

Ticking Time

written by

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INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

2015. A grandiose Victorian library. Like Cambridge or Oxford. Green study lamps on every desk. Two students, a man and a woman, sit shoulder-to-shoulder, at an elongated desk.

The tranquil sound of rain on glass is heard.

They're isolated, alone, in the middle of a late-night study session. Their backpacks lay on the floor, against the desk.

The man, SALEEM (20), Middle Eastern with a five o'clock shadow and a buzzcut, scribbles on a notebook and sets it amongst a stack of textbooks on the desk. He wears a flannel shirt and jeans.

The pale woman, ALOLA (20), leans on Saleem.

She rests her head on his shoulder. Alola is a modern-day goth. She wears an oversized sweatshirt and sweatpants, her wavy hair down to her jawline, matte black nails and black lipstick.

Alola pulls a tissue out of a small cardboard box that sat next to the scattered notebook paper and pencils. She blows her nose into it.

ALOLA

Let's take a break.

Alola sits up. She closes her eyes. Lightheaded, she begins to swivel from side-to-side. Saleem turns to look at her. He speaks in his clear American accent.

SALEEM

Wow, this sickness really hit you hard, huh? C'mon let's get you to your dorm, I'll make you some soup.

Alola blows her nose once again.

ALOLA

Maybe it's the same thing my parents got.

SALEEM

I sure hope not. You'd bring the whole city down with you, starting with me!

ALOLA

What? Scared of a little Yersinia Pestis?

SALEEM

One hundred percent, yes.

ALOLA

7 people die from it a year. We already got 2 with my parents. It might be 4 with us. And if we hurry, I can pop out triplets and that'd make it 7.

SALEEM

Your dark humor knows no bounds.

ALOLA

My parents would've laughed.

Alola leans forward into the desk. She rests her head on her palm and closes her eyes once again. A gold necklace with a glossy, green emerald hangs out from her sweatshirt. Saleem holds it close to him.

SALEEM

You never told me where you got this beautiful necklace from.

ALOLA

My dad stole it from a hitchhiker back in the 70s.

SALEEM

I always admired your pops for his boldness.

ALOLA

It was needed when we were ostracized.

Alola opens her eyes to notice Saleem mesmerized by the necklace.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

Look at you.

SALEEM

What? I guarantee you this is the same face you make when we enter the skincare aisle at the store.

Alola giggles.

ALOLA

Really? Is that really what I look like?

SALEEM

You wouldn't believe it.

Alola is suddenly full of life. She sits up and faces Saleem. She pokes his chest with her index finger.

ALOLA

That reminds me, we need to pick up our discussion we were having earlier today. Can't believe YOU almost made me forget!

SALEEM

(playful)

I just had to bring up skincare, huh?

They laugh.

ALOLA

Now, where were we?

SALEEM

Uhhhh... something something reverse aging technology.

ALOLA

Oh right! Advances in technology say that the first person to live to 200 may have already been born.

SALEEM

Shame you were born in 1993 then. You'll grow old with us mortals.

ALOLA

I can hold out. I'm doing my best to remain young indefinitely.

SALEEM

So then what if I also live to 200? And with you already planning our wedding so far in advance, tell me again, what does the officiant say? "Til death do us apart", right?

ALOLA

I don't mind.

SALEEM

You wouldn't mind being with me for 200 years? 400? *Eternity*?

ALOLA

Nope.

SALEEM

... Interesting.

Alola raises an eyebrow at Saleem.

ALOLA

Would you?

SALEEM

... Let's get to 400 first, then we'll talk about eternity.

ALOLA

Oh my god, I didn't even hesitate.

SALEEM

I-- just-- 400 is a very long time!

Alola blows her nose again.

ALOLA

Whatever.

She stands and begins to pack her backpack stubbornly.

SALEEM

I mean, for the first 500-- or 1000 years, I'm sure I would be madly in love with the only other person on this Earth that shares the same gift as I do! But human nature says we need breaks. Breaks from our favorite food, favorite music. So, I think, while I won't always be in love with that person, or share the same bedroom every night, that doesn't mean I won't fall in love with them all over again.

ALOLA

(sarcastic)

Wow, Saleem, you're such a realist, it's SO hot.

Saleem reaches out and gently grabs a hold of Alola's hands. Alola stops packing. She doesn't look at him.

SALEEM

And even as a realist, I can see myself married to you for an entire lifetime.

ALOLA

Well, then buy us a house. Because I'm serious about having a backyard wedding.

SALEEM

I will work for it. Might take a little while, maybe a little luck, but I will work for it.

Alola sits back down.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Besides, you already know I am madly in love with you. And you with me, right?

ALOLA

(stubborn)

Yes.

SALEEM

So we're basically married already. The wedding would be purely symbolic at that point.

Alola pulls her hands away and takes another tissue from the box. She blows her nose heavily. The sound is revolting.

She closes her eyes and leans in for a kiss. Mucus begins to run out of her nose.

ALOLA

Kiss me.

Saleem urgently begins to pack up.

SALEEM

Let's uh... let's get you that soup.

ALOLA

You are such an asshole. When we get married the officiant is ALSO gonna say, "-and through sickness and health". So prove to me that you love me no matter what. Kiss. Me.

Mucus now runs down onto Alola's upper lip. She breaks into a smirk. Saleem recoils. He hesitates, but he leans in. His lips begin to make contact with Alola's.

Suddenly, Alola GRABS the back of his head and PLANTS her lips on his, the mucus squeezed in between. Saleem attempts to jerk his head back. Alola keeps a tight grip on him.

Finally, she releases him.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

2018. ZOOM OUT on Alola & Saleem as they finish their kiss at their wedding. Alola shows off her golden engagement ring.

The crispy-brown leaves of the autumnal trees are blown down by the gentle wind. Clouds fill the sky on an overcast day.

The wedding unfolds in the backyard of a grandiose, marvelous Victorian house that sits uphill.

The backyard is decorated for a small, intimate, gothic-themed wedding. Black roses, black altar. There's a makeshift DJ booth off to the corner of the backyard.

Alola wears a BLACK WEDDING DRESS and gothic makeup. Her green-emerald necklace is visible against the black dress. All guests wear all-black formal clothing. They are as pale as Alola herself. They clap and cheer. Female guests also wear gothic makeup. Saleem himself wears an all-black SUIT and tie.

A mysterious, thin, Middle Eastern woman, with wavy, brunette hair that runs down to her neck, and foxy eyes that make any man weak, stands amongst a group of guests in the back. She wears a black dress. She wears no makeup which showcases her youthful, flawless skin. She stares blankly at Alola & Saleem.

Alola wipes tears off her face.

Suddenly, Alola excitedly yells to the crowd.

ALOLA

Okay, boring part is over, now  
let's start this PARTY!!

Saleem laughs. The crowd cheers. The DJ begins to BLAST pop-party music.

As guests begin to disperse, Saleem spots the mysterious woman. His smile depletes. Like a confused dog, he tilts his head. The woman smirks at Saleem before she turns around and walks away.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - PARTY

-- Guests gush at the size of the house to Alola who enjoys the compliments.

-- Saleem plays a game of beer pong.

-- The mysterious woman sneaks inside the house through the back door.

-- A tipsy and chatty Saleem fails to notice the woman enter.

-- Evening. Inside a Victorian era living room, Saleem and Lola dance erratically. Guests surround them as they clap to a beat and cheer.

-- Slow music plays as everyone now slow dances.

-- Drained and out of energy, everyone is slumped back on couches and chairs. Alola rests on Saleem's chest. She squints, a smirk grows on her face, she glances around as she contemplates.

ALOLA

You know what would be fun?

All look at her.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

If we played a game of hide-n-seek!

Silence.

Then some chuckles.

Soon everyone laughs, then CHEERS.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Saleem and a group of guests face a wall in the living room. They count from 50 down.

Alola and every other guest run around on the hunt for a hiding spot.

Alola comes across the locked basement door between the kitchen and living room. For a moment, she's confused, then determined.

ALOLA

Alright, time to finally see what's down here!

She searches the kitchen and finds a bowl with keys, matches, and miscellaneous items. She takes a hairpin and begins to pick the lock of the door.

*CLICK!*

Alola turns the knob. The door opens.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUED



*CREEAAAK.*

Alola opens the door to the basement. The moonlight barely illuminates the room through the basement window. She rushes down the stairs, careful not to trip on her dress.

She squints as her eyes adjust to the darkness. As soon as they do, she spots solid-yellow plastic CONTAINERS that fill the basement. Every container requires a key to unlock.

ALOLA

Woah, didn't expect this.

Alola walks up to a container and observes it. She notices that they are all new, clean. No dust has gathered.

SALEEM (O.S.)

Ready or not, here we come!

Alola hastily looks around and spots solid-yellow plastic BARRELS underneath the stairway that she can hide behind.

She hears footsteps above her. She scurries to hide behind the barrels. The footsteps fade away as an eerie silence fills the air.

As she hides in the small space, Alola begins to hear the WAILING of a baby. The noise is muffled by the thickness of the walls. She attempts to triangulate where it comes from.

Not from above.

Nor to her left or right. But instead...

From beneath the ground.

*CREEAAAK.*

The screech from the old wooden door spooks her. Footsteps HUSTLE down the stairway. Alola sneaks a peek over the barrels.

It's the mysterious woman.

The woman turns around and immediately spots Alola. Alola ducks out of sight. The mysterious woman, MAHILJA, speaks in a heavy Arabic accent.

MAHILJA

*Psst... Alola?*

Alola peaks over again.

ALOLA

... Yes?

MAHILJA

Do you mind if I join you? I  
couldn't find a hiding spot.

Alola stands. Hands on her hips, eyebrows furrow.

ALOLA

Uhhh, who are you?

MAHILJA

I'm Mahilja, Saleem's cousin.

ALOLA

I don't remember Saleem inviting any  
of his family...

CREEAAAK.

Someone else has entered the room.

Mahilja quickly scurries behind barrels. Alola casts a stern  
glance at Mahilja, who responds with a gleeful smile.

They sit behind the barrels, listening to the SOUND of the  
newcomer shuffle against furniture.

Alola's attention sharpens as a BABY'S WAILS pierce the air once  
more. She glances down, pinpointing the source of the sound. She  
then looks to Mahilja, who remains oblivious. Alola nudges Mahilja,  
they exchange a glance. Alola points to her ear, then the ground.  
Mahilja raises an intrigued eyebrow.

The baby's cries gradually subside.

The seeker mumbles to themselves, their footsteps retreat as they  
ascend the stairs. The door closes. Alola and Mahilja stay concealed  
behind the barrels, their voices a whisper.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?!

MAHILJA

Hear what?

ALOLA

Wailing! Like a baby crying!

MAHILJA

A baby? Crying?

ALOLA

Yes! From below the ground!

MAHILJA

Woah. No, I can't say I heard that.

Mahilja adjusts herself. She now sits on the floor, crisscross.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

You think they'll find us? If they find us, we have to flee, right? Those are the rules of the game?

ALOLA

I'm sorry-- wait-- who invited you again? I was very specific about who I sent those RSVPs to.

Mahilja smiles.

MAHILJA

Like I said, I'm Saleem's cousin--

ALOLA

--- And like I said, he didn't invite any of his family... Wasn't even sure he had any.

MAHILJA

(polite)

Oh, don't be ridiculous, everybody has a tribe! And to answer your question; I used to live in this house. I was the one who cleaned it up before you two moved in last week, as you probably noticed.

ALOLA

Yeah, what's with all the boxes?

MAHILJA

Memorabilia. This house has been passed down through so many generations that I'M starting to run out of space to create new memories!

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But I do apologize; I thought the RSVP was already implied for me. If I wasn't invited, I can head out...

Mahilja begins to stand before Alola urges her not to.

ALOLA

Oh, no, it's okay! Really! I didn't know someone had cleaned this place for us!

Mahilja sits back down.

MAHILJA

I am sort of the caretaker of this house.

ALOLA

So then... did you know Saleem's uncle?

MAHILJA

The very person who left him this house in his will? Yes, I knew uncle Frank Smith very well! I knew him for a very long time! Believe it or not, he wasn't always "Frank Smith". He, like our tribe, originated from the Middle East. He used to be called "Kazi"! But, when we immigrated here, he changed his name to fit in! I always poked fun of him for choosing such a generic name.

ALOLA

Huh. But Saleem sounds... American? So he must've been born here, right?

MAHILJA

He was. He was born in this very house!

ALOLA

(flabbergasted)  
Really?! Here?!

Mahilja nods. A silence falls as Alola ponders. Mahilja squints her eyes, she's suspicious.

MAHILJA

I don't think anybody even knows we're down here! Do you think they gave up searching for us? That would make us winners, right?

ALOLA

I guess so. Have you spoken to Saleem?

MAHILJA

I have not! But I would love to! I almost didn't recognize him at the altar today!

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I must say, for such an unorthodox wedding, it looked incredible! I never realized how well gothic aesthetics and Victorian architecture go hand-to-hand.

ALOLA

Aww, thanks! Well, tell you what, let's head upstairs. We still got presents to open so just hang back and after everyone leaves, we can sit down and talk with Saleem. Because believe me, he has A LOT of explaining to do.

Mahilja claps.

MAHILJA

Exciting!

Alola gets up. She exits the spot and begins to head upstairs. Mahilja quickly puts her ear to the ground.

She hears nothing. She gets up and heads upstairs.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Saleem waves goodbye from the front door to the last guests who leave.

He shuts the door and turns around. Alola stands right behind him. She crosses her arms and raises an eyebrow.

SALEEM

Hey, what happened back there? You tore all that gift-wrap with a vengeance!

ALOLA

Explain to me why I just learned more about you and your family in the five minutes I spoke with your cousin than the 6 years I spent with you?

SALEEM

... Cousin?

ALOLA

Yes, COUSIN!

Alola steps aside. Saleem looks into the living room. There, he finds Mahilja texting on her phone, a big smile on her face. She sets her phone down, hands flat on her thighs, back straight, a perfectly symmetrical smile on her face. She waves at Saleem.

SALEEM

Uh... honey, I don't know that woman.

ALOLA

Weird, because she knows A LOT about you.  
She knows about your uncle Frank Smith.

SALEEM

Really?!

Saleem walks into the living room. Mahilja stands and hugs Saleem without hesitation.

MAHILJA

Ohhhhhh Saleeeeeeeem! It feels like  
FOREVER since I've seen you!

SALEEM

Uhh.

Mahilja releases him.

MAHILJA

It's me! Your cousin...

Mahilja puts her fingertips onto Saleem's chin. She gently brings his face closer and closer to her. She whispers, almost seductively, into his ear.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

*Mahilja...*

Saleem freezes INSTANTLY. His eyes widen, mouth agape, as if a bell just rang inside his head. He's hypnotized. Alola takes notice.

ALOLA

Saleem?

Saleem snaps back to reality. He's amazed.

SALEEM

Cousin! It's you!!

MAHILJA

Yes!!

Saleem hugs Mahilja TIGHTLY. Mahilja laughs. He sets her down. They notice an unsure Alola.

SALEEM

Babe, it's Mahilja! My cousin!

ALOLA  
Uh-huh. I got that.

SALEEM  
(to Mahilja)  
I always had a feeling that you existed! I just couldn't put my finger on it!

ALOLA  
What do you mean a FEELING?

MAHILJA  
You'll have to excuse Saleem. He has a sort of... Aphantasia. His memories are based on feelings that something happened or someone existed. He can't actually see it in his head, isn't that right?

SALEEM  
Yes? Oh, wait, yes! That's right!

Alola takes a seat on the couch. She shakes her head in disbelief.

ALOLA  
What else do I not know about you?

MAHILJA  
Oh, Alola, don't worry, you are about to learn a whole lot about Saleem, me, and our family!

Mahilja looks at Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
The BOTH of you are.

SALEEM  
What do you mean, cousin?

MAHILJA  
Sit, sit.

Saleem sits next to Alola. Mahilja stands in front of them.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Let me start off by asking, Saleem... Tell me about your life, from the beginning.

SALEEM  
From the beginning?

MAHILJA  
From the beginning.

Saleem looks at Alola, unsure. He looks back at Mahilja, confused.

SALEEM  
I... I was born--

MAHILJA  
-- Where?

Saleem squints as he tries hard to remember.

SALEEM  
Somewhere... warm. Like... next  
to... a fireplace?

MAHILJA  
A type of fireplace, yes.

SALEEM  
Yeah.

MAHILJA  
But you can't see it?

SALEEM  
No, not really.

MAHILJA  
Mhm. Do you FEEL perhaps, there were  
no walls in that place?

SALEEM  
There were walls. Three. Buut... there  
was a giant opening where a fourth wall  
should be.

MAHILJA  
Mhm. What about as a small child,  
what do you remember?

SALEEM  
The feeling of brushing up against  
leaves, high-grass. LOTS of grass. Always  
moving with family. Always hungry.

Saleem scratches at his ankles.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
Always itchy, too.

Alola places a hand on Saleem's shoulder.

ALOLA  
What about your parents? Any siblings?



SALEEM

There's a feeling of a... father figure? Someone who taught me a lot, but that's about it. No siblings.

MAHILJA

What about me? Where do I fit in your childhood?

SALEEM

Oh well, that's easy. You were always scribbling into paper, clay, stone.

ALOLA

Stone?

MAHILJA

He's not wrong.

SALEEM

I remember you always joined us when we decided to move.

MAHILJA

Well, that's because we traveled as a tribe, always on the move.

SALEEM

Yes! I remember the sensation of dry rock on my feet. And of sand. And grass, again!

Mahilja begins to pace around the room.

MAHILJA

You did good, Saleem! See, your Aphantasia doesn't hold you back. It takes "keywords" for you to unlock your memories. My name was one of them. And in time, I will share more with you. I think it's best we unlock your memories slowly so as to avoid an overwhelming flood, yes?

SALEEM

(to Alola)

That explains why I was never able to share about my family with you!

ALOLA

We should get you to a doctor, it's not right that you didn't even know about this.

SALEEM

True.

(to Mahilja)

We got a lot of inheritance money  
from uncle Frank Smith.

MAHILJA

I know. But, a doctor's visit will have to  
wait for another day. Tonight, and the  
next few nights, you will have something  
bigger to deal with.

SALEEM

What is it?

Mahilja walks to the other side of the room. She looks out a  
window. She sighs.

MAHILJA

Well, I suppose there is no easy  
way to say this...

She turns back around and looks Saleem and Alola in the eyes.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I, Saleem, and our tribe are...  
immortals.

