

MY JOURNEY WEST

"PILOT"

By

Raza Rizvi

TEASER

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A standard American classroom in rural Tennessee.

ROHAN DASU, a 15-year-old Indian high school student with wavy hair, wearing a hoodie and jeans, sits at his desk.

All around him are his fellow SOPHOMORE classmates - every one of them WHITE. They take a test. Pencils scribbling.

At the front of the room, the teacher, MR. WILIS, stares at his phone lazily.

ROHAN (V.O.)

My name is Rohan Dasu. I'm fifteen-years-old, and I'm sure it'll be super difficult to guess this, but I'm the Indian kid. The ONLY Indian kid at Mount Romeo High School, Tennessee. Surprisingly, not a lot of people like me in the Volunteer State.

A heavy-set football player, JEFF (15) sitting next to Rohan peers over at his exam trying to cheat.

ROHAN (V.O.)

Another shocker? I don't exactly live up to the smart Asian or Indian kid stereotype.

Rohan looks over at Jeff and his terribly obvious cheating and shrugs.

On the page the QUESTION: On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked _____ launching the United States into WWII. Rohan has answered: THE GRAND CANYON.

Jeff nods and writes his answer down checking that no one has seen him cheating.

Rohan shakes his head with a smirk then starts erasing his answer.

ROHAN (V.O.)

Okay, I'm not *that* stupid. But I'm not four-point-o kid either. I'm hardly a three-point-o.

CUT TO:

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rohan is sitting on the couch staring at the TV and playing a VIDEO GAME.

On the floor, his sister SHIVANI enters the front door opening some mail.

Shivani is 18-years-old, an aura of eagerness and free spiritedness surrounds her.

ROHAN (V.O.)

My sister Shivani is the smart one.
Straight A's. Perfect attendance.
Model U.N. Twenty-three ninety on
the SAT...

Shivani's eyes go wide looking at a letter. She leaps up and begins to jump up and down in excitement.

SHIVANI

(squealing)
Mom! Dad!

ROHAN (V.O.)

And recently accepted to Georgetown
University. Which is apparently a
pretty big deal, I guess.

Rohan's mother, RITSIKA (44) and father ADI (47) celebrate with their daughter.

Adi looks at the acceptance letter while Ritsika hugs her daughter. Rohan turns the volume up on his game.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The FAMILY is seated around the dinner table eating a meal.

Shivani speaks excitedly while the parents listen. Rohan pokes his food bored.

ROHAN (V.O.)

My parents are annoyingly
traditional. Although my dad is
more lenient than my mother, he
always ends up falling in line with
her strict views.

SHIVANI

--Washington D.C. And it's especially known for preparing students for careers in government and international affairs, which is exactly what I'm hoping for!

RITSIKA

(scolding)

Rohan, eat your dinner.

SHIVANI

Bill Clinton is an alumnus.

Rohan rolls his eyes and looks at his dad. Adi shrugs and waves a hand to Rohan as if to say, "Don't worry about it." Ritsika sees this and kicks Adi under the table.

Adi immediately changes his expression to a scolding glower.

ADI

Rohan, eat your dinner.

RITSIKA

As long as you are able to visit often. I have a growing list of potential husbands you must meet.

SHIVANI

(smiling uncomfortably)

Greeaaaat!

ROHAN (V.O.)

Very, very traditional. "Arranged marriages" kind of traditional. Yeah, that's still a thing. Even here. It's awful.

Rohan's phone BUZZES, and he stifles it quickly.

Ritsika shoots him a look, and he quickly shovels a huge amount of FOOD into his mouth - nodding with a loud MMMM!

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

MJ, a 15-year-old blonde girl with big, bright eyes and low, raspy voice lounges on her bed next to Rohan in the middle of an apparently heated debate.

MJ's room is tom-boyishly decorated with punk rock posters mixed between a framed, signed Chris Johnson Titans jersey and other sports and movie memorabilia.

She has a TV with a game console and a bookshelf filled with a wide variety of Blu-Rays.

ROHAN (V.O.)

If I followed tradition, I wouldn't get to have MJ here. My girlfriend. My WHITE girlfriend. My parents would drop dead if they knew. Most nights, I sneak over here and sleep over. We don't, like, have sex or anything, we just talk about whatever.

