

**Go Home**

**By Sohrab Homi Fracis and Allan J. Marcil**

**Based on the novel *Go Home*, by *Sohrab Homi Fracis***

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INT CLASSROOM CAMPION SCHOOL, BOMBAY, DAY

A small class of MALE STUDENTS listen to MR. PANDE, a vibrant middle-aged teacher with a dashing Shivaji beard and mustachios as he lectures and scribbles on a blackboard.

LEGEND OVER: "CAMPION SCHOOL, BOMBAY, INDIA, 1975"

MR. PANDE

...India was once a land of untold riches. So Nadir Shah and the rest of the world came to pillage its cities of such treasures as the fabled peacock throne....

Sixteen year-old VIRAF ADAJANIA busily scribbles notes. Across the aisle, his friend IMTIAZ AHMED flaps his lips in mockery of the verbose Mr. Pande. Viraf stifles a laugh.

OPENING CREDITS BEGIN

MR. PANDE (CONT'D)

Viraf! Imtiaz! Pay attention.... That was long ago. But till hardly ten, fifteen years before you boys were born, for nearly two centuries before our freedom fighters led us to independence, India was under the British raj....

Mr. Pande paces, chalk in hand.

MR. PANDE (CONT'D)

You think now about that.

Viraf raises his hand.

VIRAF

Sir, what was that like?

Mr. Pande smiles, leaning on his teacher's desk.

MR. PANDE

Viraf, my young Parsi bawaji, we were all second class citizens. In our own motherland. Even I was too young to know what all was going on, but basically they were the big boss. So as long as our forefathers slogged for them, England was fat and prosperous while India had famine. Famine, I tell you!

Viraf has his nose almost on the page as he scratches down some notes. He looks up, squinting, at the board.

VIRAF'S POV

Mr. Pande's writing on the board looks fuzzy, unfocused.

BACK TO SCENE

A gray-eyed student, ROBIN PHILLIPS, raises his hand.

MR. PANDE (CONT'D)  
Yes, Phillips.

ROBIN  
Sir, Mr. Sethna says after the British left, the whole country has gone down hill.

Mr. Pande's face tightens.

MR. PANDE  
Let us not talk about what other teachers say, in my class. That Parsi fellow Sethna may think he is good at history, but he should just teach his science. How is your arithmetic, Phillips?

ROBIN  
It's okay, sir.

MR. PANDE  
Calculate for the class how long India has been independent.

Robin scribbles some numbers.

ROBIN  
Twenty-seven years, sir.

MR. PANDE  
Mr. Irani is teaching you well. Some of the others...I don't know. Your parents had their silver anniversary?

ROBIN  
My parents? No, sir.

Mr. Pande spreads his hands.

MR. PANDE

It is only two years after India's silver anniversary. Wait at least until the diamond jubilee, Phillips. Then if Mr. Sethna and I are living, we will see, down the hill or up the hill.

Mr. Pande returns to the board, turns to the class.

MR. PANDE (CONT'D)

But what life we had during one hundred and ninety years of British raj: take this down...

Mr. Pande starts scrawling dates, events, places: "British East India Company," "The Great India Mutiny," "Savage Suppression," "Gandhi Arrested," "Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre: 400 Peaceful Protestors Murdered"....

The stunned class jots down Mr. Pande's words.

Viraf, in shock, squints harder at the board. The words are barely readable to him. He squints harder.

VIRAF'S POV

Mr. Pande's writing looks frighteningly fuzzy and unfocused.

END CREDITS

EXT VICTORIA TERMINUS DAY

The train station is teeming with the bustle and cacophony of arriving and departing TRAINS and PASSENGERS. A distant argument can be HEARD: "There is no place...!"

CLOSE ON

A red-turbaned COOLIE spits a bloody stream of paan from the train's window onto the platform. The ARGUMENT grows louder.

EXT PLATFORM, TRAIN STATION DAY

Viraf's father, ASPI ADAJANIA, a compact but intense fifty-something, quietly seethes as their Station COOLIE is stopped by a middle-aged PASSENGER from stowing Viraf's luggage.

PASSENGER

There is no place! You can't see?

Viraf, seventeen now and wearing tortoiseshell GLASSES, stands on the platform, his arm around BEHROZ, his mother. She hugs him tightly, kisses him, and then lets him move toward the awaiting Bombay-Howrah Express.

Viraf's younger sister, SOONA, runs up to him.

SOONA

Don't get a big head just because you're going to IIT, okay?

She hugs her brother.

Aspi, angrily stabbing his hand at the air, now roars at the Passenger as the Coolie stands by, bewildered.

ASPI

You want to see who I am? I'll show you who I am. I'll break open your head!

The threatened Passenger backs down, gestures to the Coolie to fit Viraf's bags under the long seat.

PASSENGER

Put it, bhai. God knows what the world is becoming....

Viraf approaches his father. A calmer Aspi stops his harangue. Father and son eye each other.

VIRAF

Thanks, Dad.

ASPI

The bugger was bullying your coolie, Viraf.

VIRAF

I saw. But no one can bully you.

Viraf puts a hand to his now smiling father's slightly lower shoulder. They assess each other, and Viraf smiles too.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

I think I'm taller than you now....

ASPI

(grabs Viraf by his arms)  
It's how it should be, son.

(MORE)

ASPI (CONT'D)

You will one day take over Adajania  
Construction.... Now travel safely  
and study hard.

Viraf, nodding, suddenly looks past his father.

VIRAF'S POV

A small older woman in a sari, Viraf's grandmother MAMAIJI,  
is escorted by an older man in khaki pants, GOVIND, the  
family driver, through the crowd. She approaches Viraf. Looks  
at him intensely, taking both of his hands.

VIRAF

Mamaiji...

MAMAIJI

(shakes head at the train)  
These terrible machines will take  
you away from us, like they took  
your Grandpa Rustomji....

She hugs him for a long moment, then turns away....

EXT TRAIN CAR DOORWAY DAY

Viraf hangs out the doorway by the handrail, waving as the  
train slowly lunges and jerks into motion. Behroz gestures  
desperately for him to get inside. His family grows smaller,  
still waving on the platform as the train departs.

HIGH SHOT

The train snakes away. Myriad train tracks sprawl toward  
infinity as Viraf's train rumbles toward the horizon.

LEGEND OVER: 1981

Television documentary footage of Doordarshan (Distantvision)  
News Report on the Iran hostage crisis: 52 American hostages,  
finally released, return to the USA on the day President  
Reagan takes the oath of office. An American man holds a  
sign: "SEND ALL IRANIANS BACK"

INT THE ADAJANIAS' HALL (LIVING ROOM) DAY

The family watches. Viraf is now a handsome young man of 22  
wearing Gandhian wire-rimmed glasses. Mamaiji gestures at the  
TV like it's Exhibit A.

MAMAIJI

Where is this you want to go *now*,  
Viraf? They don't like Parsis!

VIRAF

Iranians, Mamaiji.... We're Indian  
now. And so many of my IIT pals are  
going abroad to get their master's.

ASPI

Master's-shaster's. You should just  
join the company now - we need you!

VIRAF

I'll be even more helpful for you  
when I come back. And I'll be a man  
of the world!

SOONA

(laughs snarkily)  
Columbus discovered America....

BEHROZ

Don't listen to them, Viraf. You go  
become my man of the world. But  
then make sure you come back and  
settle down with a nice Parsi  
girl....

ESTABLISHING SHOT U.S. CONSULATE BOMBAY

A LONG LINE OF PEOPLE stand in line waiting to enter.

INT U.S. CONSULATE WAITING ROOM DAY

Applicants mill about. Viraf sits waiting with MANY OTHERS.

P.A. (V.O.)

Adajania...

Viraf perks up.

INT CONSULATE OFFICE DAY

An officious middle-aged AMERICAN BUREAUCRAT behind a desk  
examines a folder. Viraf sits in a chair across the desk.

BUREAUCRAT

(not looking up)

Indian Institute of Technology...

(MORE)

BUREAUCRAT (CONT'D)

Research Assistantship to  
University of Delaware... How do we  
know you won't stay on after your  
master's degree?

He quickly looks up and impales Viraf with a stare.

VIRAF

(annoyed)

I don't want to stay on.... I'm  
going to join my dad's construction  
company - here in Bombay. That's  
what the degree is for. Civil  
engineering. I already have a share  
in our firm's ownership.

BUREAUCRAT

Did you bring proof of that?

VIRAF

(handing over papers)

Yes.

EXT U.S. CONSULATE LATER

Lines of PEOPLE still wait to enter. Viraf steps out, looks  
at the colorful USA visa on his open passport, and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE CLASSROOM DAY

Viraf, at a small podium, returns test papers to approaching  
American STUDENTS. The class is over and students file out.

VIRAF

(to the room)

If you have any questions, please  
see me during office hours. Dr.  
Reese will be back on Monday.  
Please review chapters 7 and 8....

INT CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT OFFICE DAY

Viraf enters as his ADVISOR ED REESE, frowning, leaves the  
internal office of the CHAIRMAN ADAM PICKETT, who is also  
frowning. The two senior academics dispense with any  
pleasantries as Reese turns pointedly away.

The chairman has a parting shot for the professor.

PICKETT

How long do you think this...this  
"Computer Science" department is  
going to last? Think about it.

He eyes the young newcomer, as Reese doesn't respond.

VIRAF

I took care of your class, Dr.  
Reese. They were fine.

Ed Reese hustles Viraf away and out into the corridor.

DR. REESE

Yes, yes. Thank you, my boy. Now,  
tell me: how is our site management  
simulator coming along?

VIRAF

Not bad, so far: I'm debugging as I  
go along. FORTRAN is such a  
powerful but tricky language.

DR. REESE

Sure is. But we're looking at the  
future, never forget. Not just of  
site management. The future of  
everything! So stay at it, and keep  
me posted....

EXT MAIN STREET, NEWARK, DELAWARE, DAY

Main Street, Newark, quintessential mid-Atlantic college  
town: brick storefronts, orange-flecked trees in their  
autumnal beauty. Viraf exits a store carrying a bag full of  
books. A middle-aged WHITE MALE passes him.

WHITE MALE

How you doin'?

The White Male keeps moving before Viraf can barely respond.

VIRAF

(surprised)  
Doing what?

Viraf keeps walking as a faded yellow and rusted sedan slowly  
turns the corner, windows open, rock music blasting. A YOUNG  
GUY sticks his head and arm out the window, seeming to wave.  
Viraf starts to wave back, when the Young Guy shouts:

YOUNG GUY  
 (pronouncing it the  
 American way: I-rainian)  
 Go home, you fuckin' Iranian!

LOUD LAUGHING from within the car as it pulls away and races down the street.

CLOSE ON

A stunned Viraf staring after the car.

FLASHBACK:

Viraf's Family saying goodbye, hugs, then waves, at Sahar International Airport, Bombay, INDIA. Viraf waves as he disappears into the "Travelers Only" boarding area.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf's open-mouthed gaze shifts.

VIRAF'S POV

Across the street, ALI, 21, a pretty red-headed student with a "hippie," love & peace aura, is actually waving to him.

EXT MAIN STREET

Viraf sees her waving and breaks into a smile. He waves back as she moves down the street, turning her head to smile back at him. He crosses the one-way street to catch up with her.

VIRAF  
 Hi, Ali.

ALI  
 Hi, Vir.... Lots of books.

VIRAF  
 Ya, for my future: an engineer.

ALI  
 Very cool. Like Casey Jones.

VIRAF  
 Casey Jones?

ALI  
 (sings) "Driving that train, high  
 on cocaine, Casey Jones you better  
 watch your speed...."

Viraf gets it, smiles.

VIRAF

The Dead.

ALI

Yep... Hey, we're going on a day trip to Longwood Gardens this Saturday. Wanna come?

VIRAF

Gardens! Fantastic, ya, thanks....

A 1968 Ford Galaxie pulls up to the curb. The Car Horn honks, getting Ali's attention.

ALI

Well, here's Doug.

She moves to the car and gets in. Her blond-bearded, late twenties, long-haired boyfriend, DOUG, leans over and waves.

DOUG

Need a ride? Gotta get something, then the apartments.

Viraf nods: OK. He climbs into the car, and the Galaxie drives away.

INT DEER PARK TAVERN NIGHT

The Deer Park is a colonial era tavern, now a college bar filled with STUDENTS. On stage, THE MOLES, a rock band, plays. The lead guitarist is Doug. He strums then steps back from the mic as he and the drummer, BERNIE, a gangly neo-hippie with a Fu Manchu mustache, do a guitar solo.

ANOTHER ANGLE

NITIN, a stocky Indian graduate student, Viraf's roommate, holds a glass of beer as he tries to talk to two attractive co-eds who stand by the bar nursing drinks.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Ali sits at a table with Viraf, MEGAN, another friend, and her boyfriend TAYLOR. Ali nurses a beer while entranced by Doug, who smiles at her from the bandstand as he solos. Viraf is equally entranced with Ali. Nitin approaches the table and plops down, filling his empty beer glass from a pitcher.

NITIN

Stuck up.

Viraf now notices his friend.

VIRAF

Who?

Nitin nods toward the bar, where the co-eds are now conversing with a tall blond jock in a Blue Hens jacket.

Viraf looks toward the bar. He turns back to his friend, adjusts his glasses, and smiles. He takes a large swallow of the beer. Ali turns to Viraf and Nitin.

ALI

They're so good. It breaks my heart that L.A. didn't see they're just meant to be stars....

NITIN

But then why couldn't they make it there?

Ali, looking hurt, turns to Viraf.

VIRAF

They're fantastic, Ali. It'll happen.... Just takes time.

Ali smiles at him, then returns her gaze to Doug on the stage as his solo finishes and the band returns to end the song.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENT BLDG. DAY

Viraf exits with Nitin, who carries his ten-speed bike. Viraf locks the apartment door.

NITIN

Off to the department. Have fun...

Nitin nods toward Ali's apartment with a leer, then pedals down the street. Viraf takes a few steps within the building to the next-door apartment and knocks. Ali opens the door, dressed only in her underwear.

ALI

Vir...you're early.

Ali, near-naked, pulls him in and hugs him close, lingering a bit too long, then lets go.

Doug enters the room, wearing only jeans, sucking on the remnant of a joint while drying his long blond hair with a towel. Ali's pointillist landscapes lean against a wall. A 60s era Grateful Dead poster hangs on another wall.

Ali scampers toward the bedroom. Doug watches Viraf watch her go.

DOUG

Cute...

He passes what's left of the weed to Viraf, who takes a hit and then focuses on Ali's artwork. Her miniature ceramic gargoyles on a nearby shelf also catch Viraf's attention. He picks one up, then sets it back on the shelf.

DOUG (CONT'D)

(exhaling)

So, my man. You ready?

INT FORD GALAXIE DAY

The Grateful Dead blasts from the Galaxie's tape player. Ali and Viraf sit up front and Doug drives. The windows are open and they speak loudly to be heard. Rural scenery flashes by.

Doug, driving with one hand, waves a perforated white page of blotter paper at Ali and Viraf. Ali grabs it.

DOUG

Souvenir from Bernie's last gig in California. Good ol' Bernie Weingartner. (dreamily) He and I thought we were really gonna kill it in LA.... And here we are, playing for tips in Delaware....

ALI

I'm going to show Vir how.

DOUG

Yeah, it's real hard.

Ignoring Doug, Ali holds up the blotter paper.

ALI

See these, Vir? Each little piece is a hit.

She tears off a hit along the perforations, opens her mouth, places the tiny rectangle flat on her tongue for him to see, then closes. She tears off two more hits.

Doug puts one in his mouth. Ali holds the other out between her translucently coated fingernails and places the acid on Viraf's finger.

Viraf stares at the acid, while Ali watches him.

