

Nirvana - Draft 1

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Arzoo sits on the couch, huddled under a blanket, eating ice cream and crying. She's watching something on her TV (not shown) - "the wedding song" heard loud and clear.

She's miserably lonely.

She slides off the couch and picks a flower from her vase of flowers. Starts pulling off petals, one by one. She laughs to herself.

ARZOO
(softly)
I don't need a man.

Pulls off another petal.

ARZOO (CONT'D)
No, I need a man.

Pulls off another petal.

ARZOO (CONT'D)
(unconvincingly)
I don't need a man!

And so on.

The last petal left is "I don't need a man."

ARZOO TO CAMERA
But I do.

INT. ARZOO'S BEDROOM - DAY

ARZOO HINDIAN (28) flips through her cell phone and sighs.

ON THE SCREEN: DesiDarlings.com "Select YOUR Desi-match Categories" - Age, Profession, Caste.

She selects "Profession" and scrolls through the options: 1- Doctor. 2- IT Call Center. 3- IT Call Center. 4- IT Call Center. 5- IT Call Center. 6- IT Call Center. 7- IT Call Center.

You get the picture.

She goes back without choosing any filter.

ARZOO
Give me ALL the Desi hunks, ok?

ARZOO TO CAMERA
(forlornly)
Even just one would be nice, to be honest. He doesn't even have to be a hunk. Just... someone... to appreciate me for me.

She hits "search for males" - a pop-up button.

ON THE SCREEN: There are 1.08 men for every 1 woman in India. Increase your chances - Click HERE!

She clicks HERE.

ON THE SCREEN: If you want to please an Indian man, you have to be the BEST Indian woman - Click HERE!

ARZOO
What?

She continues scrolling.

ON THE SCREEN: Click HERE for tips and tricks on pleasing YOUR Indian man!

She groans.

ARZOO (CONT'D)
Come on! Ohhh.

And clicks.

ON THE SCREEN: Various icons: 1- Dressing for Your Desi Man. 2- Dancing for Your Desi Man. 3- Cooking for Your Desi Man.

Arzoo stares at her phone for a minute. She raises her eyebrows.

ARZOO TO CAMERA
It's a well-documented phenomenon that a Desi Woman has to cook for her Desi Man. And not just any cooking, no! It must be like his mother cooking. Or else it's rubbish!

The sound of a doorbell.

ARZOO
(excited)
A visitor?! Who could it be?

Arzoo runs to the

FRONT DOOR

and opens. A package at her feet. She frowns.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The now-opened package on the table, a full box of face masks next to it. Arzoo tries on a mask at a wall mirror, preens her hair with an air of desperation. She sighs even louder this time.

ARZOO

What's the point of even trying? I haven't seen a single person in the past six months.

Her phone buzzes a notification. She picks it up.

ON THE SCREEN: A lonely Desi woman deserves a good man. You are worth it! CLICK HERE to find your next date.

Arzoo clicks. The app opens to a Tinder-like screen. She swipes right on each image -

MAN 1 - crazy mustache, turban, wild look in his eyes

MAN 2 - doctor's coat, very conservative

MAN 3 - IT call center customer service

MAN 4 - Daljeet V.

As soon as she right-swipes on Daljeet V., a pop-up comes on. It's a Desi Match!

Arzoo laughs in delight.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Arzoo texting with Daljeet in the living room.

Arzoo texting with Daljeet in the kitchen.

Arzoo texting with Daljeet in the bath.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

INT. ARZOO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As usual, Arzoo is texting with Daljeet.

ON THE SCREEN: Oh yes. I'd like that very much. Next Friday?

Arzoo's eyes open wide as an owl's. *It's a date!*

She runs excitedly to her closet to look through what she can wear.

BUZZ! Her phone.

ON THE SCREEN: Various icons: 1- Cooking for Your Desi Man. 2- Dancing for Your Desi Man. 3- Dressing for Your Desi Man.

She clicks on "Dressing for Your Man" and looks at the screen, moving her phone back and forth, upside down, etc.

She goes in her closet to find a sari. It's hot pink.

Montage of her draping her sari five different ways. Nothing looks right.

INT. ARZOO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Arzoo sleeps fitfully in her bed, clutching the sari. Clothes scattered on the bed and chair, still on hangers. She frowns in her sleep.