Their conversation becomes more audible.

ROHAN

No, no, you don't understand. The extra ingredients in soup don't count as part of the soup.

MJ

Of course they do!

ROHAN

They don't. The soup just means the liquidy part. Soup is liquid.

MJ

It depends on the soup. Tomato soup is liquid. But chicken noodle soup is not. Because you have to chew chicken... and the noodle.

ROHAN

The chicken and noodle shouldn't count as part of the soup. You only count the broth part.

MJ

It totally should. It wouldn't be chicken noodle soup without the chicken and the noodle.

ROHAN

It's Chicken. It's noodles. And it's soup. Three separate wonderful things brought together in a liquidy meal.

MJ

(relenting)
Ah! You're hopeless!

She leans over and grabs a remote - points it at the TV. They sit up in bed watching a film.

ROHAN (V.O.)
She's super cool. She's basically
my best friend.

MJ stares fixedly at the TV. Rohan peeks at her out of the corner of his eye. He clearly wishes they were doing a little more than just watching a movie.

ROHAN (V.O.)
We just hang out, talk, watch
movies. Nothing bad or anything...

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Another home at another time. Rohan sits next to CHARLIE (15), another blonde girl with bright eyes. They sit on the couch watching a cheesy rom-com.

ROHAN (V.O.)
It's much better than my last
girlfriend.

Charlie is staring wide-eyed at Rohan. He turns slowly to face her, and she leaps on him trying to kiss him. Rohan keeps her at bay, but barely.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan is still taking an innocent glance at MJ.

ROHAN (V.O.)
It's way better with MJ.

EXT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Rohan takes out an envelope from the mailbox. He looks around like he's just stolen a valuable document, then runs up the driveway and tosses the envelope in the nearest trashcan.

CLOSE ON: STUDENT STATUS REPORT - DASU, ROHAN.

ROHAN (V.O.)
My parents just wouldn't get it.
They're too strict. It's better I
keep things from them. MJ, progress
reports from schools, my favorite
foods.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rohan sits on the couch, his mother towering over him intimidatingly.

RITSIKA
Did you eat a hamburger?

ROHAN
(innocently)
Of course not, mama. That would be unholy.

RITSIKA
Don't "mama" me. Why did I find a receipt for Five Guys in your room?

She holds up a RECEIPT.

ROHAN
(even more innocent)
What's a Five Guys?

RITSIKA
Rohan!

ROHAN
It's not mine! Ask Dad!

Ritsika fires a look to the couch where Adi is reading on his IPAD. He looks back at her with wide, fearful eyes. He shakes his head. She whips back to Rohan.

ROHAN (CONT'D)
Why were you in my room?

RITSIKA
Do you think your clothes are cleaned by magic!

ROHAN
(attempting flattery)
And I am so appreciative of you, mama.

Ritsika narrows her eyes dangerously.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan studies at his desk. Textbooks and notebooks laid out in front of him.

ROHAN (V.O.)

I might think they're crazy, but they are still unbelievably supportive and caring. They're stuck in the old ways and really, really stubborn, but I still love them.

Rohan closes the textbook in frustration and takes a deep breath. He rubs his face and then pulls out his PHONE to play a game.

A hand reaches over his shoulder and yanks the phone from his hands. It is Adi. He frowns.

He holds up the progress report that Rohan threw away.

ADI

Your first quarter report card came in today. It somehow got blown right out of the mailbox and landed in the garbage can.

ROHAN

Whaaaat? Crazy winds we're having, right?

ADI

You are failing your classes.

ROHAN

No I'm not! I have C's! And that's just the first quarter report. That totally doesn't even matter it's--

ADI

Doesn't matter? I drive one hour to work every day just so you can be in this school district and you're telling me grades don't matter?

ROHAN

We're in a semester system. These aren't official.

From somewhere down the hall--

RITSIKA (O.S.)

(shouting)

No PlayStation until all those C's are A's!

ROHAN

No. What? C'mon. That's impossible.
I won't have my PlayStation until
like... I'm thirty.

ADI

You'll be moved out and a doctor
when you're thirty. You won't have
time for PlayStation.

ROHAN

(aghast)

How dare you! I will always have
time for PlayStation!

RITSIKA (O.S.)

You need A's to get into a good
university!

