

GHOST WRITER

Written by

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EXT. DOWNTOWN MUMBAI - DUSK

Smog chokes the coming sunset, creating an eerie orange sky.

A congested potpourri of taxis, autos, rickshaws and motorcycles cram the narrow streets.

The HONKS of angry horns echo in the air - a commuting nightmare. In the middle of that mess --

INT. TAXI - DOWNTOWN MUMBAI - DUSK

A TAXI DRIVER taps his HORN as he cuts off a competing cab.

NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE IS IN HINDI - SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH.

TAXI DRIVER

You're not going to make it.

RAJ RANI (42), sinewy and strong, yoga fit, sits with perfect posture in the back seat - clasping a bound MANUSCRIPT.

RAJ

I know...

The Taxi Driver takes in Raj's face in the rearview mirror -- sees the resignation in Raj's eyes... Whatever zest for life he might have once had... Evaporated.

TAXI DRIVER

I didn't mean you. I meant on time.

Raj's phone BEEPS. He answers.

INT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

Coffee, tea and Indian pastries arranged atop a small conference table... Preparation for a meeting.

DEEPAK PATEL (35), sweat stains on his white dress shirt, paces around the table, phone to his ear... A nervous wreck.

DEEPAK

(into phone)

They're arriving in five minutes!

INTERCUT BETWEEN DEEPAK AND RAJ IN THE TAXI

RAJ

There's traffic.

DEEPAK

There always is! You should have...
Sorry... You do have the script -
yes?

Raj's eyes fall on the bound manuscript.

RAJ

Sort of...

Raj kills the call on his end - gazes out the window.

DEEPAK

Sort of!? Raj...?... Hello...?

EXT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - DUSK

A twenty-story structure crafted from shimmering glass.

Raj, script in hand, plods towards the entrance like a prisoner headed for execution.

SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME.

Deepak nervously nibbles his nails as he keeps an eye on --

Three impatient FILM INVESTORS - scowls on their faces as they wait at the conference table.

Deepak removes his phone from his pocket - taps the RAJ ICON.

EXT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - SAME TIME

Raj stares skyward up the face of the shimmering building - as if it was Goliath and he was David.

He removes his phone from his pocket - sees Deepak's call. He closes his eyes, takes a huge breath - hits the answer icon.

RAJ

I can't do this anymore.

Raj pockets his phone - spots a large TRASH CAN near the entrance of the building.

He lumbers over to the trash can, hesitates just a moment, then drops the script on top of the other refuse.

Raj slides down to the pavement, leans against the trash can, taps his head against the metal side... A defeated man.

SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME.

A panicked Deepak apologizing to the angry Investors as they storm from the room.

EXT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Raj leaning against the trash can gazing at an image on his smartphone: AN OLD HOUSE. Underneath the image:

RURAL HOME - FIXER UPPER - FOR SALE in BISHOP CALIFORNIA.

Deepak bursts out the doors of the building - spots Raj.

AT THE TRASHCAN

Deepak's shadow looms over Raj.

Raj, immersed in the image on his phone, pays him no mind.

DEEPAK
Where's the script?

Without looking up, Raj taps the trash can with his elbow.

DEEPAK
That bad...?

Deepak peers inside the can, spots the manuscript wedged in between discarded fast food.

DEEPAK
Ewww...

Deepak removes a handkerchief from his pocket - retrieves the script as if it were toxic waste.

He flips the cover open, scans the first page. Then flips to the second. It's TOTALLY BLANK.

Deepak flips to the third page - blank. Rifles through the rest of the pages - all blank.

DEEPAK
You wrote one page?

RAJ
Any notes...?

DEEPAK
What's going on, Raj?

RAJ
Apparently...
(taps his temple)
Nothing.

DEEPAK
We have a contract with three very
angry investors who have put a
boatload of money into this --

RAJ
You need to find another writer.

DEEPAK
Another writer!? They invested in
you. And if you really want to stay
in this business --

RAJ
I don't.

Deepak slides down, settles next to Raj.

DEEPAK
C'mon, buddy - it's just a dry
spell... Give it some time.

Raj's eyes still on his phone screen, consumed by this image
of the FIXER-UPPER, RURAL HOME

RAJ
I want to work with my hands.

DEEPAK
You can type with your hands.

RAJ
No. I want to build real things.
Repair things. Like my father did.

DEEPAK
Your father died broke.

Raj nods, takes this... Stares at the image of the house.

RAJ
But he didn't die broken.

DEEPAK
Raj, you need to write.

A now teary-eyed Raj turns his smartphone towards Deepak -
shows him the image of the FIXER UPPER - RURAL HOUSE.

RAJ
I need to go home...

EXT. BISHOP CALIFORNIA - DOWNTOWN - DAY

A small, quaint town high in the snow-capped Eastern Sierra Mountain Range. Population - just shy of 4,000.

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

Restaurants, gas stations and gift shops line the main street to serve passing tourists. But one of those buildings is a --

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

JAKE JOHNSON (65) an old-timey real estate agent pours himself a cup of coffee at a makeshift kitchen counter.

NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE NOW IN ENGLISH.

JAKE
Sure you don't want some?

Raj, perched in a chair on the other side of Jake's desk, makes a - *no thanks* - motion with his hand as he intently studies a real estate PURCHASE CONTRACT.

JAKE
Indians don't care for coffee?

Raj - still immersed, doesn't respond.

JAKE
(louder)
You don't like coffee?

RAJ
Sorry... Yes, I do. But only with
chicory.

Jake takes a seat across from Raj, props his boots up on the corner of his desk.

JAKE
Chicory...?

RAJ
(still reading)
It gives it an earthy taste.

JAKE
Sounds horrendous.

Jake points at the real estate contract.

JAKE

If you got any questions, now's the time to ask.

RAJ

(re: the contract)

It says, *As is*...?

JAKE

The house ain't been occupied for decades. Hell, I'm not even sure what works and what don't... That's why it's so cheap after all. *As is*... Means you know that.

Raj nods.

JAKE

So, we all good here?

Raj nods - scribbles his signature on the contract.

JAKE

If it were me, I'd just bulldoze it - start over.

RAJ

I want the challenge of restoring it... With my own hands.

JAKE

You're going to need more than your hands.

Jake scribbles on a piece of paper, slides it towards Raj.

JAKE

That's my grandson's name and cell number. He's pretty handy.

RAJ

Thank you, but I don't think I'll --

JAKE

He's a bit of a drug addict. Well, he was. Got into that fentanyl shit. Pretty sure he's okay now. He'll work for cheap, but if you want him it's --

RAJ

As is?

JAKE

As is.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - THE CRACK OF DAWN

Nestled in an isolated grove of decaying WHITE BIRCH TREES and overgrown wild grass is --

The same house displayed on Raj's smartphone screen. Except --

It looks much smaller and a thousand-percent shittier. Far more dilapidated than *fixer-upper*.

The redwood frame cracked, faded and dirty - Dried, dead leaves clutter the roof.

A small stoop crafted from bricks leads to the front door.

A PICK-UP truck towing a small UHAUL TRAILER kicks up dust as it nears. The bed of the truck is filled to the brim with tools, building and cleaning supplies

Raj exits the truck. A content smile crosses his face as he takes in this piece of crap house... As if it were a mansion.

Raj hustles to the rear of the UHAUL TRAILER and slides the door open. It's stocked with canned food, rice, crackers, bottled water, kitchen utensils, bedding and the like.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAY

The door CREAKS open as Raj enters. He starts in the --

LIVING ROOM

Eerily dim - the windows all covered with aluminum foil.

Dust, cobwebs and rodent droppings cover everything.

Raj flicks a light switch near the door - no juice. He tries several more times - no luck.

He hustles over to the windows, tears off the foil allowing the sunlight to clearly reveal --

ANTIQUUE FURNITURE, ravaged by time and neglect.

A small FIREPLACE. Its once white marble stone foundation now blackened with dirt.

In the corner, an antique, roll-top desk with a black, circa 1950 TYPEWRITER perched on it.

Raj approaches the typewriter - admires the relic from the past. Just before moving on he notices --

A wastepaper basket with wads of crumpled paper in it. Oddly, the paper appears recent - no dust or yellowing.

RAJ

Huh...?

To Raj's right, a small hallway leading to the bedroom.

Raj paces to his left and enters the --

KITCHEN

Even filthier than the living room.

A dusty dinette table in the corner - big enough for two.

A very old refrigerator and a rust-pocked oven are the nicest parts.

Raj turns the sink's faucet handle. A POP of air releases followed by yellowish-brown liquid oozing out --

The water eventually becomes clearer as the old pipes are flushed. Finally, something works... Sort of...

Off to the --

HALLWAY

Raj peers up at the ceiling. The access cover that leads to the attic is gone, exposing the home's redwood support beams.

He paces towards the --

BEDROOM

Furnished with an antique dresser, rocking chair and a small POSTER BED in the center of the room.

The bedding, tattered and worn.

Raj tests the mattress with his hand - surprisingly - it's okay. Now on to the --

BATHROOM

Tiny by today's standards.

Raj opens the faucets - gets the same results he got in the kitchen.

He reaches for the toilet handle - hesitates...

RAJ
Please work...

FLUSH - it does!

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Raj by the pickup truck, the handle of a broom in one hand, phone to his ear with the other.

An array of cleaning supplies - a mop, detergents, wash rags and the like are on the ground.

RAJ
(into phone)
Your grandfather didn't mention if
you did electrical work...
(listening)
Very good. Very good indeed. Can
you come this afternoon?

MONTAGE OF HOUSE CLEANING

- Raj using a SWIFTER to remove cobwebs and dust.
- Raj wet-mopping floors
- Raj, face now sweaty and reddened, clad in latex gloves, vigorously scrubbing the kitchen sink and countertop.
- Raj filling the cupboards with canned goods.
- Raj placing new bedding and pillows on the poster bed.

LIVING ROOM

Raj opens a box containing a new laptop - sets it in the center of the roll-top desk.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - FRONT STOOP - LATE AFTERNOON

Raj, perched on the stoop, gulps back a bottle of water.

His clothes drenched in sweat and covered in filth from his cleaning marathon.

He smiles as he spots a red-tailed hawk circling above in the pale blue sky.

Raj closes his eyes as he inhales the cool Sierra air. Then --

The RUMBLE of an approaching 1980s VOLKSWAGEN VAN, faded orange paint, beat to shit - rust pocked and dented.

Black exhaust spews from the tailpipe as it comes to a stop.

Raj stands just as the driver-side door opens revealing --

LOGAN RAY (25), rail thin, both arms tatted from wrist to shoulder, donning a tattered baseball cap worn backward.

RAJ
Logan...?

LOGAN
Yep.

RAJ
Jake's grandson...?

Logan retrieves a metal toolbox from the van.

LOGAN
Were you expecting someone else?

RAJ
(muttering)
Sort of...

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - BACK OF THE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Raj studies Logan as he pries open the dirty, rusted cover of a 1950s FUSE BOX.

Logan brushes away the cobweb and dirt revealing a series of old-timey GLASS FUSES.

He removes one - inspects it - burnt on the bottom.

LOGAN
Not good.

RAJ
Explain.

LOGAN
For starters, you need a new fuse box... That's a big chunk of change... And it'll take a while to find the right type.

Logan's eyes follow the thick electrical line to the house towards a rickety power pole, a 100 yards in the distance.

LOGAN

And I ain't sure that power line is
even live anyway.

RAJ

What do you recommend?

Logan backs up from the house, takes in its size.

LOGAN

Go off the grid.

RAJ

Meaning...?

LOGAN

The house can't be more than a
thousand square feet - maybe not
even that. You ain't going to need
much wattage.