INT. ARZOO'S HEADSPACE - NIGHT

Arzoo's dream sequences come up. It's the pictures that she saw on DesiDarlings.com, warped and discolored and switching from photo to photo, first slowly then faster. Then the homepage for DesiDarlings.com comes up with "Click Here!" buttons moving all over the page. A strange, low-pitched mocking voice reverberates:

DESI DARLINGS HOST (V.O.)
1.08 mannnnn for every 1 woaaa-
mannnn... dance for your Desi
mannnn... who dance for YOUR Desi
man, priya? Mua-ha-haaa! Not
yooouuu!

Arzoo moans in her sleep.

DESI DARLINGS HOST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Click heeeerrre!

In her sleep, Arzoo clicks and clicks an imaginary phone.

DESI DARLINGS HOST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Click heeeeerrre! Click heeeeerrre!

She wakes up terrified.

ARZOO TO CAMERA
DesiDarling has no shame, eh?
(indignantly)
I'm a PAID member. I PAY for good
dreams, ok?

She touches a bit of sleep drool on her mouth. Picks up a hand mirror from the nightstand. There's unwashed makeup all over her crazy-lookin' face. She gives a little scream.

Covers her face with the sari and goes back to sleep.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Arzoo on the floor in various uncomfortable yoga poses that she can't hold. Or she isn't in the mood.

She gives up and goes to sit on the couch. Pulls out a "to do" list on her phone.

ON THE SCREEN: Places to find a man:

#1 Club

#2 Grocery store

#3 ABC Store

#4 The meat market?

#5 Church??

#6 DesiDarlings.com!

She looks at the camera with a serious face.

INT. ARZOO'S ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Days later. Arzoo opens the door. She wears a face mask and that hot-pink sari from the night before.

DALJEET VENKATANARASIMHARAJUVARIPETA (30) *bounces* as he stands in front of her, wearing an Indian flag face mask. He's named after a train station - his aura is just as kinetic. Daljeet's goofy grin gets even wider as he hands her a bouquet of carnations.

DALJEET

Arzoo? Arzoo Hhhh-indian?

Bounce, bounce.

Arzoo looks at the camera - wide eyes, frozen smile. *WTF?*

Daljeet shakes her hand mightily.

DALJEET (CONT'D)

My name is Daljeet.

(over-enunciates)

Dal-jeet Ven-kata-nara-sim-hara-juv-ari-peta is my name.

DALJEET TO CAMERA

I have to make it easy for American girl, you know. She only know American name. Smith. Johnson. Cox. Obama. But what do these American girl know of DESI man name, eh?

Arzoo looks to the camera and shrugs.

ARZOO

Please, come in.

She turns around to lead him inside. On the back of her sari, her smeared makeup from overnight - in the shape of a horrified face.

Daljeet turns to the camera, circles his face with his index finger and a confused look. Then bounces behind her.

INT. ARZOO'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arzoo stands, serves daal lentil soup. Daljeet looks around her house, in all its American decor glory.

DALJEET

Oh, this look so good. Thank you so much.

ARZOO

It's my pleasure.

DALJEET

Do you like to cook Indian food all the time?

ARZOO

Oh, no actually. I've never cooked food from back home at all.

DALJEET

Oh... so this your mother recipe,
right?

ARZOO

Umm. No, no it's not. My mom
doesn't cook Indian food, either.

DALJEET

You buy this from Indian
restaurant? Which one? I like
Little Preeti Palace --

ARZOO

Actually, this is from a recipe on
the internet.

Daljeet looks to the camera in absolute horror. He turns back
to her and presses his lips together.

DALJEET

Oh... oh. That's nice.

Arzoo sits back down.

ARZOO

Can I get you something to drink
before we start?

DALJEET

Oh, no thank you. Water is fine.

He takes a big spoonful of the soup and sips it loudly.
Smiles politely.

DALJEET (CONT'D)

Arzoo, ehh... you forgot the salt.

ARZOO

No, I put salt in.

DALJEET

Oh. Ok. Maybe you forgot spice.

ARZOO

It has spice. Curry.

Daljeet jumps back.

DALJEET

It has curry?! I can't taste it!

ARZOO

Yeah, well. It's *light* curry.
Curry's so... *spicy* hot. You know?

Daljeet looks at the camera, gives a girly little shriek.

Arzoo seductively covers his hand with hers.