ROHAN

This is America. You can get C's
and be President!

RITSIKA (O.S.)

If you don't get A's, I won't vote
for you!

ADI

You hear that? Your own mother
won't vote for you when you want to
be President.

ROHAN

I don't want to be President!

ADI

Well, you are still going to get
good grades. This is America where
you have the most prestigious
universities in the world. Your
sister is in one, and you will be
too.

Rohan doesn't respond. He turns and exaggeratedly begins
studying. Adi nods shortly and walks out of the room.

RITSIKA (O.S.)

Is he studying?

ADI (O.S.)

Yes, but very sarcastically.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan sits up in bed reading The Republic by Plato.

ROHAN (V.O.)

I'm not Shivani. They'll figure that out eventually I'm more of a free-thinker. Possibly an artist.

He closes the book and stares up at the ceiling. There is a large map with thumbtacks all over it placed directly about him.

ROHAN (V.O.)

There is in every one of us a type of desire that is terrible, wild, and lawless. I don't know what I want to be or what I want to do, but I know it's not what my parents think I should be or do. I can get out of this town and move to California. Or Oregon or anywhere else. Wherever I end up, I want to get started, because the beginning is the most important part. This is the beginning of my journey west.

Rohan stares with intense wonder.

END TEASER

ACT I

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

It is a clear spring afternoon. School has just ended, and MJ waits outside the entrance of the high school as STUDENTS mill about, leave in their cars, hurry to the buses.

Rohan walks up to MJ. They hug and start walking.

MJ

Are you coming over tonight?

ROHAN

If you want me to.

MJ

It's been a few days.

ROHAN

Yeah, sorry. I've just been really tired. I'm actually studying.

MJ

(feigned shock)

What? Has our little boy turned over a new leaf?

ROHAN

No, I just want my games back.

MJ

You going to the rally thing tonight?

ROHAN

Rally thing? That assembly about the, what, dinosaurs?

MJ

(rolling her eyes)

No, not "the dinosaurs." The open forum for the creationists versus, you know, the smart people.

ROHAN

That's kinda mean but yeah...

(a beat)

Yeah, no, I'm not going to that.

MJ

It's so stupid! They want to teach us that dinosaurs and humans lived together!

ROHAN

Well, that's just stupid. No one really believes that.

MJ

Plenty of people believe it!

ROHAN

Fine, but no one smart believes it.

MJ

That's the problem. Little kids who don't know better are being brainwashed by their idiot parents. Josh Valentine is a creationist.

ROHAN

What? No way!

MJ

I'm telling you, like a third of our school and half our teachers think the Earth is six thousand years old, and we need to learn that!

ROHAN

How the hell is our school ranked so high?

MJ

'Cause of the SAT course we have to take. They just train us to do well on standardized tests without actually teaching us anything useful.

ROHAN

You think I can use that as an excuse for my bad grades?

MJ

Ha!

They walk on down the block passing a CHURCH.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ritsika watches an absolutely awful looking cheesy Indian TV show. Rohan walks into the house.

RITSIKA

Clean your room.

ROHAN

Hello to you too. My day was great, thanks for asking.

RITSIKA

Shivani is coming home to visit, and I want a clean house. We're going to pick her up when our father gets home.

ROHAN

Why do I have to clean my room? She's not coming in there. I'll just shut the door.

RITSIKA

You shut the door, I'll nail it shut and make you sleep in the bathroom. A clean room will help you concentrate.

ROHAN

It's actually been scientifically proven that more intelligent people often have messier work spaces.

RITSIKA

You clean it, or I will, and you know what I will do.

ROHAN

(rolling his eyes)
Put everything on the lawn.

RITSIKA

Exactly.

ROHAN

(muttering)
Bet you'd make me clean THAT up too.

RITSIKA

(hearing him)
I would!

Rohan shuffles out of the room.

INT. CAR - EVENING

The FAMILY is in Adi's CAR heading to the airport.

Adi drives, Ritsika is in the passenger seat. Rohan is on his phone in the back.

RITSIKA

(to Rohan)

We signed you up for private SAT classes.

ROHAN

Nooo. We already have the thing in school. I don't need more classes.

RITSIKA

They changed the format completely. I don't know how up to date it is now.