Logan backs up... Eyeballs the leaf-covered roof.

LOGAN

I got to check it out, but I'm
assuming it could handle a solar
panel... You can get a battery back
with it... And we could put a
propane generator...

(points nearby)

Right there - for backup. Best part
- no electric bill.

RAJ

How much?

LOGAN

Five hundred for me, plus
materials.

Raj contemplates a moment.

LOGAN

Four-hundred...?

RAJ

That's not what I was thinking.

LOGAN

I'm not doing it for less than --

RAJ

Five is fine. The thing is, I don't want you to do the work. I want you to teach me how to do it.

LOGAN

You want to pay me to teach you how to work?

RAJ

Precisely.

Logan shakes his head in disbelief.

LOGAN

It's your money.

Raj extends his hand to seal the deal. Logan takes it.

LOGAN

I'm going to need to borrow your truck. The solar panels won't fit in my Van.

BISHOP HOUSE - FRONT - MOMENTS LATER

Raj watches as Logan hops into the pick-up truck, turns the ignition and rolls the window down.

LOGAN

Be back around noon tomorrow. If you need any light tonight, there's a battery lantern in the van.

RAJ

Thank you... Very kind.

Logan extends an open hand towards Raj.

LOGAN

Going to need a credit card.
(off Raj's look)
I ain't got the money to buy all the stuff.

Raj reaches into his pocket, retrieves a small wallet.

RAJ

Where did you learn how to do all this? The electrical --

Raj retrieves his credit card from the wallet.

LOGAN
Took some courses.

RAJ
Trade school?

And hands the credit card to Logan.

LOGAN
Prison.

Logan snatches the card... Drives off.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

A full moon casts the house in an eerie glow. The HOOT of an owl echoes in the distance.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A camping lantern basks the room in a yellow glow.

Raj sets his laptop on the center of the roll-top desk.

He glances at the old black typewriter, now set on a small table next to the desk.

RAJ
What did you write...?

Raj checks his phone - black screen... Battery's dead.

BEDROOM - THE DEAD OF NIGHT

Raj fast asleep. The lantern on a nightstand next to him.

Then a faint...

CLACK-CLACK.... Emanates from somewhere in the house.

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK....

Raj stirs...

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK....

Raj's eyes pop open. He listens... Was he just dreaming?

He lies back down. Moments pass... Now a louder --

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK....

Raj bolts back up - grabs the lantern from the nightstand.

HALLWAY

Raj, holding the lantern aloft, creeps down the hallway, eyes on full alert... He reaches the --

LIVING ROOM

And tiptoes to the window - peers out searching for anything that might have caused the noise... Sees nothing in the dark.

Raj pivots - spots the typewriter now perched on the center of the roll-top desk. His laptop now shoved into the corner.

RAJ
Did I....?
(nearing the desk)
I must have...

Raj hovers a finger over one of the typewriter keys... Finally presses it.

It's frozen. He tries another key, then another - same result. Years of rust no doubt.

RAJ
Okay then...

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - ROOFTOP - DAY

Logan watches as Raj, on his knees, uses a power drill to screw in a mounting bolt.

LOGAN
Be careful of the torque.

Raj approaches the task with the seriousness of a Doctor performing open heart surgery.

LOGAN
Good... Good. Now the other side.

Raj stands, loses his footing. Luckily, Logan snatches him by the belt preventing a fall.

LOGAN
Always on your knees.

Raj nods... Crawls over to the other side of the panel.

BACKYARD - LATER

A GENERATOR and a large PROPANE TANK sit on a makeshift platform a few yards from the house.

Raj holds a red wire and a white wire snaking out from where the old fuse box was.

LOGAN

Okay, now put the wire cap on them.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The gentle HUM of a generator flows in through the open kitchen window.

Raj, on a step ladder, stretches to replace a single bulb in the kitchen ceiling.

He finishes, steps down and admires the results of his efforts, as meager as they were.

LOGAN (O.S.)

Are we ready?

Logan enters.

RAJ

Ready.

Logan points to the light switch.

LOGAN

You do the honors.

Raj places a finger beneath the switch as he crosses his fingers in his other hand. He flips the switch and --

THE LIGHT SHINES.

RAJ

Yes!

He darts into the --

LIVING ROOM

Flips the switch - LIGHTS ON.

RAJ

It works!

Logan enters.

Raj dashes over to the roll-top desk, inserts the laptop's cord into an outlet. The CHARGING LIGHT comes on.

RAJ

Perfect!

LOGAN
You got anything to eat?

RAJ
It's going to be a nice evening.
How about al fresco?

LOGAN
Who's Al Fresco?

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DUSK

The sky dims as a cool breeze rises.

The small dinette table from the kitchen now moved outside.

Raj and Logan sit in folding chairs on opposite sides
finishing the remnants of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Raj dabs his face with a napkin as he watches Logan devour a
handful of potato chips, then guzzles back a bottle of water.

Logan wipes his mouth with his sleeve - the sophistication of
a toddler.

RAJ
It was an odd sound... Like a...
CLACK-CLACK-CLACK. You ever hear
something like that?

LOGAN
Woodpecker - more than likely.

RAJ
Yeah... You're probably right.

Raj smiles as he sees the lights emanating from the windows
of the house. He raises his bottle of water - a toast motion.

RAJ
To my American home.

Logan raises his bottle.

LOGAN
To you becoming a citizen one day.

RAJ
I am a citizen.

LOGAN
(confused)
I wouldn't have guessed.

RAJ
Because...?

LOGAN
Really? You know...
(points at Raj)
The Indian thing.

RAJ
Are you saying that an Indian...
Never mind...

LOGAN
I wasn't trying to mean. Just
curious.

RAJ
My father left India... Came to
America, before I was born.

LOGAN
How come?

Raj reflects for a moment.

RAJ
Shame...

LOGAN
Of what?

RAJ
He married the woman he loved
rather than the woman chosen for
him... His family disowned him.

LOGAN
Indians sound harsh, dude.

RAJ
You wouldn't understand.

LOGAN
Nope.

RAJ
He did odd jobs all up and down the
Sierras. Mammoth, June Lake,
Tahoe... He was quite the handyman.

LOGAN
Like me.

Raj scans the tattoos on Logan.

RAJ
Not exactly... Anyway, we moved
back to India when I was ten.

LOGAN
Work dry up?

RAJ
No. There was plenty of work.

LOGAN
Then...?

RAJ
It seems that the need of
grandparents to know their
grandchild outweighs their
disappointment in their son.

Raj points out towards the snow-capped mountains.

RAJ
I remember that like it was
yesterday. The moment I saw the
picture of...
(points at the house)
That on my phone, I felt a deep
sense of --

LOGAN
Poverty?

RAJ
Home.

LOGAN
(checks his watch)
I gotta to go.
(standing)
So, what about the internet? You
want to set it up tomorrow?

RAJ
I want you to teach me how...If you
have the time.

LOGAN
I got nothing but time.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raj, at the roll-top desk, sips hot tea as he stares at an
old photo displayed on his laptop computer screen --

RAJ AND DEEPAK STANDING IN FRONT OF THE BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - BEAMING SMILES ON THEIR FACES... Better times.

Raj closes the laptop lid, stands and stretches - achy muscles from a long day of work. His eyes land on --

The old typewriter on the adjacent table. Raj taps a key - CLACK. This time it works.

RAJ
That's odd...

Raj shoves his laptop into the corner of the desk, grabs the typewriter and places it in the center.

He opens a desk drawer, removes one sheet of paper, inserts it into the old typewriter roll bar and types:

AAABBBCCCD...DD...

The letters are faded.

RAJ
Needs a new ribbon...

Raj types: FADE IN:

He drums his fingers on top of the desk... Thinks... Nothing.

BEDROOM - THE WEE HOURS

Dark...

Raj, flat on his back, his open eyes locked on the ceiling - too many thoughts in his head to find sleep.

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK...

Raj flips on the light switch and peers out the window.

RAJ
Where are you little woodpecker...?

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK... DING - a typewriter bell.

Raj's eyes widen... That came from somewhere inside.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Raj, frozen in fear as he stares at the page on the old typewriter. It now reads:

AAABBBCCCD...DD...

FADE IN:

GET OUT!

The LIGHTS GO OUT - Total darkness.

A WHOOSH and sickening SNAP emanate from the hallway as the lights come back on. Raj looks towards the hallway and sees --

A DEAD MAN HANGING from a rope tied to the attic beams, clad in circa 1950 business attire.

His face and the exposed skin on his hands are an eerie, translucent blue.

RAJ

Bhoota!

The HANGING MAN's eyes pop open.

HANGING MAN

GET OUT!

Raj snatches his keys from atop the roll-top desk --

RAJ

BHOOTA!!!

Bolts for the door and bursts out to --

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

Running like a madman.

He stumbles to the ground - picks himself back up, rushes towards his pick-up truck.

He swings open the driver's door - hops inside.

INT/EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK - NIGHT

Raj's trembling hands can't slot the key into the ignition.

RAJ

C'mon!

Finally does it. He turns the ignition - flips on the headlights only to see --

THE HANGING MAN standing directly in front of the truck. Oddly, now, no longer translucent. He looks real... Alive.

Raj, frozen in fear as The Hanging Man moves towards him. He ducks down as the Hanging Man reaches the truck window and --

Taps on the glass... Quite politely.

Raj doesn't stir - stays crouched down.

The Hanging Man taps again. Raj inches up... Now eye to eye.

The Hanging Man makes a - *roll down your window* - motion.

Raj rolls the window down just an inch or so.

THE HANGING MAN
(French accent)
Pakistani...?

Raj, jaw open, just stares at the Hanging Man.

THE HANGING MAN
Answer me!

RAJ
(panicky)
Indian.

THE HANGING MAN
A bit far from home, aren't you?

Raj doesn't respond - now equal parts fear and confusion.

THE HANGING MAN
Aren't you!?

RAJ
This... this... Is my home... Now.

THE HANGING MAN
It is mine and therefore cannot be
yours. Do not come back inside. I
will not be as forgiving next
time... Understood?

RAJ
Most definitely.

THE HANGING MAN
Very good then... Ta-ta.

The Hanging Man turns towards the house.

A wide-eyed Raj watches as The Hanging Man fades through the front door. And just then....

Raj's headlights go dark.

RAJ

No...

Then the engine dies.

RAJ

No! No! No!

Raj frantically turns the ignition key... The truck's dead.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAWN

Quiet... Just the chirping of the morning birds and the rustling of foraging squirrels.

Logan's VAN rumbles up the dirt driveway.

FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Logan, a boxed SATELLITE ROUTER cradled in one arm raps the door with his knuckles.

LOGAN

Raj. Open up.

No answer - he knocks again.

LOGAN

C'mon, man.

Logan scans the area and spots --

Raj, asleep in his truck.

AT THE TRUCK

Logan raps the window, startling a sleeping Raj.

Raj opens the door, stumbles out - hair a mess.

LOGAN

Why you sleeping in the truck?

RAJ

Promise you'll believe me?

LOGAN

Sure.

RAJ

There was a ghost.

LOGAN

I don't believe you.

RAJ
In the house... Hanging from the
attic rafters.

Logan shakes his head - starts towards the house.

RAJ
Don't! We're not allowed!

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Everything looks perfectly normal. Logan paces towards the --

HALLWAY

And looks up at the support beams from the opening in the ceiling - sees nothing unusual.

RAJ (O.S.)
Logan...?

LOGAN
We can put the router in the attic,
You'll get a better satellite
signal there.

RAJ (O.S.)
Logan...

Logan shakes his head - returns to the opened --

FRONT DOOR

Spots Raj standing five feet away.