ARZOO (CONT'D)

Wait. Are you telling me you like
it spiiiiicyy hhhhh-hot?

DALJEET

Ah, yes, like my mother cooking!

Instant turn-off. Arzoo straightens up.

ARZOO

Of course... I'll go get the curry.

She leaves for a moment, returns with the (almost full)
bottle of curry powder. He looks dead in her eyes. Without
breaking their gaze, he *dumps the entire thing* into his daal.

DALJEET

Do you have another one?

ARZOO

Umm. Nope! Sorry. I'll be sure to
buy *extra* next time.

DALJEET

No problem, not problem at all.

DALJEET TO CAMERA

Oh but it *IS* a problem.

Quick snapshot of Daljeet holding a huge container of curry
from Costco or something.

Daljeet and Arzoo finish their daal. She goes to the kitchen
- brings back cheeseburgers. Daljeet's eyes open wide in
horror.

DALJEET TO CAMERA (CONT'D)

She eat cows?

DALJEET

No, thank you. I don't eat beef.

ARZOO

Oh my god, I'm so sorry!

DALJEET
 "Oh my god" - ? God who?
 (beat)
 Kamadhenu?

Flash image of Kamadhenu, the mother-god of cows.

DALJEET (CONT'D)
 Annapurna?

Flash image of Annapurna, the god of food and nourishment.

DALJEET (CONT'D)
 (seductively)
 Kamadeva?

Flash image of Kamadeva, the god of love.

He looks at her with his best seductive, smoldering look - tries for "Idris Elba" but gets "Mr. Bean."

How mortifying! She looks in his eyes with alarm. He looks back with... cheekiness. As he nods his head side-to-side, he gets even more giddy.

She giggles. He laughs in response. She laughs even harder. It's a feelgood shared moment.

ARZOO
 You know, Daljeet, I wasn't sure
 I'd ever be able to meet someone.
 Especially with these covid
 restrictions.

DALJEET
 I know. I am on DesiDarling for
 very long time. Not many women
 there. I think they still do
 arranged marriage like back home.

ARZOO
 Oh. Yeah. THAT thing.

Daljeet turns to her, eyebrows raised.

ARZOO (CONT'D)
 My parents wanted to do that, but I
 said no way. I told them they can't
 make me marry some - some stranger.
 I've lived here long enough that
 the Indian culture is... far out of
 my reach.

DALJEET

So why you on DesiDarling, eh? A pretty girl like you, who knows so many American boy. Why you don't want one of them?

Arzoo looks down, unable to answer. Her face is filled with immense pain.

ARZOO

You wouldn't understand.

DALJEET

Let me try.

A long, sad pause.

ARZOO

It's not easy to blend in. I have my parents' culture, the way they raised me, what they want to be important to me... that makes me so different than everyone here. I've been alone all my life because of that. But I can't marry a stranger and...

DALJEET

And Indian culture is so different, too. Right?

Arzoo looks at him, embarrassed to have offended him. But his eyes show a nonjudgmental look. He seeks to understand this strange girl.

ARZOO

I'm sorry. I should have known it was a bad idea to look for someone on DesiDarlings.

DALJEET

Sorry? Arzoo. Everyone is alone.

He gestures to nothing in particular.

DALJEET (CONT'D)

So alone. Everyone. Just look outside!

DALJEET TO CAMERA

No, I should say "look inside"!

DALJEET
I mean, a dating website will not
make you feel less alone. It will
not bring you happiness.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Arzoo and Daljeet relax on the couch and have tea.

DALJEET
Do you want to watch Bollywood
movie?

Arzoo laughs.

ARZOO
You like those?

DALJEET
Oh yes!

ARZOO
But they don't make any sense!

DALJEET
Life don't make sense, Arzoo. This
what I'm telling you!

She ponders this for a moment.

DALJEET (CONT'D)
You don't even like the dance at
the end?

As he bounces in his seat, he makes Bollywood hands.

ARZOO
(amused)
You call that dancing?

DALJEET
Oh. You laugh at me, eh? Because
you don't know - I am better than
Hrithik Roshan!

ARZOO
Ha!

DALJEET
Ohh. It is ON. I show you.

He gets up and does a Bollywood dance routine for her.

ARZOO TO CAMERA

Wow. I think this man can be the
Govinda of my life!

He reaches his hand out for her to join him. She smiles and giggles, indicates "no" - but he insists. His dancing becomes more pronounced. Her body sways.