ROHAN

C'mon mama. I need time to do other stuff. I'm a man about town.

RITSIKA

You are not about town. You are not a man. You can hang out with your friends after you graduate.

ROHAN

That's like two years away!

ADI

These next two years are going to shape your life.

ROHAN

(groaning)

Can we talk about anything else, please?

ADI

What do you want to talk about then?

RITSIKA

I have found the perfect husband for your sister.

ROHAN
UGH! GROSS! Stop!

EXT. AIRPORT PICKUP - LATER

Shivani waits. Seconds later, Ritsika pulls up. Immediately, Adi exits and rushes over to Shivani. He embraces his daughter and they load her bags into the trunk.

INT. CAR - LATER

Shivani sits in the back seat with Rohan. He is staring out the window bored. Shivani is chatting happily.

SHIVANI
I love that teacher so much. Like he literally gave us all hundreds on a quiz cause his dog died and he was sad.

ADI
Hopefully he has more dogs.

RITSIKA
(disapproving)
You should talk to someone. He should be grading you appropriately.

SHIVANI
Mom, it's fine. It was one quiz.

RITSIKA
I want you to be number one in your class.

ADI
She will be. Don't worry about that.

Rohan rolls his eyes.

SHIVANI
Russian history is really cool too. I hadn't realized just how poignant certain parts of World history could be. All the rulers are absolutely insane.

ROHAN
Did you learn about Olga of Kiev?

Shivani gives her brother a surprised look.

ADI

How do you know Russian History?

ROHAN

I read.

RITSIKA

Read your assigned school work and get good grades.

SHIVANI

(to Rohan)

Yeah, we did learn about Olga.

ROHAN

She just burned down everything. Just wiped out everything she didn't like. Wish I could do that. School's teaching creationism. Just burn down the school.

RITSIKA

Rohan! Do not say things like that! Are you trying to get in trouble? You know you can't say things like that.

ROHAN

I wouldn't really burn the school down, mom. I was kidding. Plus, I'm assuming this is a confidential information.

ADI

(scolding)

Don't make imaginary threats, Rohan.

RITSIKA

It's a felony! Ten years in prison I hear.

SHIVANI

(to Rohan)

I can't believe they're still trying to push that garbage. Are people that ignorant?

ROHAN

People want to go to war over statues and bathrooms.

SHIVANI

Touché.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

At the school, a large assembly room is filled with A FEW DOZENS STUDENTS and significantly more PARENTS.

The local news station has cameras pointed at the stage where a mic stand rests.

Near the rear, against the wall, MJ hangs out with some friends, including BRIAN (15), redhead with curly hair and freckles.

He's a tad chubby and speaks in a heavy southern accent.

BRIAN

Where's Rohan?

MJ

He had a family thing.

BRIAN

Oh. So you're here alone?

MJ

Yeah?

BRIAN

Nice.

He waggles his eyebrows and smiles.

MJ

Don't be gross, Brian. I'll knock whatever teeth you have left down your throat.

BRIAN

Jeez! I wasn't gonna try nothin'! Jesus, you always assume the worst in people. I'm tellin' ya. It ain't healthy Mary Jane.

MJ glares at him causing Brian to flinch a little.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna see if there's any soda pop.

He walks away slightly intimidated. She turns her attention to the front as MRS. HUNTLEY (40's) begins speaking into the MIC.

MRS. HUNTLEY
 (through microphone)
 Good evening students, parents, and fellow teachers. Thank you all for coming today. I'm Marta Huntley, and I'm head of the science department. I know many of you would like to debate how we teach our science courses, but I'm afraid there is no debate. Creationism is a ludicrous notion that we simply have no interest in infecting the minds of our students with.

Many of the CROWD murmur angrily. Many others agree.

MRS. HUNTLEY (CONT'D)
 I'm calling for this county, and honestly, the entire state of Tennessee to stop letting the religious right force their uneducated beliefs on our schools.

PRINCIPAL HANSON (50s), tall with gray hair, walks up behind Mrs. Huntley and taps her on the shoulder.

PRINCIPAL HANSON
 Okay, Marta. Thank you.

She turns around to face him as he takes the mic from her.

PRINCIPAL HANSON (CONT'D)
 (to the crowd)
 We are here to have a civil conversation about our curriculum.