LOGAN
Seriously, you're not coming in
your own house?

RAJ
He said I can't.

LOGAN
There's no ghost.

RAJ
I am most confident there was.

LOGAN
Then why didn't you drive away?

RAJ
He broke the truck.

LOGAN
Jesus Christ.

Logan hustles to the truck - hops in. Turns the ignition. The engine roars to life. He turns it off - hops back out.

RAJ
I swear.

LOGAN
Mushrooms?

RAJ
Pardon?

LOGAN
Did you happen to find and eat any
wild mushrooms?

Raj shakes his head.

LOGAN
I'm going to install the router. Do
you want to learn how or not?

RAJ
Not.

Logan pivots - heads for the front door.

LOGAN
Had to be mushrooms.

Logan snatches the satellite router he left on the stoop - opens the door and enters.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Logan, satellite router in hand, ascends a step ladder towards the opening in the ceiling leading to the attic.

He tossed the router through the opening then hoists himself up into --

THE ATTIC

Logan clicks the flashlight icon on his phone, scans the attic space. He sees dust and cobwebs everywhere and a --

CIRCA 1950, LOUIS VUITTON SMALL SUITCASE



EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - VAN - SAME TIME

Van side door open.

Raj, laser-focused on the house, rests his arse on the floor of the van as he nervously taps his feet on the ground.

RAJ
(yelling)
Are you okay in there?

LOGAN (O.S.)
I need help.

Raj stands - paces in place...

RAJ
I knew it... I knew it.

LOGAN (O.S.)
Hey! Can you hear me!?

Raj inhales a lungful of courage and bolts towards the door and into the --

LIVING ROOM

Head on a swivel looking for any sign of danger.

RAJ
I'm coming!

He reaches the --

HALLWAY

Sees the step ladder.

RAJ
Oh no... Logan...?

Logan peers down at Raj through the attic opening.

LOGAN
Lookie what I found.

Logan tosses the suitcase down to Raj who instinctively snatches it before it hits the floor.

LOGAN
That might be worth something.

RAJ
You called me in for this!?

LOGAN
Dude, there isn't any --

Raj, cradling the suitcase pivots on a dime and bursts through the --

LIVING ROOM

LOGAN (O.S.)
Fucking ghost.

RAJ
AAAHHHHH!! AAHHHHHH!!! AAHHHHHH!!!!

And out the front door.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - VAN - A LITTLE LATER

Raj rifles through the contents of the opened suitcase, now resting on the floor of the van.

Most of it - old FILM SCRIPTS.

Raj opens one to the title page: *WRITTEN BY: HENRY DUBOIS.*

He tosses it aside, opens another: *WRITTEN BY: HENRY DUBOIS.*

And another... And another.

Raj retrieves an age-yellowed envelope from the suitcase. He opens it, slides out a BUSINESS LETTER - FROM MGM STUDIOS.

RAJ
 (reading the letter)
*Due to recent events, your services
 will no longer be needed...*
 (thinking)
 What events...?

LOGAN (O.S.)
 Hey.

A sweaty and dust-covered Logan emerges from the house with Raj's laptop in hand - paces towards the van.

LOGAN
 (hands Raj the laptop)
 I set the router password to
 SCAREDINDIAN. All caps.

RAJ
 That's not very nice.

LOGAN
 You know how to connect?

Raj nods as he places the laptop on the floor of the van,
 opens the network settings.

LOGAN
 How's the signal?

RAJ
 Just a sec...
 (surprised)
 It's very good.

Raj feverishly taps the keys of the laptop.

On Raj's laptop screen - the GOOGLE SEARCH BAR. Raj keys in:
HENRI DUBOIS.

RAJ
 His name is Henri Dubois.

LOGAN
 Who's --

RAJ
 The ghost.

LOGAN
 Jesus.

RAJ
 (reading search results)
Henri Dubois. French-American. Born 1915, died 1955... Dubois was a successful screenwriter, blacklisted as a result of the McCarthy hearings in 1950.

LOGAN
 (sarcastic)
 Does it mention that he's a ghost?

RAJ
 (reading search results)
Unable to find work and under immense personal and financial pressure, he committed suicide at his home --

LOGAN
 That doesn't mean anything.

RAJ
In Bishop, California...

LOGAN
 Huh...?

RAJ
 I need to borrow your van.

LOGAN
 Your truck works.

RAJ
 I can't live in my truck.

LOGAN
 Dude... No.

RAJ
 And I'm going to need your help.

MOMENTS LATER

Raj waits by the van, side door open, as --

Logan stumbles out of the house, balancing sofa cushions atop his head. He tosses them inside the van.

LOGAN
 You're sure about this?

RAJ
Yes. Bedding...?

Logan shakes his head - paces back to the house.

MONTAGE - READYING THE VAN

- Logan emerging from the house with Raj's bedding and pillows. Raj receives them, places them in the van.
- Logan emerging with some of Raj's clothes.
- Logan lumbering out with the small dinette table
- Logan approaching with bottles of water, some boxed and canned foods. Raj receives them, places them in the van.

END MONTAGE

Logan connects the surge protector to a long extension cord, hands it to Raj.

LOGAN
One outlet for your phone. One for
the laptop.

Raj nods... He gets it.

LOGAN
Sure you don't want me to stay?
(re: the house)
You know, because of Casper.

RAJ
I must face this on my own.

LOGAN
By hiding in the van?

RAJ
Precisely.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Raj, clumsily atop sofa cushions fighting to get some sleep -
No luck. In addition to the discomfort, the --

HOOT - HOOT - HOOT of an owl makes sleep impossible.

MOMENTS LATER

Raj, upright now, leaning against the sidewall of the Van,
gazing at the screen of his cell phone. It displays a series
of TEXT MESSAGES FROM DEEPAK.

- *When are you coming back?*
- *How come you're not responding!?*
- *Okay - enough is enough!*
- *You'll never work here again!*
- *Sorry...*
- *Have you lost your mind!?*
- *Sorry...*
- *YOU NEED THERAPY!*
- *Call me.*

Raj deletes the messages, then tosses his phone aside. He closes his eyes but --

HOOT-HOOT-HOOT echoes in the air - eyes pop back open.

SECONDS LATER

Raj on his knees, peering through the Van's side window.

RAJ'S POV - The house, basking in moonlight.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

Raj, clutching a sofa cushion to his chest like it was armor, creeps towards the house, one measured step at a time.

He reaches the front door, presses his ear up against it, listens - Nothing.

He takes one step back from the door, contemplates - maybe Logan was right.

He steps towards a darkened window, cups his hands around his eyes, peers in and then, in a snap --

HENRI's form fills the window. His skin translucent blue, pupils fiery red.

RAJ

BHOOTA!

Raj hightails it back towards the van.

Finally reaches it, swings open the side door and --

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Hops in. Slides the door closed with a SLAM.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - MORNING

The pick-up truck rolls up next to the van.

Logan hops out, TWO COFFEES and a BOX OF DONUTS in hand.

He sets them on the small dinette table outside the van then RAPS on the van door.

The door slowly slides open revealing --

A very disheveled Raj - clothes wrinkled, hair a mess, using his hand to shield his eyes from the morning sunlight

LOGAN

I brought coffee and donuts.

RAJ

Did we have something planned?

LOGAN

I'm going to teach ya how to chop wood.

RAJ

Because...?

LOGAN

Winter's coming. You're going to need firewood. You ain't got a heater in the house.

RAJ

I'm not going in the house.

LOGAN

Then you're sure as shit going to need a firepit out here.

Raj nods... Makes sense.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAY

A LARGE AXE leans on a small pile of fallen birch trees dragged near the house.

Nearby, Raj studies Logan as he digs a shallow hole.

LOGAN
That should do it...
(at Raj)
Ready?

RAJ
Indeed.

Logan tosses his shovel, rolls a birch tree off of the pile.

LOGAN
Make a mark with the axe, bout
eighteen inches down.

Raj bends down - meticulously starts counting inches...

RAJ
One... Two... Three --

LOGAN
Jesus Christ, just use the tip of
your finger to your elbow.

Raj complies - places his finger on the end of the tree -
eyeballs where his elbow lands.

LOGAN
Good - now make the mark.

Raj gently runs the axe blade over the bark, like he was
applying butter to toast.

LOGAN
A little more muscle.

Raj grinds the axe blade into the wood, makes a nice groove.

LOGAN
Better... Now watch.

Logan motions for the axe - Raj hands it to him. With three
swift blows of the axe the 18-inch piece is separated.

LOGAN
Now all we have to do is split it.

Logan inserts the tree segment upright into the shallow hole.

Just as he starts to swing the axe --

RAJ
You're supposed to be teaching me.

Logan hands Raj the axe.

LOGAN

Always keep a firm grip on the axe handle, right through contact.

RAJ

Understood.

LOGAN

Because if you don't, the axe will bounce off the wood right back into your skull.

RAJ

Got it... Firm grip...
(takes a deep breath)
Okay, here goes...

Raj raises his arm - swings the axe with great force, BUT --

Misses the wood entirely, the axe slipping from his sweaty hand, WHIRLING in the air, just missing Logan and --

THUD - embedding in the front door.

Raj and Logan stare at the embedded axe... Pondering.

LOGAN

(re: the door)
That could have been me.

RAJ

I can do better.

LOGAN

Ya think?

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DINETTE TABLE BY THE VAN - DUSK

Raj and Logan, both sweat stained and weary, guzzle bottled water as they admire a neatly stacked bundle of chopped wood.

LOGAN

Not bad, Raj. Not bad at all.

Logan closes his eyes, takes in the mountain air.

RAJ

What are you thinking about?

LOGAN

I got an AA meeting tonight... I'm getting a new sponsor... Really not looking forward to starting over with someone new.

RAJ
What happened to the old one?

LOGAN
Died... Two weeks ago.

RAJ
How?

LOGAN
Axe accident.

Raj's eyes widen.

LOGAN
I'm screwing with you... He got
drunk. Drove his car into a tree.

A moment passes.

RAJ
Do they work? The meetings?

LOGAN
Apparently not for my sponsor.

RAJ
Seriously...

Logan looks at Raj... Ponders.

LOGAN
I don't know... I'd cut my pinky
finger off to get high now.

RAJ
Please don't.

Logan stands, ready to leave - catches a whiff of an odor.

LOGAN
Dude, you really need a shower.

RAJ
I am aware. But...
(nods towards the house)
You know.

LOGAN
Ah, Christ...

Logan marches towards the house.

RAJ
Don't go in!

And enters the front door.

RAJ
Be careful!

Seconds pass, then --

Logan bounces from the house carrying shampoo, soap and two towels cradled. He sets them on the dinette table.

LOGAN
Backyard. Hose. Now.

Logan heads off to the pick-up truck.

RAJ
Good luck at your meeting.

Logan turns - wiggles his pinky finger at Raj.

BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Raj sets the shampoo, soap, towels and fresh clothes on a rickety bench near a spigot and hose.

Raj removes his soiled clothes, then turns the hose spigot - feels the water with his hand - as cold as the Sierras.

RAJ
Eeessh...

Raj takes a deep breath, raises the hose above his head and douses himself with water.

RAJ
Cold... cold... COLD!

He grabs the shampoo and soap and suds himself up as quickly as humanly possible. Then douses himself again.

RAJ
COLD! COLD! COLD!

SIDE OF HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Raj, now in fresh clothes, towels his still wet hair as he strides forward, then turns the corner into the --

FRONT YARD

Stops in his tracks when he spots the hindquarters of a --

BLACK BEAR rummaging for food in the van.

RAJ
Uh-oh...