DOUG

Not gonna wimp out on us, are ya?

Viraf straightens his glasses and places the small rectangle on his tongue. Ali smiles encouragement.

HIGH SHOT

The big Galaxie rumbles down a country highway. Over the shot we hear Doug, Ali, and Viraf singing the Dead song's chorus.

DOUG, ALI, VIRAF (V.O.)

I don't know now, I just don't know  
now, if I'm coming back again....

EXT LONGWOOD GARDENS PENNSYLVANIA DAY

Viraf, Ali, and Doug trudge through dewy grass, past an open-air theater, monolithic hedges, and the former du Ponts' manor, toward a sprawling meadow. The acid begins to kick in.

EXT MEADOW DAY

Ali leads Doug and Viraf past a vibrant garden.

VIRAF'S POV

The garden is becoming a pointillist blur.

BACK TO SCENE

They walk to the edge of a field edged with trees.

VIRAF

Wait a minute.

Viraf stares off at the trees. Ali and Doug stop.

ALI

What...?

VIRAF

Nothing. I don't know.

They walk on. Viraf glances at Ali, who looks back at him.

VIRAF'S POV

Ali's face conceals a small, expectant smile.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf turns to look at the trees.

VIRAF'S POV

The trees now look distorted - crooked, flattened, their misshapen branches spread like bonsai. Their leaves are pale shifting purple - lavender fringes crackle around them like bottled lightning. Violet hues surround everything he sees.

BACK TO SCENE

VIRAF

My God!

Viraf whirls toward Doug and Ali.

VIRAF'S POV

Doug and Ali's faces now shimmer like pond reflections - dream images - and they are smiling at him.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf slides his glasses on top of his head to look at this NEW WORLD without them. Doug and Ali laugh.

DOUG

What do you think?

VIRAF

I didn't... Why didn't you say it was like this?

Ali and Doug laugh again. The laugh is distorted.

ALI

How could we? Look at it. Would you have believed us?

Viraf drops his glasses back onto his nose. Tries to focus. He looks around.

VIRAF'S POV

Pink trees. Lilac grass. Shimmering plants. A fountain splashes violet water into an artificial lake.

BACK TO SCENE

VIRAF  
(to himself, smiling)  
Too fucking ridiculous.

DOUG  
Look at our faces.

Viraf turns to look at the smiling Doug and Ali.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Now feel your own mouth.

Viraf puts his hand to his mouth, feeling his own smile.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
That's why we call it the land of  
the electric grin.

ALI  
It's so impossible and gorgeous  
that you just can't stop.

Viraf stares at Ali's gorgeous smile. (SFX. Flashes of a smiling MAYA, dark, sexy, his Indian Institute of Technology ex-girlfriend, interrupt his stare.)

DOUG  
Tomorrow, your face muscles are  
gonna ache from it.

Ali begins to stroll down a path toward another meadow. Doug and Viraf follow.

EXT WILDFLOWER MEADOW DAY

Ali leads Doug and Viraf through a meadow of wildflowers. The field is a psychedelic cornucopia of bursting magenta, light blues, deep blues, yellows, and pink flowers. But no white. Doug sings the lines from Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze."

DOUG

"Purple haze, all in my brain. You  
got me blowin', blowin' my mind...  
'scuse me while I kiss the sky!"

Ali starts to pick flowers. Viraf notices.

VIRAF

Are we allowed...?

Ali shrugs and offers her small bouquet to Viraf. Viraf bends to stick his nose into the flowers. He suddenly pulls back as a BEE flies out of the flowers, trailing flip-book motion images of itself.

VIRAF'S POV

A giant bee face appears to Viraf. A malevolent and LOUD BUZZ drowns out all other sound. Then it is suddenly gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Doug and Ali continue along the trail. Viraf follows.

VIRAF

Doug...

Doug turns.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

This will go away, ya?

DOUG

(smiling)

Oh, yeah. Just let it happen. Don't  
fight it.

Viraf checks his watch. It reads high noon. Shading his eyes, he notices finger-length pods covered with lavender fuzz swaying in front of him. He takes one in his hand.

VIRAF

What's this?

ALI

(teasingly)

Don't you know?

Viraf stares off into the distance. He HEARS VOICES but they're just a distorted mumble which becomes a RUMBLE of TRUCK TRAFFIC.

## ACID FLASHBACK:

Viraf, younger by a year or two, is on a bicycle, pedaling hard over a flyover in Kharagpur, Bengal. IMTIAZ, his old friend in high school and now IIT, pedals alongside, clanging his bicycle bell. Trucks pass loudly underneath them.

## VIRAF'S POV

A series of shots:

- A speeding overloaded truck winds down steep hills, the Western Ghats.
- Grandpa Rustomji drives a 60s era Ambassador automobile.
- The truck takes a hairpin bend and smashes into the car, which catches fire.
- A younger Mamaiji sits in front of a Zoroastrian eternal-flame memorial and a garlanded portrait of Grandpa Rustomji.
- Gray cawing crows take off from the flyover parapet.

## FLASHBACK (CONT'D)

## EXT ROAD, KHARAGPUR DAY

The younger Viraf with tortoiseshell glasses, sweating, pedals his bicycle hard, just behind Imtiaz.

VIRAF  
(shouting)  
What time is her train?

IMTIAZ  
Five-thirty, she said.

Viraf looks at his watch - the same Seiko he wears at Longwood Gardens.

VIRAF  
Better speed up, then!

## EXT KHARAGPUR RAILWAY STATION DAY

A Bollywood song plays in the background as Viraf and Imtiaz fly past CROWDS in the railway bazar and coast to a stop at the station compound. They chain their bikes and move down a platform. An approaching HUFFING and HISSING grows louder.

IMTIAZ  
It's coming!

VIRAF'S POV

An OLD WORLD coal-black locomotive, shrouded in smoke, pulls into the station. Its powerful CLANKINGS are deafening. With a great whoosh of emanations, the train comes to a stop.

BACK TO SCENE

The giant engine shifts uneasily back and forth. Viraf and Imtiaz walk briskly alongside as fully-clothed passengers stream out of the passenger cars. They stop in front of one.

MAYA, young, beautiful, steps out of the train car. She is unself-consciously naked, wearing only dangling pearl earrings. No one notices except Viraf, who is stunned.

MAYA  
Viraf... Imtiaz... I didn't know  
you were coming.

Viraf and Maya look intently at each other.

VIRAF  
I told you, Maya. On the phone...

MAYA  
I know.... Still.

IMTIAZ  
How was your holiday?

MAYA  
Very nice. I didn't want to leave.

Maya turns her head to look behind her. RANGAN, another IIT student, steps into the train car doorway holding a suitcase. His expression is almost apologetic.

IMTIAZ  
Rangan?!

VIRAF  
Rangan stayed at your place in  
Madras?

MAYA  
(now in jeans and top)  
Not *my* place...

VIRAF

So... You had a good time....

Holding on a CLOSE UP of Viraf the word "time" echoes off....

END FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON

Viraf, depressed and woozy...

ALI (V.O.)

It's a pussy willow.

EXT MEADOW DAY

Ali holds a pussy willow inches from Viraf's nose. The New World is still ablaze with lavender hues. Viraf glances at his watch. It still reads high noon!

EXT PARKING AREA LATER

The sun has dropped, the electric land is receding, and white flowers look white again. They locate the parked Galaxie.

INT GALAXIE DAY

Viraf slides into the back seat, lost in his own world. Doug starts the engine. Viraf closes his eyes.

ALI

(quietly)

Maybe we should've given him just half a hit.

DOUG

Yeah, maybe.... Thought he was on a bad trip for a while there....

EXT PARKING AREA, LONGWOOD GARDENS, DAY

The car turns onto a country road and slowly disappears.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

Viraf and Nitin sit on their apartment building's doorsteps as Doug's Galaxie rolls up. They are bundled up. The air is chilly. Viraf and Nitin get into the car.

INT CAR DAY

Doug drives. Viraf rides shotgun. Nitin sits in the back.

DOUG

We gotta make this quick. I've got rehearsal in an hour. But I think this ad is worth checking out....

EXT CUL DE SAC DAY

A ten year old, fading orange and brown Pinto sits in a driveway. A "For Sale" sign is taped to the windshield.

NITIN (O.S.)

Puky color.

Doug, Viraf, and Nitin approach the vehicle.

DOUG

Nah. That's an orange-brown a guy can drive. Fords are the best, Vir. The Everyman's car.

A portly, balding MIDDLE-AGED MAN exits a wooden, canary colored house. He smiles as he approaches the group.

MAN

So, which one of you's looking for a great little car?

Doug nudges Viraf.

VIRAF

Seven hundred, your ad said?

MAN

One hundred and thirty eight thousand original miles. I'm the only owner. This baby'll go another hundred thousand, no problem.

DOUG

That's good, Vir.

Nitin, suspicious, walks around inspecting the car. He notices some rust. Doug circles in the other direction.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Not too many nicks or dings. Single-owner cars stay in better shape.

MAN

All the service records right there  
in the glove box. Oil changes like  
clockwork.

The Man opens the passenger side door, opens the glove box,  
and removes the paper work. He hands them to Viraf.

VIRAF

Five hundred.

The Man smiles, pulling the "For Sale" sign off the  
windshield.

MAN

Six...

Viraf takes the service records and reaches for his check  
book. Nitin looks on. Doug puts his arm around Viraf's  
shoulder.

DOUG

Congratulations, my man.

INT PINTO DAY

Viraf drives with intense focus on the right side. Slowly a  
smile crosses his face. Nitin smiles too. He turns to Viraf.

NITIN

Man, we Indians know how to find a  
bargain....

Viraf stomps the accelerator. Nitin turns on the radio, and  
loud rock blasts from the Pinto's rattling speakers.

EXT STREET DAY

The Pinto, music blaring, speeds down a suburban street. It  
stops at a Stop Sign. ONE REAR BRAKE LIGHT DOESN'T WORK. The  
Pinto pulls into the intersection, turns left and disappears.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

The Pinto is parked in the driveway. Viraf, behind the wheel,  
fiddles with the radio. Nitin leans in to the driver side and  
beeps the horn a couple of times.

Ali, followed by Doug, comes out of their apartment, wrapping  
herself up in a sweater, and approaches the car.

ALI  
 (seeing the horse emblem)  
 You bought a Pinto!?!

NITIN  
 Fantastic price.

DOUG  
 Single owner, too. Took real good  
 care of it.

Viraf, looking to Ali questioningly, gets out of the car.

ALI  
 A freakin' Pinto, Doug.

DOUG  
 It's a Ford. A Ford's a Ford. They  
 go forever. Just check out my ol'  
 Galaxie.

VIRAF  
 (concerned)  
 What's wrong with buying a Pinto?

Ali drifts, in worried fashion, toward Viraf.

ALI  
 (sincerely)  
 You don't want to know.

NITIN  
 What do you mean?

DOUG  
 Not important. Some old legal  
 thing. I wouldn't worry. This  
 baby's been taking that guy in  
 Creek Bend around for ten years.

ALI  
 It has?

She walks to the driver's side and peers into the car.

ALI (CONT'D)  
 Oh, yeah. One hundred and thirty  
 eight thousand, five hundred and  
 twelve miles.

She pulls her head out of the car.

ALI (CONT'D)  
 Pay no attention to my babbling -  
 you're fine.

She gives Viraf a peck on the cheek.

Ali and Doug walk toward the Galaxie. Viraf watches them with a frown.

Ali and Doug get into the Galaxie. It fires up. Still frowning, Viraf watches it pull away.

NITIN  
 Better forget about her, pal.

Nitin motions toward the Pinto.

NITIN (CONT'D)  
 Let's go for a drive.

VIRAF  
 Ya, cool.

EXT ROAD DAY

The Pinto whizzes along in the Fall air, passing very small clusters of civilization.

INT PINTO DAY

The autumn sun starts to set over the countryside. Viraf and Nitin are enjoying the ride, listening to music on the radio.

EXT ROAD NIGHT

The Pinto rolls along through the night and passes through the small town of Chestnut Hill.

The Pinto passes an intersection, and a STATE POLICE CRUISER pulls out of a side street and follows.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives. The radio is turned down.

Suddenly the car lights up with Red and Blue flashing lights.

NITIN  
 Shit!

Viraf checks the speedometer. Squints into his rearview mirror. All he can see are the flashing lights. He HEARS two quick whoops from the State Police Cruiser's siren and begins to pull to the side of the road.

EXT ROAD NIGHT

The Pinto coasts to a stop as the Police Cruiser rolls up behind it. Lights still flashing.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf rolls down his window. A gray clad STATE TROOPER, wearing a crisp Stetson approaches the driver's side. He's a quietly intimidating presence. Viraf stares at the Stetson. The cruiser's lights flash and flicker.

STATE TROOPER

Did you know your taillight is out?

VIRAF

My parking lights?

STATE TROOPER

Taillight. One on the left.

VIRAF

No, I didn't. It isn't working?

STATE TROOPER

License and registration, please.

Viraf pulls out his wallet and hands over his license. Viraf opens the glove box. The State Trooper steps back, hand on his sidearm.

NITIN

Viraf!

Viraf looks at the Trooper. Shows both his hands.

VIRAF

The registration's in there.

The Trooper nods. Viraf extracts his registration and hands it to the Trooper. The Trooper turns and walks back toward his Cruiser. Viraf and Nitin fidget nervously and look at each other. Viraf opens the door and steps out of the car.

EXT ROAD CONTINUOUS

Viraf paces along the car, stretching his legs.

STATE TROOPER  
 (through the cruiser's  
 speaker)  
 I need you to get back in and stay  
 there!

Viraf, startled, holds up his hand.

STATE TROOPER (CONT'D)  
 (through the speaker)  
 You're starting to make me nervous.

Viraf quickly slides back into the Pinto. Nitin is freaking.

INT PINTO NIGHT

The State Trooper returns to Viraf's window and hands him his license, registration, and another slip of paper.

STATE TROOPER  
 I'll let you off with a warning  
 this time. Get it fixed in the next  
 ten days.

VIRAF  
 Okay, thanks, I'll fix it.

STATE TROOPER  
 If we have to stop you again,  
 you'll get a ticket. Then you'll  
 need to pay a fine or else show up  
 in court.

The Trooper returns to his car. Viraf returns his license to his wallet, shoves the rest of the papers into the glove box, and starts up the car. He and Nitin exchange silent looks.

EXT ROAD CONTINUOUS

The Trooper's cruiser completes a U-turn and disappears into the night as the Pinto slips back onto the road, then roars to life in the opposite direction.

Snow begins to fall.

INT APARTMENT DAY

Viraf stands at his small stove scrambling some eggs. He HEARS muffled but loud BOOTED FEET treading down the hallway outside his apartment door. He then Hears the FRONT DOOR OPEN and CLOSE with a thud.

Viraf moves toward his front window.

VIRAF'S POV

Ali, bundled in a jacket, cap, and scarf stands in snow, holding her arms to the sky, and mouths something. A snowball suddenly spatters against her ear. She squeals. Then Doug and Bernie, also bundled up, throw snowballs at each other.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf sets down his bowl, grabs his jacket, and heads quickly to the door.

EXT APARTMENTS DAY

Viraf steps outside and is immediately pelted with snowballs. He smiles, ducks, and runs to grab some snow. More snowballs fly at him. Viraf quickly makes one, but it falls apart in his hand. He finally manages a viable snowball and heaves it at Doug, barely missing him. He makes another and manages to hit Ali. They are all throwing snowballs. Viraf tries again to hit Doug, who easily side steps it and throws his own, which hits Viraf squarely in the face, knocking his glasses to the ground. Ali muffles a scream. Doug runs up.

DOUG

You okay?