BOOM! The doors crash open as a large crowd of CREATIONIST bursts through. Their chants become louder and louder. They hold signs up reading various creationist messages like:

-- **"Why are you scared of the divine creator"**
 -- **"God created everything"**
 -- **"If evolution is a theory, why should it be taught as fact?"**

CREATIONIST CROWD
 (chanting)
 We believe in Adam and Eve!

MJ looks on, visibly irate.

MJ
Civil conversation, huh?

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Dasu family eats an Indian meal consisting of naan, curry, and tandoori chicken. They eat in relative silence.

Shivani clears her throat. She takes a breath steeling herself.

SHIVANI

Uh... mom. There's something I have to tell you.

RITSIKA

Yes, beti?

SHIVANI

I... uh... well... you know college is going well, and...

RITSIKA

What is it, Shivani?

ADI

You aren't having any trouble in classes, are you?

RITSIKA

Oh no. Is there something wrong with your grades?

SHIVANI

No, no, my grades are fine.

ADI

Of course they're fine.

RITSIKA

You know your father's cricket friends are on the Board. Do you want us to call Rohit?

SHIVANI

No, really, I don't--

ADI

I have his number in my phone. Rohan, go get my iPad.

ROHAN

What? Why do you need your iPad?

ADI

My phone screen won't turn on. I
can only answer calls. I'll
facetime my phone.

ROHAN

Dad, just give me your phone. I'll
fix it.

RITSIKA

I'll call your phone, Adi.

SHIVANI

I met a boy!

Everyone stares at Shivani.

ROHAN

May I be excused?

ADI

No.

RITSIKA

(quietly)

Who is this boy?

SHIVANI

He's in my psychology class. He's
really cute and smart.

RITSIKA

And Indian?

SHIVANI

(hesitant)

... No. He's black.

ROHAN

May I be excused now?

Adi's phone starts buzzing, cutting the chilled silence. He
silences it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

The creationists have completely taken over the rally. MJ and
Brian hang out at the back of the room observing.

PASTOR SCOTT, a fat bearded man (40's) holds the mic. He has
a DEEPLY Southern gentleman's twang - an overly kind and
disingenuous tone that speaks of his overly religious
attitude. He sounds like a televangelist.

PASTOR SCOTT

Hello, everybody! I am Pastor Scott. God bless. Most of you in this room know me, and I am here to defend Mister Smythe's desire to educate our youth with the proper history of life and the Lord's World.

The crowd erupts in agreement. MJ glowers and shoves her bag into Brian's chest, who spills a bit of soda onto his shirt.

BRIAN

Hey!

She storms through the crowd.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

MJ, where are you going?

PASTOR SCOTT

The word of God is historical fact! All the life and animal species we see today came out of Noah's Ark four thousand years ago! And that's fact! All these fossil records were planted by God to test our faith.

MJ (O.S.)

Hey!

Pastor Scott turns to see MJ walking up the stairs onto the stage. She forcefully takes the mic from the Pastor. The CROWD starts booing

The local camera crew zoom in and focus on the young girl.

MJ (CONT'D)

This is the kind of crap that needs to stop! Why is a Pastor telling a public school how to teach science? Have you people even read the constitution? You claim to "bleed patriotism" yet can't even distinguish between church and state. The rest of America looks at people like us like we're idiots, and you people are the reason!

HECKLER #1 (O.S.)

Get off the stage!

The crowd boos as loudly as they can.

MJ

(shouting over them)

We can't let religion dictate policy. The people who wrote your dumb book didn't even know the Earth was round and that it revolves around the Sun. Evolution is based on millions of evidence-based documents, creationism is based on one book written two thousand years ago!

PRINCIPAL HANSON

That's enough.

Principal Hanson walks up. And takes the mic forcefully from MJ. The CROWD cheers. Mrs. Huntley takes MJ away from the stage - not aggressively.

MRS. HUNTLEY

Come on, MJ.

MJ

Fact over fiction!

HECKLER #2 (O.S.)

Get her outta here!

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rohan and Shivani sit alone on the couch.

SHIVANI

They're going to disown me, aren't they?

ROHAN

She found the perfect guy for you. It's like her third cousin once removed or whatever.

SHIVANI

Ugh. Gross.

ROHAN

Why'd you tell them?

