

AISHA

It's closer than what it used to be.

She 'ices' the toaster strudel in frosting and places in front of an empty chair at the table.

MO

In Pakistan I was a doctor but here they tell me go *back to residency*? Makes no sense.

Mo shakes his head in frustration and stuffs his resume in his leather bound briefcase.

AISHA

Please, try and do your best on this interview. We need the money.

Rohaam enters in full school uniform and a backpack around his shoulder. He's ready for the day.

He approaches the empty chair and looks down at the toaster strudel. The icing spells out '*I'll miss you!*' He looks to his mom who gives him a wink. He smiles, then takes a bite.

AISHA (CONT'D)

(To Rohaan)

See you in a few days okay? If you ace your history test, I'll bring you a souvenir from Manhattan.

She walks over and squeezes Rohaan's cheeks which he shoos away with his hand.

**SCENE 1/2
START**

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Rohaam shuts the door behind him and walks down the driveway. His friends TJ, Caucasian (12) and YU, Asian (10) wait for him at the street. They wear the same school uniforms as Rohaan.

TJ

RoRo! You do the homework?

They each do their special made up hand shakes and begin to walk.

ROHAAN

I tried but... had to beat the last boss.

YU
By yourself!? Did you?

ROHAAN
What else you expect from the best
player here?

Rohaan gives Yu a friendly jab on the shoulder and bolts away
as Yu chases after him.

We hear the sound of an airplane in the distance.

~~EXT. STREET - DAY~~

~~Rohaan, TJ, and Yu now stroll back from school. Their
uniforms not as pristine as they were this morning. Yu tries
twirling a basketball on one finger.~~

YU
My parents said we can get the
jumpy house again if we win! You
guys should sleepover.

They stop at Rohaans driveway.

ROHAAN
I'll ask my mom but count me in!
See you guys tomorrow?

TJ
Everyday dude!

Special handshakes are done and Rohaan walks towards his
home.

END

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Rohaan stares at his textbook unable to retain any
information. His eyes grow heavy as he slowly lowers his head
on his textbook.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Rohaan's eyes shoot open as his drool soaks the textbook
page. He runs out the door.

AISHA

What if he runs for a government office one day? They would question him, is he going to have to explain himself for the rest of his life?

Mo stands to meet Aisha eye to eye.

MO

I won't let other people dictate how I'm going to live my life. This is *my name*. That will not be taken from me!

AISHA

I will not have Rohaan be looked down upon, marginalized, or treated with disrespect. He's just a child and needs protection. If the entry to belonging is a last name change for him then so be it!

EXT. STREET - THE NEXT DAY

Rohaam looks down both sides of the street waiting for his friends to come.

He sits on the curb and waits a minute more.

Finally, he stands and begins his walk towards school alone.

**SCENE 2/2
START**

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Rohaam closes the door and puts his backpack down now having come back from school.

Mo and Aisha are now dressed in business attire, reading through documents in a manilla folder.

ROHAAN

What's happening?

MO

(defeated sigh)

Your mother and I have decided that we need to do whatever it takes to protect you during this time. So, we need to change your last name.

ROHAAN

Why?

Aisha and Mo both look up to Rohaan.

Mo hands him the manilla folder.

AISHA

It carries... a weight to it now. I don't want you to be judged for something that isn't your fault.

Rohaam looks at the pages briefly but doesn't pay attention to any of the writing.

ROHAAN

Why am I being punished? No one else has to do this.

MO

It's for your safety. We don't want their ignorance to be a reason why you fall behind in life. We started over when we moved to this country. Think of it as a new start for you.

ROHAAN

But I don't want a new start.

MO

Well, you don't really have a choice. This is happening. Learn it. Accept it.

CONTINUE

~~EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATER~~

~~Rohaam is now dressed in a suit as are his parents. As they solemnly walk together in the house.~~

~~INT. HOUSE~~

~~Rohaam crosses to the kitchen table and sits down.~~

~~Rohaam looks down at the court documents. He reads his new name: 'Rohaam Harris'.~~

ROHAAN

What are my friends going to say?

AISHA

Those who know you as Rohaan, will see you as *Rohaam*. And those who don't, well, it's not their life to live. They will understand. Eventually.

END