Ali retrieves the glasses and hands them to a laughing Viraf. He puts them back on and brushes some of the snow off. Doug raises his hand for a high five. Viraf high fives him.

EXT UNIVERSITY CAMPUS DAY

The Pinto rolls through the empty Sunday streets of a whitened campus. It eventually pulls into the small parking lot behind the department building, Evans Hall. Snow covers the ground and some is still caked on the Pinto. Parked by the dumpster is the only other car in the lot.

Viraf parks, gets out, and, taking out keys, lets himself in the back door.

INT EVANS HALL DAY

Viraf walks down a dark corridor, approaches the graduate ASSISTANTS' OFFICE door, opens it, and enters.

INT ASSISTANTS' OFFICE DAY

WILL THOMPSON, black, slightly older than Viraf, works at his desk. He looks up as Viraf enters.

WILL

Hey man. Couldn't stay away from work on a Sunday?

VIRAF

Look who's talking.

WILL

True. The wife was not happy when I said see ya after morning service.

VIRAF

You go every Sunday, huh?

WILL

Oh yeah. Gotta go.... None of them fire temples around here?

VIRAF

I hardly went, even in Bombay. Only on Parsi New Year when my parents took us kids.... Anyway, it's time to keep the project moving for Dr. Reese.

WILL

Mm-hm. Good man, Reese. Something went down, though, between him and the chair. Don't know what.

VIRAF

The department chair? Pickett?

WILL

Yep. Probably to do with Reese doubling up at Computer Science. Got a little frosty between them, like the weather. So see you don't stick your head in that ice box.

VIRAF

Wow, okay. Thanks.

WILL

Not the man to cross, Dr. Pickett.

Viraf sits at his computer terminal and gets to work.

INT ASSISTANTS' OFFICE LATER

A dot matrix printer spews out perforated pages of computer code. Viraf pulls out the pages and carries them back toward his desk. He checks his watch as he passes Will's desk.

VIRAF

Lunch?

Will responds with a thumbs-up.

INT DEER PARK DAY

Viraf and Will sit at a table, devouring a pizza.

WILL

A Pinto!?

VIRAF

Yeah. A '71. Why?

WILL

All right, man. I'm gonna give you an education you can't get in Du Pont Hall. Your Pinto a hatchback?

Viraf nods, slowly taking a sip of his Pepsi.

WILL (CONT'D)

A while ago, Ford got sued over a '72 hatchback. Big case. All over the papers.

VIRAF

A friend who was with me mentioned something later, but no details.

WILL

Some friend. When this Pinto was rear-ended, it caught fire. Killed the lady driving it. Almost killed the passenger. A boy in his teens.

VIRAF

Shit! But that was an accident, right?

WILL

Nope. Not the fire. That's what the law suit was about.... Other cases, too. Turned out the tank is right where a crash will punch these bolts into it. Then the gas leaks - into the car. Now that's a good way to make a fire.

VIRAF

So why the fuck didn't they fix it?

WILL

Yeah... They did a cost-benefit analysis. Like if somebody died, say two hundred grand a case. If somebody got injured: less. If they got out safe: way less. At say a couple of thousand cases, that added up to fifty million.

VIRAF

And...

WILL

(smiling)

Then they said, what'll it cost to fix all the cars? Oh, about a hundred million.... Now, that's simple math: don't fix it.

A college student WAITRESS brings them two more sodas.

WILL (CONT'D)

Now you never know about juries, but I know this much: they don't think like corporations. When a jury put a price on this burned lady and boy - what do you think? Two hundred thousand, three?

VIRAF

A million?

Will takes a gooey bite of pizza, swallows.

WILL

That all?

VIRAF

I don't know.... Ten Million?

WILL

Try a hundred. More than a hundred mil. About what it would have cost them to fix the whole line. That's a record judgement - put the fear of God into those corporate boys.

Viraf sets down a slice of pizza, takes a swig of his drink.

VIRAF

Serves them fucking right. So I should just let you crash into my car and let myself get burned. Then, if I live, I'll be rich.

WILL

You got a deal. Fifty-fifty.

VIRAF

No, it's my skin. Ninety-ten.

WILL

If we're talking a mil, all right. I'll throw in a 911 call.

Viraf laughs reluctantly. They shake on it.

INT APARTMENT DAY

The living room is full of half-packed boxes. Nitin sorts through piles of clothes and books, assigning items to their appropriate box.

Viraf looks on from the kitchen, sipping a cup of tea.

VIRAF

You're sure about this?

NITIN

I'm in love, pal. Sorry. But don't worry, I'll find another desi student to move in with you.

VIRAF

Thanks, but actually I don't know if I want another roommate.

Nitin turns questioningly.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Plus what if she throws you out after a week or two...

Nitin chucks a ball of dirty socks at Viraf.

EXT RURAL RESIDENTIAL STREET EVENING

Viraf's Pinto crawls along past quirkily ornamented lawns of older wooden houses, one sporting the red-white-and-blue flag. The Pinto slows then turns into a driveway of a gray shingled house. He gets out holding a six pack of beer and walks up to the front door.

INT NITIN'S NEW HOME CONTINUOUS

Nitin opens the front door and Viraf steps inside. Nitin embraces his former roommate.

The room still has a few boxes waiting to be unpacked. A high end multi-speed road bike leans against a wall.

NITIN  
Welcome. Welcome.

VIRAF  
Something smells great.

Viraf pulls off his coat as Nitin leads him toward the kitchen.

JUDY, Nitin's girlfriend, a young brown haired, hazel eyed, native New Castle County woman, stands at a stove, cooking. Viraf approaches her. She gives him a quick hug.

JUDY  
Hi...

Viraf looks into one of the pots on the stove.

VIRAF  
Curry?!

JUDY  
Hope I did it right.

VIRAF  
Smells fantastic.

JUDY  
Thanks. Nitin helped. And I made a beef stew too. Just in case.

INT KITCHEN TABLE EVENING

JUDY (CONT'D)

Will you say grace with us, Viraf?

Viraf hesitates a second, then sees Nitin fold his hands and bow his head. Viraf's eyes widen, but he follows suit, and the two Indians repeat grace after Judy.

JUDY (CONT'D)

We had a great church service this morning.

NITIN

Ya, so quiet and peaceful.

Viraf's mouth falls open, but his high-caste Hindu friend is helping himself to some beef stew....

INT JUDY & NITIN'S FRONT DOOR LATER

Viraf sits on the mountain bike. Nitin sucks on a beer, evidently content in his new domesticity.

VIRAF

(hesitant, low voice)

Nitin, your parents...?

Nitin shrugs and takes a swig.

Viraf inspects the bike.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Not like the my old Hero bike.

NITIN

Those were junk. Judy rode this in marathons up in Philly.

Viraf dismounts and puts on his jacket. He glances at Judy's cycling trophies lining the nearby mantelpiece. Judy enters.

JUDY

Thanks for coming, Viraf. And for all the help moving.

VIRAF

Thank you for the fine "vittles."

The three all laugh at his use of her idiom.

Viraf gives Judy a quick hug, then claps Nitin on the back.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

You're in good hands, brother.

Nitin puts his arm around Judy and pulls her toward him.

NITIN  
Take care, my friend.

EXT DRIVEWAY NIGHT

Viraf climbs into his Pinto and backs out of the driveway.

EXT COUNTRY ROAD NIGHT

The Pinto travels a lonely country road.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives. The only SOUNDS come from the Pinto's low ENGINE GROWL and the CAR'S TIRES rumbling along the pavement.

Viraf slows down as he approaches an intersection with a two-way road, one lane each way.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf looks left, then right, then pulls into the intersection and accelerates as he makes a right hand turn. Suddenly, Viraf hears the ROAR OF AN UNMUFFLED TRUCK ENGINE and sees a battery of bright lights in his rearview mirror rapidly closing on him. A large dark shape speeds by him dangerously close on the left, producing a forceful wind. Viraf struggles to keep the Pinto in his lane.

Viraf squints, seeing and hearing a large SUV pulling way out in front of him.

Viraf steps on the gas and sees that the SUV has slowed down, as the Pinto gains on the truck.

EXT ROAD NIGHT

The SUV, a large, midnight-blue, newish-looking Ford Bronco that's totally tricked out - custom wheels, exhaust, roof lights, and lifts - pulls off onto the shoulder.

As Viraf tries to pass, the Bronco pulls out and rides alongside him.

## VIRAF'S POV

The Bronco ROARS alongside the Pinto, kicking up rocks and gravel. The driver-side window is down. A man of about 30 years, THE DRIVER, in flannel shirt and two day stubble, mouths unheard angry shouts at Viraf. The Driver, using his index finger, stabs over toward the road's dirt shoulder.

Viraf then sees a twenty-something BLONDE GIRL, craning around the Driver to have a look.

Another twenty-something YOUNG MAN's head pops up from within the truck to have a look. He too starts shouting. Viraf barely hears him, but knows what he's saying isn't good.

YOUNG MAN  
(muffled)  
Pull the fuck over!

Viraf starts to freak out but keeps driving.

## EXT ROAD NIGHT

The Bronco shudders ahead and pulls onto the road in front of the Pinto. Then it slows to a crawl.

Viraf pulls the Pinto around the Bronco and steps on it.

The menacing Bronco quickly pulls up onto the Pinto's tail (the still unrepaired taillight is evident), its bright lights blasting in Viraf's rearview mirror. The Bronco inches dangerously closer to the Pinto's bumper.

## CLOSE ON

The cars' silver metal Horse Emblems, first the Indian's Pinto, then the cowboys' Bronco.

## INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf checks his rearview mirror again, recognizes the danger, then stomps on the accelerator.

## VIRAF'S POV REARVIEW MIRROR

The Pinto momentarily pulls away from the Bronco. But the Bronco speeds up, closing in on the Pinto's bumper.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf frantically checks his side-view mirror.

VIRAF

Fuck...

EXT STREET NIGHT

The Pinto speeds through a quiet patch of civilization. The Bronco follows just a foot or two behind.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf accelerates. He constantly checks his mirrors for the Bronco's ominous presence.

VIRAF

(shouting)

What do you fucking want?!

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf looks into his rearview mirror. The Bronco roars closer, then pulls out and around the left side of the Pinto.

Viraf looks out his windshield. Sees the exit sign for I 95 a hundred yards in front of him.

The Bronco pulls alongside, keeping pace. Its window is rolled down. The Young Man looks down at Viraf.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf rolls down his window. WIND, ROAD NOISE, and the growl of the Bronco's STRAIGHT PIPES fill the Pinto. The Driver leans across his passengers to shout at Viraf.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf strains to hear the Driver.

DRIVER

(yelling)

...follow you anywhere,  
motherfucker.... full tank of  
gas.... gotta stop sometime....

EXT ROAD NIGHT

The Bronco drops behind the Pinto again.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf checks his fuel gauge. Third of a tank left.

Viraf accelerates. Through the windshield, Viraf watches as he passes the I 95 exit.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf's glasses are starting to fog. He rolls up the window.

VIRAF  
Fucking assholes....

EXT ROAD NIGHT

Montage:

The Pinto speeds along a tree lined street, the Bronco not far behind.

Their silver Horse Emblems glint in the streetlights.

The Pinto and the Bronco pass the stadium complex.

The Pinto, with its broken taillight, turns onto the dark and empty university campus. The Bronco is right with it.

The Pinto winds around the curving roads of campus. The Bronco is not quitting. It speeds up, fades back. Speeds up with a roar. Fades back. It's not going away.

CLOSE ON Viraf as he wrestles the Pinto past empty parking areas.

The Pinto speeds toward Evans Hall.

EXT EVANS HALL PARKING NIGHT

A lone dumpster sits in an otherwise empty small parking lot behind Evans. The Pinto pulls in and quickly stops.

INT PINTO CONTINUOUS

Viraf looks behind him. No Bronco.

EXT EVANS HALL PARKING NIGHT

Viraf gets out of his car and quickly locks it. He looks up at the dark building. He starts toward the locked rear doors, then freezes as he HEARS the Bronco's doors open.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The Bronco sits ominously in the empty lot. The Driver climbs down and approaches Viraf. The Young Man approaches too. The Blonde Girl sits up and watches.

EXT EVANS HALL PARKING NIGHT

The Driver steps close to Viraf. He is bigger and taller.

DRIVER

What do you think you were doing back there?

VIRAF

(starting to lose it)

What was I doing...?! I was turning onto an empty road. How fast were you going?

The Driver flips his thumb toward the Bronco.

DRIVER

See my car there? See the paint? You can see your face in it. One month off the lot... One month off the lot and you woulda fucked up my new car!

VIRAF

I didn't do anything to your car! Nothing really even...

The Driver leans into Viraf and bellows.

DRIVER

You hear me? DO YOU HEAR ME, YOU GODDAM DAGO?!

The Driver drives his fist into Viraf's head. Viraf's glasses are knocked cock-eyed on his face. Viraf staggers back into the Young Man from the Bronco. The Young Man throws a punch to Viraf's stomach. Viraf grunts a pained exhale and doubles up. The Young Man grabs Viraf's arms and pins them back.

The Driver moves in.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Do you hear me, you stupid wop!?

The Driver pounds a fist into Viraf's mid-section. Time stands still. In SLOW MOTION Viraf twists, trying to avoid more punches. He sees the Blonde Girl in the Bronco.

VIRAF'S POV

The Blonde Girl watches through the Bronco's windshield, staring right at Viraf with a thin sadistic smile.

BACK TO SCENE

In SLOW MOTION, another punch connects to the side of Viraf's head. His glasses fly off, seeming to float in the air.

Back to REAL TIME, Viraf stumbles backward.

VIRAF'S POV

Everything is blurred. Human shapes swing at him.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf continues to back up as the Young Man stalks him. Viraf backs into the large dumpster. The Young Man corners him and drives his knees into Viraf's groin repeatedly. Viraf catches some on his arms and makes a run for the rear entrance of Evans Hall. The Young Man chases him.

DRIVER (V.O.)

Let him go....

Viraf, at the rear door, fumbles for his keys. Finds them. Tries to unlock the heavy door but everything is a blur without his glasses. Finally he opens the door, slips inside, and slams it behind him.

He slumps against it to the floor, insipid trickles in and out his mouth, breathing raggedly in the dim, empty hallway.

He listens for sounds through the door and hears something. The Pinto! What are they doing - kicking its sides in? Smashing the windows, the windshield, the headlights?

Reaching up along the doorjamb, he drags himself to his feet. He puts a shaking hand to the doorknob, but his muscles refuse to turn it. He breaks into sweat. The hand will not stop shaking, but he turns it and yanks the door open....

EXT PARKING LOT, EVANS HALL NIGHT

Viraf steps out of the building. The Bronco is gone. He walks toward the Pinto.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Viraf walks around his car. He sees the driver's side mirror is missing. He spots the kicked-off mirror on the ground and picks it up.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf, slightly bent over, searches the ground for his glasses. He approaches the dumpster and finds his shattered lenses and bent Gandhian frames on the ground. He picks up the frames and returns to the Pinto.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives slowly without the glasses. A ferocious and intense expression spreads across his face. He grips the wheel tightly, opens his mouth...

VIRAF

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT OPTICIAN'S OFFICE DAY

CLOSE ON a phoropter. DR. HINSON, a gray-haired black optometrist slides the phoropter to the side, revealing a slightly swollen and bruised Viraf. Dr. Hinson then checks Viraf's eyes with an ophthalmoscope.

Dr. Hinson pays attention to a bruise near Viraf's eye.

DR. HINSON

Nasty bruise there.

VIRAF

Car accident.

DR. HINSON

Hmm, yes.... Have you considered wearing contacts?

VIRAF

No. In India they're a recent thing, mainly for women.