SHIVANI

I thought I'd get it out of the way now. That way I can go back to DC and never come back.

Rohan laughs.

ROHAN

Nice try. They'd drive down there and move in or drag you back. And they'd make me come with.

SHIVANI

Yeah... how's MJ?

ROHAN

She's good. She's really becoming an activist, you know? Like, she's finding all these causes to fight for. It's pretty cool.

SHIVANI

Have you guys... you know...

ROHAN

What?

SHIVANI

You know...

She looks at him until he figures out she's talking about sex.

ROHAN

Oh! No! No-no-no. We're just friends.

SHIVANI

Yeah right.

ROHAN

We just talk.

SHIVANI

Sure, sure. I believe you. You just sneak over there and talk.

ROHAN

I'm serious!

Shivani raises her eyebrows and nods. She doesn't believe him for a second. He grabs a pillow and hits her.

ROHAN (CONT'D)

You're gross. We're just friends.

SHIVANI

(laughing)

Fine! Fine!

ROHAN
(blushing)
Whatever. I'm going to bed.

He gets up and leaves the room.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adi and Ritsika lay in a fancy decorated bedroom. The colors of the excessive amount of rugs perfectly match the drapery.

Portraits of Hindu gods hang from the walls besides a large landscape photo of San Francisco.

They speak in HINDI, SUBTITLED ENGLISH.

RITSIKA
What do we do about Shivani?

ADI
(shrugging)
I think we should at least meet this boy. Maybe he could pass for Indian.

RITSIKA
(not amused)
Is that a real suggestion?

ADI
(shaking his head)
Um... Of course not.

RITSIKA
Shreyan is perfect for her. She should meet him. He is good husband material.

ADI
I'm sure he would be, but we have to give her some independence. She is a very smart girl. The smartest girl.

RITSIKA
I just want to her to live a comfortable life.

ADI
She's going to be a doctor. She will have a very comfortable life, and we will have a very comfortable retirement too.

RITSIKA

I've already talked extensively with Sahana and Akshay and that entire side of the family. It was all but complete.

ADI

I'll talk to Shivani. Maybe I can change her mind about this Georgetown boy.

RITSIKA

I can talk to her. I am more convincing.

ADI

Are you?

RITSIKA

A mother knows how to talk to her daughter.

ADI

You'll say something to make her mad.

RITSIKA

I would not!

ADI

You'll raise your voice and upset her, and then she'll run back to Washington and only come back for holidays.

Ritsika frowns at him.

RITSIKA

Give me your iPad.

ADI

Why?

RITSIKA

You're grounded.

Adi opens his mouth to protest then closes it. He reaches over to the nightstand. He searches for an iPad but there's nothing there.

ADI

It's not here.

Ritsika stares at him expectantly.

ADI (CONT'D)
I'll go find it.

RITSIKA
Oh. I must have left it in Rohan's
room. It's okay. I'll get it.

Ritsika rolls out of bed.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan and MJ are laying on her bed looking at their phones.
Rohan scrolls through his Facebook feed.

ON SCREEN: A video starts playing. It's MJ's speech from the
rally. The text around the video reads: "Tennessee Girl owns
creationist public school".

Rohan smiles.

ROHAN
You're viral.

MJ
Wow. I made it on Occupy Democrats
and Atheist Republic.

ROHAN
Crazy. Maybe John Oliver will do a
thing about it!

MJ
Oh my god, I'd die. That would be
amazing!

Rohan rests his phone face down on MJ's nightstand. He looks
at her. She smiles at him.

MJ (CONT'D)
It was so cool. I walked right up
there and shut that Bible thumping,
holy roller down.

ROHAN
My sister thinks we should have
sex.

MJ looks at him for a beat. It is a quiet moment.

MJ
Should we?

ROHAN

I dunno. I don't think we're ready.
I mean, I'm not. Are you?

MJ

No.

ROHAN

Okay. Good. I like things the way
they are now.

MJ

Me too.

ROHAN

Only when we're both ready.

MJ

When we're both ready.

They stare at one another. It is a sweet, innocent moment.

MJ (CONT'D)

How about now?

Rohan laughs. MJ joins in.

ROHAN

Goodnight.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Adi walks up the stairs sleepily. He does not have his iPad.
Ritsika meets him at the top of the stairs.