Alola squints. She's annoyed, yet she remains silent. Saleem  
notices Alola's annoyed stare. He, too, remains silent.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I can tell neither of you believe me.  
That is okay. I shall explain...

Mahilja begins to pace around the room again, hands behind  
her back.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We are a tribe of immortals who have  
existed since the dawn of man. For  
the last six years, I have been  
keeping tabs on you two, specifically  
on Alola, to make sure my visions of  
her were accurate, and that she is,  
indeed, worthy of becoming an  
immortal herself. Yes, I wish to  
grant the gift of immortality to you,  
Alola.

Alola remains quiet. She is more annoyed than ever with her  
eyebrows furrowed and seal-tight lips.

SALEEM

... You keep saying "tribe".

MAHILJA

I mean "family". Sorry, force of habit.

ALOLA

... I don't know where you're going with this.

(to Saleem)

And YOU better not be in on this.

(to Mahilja)

But this isn't funny anymore.

Mahilja walks to Alola. She kneels to her and gently grabs her hand.

MAHILJA

This is what you have obsessed your whole adolescent and adult life over, isn't it? Eternal life, eternal youth. Practicing that silly little Western-corporate "witchcraft" in your college dorm--

ALOLA

(embarrassed)

How do you know that?!

MAHILJA

Like I said, visions.

Alola squints. She's suspicious.

ALOLA

... Prove it.

MAHILJA

Prove my immortality?

ALOLA

Yup.

Mahilja stands.

MAHILJA

(playful)

Sure, let's sit here for the next twenty years so you can see that I don't age a day.

ALOLA

Alright, this has gone on long enough. Get out.

Alola walks up to the front door. She opens it and gesture for Mahilja to leave.

MAHILJA

I heard the baby crying.

Alola closes the door as quickly as she opened it.

ALOLA

(to Mahilja)

What did you just say?

MAHILJA

In the basement, while we hid. I heard the wailing of the baby.

ALOLA

Well, why didn't you say anything?!

MAHILJA

And ruin our hiding spot? Please. Plus, I didn't want to freak you out... just yet.

ALOLA

Just yet?

Mahilja smirks once more.

MAHILJA

That baby is your key to immortality...

Mahilja checks her phone.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Or... *was*.

**BOOM!**

A bang is heard coming from the basement. Saleem and Alola are rattled. Mahilja rushes to Alola and grabs her hands.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Alola, do you truly want eternal youth and eternal life?!

ALOLA

(scared)

What was that?!

**BAM!**

The sound of a heavy object, a slab perhaps, is heard as it SLAMS DOWN on the basement concrete floor.

MAHILJA

I ask you again, do you truly want  
ETERNAL youth and ETERNAL life?!

ALOLA

YES! I DO!!

Mahilja RUNS over to Saleem and grabs his hands.

MAHILJA

And you Saleem... do you truly love Alola?  
Love her so much you can spend 200, 400,  
an ETERNITY together with her?

SALEEM

(scared)

I- umm...

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Footsteps of a giant, HEAVY ENTITY as it heads up the  
basement stairs are heard. Mahilja remains calm, giddy. She  
smirks at a petrified Saleem.

MAHILJA

Speak now, or forever REST in peace.

SALEEM

I-- I... hope so?

MAHILJA

Close enough!

Mahilja YANKS Saleem's hand as she begins to RUN towards Alola.  
She grabs Alola's hand and the three RUSH upstairs. Alola  
struggles to keep her wedding dress from tripping her.

BAM!

The entity is heard as it SMASHES through the basement door.

Mahilja ushers Alola and Saleem into their bedroom. The two  
enter. They turn around to spot Mahilja as she holds the door  
open. She does not enter.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

(quickly)

I will explain everything tomorrow!  
Tonight, you two just need to STAY in  
this room and be as QUIET as possible! I  
mean it! He is most hungry in the first  
night! Okay, good luck!

Mahilja SLAMS the door shut.

SALEEM

Mahilja!

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUED

Victorian-era furniture fills the room. The bed frame nearly touches the ceiling, draped in royal red sheets with gold linen. A dark oak wardrobe bears intricate inscriptions. Renaissance paintings adorn the walls.

The entity HOWLS, a guttural imitation of a bear with throat cancer. Its CLAWS tap on the wooden floor as it ascends the stairs.

Alola and Saleem freeze, terror-stricken.

They notice a SHADOW beneath the door. Dust puffs as the entity sniffs, sending particles toward Alola and Saleem.

The entity sits, then falls into complete SILENCE. It breathes heavily.

Alola and Saleem's fear eases. They exchange glances, then look to the bedroom window.

Saleem takes a cautious step, silent.

The entity huffs and paws at the door, its claws creating an ear-piercing sound. Alola YELPS. The entity PUSHES against the door, almost breaking it.

Saleem resumes his walk to the window, noiseless.

He reaches the window, unable to open it. No handle or wedge. He gazes at the full, honey-yellow moon.

Saleem turns, distraught. He gestures to the bed. Alola points at the door, the entity. Saleem concedes. Alola sighs.

Quietly, they reach the bed. They sit, the bed CREAKING.

The entity PUSHES the door again. Alola and Saleem momentarily freeze. They lie down, facing each other, inches apart. Whispering as quietly as possible.

ALOLA

What the FUCK is that thing?!

SALEEM

I have no clue.

ALOLA

What are we going to do?!

SALEEM

... Sleep.

ALOLA

What?!

SALEEM

You heard Mahilja. We just need to stay as quiet as possible.

ALOLA

You snore in your sleep!

SALEEM

I do?!

ALOLA

Yes!

SALEEM

Shit.

The entity is heard as it starts to move to the next room.

ALOLA

Sounds like it's searching the other rooms!

They listen. The sound of a door as it creaks open is heard. The weight of the entity makes the floorboards squeal. It has now entered another room where the sound of the entity is barely audible.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

Now's our chance!

SALEEM

What's the plan?

ALOLA

Escape!

SALEEM

Can you be more specific? I feel like we need a detailed plan here.

Saleem carefully gets out of bed and heads to the door. He places a hand on the doorknob.

ALOLA

We tiptoe our way to the front door, step outside, and bumrush it to our car!

SALEEM

Right! Wait, where's the keys to the car?

Alola remembers.

ALOLA

Fuck. Kitchen. Bowl.

SALEEM

Okay. I'll go get the keys, I'll sneak out, get in the car, then I'll text you to come out.

ALOLA

What? No! I'm going with you.

SALEEM

Babe, it's too dangerous!

ALOLA

I don't trust you!

SALEEM

(hurt)  
Wh-- why?!

ALOLA

You couldn't SAY you would spend an eternity with me! Yeah, I heard!

Saleem is surprised.

SALEEM

Can we have this argument later?

ALOLA

(sassy)  
I don't know, might be my last time we get to ever have one.

Saleem sighs. He CAREFULLY turns the knob of the door. He SLOWLY opens the door. Saleem looks through the slit. WE see him peak into another room. The entity howls lightly. The sound of a carnivorous, saliva-filled mouth as it munches on wood is heard.

Saleem closes the door. There's an expression of utter FEAR on his face. Alola sees this. She raises the blanket up to her face like a scared child.

Saleem closes his eyes and composes himself. He gestures for Alola to join him. Alola carefully makes her way to his side.

SALEEM

Whatever you do, don't look at it.



The door opens slowly. Saleem and Alola tiptoe carefully down the staircase. The entity paces in another room, audible in the distance. They continue downward.

A floorboard CREAKS as they reach the bottom. Saleem and Alola freeze. The ENTITY is alerted, rushing out of its room and into their bedroom. Monster-like RAGE emanates. Blankets are shredded.

Saleem takes Alola's hand. They tiptoe into the kitchen. They find the bowl, but the keys are missing. They whisper.

ALOLA

Wh-- they were here! They were here!

Saleem tiptoes to the living room window and looks out their front yard. There's no car in sight.

SALEEM

Our car is missing.

The entity can be heard as it comes down the stairs. Saleem turns around and hides immediately. His eyes shoot wide open. Alola notices.

ALOLA

What are you doing?!

The entity is alerted. It's heard as it RUSHES to Alola. Alola SCREAMS and RUNS away from it.

SALEEM

Alola!!

Saleem chases after her. Alola turns the corner and locks herself in the study room. Saleem turns the corner. He spots the entity BREAK down the door of the study room and enter.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

NOOO!! ALOLA!!

Saleem runs towards the room. The entity steps out. It spots him. Saleem IMMEDIATELY turns and runs away from it.

It chases him. Saleem SPRINTS upstairs and quickly brings down the ladder from the attic door. He's lightning fast as he climbs up to the attic and brings the ladder up. The entity manages to RIP off a section of the ladder.

*BAM!*

Saleem slams the attic door shut.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

A studio apartment bedroom with a stained popcorn ceiling. CLOTHES are haphazardly tossed into a LAUNDRY BASKET in one corner. Dusty-yellow sunlight filters through thin curtains, casting a warm glow over the room.

Alola and Saleem sleep on the bed, both wearing solid-colored t-shirts and sweatpants.

Alola wakes up. She heads to the bathroom. Saleem remains asleep.

A sanctuary. The bathroom is well-lit and painted all-white, gleaming with immaculate cleanliness. A large mirror CABINET is mounted on the wall, LED wall lamps on each side casting a gentle illumination on the human face.

CLOSE UP on the mirror. Alola leans into the mirror; She inspects her face carefully. No makeup and not a blemish in sight.

She opens the shower door. It reveals an arsenal of skincare products lined up against the wall. She turns the water on.

ALOLA (V.O.)

Every morning I run through my routine. It's a routine I've taken years to perfect. Perfect in quotes, of course. I know my skin type. I know I don't bruise easily; I can eat a whole pizza without a blemish appearing the next day, I can shower under scorching hot water and my skin complexion will remain unfazed. Some would say I'm genetically gifted. I say, "not good enough".

Alola undresses. She steps into the shower and places a NOSE PATCH along her nose.

As the water cascades, Alola pops open a skincare BOTTLE. She pours a teaspoon of the liquid into her hand, rubbing them together. Gently, she massages her face with the liquid.

She unscrews a bottle of acne medication. Splashing the liquid onto a cotton pad, she rubs the pad against her face.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

10% Salicylic acid exfoliation to disintegrate all the dead skin that builds up overnight. Noamicide gentle face wash to wash away any leftovers.

She pops open ANOTHER bottle, pours a teaspoon onto her hand, rubs it together, and massages her face once again.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Salicylic acid opens the pores of the skin, retinoids seep into the skin, forcing the body to mass produce a new set of skin cells... young and fresh.

Alola steps out of the shower, towel wrapped around her. She brings with her a tiny, glass prescription bottle.

She looks into the mirror and begins to peel away the nose patch. CLOSE UP on her nose. As she peels, black gunk from the pores of her nose are pulled out by the sticky side of the patch. Alola is quick to open the bottle and rub the liquid on her nose and face.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Ethereal Silk primer acts as a protectant layer to avoid any disgusting particles from the outside world building up directly on my skin...

Alola waves her hands like a fan on her face.

Afterwards, she puts sunscreen on her face.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 And of course, sunscreen. But the kind WITH Zinc Oxide because they don't contain forever chemicals that seep into your skin and give you cancer. No, we avoid that. Any brand made for baby's is always a safe bet. Everybody is extra careful when it comes to babies... unless you're Johnson & Johnson.

Alola opens her mirror cabinet and brings out a makeup bag.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Lastly, makeup. Not of much importance to me. I only put on the bare minimum for a gothic aesthetic. Black eyeshadow, black lipstick on special occasions, and black matte nail paint. Earrings, too. But I regret getting them pierced, because pierced skin is a scar that cannot be healed. And don't get me started on tattoos...

As Alola is about to apply her makeup, she notices a pimple along her jaw.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 How...

Alola opens the mirror cabinet. WE see inside it. Revealed, are an entire kit of pristine, sanitized surgical tools. She grabs a scalpel. She closes the cabinet; the mirror shows her reflection back at her.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY ROOM - MORNING

Alola wakes up in a very tight, metallic, dusty space. She takes moments to compose herself. Her gothic makeup has smeared her face. Drool has dried on her cheek. Her hair is a frizzy-mess covered in dust.

The HUM of a ventilation system starts, followed by a sudden COLD BLAST of air to her face. She YELPS, pulling herself backwards toward an opening.

She had entered and slept in the air vent of the study room. A large chunk of her wedding dress had been ripped by the entity.

The sunlight enters in beautiful streaks from the window. It shines on the marvelous wooden desk, ancient globe, and a library's worth of books and bookshelves on every wall.

Alola exits the air vent and lands on the floor. A burst of pain shoots up her right leg. She falls to the ground. She inspects her leg and notices a massive SCRATCH from the entity's claw. Blood has dried all over her leg.

She looks around the room. She listens.

Silence, except for the howl of the wind outside.

She begins to hop out the room on her good leg.

In the hallway, she notes the destruction from the previous night. Toppled decorations, claw marks.

Alola hops to the living room. Saleem is nowhere to be found. The pain on her leg is unbearable now. She sits on a sofa.

A BEEP signals a car locking outside. Alola freezes, listening to HUMAN FOOTSTEPS approaching.

*KNOCK. KNOCK.*

Alola peers through the window blinds. She spots Mahilja at the front door. Mahilja wears a leather purse decorated with exotic animal fangs. She also carries a single grocery bag. Alola grunts.

ALOLA  
 (shouts)  
 It's unlocked!

Mahilja enters. She gasps. She finds Alola in the living room. She gasps again.

MAHILJA  
 What happened?!

ALOLA  
 Why the FUCK did you take our car?!

MAHILJA  
 I had to run some errands!

ALOLA  
 So you STEAL OUR CAR?!?

MAHILJA  
 I didn't think you were going to need it!

*THUD.*

Something lands on the floorboards upstairs. Mahilja and Alola fall silent, eyes wide, listening intently. FOOTSTEPS rush down the stairs. It's Saleem. His face and suit stained with dust.

SALEEM  
 Oh! You're alive!

He runs and hugs Alola. Alola pushes him away. She's on the verge of tears. She SLAPS him, then hugs him.

MAHILJA  
 Dear Alola, I must treat your wounds!

Saleem looks at her leg.

SALEEM  
 Oh my God!

MAHILJA  
 It's okay! It is treatable! I keep a medicine kit under the kitchen sink for this EXACT scenario!

Mahilja heads to the kitchen. Saleem gets on one knee and holds Alola's hand.

SALEEM  
 I'm sorry. I tried chasing that thing last night. I saw it follow you into the study room, then it came after me.  
 (MORE)

SALEEM (CONT'D)

I ran upstairs and climbed up the ladder into the attic. I waited and waited, but it just stayed there, waiting for me! Next thing you know I... I fell asleep.

ALOLA

(exasperated)

It's... whatever.

Mahilja returns with a medkit.

MAHILJA

(unsure)

Perhaps we should get you cleaned up first. And a new set of clothes, yes? You too, Saleem.

Saleem inspects his dirty suit.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Alola now wears a black t-shirt and black jeans with the right-leg sleeve rolled up. Her green-emerald necklace remains worn. Her hair is wet from the recent shower. She sits on the toilet lid as Mahilja treats her wound.

She spots her ruined wedding dress on the sink. She frowns.

Alola stares at Mahilja. She speaks more cautiously, softly.

ALOLA

Last night, you mentioned you had visions of me...

MAHILJA

Yes.

ALOLA

What does that mean?

MAHILJA

It means I had visions of you merely by accident when I tried to cure a migraine.

ALOLA

The more you speak, the less you make sense.

MAHILJA

It will all make sense soon. I promise.

Saleem enters. He wears a clean, red-flannel shirt and blue jeans.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I know you two are mad at me, but to be fair, I did say to stay in the bedroom and be as quiet as possible. You could've easily just slept, and The Chief would've been none the wiser.

A frustrated Alola looks at Saleem. Saleem is hypnotized just the same as when Mahilja whispered her name to him.

ALOLA

Saleem?

SALEEM

"The Chief"... That was The Chief?! I don't remember ever seeing him that way!

MAHILJA

Very few have. Speaking of, where is he?

SALEEM

Um, I think I heard him in our bedroom.

MAHILJA

You left him all alone? Are you crazy?! Go get him!

ALOLA

(alert)

B-- b-- but it tried killing me...

MAHILJA

(giggling)

I'd be amazed if HE can kill you right now.

Saleem exits the room. Mahilja closes up the medkit and rolls down the sleeve of Alola's jean.

Mahilja looks up to notice Alola wide-eyed, trembling, traumatized. She's on the verge of tears as she scrunches her face. Mahilja sits on the ledge of the bathtub.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

(stern)

Are you having seconds thoughts about your biggest wish?

Alola breaks down into tears.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Alola, darling, it is scary, I know. It is scary when a dream starts to become reality. No matter how much we fantasize about it, how many details we plan for it, we are simply never prepared.

Mahilja places a hand on top of Alola's.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But... we are also never prepared for the ecstasy that's unleashed when we finally achieve our dreams. That kind of happiness changes you permanently, in a good way.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I know you tremble right now. Your mind is begging you to run away, you wish your mother or father were here to comfort you. That is okay. This will pass.

Alola composes herself. Her strong voice returns, yet she still trembles, slightly.

ALOLA

I was raised believing things like this.

She looks down at the ground.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

Cryptids, witchcraft, mythos. I was even BORN in the midst of chaos! In a cult town obsessed with comic books. A town that ostracized me and my family! I thought I would be ready...

MAHILJA

And you are ready! You just don't know it! That courage is inside you, it just needs to be tapped into.

The coos of a baby are heard.

Saleem enters the room again. This time, he holds THE CHIEF, wrapped in a blanket.



The Chief is a brunette-hair baby. Except for his eyes. They are golden, metallic marbles. And where there should be pupils, there are holes where a strong golden light emits out of.

SALEEM  
THIS is The Chief?!

MAHILJA  
Aww, come here!

Mahilja stands and reaches for The Chief. Saleem hands him to her.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Baby during the day, abomination during the night, but our grand, almighty chieftain forever.

Saleem stands next to Alola. Alola is cautious, scared.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
(to The Chief)  
You met cousin Saleem, already! How was he?

The Chief coos.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Yes, yes, it has been a long time. And look! He's married now to a most beautiful woman. Look, this is "Alola", his wife.

Mahilja kneels down next to Alola. Alola looks at The Chief.