Raj spots the axe near the front stoop. He snatches from the ground just as the --

Bear pivots around in the van - now eye to eye with Raj. The Bear's face caked with remnants of Raj's food.

RAJ
(cradling the axe)
I mean you no harm.

The Bear tumbles out of the van - GROWLS.

Raj instinctively HURLS the axe - comically off, strikes the front tire -- WHOOSH, the air goes out.

A guttural growl in return.

RAJ
Sorry!

The Bear rises up - GROWLS again.

RAJ
Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Raj pivots on a dime - storms towards the front door and --

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Bursts in, SLAMMING the door behind him.

He moves to the window, peers out.

RAJ POV: The Bear sniffing the ground where Raj stood.

The HANGING MAN, who we now know as HENRI DUBOIS materializes behind Raj.

HENRI (O.S.)
I thought you understood the rules.

Raj pivots - spots Henri, in his translucent blue glory, on the other side of the room.

Henri's pupils flash red as he takes a step towards Raj.

HENRI
I believe I was very clear.

Raj swings open the door - BEAR!

And slams it back shut.

RAJ
I have no choice.

Henri moves closer.

HENRI
Nor do I.

And closer...

Raj faints from fear, collapsing to the floor.

SMASH TO BLACK

The sounds of CHIRPING BIRDS welcoming the morning.

LOGAN (V.O.)
(muffled/distant)
Raj... Raj...?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Raj, crumpled on the floor next to the door, stirs awake.

He pats himself down, checking to see if there is any damage.

There's none. He rises, smiles as the realization hits him...

RAJ
He can't hurt me...

LOGAN (V.O.)
Raj!

Raj opens the door to see --

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - MORNING

The van - side door wide open, remnants of torn food boxes and claw-ripped clothing on the ground.

Logan at the edge of the property, hands cupped around his mouth - looking out towards a forest of birch trees.

LOGAN
Raj!!!!

RAJ
Over here.

Logan pivots.

LOGAN
What the fuck happened!?

THE GROUNDS AROUND THE VAN - LATER

Raj picks up the last of the trash left by the Bear's foraging as Logan jacks up the flat front tire of the van.

LOGAN
(removing lug nuts)
You can't stay in the van anymore.
The bear will return. They always --

RAJ
I'm staying in my house.

LOGAN
What about Casper?

RAJ
Henri.

LOGAN
(removing lug nuts)
Whatever.

RAJ
If he had the power to harm me, he would have exercised it last night.

LOGAN
So he's like Oz?

Logan pulls the flat tire off the axle.

RAJ
Oz...?

LOGAN
The great and powerful wizard -
turned out to be just an old man
behind a curtain.

RAJ
He is not a man. He is a spirit.
But one who can only frighten me to
the extent I choose to be
frightened.

LOGAN
Whatever floats your boat.

Raj peers into the Van at the ravaged food.

RAJ
I'll need more groceries.

LOGAN
Give me a list and your credit
card. I got to go into town anyway.

RAJ
Because...?

LOGAN
(re: the flat tire)
I ain't got a spare!

MONTAGE - LATER THAT MORNING - RAJ MOVING BACK IN

Raj drags the dinette table towards the house - manages to
shoehorn it through the front door.

Raj, balancing the sofa cushions on his head strides through
the front door.

Raj, laptop computer and surge protector in hand, heads
towards the house.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Raj, bedding in hand, enters and spots --

Henri, translucent blue, pupils a hellish red.

RAJ
(calmly greeting)
Hello, Henri.

Raj taps his forehead.

RAJ
Shampoo and soap - be right back.

BACKYARD - SECONDS LATER

Raj snatches the soap, shampoo and soiled clothes from the
tree stump. Returns to the --

BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Henri still there as Raj re-enters.

HENRI
I warned you!

RAJ
Yes... I recall.

HENRI
I am evil incarnate!

RAJ
You're nothing but light and dust.

Raj heads towards the --

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Places the soap and shampoo in the shower.

BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Henri now in the chair - Looks human now, and a bit dejected.

INTERCUT BETWEEN RAJ IN THE BATHROOM AND HENRI IN THE BEDROOM

Raj examines his teeth in the mirror.

HENRI
Define Bhoota.

RAJ
What's that?

HENRI
Bhoota... You've called me that...
Several times.

Raj grabs his toothbrush, squeezes some paste on it.

RAJ
In India, a type of ghost.

Raj starts to vigorously brush his teeth.

HENRI
What type - specifically?

Raj pauses his brushing.

RAJ
Restless... Due to unsettled
matters when they were alive.

HENRI
Unsettled matters?

RAJ
 Something preventing them from
 moving on to transmigration...

Raj pokes his head out of the bathroom - eyes Henri.

RAJ
 To Nirvana.

Raj pops back to the bathroom.

HENRI
 (muttering)
 Like unwritten words...

RAJ (O.S.)
 What did you say...? Henri...?

Raj pops his head back out of the bathroom - scans the room.

Henri has faded away.

A smile consumes Raj's face... *Victory over the Bhoota.*

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Logan at the sink scrubbing his hands - covered with grime
 from changing the tire.

Raj at the stove preparing dinner.

Logan takes a seat at the dinette just as Raj sets two plates
 on the table: Hot Chapati (flatbread), basmati rice and a
 vegetable curry.

Logan takes a bite of the flatbread.

LOGAN
 Not bad...

Then a bite of the vegetable curry.

LOGAN
 Not good.

RAJ
 Do you want something else?

LOGAN
 I'll soldier through it. Sit.

Raj takes a seat. They eat in silence for a few moments.

LIVING ROOM

HENRI, ear against the wall near the kitchen entrance, eavesdropping on the conversation.

KITCHEN

LOGAN

What are your plans after we finish fixing this place up?

Raj contemplates...

RAJ

I'm not quite sure... I was thinking about opening a wellness center.

LOGAN

You mean like a gym?

RAJ

Not exactly. It would be for body and mind.

LOGAN

So a gym.

RAJ

Never mind.

LOGAN

What about writing again?

RAJ

I no longer possess that ability.

LIVING ROOM

Henri inches even closer to the entrance... Very interested.

KITCHEN

LOGAN

You haven't any ability to handle an axe - but you're still trying.

RAJ

Meaning?

LOGAN

You're probably just being too hard on yourself. Take a fresh look at your stuff.

RAJ
That would be a pointless.

LOGAN
Because...?

RAJ
It's impossible for a writer to
judge whether their own work is of
high quality... Others make that
determination.

LIVING ROOM

Henri nods in agreement - *a shared view among creatives.*

KITCHEN

RAJ
It doesn't matter anyway. My Mind
is empty... Like I'm in a creative
coma.

LOGAN
Suit yourself.

Logan wipes his face with a napkin - stands.

LOGAN
I gotta go. I assume you're not
going to need the van anymore.

Raj nods.

LIVING ROOM

Henri fades away.

KITCHEN

LOGAN
Thanks for the... Not sure what you
call it.

RAJ
Curry.

LOGAN
Curry. Please don't make it again.
(leaving)
Tomorrow I'm going to teach you how
to caulk your window frames.

RAJ
Excellent.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raj at a window, examining the window frame - cracked and weather-worn. Just then he spots --

The Bear, sniffing the ground where the van was once parked.

Not finding anything, the Bear rumbles away.

Just then - a phone TEXT ALERT.

FROM DEEPAK: *Call me. It's urgent!*

FROM RAJ: *Did someone die?*

FROM DEEPAK: *No!*

FROM RAJ: *Are you sick?*

FROM DEEPAK: *No!!!!*

FROM RAJ: *Then it's not urgent.*

Raj pockets the phone, stretches and YAWNS - been a long day.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A beam of moonlight cascading through the window the only source of illumination.

Raj, nestled in bed, sleeping peacefully.

CREAK... CREAK... CREAK...

Raj stirs...

CREAK... CREAK... CREAK...

Raj's eyes flutter open, finally landing on --

HENRI - gently rocking in the chair adjacent to the bed.

RAJ
(irritated)
Really?

HENRI
You believe you can no longer
write?

RAJ
You were eavesdropping...? I don't
like --

Henri, knuckles his eyes, mocking a crying toddler.

HENRI
Wah, wah, wah. Poor little baby
writer. His wittle head devoid of
thoughts.

RAJ
Here's a thought. How about you let
me sleep?

HENRI
Your self-pity is repulsive.

Raj pats the pillow, lays back down - pulls up the cover.

HENRI
God granted you the gift and
passion to write, yet you refuse to
do so.

RAJ
Please... Shut up.

HENRI
I had to HANG myself because,
despite the gift and passion
granted to me by God, I was
prohibited from writing by MAN!

A frustrated Raj bolts back up.

RAJ
You weren't banned from writing.
You were banned from being
published. And God may grant a man
a creative passion. He does not
guarantee a reward for a man's
exercise of that passion.

Moments pass...

HENRI
That's very good. You should write
that down.

Raj thinks for a sec - *should he?* Nope - he lies back down,
cradles the pillow over his head.

HENRI

You are on the same journey that I
have already taken...

RAJ

(muffled, thru pillow)
I am not.

HENRI

Destined for the same fate.

RAJ

Be quiet.

HENRI

There is only one solution to both
of our predicaments.

RAJ

You leaving.

HENRI

Mon ami, we must write together. It
will light your spark and help me
extinguish mine.

Raj turns towards Henri.

RAJ

What!?

HENRI

I now realize that I am bound here
because of...

(taps his forehead)

The words unwritten. You can help
me finish mine. I will help you
restart yours.

Raj turns over - cradles his pillow even tighter.

HENRI

What do you think...?

(much louder)

I asked - what do you think?

Raj bolts up - points towards the door.

RAJ

Get out of MY room!

HENRI

You're being unnecessarily mean.

Raj flops back down into bed.

MOMENTS LATER

Raj, just falling back to sleep.

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK... From the living room.

RAJ
I'm not writing with you, Henri!

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK... DING

Raj reaches into the nightstand drawer and retrieves his phone earbuds. He inserts the earbuds, lies back down.

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK...

EXT. DOWNTOWN BISHOP - DWAYNE'S PHARMACY - THE WEE HOURS

The moon hangs like a lantern in the midnight sky casting a glow over --

Logan, HAMMER in hand, pacing outside a small building - *DWAYNE'S FRIENDLY PHAMARCY*. He's a bit of a nervous wreck.

LOGAN
Just get it over with...

Logan scans the street - makes sure the coast is clear as he approaches the pharmacy's glass door. Then --

Stops in his tracks, contemplates...

Logan, eyes still fixed on the glass door, grabs his phone from his pocket, taps three numbers.

FILTERED/VOICE THRU PHONE
9-1-1. What's your emergency?

LOGAN
Someone's vandalizing Dwayne's pharmacy.

Logan hangs up, takes a deep breath, then --

HURLS the hammer towards the glass door.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A refreshed Raj bounces in from the bedroom.

And glances at the roll-top desk as he heads for the kitchen - stops in his tracks when he notices a --

STACK OF TYPED PAGES, about ten sheets written in screenplay format. From the font, obviously typed on the old typewriter.

Raj picks up the top page - reads it.

RAJ

Hmm...

He takes a seat at the desk as he reads the second page. Then quickly gets to the third...

RAJ

This is really good...

Then the fourth page...

MOMENTS LATER

Raj, still at the roll-top desk, except now, his laptop is perched in front of him. Henri's typed pages close by.

Raj feverishly taps the words on the typewritten pages into his laptop.

Unbeknownst to Raj, a curious Henri looms behind, peering over Raj's shoulder.

HENRI

What are you doing?

Raj shudders in panic - screams.

RAJ

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!

Raj takes several deep breaths - checks his neck pulse.