ADI

I couldn't find it.

RITSIKA

(irate)

I bet Rohan took it to play games.

She walks down the hall and turns left to Rohan's closed
door. She slowly and quietly opens the door and walks inside

ROHAN'S BEDROOM

RITSIKA (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Rohan?

No response.

She looks around the dark room, inquisitive. She switches the light on and notices the room is empty.

RITSIKA (CONT'D)

Rohan?

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan and MJ are both asleep.

ON THE NIGHTSTAND: Rohan's phone, which is face down, lights up. But it's silent.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ritsika is frantically pacing. She holds her phone up to her ear. Adi sits up in bed.

RITSIKA

He's not picking up. He's been kidnapped!

ADI

He has not been kidnapped. Who would want him?

RITSIKA

Then he sneaked out. Where would he have gone? Cause wherever he is, I am going to kill him!

ADI

Just calm down, Ritsika.

RITSIKA

(yells)
Shivani!

ADI

What are you doing?

RITSIKA

Maybe she knows where he is.
Shivani! Shivani!

Shivani appears at the door.

SHIVANI

Mom, I'm so tired. I don't want to talk about this right now--

RITSIKA

Rohan's missing.

SHIVANI

Missing? What do you mean? He was just here.

RITSIKA

He isn't in his room. Do you know where he is?

Beat.

SHIVANI

No...

RITSIKA

Okay. I'm calling the police.

SHIVANI

No. Mom, come on. He probably just snuck out or something.

RITSIKA

He's missing in the middle of the night and none of us know where he is. He could be in danger!

Ritsika begins to dial 911.

SHIVANI

Wait! Wait!

Before, hitting call, Ritsika stops.

SHIVANI (CONT'D)

I think I know where he is.

RITSIKA

Where?

SHIVANI

I'll go look. You can stay here.

RITSIKA

No. No. We're coming with you.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The two kids peacefully sleep. Seconds later, the doorbell RINGS. MJ and Rohan jolt awake.

ROHAN

Who's that?

MJ
I don't know.

MJ gets up. She hears her Mother stirring in the hall

MJ (CONT'D)
(to Rohan)
Just... be quiet.

MJ exits the room swiftly

INT. MJ'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She walks down the stairs and freezes at the bottom staring at the front door where Ritsika, Adi, and Shivani are standing.

MJ'S MOTHER - MISSA, early 40s, basically a spitting image of her daughter is standing holding the door open.

MJ
Oh...

MISSA
MJ? Do you know these people?

RITSIKA
Who are you? What did you do to my son? Is he here?

MJ
I... no... who? Shivani?

SHIVANI
Hey, MJ.

RITSIKA
You know this girl, Shivani?

SHIVANI
Yeah...

MISSA
MJ, what is going on?

RITSIKA
Apparently, my son is here with your daughter.

MISSA
What!?

MJ stares like a deer in headlights.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan sticks his ear up to the door.

ROHAN (V.O.)

It's not fair. Not really. The one good thing I have in my life and they're gonna ruin it. They're gonna snatch it away from me because they don't understand. They can't understand. So, I had two choices: stand up for myself and own my actions or run away.

BEAT.

Then, Rohan runs towards MJ's window. He quickly opens it then climbs on the overhanging tree and makes his way down.

The door BURST opens and MJ hurries in along with her mother and Ritsika, Adi, and Shivani.

ADI

Rohan!

They all stare at the open window.

RITSIKA

He's running away!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - LATER

Rohan runs down the middle of the dimly lit street.

ROHAN (V.O.)

I don't think I actually thought I could run away. Not really. I'm not super smart, but I'm smart enough to know I didn't stand a chance out there in the world in my pajamas and barefoot. I couldn't just run for it. Not far at least. But it was worth a shot in the spur of the moment.

Adi's car pulls up beside Rohan. The passenger's window rolls down. Ritsaki leans out. Rohan just keeps running alongside the car.

RITSIKA

Rohan Dasu, you get in this car this instant!

ROHAN
You can't make me!

RITSIKA
(reaching)
Oh yes I can!

Ritsika begins to climb out the window. Adi and Shivani hold her back.

ADI
Ritsika!

SHIVANI
Mom! You're going to fall out!

ROHAN
Just leave me alone!