DR. HINSON

India. I was wondering where you're from. Once you spoke, I thought India, but I wasn't sure.

VIRAF

Mm... What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Dr. Hinson sets down the ophthalmoscope.

DR. HINSON

You'd have to clean the lenses nightly. But with lenses right on your cornea, you'll have better peripheral vision, closer to the wide angle of your eyeball.

Viraf thinks for a second.

QUICK FLASHBACK (VISUAL EFFECT) VIRAF'S POV

Fuzzy fists swing in at Viraf to the side of his old glasses.

BACK TO SCENE

VIRAF

Okay. I'll try them.

EXT SIDEWALK DAY

Viraf, without glasses, walks home. A smile creeps across his face. He looks in every direction, taking in a sharper world.

INT VIRAF'S APT DAY

Viraf broods on his couch. His WALL PHONE RINGS. Viraf snaps awake. He goes to pick up the colored hard-plastic phone.

VIRAF

Hello...

INTER-CUT PHONE CALL

DOUG

Hey, man. The Moles have a gig in  
Wilmington tonight. C'mon with us.

VIRAF

Uh... Sorry, Doug.

DOUG

Oh, c'mon.

VIRAF

Too much work, man. I'm exhausted.

DOUG

Okee-doke. See ya on the flip side.

Viraf sets down the phone.

INT VIRAF'S APT. DAY

Viraf stands in his shower. Steam fills the room.

INT BATHROOM DAY

Viraf stands in front of his mirror. He wipes some fog off the glass and examines his still slightly bruised face. His contact lenses sit on the sink in their case. Viraf opens the case and attempts to put his contacts in. He struggles.

VIRAF'S POV

His reflected image is blurred and foggy as he attempts to place one contact lens then the other.

VIRAF

Fuck!

Finally he gets both contacts situated. The image in the mirror is now clear and focused. There's a KNOCK on his door.

Viraf, wrapped in a towel, exits.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Viraf plods across his living room, still dripping water a bit, and opens the door. Ali, holding a Frisbee, stands there. An awkward pause. Viraf turns slightly so his bruise is not seen.

VIRAF  
Hey, Ali....

ALI  
Hey... Frisbee in the courtyard?

VIRAF  
Maybe, thanks.... If I get some work done.

ALI  
Okay. Cool. See ya then....

She hesitates.

ALI (CONT'D)  
Coming up to Wilmington with us tonight ?

VIRAF  
Not possible, Ali. Work, you know?

ALI  
Sure. Cool.

Ali exits. Viraf watches her go, then shuts his door.

EXT NEWARK AUTO SERVICE DAY

The Pinto sits outside a service bay. A new side-mirror has replaced the broken one. Viraf, accompanied by a MECHANIC in grease-streaked overalls, exits a small office. Viraf eyes the man warily as they approach the Pinto. The Mechanic points to the side-mirror.

MECHANIC  
What happened?

VIRAF  
(bristling)  
Couple of assholes kicked it off.

The mechanic nods laconically. No comment. Next he walks behind the car and gestures at the taillight.

MECHANIC  
Just needed a bulb.

He hands Viraf the keys and turns back toward the office. Viraf looks at the tail light then climbs into his car.

## EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

The Pinto pulls into the parking area. Viraf steps out. He sees Ali and the gang - Megan, Doug, Taylor, and Bernie - tossing Frisbees on the lawn. Doug makes an acrobatic leap, snagging the Frisbee.

Doug notices Viraf watching and waves for him to come join the game. Viraf shrugs them off with a wave and enters.

## INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT EVENING

Viraf works at his coffee table. Text books are open next to a stack of assignment papers. Viraf uses a pencil on a yellow legal pad. A Texas Instruments calculator rests near the pad.

Viraf stops working, fatigue showing as he closes his eyes. He carefully strokes his eyes, then slowly extracts his contact lenses and sets them in their case.

## INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT DAY

Viraf sits on his bed, lacing up his Adidas. There's a LOUD banging on his door. He rises, one shoe tied, to answer it.

## ANOTHER ANGLE

Viraf opens the door. Ali, Megan, and Taylor stand there. Megan holds a cooler.

MEGAN

Lums Pond. Picnic.

TAYLOR

Beer.

ALI

Can't say No to *that*.

Viraf smiles, steps back, grabs a bag of chips off his kitchen counter, and leaves with the gang.

## INT GALAXIE LATER

Viraf rides in the back with Megan and Taylor. Bernie and Ali sit up front with Doug, whose beard has been trimmed to a two-day stubble reminiscent of the Bronco driver's.

BERNIE

Did Sean kill it on Stairway or  
what?

ALI

Those groupies from Newark almost  
killed him.

DOUG

Hysterical. Vir, these chicks  
dragged Sean, right in the middle  
of a verse, off the fucking  
stage.... I mean dropped him right  
on his ass on the dance floor.

ALI

That one chick was sooooo drunk.

TAYLOR

(sarcastically laughing)  
Was that it? I thought she just  
liked Sean's vocals.

Viraf half listens to their banter. He gazes out the window  
as the car leaves the campus.

VIRAF'S POV

The countryside passes. Luxuriant trees signal spring.

INT GALAXIE DAY

DOUG

Vir!

Viraf still gazes out the window, distracted.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Planet Earth to Viraf... Come in...

Viraf turns his attention to Doug. Attempts a smile.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Do you know who Caesar Rodney was?

Viraf leans over the front seat to hear over music.

VIRAF

Who?

Ali pops the tape out of the car's tape player. Suddenly just  
silence and road noise.

DOUG  
Caesar Rodney.

Viraf pauses, thinks.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Hint - why's Delaware called the  
first state?

VIRAF  
(attempting humor)  
Ah. It was a Roman state ruled by  
this Caesar fellow.

Ali laughs.

DOUG  
Nope. Try again.

VIRAF  
(apathetically)  
I give up. Just tell me.

DOUG  
We were the first state to say yea  
to the Constitution. Rodney was  
Delaware's Speaker. Rode through a  
thunderstorm all the way from Dover  
to Philly - at night - to cast our  
vote for the Declaration of Inde-  
pendence. *Our* vote put it through.

TAYLOR  
Gotta know that, Viraf.

VIRAF  
Thanks, I'll remember.

Viraf turns his attention back to the scenery passing by. Ali  
pops the tape back in. It plays.

VIRAF'S POV

The car passes a trailer park, an overgrown cemetery, and a  
decrepit shopping mall.

EXT ROAD DAY

The Galaxie barrels along Highway 896. It approaches the  
fateful intersection with Porter Road.

CLOSE ON

Viraf is struck with a sense of dread.

QUICK FLASHBACK (VISUAL EFFECT) VIRAF'S POV

A midnight-blue Bronco roars straight at Viraf.

CLOSE ON VIRAF

Viraf closes his eyes. The gang sings along to music.

EXT LUMS POND DAY

The Galaxie idles. A guard bar rises, and the car slides into the park. It swings around tranquil, tree-lined roads.

EXT LUMS POND DAY

The car pulls into an open area of picnic tables and grills by a pond. A sign reads "Pavilion Fishing."

Viraf steps out, bag of chips in hand, and stretches. He takes a long, relaxing breath.

Megan and Ali open the trunk, grab the cooler, and walk toward a picnic table at the far end.

Doug and Taylor grab a bag of charcoal and a stack of paper plates, plastic forks, and cups.

Bernie grabs his bong and closes the trunk lid.

EXT PICNIC AREA DAY

Smoke rises from the grill (and Bernie's bong) as Doug flips burgers and rolls hotdogs with tongs. He lifts a burger to flip it, but it falls apart. Doug notices Viraf watching him.

DOUG

Vir, holy shit! What are you doing without glasses?

Ali approaches. Bernie offers Doug a hit from his bong.

ALI

Wow. Right. I knew something was different.... No glasses.

DOUG  
Can you even see?

VIRAF  
(awkwardly)  
They broke.

DOUG  
Broke? How did that happen? Need  
someone to guide you around?

VIRAF  
I sat on them.

Doug chokes on an exhale, laughing.

DOUG  
Sat on them?

MEGAN  
They just popped out, right? I mean  
those plastic lenses don't actually  
break. Do they?

VIRAF  
They were glass. Brought them here  
from India.

DOUG  
Oh, they still make them out of  
glass there?

Viraf rolls his eyes.

Doug holds the bong out toward Viraf. Viraf shakes his head,  
rejecting it. Doug hands it back to Bernie.

MEGAN  
Well, I think you look nice.

Megan approaches Viraf to look him in the eyes.

MEGAN (CONT'D)  
You have nice eyes, Viraf.

VIRAF  
Thanks....

ALI  
You look nice with your glasses,  
too.

VIRAF  
Thank you.

DOUG  
(a little high, slight  
giggle)  
You sat on them? None of the pieces  
stuck in your ass?

ALI  
Do-ug!

DOUG  
Just concerned for his ass, Ali.  
I'd ask about your ass, too, if you  
sat on broken pieces of glass. (to  
Viraf) So, getting plastic ones,  
now?

VIRAF  
Actually...

Bernie passes the bong to Taylor, who takes a hit. He passes  
it to Megan.

VIRAF (CONT'D)  
Actually glasses were a pain. I got  
contacts.

Megan exhales a cloud. Hands the bong back to Bernie.

MEGAN  
That's great, Viraf. You look  
really nice in them.

Bernie takes a hit.

VIRAF  
It's not about how I look. I just  
had a hard time wearing glasses.

BERNIE  
Yeah? Like how?

VIRAF  
They just... They cut into my nose  
and ears and sat weird and made me  
dizzy....

BERNIE  
Oh. Okay.

DOUG  
All right, guys. Come and get it.

EXT PICNIC TABLE LATER

Viraf lifts a fat, over-stuffed burger to his mouth. Ketchup and half the patty splatter out onto his jeans. He grabs a paper napkin and wipes at the stain, only making it bigger.

MEGAN

(mouth full)

Sorry about the crumbly burgers,  
you guys.

She swallows and wipes her mouth.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

You know Taylor and I rarely do  
meat. I mean, our Irish Wolfhound,  
Galahad, eats more meat in a week  
than we do all year. Viraf, are you  
okay with meat? I thought Indians  
were, like, vegetarian.

VIRAF

(perfunctorily)

That's orthodox Hindus. Like  
Nitin's parents. Like I've said  
before...I'm not Hindu. I'm Parsi.

Doug crunches a couple of chips, takes a swallow of beer.

DOUG

(slight edge)

That's right. Vir's really from I-  
ran. Didn't you know?

VIRAF

Iran, pal. Ee-raan. Why is it so  
hard to pronounce it the way  
Iranians do?

DOUG

(mockingly)

Hmm, let's see. Why *don't* we talk  
like the I-rainians? Because we're  
in America, maybe.

Ali sets down her burger. Doesn't like where this may be  
headed.

VIRAF

I didn't say talk like them. I just  
said at least say their own fucking  
name like they do. And, just so you  
know, my folks have been in India  
for a thousand years.

(MORE)

VIRAF (CONT'D)

That's twice as long as Americans have been around. So if I'm really from Iran, then you're really from Scotland.

DOUG

So if you love India so much, why don't you go back?

Viraf pauses. Glances involuntarily at Ali.

VIRAF

(grimly)

I will. As soon as I get my degree.

DOUG

Great. And just so you know, I'm not your "pal."

VIRAF

Yeah, I can see that.

ALI

Stop it! Stop it, you guys. This isn't cool. It's such a nice day, and you're spoiling it for everyone.

Taylor, his arm around Megan, and Bernie look on, unsure of what to do. Bernie loads his bong.

MEGAN

Viraf. Is something the matter? You don't sound like yourself.

Viraf looks at her, his aggravation spilling over....

VIRAF

Myself?! What does that mean, "myself?" Who do you think this is? Some alien?

Doug gives Viraf a shady look, hearing the word "alien."

TAYLOR

All right. Take it easy. All she meant was maybe you're not feeling too good.

Viraf deflates.

VIRAF

Sorry. Long week... Sorry I messed up your picnic, but I told you all I was tired.

DOUG

Yeah, you did. Too bad we didn't listen.

VIRAF

Fuck you, Charlie.

Bernie waves the bong at them.

BERNIE

Whoa. Guys, guys. Time for a peace pipe.

VIRAF

Fuck you and your peace pipe.

Viraf shoves up from the table and walks off toward the lake.

EXT LAKESIDE LATER

A great blue heron takes off from the shore. Viraf sits near a "No Swimming" sign by the water. Silence. Only wind in the trees. The sun lowers on the horizon as a LONE CANOEIST drifts past. Viraf's eyes stare mindlessly. He rubs his eyes slightly. He dips his fingers into the water and wets his eyes. Now he looks like he's been crying.

ALI (V.O.)

You okay?

Viraf turns to see Ali standing there, her dress pressed against her by the spring-time breeze. He stands up.

VIRAF

Yeah... I'm fine. Contacts were bothering me. I'm still getting used to them.

ALI

I mean in general.

VIRAF

I'm okay, Ali, thanks.

ALI

We won't be staying much longer. Did you want to finish your burger? It's kind of cold....

VIRAF  
That's okay. Thanks.

INT GALAXIE LATER

Doug drives, as the sun sets. Ali stares straight ahead. Megan is asleep on Taylor's shoulder. Bernie's head droops, then bobs back up. Music plays softly. Doug rolls down his window and points.

DOUG  
(pontificating)  
Right over there: Iron Hill.  
Washington hung out there, checking  
out the British army.

BERNIE  
(suddenly awake)  
Before or after crossing the  
Delaware?

DOUG  
After. The tide had already turned  
at Trenton when they routed the  
Hessians.

MEGAN  
(groggy)  
Hessians?

DOUG  
Yeah. German mercenaries. Think of  
all the German names in Wilmington.  
Like Mark Schiller. Or Bernie.

Bernie perks up.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Bernie Weingartner. Obviously  
derived from wine gardener.  
Descendants, probably. We were down  
and out in Pennsylvania. Could've  
been it for the revolution.

As Doug rambles on, Ali looks in the rearview mirror at Viraf. Viraf sees her eyes in the mirror.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
But we took them by surprise on  
Christmas, crossing a fuckin'  
freezing river. At night.  
Surrounding them...some of us  
barefoot in the snow.  
(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)

It was a rout. Like a handful of American casualties to a thousand Hessian.

BERNIE

Well, a hundred. Most of them surrendered.

DOUG

Yeah. Tell you what. They make the best Americans. Germans do.

Viraf tries to ignore the lecture.

TAYLOR

So how's that Pinto, Viraf?

VIRAF

Ah, the great American Pinto... It's a piece of shit that catches fire and kills its passengers. Ever think of telling me, Doug?

Silence.

ALI

(ice cold)

You know what? Doug didn't have to go out of his way to help you. He could have left you to *walk* all over town looking for a car. You were the one who needed it, so what stopped you from looking into it?

VIRAF

(giving up)

Nothing... That's what I should have done.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS EVENING

The Galaxie pulls in and parks. Viraf steps out from the back seat as Doug and Ali exit from the front.

Viraf walks ahead, past his Pinto, and enters their building.

INT VIRAF'S BEDROOM NIGHT

A newly black-bearded Viraf sleeps in bed. His bedside phone RINGS, shocking him awake. It RINGS and RINGS. He finds a light, switches it on. Grabs for the phone.

The muffled VOICE OF ASPI, HIS FATHER, leaks through. Viraf sits up, stunned, with the phone to his ear. Aspi's voice is calm but urgent.

VIRAF'S IMAGINATION

Viraf visualizes in slow-motion what his father describes:

Mamaiji from the neck up, eyes shut, soapy, is in the shower, water raining down. She reaches to put the shampoo down, slips, and crashes to the tile floor.