Alola stares into The Chief's eyes. It hypnotizes her. The eyes begin to glow more intensely. A tear naturally flows out from each of her eyes. Mahilja places a hand over The Chief's eyes, breaking Alola hypnosis.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Ookay, let's not stare for too long.

Mahilja hands The Chief over to Alola. She's hesitant.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Take him. He won't bite.

Alola cradles The Chief. The Chief begins to play with her hair. Alola tenses up. Mahilja searches through her purse.

SALEEM  
That's an incredible purse, cousin.

MAHILJA

Thank you, I had it commissioned by  
Rosa Genoni.

Mahilja glances around at Saleem and Alola.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

You two must be hungry. Listen, let me  
cook us all a big breakfast! How does  
that sound? Hm?

Alola & Saleem look at each other, unsure.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

C'monnnn! I will cook us an old family  
recipe. Exquisite, excellent, EXOTIC...

Saleem raises an eyebrow. Mahilja laughs and begins to walk  
out the room. Saleem looks over at Alola.

SALEEM

Are you okay?

Alola trembles slightly. She GULPS. She calms down. She looks  
at Saleem and nods.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Mahilja finishes serving white rice on two plates of cooked  
chicken. She pulls out a mysterious spice from the grocery  
bag. She sprinkles the spice on the dish.

Alola holds The Chief in her arms. The Chief plays with Alola's hair.  
He coos. Alola looks down at him. She smiles, briefly. Mahilja turns  
to look over her shoulder. She notices.

MAHILJA

He likes you.

ALOLA

Yeah...

Mahilja serves the two plates. She slides one to Alola and  
one to Saleem, who sits next to her.

Saleem inhales the steamed aroma that comes off her dish.

SALEEM

These are our leftovers...

MAHILJA

(playful)

It was all I could find in your fridge.

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But, I added a very special spice that grants you magical powers! Made exclusively by our tribe!

Alola looks around at her floors, walls, furniture. All ruined and clawed.

Mahilja gently takes The Chief out of Alola's hands. The Chief whimpers. Alola looks on, saddened.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Eat up, please.

Saleem begins to eat the meal without hesitation. Alola looks down on it, uninterested.

Mahilja takes a deep breath.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Okay. Now that we are all here, I can finally begin to explain.

Mahilja takes a seat across from the both of them.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I will tell you both the story of our tribe, our origins, and our journey up until last night. It will explain all that has, is, and will happen.

Beat.

Mahilja takes a deep breath.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

It begins... with my death. About 40,000 years ago.

Saleem stops eating. Mahilja now speaks in a matter-of-fact manner. Her playfulness fades from her tone.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I remember... waking up. Submerged underwater. I felt the ground I laid on. It was cold. I could see I was only a few inches from the surface. I sat up.

Alola raises an eyebrow at Mahilja.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I had been submerged underneath an oasis in the middle of a jungle. The water was too pristine, glossy.

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

The very floor I laid in, submerged, was made of silver. Clean cut grass surrounded the oasis. To this day, we are not sure how it could exist in such a location, but all we know for certain, is that it granted our entire tribe immortality. Including you, Saleem.

SALEEM

I was there?

MAHILJA

You have always been there, cousin. You are one of us. A member of the tribe.

Saleem smiles to himself.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

As I was saying, I emerged from the oasis to find none other than The Chief, but not as you see him right now. Instead, in his true form, eight feet tall, skin as gnarled and leathery as the oldest oak. His eyes like molten gold, seeing into your very spirit when he gazes upon you. A mane of walnut brown hair. A behemoth of a man that embodied leadership!

Mahilja's eyes unfocus momentarily. She clears her throat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Ahem. Anyways, I awoke to find him sitting on the grass, staring at me, motionless. I wasn't frightened, I knew my chief. What did frighten me was when I looked at my surroundings. Our entire tribe, including you, Saleem, laid on the jungle grass, motionless. The Chief assured me that you were all simply recovering. And so you did. One by one, you all awoke.

Mahilja pretends to sleep, then arises.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

According to The Chief, he had led us on a hunt INTO this jungle. Along the way, I caught a sickness and died. My body was carried as they tried to find a way out. They got lost.

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

No water, no food, everyone was on their last legs until they stumbled across the oasis. They all drank from it. They all passed out.

Mahilja shrugs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

After we all awoke... we went back to hunting like true hunter-gatherers for the next 20,000 years or so.

Beat.

ALOLA

... That's it?

MAHILJA

When you have no way of expressing philosophy, self, dreams, or even ideas, life is very mundane. You need a robust language for that. Ours was far from it. It was primitive. So primitive in fact, we didn't even have a name for it. It was simply a series of tongue clicks and "huhs".

Mahilja laughs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Our word for "cave" took a whole FOUR seconds just to pronounce PLUS extravagant hand gestures.

Mahilja makes a series of quick tongue clicks as she motions with her arms wildly.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Not good. Although, to give us credit, it developed much better over time and became the origins of Proto-Semitic languages, which would later evolve into Arabic, but I digress.

The Chief begins to whimper. He stares at Saleem's chicken. None pay attention.

SALEEM

Where was this jungle?

MAHILJA

I am 98 percent sure we were in Sudan.  
In the Sahara Desert. Only back then  
it was a jungle.

ALOLA

How do you know that?

MAHILJA

It's all retrospective from textbooks of  
today. I integrate my recollections and  
memories with modern findings.

ALOLA

How can you be sure? Memory is  
HEAVILY unreliable.

MAHILJA

Not mine. I don't know why or how,  
but along with immortality, I was  
also gifted photographic memory. I  
remember every waking detail of every  
minute of every life.

ALOLA

That can't be possible. You would've  
surpassed the 2.5 million gigabyte  
memory capacity of the human brain  
long ago, right?

MAHILJA

Yes! You are right!

Mahilja gives Alola a somber smile. Alola leans back,  
cautious.

SALEEM

Wait, did you say every "LIFE"?

MAHILJA

I'll get to that. To continue on, we  
exited the jungle and headed north,  
following the coast of the Mediterranean  
Sea. 40,000 years ago, humanity existed  
simply as hunter-gatherer tribes, and we  
were no exception. We traveled. Never  
settling. Hunting and traveling, hunting  
and traveling. We noticed none of us  
would age at all. We didn't think much of  
it, since our sample group for humanity  
was us. Other tribes we would either kill  
or interact with very briefly.

The Chief begins to cry. He continues to reach for Saleem's chicken, so far away.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Hand him a piece, won't you?

Mahilja becomes more seldom. A slight, nervous smile on her. Alola notices. Saleem hands a small piece of chicken to The Chief. The Chief begins to eat it.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We only began to realize something was strange about us when the very children we gave birth to would grow old and die. That's when we discovered the concept of aging.

The Chief coos. Mahilja at him once more. She becomes teary-eyed.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

At some point, every single one of us has had to watch our own children take their last breaths. As it turns out, passing on the gift of immortality is not so simple.

Mahilja gets up. She paces around the kitchen island.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But... it IS possible. In time, we found ourselves in the Rhineland. Back when it was an ocean of pine trees as far as the eye can see. During a hunt, an immortal, Izabiliah, was mauled by bear when she stepped on a twig and spooked the cubs of the bear.

Mahilja pauses and drops her head momentarily. A moment of silence.

ALOLA

How can you be so accurate about such a small detail that happened tens of thousands of years ago?

MAHILJA

The same way mortals know Otzi the Iceman's last meal was ibex and red deer meat 5,253 years ago, science.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But finally, after so long, an immortal was dead... or so we thought. We prepared a funeral for Izabillah, but she arose from the dead just as the sermon began. She shifted into the very same monstrosity you two had to face last night and then slaughtered all the mortals, the CHILDREN we had given birth to. How rude.

The Chief giggles.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

The Chief had to kill Izabillah with "Sadiq al-Ruh", his mystical spear. He sank the tip into her neck, TRULY killing her. The Chief ordered us to collect all the bodies. Surprisingly, one of the mortals, an adult, was horribly wounded, but still alive. There was no chance of saving him. So, The Chief gave him mercy. He sank a BLOODY Sadiq al-Ruh into the mortal, killing him.

Mahilja goes quiet. Alola remains quiet. Saleem becomes curious.

SALEEM

What was that mortal's name?

Mahilja gives him a cunning smirk.

MAHILJA

... "Kazi".

Saleem is once again hypnotized. Eyes wide. Mouth agape.

ALOLA

"Kazi"? Uncle Frank Smith?!

Saleem snaps out of his hypnosis.

SALEEM

Kazi... I remember him.

ALOLA

Yeah, he was your uncle!

SALEEM

No, I remember his death! That was him! That was him! Yeah, I remember!

(MORE)



SALEEM (CONT'D)

The Chief killed him out of mercy, but the very next morning he... he woke up. He was whole again?

MAHILJA

Yes. What else?

SALEEM

He stopped aging after that. I remember! Yeah! He was BORN a mortal but became... IMMORTAL?! Wait, how?!

MAHILJA

Sadiq al-Ruh.

ALOLA

Wait wait wait wait... does that mean... that we are babysitting The Chief until he returns back into his "true" form so he can stab me with his spear?!

MAHILJA

Essentially, yes.

ALOLA

I don't know how I feel about dying and coming back to life. Will it even be ME? Or will it be an indistinguishable copy?

MAHILJA

I remember me and Aristotle having this exact discussion, as a hypothetical of course, wouldn't want to reveal the family secret with a bunch of war mongers. He argued no, I argued yes. But ask yourself, which one of us has died multiple times and still feels like herself, huh?

ALOLA

(unsure)

Hmmm...

Alola finally takes a look down at her dish. It's gotten cold. She takes a bite of chicken. She begins to cough INTENSELY.

SALEEM

Oh my god, are you chocking?!

Alola puts a hand to her throat. The Chief begins to cry. She gestures for some water with the other. Saleem rushes to pour her a glass of water.

ALOLA  
 (coughing)  
 What is this?! My throat HURTS!

Saleem hands her a cup. Alola gulps it all at once. She recovers.

MAHILJA  
 Like I said, it has magical powers you'll need soon.

SALEEM  
 Huh?

MAHILJA  
 Well, I presume you two are finished with breakfast. Let us head into the basement. I shall begin the next chapter of this story in there.

Mahilja hands back The Chief to Alola. Despite her coughing, she can't help but smile as The Chief immediately stops his cries once he's in her arms. Mahilja grabs their plates and places them in the sink.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUED

*CREEEAK.*

The four enter the basement. They reach the bottom of the stairs. There's a large CONCRETE SLAB amidst a pile of containers that had fallen on top of it. There's a wide slab-like hole in the ground, right where Alola and Mahilja once hid. It emits a STRONG golden light, making it impossible to see inside.

ALOLA  
 Oh my god...

The Chief giggles.

MAHILJA  
 I wouldn't worry about it, The Chief will fix everything once he returns to his true form. He's a gentleman like that.

Saleem points to the slab entrance.

SALEEM  
 What's in there?!

MAHILJA  
 A tomb.

ALOLA

There's a tomb in our basement?!

MAHILJA

Yes, it's where The Chief had been resting for a very long time.

ALOLA

Is that where his wailing came from?

MAHILJA

Yes! Hmm, I've actually never seen the inside of it. The Chief won't let me.

Mahilja attempts to enter the tomb. The Chief immediately begins to WAIL. It's unbearable to the ears. Mahilja steps away from the tomb.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Okay, okay! Sheesh, not even in his transitional period will he allow me in.

Mahilja composes herself.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Ahem. As briefly mentioned before, I and the tribe wish to pass down the gift of immortality to Alola. But in order to understand how that will work, I must explain how immortality works.

Mahilja sits on the concrete slab.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We live forever, yes. Theoretically, we could live for thousands, millions of years... So long as we are not decapitated, stabbed, crushed, burned, hunted, or any form of violent acts... If we are killed, a sort of countdown begins.

Mahilja holds up three fingers.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Three nights. That is how long one has to regain their immortality and that's IF they're not killed in the midst of those three nights.

SALEEM

How do you regain it?

MAHILJA  
How does a tick feast?

SALEEM  
By... drinking blood?!

MAHILJA  
Yes!

Saleem gags. Alola's inner eyebrows raise, worried.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
The first night, an immortal hunts for blood. It does so because it is VERY hungry, the body wants to catch up where it left off. Bare minimum, an immortal requires an entire body's worth of blood to regain its immortality. The good news though, you two won't have to deal with The Chief transforming anymore. The first night is the only chance an immortal has to retrieve blood on their own. Afterwards, it becomes the responsibility of the tribe.

Saleem looks over at The Chief.

SALEEM  
So, how do we get... all that blood?

MAHILJA  
Don't worry, that is my errand to run.

ALOLA  
"Errand"? Is that what you were up to last night?!

MAHILJA  
(cheery)  
Yes! I am finding you both a human sacrifice!

ALOLA  
(urgent)  
Okay, no, we-- YOU can't do this. Murder is never okay, no matter what!

MAHILJA  
Hey, we're immortals, not immoral! We have a code.  
(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Sure, early on we sought out blood indiscriminately, but Hammurabi taught us that there are those who deserve to have their blood taken away... Criminals!

ALOLA

Ever consider that you could be killing someone wrongly convicted of a crime?

MAHILJA

Back then, sure. But trust me when I say the criminal I'm luring in is guilty without a shadow of a doubt!

Mahilja clears her throat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

This is a lot more talking than I thought it would be. Perhaps I should prepare a slide presentation next time.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Anyways, on the second night, all you have to do is cast away the spirits of those the immortal has wronged in their past lives. And by "wronged" I mean--

ALOLA

-- Killed.

MAHILJA

Yes! And The Chief... oh boy. Zulus, Mongols, prophets, a pharaoh, Alexander the Great's nephew, even a bishop, but that one was an accident! These spirits seek revenge. They wish to steal the immortal's body. But don't worry, YOU'LL be completely safe as long as you wear a head-dress that should be somewhere around here.

Mahilja looks around at the containers. She spots one that had tipped over. She frowns as she inspects it.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Oh no.

ALOLA

What?

MAHILJA

The head-dress. It's in that container. It's a delicate head-dress, but it renders the wearer invisible to the spirits. Um, it's alright, I'm sure I can fix it before sundown.

Mahilja turns back around to face Alola & Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

To ward off the spirits, you simply have to cast spells from our spell book, "Mashaf al-Damim". Sound familiar?

ALOLA

Witchcraft?!

MAHILJA

Oh yes. The real deal.

SALEEM

(playful)

Oh, that's definitely right up Alola's alley.

MAHILJA

Which is why you won't join her tonight.

Alola furrows her eyebrows at Saleem.

SALEEM

Wait! I was joking!

MAHILJA

This is Alola's challenge. This is how she proves herself worthy of immortality. And there's only one head-dress. On the other hand, if you two are to spend eternity together, then Alola has the right to learn about all of Saleem's past lives and endeavors. Which is what you will be relearning, cousin.

Alola remains with a stern look at Saleem. Saleem looks at her. He shrugs and smiles nervously.

ALOLA

Okay, so The Chief gets his blood, he regains immortality, and then he kills me. Am I going to have to go through those three nights, too?

MAHILJA

Maybe just one night. This new breed of human sacrifices are much larger than what we're used to no thanks to processed foods.

Mahilja observes a container at the top of a stack, surrounded by other containers. She can't reach it. She turns to Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Saleem, darling, do me a favor, could you bring that container down for me?

SALEEM

Of course.

Mahilja walks over to Alola's side. They watch Saleem search and move aside other containers.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

So our entire family history is in all these containers?

MAHILJA

A lot of it, yes. In the form of journals, mainly. We have even more in rental storages nearby. I wrote most of them because of my memory, but you and the others would occasionally write your thoughts and experiences. They serve as archives. Our own little history books.

Saleem gets on top of a container in order to reach the one Mahilja attempted to get. Alola and Mahilja stand idly.

ALOLA

(to Mahilja)

So... when was the last time you died?

MAHILJA

1747. Marseille, Paris. My husband at the time, a mercenary for the Dutch East India Company cheated on me during his time in India. When I found out, I killed him in his sleep and then threw myself off a bridge into the nearest river because I was just SO heartbroken...

ALOLA

Oh.

MAHILJA

Oh no, it's okay!

(giggles)

I was reborn the very next morning, but you'll never guess where I awoke...

Mahilja begins to laugh.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Our bedroom! I had transformed into the monstrosity and made my way back to the village, to our house just to drain him of his blood! Talk about holding a grudge, huh? When I realized that, I laughed it all off. Of course, I now had to pack up and flee yet again.

Mahilja sighs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But ever since then, I have remained alive! I've-- or WE, the tribe, have gotten very good at living a long time thanks to modern technology.

Saleem sets the container down on the ground.

SALEEM

Okay! Here it is!

MAHILJA

Great! Now bring it upstairs.

Saleem drops his shoulders, upset. Mahilja walks to the tipped over container with the head-dress. She grabs it and places it in front of Alola's feet.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

And Alola, could you bring this one with you?

ALOLA

But I'm--

Mahilja reaches over and grabs The Chief from her arms.

MAHILJA

Thank you, I appreciate it!

Mahilja begins to head upstairs. Alola & Saleem struggle to carry their containers. They begin to head upstairs, slowly.



INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

Mahilja enters the living room with The Chief in her arms. She waits around as Alola & Saleem struggle to enter with the containers they carry. They arrive and plop them down on the floor.

MAHILJA

Sit. I will resume the telling of the family's story, just let me get a drink first. Dry throat.

Mahilja hands The Chief over to Alola. Alola immediately entertains The Chief, who giggles. Mahilja heads to the kitchen within speaking range of Alola & Saleem.

ALOLA

From what you've told us so far, immortality sounds more like resurrection. Kinda a bummer.

MAHILJA

Everybody always assumes immortality equals invincibility. Not quiet. Every time we are reborn, we retain a lot from our past lives. Genetics, innate talents, intelligence to a degree. Everything except our memories. Metaphorically speaking, those are completely locked away in boxes deep within our minds, like containers. And the keys are memorabilia, or keywords, or familiar places. Although, I wouldn't rely on familiar places since a lot of them look NOTHING like they used to.

Mahilja pours herself a cup of water. She drinks it all at once, then pours herself another cup.

SALEEM

How come I didn't remember you when I first saw you? Wouldn't familiar faces be another key?

Mahilja heads back to the living room with her cup of water.

MAHILJA

Strangely, no.