SHIVANI
Rohan, just stop.

ADI
Ritsika, please get in the car.

RITSIKA
Now that I know you're safe, I'm going to... to... I can't even think of what I'm going to do!

ROHAN
Leave me alone! I don't want to be a part of this family anymore! I don't want to be a doctor! I don't want to go to Georgetown! Just want to do what I want to do!

RITSIKA
And what is that?

ROHAN
I don't know!

RITSIKA
Fine! You want to spend the rest of your life on the street!? So be it.

Ritsika gets back in the car and buckles up.

RITSIKA (CONT'D)
Adi, take us home.

Adi keeps driving with Rohan still running next to the car. He looks out at his son. Rohan is huffing and puffing.

ADI
(gently)
Rohan.

ROHAN
No!

ADI
(gently)
We're not leaving you. You can just
keep running, but we're not leaving
you.

He runs on. He looks at his dad. He looks at Shivani who is looking back at him with a mix of amusement and worry. Rohan looks at his mom.

Ritsika is seated facing forward with her arms crossed. She has tears running down her cheeks.

Rohan finally stops running. Adi slows the car and stops. Rohan, breathing heavily, slouches and slowly gets in the back seat with his sister.

He shuts the door, and the car drives on.

INT. ADI'S CAR - NIGHT - LATER

It's dead silent. Rohan slouches in the backseat. Adi stares at him through the mirror. Rohan looks at his sister, and mouths "sorry" to her brother.

ROHAN (V.O.)
I'm not sure if that was the
closest we'd all ever been as a
family... or the furthest.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rohan is buried in his bed under his covers. He listens - through the closed door, he can hear his mom exploding.

RITSIKA (O.S.)
He sneaked out of this house in the
dead of night to go be with some
white girl!

ADI (O.S.)
And now he's home.

RITSIKA (O.S.)
 What type of boy did I raise!? It's
 all this television and video
 games! They are rotting his brain!
 This is why he is failing!

SHIVANI (O.S.)
 Mama, please--

RITSIKA (O.S.)
 Don't "mama please" me! You're in
 just as much trouble, Shivani!

ADI (O.S.)
 You're upset, Ritsika.

RITSIKA (O.S.)
 (hysterical)
 Am I?

SHIVANI (O.S.)
 I'm going to go to bed.

RITSIKA (O.S.)
 Adi, I want bars on the window and
 a camera in the room.

Ritsika's tirade begins to fade away.

ROHAN (V.O.)
 This went on for about forty-five
 more minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Rohan sits at his desk and watches as Adi bars the window.

ROHAN (V.O.)
 And she was serious about barring
 the window...

CUT TO:

Adi installing a camera in the corner of the room.

ROHAN (V.O.)
 ... and the camera...

INT. MJ'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MJ and her mother stand in the middle of the room, in the midst of a quiet conversation. Missa is angry, but she is far more understanding. MJ is weeping.

ROHAN (V.O.)
MJ obviously got off easier.

MJ
I love him, mom.

MISSA
Honey, you don't even know what love is.

MJ
I do!

MJ'S MOTHER
I was young once...

They hug. MJ cries.

ROHAN (V.O.)
She was just grounded for a week, and her and her mom actually got closer because of it. She started telling stories about how adventurous she was at her age. Damn white people.

EXT. STREET - DAY

It is an overcast day - weather to reflect the gloom of Rohan and MJ as they walk home together.

ROHAN (V.O.)
After that, I only got to see MJ at school and on the walk home. My mother technically forbade me from ever talking to her again, but whatever.

They reach Rohan's house.

ROHAN
I'll see you tomorrow.

Rohan hugs MJ, who pulls back and goes back in with a kiss.

MJ
I'll work on getting you that
second phone.

ROHAN
Thanks.

She waves and slowly shuffles off. Rohan watches her go.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Rohan throws his backpack aside. He looks around his room, stares long and hard at the bars on the window, then focuses his attention on the spy camera. He just stares at it.

ROHAN (V.O.)
I already felt like a prisoner in
this town, and now I was a prisoner
in my own house. Maximum security,
solitary confinement. It was child
abuse.

Rohan lays down on his bed and stares at HIS MAP.

ROHAN (V.O.)
And I wasn't going to stand for it
anymore.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE