

Seven Years and a Window

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - DAY

Empty. Clean. Floor still wet from a mop. Stalls line the wall. One stall occupied. Pants down. A hairy leg visible.

INT. TOILET STALL - CONTINUOUS

From above: ALAN, 32, sits on the toilet, phone in hand, mid-video call.

On his screen: PREETI, 28, Indian-American, cute, distressed.

ALAN

Your dad? Your whole family stood there. It felt like I got yanked straight into Delhi. And I paid the whole bill. Too much eating and yelling.

PREETI (V.O.)

(on screen, anxious)

Alan, did you tell them?
Everything?

ALAN

I did. I swear. I tried to reason with your family but they nodded, shook their heads and-
(Indian accent)
-no no no.

He sighs.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Not a single smile. Not one yes.

PREETI (V.O.)

(on screen)

What did my dad say? Did he at least consider it?

ALAN

Consider it? He stared at me like I was shaving his balls.

PREETI (V.O.)

(sobs)

Oh no. Wish my mom was alive.

Alan softens.

ALAN

Preeti... you're the best thing that ever happened to me. I'll figure this out. I promise. It's you and me against your family, and half of India obviously. We stay together.

PREETI (V.O.)

(on screen)

No, we don't! My sangeet just ended. I'm marrying a stranger next week! His breath stinks, he spams texts, he's a total jerk. And my whole family's here like today's the wedding! My papa hates you. I love you so much but it's all tearing--

The screen freezes on her distressed face.

ALAN

Babe? Babe, you hear me? Preeti?

He taps the phone. Nothing.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Fuck. Fuck. Damn internet.

He breaks down. Quiet, hopeless.

INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Next stall: CHANDU, 17, Indian-American, stands on the toilet lid, peeks over, catches Alan crying.

Chandu smiles.

CHANDU

Wow. You can cry?

Alan jolts. His phone slips. He panics, pants still down, scrambles out of the stall.

Chandu stares at Alan's pants, then his face.

ALAN

Chandu?! What're you doing here? You shouldn't be here now.

CHANDU

No, Mr. Alan. This is the student's restroom. You shouldn't be here.

(MORE)

CHANDU (CONT'D)
School ended an hour ago. Were you
jerking off? And crying? Why?

Chandu's eyes drop to Alan's waist. Alan yanks his pants up.

ALAN
Nothing weird. I was watching a
movie. Emotional one.

CHANDU
Jerking off for an emotional movie?
Wierd.

ALAN
I was not jerking. It's La la land.
Okay bye, Chandu.

Alan washes his hands, breathes out, heads to leave.

Chandu steps in front.

CHANDU
I overheard. You were talking with
someone? Preeti?

ALAN
None of your business. Move.

CHANDU
Mr. Alan, you're my favourite
teacher. I can't see you like this.
If you need help, I'm here. Is that
an Indian chick? Your girl?

Alan exhales, shaken.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
You okay, Mr. Alan?

ALAN
Yeah. Thanks, Chandu. Really. Move.

Chandu holds his ground.

CHANDU
If you leave, I tell everyone what
happened here.

ALAN
Nothing happened.

CHANDU
You happened. Your crying happened.
Your dick happened.
(MORE)

CHANDU (CONT'D)

And that scar on your dick. Jerking off for La la land. Students will know. You are gonna regret it. That scar, did she bite there?

ALAN

Shut up! I didn't jerk off for La la land. If you open your mouth--

CHANDU

Then talk. Say what's wrong. I'm Indian. Indians help American's problems, Americans listens to Indians, tech wise though, but still...

Alan stares, confused.

CHANDU (CONT'D)

I can help. I can talk to her. Set everything straight.

ALAN

You need marks for your presentation, right?

Chandu smiles, guilty. Alan sits back down on the lid.

CHANDU

Yes. But give me a chance. I'll do my best.

Alan glances around. Still empty.

ALAN

Yeah. My Indian girlfriend of seven years is getting married to a rich Indian dude. Her sangeet ended. She hates the guy. Arranged marriage. Forced. Rich family friend. It's hard for her.

CHANDU

Yeah, that's a problem. You met her parents? Told your love for her?

ALAN

Plane crash. They didn't let me talk. Just pointed at my skin and--

He sighs. Chandu squats down beside him.

CHANDU

Okay. Indians are amazing people. Lovable. Helpful. But when marriage enters the room, pride shows up, ego shows up, everything else hides. They forget their own daughter or son for some stranger. Think they do the best for her, but actually they do it for the society. Pleasing them. "How people see me, respect me after I give my daughter to a rich dude with five cars and seven houses." You know, that talk.

ALAN

This is not helping Chandu.

CHANDU

Preeti? She talked to her dad?

ALAN

She tried. Nothing moved.

CHANDU

I see, no voice, they won't listen to her. Okay... I have a plan, but you won't like it, but this is how my dad and mom got married. And they are happy.

Alan looks up.

ALAN

Anything to get Preeti.

CHANDU

Let's kidnap her.

Alan jumps up.

ALAN

No. No.

Chandu pushes him back down, shuts the stall door.

INT. TOILET STALL - CONTINUOUS

Chandu grips Alan's shoulders.

CHANDU

Ssshh. Not what you think.

ALAN
Hands. Off.

Chandu lifts his hands.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Get out.

CHANDU
Wait. Tell her to come to her
hairstresser, salon or some
restaurant. We pick her up, then go
to a temple or church. Get married
there.

Alan blinks.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
No one stops you after marriage.
Indian family hates divorce.
Divorce is a shame. They'll accept
a white dude married without their
consent faster, than a divorce from
an Indian dude they married off.
Ego. So, I promise it will work.

Alan fidgets.

ALAN
I don't know. That's a felony. I'll
lose my job.

CHANDU
She agrees right? She knows, so no
felony. It becomes a wedding run.
Runaway bride. You're safe.

Alan shakes his head.

ALAN
No. No.

He pushes Chandu out.

INT. SCHOOL RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chandu blocks the door.

CHANDU
I don't need your mark. Once Preeti
marries, it's over. Nothing can be
done. Now or never.
(MORE)

CHANDU (CONT'D)

You said her sangeet finished. Next is engagement. Then wedding. Act soon.

ALAN

You're a kid, my student. People will talk. This is bad.

CHANDU

Let them talk. Who cares? You end up with your girl. I get my marks... Yeah, I need marks... You love her right? If you truly love her, you fight. You go extreme... Wait, I see, you don't love her. Just for talk and acting, playing out. Not true love. Fake.

Alan snaps. Looks up at Chandu. Anger. Chandu sighs.

CHANDU (CONT'D)

Tell her to come outside her house. Or near it.

ALAN

She can't. She's locked in. Can't come out.

CHANDU

Then we go to her house and pick her up. Call her. Tell her to be ready.

Alan nods. Fire returns to his eyes.

He dials. Rings. No answer. Again. Silence.

ALAN

Oh God.

CHANDU

Come. We drive to her home. See what we can do.

Alan nods.

ALAN

Hope it ends well.

They exit together.

INT./EXT. ALAN'S CAR - DAY

Car parked. Alan behind the wheel. Chandu in the passenger seat, scanning the giant house.

CHANDU
That's her house?

ALAN
Yeah. And that's half of India
inside. Oh my God.

Alan, phone, he calls Preeti. No answer.

CHANDU
They probably took her phone. Too
many people... I can't go in. It'll
be a communal clash.

Alan freezes.

ALAN
Communal clash?

CHANDU
You don't worry about that, you are
different.

Alan sighs, peeks out.

ALAN
You stay here. I'll climb up. I've
been here before. I'll get her out.
Just wait in the car.

Chandu nods.

CHANDU
All the best, captain. Let's get
you both married.

Alan manages a nervous smile, he exits.

INT. PREETI'S ROOM - DAY

Preeti, in full Indian wedding attire, lies on her bed
staring at the ceiling.

Outside the window, Alan's hand appears, then his face. He
struggles with the latch.

The window finally slides open. Preeti turns, gasps.

Alan slips inside, lands on the floor. Preeti stands. He gets up and hugs her tightly.

PREETI

Alan? What are you doing?

He kisses her.

ALAN

Let's go. I have a plan.

PREETI

If my dad sees you, we're dead.

ALAN

Let's get married. Church, temple, whatever's closest.

PREETI

What?

Preeti backs up, sits on the bed.

ALAN

Babe, let's move to L.A. I've got a friend there, I can get a job. We live there for a while, have kids, come back later and talk to your family.

PREETI

Kids? Alan, really? Now? My entire family is outside. I'm terrified.

Alan sits beside her.

ALAN

Don't panic. One of my student's outside, he's Indian, his friends are coming. We'll work it out. Your family won't know. Once we're married, we can convince them later. It'll work.

Preeti shakes her head.

PREETI

You won't understand. I can't.

ALAN

What do you mean you can't?

PREETI

They're all here.

ALAN
Let them be. We leave. We don't
have time.

Alan jumps to the window, checks his car, then turns back.
Preeti's head is bowed.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Babe?

She looks up.

ALAN (CONT'D)
I'm here, right? Everything will be
okay once we're married.

PREETI
It's not that. I'm worried about my
dad. He's diabetic. His heart is
weak.

Alan sighs, kneels.

ALAN
Honey, he'll be fine. I swear I'll
handle things later. We need to get
out before someone finds me.

Preeti sits frozen. Her phone rings. Alan checks his pockets,
not him.

She answers, immediately cuts the call.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Your phone's with you? Did you get
my call?

Preeti doesn't answer. Instead, she glances past him--

Chandu drops into the room. Alan spins around, panics.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Chandu? What are you doing here?

Preeti freaks out, rushes to the door and locks it.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Chandu, wait in the car.

PREETI
Who is that? Alan, are you joking?

ALAN
My student. Chandu. He's helping
us.

Chandu stands, awkward, eyes darting between them.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Chandu, leave.

CHANDU
Mr. Alan, we need to go.

ALAN
What?

CHANDU
Trust me. Come.

Chandu grabs Alan's arm. A knock at the door.

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Preeti?

Preeti panics, shushes Alan.

PREETI
(mouths)
Papa.

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Preeti? Open the door!

Preeti tip-toes into her bathroom, from inside.

PREETI (O.C.)
Papa! I'm in the toilet!

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh. Okay okay. Are you pooping?

Alan and Chandu exchange a mortified stare.

PREETI (O.C.)
Yes! I'm pooping!

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Good poop? Or bad poop?

Silence. Door knock.

PREETI (O.C.)
Good poop, Papa.

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Okay, poop well beta. Poop all you
want. I'll wait.

Preeti emerges, rushes to Alan, whispers urgently.

PREETI
You need to leave.

ALAN
Not without you.

PREETI
You don't understand the trouble
we'll be in. Please. Let's talk
later. Just go.

CHANDU
We need to leave. Please, Mr. Alan.

ALAN
I'll come back tonight. Or tomorrow
morning. Pick my call. I'll take
you safe.
(beat)
I love you.

Preeti nods but doesn't say it back.

Alan notices. He pulls her in, kisses her deeply. Pulls away.

ALAN (CONT'D)
I love you more than anything. I'll
get you out of here, okay?

Preeti shakes her head slightly. Another knock.

INDIAN MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Did you poop?!

Alan winces. Chandu drags him toward the window.

They tumble out. Preeti closes the window, wipes her tears.

PREETI
Done, Papa. I pooped.

She walks to the door.

INT./EXT. ALAN'S CAR - DAY

Alan drives. Chandu taps his phone.

ALAN

Chandu, I'll take it from here.
Thank you.

CHANDU

Wait. Park the car.

ALAN

No, I don't have time.

CHANDU

Stop the car. Mr. Alan. Stop.

Alan brakes hard. The car halts on an empty street.

CHANDU (CONT'D)

You still love her?

ALAN

What?

CHANDU

Mr. Alan, your love is real, I'm
sorry about earlier. But does she
love you? Are you sure?

ALAN

Ofcourse she does, did you see her
kiss me? Her tears?

CHANDU

Crocodile tears.

ALAN

What?

Chandu's phone beeps. He checks it.

CHANDU

You're gonna hate me. But I don't
think she loves you anymore.

ALAN

What are you talking about?

CHANDU

I rang my brother for help, he said
yes, we talked about Preeti, and is
the guy she is getting married,
Dinesh?

ALAN

Yeah, that's the name, how do you
know? Is he your cousin?

CHANDU

No, he is not. Oh this is bad. My brother is a choreographer, ah man, he choreographed a dance for Preeti and Dinesh lately for the Sangeet. He said, they seemed to be pretty fun and they, hit it off while practicing.

Alan shakes his head, laughs.

ALAN

You're insane. She hates him. His breath stinks. He texts too much. She loves me.

Chandu hesitates.

CHANDU

Mr. Alan... With respect, your breath stinks. And do you text her a lot?

Alan breath-checks himself. Horrified, yes, bad.

CHANDU (CONT'D)

Yeah. She likes him.

ALAN

Fuck you, Chandu. What do you know about us? About seven years?

CHANDU

I know this, if she loved you, she would've jumped out that window. She'd be here now.

ALAN

She's scared. Worried for her family.

CHANDU

Then she loves her family. Not you. You'll listen to the people you love. Clearly not you.

ALAN

Shut up.

Alan drives. Chandu plays a video.

CHANDU

Is this Preeti and Dinesh?

Alan brakes. Gets the phone, eyes at Chandu's phone, a video plays, Indian dance music.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
That's them in their Sangeet, and
that's her happily dancing with
Dinesh.

Alan flinches.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
And that's, yeah, they are kissing.

Alan freezes, his world collapses. He shuts off the engine.

ALAN
What in the hell?

CHANDU
I'm sorry.

ALAN
Why did she do that to me? What the
fuck? Where did I go wrong?

Alan laughs bitterly.

ALAN (CONT'D)
Her father forced her. That's it.
She's my sweet girl. My baby...

He crumbles, crying onto the steering wheel.

ALAN (CONT'D)
No, no...

Chandu pats his shoulder gently.

CHANDU
You're a good man. She got tangled
in the family, money, emotions.
It's not her fault.

Alan rubs his face, devastated.

ALAN
No. She cheated on me. Handsome,
rich guy... Why didn't she tell me?
Seven years.

CHANDU
Maybe guilt. Maybe she didn't want
to hurt you.

Alan laughs, hollow.

ALAN

Didn't want to hurt me? I'm
breaking down on a random street,
Chandu.

CHANDU

Come to my house. Meet my parents.
We'll talk. They're cool people.

Alan nods, still in disbelief.

ALAN

I still can't believe it. She
betrayed. Wow, earlier while we
were speaking on the phone, she
seemed caring.

CHANDU

Are you gonna call her back? Try to
get some answers?

ALAN

Why bother? My dad always said, you
want to keep your self-respect, you
have to know when to walk away. The
action is the answer. Betrayal
doesn't need a closure.

Silence. Chandu smiles softly.

CHANDU

Hey, you're still my favourite
teacher.

ALAN

Well, you got your marks.
(beat)
God, I need healing.

CHANDU

You want a coke?

ALAN

Coke? I need a beer.

Chandu smirks.

CHANDU

No, I meant cocaine.

Alan's eyes widen.

ALAN
Are you serious?

Chandu bursts out laughing.

CHANDU
I'm kidding! Hey!

Alan stares, doesn't trust him.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
Seriously, kidding. Come meet my
parents. We got beers, and coke
too.

Alan squints.

CHANDU (CONT'D)
The soft drink. Not the drug.

Alan exhales, half-smiles through his heartbreak.

The engine starts. The car drives away.

FADE OUT.

TEXT OVER BLACK:

Sometimes love wins.
Sometimes culture does.
And sometimes...
The poop conversation is your only warning.

THE END