Mahilja sets down her cup on the coffee table. She takes out a keychain from her purse. She unlocks Saleem's container with a key. She pulls out a journal. She hands Saleem the journal.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

That there is one of your earliest journals, Saleem. I had you sit down and recollect essentially all I said, but from your perspective. Then about halfway, you started writing what you witnessed as we continued moving.

Saleem opens the journal.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

What does it say, Saleem?

Saleem reads from the journal. He speaks fluently in an unknown language. It amazes him. Phonetically, the language sounds similar to Arabic. Saleem looks at Mahilja. He smiles.

SALEEM

"Txilik"!

MAHILJA

Our mother tongue.

SALEEM

Woah... I'm not remembering anything, though.

MAHILJA

Keep reading, you'll come across some keywords.

Saleem begins to read the journal. He still listens in to Mahilja and Alola. Mahilja takes a sip from her cup. She opens the other container with another key.

Mahilja reveals an ANCIENT HUNTER-GATHERER HEAD-DRESS, fashioned from a CAVE BEAR SKULL. Teeth and animal hides meticulously decorate it. Placed on someone's head, it casts an ominous shadow across their face. Blood-painted markings adorn it, clearly hand-painted. The head-dress emanates a shamanistic aura.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Ah, good! Not as bad as I expected.

Mahilja pulls out more teeth and string from the containers. She begins to work on placing them back on the head-dress, as if knitting. Saleem reads from the book.

SALEEM

"Izabillah sleeps forever. Kazi becomes mountain like us"?

ALOLA

Mountain?

MAHILJA

Immortal. Big, significant, never changing.

Saleem flips the page.

SALEEM

"We travel. We find pebble... people"?

MAHILJA

Mortals. Smaller, insignificant, weak, always being pushed forward by some force AKA, aging.

SALEEM

Oh, right, heh.

Alola raises an eyebrow at Saleem. Saleem chuckles nervously.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

"We find new pebble people. They create food from ground. The Chief enters village. We live together. We learn to grow food."

Saleem sighs.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

When do I stop writing like a caveman?

MAHILJA

Soon, actually. Keep reading.

SALEEM

"Pebbles worship us. New little pebbles worship us. Mahilja finds bigger stronger cow with horns. It not like her. It opens Mahilja with horns. Mahilja sleeps. Becomes beast like Izabiliah. She crushes pebbles."

Saleem & Alola look at Mahilja. She shrugs.

MAHILJA

Whoops.

Saleem flips the page. He smiles.

SALEEM

Ah, finally! Coherent sentences!  
 Ahem. "Since wisely assuming  
 control from the pebbles, we  
 harvest our own crops, toil with  
 husbandry, and adopt a rather  
 peculiar local writing system,  
 enabling literacy amongst our  
 tribe. We find ourselves most self-  
 sufficient, reveling in stable,  
 peaceful lives. For countless dawns  
 I, and the tribe, have awoken to  
 the gentle caress of a morning  
 breeze, toiled alongside brethren,  
 and at countless dusks, gathered  
 'round crackling fires, in warmth  
 and kinship. I do say, this commune  
 with the elements and tribe shall  
 remain eternally cherished."

Mahilja's eyes glaze, lost in memory.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

That sounds beautiful.

MAHILJA

And it was... it was.

Alola raises an eyebrow.

ALOLA

... But then?

MAHILJA

... A stranger pays us a visit.

Mahilja pauses on fixing the headdress.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

One day, I and my husband at the  
 time go out on two separate hunts in  
 search of fur. He heads East, I head  
 West. I struggle. It takes me all  
 day to find anything. He kills a  
 wolf, brings it back to the village.  
 The wolf had been covered in fleas.  
 The fleas spread to him, then the  
 village. The sun begins to set. I  
 give up and head back...

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I come back to find something haunting... Everyone is dead.

Alola squints, tilts her head, confused.

ALOLA

That's... not... too bad?

MAHILJA

That's not the haunting part. No, it was me hiding in a bush as a shadowy figure emerged from the fog and STABBED as many immortals as it could before The Chief attacked it! The figure stood as tall as The Chief, weld a spear like him, LOOKED like him. But it had WINGS like a moth! A clash of TWIN titans! Suddenly, The Chief's eyes glow INTENSELY and BLAST a golden beam of energy at the figure, sending it FLYING away... Then The Chief collapsed. I rushed to his aide and noticed he had aged significantly. His beard now peppered, his hair more grey than brown.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We went from 56 tribe members, down to 45... That was when we learned that permanent death is a real possibility even for us. Meanwhile, those who weren't stabbed still needed to be reborn.

Mahilja sighs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

To this day, the most difficult task I had to endure. I tried... I tried so hard to save everyone!

ALOLA

What did you do?

Mahilja looks at the space in front of her. There's a thousand-yard stare on her face.

MAHILJA

I knew of a village nearby... I took advantage of their kindness by getting them to help bring all immortal babies to their village. Then, I hid away at night, and let the slaughter begin.

Mahilja drops her shoulders and looks down at the ground.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

I'm not proud of what I did... I'm not even sure I did the right thing. There wasn't enough blood for all immortals to reborn, so even more perished...

Mahilja looks down at the head-dress. She slowly resumes her work on it. Alola & Saleem remain quiet, attentive.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

In two days, 22 of us left this corporeal world. The rest, reborn, had no memories. Fortunately, when we returned to our familiar village it sparked recollections, enough to resume life. We arrived and found The Chief sitting, waiting for us, yet again.

Mahilja sighs.

Saleem looks back down at his journal. He reads some more.

SALEEM

"This morning we broke down our village and began to move away. Onwards, East."

Saleem flips the page of the journal. He flips another page.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Nothing really happens for a long time.

MAHILJA

Yes. We simply became like spectators for the ancient world. Just traveling, trading, and catching up on world events. Life was good that way, and eventually, we found ourselves on a ship heading to "the land of the rising sun", or Japan.

Mahilja places the finished head-dress on the coffee table. She gets up and stretches.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Oookay! That's a good stopping point! I need to go for my morning run, and then continue with my errand.

ALOLA

You're leaving?

MAHILJA

For just a few hours. I'll be back at night. Your head-dress is nice and new. Just remember to put it on when nighttime arrives. And here...

Mahilja takes out a book that resembles the Necronomicon from the container of the head-dress. It is tiny. Small enough to fit into jean pockets. She hands it to Alola who browses it. She comes across a bookmark.

ALOLA

What is it?

MAHILJA

The spell book. That bookmark is for the spells you'll need to cast tonight.

ALOLA

But... I can't read this. It's in your language, I think.

MAHILJA

Try it. Try reading... right page, third line from the top.

ALOLA

Umm...

Alola speaks the unintelligible language of Txilik. Phonetically, she sounds fluent. She doesn't stutter. Her words connect. She's surprised as she reads.

**BOOM!**

A STRONG gust of wind emits outwards from a force field that INSTANTLY appeared around Alola. Saleem is PUSHED off the couch from the gust. Mahilja doesn't flinch. Only her hair reacts. The Chief giggles and claps. Alola is wide-eyed and shocked.

SALEEM

HOLY SHIT!!

Saleem gathers himself. He stands.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
That was AWESOME!

MAHILJA  
Told you that meal had magical powers...

Saleem begins to laugh and smile, Alola joins him as the two are completely amazed. Mahilja smiles.

SALEEM  
(to Mahilja)  
Are you sure I can't join Alola tonight?!

MAHILJA  
Sorry, only enough room for one. But if you two survive, I might allow you to play around with some spells afterwards.

Alola and Saleem continue to laugh towards each other. Alola closes the book.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Don't lose that page. Those spells are the ones you'll need to keep the spirits away, okay?

ALOLA  
Yeah, for sure!

MAHILJA  
Okay, see you both in a bit!

Mahilja heads to the kitchen and takes the car keys from the bowl.

ALOLA  
Wh-- you're taking our car again?

MAHILJA  
Were you planning on going somewhere?

ALOLA  
Well, no, but still... it's our car.

MAHILJA  
Don't worry, I'll refill the tank!  
Maybe even take care of that pesky check engine light.

Mahilja heads out. Alola & Saleem watch out the living room window as Mahilja enters the car and drives away.

Saleem looks back at the spell book.



SALEEM  
 (excited)  
 Do another spell!

Alola looks at him, then the spell book. For a moment, she's unsure, until she suddenly smiles.

ALOLA  
 Okay!

Alola sits The Chief down on the couch.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
 (to The Chief)  
 There you go. Wanna watch me perform some magic?

The Chief coos.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
 (to The Chief)  
 Yes? Aww, yes yes yes! Yes, I will!

Alola picks up the spell book and opens the bookmarked page.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
 Which one should I do?

SALEEM  
 Just do the next one below.

The Chief begins to cry.

Alola reads the next spell. The Chief WAILS. Saleem watches Alola, hypnotized.

A purple aurora begins to form over Alola. It distorts the space around her as it creates the illusion of a force field. A light hum fades in as Alola continues to speak.

Saleem feels a force pulling him toward Alola. He resists, struggling to stay on his feet. Clothes flap, as if caught in a strong current.

Alola concludes the spell. The force field EXPANDS, engulfing Saleem. It IMPLODES instantly, LAUNCHING Saleem straight at Alola.

**BAM!**

Saleem and Alola clash heads.

Both are knocked out.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

CLOSE UP on Alola's pimple along her jaw.

Alola stands in front of the mirror, gazing at the pimple. Her towel still wrapped around her, her hair still wet. She stares at it, determined.

ALOLA (V.O.)

Imperfections are to be eliminated or tamed at all costs. Hiding it with makeup is not an option, for that is a cop-out. I have an arsenal for victory. Total victory or Pyrrhic victory. It does not matter. I do not give up. I win.

Using a needle, Alola lightly STABS at the pimple's tip until it POPS. White sebaceous filament and blood emerge. Alola presses a toilet paper square onto the pimple.

She removes the toilet paper. The pimple has deflated, leaving a gauge hole exposing underlying skin.

Alola unpackages a syringe filled with a mysterious blue liquid. With surgical precision, she positions the syringe above the hole, without puncturing the skin.

She ejects the thick liquid onto the skin. The pimple refills with the liquid, a blue spot replacing it. Alola smiles, tapping the blue spot. It flattens and blends with the rest of her skin.

ALOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Today, I worship, but tomorrow, I will be the God of my own temple.

Alola puts away the syringe and closes the mirror cabinet. In the reflection, she spots Saleem in the doorway. He had caught her in the act.

BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

CLOSE UP on Saleem's brown eyes as he begins to wake up. His eyelids flicker. He looks around. Slowly, he regains composure. He hears sobbing. He sits up to find The Chief as he sits next to an unconscious Alola.

The Chief is now a TODDLER. His golden eyes remain, but he now sports a headful of long, straight, walnut-brown hair. He wears the blanket he had been wrapped in as a toga.

The Chief looks at Saleem, teary-eyed. His small hands pull on Alola's shirt.

Still dazed, Saleem continues to look around. The house is dark. A lack of sunlight enters through the windows.

Finally, Saleem gets up and looks out the window. In the horizon, the sun has nearly set.

Saleem PANICS. He hastily pulls out his PHONE and checks the time.

8:43PM.

SALEEM

No! Shit!

He turns around and spots the headdress on the floor. Some of the teeth and strings have scattered onto the floor.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Oh nononononno!!

The Chief begins to cry.

Unsure, Saleem approaches The Chief, then the spell book, then the headdress, then Alola.

He rolls over Alola and begins to shake her.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Babe! C'mon babe! Wake up! Wake up!

Saleem stands up. He looks around. He flicks his wrists in urgency. He thinks.

Saleem grabs the headdress and the scattered pieces. The Chief continues to cry.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

(to The Chief)

It's okay! It's okay! I'm just fixing Alola's headdress, right? She's gonna wake up soon and fight demons, okay? But she needs her headdress first.

The Chief cries more.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

No, trust me, I know Alola, she would hate me if I tried bailing us out of this challenge right now. Also, you're life kind of depends on it, buddy.

His cries dwindle. Saleem works on the headdress.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

You think she'd wake up if I throw  
cold water on her?

Moonlight barely illuminates the living room. The sun's gradual descent to darkness goes unnoticed by Saleem.

Saleem completes the headdress and rushes to the kitchen, pouring a cup of cold water. He turns, unaware of the unfolding change.

EMERGING FROM THE GROUND, the spirit of a PREHISTORIC TRIBAL WARRIOR appears. Garbed in fur pelts and etched mammoth ivory jewelry. Tribal markings are painted on his gaunt face with ochre pigments. He's horribly disfigured, a caved-in skull and missing lower body. He crawls toward The Chief.

Saleem YELPS, dropping the cup that SHATTERS. The tribal warrior inches closer to The Chief.

Saleem watches, frozen.

The Chief crawls away, wailing.

A woman's wail joins in.

A SPIRIT OF A PREHISTORIC YOUNG MOTHER emerges from the guest room doorway. She wears a simple wool shawl and linen dress cinched with a cord belt. Her braided hair holds an amulet of carved bone. She cradles a limp child, in her arms. The child, in a simple undyed tunic, is limp and bruised.

The young mother's face bears an agonized expression, reminiscent of Guernica. She approaches Alola, kneeling down and gently placing the limp child on top of her.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

NO!!

Saleem snaps out of his frozen state. He RUNS towards Alola and drags her away by her feet. The woman SCREAMS. Saleem pulls Alola towards the couch. In the process, she SLAMS her elbow on the leg of the coffee table.

Alola grunts. She begins to move. Saleem grabs the headdress and places it on Alola.

The woman panics. She picks up her child and looks around helplessly.

Saleem picks up the spell book. He spots the bookmark on the floor.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Shit! Shit! Which page was it?!

Saleem urgently flips through the spell book. The Chief crawls to Alola, hugging her leg. Alola moves, slightly.

The tribal warrior nears The Chief. The woman rushes toward Saleem.

Saleem casts a spell. Candles SPRING UP across furniture surfaces, flames varying from red to yellow.

The warrior merges with The Chief, who wails. The woman trips over Alola, dropping the child.

Saleem casts another spell. The child BURSTS INTO FLAMES. The woman drops the child. She kneels next to it. She cries so INTENSELY, she faints and falls headfirst into the flame that burns the child.

Saleem reads another spell. The tribal warrior is PULLED AWAY from The Chief by a mysterious force. The warrior is CRUSHED and FLATTENED against the wall. Ghostly, blue blood splats all over.

Silence. Only crackling fire remains.

Saleem watches the burning woman and child, stunned.

Long beat.

Shuffling near the coffee table. Saleem spots Alola, awake by the coffee table, holding The Chief. Her face is barely visible due to the headdress. Only her eyes are visible. They are large, widen, fear in them.

Saleem becomes serious. His eyebrows drop. He frowns slightly. He gets up, spell book in hand. He walks over to Alola. She looks up at him.

Saleem drops the spell book next to her and walks out to the backyard.

SLAM!

The door shuts. Alola begins to sob. The remains of the tribal warrior, mother, and child begin to dissipate into the air.

Long beat.

As Alola wipes her tears, she spots a ZULU WARRIOR SPIRIT in the corner of her eyes. It wears traditional regalia, and stares at her with an enormous smile.

Alola YELPS, crawls back, The Chief in one hand. She grabs the spell book and reads the first spell she can.

Wind EMITS from a force field, knocking the Zulu warrior down. He gets angry, jumps, stomps, aims his spear. Alola rereads quickly. The Zulu warrior THROWS his spear at her.

Wind EMITS again. The Zulu warrior's spear diverts UPWARDS, lodged in the ceiling.

Alola reads another spell.

The Zulu warrior BURSTS INTO FLAMES, SHOUTS in pain. GERMANIC BARBARIAN WARRIORS emerge from the floor, fur-clad and fierce.

Alola screams, puts The Chief on her shoulder, holds the spell book. She rushes upstairs, enters the bedroom, and SLAMS the door shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUED

Remnants of Saleem & Alola's wedding remain in the backyard. Tables, chairs, the altar, the decorations. Saleem sits on a chair, facing the altar. He fidgets with his fingernails, lost in thought.

MAHILJA

Hello, Saleem.

Saleem looks up to find Mahilja standing at the altar. She wears the same black dress and purse as before.

SALEEM

Hello, cousin.

MAHILJA

Come with me.

Mahilja turns around and walks over to the lone oak tree beyond the backyard, on the hill, overlooking the sparse field and lonely roads. Saleem follows her.

Mahilja sits on the grass, right underneath the oak tree. She had gathered materials for a campfire. She lights the campfire using a primitive method of flint and steel. Saleem sits next to her.

The sound of the fire as it crackles causes Saleem to shudder. He scrunches his face briefly. Mahilja notices. As she tends to the fire, she recites a poem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

"How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot:  
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each  
prayer accepted, and each wish resign'd"

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Do you know who wrote that?

Saleem shakes his head.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Alexander Pope. A good friend of mine  
during my lonely period in London.

Mahilja reclines back and looks up at the stars.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We would grab tea, go on walks, discuss  
literature. I remember one time; I  
brought up the topic of immortality when  
he was still writing, "An Essay On Man".  
I told him the hypothetical life of an  
immortal, "Johanna Smith", who had  
witnessed horrors, war, diseases, and the  
loss of so many loved ones since the dawn  
of man.

Mahilja chuckles. She brushes her hair behind her ear.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

It had been too long since I had a  
meaningful connection, because I  
accidentally spoke from the heart. The  
look he gave me said that he knew he  
was looking at Johanna Smith. He  
chuckled. Then he promptly proceeded to  
recite that very segment of "Eloisa and  
Abelard" as I just did.

Mahilja turns to look at Saleem who sits with his head in  
between his knees. His face is hidden.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Saleem, when last you passed, I had  
wished to spare you from all the  
horrors you've gone through in your  
past lives. A blissful ignorance. For  
once, someone in this tribe would have  
a true rebirth, to be whoever you  
wanted to be. Free will.

Mahilja sighs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

But in the end, I guess there is just no  
escaping our past.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Alola has locked herself in the bedroom with The Chief. She lays an unconscious Chief on the bed. The hanging teeth of the headdress clatter as she moves around in a haste. She opens the spell book.

*BAM!*

The door is hit.

*BAM!*

The AXE of a Barbarian warrior SMASHES through the door.

Alola reads a spell.

A golden SPEAR with a red, emerald tip materializes next to her. It falls to the ground. Strange runes are etched along the spear's golden body, flowing down in intricate swirling patterns that give off a subtle glow.

Alola lifts the spear.