BACK TO SCENE

Aspi can still be heard as the scene...

FADES TO SAFFRON

FADE IN

The saffron fades. Piped-in sounds of sitar and tabla, as a Jumbo jet climbs majestically into the air.

INT AIR INDIA JUMBO JET

Sari-clad STEWARDESSES roam the aisle, collecting cups and passing out beverages. Sitar can still be heard softly.

Viraf sits near a window. He holds a copy of William Saroyan's "My Name is Aram," but sits with his eyes closed.

A STEWARDESS, pushing a cart, offers a cup of tea and tries to get the bearded Viraf's attention.

STEWARDESS

Excuse me, sir.... Sir? Some tea?

Viraf opens his eyes, looks toward the tea, smiles, and nods. The Stewardess smiles back and hands Viraf a cup.

VIRAF

Thanks. Sorry, fifteen hours is a long time to sit.

STEWARDESS

You get used to it.

The Stewardess moves on.

## INT AIRPORT BAGGAGE AREA DAY

Viraf hefts his bag and emerges into sun-soaked earth tones and a wall of heat. He turns to see Aspi, his mother Behroz, and his now rather adult sister, Soona. They rush to him. Hugs and squeals. Kisses. Behroz touches Viraf's eyes and beard. A question on her face. Their driver, Govind, takes Viraf's bag as they all head toward the parking area.

## INT CAR DAY

The Adajania family sits crammed in a Fiat sedan. Aspi rides up front next to Govind while Viraf is jammed into the rear seat with his mother and sister.

VIRAF

Mamaiji... What happened?

BEHROZ

Terrible fall she had. She insists on showering with no help.

ASPI

Broke her hip.

## EXT AIRPORT ROAD DAY

The Fiat cruises past the Dharavi slum.

## INT FIAT DAY

BEHROZ

(holding her nose)

Such a sight for travelers as soon as they arrive....

The Fiat reaches Mahim's streets and slows down.

## EXT PARSEE GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM DAY

Mamaiji, hooked up to monitors and IVs, sleeps. The Adajania family stands, talking quietly in hushed whispers.

ASPI

You brought pictures of that Pinto of yours?

VIRAF

Orange and brown. Like rust. I'll send you pictures.

ASPI

Takes bloody years to get your letters, Viraf. Good car?

VIRAF

Ya. Barely paid six hundred bucks for it. So can't expect too much.

SOONA

(excitedly)

Six hundred bucks! Dollars, na? That's like eight thousand, nine thousand bucks, haa. Don't forget.

Mamaiji starts to stir.

BEHROZ

Where's my Chevy Impala, mister?

VIRAF

First I have to make more than an assistantship, Mum. (smiling) Then I'll get it for you.

ASPI

You can get your mum any car she wants, two three years after you join us! So much business now we have, we're getting contracts even outside Bombay: Nasik, Poona, Goa.

BEHROZ

If business is so good, Aspi, why haven't you bought me an Impala?

Soona notices Mamaiji staring at them.

SOONA

Mamaiji!

Mamaiji scans the room. Seeing a bearded Viraf, she smiles. She signals him to her bedside. He sits in the chair next to the bed. He takes her taped and tubed hand in his.

VIRAF

Mamaiji....

MAMAIJI

So... You've come all this way to see your sick grandma....

VIRAF

How are you now?

She looks at her surroundings, the tubes, the equipment...

MAMAIJI

All right. Yes, Behroz?

BEHROZ

Yes, Mama. The doctors say you'll be out in no time.

MAMAIJI

(grunting)

Mmm... And what is this talk of a car I'm hearing? Orange. Brown. Rust color.

VIRAF

You were listening?

Mamaiji nods. Aspi, Behroz, and Soona slowly exit the room.

BEHROZ

We'll come back soon. You catch up with Viraf.

They leave.

VIRAF

Yes. I bought a car. In America you can't live without one. Everything is so spread out.

MAMAIJI

Your poor grandpa... (sighs) He liked cars too. And he died in one.

VIRAF

Yes. I know, Mamaiji.

MAMAIJI

My Rustomji was a very good driver, you know. If he was driving, and not his friend from the gymkhana, they wouldn't have crashed into that truck. But that friend died too, so I can't say anything. The government should have a law....

VIRAF

What sort of law?

MAMAIJI

A law to make everybody walk again.

She smiles, pats his hand.

MAMAIJI (CONT'D)

So tell me, baba, are you going to find a nice Parsi girl before your old Mamaiji is gone?

VIRAF

Lots of time before that happens. But why only a Parsi girl?

MAMAIJI

Ohhhh...someone else is there?!

VIRAF

No, no. I'm just saying a nice girl is a nice girl. Not just Parsi.

MAMAIJI

(makes noncommittal noise)  
Achha, how are your studies? You know your father is impatient for you to come home.

VIRAF

Ya. Apparently the company is very busy.

MAMAIJI

He goes from morning to night. But he wants to retire some day. And in whose hands can he leave this great business he has built?

Viraf stalls.

VIRAF

Still some courses left, Mamaiji. But I'll be starting my Master's thesis soon.

MAMAIJI

You and your books. From when you were little. Always with your nose in a book. I told you those books would take you away from us....

They share a long smile.

EXT BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE DAY

A factory is being built. WORKERS surrounded by construction equipment mill around doing their various jobs. Aspi and Viraf patrol the site. Aspi carries rolled up blueprints.

ASPI

College professors know nothing of real sites.

VIRAF

Dr. Reese has some very good site management ideas.

ASPI

All theory! When you're back home working on a real site, you'll have to forget all that nonsense and be practical.

Viraf is tactfully silent. He observes the wiry, sunburnt, and sweaty workers as they toil.

VIRAF

Hard work...

ASPI

Yes. Our workers are very good. Not like those textile mill workers who have gone on strike.

VIRAF

Really?

ASPI

For months now. Blackmailing their companies. Shutting down the city: Bombay Bandh and all that.

VIRAF

Why? Their demands were not heard?

ASPI

Ya, ya, they were heard. All bogus demands, the greedy buggers.

Viraf is again reduced to observing the hapless site workers, one of whom mops his face, then bends to his task again.

ASPI (CONT'D)

They've called for another Bombay Bandh, so better watch out, okay?

VIRAF

Okay, Dad.

## INT BATHROOM DAY

Viraf stares into the cracked mirror of his old bathroom. He inserts his contact lenses then examines his bearded face. He shapes the beard with a scissor. SOUNDS of the family emanate from elsewhere in the house.

## INT FAMILY FLAT LATER

Viraf surveys the living room of his youth. A SERVANT WOMAN dusts and cleans. On a table stand photos of young Viraf and Soona, Behroz, Aspi, Mamaiji, and the late Grandpa Rustomji.

Viraf turns his attention to the nearby turntable. There is a shelf with vinyl LPs. Viraf pulls out a record: Nat King Cole: "Greatest Hits." He slides it back and pulls out another: Jim Reeves: "Good 'N' Country." He slips it back.

Viraf walks out to the entry-hall and takes a set of car keys off a doormat table.

## EXT BUILDING DAY

Viraf climbs into a parked Fiat and starts the engine. The car crawls out of a narrow driveway onto Queen's Road.

## EXT STREET DAY

The Fiat meanders slowly through light Sunday traffic in South Bombay. The car stops at the Churchgate traffic signal. BEGGAR CHILDREN weave between the stopped cars.

## INT CAR DAY

A BANGING SOUND on Viraf's window grabs his attention.

## VIRAF'S POV

A BOY BEGGAR CHILD raps hard on his window. Viraf rolls down the window while reaching for his wallet. The Boy is quickly joined by a BEGGAR GIRL.

GIRL

Seth, seth, hum ko bhi do na.

A ONE-LEGGED MAN also approaches, hopping toward the car.

BACK TO SCENE

Cars start to HONK. Viraf hands a 2 rupee note to the Girl, puts the car in gear, and eases into the traffic.

EXT CCI (CRICKET CLUB OF INDIA) DAY

Viraf's Fiat glides through the entrance of CCI. He drives to the poolside parking area, parks, and steps out.

Viraf walks through a trellised white gate toward the crowded pool area. CHILDREN splash in the pool. ADULTS lounge as food and beverages are delivered by WAITERS in drab uniforms. Viraf looks conflicted by this contrasting luxury so nearby.

EXT POOL AREA DAY

Viraf finds a secluded table and settles into a low-slung wicker chair. He watches as a Teenager climbs up the high dive platform and dives into the pool with a splash.

MAYA (V.O.)

Look at him.

Viraf turns to see Maya, dark, gorgeous, and stylish in expensive jeans, low-cut top, and heels, and Rangan, his arm around her, standing at the table.

MAYA

Hardly recognized you.

Viraf stands, soaking up this vision of Maya. Deep-seated feelings rise again. He shakes Rangan's hand, invites them to sit with a gesture, and signals to an approaching Waiter.

EXT POOL AREA LATER

Viraf signs the bill and hands it to the Waiter, who exits. Maya sips on her sweet lassi. Rangan surveys the club.

RANGAN

Your old pada.

VIRAF

Ya. Practically grew up in the place. I used to come here for swim class in school.

MAYA

Your accent is different.

VIRAF

Accent?

MAYA  
Ya. Little bit Yank.

Viraf chuckles at the remark.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
So tell...did you like the  
complexions of American girls?

Maya throws a snarky look at Viraf.

VIRAF  
Ha.

Viraf absorbs Maya's dark beauty.

RANGAN  
Were the Yank chicks hot or no?

Viraf and Maya are focused on each other.

VIRAF  
Ya. Pretty hot.

EXT POOL AREA LATER

The table is littered with plates of desi snacks: sev puri, samosas, dahi batata puri... Viraf, Maya, and Rangan eat, drink, and laugh.

MAYA  
Tripping? Acid? Purple trees...?!

RANGAN  
"Purple haze...all in my brain..."

VIRAF  
And once, we drove to Philadelphia  
to see the Moody Blues....

RAGAN  
Moody Blues!

VIRAF  
Yeah, the real thing. Live. Had to  
buy tickets from scalpers....

MAYA  
Scalpers? Like the Red Indians?

A Waiter brings another round of beers. Maya laughs at her own joke.

VIRAF

Heh. In the parking lot. And Bernie brought this snack...a box of chopped dry mushrooms. Told Nitin and me we'd like it. Incredible night: the fucking Moody Blues, right in front of us. White smoke across the stage: "Nights in White Satin." I start pounding Nitin.... But we get home and Nitin says, "It wasn't *that* good, you know."

RANGAN

The mushrooms?

VIRAF

(laughing)

Nitin had spat out his mushrooms. And me, like an idiot, took a second helping - just to be polite.

They all laugh.

MAYA

Like Alice in Wonderland.

RANGAN

Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit." Deadly Drumming.

Rangan plays "air" drums.

EXT POOL AREA LATER

Viraf, Maya, and Rangan are snacking. A large CAT meanders to their table. It rubs up against Viraf, who feeds it a piece of puri. Maya notices the cat going under the table.

MAYA

How sweet!

Viraf feeds the cat under the table. Maya also holds out food for the cat. She leans forward, her knees almost touching the ground, her torso stretched under the table to reach the cat. As Viraf strokes the cat under the table, he feels what at first he thinks is Maya's hand. But it's actually Maya's breast.

He's startled, but her head is down, still occupied with the cat. Maya consciously presses her breast into Viraf's hand again. Viraf quickly brings his hands up.

Rangan continues to eat.

RANGAN

We could have our wedding reception  
at my club, Maya.

Maya sits back in her seat with an inscrutable expression.

RANGAN (CONT'D)

Viraf, hope you can be there.

Viraf can't meet Rangan's eyes. Viraf finally glances at Maya. She puts a lassi to her lips and sips.

EXT PARSEE GENERAL HOSPITAL DAY

A gray, pre-monsoon day.

Govind sits behind the wheel of the Fiat, idling. Viraf and Behroz exit the hospital. Govind quickly gets out of the car, opening the rear door, where Behroz climbs in, while Viraf settles into the front passenger seat. Govind climbs into the driver's seat and the car slowly pulls away.

INT CAR DAY

Govind drives slowly as they leave the hospital grounds.

VIRAF

Good, she should be out in a week.

BEHROZ

Once she is back home, she'll perk up. The hospital room is so grim.

VIRAF

But for now it's the best place for her.

BEHROZ

And so, Viraf? Your travel arrangements are again set?

VIRAF

Bombay to Dubai. Dubai to Frankfurt. Frankfurt to New York...

BEHROZ

When will you come back?

Viraf turns to give his mother a smile.

VIRAF

When I finish my studies, Mummy.

EXT STREET DAY

The Adajaniyas' Fiat emerges onto a narrow access road between dilapidated brown buildings. The car slows as a THRONG OF MEN block the street ahead of it. Textile mill workers on strike carry signs in Marathi, Hindi, and English, protesting their working conditions and wages.

POV FROM WITHIN THE FIAT

The Men, dressed in shabby cotton shirts and polyester pants, break and come together like a many-limbed creature that approaches the car.

INT FIAT DAY

Govind nervously slows to a stop and turns to Viraf.

Behroz sits paralyzed in the back seat.

GOVIND

Today is Bombay Bandh, looks like.  
Aage chalau?

VIRAF

(nods, gesturing forward)  
Chalao. Dheere se. Slowly.

EXT STREET DAY

The Fiat inches forward. The muffled Crowd surrounds the car, humming like a mass of bees around a hive.

INT FIAT DAY

Govind leans his upper frame toward the windshield and raises his hand, loosely spreading his fingers and patting the air.

The crowd of floating brown, mustached, almost silently mouthing faces slowly yields as the Fiat creeps through.

The Crowd slowly makes space for the car. Then, LOUD THUMPING as men pound on the roof and sides. Behroz SCREAMS!

Viraf turns to catch the alarm on his mother's face. The car continues to inch forward.

VIRAF

Chalao, Govind!

Govind shifts the car audibly into second gear and pushes ahead. Men shove each other to get out of the way of the car.

EXT STREET DAY

The Fiat gains speed. The crowd gives chase. TWO MEN shouting something BANG on the trunk as the car finally speeds up.

INT FIAT DAY

Govind shifts gears again, and the car races away. Viraf and Behroz sit in stony silence.

CLOSE ON VIRAF

Shock.

FLASHBACK

Viraf flashes on THAT NIGHT: the Bronco, driving alongside. The Driver's contorted face bellowing:

DRIVER  
(repeatedly)  
Do you hear me?! Do you hear me...?

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf puts his hand on Govind's shoulder and lets it rest there.

Govind is confused at first, then, eyes still on the road, he smiles.

INT ADAJANIA FLAT/CONDO DAY

Viraf, carrying his bags, sets them by the door. He enters the dining room where the family - Behroz, Soona, and Aspi - eat. Their cook LOUISE sets food on the table.

Aspi, at the head of the table, reads a newspaper, the *Indian Express*. Viraf sits. Louise pours him some tea.

VIRAF  
Thanks, Louise.

Louise smiles shyly at the now bearded young man.

ASPI

You were very lucky, you know that?

Aspi holds up the paper, showing the front page to Viraf.

ASPI (CONT'D)

The mob was throwing stones at cars, taxis, buses.... Twenty four BEST buses were set on fire. The Morarji Mills also. The Century Mills showroom at Haji Ali was broken into and looted....

BEHROZ

I thought they would kill us.

Louise, hanging around for the story, puts her hand to her graying face and exclaims with gentle empathy in Portugese.

BEHROZ (CONT'D)

Govind saved us, Louise! I think they could see him waving at them.

SOONA

Maybe they only want a decent wage.

ASPI

Decent wage! (to Viraf) You know, Tata Textiles and Bombay Dyeing, our own Parsi companies, generously accepted the labor minister's proposal of Rs. 30 pay hike for all the workers, in spite of their illegal strike. But the greedy workers turned down that proposal.

