not words. You know what I miss? The way he touched my face. Just...holding my face between his two hands. As if I was treasure.

They sit, as still as two people in prayer, allowing her sorrow to fill up the silence.

Darwan pulls the car up in front of Wendy's house.

WENDY

(rummages in purse)
Shit. Can you come inside? I left my checkbook at home.

DARWAN

You can pay me next time.

WENDY

(gets out)
No next time. I'm done with driving.

110

INT. FRONT HALL - MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

110

Wendy writes out a check while Darwan tries to persuade her.

DARWAN

You shouldn't give up. You only
need a little more practise.

WENDY

I don't have it in me, Darwan. I'm
sorry.

She hands him the check.

DARWAN

You make me say goodbye.

WENDY

(suddenly uncertain)
I guess...yeah.

He bows reluctantly, *namaste*, his palms together.

WENDY (cont'd)

Thank you. You did your best.

DARWAN

Not enough.

A beat. He slowly brings his hands toward her. And gently
touches the sides of her face. As if she is treasure.

She releases a pained breath. She turns her face into his
touch, leaning one cheek on his palm.

He pulls his hands away. His face shows the struggle within.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Goodbye, Wendy.

Wendy watches as he leaves.

FADE OUT.

111

INT. BATHROOM, BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY

111

Jasleen reaches opens the cabinet under the sink, takes out a
box of sanitary napkins she brought from India with Punjabi
writing all over it.

The box is empty. Her brow tightens with dismay.

112

INT. DUANE READE PHARMACY - LATER - DAY

112

Jasleen wanders the long aisles of the drugstore, trying to compare the pictures on her box to those on the shelves. A MALE EMPLOYEE makes no attempt to help, looking at her Sikh clothes and veil with contempt.

She rounds the corner, approaches a FEMALE EMPLOYEE and shows her the box.

JASLEEN

Where is...?

EMPLOYEE

I can't read that.

A hand snatches the box away. It's another Sikh woman (MATA, 40ish).

MATA

You see the picture! You know what she wants!

EMPLOYEE

No ma'am.

MATA

You work here and you don't know where is the sanitary napkin!

Mata's raised voice gets the attention of the MANAGER, who looks over.

EMPLOYEE

Aisle five.

Mata grabs Jasleen's hand, pulling her toward the right aisle.

MATA

They're so rude here. You have to demand your respect in America! Where are you from?

JASLEEN

Dadiala.

MATA

My uncle lives there! Why don't I see you at *gurdwara*, darling?

113 EXT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - MAGIC HOUR 113

Darwan pulls up in his taxi. He goes to his front door, then hesitates, surprised to hear WOMEN CHATTERING within.

114 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS - MAGIC HOUR 114

Darwan enters to find five SIKH WOMEN occupying the couches, all YAKKING with Jasleen. He recognizes one.

DARWAN

Mata! Hello.

MATA

(re: Jasleen)

Darwan Singh! Why do you shut up this pearl in the house?

DARWAN

(on the spot; smiles)

I assure you she's free to go anywhere.

MATA

(to Jasleen)

What a husband! Leaving you alone all the time. Don't worry, darling, we make our own fun here, we don't need him.

Jasleen casts an anxious look at Darwan, gets up to go to the kitchen.

JASLEEN

I make dinner.

DARWAN

Never mind. Enjoy your new friends.

(goes to door)

I'll pick up something to eat.

SIKH WOMAN

(calls after him)

That's right, leave her to us. You won't recognize her when we're done with her!

The women HOOT with laughter. Jasleen grins.

115

INT. WENDY'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

115

PANNING OVER PACKING CARTONS - their flaps open, revealing hundreds of BOOKS waiting to be put on shelves.

ANOTHER ANGLE - TASHA helps Wendy unpack in her new, bare apartment. The dark, hermetic burrow of her old townhouse has been replaced by open space and tall windows.

TASHA

Whew! There's so much...stuff.

WENDY

Believe me, I threw out tons.

Wendy puts her arm around her daughter.

WENDY (cont'd)

Bless you for helping. But hadn't you better get on the road? It's a long drive.

TASHA

Mom...I think I won't go back.

(off Wendy's surprise)

I love farming but...mainly I wanted to be close to this guy, and then he suddenly decided to go back to Dartmouth, and so now I'm alone and all the other kids are gone...

WENDY

So - what? You want to go back to school, too? Isn't it too late for the semester?

TASHA

Yeah...Maybe I won't go back at all.

Tasha's voice catches; tears in her eyes; swallows a sob.

TASHA (cont'd)

I'm just so embarrassed...