RAJ

You nearly gave me a heart attack.

HENRI

That's a tad dramatic.

RAJ

Don't sneak up on me like that!

HENRI

I have no choice in the matter...
Appearing out of thin air is
fundamental to being a spirit.

RAJ

Well, work on it.

HENRI

Why are you putting my words in
this box of yours?

RAJ

Box...?

HENRI

Does my work vanish in there?

RAJ

You don't know what a laptop is?

HENRI

I Died. 1955... Remember?

RAJ

Fair point. This...
(re: the laptop)
Is what we use rather than a
typewriter today.

Raj holds up a sheet of Henri's typed page next to the same
words now on the laptop screen.

RAJ

See?

HENRI

No paper?

RAJ

None needed. You can write as much
as you want.

HENRI

Let me try.

Raj moves aside. Henri presses his finger on the Z KEY.

Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z on the screen.

HENRI

Tis magic...

RAJ

And you can fix mistakes without
using correction fluid. Just hit
the backspace.

Raj demonstrates by deleting the Zs Henri typed.

HENRI

But where do the words go?

RAJ
 On a hard drive...
 (off Henri's confusion)
 It's like a library inside the
 computer.

Raj picks up the stack of typed pages.

RAJ
 You're very talented.
 (re: the pages)
 Your story - right? About being
 blacklisted...?

HENRI
 It's part of my story. Obviously...

Henri feigns the classic - *hanging by a rope* - motion.

HENRI
 I didn't finish it. And you have
 not answered my question.

RAJ
 I'm sorry. You're question was --

HENRI
 Why are you typing my words?

Raj reflects for a moment.

RAJ
 I didn't want to lose them... I
 thought you might throw them
 away... You can be impetuous.

HENRI
 I am anything but impetuous.

Raj feigns the classic - *hanging by a rope* - motion.

HENRI
 That was one time.

A KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK at the door.

RAJ
 That's Logan... You need to go.

Henri fades away...

FRONT DOOR - SECONDS LATER

Raj opens the front door, revealing JAKE JOHNSON, the real estate agent and Logan's grandfather.

RAJ
Mr. Johnson...?

JAKE
Logan's in jail.

Raj's jaw drops, imagining the worst.

RAJ
Jail...?

JAKE
He wanted me to let you know he
won't be coming out for a while.

Jake tilts his head inside, eyeballs the place.

JAKE
I'm impressed. Looks nice. Anyway,
message delivered... Got to get to
the office.

Raj, dumbstruck, watches as Jake ambles towards his SUV.

RAJ
Aren't you worried!?

JAKE
Nope.

Jake stops, pivots towards Raj.

JAKE
It ain't a rare event.

INT. BISHOP POLICE STATION - JAIL CELL - DAY

Raj grasps the blue-steel bars of a jail cell as he addresses Logan, perched on a metal cell bench.

RAJ
I can post your bail.

LOGAN
No.

RAJ
It's not a problem. It's the least
I can --

LOGAN

How do you not get it!?

RAJ

I'm confused.

LOGAN

I need to be here.

Logan stands, approaches a confused Raj.

LOGAN

For a while now, I've had the itch.
You know, to...

Raj nods - he does know.

LOGAN

I forced myself to do the right
thing.

RAJ

How is robbing a pharmacy the right
thing to do?

LOGAN

I didn't rob the pharmacy. Sure, I
went there with that in mind...
Instead, I just broke some glass.

RAJ

Because?

LOGAN

I needed to be put somewhere where
I couldn't get drugs.

RAJ

You could have stayed with me.

LOGAN

And left anytime I wanted to get
high... Raj, I need to be here.

RAJ

For how long?

LOGAN

My Grandfather's lawyer says I'll
be out in a few days... That should
be enough time to get me through
this spell.

RAJ
And if it is not?

LOGAN
I got more hammers.

EXT. BISHOP POLICE STATION - DUSK

Skies darkening... A nasty storm is brewing in the distance.
Raj leans against his truck - phone in front of his mouth.

RAJ
(at phone speaker)
Indian stores near me.

PHONE VOICE
I have found three stores nearby.

RAJ
Really...?

INSERT PHONE SCREEN: A map of several NATIVE AMERICAN stores nearby - not what he needed.

RAJ
Eastern Indian Stores near me.

PHONE VOICE
I have found Sanchi's Goods and Apparel, Sacramento California.

RAJ
How far is it from Bishop to Sacramento?

PHONE VOICE
Sacramento is 271.5 miles from Bishop California.

Raj pockets his phone as THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.
He looks towards the highway... Thinks.

EXT. TWO-LANE MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Heavy rain PELTS the road. Lightening CRACKLES in the skies.
Raj's truck passes a road sign: *SACRAMENTO - 192 MILES*

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY (TRAVELING) - NIGHT

Wipers flapping at top speed, barely clearing the windshield.

Raj white-knuckling the steering wheel, squinting to try and make out the lane markers.

The bright HEADLIGHTS of an oncoming BIG RIG distort Raj's view... He unknowingly moves towards the middle of the road.

HONK-HONK from the truck horn.

Panicked, Raj steers his truck to the right just as the Big Rig whooshes by. Raj SLAPS his face.

RAJ

Focus...

Another CRACK of lightning. The RUMBLE of thunder...

EXT. SACRAMENTO - SANCHI'S STORE - PARKING LOT - DAWN

Clear now... The storm has passed.

The only vehicle in the lot - Raj's pickup truck.

A FEW HOURS LATER

The lot now peppered with cars.

Raj emerges from his truck, stretches, yawns - shakes his head trying to clear the cobwebs. Heads towards the store.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The door kicks open and Raj, loaded with SHOPPING BAGS, stumbles in... His clothes wrinkled, face unshaven - dark circles under his eyes.

He goes to the --

BEDROOM

Spots Henri in the rocking chair.

Raj pays him no mind as he starts removing a variety of traditional Indian garments from one of the shopping bags.

HENRI

I've written more pages.

RAJ

Uh-huh...

Raj removes two YOGA MATS from another bag, then exits.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Several more shopping bags are on the kitchen counter.

Raj removes scented meditation candles and incense sticks from one, sets them on the dinette table.

LIVING ROOM

Henri standing by the roll-top desk.

HENRI

Where is your friend?

INTERCUT - RAJ IN THE KITCHEN AND HENRI IN THE LIVING ROOM

RAJ

Jail.

HENRI

Ah... A relapse no doubt.

(in French)

Ce qui doit arriver, arrivera.

RAJ

I don't speak French.

Raj beams with delight as he removes two large cans of INDIAN CHICORY COFFEE.

HENRI

It means that what must happen,
will happen... That certain
outcomes are unavoidable.

Raj shuffling through a kitchen drawer - searching.

RAJ

Where's the can opener...?

HENRI

Like an addict's relapse. It's as
certain as a moth to a flame.

RAJ

Didn't relapse...

Raj finds the can opener - eyes it like it was gold.

RAJ

Found it.

EXT. BISHOP POLICE STATION - PARKING LOT - DUSK

Raj and Logan heading towards Raj's pick-up truck.

INT/EXT. RAJ'S TRUCK - MAIN STREET (TRAVELING) - DAY

Raj at the wheel. Logan lost in thought as stares at the buildings on Main Street.

RAJ
Just stay with me.

LOGAN
I already told you - no.

RAJ
Why though?

LOGAN
Cause it ain't going to do me any
good if I can't learn to live with
myself.

Raj stops at a STOP LIGHT right by DWAYNE'S PHARMACY.

The glass door Logan shattered is now covered in plywood - still pending repair. They both stare at it.

LOGAN
I got to fix that tomorrow. Part of
my plea deal. I'll be out to teach
you how to caulk the windows --

RAJ
(driving on)
We're not going to be working on my
house anymore.

LOGAN
I get it... I wouldn't --

RAJ
We're going to be working on you.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Raj, patiently waits, clad in fine, traditional Indian garb. He wears the clothes he purchased in Sacramento. A --

KURTA SHIRT, long-sleeve, made of soft cotton, colorful and extending down nearly to his knees, and pair of --

SALWARS PANTS, solid white, baggy with narrow ankles - perfect for stretching and yoga.

RAJ
 (calling to the bedroom)
 How are you doing in there?

A very displeased Logan emerges - clad in a similar outfit.

LOGAN
 Do I really have to wear this?

RAJ
 You do.

LOGAN
 Makes me look like I'm going to an
 Indian prom.
 (eyeballing Raj)
 Makes you look like my date...

Logan starts to remove his shirt.

RAJ
 I drove all the way to Sacramento
 in a FUCKING STORM to get those
 clothes!

Raj is immediately embarrassed by his outburst - not like him
 at all.

RAJ
 I am so sorry... Forgive me.

LOGAN
 Sacramento...? You have heard of
 Amazon... Yeah?

RAJ
 I checked. They couldn't provide
 delivery in time.

LOGAN
 Putting me in an Indian dress was
 an emergency?

RAJ
 You've heard the expression, well-
 dressed - yes?

Logan nods - of course he has.

RAJ
 Think of yourself as wellness-
 dressed. Visual and mental
 alignment are essential.

RAJ (CONT'D)

As an example, the sleeves of the shirt cover your arm tattoos. They would be a distraction to meditation.

LOGAN

Indians don't like tattoos?

RAJ

Quite the opposite. They are quite popular.

LOGAN

Then...?

RAJ

We adorn skin with positive images and words. The names of loved ones, flowers, deities, symbols of love and strength. All reinforcements of a positive state. You on the other hand have several depicting nothing but negativity - bony skulls, a bloody knife, and if I recall correctly a tattoo of --

LOGAN

I get it!

RAJ

Some sort of demon.

MOMENTS LATER

The windows now covered with bed linens- darkening the room other than --

Two incense candles perched on the roll-top desk flickering - filling the room with peaceful light.

Next to them, lit incense sticks emit a meditative aroma.

Raj and Logan sit cross-legged on yoga mats.

RAJ

The chant is... *Om Namo Narayana*.

LOGAN

What does it mean?

RAJ

Om is an Indian primordial sound, representing the universe.

LOGAN

Okay...

RAJ

Namo means I bow... *Narayana* is another name for Vishnu, the preserver in Hinduism. So.. *Om Namō Narayana* means - *I bow to the divine.*

LOGAN

Ah.... Like Step One.

RAJ

Pardon...?

LOGAN

Step one of AA - *We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

RAJ

Sure... If that works for you.

(as he demonstrates)

Now, straighten your spine, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself.

Logan closes his eyes and mimics Raj, taking deep, slow breaths.

RAJ

Now, we'll chant together. Listen to me first, and then join in.

A WHILE LATER

Repeated chants, in unison from Raj and Logan

RAJ

Om Namō Narayana...

LOGAN

Om Namō Narayana...

Calm and profound, voices steady and soothing.

RAJ

Om Namō Narayana...

LOGAN

Om Namō Narayana...

Raj stops, stands... Logan unaware, continues chanting as Raj extinguishes the meditation candles.

RAJ

How do you feel?

Logan opens his eyes...

LOGAN
Different...

RAJ
A very good start.

LOGAN
Start?

RAJ
Tomorrow is Yoga.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Raj at the front door, waving at Logan as he takes off just as he receives another TEXT ALERT from --

DEEPAK: *Check your bank account.*

RAJ
Check my bank account...?

AT THE ROLL-TOP DESK

A frantic Raj logs on to his bank account. On the screen:

ACCOUNT STATUS: FROZEN

RAJ
That's impossible.

Raj tries logging on again - same result.

MOMENTS LATER

Raj, phone to his ear, wearing a path in the floorboards.

RAJ
How could this happen?

INT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - DEEPAK'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Deepak, feet up on the desk listens to Raj through the speaker of his business phone.

DEEPAK
Not all that complicated.

INTERCUT BETWEEN RAJ AND DEEPAK

RAJ
It seems really complicated.

DEEPAK

You signed a contract with an investment company to write a script. You decided not to write a script. As a result --

RAJ

I couldn't write a script!

DEEPAK

As a result, they sued you for breach of contract. And your representative... That's me --

RAJ

I know that's you.

DEEPAK

Called you two dozen times and sent you as many text messages to talk to you, all of which went answered.

RAJ

Truly sorry about that.

DEEPAK

The court ruled for the plaintiffs in your absence and granted a lien against your assets... See, not so complicated.

RAJ

Can't you get another writer?

DEEPAK

They invested in a Raj Rani script.

Raj paces - the wheels are spinning... His eyes land on the old typewriter.

RAJ

What if I got them one?

DEEPAK

Do you have one...?

RAJ

Give me a couple of. I'll have a first act done.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Raj brewing a pot of Chicory Coffee.

RAJ

Henri!

No response...

Raj pours a cup.

RAJ

HENRI!!!

And goes to the -

LIVING ROOM

And spots Henri, relaxed, cross-legged, on the sofa.

HENRI

You rang?

RAJ

I've thought it over. I agree with you... We should write together.

Raj goes to the desk, takes a seat - opens up the laptop.

RAJ

Come on over.

HENRI

No.

Raj pivots - locks eyes with Henri.

RAJ

No?

HENRI

I've changed my mind. I no longer wish to collaborate with your kind.

RAJ

My kind...?

HENRI

I came to America to become a writer. You came to America to stop being one. That does not sound like a solid basis for a partnership.

RAJ

No... It doesn't...

Raj turns back to the laptop, contemplates as his fingers hover over the keyboard.

RAJ
 (reads aloud as he types)
*Henri Dubois was fueled by
 dishonesty, arrogance and weakness.
 A fatal combination for any man.*

HERNI
 Stop.

RAJ
*Though many believed that Henri's
 arrogance was unearned.*

HERNI
 That's a lie.

RAJ
 (turns towards Henri)
 Then help me write the truth.

Henri stares at Raj for a moment... *Finally* --

HERNI
 No.

Henri fades away. Raj - panicked - stands.

RAJ
 I can't write! I need your words,
 your story...

HERNI (O.S.)
 (echoing in the room)
 Because?

RAJ
 I need a script that I can put my
 name to... I need the money.

HENRI (O.S.)
 (echoing in the room)
 Your needs appear to be meager.

RAJ
 All of my money is frozen. Please!

From the corner of the room...

HENRI (O.S.)
 And what would I gain from it?

Raj turns toward the corner - sees the re-emerged Henri.

RAJ
Transmigration... Freedom.... Once
you get your words out... The ones
you were meant to be write - you'll
no longer be restless... No longer
be Bhoota. You'll be free...

AT THE ROLL-TOP DESK - A LITTLE LATER

Henri looms behind --

Raj peering at his laptop screen: A BLANK TITLE PAGE.

Raj keys in the title: *BLACKLISTED*.

HENRI
I do quite like these computers.

Next: *WRITTEN BY*

Raj hesitates - he knows the next keystroke starts him on a
journey antithetical to his core values. Finally, he types...

Written by: RAJ RANI

HENRI
Perhaps go with Rodger.

RAJ
What...?

HENRI
Raj sounds like short for Rodger
anyway. Like, *hello Rodge*.

RAJ
That's inane.

HENRI
I'm concerned that Americans may
not be interested in a screenplay
penned by an Indian. It's not wise
to narrow the audience.

RAJ
(a) this is not 1955, (b) you don't
think *Rani* gives away the fact that
I'm Indian?

HENRI
I was thinking Rodger Randall.

RAJ
No.

HENRI

Actors and actresses change their names to disguise their ethnicity all the time. Writers also --

RAJ

So, in the script, we should change your name from...

(snobby French accent)

Henri Dubois to... I don't know - Hank Dobbs?

Henri takes this in.

HENRI

Fair point. Go with Raj.

Raj types: *FADE IN*, cracks his knuckles - readies himself.

RAJ

Okay, you talk, I type.

HENRI

There are already twenty-five typed pages in the desk drawer.

Raj opens the drawer of the roll-top desk - removes a stack of typed pages.

RAJ

If you weren't going to write with me, then...

Raj holds up the typed pages.

RAJ

What's this!?

HENRI

I lied.

RAJ

Why on earth would you lie?

HENRI

I'm - *fueled by dishonesty* - remember?

RAJ

That was just to get you to --

HENRI
 I am well aware.
 (re: the typed pages)
 We should get started.

HOURS LATER

Raj working the keyboard, Henri relaxing on the sofa.

RAJ
 So you were a member of the
 communist party...?

HENRI
 The French communist party - yes,
 for a brief time during a naïve and
 reckless youth.

Raj returns his focus to the laptop.

RAJ
 I need to change the dialogue here.

HENRI
 Be specific.

RAJ
 Dialogue between you and Amélie.
 (reading the screen)
*I'm being persecuted and banished
 merely for holding an opinion...
 Treated as if I were a common
 criminal or a homosexual.*

HENRI
 The problem?

RAJ
 That's not really a thing anymore.

HENRI
 Criminal?

RAJ
 Homosexual. You're going to look
 like --

HENRI
 I'm flawed...
 (contemplates)
 Leave it as is... Readers want
 honesty in a character, warts and
 all as Americans would say... As a
 writer, you should know that.

Raj shakes his head... Returns to the keyboard.

STILL AT THE DESK - THE WEE HOURS

Henri still on the sofa. Raj, tired and exhausted, opens up an email app:

INSERT EMAIL TO DEEPAK:

As promised, the draft of the first act is attached. Let me know what you think.

Raj powers down the laptop, stands - stretches and yawns.

RAJ

I got to get some sleep. Logan will be here first thing.

HENRI

You need to jettison your friend. Our writing is far more important.

RAJ

It's not.

HENRI

How's your bank account?

Raj takes this in....

RAJ

I take your point. But Logan needs me right now. We'll write everyday, the minute he leaves - eight hour minimum.

HENRI

And you will sleep....?

RAJ

When I can. Speaking of which - you don't - correct?

HENRI

Don't...?

RAJ

Sleep.

Henri shakes his head.

RAJ
 (re: the typewriter)
 Then there's no need for you to
 stop.

BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Raj, out like a log. Nothing's going to disturb his sleep.
 Not even the --

CLACK - CLACK - CLACK - DING

Emanating from the living room.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - BIRCH TREE GROVE - MORNING

Serene... A gentle breeze blows.

Morning sunlight filters through tree leaves, casting
 sporadic shadows on the ground.

Raj and Logan, dressed in their traditional Indian garb,
 yoga mats at their feet.

RAJ
 We'll start with the basics.

LOGAN
 Couldn't we just lift weights or
 something?

RAJ
 Yoga is designed to lift weights...
 (taps his forehead)
 From your mind. It's all about
 connecting with your breath and
 finding inner peace.

LOGAN
 Seems like it's all about
 contorting your body.

RAJ
 We'll start with the Tadasana.

LOGAN
 Tad - what?

RAJ
 The mountain pose.

LOGAN
 Why didn't you just say that?

Raj stands tall, feet together, hands by his sides. Logan mimics his stance, slightly awkward.

RAJ
Now, focus on your breathing.
Inhale deeply through your nose...
(demonstrates)
Exhale slowly through your mouth.

Logan closes his eyes and follows Raj's breathing pattern.

RAJ
How does it feel?

LOGAN
Like I'm taking a breathalyzer.

RAJ
Feel the soil beneath your feet.
Imagine roots growing from your
feet into the earth, grounding you.

Logan opens one eye, peeking at Raj, then closes it again, trying to concentrate.

RAJ
Now, we'll move into Vrikshasana...
The tree Pose. Shift your weight
onto your left leg, and place your
right foot on your inner left
thigh. Hands together in prayer
position.

Raj effortlessly transitions into the pose. Logan wobbles but manages to get into position.

LOGAN
This is harder than it looks.

RAJ
It's all about balance. Focus on a
point in front of you to help
steady yourself.

They hold the pose for a few breaths. Logan wobbles a bit but finds his balance.

RAJ
Good, now switch legs.

Logan complies.

RAJ
 Now, the forward bend. Inhale,
 raise your arms above your head.
 (demonstrates)
 Exhale, and fold forward, reaching
 for your toes.

Logan groans as he bends reaching for his toes.

LOGAN
 I ain't that flexible.

RAJ
 It requires practice - repetition.

MUCH LATER

Logan, now sweating like he finished a wrestling match, lies
 on a mat - eyes closed.

RAJ
 Last one for today, the Shavasana,
 or Corpse Pose. Place your arms by
 your sides, palms facing up.

Logan complies.

RAJ
 (softly)
 Inhale peace... Exhale stress...

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - STOOP - DUSK

Logan gulps bottled water as he feels the cooling air.

Raj emerges from the house, bottled water in one hand, yoga
 mat in the other. He plops the mat down next to Logan.

RAJ
 It's an extra. I want you to
 practice at home.

Raj takes a seat on the stoop - YAWNS.

LOGAN
 Hah! You're more tired than me.

RAJ
 I didn't sleep much last night.

LOGAN
 Because...?

RAJ
I was writing.

Logan SLAPS Raj on the back - a bit too hard.

LOGAN
Atta go, Raj.

RAJ
(feeling the sting)
Thanks...?

LOGAN
What about your ghost - he gone?

Raj ponders this... Then tells the perfect white lie.

RAJ
He no longer bothers me.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Raj yawns as he pours a cup of chicory coffee.

HENRI (O.S.)
I'm waiting...

Raj, red-eyed and tired, enters the --

LIVING ROOM

Spots Henri on the sofa, a small stack of typed paper in hand.

Raj's phone rings: DEEPAK.

RAJ
I need to take this...
(heads for the door)
Give me a moment.

HENRI
I already had to wait for the
addict to leave and now you --

Too late - Raj is through the door and is already --

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

Raj paces, phone to his ear.

RAJ
What did you think of the first
act?

DEEPAK
I loved it... I hated it.

RAJ
I'm lost.

DEEPAK
The story itself is fantastic. But
your main character is French.

RAJ
And...?

DEEPAK
Needs to be an Indian. You know
that.

RAJ
It's a biopic about Henri Dubois.
He's French!

DEEPAK
Or it's just a story about a
blacklisted writer. He could be
anything. Except in this case - he
must be an Indian.

Raj looks skyward at a carpet of twinkling stars, as if
somehow the solution to his problem could be found there.

DEEPAK
Raj...?

RAJ
Let me finish it as is... I'll make
the changes later.

DEEPAK
To an Indian.

Raj scruffs the ground with his feet, hates this predicament.

RAJ
Yeah...

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raj re-enters. Henri clacking away on the old typewriter.

HENRI
Who was that?

RAJ
My agent. He's read the first act.

HENRI
And...?

RAJ
Loves it.

HENRI
No notes? No changes?

RAJ
Nothing worth mentioning.

HENRI
Really?

RAJ
We need to get started. I have a full day tomorrow.

HENRI
Wasting time with an addict.

RAJ
It's not a waste of time. It's helping him to --

HENRI
Delay the inevitable.

RAJ
(firmly)
Achieve the achievable.

HENRI
(in French)
Tu bâtis des châteaux en air.

RAJ
If you are going to insult me, have the courtesy to do it in English.

HENRI
It translates to - *you're building castles in the air*. It means you're delusional.