*BAM!*

The door is KNOCKED OFF its hinges and falls to the ground. The barbarian warriors are revealed on the other side. They look right at Alola.

Alola clutches the spear. She struggles to aim the spear correctly. The barbarians begin to enter through the doorway, in a line, one behind the other.

Alola THROWS the spear. The spear adjusts its OWN trajectory and aims at the head of the first barbarian. The spear PIERCES through the perfectly aligned heads of the barbarians. All barbarians PLOP to the ground, dead. The spear is impaled to the wall of the hallway.

Suddenly, it vaporizes into thin air.

Mouth agape, Alola is baffled. The Chief is heard as he sobs. Alola sees that he has woken up.



ALOLA  
My baby! Come here!

She puts the spell book in her pocket and grabs The Chief.  
She puts him on her shoulder. She steps out the bedroom.  
Alola heads downstairs.

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Saleem stares at the campfire, transfixed by the dancing flame.  
Mahilja looks at him with a slight smile.

MAHILJA  
Remember where we left off earlier today?  
Japan, around the 15th century.

Saleem nods.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Well, long story short, after 200  
years, we got bored in Japan. So, The  
Chief allows us to set off and explore  
the world and live our own lives for a  
while, or for multiple lifetimes. Me,  
you, and another immortal headed to  
London. The rest, well, some joined  
the Ottomans, some helped kickstart  
the Italian Renaissance, others made a  
living building castles. When we  
camped out in France for a few weeks,  
the immortal who joined us thought it  
funny to joke around with an English  
clergy that a tomboy like Joan of arc  
must have some demonic possessions...  
that backfired immensely.

Saleem breaks into a chuckle.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Of course, those who didn't sail from  
Japan stayed back with The Chief,  
maintaining our village.

SALEEM  
Who was the immortal that joined us?

Mahilja's smile depletes. She scoots right next to Saleem and  
faces him. Saleem tenses up. Mahilja places her hands on his  
jawline. She whispers to him.

MAHILJA

Forgive me.

SALEEM

(nervous)

F-- for what?

MAHILJA

For the anguish you're about to feel.

Mahilja leans into Saleem's ear. Her lips centimeters from it, she whispers yet again.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

"Nuri"...

Saleem loses focus. His eyes seem to float in their sockets as he slowly tilts his head back. A rush of memories flood his mind as tears begin to flow out in abundance.

Mahilja puts an arm around him. Saleem covers his face in between his knees. He WAILS.

SALEEM

(distraught)

Nuri... my beautiful Nuri... I loved her so much...

MAHILJA

You did. She was there all along. Before even the oasis, you two were in love, I'm sure of it. Hundreds and thousands of years of love.

Saleem cries more intensely. Mahilja hands him a blue potion to drink in an 8oz JAR.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Here, drink this.

Saleem holds it and observes it in between tears.

SALEEM

(crying)

What is it?

MAHILJA

It is to calm you. Her name is unleashing thousands of years of grief in you right now, and last time you rediscovered her you nearly died of a broken heart.

Saleem drinks the potion. He comes down to a quiet sob.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Saleem, can you remember what happened in London?

SALEEM

(sobbing)

... The Black Plague.

MAHILJA

Yes, good. How did it affect us?

SALEEM

It crippled our exploration. We were getting ready to sail across the Pacific. Nuri shared that love for exploration.

Saleem begins to cry more intensely.

MAHILJA

Drink, drink.

Saleem drinks from the jar. He calms down.

SALEEM

When the plague struck, we were forced to quarantine in our home. We were just as afraid of the fleas as the mortals.

Saleem weeps more. He drinks from the jar again.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

My Nuri got infected! We had to quarantine her in her own room! Sh-- she just wanted to help people!

MAHILJA

She did... She always did.

SALEEM

She was an angel! She was out there saving lives!

Mahilja puts an arm around Saleem.

MAHILJA

I know... I know...

Saleem takes another sip from the jar. His eyes go wide. He goes quiet. He looks at Mahilja.

SALEEM

... Why didn't she ever wake up? She should have resurrected, right?

(MORE)

SALEEM (CONT'D)

I remember, we waited and waited!  
Mahilja, why didn't she wake up?!

Mahilja sighs. She leans into the campfire. It illuminates her face to give her an ominous look.

MAHILJA

On the night she died, we were taking turns watching over her, prepared for when she would transform. It was my turn to look over her as you slept for a few hours. I was in the kitchen making soup. I noticed... a flea, on the counter. Then another on the floor. Then more and more leading into Nuri's room. As I opened the door... I walked in...

Mahilja's throat swells. She finds it hard to continue. She swallows.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

The room was covered in fleas... and sitting by her side... was...

She looks at Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

"The Warlord".

Saleem is INSTANTLY hypnotized. He remains frozen and wide-eyed for a few seconds.

SALEEM

He... he...

MAHILJA

Killed her. Just as he had killed many of us before.

SALEEM

No... he... saved her.

MAHILJA

(surprised)

What?!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Alola enters the living room in a haste. She stops suddenly.

In the living room, there is a group of Indian worshippers. About 10 of them on their knees worshipping in the direction of Alola, plus a leader who faces the group.

The somber, spectral worshippers are draped in tattered, red, saffron robes. Except for the leader, who wears a yellow robe. Around their necks hang beaded malas.

All but the leader kneel and bow with their arms. The leader turns around to face Alola. He is a middle-aged man with greying hair and pudgy cheeks. He smiles at Alola. They can see her.

ALOLA  
(to herself)  
They can see me?!

The leader nods. He gently and kindly walks up to her. He gestures for her to hand him The Chief. Alola clutches The Chief.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
What?! No!

The leader insists more.

Alola pulls out the spell book as she maintains eye contact with the leader.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
Back off!

The leader recognizes the book. The worshippers stand up. Some clutch their hands together and start begging in Hindi.

The Chief reaches for the spell book. He coos. Alola notices. The leader gestures for her to let The Chief hold the book. Eyes squint, lips parted, Alola is confused. She looks at The Chief, then the leader. The leader nods.

Alola hands the book to The Chief. Like a toddler, his grasp is flimsy at best. He turns through many pages with his stubby, pudgy fingers until he finds the right one. All the while he coos.

The Chief points to one specific spell. Alola notices. She takes the book back. She looks over at the worshippers. All of them smile, some nod.

Alola reads the spell.

Faint, blue, small DOTS that leave behind a misty trail ARISE from the ground. They rise up to shoulder level. Hundreds, maybe THOUSANDS in grid-like organization.

Alola leans in to one of the dots. She can see something in them. She leans in closer and squints. She spots a haunting, demonic FACE that stares right back at her.

She gasps and steps back. It's a soul. They're ALL souls.

The leader faces the group. A worshipper picks up an ornate BOWL. The worshippers begin to chant. The leader picks up a BELL and STICK. The worshippers stop their chant. The leader taps the bell with the stick.

*DIIIIING.*

ALL the souls are SUCKED straight into the bowl. They swirl as they enter the bowl.

The leader faces Alola. He gestures for her to read the spell again.

She does.

More souls appear. The worshippers perform their ritual again.

*DIIIIING.*

More souls are trapped.

Alola reads the spell again.

*DIIIIING.*

More souls are trapped.

Alola watches the bowl become full. The leader faces her. He walks up to her. He places a hand on The Chief. He whispers into his ear. As the leader steps back, The Chief begins to sob and reach out for him.

The leader and the worshippers face Alola and The Chief. They place their hands together in a prayer manner. They bow. They fade away like mist.

Alola is left in awe. The Chief wipes his own tears.

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Mahilja scoots back from Saleem. She is distraught, mouth agape as she stares at Saleem.

MAHILJA

You followed The Warlord all the way back to Sudan... and you didn't even tell us?

Saleem stares right at the campfire.

SALEEM

... I followed Nuri. Not him. He carried her corpse, promising I could speak to her one last time.

MAHILJA

I searched for you... for hundreds of years!

SALEEM

I know. I'm sorry.

Mahilja sighs.

MAHILJA

What happened when you got there?

SALEEM

We arrive at the spot of the oasis, now part of the Sahara Desert. We build a pyre for Nuri, and as we do, he speaks to me.

MAHILJA

What did he say? What did he want?

SALEEM

He wanted The Chief dead. He wanted all of us dead. He says The Chief cheated him.

MAHILJA

What? How?

SALEEM

By drinking from the oasis... In a mortal's death, the soul finds its way to him. When we die, our souls remains, allowing us to resurrect. The only way to he can capture our souls is if he PERSONALLY snatches it from us.

MAHILJA

Fascinating.

SALEEM

Yeah... He does not seek revenge or vengeance. He said he is simply trying to do his job.

MAHILJA

Of course... of course, that's who he is.

Mahilja shakes her head.

SALEEM

He was... really wise. He gave wisdom the polar opposite of The Chief, but just as enlightening. He helped me come to accept death and its friends. The necessary balance of the universe. He warned me, that this "gift" can turn into a curse. Mortal or immortal, if you live long enough, you will beg for him eventually.

Mahilja looks away. She is concerned.

The campfire becomes more intense on its own.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Once we finished the pyre. He laid Nuri on it. She looked so tiny in his arms. She was wrapped up in this beautiful Egyptian cloth. I leaned in and whispered my last words to her...

Saleem begins to cry. He drinks from the jar. The jar is now empty.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

The Warlord placed a mask on her face, like a Pharaoh's, but instead of gold, it was a green emerald. He lights the pyre. He takes out a powder from his satchel. He sprinkles it over Nuri. Then, he places both of his hands on her and suddenly, the mask begins to glow. The Warlord tells me to lean in close.

Saleem leans into the campfire. The flames only inches away from him.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

I hear a whistle. And then... I hear her... I hear Nuri!

Saleem begins to sob. Mahilja is teary-eyed, surprised.



SALEEM (CONT'D)

She tells me... She tells me...

Saleem chokes up and begins to wail. Mahilja panics as she notices the jar is empty. She searches her purse to no avail. Saleem shouts at the sky.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

I want to see her again!! My love!  
Come back to me!!

MAHILJA

Saleem! Saleem! It's okay, it's okay!  
Calm down... calm down.

Mahilja hugs him. Saleem continues to wail. Mahilja begins to sing in Txilik. By her soothing tone, it is clearly a lullaby. Saleem begins to calm down. He trembles.

SALEEM

The Warlord told me he had done me a favor, and that now I will do one for him...

Beat.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

... And then he killed me.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

CLOSE UP of Alola fidgeting with her green-emerald necklace. She sits on the couch with The Chief next to her. She's exhausted. Eyes half-closed. Her movement sluggish. She speaks out loud.

ALOLA

I... I need my sleep.

Alola continues to fidget with the necklace. She rubs her thumb back and forth on the emerald. She doesn't notice, with each rub the emerald begins to glow brighter and brighter. Finally, the glow is potent enough to catch her attention.

She raises the emerald right up to her eyes. She begins to hear a whistle. Suddenly, the emerald EXPLODES in a beam of energy straight INTO Alola's eyes.

Alola's eyes are fried momentarily as she's knocked back into the couch.

Her irises turn to a lime green. They glow momentarily, in sync with the emerald. The emerald resets back to its normal state.

Alola collapses on the couch. Her eyes wide open as she stares at the ceiling.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
(mesmerized)  
Who are you...

A THUMP is heard in another room. Footsteps run down the stairs. The Chief turns to look in the direction of the noise.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
Nuri...

BACK TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Mahilja lets go. She scoots back to look at Saleem, confused.

MAHILJA  
He- he killed you?! Then... then why are you not permanently dead?!

SALEEM  
He used a knife. He slit my throat from behind. As I laid dying, I remember he tossed me the corpse of the man he possessed.

MAHILJA  
But then... how do you remember all this? You would have forgotten it all after rebirth.

SALEEM  
My journal. I had written everything there.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
When I awoke, he had left it behind for me. He wrote AND drew in it, too. Incredible detailed maps, guides to faking identities, info on every civilization at the time... Nuri and the pyre were gone. Picked up by the wind. Ashes or sand makes no difference to the Sahara.

MAHILJA  
Did he write about anything else?

SALEEM

He explained my immortality and how it worked. He warned me about mortals. How I could be hunted and killed if they were to discover my immortality. How I should always be on the move. 10 years maximum living in one place. To never... fall in love again...

MAHILJA

That bastard! It was him who made you make that promise!

SALEEM

What?

MAHILJA

Uh, nothing! Continue.

SALEEM

Um, and to, uh, always keep...

Saleem feels around his collar.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

... my emerald necklace on me.

He wears no necklace. Mahilja notices.

MAHILJA

Emerald? Like the one Alola wears?

SALEEM

Yes... yes!

MAHILJA

Why is Alola wearing your necklace?

SALEEM

It's... it's not mine? She told me it was her dad's.

MAHILJA

Her father's? How could that be?

SALEEM

Oh wait-- no, she told me her father stole it from a hitchhiker!

MAHILJA

A hitchhiker? Wearing YOUR necklace?

Saleem shrugs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We need to speak to her father.

Saleem squints at Mahilja.

SALEEM

Don't you know?

MAHILJA

What?

SALEEM

Her parents are dead. They've been dead.  
That's why they weren't at the wedding.

MAHILJA

Oh no. I... I had been so distracted  
preparing for these three nights that I  
forgot to keep tabs on you two.

Mahilja closes her eyes and rubs her temples with her  
fingertips. She's frustrated.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

How did they pass?

Saleem eyes widen. Mahilja opens her eyes and looks at him.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Saleem?

SALEEM

... Yersinia pestis.

Mahilja's eyes widen. They look at each other.

MAHILJA

We need to talk to Alola... NOW!

Mahilja stands and rushes towards the house. Saleem follows  
closely.

The campfire dwindles down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

Mahilja and Saleem burst into the kitchen from the backyard.  
Immediately, they spot a group of MACEDONIAN FOOT SOLDIERS heading  
towards The Chief. They're armored in damaged Lino thorax breastplates  
and sturdy sandals - they clutch battered Sarissa pikes. Some are  
missing a leg, or an arm, as if chomped off.

Also emerging from the ground, are chieftains, nomads, patricians from different ancient cultures. Mahilja steps forward and shouts towards them a spell.

Suddenly, ALL spirits move in SLOW MOTION.

Mahilja shouts another spell.

A spiritly ornate bowl appears in her hand. A spiritly knife appears in her other hand.

Mahilja rushes towards the Macedonian foot soldiers. One by one, she cuts their throats and collects their blue blood in the bowl.

SALEEM

Why are you collecting their blood?!

MAHILJA

To destroy their souls! That way they can't come back next time The Chief dies! You wouldn't believe how many spirits we had to kill last time. A spiritly genocide, I tell you!

Mahilja notices Alola hypnotized on the couch. Her eyes wide open.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Saleem! Check on Alola and The Chief!

Saleem rushes to the couch. The Chief cries as he tugs on Alola. Saleem kneels to her side.

SALEEM

Alola! What happened?! What's going on?!

Alola is too hypnotized by the spell to respond. Saleem notices the green eyes on her.

More spirits appear. A WITCH also appears. She wears a simple tunic dress tied with a cord belt and headscarf - she clutches dried bundles of medicinal plants, with a bag for bones, salts and elixirs slung across her waist. She CASTS A SPELL in an unknown language that emits a dim, golden glow out of her skin.

Mahilja makes her way to the couch. She recites her spell again. All BUT the witch move in slow motion.

MAHILJA

Agh, you bitch!

Mahilja wrestles the Witch to the ground. She's overpowers her enough to converse with Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
 (to Saleem)  
 What happened to Alola, Saleem?!

SALEEM  
 I-- I don't know! Her eyes are green!

MAHILJA  
 Green?! That's new! What could that mean?!

SALEEM  
 I-- um...

Saleem notices the emerald of the necklace glowing.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
 The necklace! It hypnotized her, I think!

MAHILJA  
 Hypnotized?

He feels The Chief tug at his shirt. He looks down to find the spell book opened to a specific page. The Chief points at a spell.

The Witch recites a spell. Mahilja's eyes go wide. ALL spirits now move at regular speed.

Saleem reads the spell.

Alola's necklace unleashes a green SONIC BOOM that causes every spirit, including the witch, to collapse momentarily. They all spirits grasp at their chest, right over their hearts. None of Saleem, Mahilja, Alola, or The Chief are affected.

The witch recovers quickly. She wrestles Mahilja. The two roll over. Mahilja is now pinned to the ground. The Witch pulls out a KNIFE, ready to strike at Mahilja.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
 (shouts)  
 Saleem! Cast that spell again!

Saleem reads the spell again.

Another sonic BOOM emits out of the necklace. This time, the green emerald in Alola's necklaces SHATTERS INTO PIECES. The HEARTS of every spirit BURSTS out from their chests. They all collapse, dead. The Witch collapses onto Mahilja.

Saleem looks at Alola. He notices, hidden behind the emerald, stuck to the pedant, is an intact, but dead, flea.

Mahilja pushes her aside. She stands back up. Saleem is amazed.

Alola's eyes return to her natural brown. The green fades away. She blinks rapidly. She looks up at Saleem. Saleem notices her gaze, he looks down at her and smiles.

SALEEM

Alola!

Saleem hugs her.

Alola stares back at Saleem. Her mouth shut, her gaze serious.

ALOLA

What happened?

SALEEM

I'm not too sure. I think you were hypnotized.

ALOLA

Hypnotized?

MORE spirits begin to emerge. Mahilja notices.

MAHILJA

Guys, I'm sorry to intrude, but I'm going to need your help if we want to survive tonight!

Alola breaks eye contact with Saleem.

ALOLA

What do you need?

MAHILJA

More spells, of course.

The Chief, one step ahead, has flipped pages to the spells needed.

All three cast their spells.

A Ulfberht sword materializes in Mahilja's hands. The magical spear respawns next to Alola. She catches it. A barrel spawns next to Saleem.

SALEEM

What the fuck?! A barrel?!

MAHILJA

To collect blood! You're going to have to get your hands dirty, the both of you!

The three prepare themselves for the next wave of spirits.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAWN

The new day is quiet. The sun peaks through the horizon. The trees dance gently with every gust of wind.

Mahilja steps out the front door. She does so casually. She steps to the edge of the porch. She inhales deeply and soaks up the view. She is tranquil.

Her dress is a mess. There's small tears and rips on it. Her hair has a slight frizz to it. She notices blood on her sleeve. She brushes it off.

Mahilja stretches. She soaks up the view one last time before she heads back inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Mahilja enters the living room.

The last corpses of spirits begin to vaporize into the air. The coffee table has been tipped over. Paintings on the wall have fallen and cracked. Scratches marked on the floor.

Saleem sits against the wall, exhausted. He eases his breathing. He, too, has marks and tears on him. His face, bruised. With heavy eyes, he struggles to stay awake.

Alola sits against the kitchen island. She faces the living room. She holds The Chief in her arms, who is asleep. Tears and marks on her, heavy-eyelids and falling asleep, too.

MAHILJA

Now, where were we?

Alola glances at Saleem, eyebrows furrowed. Saleem avoids eye contact with her.

Mahilja walks up to Alola. She kneels to her.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Alola, my darling, last night me and Saleem learned a lot of valuable things. Most importantly, we learned about a necklace Saleem was gifted long ago. That necklace is very much similar to the one you wear... right now?



Mahilja notices the emerald of the necklace missing. All that remains is a pendant.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
... Where's the emerald?

SALEEM  
It shattered.

MAHILJA  
What?!

SALEEM  
That spell, with the green sonic boom? It destroyed it.

Mahilja seals her lips and holds her breath. She suppresses her frustration. Suddenly, she smiles. Alola raises an eyebrow.

MAHILJA  
That's fine. That necklace was probably cursed, anyhow.

Alola squints at Mahilja. She's unamused.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Nonetheless, I would like to find out more about how it came to your possession. Please, tell me, did your father ever speak about that necklace?

Alola is surprised. She looks over at Saleem. Again, Saleem avoids eye contact.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Saleem is blameless here... Did your father ever describe the hitchhiker? Was it a man? A woman? How long ago was it? Where did he meet them? Before the necklace, did you ever encounter fleas at any point of your life?

Alola gives Mahilja an intense stare. There's a controlled fury in her.

ALOLA  
... Fuck off.

Mahilja is surprised. She stands up and backs off. She walks towards Saleem. Alola begins to drift off.

POV ALOLA. As she drifts into sleep, she sees Mahilja speak to Saleem. Both of them turn to look at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - FLASHBACK

In his sleep, Saleem reaches over to the other side of the bed. His arm falls flat. Saleem wakes up and notices Alola is not in bed. He looks around and spots the bathroom door slightly ajar.

He hears the cabinet mirror squeak as it closes. He enters.

Alola stands in front of the mirror, towel wrapped around her, hair still wet. She stares directly at herself in the mirror, at the blue spot along her jawline. She spots Saleem in the reflection.

Alola speaks to him from the reflection.

ALOLA  
Would you say I have a problem?

SALEEM  
Uh, what do you mean?

ALOLA  
My skincare, my witchcraft, my  
obsession. Does it frighten you?

SALEEM  
... No.

Alola smirks.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
I mean, it can be... nasty, at times,  
but that's about it.

ALOLA  
I'm just priming myself.

SALEEM  
Right.

ALOLA  
We are currently living through a  
transitional period.

Alola finally turns to look at Saleem.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

I've been reading about this company, "Blanket Incorporation", they recently bought out a massive cybernetics and body augmentation company. Fascinating stuff.

SALEEM

But you're not about cybernetics.

ALOLA

Yes, but it is the implications that excites me. A 4 trillion-dollar market value tech company known for churning out faux-luxury electronics year after year suddenly going all in on body augmentations and cybernetics? That... that right there is writing on the wall. Something BIG has been discovered backstage that is being kept top secret.

SALEEM

Meaning, it'll be years-- decades before we see any of it as over the counter products.

ALOLA

And that is a chance I am willing to take. All I have to do is wait. If Blanket--

Saleem sighs.

SALEEM

Alola...

ALOLA

If not reverse aging, then at least augmentations. I'll settle for that. I'm not picky! And all this...

She waves an arm at all the skincare products in the shower, in the cabinet.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

... All the exercise and healthy eating? It's to make sure that I at the very least am not senile and crusty when any semblance of immortality is introduced.

Next to the faucet, Saleem spots a tiny jar full of clear liquid with a warning label stamped on it. There's a toothpick laying on the lid of the jar.

SALEEM

What is that?

Saleem points to the jar.

ALOLA

Oh, it's just for my skincare.

SALEEM

What does it do?

Alola darts her eyes away from Saleem. She remains silent.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Babe...

ALOLA

It's acid. It burns the skin off.

Saleem nearly gasps.

SALEEM

What the fuck...

ALOLA

It's called TCA cross! I have some calluses on my hip that can help get rid of them!

SALEEM

By literally melting the skin off?!

ALOLA

In a controlled manner, yes. I'm not an idiot. I did my research, I know how much to dab, I know the technique. There's nothing to worry about!

SALEEM

No! There is a lot to worry about! You keep dipping your foot deeper and deeper into your obsessions! What's next? Satanic worship for skincare coupons? Plastic surgery for wrinkles? Where does it stop?

Alola looks down at the ground.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Babe...

ALOLA

What's the problem with a small operation?

Saleem throws his arms up, defeated.

SALEEM  
You're insane!

ALOLA  
What's the problem?! It's just a  
small operation!

SALEEM  
It's a face lift, rhinoplasty, Botox,  
it's hideous! It's fake! It doesn't  
keep you young! It's lying to yourself  
and everyone. Besides, we already  
agreed to spend the money fixing up  
the house for the wedding, and then  
investing the rest.

Alola drops her head in shame. Saleem notices.

Saleem rushes to grab Alola's hand. He kneels and looks up at  
her, a gentle smile on him.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
(sincere)  
Baby, you're beautiful the way you are.  
I wouldn't want you any other way. I  
wouldn't want anyone else to spend my  
life with...

ALOLA  
Then say you love me..

Saleem's smile disappears. He looks down at her hand.

SALEEM  
I...

Saleem struggles. His throat swells. His face tenses up. He looks  
around. He spots Alola's necklace on the faucet. He stares at it.

SALEEM (CONT'D)  
I... love you.

Saleem looks back up at Alola. Face slightly tense, she's  
confused.

ALOLA  
... Okay.

Alola pulls her hand away from Saleem's. She walks out the  
bathroom. Saleem remains in his pose.

BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alola slowly wakes up. The sunlight shines brightly through the windows. The scorch marks on the floor and walls more apparent.

Saleem sits on the couch. He has changed clothes into a white t-shirt and another pair of jeans. He notices her wake up. She walks over to her and kneels in front of her.

SALEEM

Hey...

ALOLA

Hi...

Alola shuffles around. The Chief's blanket had been placed on her.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

What time is it?

SALEEM

It's almost noon.

She notices The Chief is missing.

ALOLA

(worried)

Where's The Chief?!

SALEEM

He's with Mahilja. He's grown.

Alola is surprised to hear this. She calms down. She sighs and looks Saleem in the eyes.

ALOLA

What's going on with us?

SALEEM

What do you mean?

Alola sighs more. She struggles to find the right words.

ALOLA

Last night, you relearned more about your past, right? What did you discover?

Saleem breaks eye contact with Alola.

SALEEM

Oh. Just... More family history.

ALOLA

Like what?

SALEEM

... Japan. We went to Japan. Then London.

ALOLA

What happened in London?

Saleem struggles to find the right words.

SALEEM

We uh... we lost an immortal. And I uh... I was so sad I... took a pilgrimage back to Sudan. Heh, can you believe that?

Alola stares at Saleem. She inspects him with sad eyes. Saleem maintains eye contact, refusing to blink.

Beat.

ALOLA

(sad)  
... Okay.

Alola looks down at the necklace.

The laughs of a child are heard upstairs. Small footsteps, followed by other footsteps are heard coming down the stairs.

Mahilja and The Chief enter the living room. The Chief is now a child. About the age of 7. His hair now reaches his shoulders. Tribal tattoos have appeared along both his arms. They are faint and hard to see without direct sunlight. His eyes glow all the same. He wears basic children's clothing.

Mahilja wears a new black dress. Her purse on her all the same. She holds a plastic bag from a kid's clothing store.

The Chief laughs and giggles as he runs around the living room. He spots Alola and runs up to her. Suddenly, Alola perks up. She opens her arms and hugs him. Saleem steps out of the way.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

You've grown!

The Chief giggles.

MAHILJA

Alola! You're awake! Just in time, too. I was getting ready to tell Saleem what a BEAUTIFUL day it is outside!

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

We should go out, get breakfast. We need to avoid cabin fever setting in. And plus, we need to pay a visit to a very special person.

SALEEM

Who?

Mahilja smiles.

MAHILJA

Kazi!

The Chief claps his hands in excitement. Alola & Saleem share a surprise look.

INT. CAR - LATER

Mahilja drives their car. Saleem and The Chief sit in the back. Saleem plays with The Chief. They giggle and smile. Alola rides in the passenger seat. She looks in the rear view mirror at Saleem and The Chief. She's stoic. She looks out the passenger window.

Mahilja sends a text to someone while on her PHONE.

SALEEM

Uh, cousin, should you be texting and driving?

Mahilja puts away her phone and reaches for her COFFEE in the cup holder. BAGS from a fast-food restaurant are revealed.

MAHILJA

(playful)

Oh, no worries, there's three immortals in the car... plus Alola.

Mahilja & Saleem chuckle. Alola, doesn't. Mahilja notices.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Alola, I want to apologize for pressing you for answers on a sensitive topic. It was not right.

Alola sighs.

ALOLA

It's okay.

Alola looks over at Mahilja.



ALOLA (CONT'D)

Last night... some of those  
spirits... there's no way they were  
enemies of The Chief.

Mahilja sips her coffee. She keeps her eyes on the road.

MAHILJA

No, they were not.

ALOLA

Women. Children.

MAHILJA

Yes...

Mahilja sets her cup down. Saleem pulls out his PHONE and hands it to The Chief. The Chief is instantly hypnotized by the phone. Saleem leans in to listen.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

It was a completely different world  
back then. Savagery ruled. Kill or be  
killed. Hunt or be hunted.

ALOLA

(angry)

But women? CHILDREN?!

MAHILJA

I will not try to justify it. All I  
will say is, every time we spared  
an enemy tribe, they would  
repopulate and begin the cycle all  
over again.

Alola is shocked to hear this. Her mouth-agape. She looks back at Saleem, who shifts his eyes between the two.

Beat.

ALOLA

What about worshippers? Last night, I  
met some people in robes. They didn't  
fight me. In fact, they helped me.  
Seemed they worshipped The Chief.

MAHILJA

Ah yes, early-day Bhikkhus. Followers  
of Buddha. Lovely people.

ALOLA

Lovely? Then why were they killed?!

MAHILJA

They discovered we were immortal and wanted to spread the word. No matter how hard we BEGGED that they didn't, they insisted. We trapped them in the village to try and convince them otherwise. They insisted otherwise. So, The Chief convinced them to kill themselves to be granted with immortality themselves. Guess the universe saw through that.

ALOLA

Christ...

MAHILJA

Alola, the world was awful back then. Mortals take the peace of today for granted. Yesterday was not pretty. It never was. Even as immortals, it was constant hunger, anguish, fear. Only NOW do are we getting to enjoy our immortality.

Alola turns to look out the window again. She rests her head on her hand. Her eyebrows drop. She's frustrated. Saleem places a hand on her shoulder. Alola doesn't react. She continues to stare out the window.

ALOLA

I have something to say...

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

A car door SLAMS shut. Alola steps out of the car. She takes a few steps forward and looks out at the well-cared for cemetery.

Every TOMBSTONE unique in design. A dirt path paved gently in a grid all over the cemetery. Oak TREES, sparse, but massive, casting a great shade on most of the cemetery.

Mahilja & Saleem remain in the car. Their mouths agape, eyes-widen as they stare at Alola. The Chief also remains inside, still mesmerized by Saleem's mobile phone games.

Alola begins to walk along the dirt path, observing every tombstone.

INT. CAR - CONTINUED

Saleem breathes heavily. He contains his frustration. Mahilja and Saleem whisper to each other.

SALEEM

Nuri was ALIVE this whole time?!

MAHILJA

Saleem, calm down! Her soul was trapped in the necklace! Big difference! Ugh, I knew The Warlord was not to be trusted!

SALEEM

But Alola SPOKE to her! IN the necklace!

Saleem's heavy breathing calms down. His eyes unfocus.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

(afraid)

... She knows everything now.

MAHILJA

That's not true! She only knows London, Sudan, our return trip to Japan, the tribe reuniting to look for you in America after hearing news of a monstrosity overseas, our uncle "John Bellingham" working government jobs so he can learn the system to create a system of forging documents, identities, wills, and laundering money for the tribe to remain hidden and undisturbed from prying eyes.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

There's still a lot she doesn't know. If anything, it's a good thing you destroyed that necklace before she learned more and spoiled the surprise.

SALEEM

Well, it's not like I did it intentionally...

Mahilja breathes a sigh of relief.

MAHILJA

I can't believe it was so obvious and we didn't pick up on it! Of course The Warlord would trap Nuri in your necklace! It's a bit uncomfortable knowing that she had been observing the world through that necklace all these centuries.

SALEEM

So then, Alola must know who the hitchhiker was, right?

Mahilja opens the car door and steps out.

MAHILJA

Saleem, I think you're the only one that doesn't know at this point.

SALEEM

What? What do you mean?

Mahilja closes the door.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUED

Mahilja and Saleem catch up to Alola, who continues her walk on the dirt path. Saleem holds The Chief by one hand as they walk together.

MAHILJA

Alola, where are you going?

ALOLA

To Kazi's grave. Nuri told me where it's at.

Beat.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

So, when do we move to Chicago? Out of all the houses Nuri told me about, that one sounded the prettiest.

MAHILJA

In two years. Currently, two of my siblings live there. Once it's time for the tribe to rotate houses, you'll be heading to Chicago and getting a new alias.

(MORE)

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

On paper, they will have died, and you, their daughter, will have inherited their house. Saleem, your husband, will join you, of course.

The four arrive to Kazi's tombstone. An Oak tree casts a shade over them. The tombstone reads:

*"Frank Smith - 1967 - 2021 - "Beloved Cousin and Brave Adventurer."*

SALEEM

Kazi...

MAHILJA

Kazi... the first mortal turned immortal... and hopefully not the last.

Mahilja caresses the tombstone with a slight smile in her face.

SALEEM

I gotta say, this is clever! Tombs disguised as tombstones. How long will he have been asleep?

MAHILJA

What? No, Saleem... Kazi is... perma-dead.

Saleem's smile drops into a frown.

SALEEM

Oh.

Beat.

ALOLA

So, how is he gonna--

Mahilja takes out a vintage CASSETTE PLAYER from her purse and lays it on top of the tombstone.

MAHILJA

It took another 200 years before we got a "lifeline" to Saleem's whereabouts. In 1977, Kazi recorded a series of tapes as he journeyed through America to find Saleem. I spliced them together to tell his journey.

Mahilja points to the recorder.

SALEEM

Kazi found me? How did he know  
where to find me?

MAHILJA

I'll let him explain...

Mahilja smiles politely. She hits the play button on the tape recorder. As the tape plays, the three of them stand around the tombstone.

Kazi's voice is deep and soothing. He speaks in a clear, strong American accent. Like a news anchor.

Within the tape, *the sound of a car door closing and an engine roading is heard.*

KAZI (V.O.)

After 20 millennia, my dear cousin Mahilja's immortal mind hit full capacity last week. New memories caused her scorching migraines and maddening torment.

ALOLA

Wow, he really sounds like a "Frank Smith".

SALEEM

"Scorching migraines"?

MAHILJA

The curse of never forgetting. The brain fills up and can no longer create new memories.

KAZI (V.O.)

The Chief and I tried all sorts of medicine, therapies... procedures, to no avail. One day, her pleading eyes compelled The Chief to use his magical eyes, knocking her unconscious. When Mahilja awoke, she had forgotten the past 50 years, but at least it relieved her of the migraines, at the cost of aging The Chief. Nonetheless, she had visions of Saleem at some university, looking like any mortal. So, she shared this omen with us. And now I must bring our prodigal son back home.

(MORE)

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Maybe he holds the key to soothing Mahilja's overloaded, photographic memory, should it happen again. Our minds reset between lives, but hers persists... how troubling.

*The sound of the rustle and bustle of the interior of a car as it drives is heard within the tape. 60s rock n' roll music played from a radio is also heard.*

ALOLA  
 (to Mahilja)  
 Didn't you say you saw visions of me?

MAHILJA  
 I would, later on.

KAZI (V.O.)  
 Saleem, pal, it's been too long.  
 Let's bring you home.

The tape skips. Saleem stares at the recorder with soft eyes. Alola glances at him.

*The sound of distant dog barks is heard. A door closes. The dog barks are gone. A bed mattress springs.*

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I'm in Nashville right now, staying the night in a motel, and I just realized, Mahilja, darling, what if your visions were outdated? Or too far ahead? What if Saleem living in Texas won't happen for another ten years? Or what if it already happened ten years ago and he has up-and-moved? It feels like we're up against a ticking clock. Boy, when was the last time that happened, right?

Beat.

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But don't get me wrong, ten years is nothing, although that would mean we would have to rely on The Chief blasting you with his golden eyes again, and we already know the damage that did to him.  
 (sigh)  
 For the sake of The Chief, I hope it doesn't come down to that... It feels like he's on his last legs.

Mahilja pulls out a single flower from her purse. She lays it on Kazi's tombstone.

*The tape skips. A car shuts off. A door opens and closes. Dress shoes on concrete are heard.*

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have decided to make a quick stop at Saleem's workplace. "Wolfraam University". I can tell you right now, this is a prestigious institution. Reminds me of Harvard back when I attended for a semester.

*The tape skips. A car changes gear. An engine idles.*

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So, Saleem is part of high society from the looks of it. I'm currently parked outside a GATED community of houses. I've never seen anything like this. So much grass! So much space! They're spoiled rich! Golly! Chief, I think we should build a house here next.

MAHILJA

And we did! Rockwall, Texas, right outside Dallas. Two of our cousins are currently living there!

KAZI (V.O.)

But nothing compares to our humble abode back in New York, right cousin?

Mahilja giggles.

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Anyways, I found his address quite easily. He's the only fellow named "Saleem" in this whole city. Cousin Saleem, I know you'll be listening to this at some point, so lemme tell ya, amateur mistake not changing your name! But it's not too late, "Frank Smith Jr" has a nice ring to it, don't ya think?

Kazi laughs. Saleem chuckles.

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm about to hop a fence and knock on Saleem's front door. Hopefully I don't get caught AND hopefully the visions were accurate.

The Chief, still hypnotized by Saleem's phone, walks over to Alola's side. Mahilja brushes dirt off the tombstone.



*The tape skips. The sound of a chair leg as it shuffles on a wooden floor is heard.*

KAZI (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Go ahead.

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Uh, hello, my name is Saleem.

Saleem & Alola are surprised.

SALEEM  
That's me!

MAHILJA  
Indeed.

Saleem & Alola scoot in closer to the tape recorder.

KAZI (V.O.)  
What's your full name?

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Uhh, "Saleem Jaluni".

KAZI (V.O.)  
Mm, no, I don't think so. Your full name, believe it or not, is... "Saleem Jaluni Shuazeh e Guandah Hu'Alkaddad".

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Really? Is that our mother tongue?

KAZI (V.O.)  
Indeed.

SALEEM (V.O.)  
What's the meaning behind my name?

KAZI (V.O.)  
Sheesh, it's been so long. If I remember correctly, your name meant something along the lines of, "Rock thrower in grassy fields".

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Oh, that's...

KAZI (V.O.)  
Dull, boring, anticlimactic? Why, I fully agree. But do me a favor, cousin, can you say your full, original name out loud?

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Uh, what for?

KAZI (V.O.)  
For future references. You'll need it.

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Um, okay... "Saleem eh--", no wait,  
"Saleem Shu-- shua--"

KAZI (V.O.)  
"Shuazeh".

SALEEM (V.O.)  
Right! Sorry. "Saleem Jaluni  
Shuazeh e Hu'Alkaddad".

Saleem's eyes WIDEN. Time SLOWS DOWN for him. He is hypnotized more intensely than ever before. He is FROZEN.

Alola notices.

MAHILJA  
And there it is! The ultimate keyword!

Mahilja pauses the tape. She walks up to Saleem, still hypnotized.

ALOLA  
(panic)  
What's wrong with him?! Why isn't he snapping out of it?!

MAHILJA  
Don't worry, I got this.

Mahilja SLAPS Saleem so HARD, The Chief drops Saleem's phone. Saleem returns to reality as he caresses his cheek, in pain. Alola rushes to attend to Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
Welcome back, cousin. I believe you now remember everything about yourself, ever?

SALEEM  
(in pain)  
... Yes.

ALOLA  
(to Mahilja)  
What the hell?! Couldn't you have used like a potion or something to snap him out of it?

MAHILJA

Yes, but why overcomplicate it? Oh!  
But that does remind me...

Mahilja takes out a potion from her purse. It is encased in a glass jar with a cork top. She hands it to Saleem.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Here take this.

SALEEM

What is it?

MAHILJA

Alcoholic potion. You'll need it now that your brain is getting FLOODED with memories and needs complete focus on organizing those memories... and for the cheek pain.

ALOLA

Wait, does this mean he's now just like you?

MAHILJA

What, photographic memory that carries on between lifetimes? Ha! Don't kid yourself! He'll lose all these memories the next time he dies.

Saleem grasps his own head. He's in agony.

SALEEM

Aghh!

MAHILJA

Yes, now you know how I felt. That is the reason we immortals don't like to remember our own names. It tends to bring back LOOTS of memories. Fortunately for you all, your memories are not detailed like mine. Just broad pictures.

Saleem pops the cork out of the jar and drinks the potion. It's disgusting as he wipes his mouth.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

(to Alola)

It's like reading the spark notes versus the actual book.

Saleem drinks even more of the potion. He leans against Kazi's tombstone. His eyes start to become heavy. The Chief walks over to Saleem and attempts to take the jar. Alola pulls him back.

ALOLA

No! Here, play with this.

Alola picks up Saleem's phone and hands it back to him. The Chief is rendered silent as he is hypnotized by the shiny phone once again.

MAHILJA

Ugh, parenting these days.

Mahilja hits resume on the recorder.

*The tape skips. Kazi has a hearty laugh.*

KAZI (V.O.)

Did you guys catch that? Saleem has a system just like ours! Even after all these centuries, our blood flows the same!

Saleem finishes the potion. He drifts in and out of consciousness.

SALEEM (V.O.)

So... how did you find me?

KAZI (V.O.)

A cousin of ours, Mahilja, had visions of you.

SALEEM (V.O.)

Visions? Like, magical?

KAZI (V.O.)

Yes, magic exists.

SALEEM (V.O.)

Wow.

KAZI (V.O.)

She saw you working at a lecture room. She saw one of those school pride flags in the background.

SALEEM (V.O.)

Ah, yes! They are very big on school pride here.

SALEEM

(drunk)

Wolf-raam! Wolf-raam! Wolf-raam!  
Let's go wooolves!!

KAZI (V.O.)

Precisely. From there, I simply tracked down where such a university sits, then looked for a "Saleem" in the phonebook of that town. You really ought to consider changing your name. Americans don't really like foreign sounding names. Trust me, I know.

SALEEM (V.O.)

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet". Do you know who wrote that?

KAZI (V.O.)

(urgent)

Yes, Shakespeare. I was one of the original actors at the Globe Theatre.

SALEEM (V.O.)

Well, then you'd know best that changing my name would be admitting cowardice.

Saleem pumps his fist into the air.

SALEEM

(drunk)

Haha, yeah! You tell 'em, Saleem!

KAZI (V.O.)

... In any case, I'm here to take you back to New York, to meet the tribe, all 16 that are left.... even if you do insult me.

Saleem passes out as he leans on Kazi's tombstone. Alola looks worried. Mahilja simply smiles.

*The tape skips. There's a pause as the next tape loads. 60s music plays from a radio once again. The rumble and tumble of a car on the highway is heard.*

SALEEM (V.O.)

Um, there? Is it recording now?

KAZI (V.O.)

... Yes. Go ahead. Leave the tribe a message for them to hear later on!

SALEEM (V.O.)

Oh okay... Uhh, hello! My name is Saleem--

KAZI

Heh, they'll already know that. Think farther ahead, after the celebrations, after the reunion, after I get all the praise, of course.

SALEEM (V.O.)

Ah- yes, ahem... Hello everyone, you've probably learned my whole story by now, if you didn't fall asleep in the middle of it. It's been rather uninteresting as nomadic professor. But that's how it's supposed to be, right? Inconspicuous. I'm still not sure why I disappeared from London, Kazi tells me that is for Mahilja to reveal. I guess it's all a foggy haze right now. Feelings more than anything. Nonetheless, I'm looking forward to meeting all-- WATCH OUT!

*The sound of a tire SCREECH is heard. Saleem and Kazi yell. Cars HONK.*

*Suddenly, a BANG and CRASH is heard as the metallic car crashes.*

*Alola puts her hands over her mouth, shocked.*

*Beat.*

*There's a silence as the sound of an empty recording plays. Alola looks at Mahilja. There's no expression on her face. She only stares at the recorder.*

*The tape skips.*

*Crickets CHIRP. In the distance, cars are heard zooming by. Tall grass is brushed against. Heavy breathing is heard.*

SALEEM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(distracted)

I-- I-- I don't know what happened! We were passing through this small town and suddenly th-- this car crashes into us! I-- I woke up and-- All these fleas! Fleas everywhere! I--  
- I woke up and...

*More heavy breathing.*

SALEEM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm currently running. I don't know where to! I just had to escape all the fleas! They were EVERYWHERE! I'm in a field right now. It's night. I can't see much! I just have to...

*The sound of tall grass being brushed aside stops. The heavy breathing comes down to a stop.*

SALEEM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Kazi... He was unconscious when I woke up. I tried getting him out of the car. But the fleas were all over him! All these ugly purple bumps were growing on his skin! Could it be Yersinia pestis? Impossible! Can't be! I-- I tried pulling him out when, when I saw... I saw this figure... step out of the other car. It had wings. It was so tall... I'm sorry. I-- I had to leave. I'm sorry.

*The tape stops fully.*

Alola looks on at the recorder.

MAHILJA

Saleem would later tell us that he hitchhiked all the way to our house here...

ALOLA

... And Nuri told me that along the way, a couple robbed him.

MAHILJA

Well, to be fair, he didn't pay up.

ALOLA

(agreeing)

That's what I'm saying!

Mahilja caresses Kazi's tombstone one last time. She takes the recorder and puts it back in her purse. She notices the sun as it sets in the horizon.

MAHILJA

It's getting dark, we should head back. C'mon, help me get Saleem back in the car.

Mahilja and Alola raise a passed out Saleem onto his feet. They each put an arm around them and carry him to the car. The Chief follows on autopilot, still mesmerized by the phone.

INT. CAR - EVENING

As Mahilja drives, all sit in silence. Alola stares out the window. The Chief is asleep in the back.

Saleem SUDDENLY wakes up from his blackout state.

SALEEM  
The WARLORD!!

Neither Alola nor Mahilja react. The Chief remains asleep.

ALOLA  
We know.

Saleem looks around. His shocked expression deflates.

SALEEM  
Oh.

He checks the temperature with the back of his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Mahilja parks the car next to the curb of the house. All step out. Alola holds The Chief's hand. Mahilja looks at the grand house and inhales deeply. As she does, Saleem squints at her and furrows his eyebrows. There's a serious look on his face.

All four begin to head towards the house.

MAHILJA  
Alola, my darling, I want to apologize for not giving you enough time to go through your skincare routine this morning. I know how much you value it.

ALOLA  
It's fine. I...

Alola stops and realizes something.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
... I didn't even feel like going through it this morning.



Mahilja notices a smirk on Alola's face. They continue towards the house.

They arrive at the front door. Mahilja opens the front door. A ground-level, purple FOG slithers out into the open.

SALEEM

Woah.

The Chief coughs. He is the only one that does so.

Mahilja steps inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mahilja casts a spell. She blows air out. The fog dissipates. Nonetheless, The Chief continues to cough. It becomes too intense for him. He drops Alola's phone. She rushes to him.

ALOLA

The Chief! What's happening to him?!

MAHILJA

The third and final night is beginning.

ALOLA

He needs blood, doesn't he?!  
Where's the blood?!

MAHILJA

On its way.

The Chief's coughs begin to cripple him. Alola keeps him from falling down.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Take him upstairs won't you. I'll  
be there shortly.

Alola looks at Mahilja, worried. She picks up The Chief who has become too weak to move. She begins to carry him upstairs. Saleem watches Mahilja with a suspicious eye.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

You too, Saleem.

Alola has made it up the stairs. Saleem approaches Mahilja. His eyebrows furrow as he frowns at her. Mahilja smiles back. Saleem whispers to her.

SALEEM

I remember everything.

MAHILJA

That you do.

SALEEM

... You killed me! Against my wish!

MAHILJA

It was either that or...

SALEEM

You had no right! It was MY life! I get to decide if I die or live and you took that choice away from me!

MAHILJA

Saleem, I was in AGONY! What you felt at the cemetery was only a FRACTION of what I was enduring!

SALEEM

... We could've found another way! I made a promise to Nuri.

MAHILJA

That you would never fall in love again, yes. And ask yourself... has that promise really been broken?

Saleem looks away from Mahilja, down at the ground. His temples tense up. The WAILING of The Chief is heard upstairs.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Cousin, you may not love her, but she could really use your help right now.

Beat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

You remember how to handle a third night, right?

Saleem looks up at Mahilja. He nods at her. He heads upstairs.

Beat.

Mahilja remains alone in the living room. She hears the bedroom door close upstairs. Mahilja remains standing, as if waiting at the altar. She tilts her head down, slightly. She closes her eyes.

The purple fog begins to flow back into the house from every nook and cranny.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Saleem walks into the bedroom. He finds Alola as she sits on the edge of the bed, her back towards him. She trembles and rocks back and forth. She holds The Chief in her arms. His long hair dangles off her arm. Saleem cautiously approaches.

SALEEM

Alola? What happened?

Alola whimpers. Saleem looks over her shoulder to find Alola holding the deflated, empty SKIN of The Chief. His two golden eyes sit on the floor, as if having fell off their sockets.

A wide-eyed Saleem covers his mouth. He whips his head away from the sight. Alola begins to wail.

Saleem composes himself. He rushes over to Alola. He picks up The Chief's cloth-like body and sets it on the ground. Alola's arms remain frozen in the exact same position. Saleem kneels and grabs both of her hands.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, it's okay! It's all part of the third night! The Chief is okay! We just have to find him.

Alola's wails begin to fall into sobs. Through her teary eyes, she looks at Saleem.

ALOLA

What do you mean "find him"?

SALEEM

He is in a different world and we are going to enter it.

Saleem sighs.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

In this world, there will be a lot of distractions, but...

He gently squeezes his grip on Alola's hands.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

... If we stick together, we'll be in and out in no time with The Chief.

Beat.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Do you trust me?

A teary-eyed Alola looks at Saleem. She nods.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Usually, The Chief is the one who travel  
to this world...

Saleem grabs both eyes from the ground. He levels the eyes and his own eyesight to Alola's. The Chief's golden eyes sit between their eyesight. Saleem begins to recite a long spell.

As he recites the spell, the eyes begin to glow purple. Saleem and Alola become engrossed in the eyes. They begin to lean forward, hypnotized. Saleem's speech becomes slurred.

The purple fog enters from underneath the doorway.

Saleem barely finishes the spell. Alola passes out. Half-awake, Saleem drops the eyes and catches her. They both fall to the ground and pass out. The purple fog begins to engulf them.

BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Mahilja opens her eyes. She opens the front door. THE MAN stands outside. He is a large, hairy, overweight middle-aged man. He wears a grey tank top and blue jeans. Most distinctively, he wears a hood that covers his face with two holes to look out of, akin to an executioner.

MAHILJA

(nervous)

Hello.

THE MAN

Hi.

The man steps inside.

MAHILJA

I'm glad you could make it.

THE MAN

Yeah.

The man looks around.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Where is the child?

MAHILJA  
Upstairs. You can just head in  
there and lock the door.

THE MAN  
No.

MAHILJA  
No?

THE MAN  
You need to join.

MAHILJA  
I-- I don't want to watch.

THE MAN  
I don't care if you watch. You just  
can't leave my sight.

MAHILJA  
You don't trust me?

THE MAN  
No.

MAHILJA  
But we already struck a deal. You do  
whatever you want, I get the money. So,  
either we both go down, or none of us do.

The Man stares at Mahilja for a few moments. Mahilja composes herself from his gaze.

The Man begins to head for the stairs. Mahilja stands and watches for a few moments.

Suddenly, Mahilja ATTACKS the man. In a BURST OF ENERGY, she wraps her arms around the man's waist, from behind, and SUPLEXES him on the wooden floor, showcasing incredible technique and strength.

The man struggles to compose himself after a hard SLAM on the floor. Mahilja POUNCES.

Mahilja flawlessly puts the man in a unique chokehold. She whispers to him.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
You know who taught me this one?  
Milo of Croton!

She strangles the man until he goes limp and unconscious. Mahilja releases him and stands back up, full of energy.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
 (satisfied)  
 Ahhhhh! I miss the Greek Olympics!

Mahilja stretches. She checks on the body of The Man.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
 That's a body's worth of blood! Or  
 perhaps even two bodies...

She wipes sweat off her forehead.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)  
 Now the hard part...

She attempts to drag the body of The Man. She struggles to  
 move him a few inches.

CUT TO:

EXT. VOID - SIMULTANEOUSLY

A dark void surrounds the space as far as the eye can see. The  
 ground is a reflective, glass-like material. The only source of  
 light strikes down from above, from an unknown source. It reveals  
 the low-level purple fog as infinite as the ground.

POV ALOLA. A man and a woman walk up to Alola, who lays in  
 the ground, paralyzed. They are both horribly disfigured.

The man, ALOLA'S FATHER, 40s, has an enlarged tumor underneath the  
 skin of his forehead. His entire face appears severely swollen, nearly  
 covering his eyes. The woman, ALOLA'S MOTHER, 40s, has scabs and dry  
 skin on her face. They're both dressed like farmers.

ALOLA'S MOTHER  
 Look how beautiful she is...

ALOLA'S FATHER  
 Our little angel, Alola. She becomes more  
 gorgeous every day. I'm starting to think  
 she will never end up looking like us.

ALOLA'S MOTHER  
 And I couldn't be any happier. Her  
 paranoia and obsession paid off. She  
 was spared.

ALOLA'S FATHER  
 Go to sleep, my angel. We forgive you.

Alola is heard as she whimpers.

ALOLA'S MOTHER

(to Alola)

Shhhhh... No need to talk, we understand. And we don't blame you for being disgusted by us. Everyone was. You tried your best to be kind and caring back, and we appreciate that the most. We couldn't have asked for a better, more gorgeous daughter.

The woman begins to tear up. The man puts an arm around her.

ALOLA'S FATHER

But before you sleep, there's just something I want to ask...

Alola's father takes out Saleem's green-emerald necklace out of his pocket. He dangles it above Alola's eyes.

ALOLA'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Why did you kill us?

CLOSE UP on Alola's face. She is wide-eyed with tears running down her temples.

ALOLA'S MOTHER

Why, Alola? What did we do wrong?

Alola shuts her eyes; more tears are squeezed out.

ALOLA'S FATHER

(shout)

Why?! Please tell us, why?!

Suddenly, Alola is DRAGGED away from her parents.

She looks up to see Saleem dragging her by her arms. She looks down to see her parents slowly engulfed by the purple fog.

Saleem rests her on the ground. He kneels over her.

SALEEM

Alola, listen to me, that was not your parents, this is NOT an afterlife! This-- this space is haunted. It haunts visitors with things we never wanted to confront.

Saleem holds Alola's wrists. He closes his eyes and begins to cast a spell.

Alola suddenly inhales DEEPLY. She is unfrozen from her paralyzed state. She sits up and hugs Saleem tightly.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

We need to hurry up, I don't know how long we have, but I know we can end up trapped here forever... and The Chief is the only one that knows how to get out of here.

Alola lets go of Saleem. She stares right into his eyes.

ALOLA

Did you hear all that?

SALEEM

... Yes.

Alola looks down, ashamed.

ALOLA

Well, now you know...

SALEEM

Yes, and you figured out that I was the hitchhiker, didn't you? So, I've met your parents. And it was I who brought the necklace into their-- YOUR life.

Alola nods.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

So, the burden is on me, not you. Alola, they loved you. The way they spoke about you during that car ride... The way they spoke about you when I first met them again decades later... Thankfully, they didn't recognize me because I didn't look like an anorexic hobo. Or the way your dad threatened me BECAUSE they cared so much about you.