WENDY

(embraces her)

Baby...

TASHA

Can I stay here with you?

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

WENDY
 (gently)
 Tasha. No. And not because I
 wouldn't love it. But if you move
 in here it will be in a spirit of
 failure. And that is deadly. Finish
 this thing out. Go back to Vermont
 and harvest your ass off. Make it a
 triumph.

Tasha nods, sniffing back tears.

TASHA
 Back to the earth.

WENDY
 Yeah, I think so.

TASHA
 Okay.

She hugs her mother again, not wanting to let go.

WENDY
 I'll visit you. I promise.

TASHA
 But it's so far.

WENDY
 I will find a way.

116 OMITTED

116

A116 INT. OFFICE (NEW YORK TIMES) - DAY

A116

WENDY is at her desk on the phone speaking to DARWAN.

WENDY
 It's me...

CUT TO:

A117

A117

117 I/E MOVING STUDENT CAR - DAY

117

Wendy drives through Brooklyn with Darwan by her side. Their conversation in the following sequence is punctuated by long, easy silences: they are as comfortable together as an old married couple.

WENDY
How is Jasleen?

DARWAN
She's very busy. She goes to school now, taking classes...

They drive around Fort Tryon Park where the leaves are changing in the amber September sun...

WENDY (O.S.)
Who do you think will win the World Series?

DARWAN (O.S.)
Well, Indians don't know baseball. Cricket's our game.

Passing through Grand Army Plaza, with its bronze Civil War statue of General Sherman...

DARWAN (cont'd)
How do you like your new apartment?

WENDY
It's an adjustment. I'm *tasting* it.

They exchange smiles.

LATER - Passing through Carroll Gardens, with its affluent homes guarded by elaborate wrought-iron gates...

...Williamsburg waterfront, with its decaying artist-inhabited buildings and water taxis...

WENDY (cont'd)
You're so quiet.

DARWAN
You're not doing anything wrong.

118 I/E. DRIVING TEST SITE - BROOKLYN - ANOTHER DAY

118

Darwan paces alone, shivering a little in the fall air. He keeps stopping to peer anxiously down the street.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

He buys coffee from a STREET VENDOR.

Suddenly he sees the student car returning with Wendy at the wheel. The TEST EXAMINER (#2) is in the passenger seat beside her.

Abandoning the coffee and his money with the Vendor, Darwan breaks into a run...

WIDE ANGLE - Examiner #2 emerges from the passenger side, striding away with her clipboard. As Darwan reaches the car, Wendy jumps from the car and flings her arms around him with a little SHRIEK of victory.

119 I/E MOVING STUDENT CAR #2 - LATER - DAY

119

Darwan drives through Brooklyn, taking Wendy back to Manhattan. She's on her cell phone to Tasha.

WENDY
(into phone)
Sweetie, I got it!...Yes!...I
wasn't as nervous this time...Soon,
I hope. When are the leaves turning
up there? I've always wanted to see
that!...

As her CONVERSATION FADES we PAN TO DARWAN'S FACE:
conflicted, as their relationship draws to a close.

Suddenly Wendy pokes his arm, breaking his trance.

WENDY (cont'd)
Park here!

She's pointing gaily to a CAR DEALERSHIP.

120 EXT. PARKING LOT, CAR DEALERSHIP - LATER - DAY

120

A SALESMAN stands with Darwan and Wendy looking at a RED
COMPACT car.

WENDY
It's a good price.

SALESMAN
You can drive it off the lot today,
if the color's okay with you.

WENDY
I never thought of red, but...?

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

She turns to Darwan.

DARWAN

Red is happy. It's what the bride wears to the wedding in India.

WENDY

But what does it say about me? I'm a hot little number? Hussy on board?

DARWAN

It says...

He leans in and whispers:

DARWAN (cont'd)

"Don't fuck with me."

They both break up GIGGLING, their heads together. The Salesman eyes them, thinking they are certainly the oddest couple he's seen in a while.

121 INT. SALESMAN'S CUBICLE - LATER - DAY

121

The Salesman prepares the paperwork at his desk. Darwan and Wendy sit opposite.

SALESMAN

So, who is purchasing the vehicle, you or your wife?

DARWAN

(taken aback)

She's -- she's not my wife.

SALESMAN

But whose name will the car be under, sir?

DARWAN

Really, we are not together.

WENDY

(teasing)

Honey, it's okay.

(to Salesman)

I'm buying it.

122

EXT. PARKING LOT, CAR DEALERSHIP - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

122

The salesman leads them back to the little red car and ceremoniously hands Wendy her new car keys. Darwan CLAPS in applause. Wendy beams. It's like a birthday.