ARZOO TO CAMERA (CONT'D)

It can't be that hard.

She gets up and joins him. It's a disaster combination of really bad Bollywood moves with the Funky Chicken and freeform. He slows, then stops while staring at her. She doesn't notice.

DALJEET TO CAMERA

Should I tell her?

She dances so hard that she trips and falls.

He awkwardly helps her get up on the couch and she nearly cries in embarrassment and pain.

DALJEET

Are you ok?

She shakes her head, tries to answer - unintelligible words.

DALJEET (CONT'D)

I go get ice, ok?

He pats her head and leaves. She's now sobbing.

INT. ARZOO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

He pulls a bag of Laxmi frozen peas from the freezer. As he closes the freezer door, sees that it has a magnet clip with a coupon from DesiDarlings.com. He picks it up, frowns, pulls a pen out of his pocket.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Daljeet ices Arzoo's ankle while she props it up on the couch. He rubs her arm, tries to make her comfortable. She smiles at him genuinely.

INT. ARZOO'S ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Daljeet, outside; Arzoo, inside.

DALJEET

I will be back tomorrow to check on your ankle, ok?

ARZOO

Oh, no, Daljeet. You don't have to do that. I'll be fine.

DALJEET

But I want to! And I will cook for you.

(pause)

Not curry, ok? I know you don't like it. Maybe paneer... with...

He gives her an expected kiss.

ARZOO

Oh! Oh! Bye!

She shuts the door quickly and runs inside.

ARZOO (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Oh my god, all that spice is still in his mouth!

INT. ARZOO'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Arzoo chugs down a gallon of milk direct from the container.

She puts it back in the fridge and spies the note that Daljeet had written on - the DesiDarlings coupon. There's something written over it - but it's in Hindi.

Her phone dings, she checks it.

ON THE SCREEN: DesiDarlings.com Presents: HOW TO BE A PERFECT INDIAN GIRLFRIEND IN 10 DAYS! Click [HERE](#)!

She scowls, looks up.

ARZOO TO CAMERA

(defeated)

What do you think? Am I ever going to find love through DesiDarlings? Daljeet is nice, yes. I like him. But... what am I really looking for?

She hits "X" on her phone, puts the phone down.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Days later, Arzoo sits in her living room, reads an article on her phone.

ON THE SCREEN: Can Nirvana Truly Exist?

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

She does yoga poses. Classical Indian music - sitar, etc - plays in the background.

She's stuck in a certain pose. Groans.

Gets up and changes the music to hip-hop. Starts to bob her head. Gets back into the position. Face is neutral.

MONTAGE: Various yoga poses with hip-hop pieces.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Few weeks or so later. This time, there's a few handwritten confirmations on the wall: (1) I am 100% responsible for my own happiness. (2) I am a strong, beautiful, independent woman. (3) I love myself more and more every day.

She continues doing yoga, *while wearing a funkified sari*. Face is smiling.

INT. ARZOO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Later that day, Arzoo wears her sari and does some cool dance moves. She does not care if it's Bollywood or not. Face is beaming. She hasn't been this happy in years.

INT. ARZOO'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Arzoo opens the fridge to get some water. She's been dancing a lot. As she closes the fridge, she sees that ridiculous DesiDarlings coupon. She pulls it off the freezer door -

And it falls to the ground. She picks it up and sees writing in English on the other side.

ON THE SCREEN: Hi, Arzoo. Can you read what I wrote in Hindi on the other side? It says "Be at peace with yourself and you will find Nirvana." I hope you find your Nirvana one day. Your friend, Daljeet Venkatanarasimharaju- [arrow sign pointing to other side, there is not enough space on this side for his full last name]

She flips to the other side.

ON THE SCREEN: -varipeta

Arzoo laughs a bit.

ARZOO
(to herself)
I know it.

She picks up her phone and scrolls through, finds Daljeet's contact.

ON THE SCREEN: Hey, Daljeet. I just saw your note. Guess what! I found NIRVANA all by myself ;-)

She takes a sip of water.

ON THE SCREEN: (three dots show that he's writing back, then)
That's great! I knew you could do it. And guess what I found?

(She writes back) What?

(He writes back) There's this great website, it's called How to be an American Boyfriend in Ten Days!

ARZOO TO CAMERA
ARE YOU JOKING ME?!

FADE TO BLACK.