Alola tilts her head, confused. Saleem smiles.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know right? And the way you cared for them, when no one else would. You're the reason they felt pride in their lives. They looked at you and felt like God put a gift down on Earth just for them. That is all to say, you had the most amazing parents, and they raised the most amazing daughter.

Alola smiles at Saleem. He smiles back. He wipes the tears off her face.



SALEEM (CONT'D)

I know our relationship has been pretty unorthodox, for the good... and for the worse, but... Alola, I love you. I will always love you.

ALOLA

I love you, too.

As the two lean in to kiss, Saleem notices someone emerge from the fog. It's the ghost of Saleem, dressed in an oversized polo shirt and khakis. He stomps angrily. The ghost of Mahilja also emerges, following right behind. She wears the same black dress as always.

GHOST SALEEM

(furious)

I DON'T love her!

GHOST MAHILJA

(frustrated)

That DOESN'T matter! You just have to PRETENED!

Alola turns and notices the ghosts.

GHOST SALEEM

Nuri will always be my true love.

GHOST MAHILJA

UGH! Saleem, why are you doing this to me?! She would have wanted you to move on!

GHOST SALEEM

You don't know A THING about what she would have wanted! You never liked her! What, was she too playful?! Was it her dark humor?! Or maybe you were just jealous that your cousin had a loving relationship while you were constantly cheated on, divorced, and left alone because you can't admit your toxic!

The ghost of Mahilja turns her back to Saleem. She discreetly pulls out a Celtic DAGGER from her purse.

BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT - SIMULTANEOUSLY

WIDE SHOT of the basement. Light shines from the doorway upstairs. The basement remains a mess.

The body of The Man suddenly TUMBLES and ROLLS down the stairs. It lands on the floor. The Man remains motionless.

MAHILJA (O.S.)

Oops.

Mahilja appears as she walks down the stairs. She stands over the body of The Man, her forehead glistening from sweat.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

Hard part's over. Time for the worst part.

Mahilja pulls out an ancient Celtic DAGGER from her purse. She kneels down and cuts the tank-top off The Man. She removes the fabric off him. She coils in disgust. She throws the fabric to the side. She sets the dagger next to The Man's hand.

Next, she begins to unbuckle The Man's pants. She coils even more in disgust.

MAHILJA (CONT'D)

At least I'll no longer have to remember any of this...

In the corner of her vision, Mahilja notices the fingers of The Man's hand twiddling towards the dagger.

In an instant, Mahilja goes wide-eyed, The Man suddenly BURSTS with energy, grabs the dagger, and STRIKES at Mahilja. Mahilja DODGES his strike and SLAPS the dagger off his hand.

The Man is quick to react and puts Mahilja in a chokehold. Mahilja struggles to escape.

THE MAN

You stupid bitch. I'm usually not into older women but looks like I got no choice.

The Man notices his torn tank top.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Aww, and look at that. You already gave me a head start.

Mahilja begins to contour her body.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Stop fucking moving!

Mahilja kicks her right leg upwards, then SWINGS it down with a fury, aiming her HEEL right at The Man's kneecap. The Man screams in pain. His chokehold weakens momentarily.

Mahilja swings her leg upwards again. She swings it back down and SMACKS The Man's kneecap again, this time, dislodging it from the joint. The Man screams in agony and let's go of Mahilja.

Mahilja is quick to stand up and run for the dagger. The Man, on one foot, hops towards her before she can grab the dagger. He PINS her against the wall. He breathes HEAVILY against her. Mahilja turns to face him. He PUNCHES her in the face. She is dazed. He PUNCHES her again.

A dazed Mahilja reaches for his eyes and begins to GOUGE them. The man is quick to overpower her and TOSS her back to the ground. As she tumbles on the ground, Mahilja grabs the dagger. She stands up. The Man notices the dagger in her hand. The two now have a standoff.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Try me. It won't make you any better than me.

MAHILJA

You imbecile, there is no child! You were setup! The only thing waiting for you upstairs is a 40,000-year-old man and a couple with trust issues!

The man drops his guard.

THE MAN

What?!

In an INSTANT, Mahilja throws the dagger at The Man. It STABS him right in the neck. As blood pours out, The Man attempts to pull out the dagger. Mahilja sprints towards him then JUMPS at him, like a leaping frog. Her momentum crashes with The Man's. He tumbles backwards, like a tree falling. Mahilja holds onto the dagger as The Man falls.

Using the momentum, she is able to DIG the dagger DEEPER into The Man's neck as he SLAMS down on the ground.

Mahilja stands back up. She stands over The Man's body, looking down at it, eyebrows furrow, an intense frown on her. She takes deep breaths.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. VOID - SIMULTANEOUSLY

A ghostly, bloody Mahilja holds the Celtic dagger and breathes heavily.

Laying on the ground, instead, is the ghostly corpse of Saleem.

Saleem & Alola watch as the ghostly Mahilja begins to drag the ghostly Saleem away, into the purple fog.

ALOLA  
Boy, that is a lot to unpack...

SALEEM  
(panic)  
No! It has to be coincidence that you are anything similar to Nuri! Mahilja was the ONLY ONE that knew anything about you!

ALOLA  
Maybe free will is just a lie we tell ourselves...

The sound of a child WAILING is heard in the distance. Alola points in the direction of the sound.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
That way!

Saleem sighs.

Alola & Saleem walk towards the sound. The purple fog gently parts as they walk through it.

ALOLA (CONT'D)  
So, her headaches returned, The Chief used his magic, and THAT'S when she had visions of me. So, what was her plan?

Saleem sighs.

SALEEM  
To learn all about you, and then for you to "coincidentally" meet someone perfect for you.

ALOLA  
(offended)  
Wow.

SALEEM  
But, I refused, Mahilja killed me out of rage, I lost all my memories, and she slowly but surely dictated that my "free will" was me going along with the plan. So, "coincidentally" became... coincidentally.

The wailing is heard in a different direction. They turn towards the sound and walks in that direction.

ALOLA

So, we were always meant to meet.  
Everything had already been planned and  
predetermined for us.

SALEEM

In a way. The only thing that came  
to fruition organically, was my love  
for you.

Saleem smiles at Alola. He reaches out to hold her hand when  
he's suddenly YANKED by the purple fog that had wrapped  
itself around his ankles.

Saleem falls to the ground. The fog begins to pull him towards the  
void, away from the light. Alola rushes after him. Saleem casts a  
spell that dissipates the fog around his ankles. He's free.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Shit, already?!

(to Alola)

We HAVE to find The Chief, the void  
is already trying to trap us here.

The cries of The Chief are heard nearby. Saleem & Alola chase  
after the sound.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

(yelling)  
Chief?! Chief?!

ALOLA

Chief!

As they sprint, Saleem here's a voice whisper into his ear.

NURI (V.O.)

Saleem...

Saleem FREEZES up. Alola continues on forward. Saleem turns  
towards the voice. He's hypnotized. He walks towards the fog,  
in a different direction.

INTERCUT - THE VOID & THE BASEMENT

- Mahilja chops up the body of The Man. Her sleeves are  
rolled up, hands covered in blood.

MAHILJA

Saleem, you two should've been done  
by now...

- Saleem continues to follow the whispers of the voice. He is led  
to an oasis surrounded by desert sand.

NURI (V.O.)

Bring me back, Saleem...

- Saleem becomes teary-eyed.
- Mahilja places body parts into a container. She heads upstairs and notices the time is nearly midnight as shown by a grandfather clock.

MAHILJA

(panic)

Okay, okay, almost done here.

- Mahilja enters the kitchen and opens the freezer.
- A hypnotized Saleem begins to walk on the sand surrounding the oasis. Alola appears and yells.

ALOLA

Saleem! Don't!

- Alola runs towards Saleem.

ALOLA (CONT'D)

Stop! She's not real!

- The purple fog FLINGS Alola straight into the oasis. She begins to drown. Saleem doesn't notice.
- Mahilja empties an ice bag into a container. She reaches in and pulls out a severed arm. She heads back upstairs.
- She steps out of the basement and notices the purple fog has become much more thicker.

MAHILJA

Oh no...

- Mahilja rushes up the basement stairs and up the living room stairs.
- Saleem dips his toes in the oasis. A flea appears on Saleem's face. As Nuri speaks, her voice becomes distorted into a deep tone.

NURI (V.O.)

I've missed you...

- Mahilja enters the bedroom to find Alola & Saleem laying on the floor. Alola coughs, as if choking. Saleem has gone limp. The Chief's deflated skin lays next to them. She spots one of The Chief's eyes on Saleem's hand. She rushes to grab it.

MAHILJA

Where's the other one?!

- Alola begins to slowly descend down into the oasis' water. Saleem continues walking towards the oasis. Suddenly, silver chains from underneath the water WRAP themselves around Saleem's wrists, restraining him.

NURI (V.O.)

You left me to die.

- Saleem snaps out of his hypnotized trance. He panics and attempts to break free, to no avail.

- Mahilja searches the bedroom for the second eyeball.

- Behind the fog, an entity is heard approaching from the water. With every movement, ripples from the water appear. Alola's body floats to the surface. She's motionless.

- Mahilja looks under the bed and spots the second eyeball. She stretches and bends to reach it. Alola coughs.

- The entity is closer. Past the purple fog, Saleem can spot a silhouette of a massive humanoid figure with wings, holding a spear, as it approaches. A new, much more sinister voice, that of THE WARLORD, speaks to him.

THE WARLORD (V.O.)

Saleem, you have done well. This  
loophole in the universe shall now be  
closed once and for all. Thank you.

- The eyes of The Warlord begin to glow purple.

- Mahilja grabs both eyeballs. She places them back into the sockets of The Chief. She hovers the arm over The Chief's deflated face. She pulls out her dagger and cuts the arm, causing blood to pour onto The Chief.

MAHILJA

C'mon, this should be enough for now!

- Mahilja begins to recite a spell.

- Just before the light reveals the skin of The Warlord, a BEAM of GOLDEN ENERGY BLASTS The Warlord back into the fog. The beam continues intensely. Saleem attempts to turn to look. He only spots another silhouette, that of another massive humanoid with long hair and a massive spear.

SALEEM

Chief? Chief!

- Mahilja continues reciting the spell. The Chief's eyeballs begin to glow intensely.

NURI (V.O.)

Saleem!

- The chains around Saleem dissipate. He spots the silhouette of a woman running through the water towards him.

SALEEM

Nuri! Hurry! Hurry!

- The Chief BLASTS a beam of energy towards the silhouette of Nuri. He misses.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

Nooo! What are you doing?! What are you doing?!

Nuri, wearing a prehistoric tribal dress, reaches Saleem. She HUGS him TIGHTLY. Only the back of her face is seen.

NURI

I love you!

SALEEM

I love you, too!

- Saleem notices The Chief's shadow cast over them. He looks up at The Chief.

SALEEM (CONT'D)

NONONONO!! Nononono PLEASE! DON'T!!

- A spear impales Nuri.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Birds chirp. Tree branches rustle. The grand Victorian house creaks.

Alola opens her eyes. The morning sunlight blinds her from the bedroom window. She shuffles around and notices she lays in bed, tucked in gently and properly. A blanket had kept her warm. She sits up to find Saleem and The Chief missing. A shot of pain is felt on the right side of her belly.

Alola looks down to notice she now wears a black, wool sweater and a clean pair of jeans. She lifts the right side of her sweater to notice a bandage wrapped around and below her ribcage. The bandage has a small blood stain.

She slowly gets out of bed.



The room is freezing. Every breath she takes, visible. Alola shivers. She takes the blanket and wraps it around her. She heads out the bedroom.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

Alola walks up to the living room window. She spots her car parked next to the curb. She turns around and spots an origami Phoenix on the kitchen island counter. She walks up to it.

ALOLA

Saleem?

Next to the paper, is an engagement ring. She unfolds the paper. The paper is a letter written by Mahilja. Alola begins to read it.

MAHILJA (V.O.)

Dear Alola, by the time you read this letter, you will have been reborn an immortal. Your wish has come true, but at a cost.

Alola picks up the engagement ring.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Saleem has left. For good. We tried to reason with him. He shouted, he argued, but in the end, he apologized profusely to you. I just don't think he will ever get over Nuri... I'm so sorry, Alola.

Alola breaks down into tears. She hyperventilates. Too weak to hold the letter, she drops it and leans on the counter.

Long beat.

Alola composes herself. Through sniffles, she continues to read the letter.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My sister, as of me writing this letter, you are currently in a coma. Me and The Chief are taking care of you and the house. The Chief even managed to fix the old grandfather clock in the living room! But, turns out, a mortal's soul is not used to the void. The Chief is willing to use his eyes to bring you back.

(MORE)

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It will cost him his life, but he trusts you, like he trusts me. But in order for that to happen... MY wish must be granted. Freedom.

Alola's eyes widen.

ALOLA  
 (whispers)  
 No, don't do this...

MAHILJA (V.O.)  
 The migraines will return one day, and The Chief will not be there to relieve the pressure. No one will. It is best this way. It is what I had planned since I saw visions of you. I just needed to know you were capable of taking over.

Alola begins to cry again. She cusps her hand over her mouth as she attempts to remain composed.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 You see, this is how Kazi remained the only mortal turned immortal. It was the transfusion of Izabiliah's blood into him that granted him immortality. Sadiq al-Ruh was simply a vessel for the blood. I hope you accept my gift. And feel no guilt, I WANTED this.

Alola trembles through sniffles and tears.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 But anyways, head to the basement, see me rest in glorious peace...

A calm washes over Alola. Only sniffles and dried tears remain. She begins to walk towards the hallway.

In the hallway, the basement door has been placed back on its hinges. Alola walks to the door and opens it. She heads down into the basement. The wooden planks of the house CREAK from the HOWLING wind.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUED

Alola reaches the bottom of the stairs. The basement and all its containers have been cleaned up and placed back. The concrete slab of the tomb remains where it was left.

The golden light of the tomb shines out from the ground.  
Alola enters the tomb.

INT. TOMB - CONTINUED

Alola walks down a short set of stairs. The walls of the tomb reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphs. She enters a room.

At the center, on a sandstone SLAB, lays the BODIES of Mahilja and The Chief, in his true form. He is massive in frame, muscular, a great white beard and mane, covered in tribal tattoos, he wears a simple tunic made of animal hide and ceremonial beads around his leathery neck. Hands clasped over abdomen. A monumental figure in repose.

The Chief's spear, Sadiq al-Ruh, lays next to him. Made of solid gold, a velvet ribbon wrapped below the tip, tribal symbols that emit a faint, white light carved all along the body. The tip of the spear is bloodied.

Mahilja wears a beautiful, ceremonial DRESS full of colors finely weaved from rare cloths. Her body is sprinkled with the PETALS of a Blackberry Petunia.

Piled and stacked all over the room, are ancient MEMORABILIA. Viking shields, vases, gold coins, Mayan calendars. A foregone world encapsulated in this memorial.

Alola continues to read the letter in her hand.

MAHILJA (V.O.)  
... Now turn this letter over.

She turns the letter over.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Very gnarly, isn't it? Turns out  
The Chief had built the tomb for  
me! After all this time, he still  
remembered how much I used to  
obsess over Egyptian culture! I  
told him I always wanted to be a  
mummy! The perfect resting place,  
don't you think? I guess a father  
always knows his daughter best...

Alola approaches The Chief and Mahilja. They lay shoulder-to-shoulder. Both motionless, absent of life. Alola notices Mahilja's hands are covering a bandaged wound on the right side of her belly.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

By the way, the tribe is preparing to come pay you a visit. I've finally told them all. They are excited. They will welcome you, guide you, and most importantly, help you. This is a FAMILY, Alola, and you are most welcomed to join it.

Alola rests her forehead on Mahilja's. She closes her eyes.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"The soul secured in her eternal right, laughs at the falsehoods and defiances of matter." I think your parents would've been so proud of the woman you've become. With love,  
Mahilja.

She opens her eyes and reads the rest of the letter.

MAHILJA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

P.S. I left you a gift in the backyard, under the oak tree me and Saleem used to sit under and watch the world move by. I think you'll like it.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

Alola stands alone in her empty backyard. All chairs, tables, and remains of her wedding, gone. She walks down the long gone aisle, to the other end of the backyard.

She arrives at the large oak tree behind the house. There, she notices a small wooden box leaning against the bark. She sits on the grass and opens the box. Inside, is the spell book, Mashaf al-Damim. There's a slight smirk on Alola's face as she caresses the leathery spell book. She looks off into the distance, watching the world go by.

Far off, on a lonesome road, she spots a stray dog. The dog scratches itself intensely. From such a distance, it's ears perk up. It looks straight at Alola. Then, it moves along.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alola has lit up CANDLES in the living room. She sits on the couch. She sips on a cup of hot chocolate as she reads the spell book.

TICK. TICK. TICK.

The sound of a grandfather clock ticking away fills the silence.

Every tick sets to irritate Alola. Like a cat with a metronome, she jerks with every tick.

TICK. TICK. TICK.

Alola furrows her eyebrows. She attempts to ignore the clock.

TICK. TICK. TICK.

BONG!

Alola SPRINGS out of the couch, frightened. She hyperventilates. She places a hand on her chest. A panic attack has set in. She heads upstairs urgently, leaving behind the spell book.

Upstairs, the tick of the clock is barely audible. Alola begins to calm her breathing. She continues to walk the upstairs floor. She approaches her bedroom; she stares at the bedroom with distress.

Alola walks away from her bedroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alola enters the pristine bathroom. She closes the door. She views herself in the mirror. No pimples, no dry skin, just a flawless face. She spots one of her surgical tools on the sink. She takes it and opens the mirror cabinet. She observes all the other pristine surgical tools.

Beat.

Alola suddenly takes ALL the TOOLS and all the skincare PRODUCTS and THROWS them into the trash bin in a FURY.

She SLAMS the mirror cabinet shut. She leans into the sink, looking down. She breathes HEAVILY. Eyes SHUT.

Beat.

Alola calms down. She wipes her nose. She straightens herself and turns around to head back.

Alola YELPS.

A FIGURE stands in the doorway.

Its massive frame takes up the entire opened doorway as it BENDS down to peer inside. Its muscular body towers over 8 feet tall. Leathery, purple, dry skin is visible underneath the ancient tribal MASK adorning its face. A smiling psychotic face is finger painted onto the mask. Enormous INSECTOID WINGS fan out from its back. It wears a beaded necklace around its neck. It grips an ornate SPEAR, the glowing glyphs on its shaft pulsing rhythmically.

It's The Warlord.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.

Bridel