SOONA

Daddy, a raise of hardly two dollars isn't so generous.

Viraf and Louise smile at his spunky sister.

BEHROZ

Enough. Viraf is leaving now. Forget all this. (emotional) Feels like you just arrived. And now you have to leave us again. When will you finally be back, my man of the world...?

EXT ADAJANIAS' BUILDING DAY

The Fiat is parked out front. Govind and Viraf load his suitcase in the trunk. The Family exits the building.

Soona embraces and kisses her brother.

Aspi steps forward and takes Viraf by his shoulders.

ASPI

Get your "phoren" degree quickly!  
Then come back and join us, son.

Behroz embraces Viraf. He kisses his mother's forehead. Then he turns toward the waiting car.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Viraf opens the car door and slides in. Govind starts the car and puts it into gear. Just as the car begins to move...

SOONA

Look back, Viraf. Quickly look back  
at your home!

CLOSE ON BEHROZ, SOONA, ASPI

CLOSE ON VIRAF

Viraf twists in his seat, looking back at the house.

VIRAF'S POV

The Adajaniyas' building and the family grow smaller as the Fiat drives off. A faint echo of tabla and tanpura can be HEARD, then it segues into country music.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT COUNTRY ROAD DAY

An empty road cuts through farms, towns, woods, and fields. A large Trailways Bus appears on the horizon, growing bigger and louder ("GO BIG RED" on its side) as it swipes the frame.

INT BUS DAY

The bus is full, mostly impecunious COLLEGE STUDENTS and a number of AFRICAN AMERICANS.

Duffle bags, music, and chatter fill the vehicle. Era-appropriate headphones cover one student's ears. Viraf sits in a window seat halfway back. He looks around the bus and smiles. He looks out the window.

VIRAF'S POV

The American countryside whooshes by, bursting with Fall colors.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

Viraf lugs his suitcase up the Apartments driveway.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf looks at his building. Leaves have already begun to fall from the trees. He sees his Pinto, covered with some leaves and twigs, right where he left it.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf approaches his car and sweeps debris off with his free hand. He then walks to his apartment building.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT DAY

Viraf comes through the front door, flops down his bag, drops into his couch. Home. Phew.

EXT DOUG AND ALI'S APT DOOR DAY

Viraf knocks on the door. Waits. Ali opens it and squeals.

ALI

Look who's here!

She gives Viraf a warm hug and drags him inside.

INT DOUG AND ALI'S APT LATER

Viraf sits at the kitchen counter. Doug takes a couple beers out of the refrigerator.

DOUG/ALI

How was India?

They look at each other and high-five the simultaneity.

VIRAF  
(to Ali)  
Great. Crazy but great.

ALI  
You stayed longer than you planned.

VIRAF  
My grandma. She took a really bad  
fall. Broke her hip.

ALI  
Oh... I'm sorry.

VIRAF  
She slipped in her shower. Always  
insists on no help. At her age...

DOUG  
(interrupting)  
So is she all right now?

Doug opens the beers. They sip as they talk.

VIRAF  
Ya. She'll be home in a day or two.

DOUG  
Cool.

ALI  
I'm so glad....

VIRAF  
What have you been up to?

ALI  
Oh, you know. Vegetarian parties at  
Megan's...

DOUG  
Bong sessions at Bernie's...

ALI  
Ceramics classes...

DOUG  
Moles gigs... One coming up at Deer  
Park.

VIRAF  
Very cool...

ALI

Oh...here.

Ali crosses the kitchen, fishes around, and comes back with a small stack of mail held together by a rubber band. She hands it to Viraf, who takes it from her.

VIRAF

(standing up with mail)  
Probably some bills to pay.

ALI

(going with him to door)  
I bet.

VIRAF

(to Doug loudly)  
Remind me when the band's playing  
so I can come.

Doug doesn't respond.

ALI

See ya....

VIRAF

See ya.

She closes the door.

INT VIRAF'S APT. DAY

Viraf sits at his small kitchen table surrounded by opened mail. He studies one document with a worried frown.

EXT PARKING AREA FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

Viraf walks around the parked Pinto, opens it, and gets in.

INT PINTO DAY

Viraf settles in behind the wheel and buckles up. The Pinto coughs to life. Viraf puts the car in gear and pulls away.

INT WILMINGTON TRUST DAY

Viraf stands in front of a TELLER, a sandy-haired middle-aged lady. A line of other BANK CUSTOMERS grows behind him.

Viraf holds a bank statement in his hand. The Teller sorts through a file folder.

VIRAF

See. Here. It doesn't show any recent deposits from the college.

The Teller hands Viraf a slip of paper. He reads it in shock.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

This is my balance?

TELLER

As of today, sir. Yes.

VIRAF

But how can that be?

TELLER

(looking past Viraf at the line of customers)

Would you like to discuss this with one of our officers?

The Teller points toward a row of small offices. Viraf turns to look, then returns his attention to the Teller.

VIRAF

No... I'll check at my department.

Viraf takes his paperwork, turns, and exits.

INT CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT OFFICE DAY

RICHARD DANNER, forty-ish in dark-framed glasses, sits behind a cluttered desk in an outer office. A small plaque on his desk reads: "Richard Danner, Dept. Secretary." Viraf hovers over him while Danner studies a computer screen.

DANNER

Let me get back to you about this, Viraf.

VIRAF

But Richard, did you find out what the problem is?

DANNER

Um... Doesn't look like you're on the assistants' list anymore, for some reason.

Viraf is stunned.

VIRAF

But what reason, Richard? Has to be a mistake! I asked you before I left if there was anything I had to do. Remember?

A tense moment ticks by before Danner slowly nods yes.

Viraf gestures toward the office door behind Danner. A plaque next to the door reads: "Dr. Adam Pickett, Department Chair."

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Is Dr. Pickett in?

Danner shakes his head.

DANNER

I'll look into it and let you know. Give me till tomorrow.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Viraf rummages around his kitchen cooking some rice and stirring some curry. He holds a phone to his ear.

VIRAF

Ya, I'll tell you about the trip later, Nitin. Ya... I think it's just a clerical error. Richard said he'll try to figure it out....

MONTAGE:

-Viraf takes out his contacts.

-Viraf eats while studying.

-Viraf's bearded head rests on his arm, barely awake.

-Viraf sleeps on the couch.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT NIGHT

A RINGING WALL PHONE jerks Viraf awake. He stumbles toward the kitchen, turns on a light, and picks up the relentless phone. The metallic, muffled voice of Aspi squawks through the receiver.

ASPI (V.O.)

Viraf... Viraf.

VIRAF

Dad?... It's me. I was asleep.

Aspi's crackling voice responds.

ASPI (V.O.)

Ya. It's your nighttime there. I know.

Worry sweeps across Viraf's face.

ASPI (V.O.)

Viraf, your Mamaiji passed away last night.... Viraf? Can you hear? She had pneumonia. She was fighting it.... But she was old and too weak, ultimately....

VIRAF

(after a long pause)

Should I come back...for the...

SPLIT SCREEN

Aspi on a standard black telephone in the Adajania flat.  
Viraf on a colored wall phone in his apartment.

ASPI (V.O.)

No, no. You don't disturb your studies. We are making arrangements for the ceremonies at the dakhmo.

VIRAF

Mum...?

ASPI

Your mummy is a bit distressed, otherwise she would talk to you. Soona is with her. We will all talk to you next time.

VIRAF

She's okay, though?

ASPI

Ya, just very sad, naturally. Little bit of crying.

VIRAF

Okay... Give her my love.

ASPI

Here, she's coming. Bye.

Aspi hands the phone to his wife.

BEHROZ

Viraf, maro dikro...your dear  
Mamaiji is gone.

VIRAF

(his voice catching)  
Yes, Mummy. Dad told me. Are you  
okay?

BEHROZ

I don't know, darling...very  
confused. I keep thinking how she  
was before your grandpa died and  
she became all bitter. She even  
stopped thinking she would see him  
again, after she saw those men  
jumping around on the moon.

VIRAF

Yes, I remember....

BEHROZ

I know Zarthust saheb said we would  
go to heaven after we die. But even  
he must have never thought, three  
thousand years ago, that people  
would be flying around in rockets!  
(more upset) In my heart I feel  
that my daddy was gone and never  
came back and now Mummy is gone,  
and one day we will also be gone,  
Viraf, and you and Soona must try  
to remember us, wherever you are.

VIRAF

We'll all be together, Mummy. No  
need for remembering. As if we  
could forget in the first place.

Behroz starts to sob. Soona takes the phone.

SOONA

She's too tired, Viraf.

VIRAF

No, that's okay. Let her rest. You  
and Dad are okay?

SOONA

Ya. We're fine. But you're there  
all on your own....

VIRAF

I'm okay, don't worry. Bye for now.

Soona says bye and hangs up.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Viraf leans against the wall, phone still in hand. He turns off the light. In the dark, we hear his muffled grief.

INT GRADUATE ASSISTANTS' OFFICE AREA

Viraf sits alone at his desk, working. The wall clock reads: "5:15." The office phone rings. He answers.

VIRAF

Yes, Richard.... I'll come over.

He hangs up.

INT ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT OFFICE DAY

Viraf approaches Danner's desk. Danner looks up with concern.

DANNER

You're not on the list, Viraf. No assistantship. And that means no tuition waiver either, I'm afraid.

Viraf is speechless.

DANNER (CONT'D)

Chairman Pickett would like a word with you about your situation.

Danner nods towards the chairman's open door.

Viraf moves toward the door and tentatively knocks.

VIRAF

Dr. Pickett?

Dr. Pickett, a bulky man with thinning red hair and wearing reading glasses, looks up, smiles.

PICKETT

(friendly)

Hello there. Come on in.

The black-bearded Viraf enters. Pickett motions him to sit in the chair in front of his desk.

PICKETT (CONT'D)  
So, Varif...?

Pickett mispronounces Viraf and accents the wrong syllable.

VIRAF  
Viraf. Like giraffe...

PICKETT  
(chuckles)  
So, Viraf...where did you get your  
undergraduate degree?

VIRAF  
At the Indian Institute of  
Technology. In Kharagpur.

Pickett nods approvingly.

PICKETT  
Excellent. We're happy to have an  
IIT student come to us. Now, how's  
it going? I see you came here on a  
research assistantship. Which of  
our professors have you been  
working with? Dr. Froley? Dr.  
Takagi?

VIRAF  
No. Dr. Reese.

Pickett's smile diminishes.

PICKETT  
Mmm. And after the master's, what?  
Do you plan on getting your PhD  
with us?

VIRAF  
Oh... No, just the master's.

Pickett's smile vanishes.

PICKETT  
I see.

VIRAF  
After the master's I'll be joining  
my father's construction company  
back in India. So I'm working on a  
site-management project with Dr.  
Reese. For my thesis.

Viraf slides his chair closer.

PICKETT

I see. And how far along is the thesis? Almost complete and ready to write up?

VIRAF

(shocked at the idea)  
No, no. Our investigative tool, a FORTRAN simulator I'm developing, is almost complete. But the research can't start until it's ready.

PICKETT

(suddenly gets tough)  
Well, what's taking you so long? Just what have you been doing all year?

Viraf controls the feelings of self-doubt, apprehension, and resentment that begin to bubble within him.

VIRAF

(desperately)  
I've been focusing on my course requirements. I've finished all but the two I'm taking this semester. I have A's in all my courses, except one B in my first semester. It made sense to get it all done. And done well so I could really concentrate on my thesis.

PICKETT

(aggressively)  
If that's so, where were you during the summer session? You weren't here all summer, I believe. What stopped you from wrapping up your course load over the summer?

A pause.

VIRAF

No one told me I had to be here in the summer!? I didn't even know we could take courses in the summer. Summers at IIT were holidays.

PICKETT

So you just took the summer off! What did you do with it?

(MORE)

PICKETT (CONT'D)

You haven't said. What did you do with it?

Viraf has had enough.

VIRAF

You want to know? I'll tell you. It's none of your business what I do on my time. But I'll tell you. You want to know what I was doing this summer? My family, who I hadn't seen in a year, wanted me home. My aged grandmother fell and broke her hip. Then in the hospital she caught pneumonia. So I stayed. *That's* what I was doing....

PICKETT

(skeptically)  
Your grandmother?

Viraf stands and explodes, unconsciously echoing the BRONCO DRIVER'S words.

VIRAF

She died! Do you hear me? She's dead!

Long pause. Viraf calms himself.

PICKETT

(temporarily abashed)  
Well... It's a good reason.

Viraf slumps back into his chair.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

But now what? You're no longer on our assistants' roll. How do you plan to see your studies through?

VIRAF

(deflated)  
I asked Richard before I left...

Viraf gestures toward the doorway. He's startled to see Danner still at his desk, not looking but hearing everything.

PICKETT

Well, let me say this again. All the assistantship funds have already been allocated. And that's a finite amount. There's no more to go around.

(MORE)

PICKETT (CONT'D)

So there's nothing either you or I can do about that. The question is - how do you intend to handle it?

Viraf thinks about it.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

Here's my advice. Take out a student loan. Finish up as fast as you can. Work at a company for a while and pay it off. That's what most people do.

VIRAF

No. I came all the way here on the assurance of a scholarship for my master's. Not to get into debt in another country. My student visa doesn't allow me to work off-campus. And I'm expected back home after the degree.

PICKETT

Well then, what are you going to do?

Viraf takes a long breath.

VIRAF

I'll go back.

PICKETT

You'll just stop? A year into the program. And go back?

VIRAF

(nodding)

I'll join my father's company. Like I'd have done a year ago if I hadn't been offered this scholarship. It's a waste of a year. But anyway...

Pickett leans in toward Viraf. Viraf has touched a nerve.

PICKETT

You have the gall to sit in front of me and call a year in our program a waste of your time?

VIRAF

No. I meant a waste in terms of not getting the degree and not learning the ropes either.

(MORE)

VIRAF (CONT'D)

My father believes there's a gap between class theory and what's practiced in the field. So if I'd started with him a year ago, I'd be a year of work experience ahead by now.

Pickett settles back into his chair.

PICKETT

(calmer)

So I'll ask you again. What do you intend to do?

VIRAF

I'll go back.

Pickett leans back, frustrated, folding his hands behind his head.

PICKETT

What if we arrange an interest-free loan for you? No interest to pay, none. And we can talk about your period of repayment.

Viraf shakes his head in disagreement.

VIRAF

No. No debt. We don't have car payments in India. Or mortgages. Not even credit cards until the last few years. It's not the way I grew up.

PICKETT

(losing patience)

Well, what are you going to do? Tell me.

VIRAF

I just did!

PICKETT

(backing down, defeated)

All right... Here's what I'll try to do. No promises, do you understand? No promises.

Viraf nods.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

I want from you a research proposal.

(MORE)

PICKETT (CONT'D)

A written proposal for your thesis. And I want it fast. I'll try to put it through a departmental proposal to fund the project with a grant. I'm talking a small grant, mind you, no more than a couple thousand. If we can clear room in our budget, it's a one shot deal. No more to come. After that you're on your own.

Viraf nods grudgingly again.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

Get all the research done this fall and write it up over the winter. Then go home to your daddy's company.

Viraf glares silently at the final sneer. He rises to leave.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

You've said some things in here that I'm going to put aside. Only because you're young. But you're not the first person in the world to lose his grandmother. And you won't always get off so easily.

Viraf grimly turns away and moves toward the door.

PICKETT (CONT'D)

(eyes widening)

I want that proposal on my desk first thing tomorrow morning.

Viraf looks back, locks eyes with Pickett, then moves through the door.

Viraf passes Danner, who never looks up. But Viraf notices Danner showing him a subtle "thumbs up."