RAJ
Get out of my chair.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BISHOP - DWAYNE'S PHARMACY - MIDNIGHT

Logan, HAMMER in hand, gazes at the pharmacy's glass door.
He bites his lower lip as beads of sweat form on his brow.

He takes a step forward - stops. Then paces in a small circle, anguished and agitated.

LOGAN
Somebody help me...

He raises the hammer, locks eyes on the door and --

Drops it to the ground...

Logan slides down to the sidewalk, back against the building.

He crosses his legs in a lotus position, closes his eyes...

LOGAN
Om Namo Narayana... Om Namo
Narayana... Om Namo Narayana.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BEDROOM - THE WEE HOURS

Raj, still in his clothes, asleep. Out cold, but then --

He stirs... Tosses and turns... Suddenly restless.

A NOOSE is tightened on his neck. His hands instinctively grab it as Raj's panicked eyes pop open to reveal --

HENRI - translucent blue, the pupils of his angry eyes a fiery red. Those eyes lower - now locked with Raj's.

HENRI
I trusted you... You lied to me!

Raj chokes on the tight noose.

HENRI
You're going to make me an Indian!?

RAJ
(struggling/muffled)
No! No!

HENRI
You'll hang for that.

Henri pulls hard on the rope and Raj --

BOLTS UP IN BED... Sweating, frantic breaths... Sees nothing.
Just a nightmare.

RAJ
Henri!

LIVING ROOM

CLACK - CLACK - CLACK - Henri calmly tapping the keys of the old typewriter.

RAJ (O.S.)
Henri!

Raj enters... Henri glances towards him.

HENRI
Yes...?

RAJ
I lied to you.

HENRI
How so?

RAJ
They want to make your character an Indian.

HENRI
Yes... I know.

Henri returns to typing.

RAJ
You knew...?

HENRI
Of course I did. Although I would have preferred otherwise, your Agent friend is quite correct.

CLACK - CLACK - CLACK... Henri back to typing.

RAJ
So you're changing it?

HENRI
I am not. That'll be your task - when we're done. You can manage that small task - yes?

Raj nods.

CLACK - CLACK - CLACK.

HENRI
Since you're up anyway, he might as well make the most of it.

RAJ
Let me get some coffee.

PRE-DAWN

Henri looms behind as Raj, perched at the roll-top desk keys in Henri's typed pages into his laptop.

A tear tumbles down Raj's cheek... Then another...

He stops typing, wipes his eyes.

HENRI
What...?

RAJ
(re: the laptop)
It's heartbreaking... I didn't
think Amélie would leave you. How
could she do that?

Henri takes a seat on the sofa... Contemplates.

HENRI
I was useless... Drowning myself in
self-pity and wine... What woman
would want a man like that?

RAJ
The woman who married you.

Henri shakes his head in disagreement.

HENRI
I wasn't the man she married... And
I wasn't going to become him again.

Raj moves to the sofa... Tries to get a read on Henri,
obviously lost in past memories.

RAJ
Why did you take your life?

Henri doesn't respond.

RAJ
Was it because you were
blacklisted?

HENRI
What is your theory, mon ami?

RAJ
Because you were heartbroken.

HENRI
You're getting ahead of the story.

RAJ
Please...

HENRI
And Amélie had no choice in her
destiny. I do not blame her.

RAJ
You're not answering my question.

HENRI
Perhaps it was merely because I was
weak. Sometimes the correct answer
is the simplest one... No?

RAJ
Weakness is a character trait.
Suicide is an action. So again,
why?

HENRI
Perhaps I could not live as a
failure. Or perhaps I could not
live as a failure without the
comfort that love brings... I hung
myself the day I heard news of
Amélie's remarriage. Who is to say
whether I would have done so were I
still able to write?

RAJ
You are.

HENRI
In time... Let's continue the
journey before we decide whether or
not we know the end.

Raj nods.

HENRI
And you?

RAJ
Me...?

HENRI
Why are you alone? Have you not
been in love?

RAJ

I have.

HENRI

Enlighten me.

RAJ

Her name was Aisha... We were to marry... Someday, anyway.

HENRI

But you did not.

RAJ

In my culture, financial stability is expected to come before marriage. I could not offer that. I needed to be a writer. It took far too long to become a successful one... She married another.

An awkward moment of silence...

HENRI

Are you at peace with your choice?

RAJ

I am not... Especially now.

HENRI

Now...?

RAJ

I've lost my passion for writing.
I've retained my passion for her.

HENRI

Use her in my story.
(off Raj's surprise)
You're going to make it an Indian story. I would quite like it if you made my Amélie, your Aisha.

RAJ

Very kind of --

HENRI

We need to get back to work.

THE NEXT MORNING

Raj, asleep on the sofa - a sprawled out, crumpled mess.

A KNOCK on the door. Raj comes to, stretching and yawning.

Goes to the door, opens it, and is immediately bear-hugged by Logan.

LOGAN
Thank you.

A confused Raj hugs him back.

RAJ
For...?

LOGAN
Saving my life last night. That
chanting shit is awesome.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - BIRCH TREE GROVE - MORNING

Raj and Logan sitting cross-legged on their mats.

RAJ
The first step in Vipassana is to
find stillness. It's not about
forcing your mind to be quiet, but
rather observing it without
judgment.

LOGAN
Easier said than done.

RAJ
It's natural for the mind to
wander. The key is to gently bring
your focus back to your breath each
time it does. Now, close your eyes.

Logan closes his eyes, his hands resting on his knees, palms
up. Raj watches him for just a moment.

RAJ
(soothing tone)
Take a deep breath in...

Logan complies.

RAJ
Hold it for a moment then... Slowly
exhale... And again. Feel the air
entering your nostrils... Filling
your lungs... Leaving your body.
And again... Focus only on the
sensation of your breath. If
thoughts arise, don't fight them.

RAJ (CONT'D)
Simply acknowledge them and gently
bring your focus back to your
breathing.

Logan's breathing becomes more rhythmic, his body relaxed.

RAJ
Expand your awareness to your body.
Notice any sensations without
trying to change them. Feel the
weight of your body against the
ground, the texture of your clothes
on your skin. If you feel any
discomfort or tension, observe it
without judgment. Everything you
feel is a part of your experience.
But feel each sensation without
judgment.

Logan breathes as Raj yawns, fighting the need for sleep.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raj at the roll-top desk, feverishly entering Henri's typed
pages into his laptop.

Henri paces the room behind him.

RAJ
Almost done...

Raj grabs the next typed page from Henri's stack, starts to
keyboard it in... Slows down... And then stops.

RAJ
(re: the typed page)
I don't want to type this.

HENRI
You have no other choice.

Raj nods - his fingers hover over the keyboard.

INSERT LAPTOP COMPUTER SCREEN.

**NOTE: All of the words in the scene below will be spoken by
Raj in VOICE OVER and appear on the screen as they are
spoken.**

RAJ (V.O.)

INT. SMALL HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dimly lit, filled with the scent of dust and failure.

A noose dangles at the end of a rope descending from the attic rafters.

Henri, formally dressed, hair neat and tidy, moves a rickety wooden ladder into position.

He slowly ascends the ladder, each step groaning under his weight. He reaches the top and pauses for --

One last moment - is this really to be his final fate?

Memories flood his mind. His eyes well with tears. He takes a step up. He has answered the question.

Henri reaches the top step of the ladder. His balance and posture perfect, as if he practiced this many times before.

He slips the noose over his head, closes his eyes, his breathing slow and deliberate.

HENRI

I am... A writer.

Henri kicks the ladder away.

The sudden drop is swift. The rope tightens around his neck, cutting off his breath. Then...

Silence... Save for the gentle swaying of the rope and the creaking of the rafter.

END LAPTOP SCENE - BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Raj's lips wobble fighting a cry as he keys the last line into the laptop.

He leans back... Takes a beat.

RAJ

I think that's enough for now. We can pick it up --

HENRI

*I'm done.
(off Raj's look)
It's the end... FADE OUT.*

RAJ

It can't be.

HENRI

But it was.

Raj thinks...

RAJ
Someone had to find you... Your
body.

HENRI
I have no recollection of who
did... And I don't care to
contemplate the obvious.

RAJ
The obvious ...?

HENRI
That the smell of my rotting corpse
alerted someone. A delivery boy. A
postman... A Ranger.

Raj takes in Henri's somberness... Thinks.

RAJ
I think you were found by Amélie.

HENRI
Impossible.

RAJ
She returned home to see you... To
be with you... Just too late.

A moment passes...

HENRI
I would like that.

Raj returns his focus to the keyboard, not noticing Henri --
Fading into the ether.

A few moments later --

Raj turns towards the sofa - sees nothing.

RAJ
Henri...?

A warm smile crosses Raj's face.

RAJ
Nirvana, mon ami.

Raj returns his focus to the laptop - types away... Energized
and in the height of creativity.... A sense he hadn't felt in
a long time.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - MORNING

Raj lugs a suitcase towards Logan, waiting at Raj's pick-up truck.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Logan takes the suitcase, tosses it in the bed of the truck.

RAJ
Thank you for keeping a watch on
the place... I should be back in --

LOGAN
I need a favor.

RAJ
Anything.

LOGAN
I want to bring some of my friends
out here --

RAJ
Friends?

LOGAN
Other addicts.

RAJ
Because?

LOGAN
To teach them wellness... It helped
me. I'm just thinking if a loser
like --

RAJ
You have my permission.

Raj places a hand on Logan's shoulder.

RAJ
And you are not a loser. Trust me,
I know.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MUMBAI - DAY

A congested potpourri of taxis, autos, rickshaws and
motorcycles cram the streets. In the middle of that mess --

INT. TAXI - DOWNTOWN MUMBAI - DAY

An agitated TAXI DRIVER at the wheel.

Raj in the back seat, his laptop computer perched on his lap.

EXT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - DAY

Raj strides towards the entrance, ignoring his reflection in the shimmering glass.

INT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Coffee, teas and Indian pastries arranged on a small conference table.

Deepak on one side of the table. On the other side --

Three smiling FILM INVESTORS, each with a manuscript in front of them: *BLACKLISTED... WRITTEN BY: RAJ RANI*.

Raj enters. The Investors stand and clap - *bravo applause*.

Raj smiles, takes a seat next to Deepak.

NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE IS IN HINDI - SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH.

DEEPAK

Let's get down to business.

Deepak opens a folder with a contract.

DEEPAK

The lien on Raj's bank account is to be lifted immediately.

INVESTOR ONE

Done.

DEEPAK

\$250,000 for the script or 2.5% of the budget, whichever is greater plus three points on the backend.

INVESTOR TWO

I'm only willing to go two points. And only if he's willing to come back when needed for publicity events.

DEEPAK

Raj, your call.

Raj nods in agreement.

INVESTOR THREE
We've already got a mock-up of the poster.

Investor Three opens his briefcase, retrieves a MOVIE POSTER
MOCK-UP: *An eerie background behind a man in a business suit hanging from the attic rafters.*

He slides it towards Raj.

INVESTOR THREE
What do you think?

RAJ
(suddenly somber)
It's dark...

INVESTOR THREE
We can lighten the color scheme --

RAJ
I'm not talking about the colors.
The tone is too dark. And there was
much more to the character other
than how he died. In fact --

An intercom speaker CRACKLES.

VOICE FROM INTERCOM (V.O.)
Deepak, the reporter from Filmfare
is ready for you and Raj.

INT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - DEEPAK'S OFFICE - DAY

A female FILMWAY REPORTER interviewing Raj, under the watchful eye of Deepak, at a small conference table.

FILMWAY REPORTER
It was reported that you had
retired from writing --

DEEPAK
He never announced he was retiring.
Just taking some time off to
recharge the batteries, right Raj?