The Salesman returns inside. Wendy opens her car door.

WENDY

Wait. How do I get home?

DARWAN

You can follow me to the bridge.

She still doesn't get in. They're both reluctant, now that this moment is here.

WENDY

Darwan...Thank you.

(smiles)

I'll be hearing your voice in my head for a long time.

DARWAN

That would please me.

WENDY

Well...Here goes!

She turns to climb inside her new car. His formality crumbles; he holds her back; words rush from him heedlessly; he knows he's begging but can't stop himself:

DARWAN

Wendy -- could we go somewhere? We can celebrate, have dinner -- please --

She's already shaking her head.

DARWAN (cont'd)

Or have coffee some time, just to chat --

WENDY

I can't.

It costs her to refuse him, and her eyes show her regret.

DARWAN

I want to see you again.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

WENDY

I know.

She quickly wraps her arms around his neck, hugging him close. His heart opens wide and he presses himself to her. Then she pulls away.

WENDY (cont'd)

The trouble is...

DARWAN

What? Why?

She leans in and gives him a soft kiss on the cheek. Then:

WENDY

...You're a good man.
(smiles)
You're my faith.

He looks on forlornly as she gets into her new car, puts the key in the ignition.

DARWAN

Wendy.

She looks up.

DARWAN (cont'd)

(his voice rough with
emotion)
Seat belt first.

123 EXT. SEQUENCE OF SHOTS, BROOKLYN - LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

123

The little red car follows the student car toward the Brooklyn Bridge.

The Student Car turns to go to Queens as the little red car goes over the bridge.

124 OMITTED

124

125 INT. PRAYER ROOM, GURDWARA - LATER - MAGIC HOUR

125

Darwan enters. There's a crowd, mostly men arrived after work. Darwan sees an open spot next to a woman. He makes a move toward it, then stops short.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

He realizes it's Jasleen. Her eyes are downcast in prayer, her lips moving. He is struck by the simple, heartfelt devotion in her face. An image out of the old country.

He retreats so she won't see him.

126 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - LATER - NIGHTFALL

126

Jasleen enters, her arms full with school books and grocery bags. She stops short, seeing Darwan seated on the bed.

He's very still, just looking at her.

JASLEEN
(much improved English)
Darwan, I didn't expect you.

Something in his manner makes her put down her bags and sit quickly beside him.

DARWAN
Jasleen...Maybe I will not work at night anymore. Would you like that?

JASLEEN
Oh, yes!

A beat. He drops his eyes, feeling his awkwardness, his stubborn formality. He must gather his courage to "cross the divide," as Wendy would say.

JASLEEN (cont'd)
Darwan?

He looks up.

JASLEEN (cont'd)
If you have more time now...
can you teach me to drive?

He lights up. Gazing at her with a warmth and a need she hasn't see before, he stretches his hand to her face.

DARWAN
Yes.

His fingers touch her cheek tenderly, as if she was treasure. Her dark eyes shine, and she leans her face gratefully into his palm...

END MUSIC SEQUENCE BEGINS:

127 EXT. WENDY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY 127

ANGLE ON CAR TRUNK OPENING. The DOORMAN places her LUGGAGE inside.

128 INT. WENDY'S NEW CAR - DAY 128

HER NEW KEY ENTERS THE IGNITION, turning...

129 INT. MOVING CAR - LATER - DAY 129

Wendy drives slowly, with growing confidence, through the New York streets.

HER EYES flicker up, down, side to side, using the mirrors, reading the signs, seeing the whole picture.

FANTASY: Magically, more travellers materialize all around as if accompanying and escorting her into the traffic flow: a TAXI, a VAN, a TEENAGER ON A SCOOTER, a PEDI-CAB, a MOTORCYCLIST, a PUSHCART VENDOR, a BICYCLE MESSENGER, a mighty river of travellers; all carried, like her, into the uncharted horizon...

And as far as she can see ahead, all the TRAFFIC LIGHTS ARE GREEN.

DARWAN (V.O.)
Go on, Wendy. You have the light.

WENDY takes a DEEP BREATH.

HER FOOT PRESSES THE ACCELERATOR DEEPER.

130 EXT. ROUTE, VERMONT - DAY 130

WENDY'S CAR skims up a two-lane road, entering the arches of dazzling AUTUMN FOLIAGE: LEAVES turning scarlet, saffron, orange, and crimson, against the turquoise sky, like the colors of a Punjabi wedding.

FADE OUT.