INT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY DAY

Viraf sits at a long table covered with a few opened books. He jots down things on a yellow legal pad. Other STUDENTS study and search the stacks.

NEW ANGLE

There are fewer students, but Viraf writes intensely.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Even fewer students. Interior lights are on. Viraf continues.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Viraf is alone. A JANITOR vacuums. Viraf is distracted by the noise.

EXT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY NIGHT

Viraf steps outside carrying his pad and walks into the night toward Evans Hall.

INT ASSISTANTS' OFFICE NIGHT

Viraf types away on the keyboard of the computer terminal. A nearby printer spews out perforated pages onto the floor.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Viraf's bearded head drops to the computer table. He sleeps. The printer wheezes out the last page and stops. Silence.

INT CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT DAY

Viraf, still in yesterday's clothes, walks through the departmental office carrying his proposal. He approaches Danner, who looks up as Viraf walks straight through the open door of Pickett's empty office.

Danner watches as Viraf drops his proposal on Pickett's desk, turns, and reemerges.

VIRAF

Make sure he gets that, Richard.  
Thanks.

Viraf doesn't wait for a response and heads toward the door.

DANNER

Done...

EXT CAMPUS DAY

Autumn is in full bloom. The falling leaves of the shade trees create an orange carpet on campus. Viraf walks across the mall, up the steps of a building, and into an office.

DR. REESE (V.O.)

Now, tell me everything. I wish I could have been with you when you met with Dr. Pickett.

INT VIRAF'S ADVISOR DR. REESE'S OFFICE DAY

Viraf sits in front of Dr. Reese, a portly New Yorker.

DR. REESE

I hadn't heard a word, so it was a shock when it came up at the departmental meeting. But tell me exactly, what was said between the two of you?

VIRAF

Dr. Reese, I had no time to consult you. When I got back from India, visiting my family over the summer, I saw that no assistantship stipend had been deposited in my account. So I went to the department secretary, Richard Danner....

CUT TO:

INT DR. REESE'S OFFICE LATER

Close on the bearded Viraf.

VIRAF

....They can't do things like that and expect students from top international colleges to still come here. Who would come? And then where would the department be? In India they're complaining about the brain drain. And here they're cutting off the best students....

DR. REESE

Whoa, whoa, whoa. For God's sake, put away that attitude. This is no time for it. Just put it away.

Reese gets up, comes around to Viraf's side of the desk.

DR. REESE (CONT'D)

Listen. There's more to this than you know.

(MORE)

DR. REESE (CONT'D)

Pickett and I haven't always agreed on things. And there's been some resentment over my doubling up here at the new computer science department. They've been leaving me out of the loop when assigning assistants. When they selected you, I don't think they anticipated that you'd hook up with me instead of one of them.

VIRAF

The secretary, Richard Danner, sent me to you when I wanted to work on site management. He told me you were the expert.

DR. REESE

Danner's a good man.... I believe they'll take care of you now. And when they do, I'm leaving the engineering department and devoting myself totally to computer science.

VIRAF

(shocked)  
Not because of...

DR. REESE

I don't like the way they've handled this. And I feel partly responsible. I should have seen it coming....

VIRAF

What about my thesis, Dr. Reese?

DR. REESE

I'll see you through with that. Soon as we get the official green light, let's get cracking.

INT ASSISTANTS' OFFICE DAY

Viraf, hurrying through, passes Will Thompson's desk.

WILL

You good, man?

Flashing a thumbs up toward Will, Viraf exits.

INT PINTO DAY

Viraf drives through campus toward his apartments. He eases over a speed bump and HEARS an UNUSUAL CREAK emanating from under the car. He carefully pulls the car over to the curb.

EXT STREET DAY

Viraf, curb-side, is on his knees peering under the rear of the Pinto.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf inspects the rusty underbelly of the car. Nothing looks out of place.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf stands, pauses, gets back into the car and drives away.

EXT FIRST STATE APARTMENTS DAY

Viraf pulls the Pinto into his parking place. Gets out. Does a quick walk-around inspection and enters his building.

EXT ROAD NIGHT

The Pinto drives along.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives along Main Street. BOOM! The rear of the Pinto erupts into repeating BACKFIRES. Viraf strains to see a short burst of flame as smoke engulfs the rear of the car. Fearfully he pulls over and kills the engine.

EXT ROAD NIGHT

Viraf jumps out of the car. Walks to the rear and drops to his hands and knees. The Pinto's muffler hangs on the ground, barely attached to the car. Viraf gives it a tug, but quickly pulls back. The tailpipe is hot. He wraps his Indian handkerchief around his hand, then yanks the muffler off. He stands, opens the hatchback, and tosses in the muffler.

Viraf gets back into the car, starts it, and roars off into the night.

EXT DEER PARK TAVERN NIGHT

The Pinto sputters and growls into the parking lot. PEOPLE mill around drinking on the front porch. Their attention is drawn to the flatulent Pinto as Viraf parks it.

INT DEER PARK NIGHT

The smoky joint is jumping. Viraf enters, making his way around the CROWDED BAR. The Moles are rocking out on stage. Bernie attacks the drums and Doug works on a wah-wah pedal accompanied by a thumping bass and perky keyboard.

Viraf sees Ali, Megan, Taylor, and SARAH, a pretty brunette Californian. Megan waves, and Viraf goes to them.

Viraf sits next to Ali, but senses something is wrong. Ali studies her drink, barely looking up.

MEGAN

Viraf...meet Sarah.

Viraf raises a hand and says hi.

SARAH

Viraf?

VIRAF

Like giraffe...

The women giggle.

MEGAN

Sarah came in from California.

Ali rummages in her handbag, as if looking for something. A WAITRESS delivers some cocktails. She looks to Viraf.

VIRAF

Rum and Coke.

The Waitress nods and departs.

OFF SCREEN The Moles start playing Arlo Guthrie's "City of New Orleans." Viraf leans into Ali.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Which group is that?

Ali looks at Viraf with more intensity than his question calls for.

ALI  
It's Arlo Guthrie.

VIRAF  
Oh...

ALI  
(artificially upbeat)  
So what have you been up to?

Viraf hesitates, then leans closer.

VIRAF  
My grandma died.

ALI  
Oh... Sorry... I love my Gramps so  
much. I can't imagine how I'll feel  
when... He's so frail now...

The Waitress sets a Rum & Coke in front of Viraf. The music  
is LOUD. Viraf and Ali struggle to converse. They lean in  
closer to each other.

VIRAF  
How about you?

ALI  
Oh, this and that. My ceramics  
class is really neat. I have to  
show you some of the stuff I've  
been making.

VIRAF  
Like pots and vases?

ALI  
Yeah, that. But some of my own  
stuff too. Like my little dragons,  
you know? But in clay now. And  
glazed in these gorgeous colors.

VIRAF  
I like your dragons.

ALI  
I'll have to make one for you.

VIRAF  
Thanks.... Remember that emergency  
I was dealing with at school?

ALI  
Oh yeah.... What happened?

VIRAF

Long story. Lost my assistantship.  
Department politics.

ALI

No. Those assholes. Screwing you  
over their politics.

VIRAF

Thanks. But they came through with  
a grant so I can finish.

ALI

And then...?

Viraf lifts his shoulders and palms in classic "Who knows?"  
fashion. He raises his glass in a toast. Ali joins him.

VIRAF

Cheers.

Glasses clink.

ALI

Cheers.

Megan leans happily across the table to clink hard.

MEGAN

What're you guys toasting?

ALI

Viraf's pig of a boss finally came  
through for him.

Megan, Taylor, and Sarah add their glasses in loud support.

VIRAF

(overwhelmed)

Thanks... Thanks...

INT DEER PARK LATER

The bar is less raucous. Fewer people. The Moles wrap up a  
song and their evening. CLAPPING and WHISTLES are heard.  
Viraf, Megan, Taylor, and Sarah laugh over more drinks. Viraf  
notices Ali is again a bit detached.

DOUG V.O.

Thank you! Thank you! Good night,  
everybody! Peace!

Then the SOUND of INSTRUMENTS UNPLUGGING, and then only the sound of the late hour barroom buzz.

Doug, now beardless, and Bernie amble over to the table and pull up chairs. There is palpable tension between Ali and Doug.

MEGAN

You guys were rocking, tonight.

Doug makes a theatrical bowing gesture.

SARAH

(to Doug)

You were really cool.

Doug leans into Sarah, smiling.

The Waitress approaches. Bernie checks out the table.

BERNIE

Another round?

Sarah smiles at Doug, who leans into her some more. Megan and Taylor raise their glasses. Viraf leans toward Ali, whose eyes are clouded. HOUSE MUSIC plays in the background.

VIRAF

Another Margarita?

ALI

No, thanks. I won't be here much longer, Vir. Thanks, though.... So, how's Nitin? Have you seen him and Judy lately?

VIRAF

Couple of weeks ago. They're doing fine.

ALI

Oh, good. Haven't seen you around much either. Working too hard?

VIRAF

Gotta do it, Ali. Lots of pressure. Never done a thesis before. And suddenly I'm expected to wrap it up in a couple of months.

ALI

Yeah...

VIRAF

I did grab a couple of beers at Jimbo's the other night.

ALI

Jimbo's?! But that's a meat market, Vir!

VIRAF

A what? Oh... No, it was an older crowd. I just drove out there for a drink.

MEGAN

(smirking)

What's this about Viraf and meat markets?

Everyone but Ali laughs. She looks aggrieved.

ALI

Vir has been picking up women at Jimbo's.

DOUG

Did you say at Bimbos'?

The table, except for Ali, erupts in laughter. Doug stands and Bernie joins him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

(to Bernie)

Let's pack it up.

BERNIE

Ain't it time we got some roadies?

Doug and Bernie shuffle back toward the bandstand. The Waitress arrives with another tray of Margaritas. Ali gets up and puts on her jacket.

SARAH

Ali, you're not leaving already?

ALI

Sorry. Too many margaritas, I think.

Ali departs, waving to the table. Viraf watches her navigate the tables toward the exit. She passes the bandstand where The Moles pack up. She hesitates. Doug never looks up, just wraps cables and wipes down his guitar. Ali walks out the door. Viraf stands, has an urge to follow her.

Sarah gets up and moves to the chair next to Viraf.

SARAH

Is it true India has the biggest movie business in the world?

VIRAF

(distracted, sits)

Uh, yeah. Yeah. We love movies....

SARAH

Was "Star Wars" as big in India as it was here?

VIRAF

With the more Westernized audiences... But the rest are mostly into Hindi "fillums."

Viraf stands again, grabbing his jacket.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Sarah.... I'll be right back.

Viraf moves toward the exit, passing Doug and The Moles in the last stages of packing up their gear.

EXT DEER PARK NIGHT

Viraf steps out on the porch. Car lights turn on, engines start as cars leave. Viraf scans the parking lot looking for Ali. No sign of her. He goes back inside.

INT DEER PARK NIGHT

Viraf passes by the band.

DOUG

Vir. Give us a hand here?

VIRAF

Sure.

Doug hands Viraf his cased guitar and a mic stand. Doug grabs his heavy amplifier. They trudge toward the parking lot.

DOUG

Thanks, man. We could use a roadie. Interested?

VIRAF

Yeah. Right after I get my degree.

EXT PARKING LOT NIGHT

Very few cars are left. Doug, coat on, stops to look around.

DOUG

She leave already?

VIRAF

Ali? Yeah. A few minutes ago...

DOUG

Shit. Can you give me and my stuff  
a ride back? Ali took the Galaxie.

VIRAF

Yeah, sure. C'mon.

They approach the Pinto. Viraf opens the hatch. Doug  
chuckles.

DOUG

What's your muffler doing in the  
trunk?

VIRAF

Wait till you hear this car now.  
It's a hot rod.

They load the equipment into the hatchback's trunk space.

DOUG

So, what did you think of her?  
Isn't she great?

VIRAF

(dryly)  
Who, Ali?

DOUG

No, wise guy, Sarah. She and I hung  
out a lot when I lived in LA.

Viraf closes the hatchback.

VIRAF

Listen, it's not my business, and  
there's no question she's very  
pretty. And nice. But you've  
already got an incredible girl....

Doug, nodding calmly, holds up an open-palmed hand.

DOUG  
I know... But I never promised to  
be monogamous. She knows that.

Viraf stands open-mouthed. He climbs behind the wheel. Doug jumps into the passenger seat. The Pinto roars to life.

INT PINTO NIGHT

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Holy shit. Take this baby to  
Daytona.

Doug rolls down the window. THE CAR GROWL grows LOUDER.

VIRAF  
(yelling)  
Daytona?

DOUG  
The Daytona 500, man. Florida here  
we come!

EXT STREET NIGHT

The Pinto disappears into the darkness in a cloud of exhaust.

EXT VIRAF'S APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT.

Establishing. Light snow drifts out of the night sky.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Viraf sits on the couch, working on his thesis. Books and papers are strewn on the coffee table. He hears a knock at his door. He gets up and opens it to find Ali standing there, one hand behind her back.

ALI  
Hey, stranger.

VIRAF  
Come on in.

ALI  
You need to stop working so hard.

Ali steps into the apartment. Viraf shuts the door.

ALI (CONT'D)  
(coyly)  
I've got something for you.

She steps further into the room while still disguising what's behind her back.

ALI (CONT'D)  
I made it in ceramics class.

Ali holds out a small, colorful Yoda-like figurine.

VIRAF  
Wow. That's fabulous.

He takes it from her and examines it from all sides.

ALI  
Do you recognize it?

VIRAF  
Yeah. Of course. One of your little creatures.

ALI  
Not just any creature. Look.

Viraf looks closer and notices that the creature wears glasses.

VIRAF  
Is it me?!

ALI  
Yeah. See how he throws his hand around when he talks.

VIRAF  
That's the first time anyone's made a statue of me.

Viraf hugs Ali.

ALI  
It's just a little figurine.

VIRAF  
That's fine. No one's made a figurine of me either, Ms. Michelangelo.

ALI  
Oh, good. So are you volunteering to pose for a David?

Viraf holds the figurine up to admire it.

VIRAF

Yeah. Maybe you'd do me without a paunch and a fat ass, then.

ALI

I do think you make a cute dragon.

Viraf smiles.

ALI (CONT'D)

So, Vir. I have a quick question. I'm going to a Grateful Dead show in Philly, a week from Saturday. And I've got an extra ticket. Do you want to go?

VIRAF

Wow. Sure. Fantastic! Thanks. Are we going in the Galaxie? Like for the Moody Blues?

Ali hesitates.

ALI

No. No, it's just me... Would you mind driving?

VIRAF

(pleasantly taken aback)  
No problem. Absolutely. No problem.

ALI

Great.

Ali smiles. She grabs Viraf for a small kiss on the cheek and heads to the door. Viraf watches the door close, wondering what just happened. Simon & Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair" creeps into the background.

EXT FIRST STATE APTS DAY

The day is bleak. Patches of snow still cover the ground.

INT VIRAF'S APARTMENT DAY

Viraf, dressed in jeans and a University of Delaware sweat shirt, opens the door to his apartment. Ali waltzes in, dressed in a hippie "Dead Head" look: tie-dye over long skirt, bead-strings around her neck and wrists.

She approaches Viraf as if for a hug, but plants a full-lipped mouth kiss on him. Viraf is stunned.

VIRAF  
(recovering)  
Looking nice...

Viraf gestures at his own clothes.

VIRAF (CONT'D)  
Same old, here.

ALI  
Oh, there'll be so much you can  
pick up outside the Spectrum....

She holds up a pinch of her tie-dyed top.

ALI (CONT'D)  
If you want.

VIRAF  
A bit chilly for that, no?