RAJ
I retired from writing.

FILMWAY REPORTER
So what brought you back?

Raj doesn't answer - his mind obviously somewhere else.

FILMWAY REPORTER

Mr. Rani...?

RAJ

I'm sorry... What?

FILMWAY REPORTER

I asked what brought you back to writing?

A moment passes.

RAJ

I had a... Spiritual awakening.

FILMWAY REPORTER

Can you elaborate?

RAJ

No.

(at Deepak)

I'd like to go home now.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAY

Raj's truck pulls up. As he emerges, he spots --

A smoky barbecue, burgers and dogs. And a new picnic table where Logan and --

Two of his ADDICT FRIENDS are engaged in gluing back pieces of smashed ceramic COFFEE MUGS.

LOGAN

Raj!

Logan hustles over as Raj removes his suitcase from the truck, gives him a bearhug.

LOGAN

How did it go?

RAJ

As expected.

Raj motions towards the picnic table, the Addicts still immersed in gluing pieces of the mugs together.

RAJ

What's this...?

LOGAN

It's Kintsugi. A Japanese wellness exercise I looked it up.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

You smash something up and then put it all back together, filling the cracks with gold-tinted glue.

RAJ

Why?

LOGAN

Because by embracing flaws and imperfections, you can create an even stronger --

RAJ

I meant why my coffee cups?

LOGAN

Ah... Yeah. I didn't expect you back so soon.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Raj pours freshly brewed chicory coffee into a plastic cup.

He grabs it, recoils as he feels the heat on his fingers.

Logan enters.

LOGAN (O.S.)

Promise, I'll bring new cups tomorrow.

(off Raj's nods)

And clean up the front. I'd do it now but I'm late for a --

RAJ

Go.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Raj, plastic coffee cup in hand, gazes out the window at --

THE BEAR - returned to clean up the remnants of Logan's barbecue.

The Bear turns for a moment, locks eyes with Raj. Then a LOW GROWL and the Bear returns to his scavenging.

RAJ

We all must do what our nature demands.

ROLL-TOP - DESK - LATER

Raj drums his fingers as he stares at his laptop screen. On it: *We all must do what our nature demands.*

Raj gazes just another moment before hitting the backspace bar, deleting the words.

RAJ
Perhaps not...

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Raj, nestled in bed, fast asleep.

CREAK... CREAK... CREAK...

Raj's eyes flutter open, finally landing on --

HENRI - gently rocking in the chair adjacent to the bed.

RAJ
Henri...?

HENRI
I would say - in the flesh - but we know better.

RAJ
(totally confused)
You moved on...

HENRI
I tried... I couldn't.

Raj scoots up in bed.

RAJ
Because?

HENRI
The title page. Written By...

RAJ
I told you. I'm not going with Rodger Randall.

HENRI
I'm quite aware.

RAJ
Then...?

HENRI
It needs to be Henri Dubois.

RAJ
WHAT!?

Raj bolts out of bed.

HENRI
In order to find eternal piece, I
need to be credited with my work.
The world needs to know I wrote it.

RAJ
It's too late for that.

HENRI
It is never too --

RAJ
(angry)
Follow me.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Raj at the roll-top desk. Henri looming behind him.

On the laptop screen, a promotional article regarding the
upcoming film: *BLACKLISTED, BY RAJ RANI*.

RAJ
You would have me labeled a
plagiarist!?

Henri contemplates for a moment.

HENRI
Are you not one?

RAJ
No!

HENRI
Raj....?

Raj stands - eyeball to eyeball with Henri.

RAJ
I have everything at risk here! My
bank account. This house! My
reputation!

HENRI
But I wrote it.

Raj clenches his jaws...

RAJ
It doesn't matter.

HENRI
Because?

RAJ
Because...? Because, as they say...

Raj heads towards the kitchen, turns towards Henri.

RAJ
You're dead to me.

Raj disappears into the kitchen.

RAJ (O.C.)
AND TO EVERYONE ELSE!

MOMENTS LATER

Raj re-emerges from the kitchen, bottle of water in hand.

Henri is nowhere to be seen. Raj enters the --

HALLWAY

And YELPS as he spots...

Henri, hanging from a rope tied to the attic beams. His face and skin back to that eerie, translucent blue.

HENRI
Is this what you want for me?

Raj swallows an angry breath, takes a sip of water - then calmly strolls past Henri...

RAJ
Good night, Henri.

As Raj disappears into the bedroom, Henri swivels around on his hanging rope.

HENRI
You're not being very nice...
(no response)
I thought we were colleagues...
(no response)
Do you know what's worse than being
blacklisted...?
(no response)

HENRI (CONT'D)
 Being a fraud...
 (no response)
 Raj...?

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - BIRCH GROVE - FIRST DAY AFTER

Raj leads Logan and now three ADDICT friends of his in a series of yoga exercises.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - HALLWAY - THAT NIGHT

Raj strolls by Henri, hanging from the attic.

RAJ
 Good night, Henri.

HENRI
 I will haunt your dreams!

RAJ
 Right...

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - SECOND DAY AFTER

Gray skies as a peppering of snowflakes float to the ground.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Logan watches as Raj applies a weatherproofing caulking seal around the perimeter of the window frame.

LOGAN
 Make the bead just a little bit smaller.

HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Raj strolls by Henri, hanging from the attic.

RAJ
 Still hanging around?

Henri makes an attempt at kicking Raj as he passes - misses.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THIRD DAY AFTER

A fire fueled by birch tree logs flickers in the fireplace.

Raj, Logan and the Addicts, all in a lotus position on the floor engage in meditative chants.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Raj paces towards Henri, still hanging, head bowed - a lone tear streaking down his cheek.

RAJ
Are you trying to fool me...?

HENRI
Leave me be.

RAJ
Because I am not a fool.

HENRI
At long last, have you no decency!?

The line stings Raj - He knows the origin.

HENRI
I beg you... I need to move on.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Raj, on the stoop, sipping chicory coffee, taking in the snow-covered landscape. But his eyes show no delight - instead, they reflect a somberness... A soul searching.

Logan sits next to him, also cradling a cup of coffee.

LOGAN
You want me to believe that your
imaginary ghost wrote your script?

RAJ
Further conversation is useless if
you think me insane.

LOGAN
Fine. A ghost wrote the script. Got
it. But so what?

RAJ
I took credit for it.

LOGAN
And...?

RAJ
I am a liar.

LOGAN
Until you tell the truth.

RAJ
I can't.

LOGAN
I don't think you really have a
choice.

RAJ
Meaning...?

Logan stands, sips coffee as he takes in the scenery.

LOGAN
You're the one who taught me that
one cannot achieve wellness if one
is living a lie...

Logan pours the rest of his coffee on the ground, watches it
melt through the snow.

LOGAN
Or was that just for addicts?

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Raj stares at a hanging, motionless Henri.

RAJ
I have a plan I need to run by you.

Henri's eyes pop open.

HENRI
Does it involve me receiving credit
for my work?

RAJ
And celebrated for it.

Henri slips to the ground.

HENRI
You have my attention.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Henri studies Raj, at the door, a packed suitcase nearby.

Raj reaches for the handle, stops short of grabbing it.

RAJ
This will be the last time we see
each other.

HENRI

Perhaps we will meet again... In
the hereafter. I will look for you.

Raj grabs the suitcase - extends his free hand towards Henri.

They engage in a weird, ghostly handshake.

RAJ

It's been an honor.

HENRI

The honor was all mine... Thank
you, Raj Rani. Safe travels.

Raj nods, then slips out the door.

INT. BOLLYWOOD BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A stoic Raj sits across from the FILMWAY REPORTER - appearing
very impatient.

NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE IS IN HINDI - SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH.

FILMWAY REPORTER

Are you sure he's going to be here?

RAJ

He will.

FILMWAY REPORTER

(checks her watch)

I do have other --

RAJ

It will be worth the wait.

A few more awkward moments of silence and then --

DEEPAK bursts in.

DEEPAK

(nervous politeness)

Hey, what's going on, Raj? You know
I handle all press meetings.

RAJ

Except for this one. Please... Sit.

As Deepak slowly slips into a chair, Raj hits SEND on an
email on his smartphone.

RAJ
(at the Filmway Reporter)
I have a scoop for you. Blacklisted
was written by Henri Dubois.

The Reporter's eyes narrow with confusion.

DEEPAK
I think you mean it was based on --

RAJ
No. It was written by him.

DEEPAK
That's impossible.

FILMWAY REPORTER
I need you to explain.

The Reporter starts feverishly taking notes.

RAJ
I found his script in the house I bought in California. The very one he hung himself in. All I did was transcribe his typed pages into my computer.

FILMWAY REPORTER
Are you admitting to plagiarizing?

I am. RAJ

FILMWAY REPORTER
Because?

DEEPAK
Raj, stop talking.

RAJ
I thought his work was brilliant...
And thought mine was horrible.

FILMWAY REPORTER
Is this a joke? I'm not going to
report this just to be made a fool
of later.

RAJ
Like Henri, I am dead serious. At the start of this interview, I sent both you and Deepak an email.

The Reporter and Deepak fumble for their phones. The Reporter beats Deepak to it.

RAJ
My written confession and the
headline for your story.

FILMWAY REPORTER

(reading email)

*The credits on the film Blacklisted
should be as follows: written by
Henri Dubois... Stolen by Raj Rani.*

RAJ

Good enough?

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

A calm Raj, sipping coffee at the table eyeballing a --

Stabbed in the back Deepak angrily pacing the room.

DEEPAK

I'm now disgraced. And you - You'll
be sued for everything you own! How
could you --

RAJ

Gift you the most successful film
you will ever have.

DEEPAK

What!?

RAJ

Once that article is posted,
Blacklisted will be the most talked
about film project in decades. I
stole a script - from a dead man.
You can't buy that level of
publicity. You won't need to spend
a dime on advertising... Everyone
will watch it. And thanks to Henri,
everyone will love it.

Deepak stops his pacing - thinks... Perhaps Raj is right.

RAJ

And your investors will not have to
pay a nickel for the script. It's
theirs for free. All I want is a
promise that there will be no more
liens against my bank account. Can
you arrange that?

Deepak takes a seat... Nods.

DEEPAK

You know you'll never be paid to
write again. Your career... It's
over.

RAJ
 That is not for you to decide... Or
 for me for that matter.
 (standing)
 And it never really has been.

Raj removes a sealed envelope from his pocket - hands it to Deepak.

RAJ
 I need you to get this to Aisha.

RAJ
 Raj... She's still married.

RAJ
 I know.

DEEPAK
 (re: the envelope)
 Then.

RAJ
 My apology... My regrets.

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Raj enters, drops his suitcase on the floor.

SUPER: A FEW DAYS LATER

He looks towards the roll-top desk, spots a piece of paper in the old-timey typewriter.

He removes it from the roller. It reads: *MON AMI... THERE ARE STILL STORIES WITHIN YOU...*

Raj takes a few steps, peers down the hallway. Sees nothing.

Looks towards the ceiling. The access space now covered.

A warm smile crosses his face.

EXT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAY

Logan, and now four Addicts doing yoga exercises on a patch of lawn that has been shoveled clean of snow.

SUPER: A WEEK LATER

Meanwhile --

INT. BISHOP HOUSE - DAY

Raj at the roll-top desk. His laptop screen opened in front of him. On the screen:

TITLE: GHOSTWRITER.

WRITTEN BY: RAJ RANI

Raj goes to the next screen page, types: *FADE IN:*

He takes a sip of coffee, squares his shoulders, cracks his knuckles and then starts typing like there's no tomorrow.

FADE OUT.