Ali pulls a knit shawl out of her bag.

ALI  
Voila!

She throws the wrap around her shoulders. Viraf grabs his jacket off the couch.

VIRAF  
Okay!

INT PINTO DAY

The Pinto (its muffler repaired) cruises along the road.

VIRAF  
Wow. Would you do that? Chuck  
everything to follow the band.

ALI  
Maybe. Some day. Maybe after I  
finish at UD. It's so hard to know  
right now.... Would you?

VIRAF  
Mmm, wow. Don't know... See  
California. Florida. Carolina...

Viraf checks his rearview mirror.

VIRAF'S POV

An ominous BLUE STATION WAGON rides his bumper.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf accelerates. Checks his mirror.

ALI

(oblivious)

So cool to see them at the Fillmore  
in San Francisco. Or at a festival.

VIRAF

Yeah... Very cool...

VIRAF'S POV

The Blue Station Wagon is still on him.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf drives but is distracted by the car that follows him.  
Ali notices his discomfort.

ALI

Vir? What's going on?

VIRAF

Behind us. Car's been tailgating us  
for the last couple miles.

EXT ROAD TWO LANES BOTH WAYS DAY

The Pinto speeds along in the left lane. The Station Wagon  
doesn't fall back an inch.

INT PINTO DAY

Ali turns to look behind them.

ALI

Asshole.

VIRAF AND ALI POV

The Station Wagon suddenly swerves and passes the Pinto on the right, revealing the wagon is towing a swerving trailer, loaded with equipment that's covered by a tarp. Ali SCREAMS as the Station Wagon & Trailer cuts back hard across the Pinto's nose.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf stomps the brakes and yanks the wheel, trying to avoid being smashed by the in-swinging trailer. The Pinto spins toward the solid median. Out of control. Viraf struggles with the steering wheel, working the gas pedal then the brakes to avoid the median. Other cars swerve to avoid hitting them.

EXT ROAD DAY

The Pinto spins right after missing the median. Then spins left after barely missing another car. The SHRIEKING TIRES of the Pinto pierce the traffic noise.

INT PINTO DAY

Ali sits zombified. At last Viraf manages to get the car under control and straightens it out. He looks at her. She stares straight ahead in shock, hand on her chest.

VIRAF POV

Viraf sees the Station Wagon & Trailer about 400 yards ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf, livid, guns the Pinto.

EXT ROAD DAY

The Pinto speeds along the road, coming up behind the Station Wagon & Trailer.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives with furious energy.

ALI  
No, Vir! Just let it go.

Ignoring Ali, Viraf closes on the Station Wagon, accelerating and BLOWING HIS HORN.

ALI (CONT'D)

Let it go!

EXT ROAD DAY

The Pinto speeds past the Station Wagon on the right and swerves viciously to cut it off. Viraf hits the brakes and checks his mirror.

ALI (V.O.)

(screaming)

Stop it, Vir. Stop!

VIRAF POV

The Station Wagon lurches right behind Viraf. Viraf accelerates. The Station Wagon pulls closer. Viraf hits the brakes again. The Station Wagon again drops back, avoiding a collision. Viraf speeds up again.

INT PINTO DAY

Viraf is almost enjoying this game, but he sees Ali is not.

VIRAF

Sorry. Not a good idea...wagging the rear end of a Pinto in front of a homicidal driver....

Ali is silent.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

He could have killed us, you know.

ALI

He's a jerk. A dangerous jerk. All the more reason not to react like that.

EXT ROAD DAY

VEHICLES slow down as a traffic signal turns yellow. A CAR that must have witnessed the latter proceedings slides in front of Viraf, preventing him from going through the light.

The Station Wagon slowly pulls up behind them.

INT PINTO CONTINUOUS

Viraf strains to look over his shoulder. Ali pushes his face forward with her hand. Viraf looks into his rearview mirror.

ALI  
Don't look.

VIRAF'S POV

The door to the station wagon opens.

VIRAF (V.O.)  
Too late...

INT PINTO CONTINUOUS

Viraf cuts the engine and unfastens his seat belt.

ALI  
Don't get out!

Viraf looks at Ali, then opens his door and steps outside.

EXT ROAD DAY

Viraf steps away from his car and stands ready, black beard bristling. A forty-ish MAN in worn overalls and a two day brown stubble walks aggressively toward him. Viraf tenses.

VIRAF  
What kind of stunt was that? You almost killed us.

The MAN steps closer.

MAN  
Listen, you motherfuckin' spic. I don't have all day to get where I'm goin' - behind people who don't know to ride in the slow lane.

VIRAF  
And that gives you the right to ram your fucking trailer into them?

MAN  
Damn right it does. Beat your fuckin' head in too. What're you gonna do about it?

Man steps in even closer.

VIRAF  
 (roaring like his father  
 at Victoria Terminus)  
 Try it, you fucking asshole! I'll  
 knock your rotten teeth out. And  
 then I'll call the cops.

ALI'S POV

From inside the car, Ali has rolled down the driver's window and can HEAR the argument loud and clear.

BACK TO SCENE

Man draws a breath. Seems to deflate at the mention of cops. He steps back. He drops his eyes.

MAN  
 Listen... I had a bad day...you  
 understand?

VIRAF  
 (furiously)  
 And that gives you the right to  
 call people anything you want? And  
 to lay your hands on them? Because  
 you had a bad day.

INTERCUT ALI'S REACTIONS TO THIS ARGUMENT

VIRAF (CONT'D)  
 I don't have to do a damned thing  
 to you. Life will take care of  
 someone like you....

Man attempts to speak, but no words come out of his mouth. Recognition of the accuracy of Viraf's frightening assessment is large on the Man's face. He turns and wanders back toward his Station Wagon. CAR HORNS BLARE as traffic starts to move.

Viraf returns to the Pinto while shouting over his shoulder.

VIRAF (CONT'D)  
 Your own life will take care of  
 you.

Viraf climbs back into the Pinto.

INT PINTO DAY

Viraf pulls on his seat belt. Ali sits straight up, looking ahead and not at Viraf.

VIRAF

Sorry...

Viraf starts the car. He pulls the Pinto back into traffic.

ALI

It's okay.

But her expression says it isn't.

VIRAF

You can relax now....

ALI

(tersely)

I'm relaxed.... How exactly were you planning to call the cops?

VIRAF

It didn't come to that, Ali. Probably because I said that. You should have seen his face....

ALI

I did. Stupid redneck...

VIRAF

(puzzled)

What's a redneck?

ALI

Oh, some country folk. Right out of the boonies - that kind.

VIRAF

(quick glance at her)

You could tell just from looking at him?

ALI

And the way he spoke, the things he said.

VIRAF

(thinking aloud as he drives)

You know, the mechanic who fixed this car was a lot like this guy who practically wrecked it....

It's Ali's turn to send a curious glance at Viraf.

VIRAF (CONT'D)

Almost wish I hadn't laid that stuff on him at the end. It's a rough life, as it is. Not just a bad day....

EXT ROAD DAY

The Pinto takes the I 495 Wilmington bypass and heads for Philadelphia.

EXT SPECTRUM DAY

Late afternoon. Viraf and Ali wander through a Dead Head bazar of painted trailers and temporary stalls vending Dead memorabilia. A small crowd of TIE-DYED DEAD HEADS, Men, Women, and Children mill about. An aura of psychedelia, love, peace, and weed is in the air.

Ali seems distracted, looking around and even behind them.

Viraf notices, but doesn't ask.

They approach a stall selling beads and jewelry. Ali admires a string of beads. A HIPPIE GIRL sits on a crate, strumming a guitar, singing the Dead's "Uncle John's Band." A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN in a flowing dress works the stall, showing Ali the necklace. She strings it around Ali's neck and steps back.

WOMAN

Wow...

Ali smiles and starts to remove the necklace.

VIRAF

No, it's totally you.

Viraf reaches for his wallet.

ALI

No, Vir...

VIRAF

Come on, Ali. You got the tickets.

Viraf hands some money to the Woman.

INT SPECTRUM DARK

The concert is on. Ali and Viraf sit inside the packed venue. Lights, like hundreds of fire flies, flicker from the raised cigarette lighters that greet the band. The lilting strains of "Bertha" echo through the concert hall.

MONTAGE: THE CONCERT

We DISSOLVE through various shots of Viraf and Ali as they watch the stage and snatches of Grateful Dead songs SEGUE from one to another. Viraf sneaks glances at Ali, but she stays enthralled by the band on stage.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT SPECTRUM MEN'S ROOM NIGHT

Viraf washes his hands in a noisy men's room. He looks at his adult, bearded image in the mirror with some pride.

EXT SPECTRUM CONCESSION AREA NIGHT

The Dead song, "Ripple," reverberates through the arena. Viraf approaches a concession stand. A DEAD HEAD YOUNG WOMAN twirls in a tie-dyed caftan.

Ali stands at the concession stand...talking to Doug. Shocked by Doug's presence, Viraf approaches. Ali and Doug turn to see Viraf approach. He waves but steps into a beverage line.

EXT CONCESSION STAND/BEVERAGE LINE NIGHT

Viraf waits in a fast-moving line, discreetly checking out Ali and Doug, recalling how she'd looked around for someone.

VIRAF'S POV

Ali is deep in conversation with the stubble-faced Doug.

EXT CONCESSION AREA NIGHT

Viraf approaches Ali and Doug with a pizza box and two drinks. He hands Ali a drink. Doug smiles nonchalantly, but unspoken tension binds the trio.

ALI  
 (awkwardly)  
 Vir, Doug's with a friend in town,  
 and they're having a party after  
 the show. Do you think you could  
 drive us over? I know the way.

VIRAF  
 Sure...

DOUG  
 Cool. See you soon....

Doug flashes a two-fingered "peace" sign and departs. Ali watches him go. "Ripple" crescendos.

CLOSE ON VIRAF

EXT PHILADELPHIA STREET NIGHT

The Pinto crawls along a quiet street. Light snow falls.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Ali pensively looks out the window searching for an address. More Grateful Dead emanates from the radio.

ALI  
 Here it is. One eighty one.

Viraf looks for a parking place.

EXT PHILADELPHIA STREET NIGHT

Viraf and Ali, her knit wrap on her shoulders, climb the stairs of a weathered brownstone. The snow falls harder. A FEW PARTY PEOPLE linger on the stairs sharing a joint.

INT HALLWAY NIGHT

Viraf and Ali enter a sparsely furnished hall lined with doorways and a balcony that overlooks the street. Era-appropriate MUSIC resonates through the house. SOME PARTY-GOERS come and go. A GUY in a colorful kaftan passes Ali.

GUY  
 Hey, Ali...

ALI  
Seen Doug?

Viraf stays put, absorbing the scene. GUY opens one of the doors and calls into a room.

GUY  
Doug!

Doug comes to the door. Ali walks over to him.

VIRAF'S POV

Ali turns towards Viraf and waves, then disappears through the doorway with Doug.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf wanders down the hall and walks through a different doorway.

INT ROOM/BROWNSTONE NIGHT

The room is filled with SMALL GROUPS, some women, but mostly men. A bowl of pot is passed around. Smoke fills the air. The bowl is passed to Viraf, but he declines and wanders back into the hallway.

INT HALLWAY NIGHT

Viraf steps out onto the balcony and watches the snow fall.

ALI (V.O.)  
Vir...

Viraf turns to see Ali poking her head out onto the balcony. He approaches her.

ALI  
I thought you might have left already.

Viraf shakes his head, no.

ALI (CONT'D)  
(hesitantly)  
Vir... I hope you don't mind...but I'm going to stay here for the weekend.... Doug will take me home.

VIRAF  
 (nods, stoic)  
 Okay...

ALI  
 You can spend the night here, if  
 you like. Our friend won't mind.

VIRAF  
 Thanks... I'll just go back, if  
 you're okay.

ALI  
 I'm fine.... Vir...I had a great  
 time at the show.

VIRAF  
 I'm glad. Me too.

But there isn't much conviction in his voice.

ALI  
 Is it still snowing?

Viraf nods.

ALI (CONT'D)  
 A lot?

VIRAF  
 Nah...

ALI  
 It might get slippery.... Drive  
 carefully.

VIRAF  
 I will.

ALI  
 Can you find your way back? You  
 have to get back onto 95.

VIRAF  
 No problem.

Ali steps toward Viraf.

ALI  
 Okay.

Viraf manages a smile and nod, but stays put. No hug. Ali,  
 looking distressed, steps back into the hall and toward the  
 room.

INT ROOM/BROWNSTONE NIGHT

Viraf returns to the room with SMALL GROUPS.

Viraf approaches one of the groups: TWO LONG-HAIRED DUDES and a large BEARDED GUY who passes a bowl of weed to Viraf. Viraf shakes his head.

VIRAF

No, thanks. But can you tell me how to get back to 95 for Delaware?

Bearded Guy takes a big hit off the bowl and starts to give directions while exhaling.

BEARDED GUY

Easy. Just get out to Broad. Then get on 676 East.

Bearded Guy takes another hit, as Viraf considers this.

BEARDED GUY (CONT'D)

Then take US 30 to 95. South.

VIRAF

Thanks. How do I get to Broad from here? And which way do I turn?

Bearded Guy exhales another cloud.

BEARDED GUY

(to The Dudes)

Who is this guy?

The Dudes and Bearded Guy laugh and drift toward another group. One of the Dudes turns toward Viraf.

DUDE

Where you trying to get to?

VIRAF

(grimly)

Home. I'm going home.

Viraf stalks out of the room.

EXT STREET NIGHT

Viraf walks along a snow-covered street, looking for his car. Viraf finds the Pinto and sweeps snow off the windshield with his hand. Then he blows on his hand to warm it up while unlocking the car door with his other hand.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf starts the car and pulls away. The radio plays.

EXT PHILADELPHIA ROADS NIGHT:

The Pinto drives through falling snow on the tangle of roads and then highways that lead out of Philadelphia.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf's wipers are moving as fast as they can, sweeping hypnotically. The snow keeps falling. Viraf drives through a blurred white cloud. Occasional headlights stream by him.

He sees a sign, illuminated by his high beams, that reads: CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY.

INT PINTO NIGHT

VIRAF

Shit!

Viraf pulls over and unfolds a map from the glove box. After poring over it, he drives on again, through a snow storm approaching blizzard proportions.

EXT HIGHWAY NIGHT

The Pinto is a dark smudge moving slowly through a blurry white world.

INT PINTO NIGHT

Viraf drives slowly. He can barely see out the windshield. The car skids. Viraf fights the steering wheel. The car stalls. He then guns the engine, and the wheels churn....

Peering through the white, Viraf eventually discerns the growing twin towers of a bridge. The Pinto angles upward and begins to climb. It is buffeted by high winds that blow it around like a toy. The road behaves like ice. The wipers stall from the weight of the snow. Viraf pulls to the side.

Viraf turns off the car. He turns on the emergency flashers and takes a breath.

INT PINTO LATER

Viraf sits shivering, huddled over to stay warm. His beard frosts over. The storm slowly dies. Viraf opens the car door.

EXT DELAWARE MEMORIAL BRIDGE NIGHT

Viraf steps out onto the bridge and to a guardrail.

HIGH SHOT of Viraf and the Pinto stopped in the middle of the southbound bridge.

VIRAF'S POV

Viraf sees above him the towers of the identical half-mile bridges, side by side. Then he notices the highway sign for "295 South." He sees the historic Delaware River flowing under the bridge. He sees a sign for New Jersey behind him and a sign for Delaware in front of him.

BACK TO SCENE

Viraf scans the width of the Delaware River to see both sides. He is on a historic bridge between two states.

Viraf looks up at the sky. The light pink of dawn is breaking through the gray.

END CREDITS ROLL over the sky.

FADE OUT

THE END