

# SUNNY WITH A CHANCE

by  
Upasna Maharaj  
MHRUPA002

*A creative production submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of Master of  
Arts in Media Theory and Practice*

*Faculty of Humanities  
University of Cape Town*

*2021*

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*It's not important to be right.  
It's only important to be true.*

- Christine McPherson in *LadyBird* (2017)

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## **SUNNY WITH A CHANCE**

### ***Coming of Age as Coming Out and Coming Into One's Own***

*written by*

*Upasna Maharaj*

The screenplay (creative production component) follows Sunny, a young South African Indian woman, who relocates to Cape Town to study fine art. She sets her eyes on a significant award, but makes the critical mistake of falling for her greatest rival. Despite facing crippling cultural expectations and biases, Sunny discovers that being different - and loving who she wants to love - is not a crime, but an imperfect truth. The screenplay explores the protagonist's first year at university, complicated by questions of identity, race, gender, sexuality and their intersection with tradition and culture in contemporary South Africa. Taking the form of a coming-of-age Indie drama (with an artistic twist), the main character embarks on a journey of self-discovery and learning, as she confronts these challenges.

The reflective creative explication serves as an accompaniment to the screenplay. It is used to expound upon the creative process of writing the screenplay: highlighting key scenes, beats and decisions whilst interrogating the theoretical frameworks surrounding representations of 'othered' groups - specifically queer women of colour - and their perception in society, aided by the lens of personal lived experience. This is followed by a review of the Indie and coming-of-age genres, in which the screenplay operates. The piece acts as a critical reflection intended to contextualise and justify the creative decisions made in the screenplay, so as to provide a means of accessing the larger themes and concerns at hand.

**Keywords:** coming out, coming-of-age, queer, South African Indian, screen studies, film, indie

SUNNY WITH A CHANCE



**CREATIVE EXPLICATION**  
*Coming of Age as Coming Out and  
Coming Into One's Own*

*Upasna Maharaj*

## **INTRODUCTION**

I am a great lover of the indie coming-of-age genre. However, hardly ever in these texts do I see anyone that looks like me, who shares my sensibilities or cultural concerns. This is largely due to issues relating to cultural power and identity formation (such as race or sexual orientation). For this reason, I - and surely many others - have never fully identified with the characters that operate within these seemingly inaccessible worlds. We become what Andrew Scahill terms "spectatorial scavengers," searching for "marginal characters, coding, or... subtext to affirm the fact of [our] existence" (2019: 114). This predicament is exceptionally isolating, especially in a time where film is seen as a means to unite and grant insight into lives and worlds previously unknown. It is this realisation, of the lack of representation (Eschholz, Bufkin and Long, 2002: 299), that inspired the conception of *Sunny With A Chance*.

The screenplay follows Sunny, a South African Indian girl, who relocates to Cape Town to study fine art. She sets her eyes on a significant award, but makes the critical mistake of falling for her greatest rival. Despite facing crippling cultural expectations and biases, Sunny discovers that being different - and loving who she wants to love - is not a crime, but an imperfect truth. The screenplay explores the protagonist's first year at university, complicated by questions of identity, race, gender, sexuality and their intersection with tradition and culture in contemporary South Africa. Our protagonist embarks on a journey of self-discovery and learning, as she confronts these challenges. The screenplay aims to initiate conversations surrounding pressing, yet culturally taboo, topics through the medium of a light-hearted and easily-accessible genre: the Indie Coming-of-Age Drama (with an artistic twist).

The screenplay, based loosely on true events, hopes to contribute to a normalisation of alternate and disenfranchised identities. Sunny's story may encourage women of colour, who perhaps see themselves in Sunny, to realise that embracing authenticity should not be villainised. Likewise, the concepts of Hope and Promise are suggested in the title, alluding to the common meteorological idiom 'sunny with a chance of showers.' This extends to Sunny, our protagonist, having a chance at her dreams and embracing her genuine self. However, it also intimates the more sombre connotation of a 'sprinkling' of tribulation amongst one's good fortune; Sunny with a chance of showers, thunderstorms, hail, wind, or rainbows. As is customary of the quintessential indie coming-of-age protagonist, Sunny will encounter it all.

This reflective creative explication serves as an accompaniment to the screenplay. Here, I shall expound upon the creative process: highlighting key scenes, beats and decisions whilst interrogating the theoretical frameworks surrounding representations of marginalised groups - specifically queer women of colour - and their perception in society, aided by the lens of personal lived experience. This is followed by a review of the Indie and coming-of-age genres, in which the screenplay operates. All in all, this creative explication

acts as a critical reflection, intended to contextualise and justify the creative decisions made in the screenplay, so as to provide a means of accessing the larger themes and concerns at hand.

## **SITUATING THE PERSONAL**

Due to the semi-autobiographical nature of *Sunny With A Chance*, it is necessary to situate the narrative within the framework of my lived experiences as a queer South African Indian women and examine how 'othered,' identities are perceived within the South African Indian community. This framework has largely informed my portrayal of the protagonist and her family, chiefly with regards to how her family perceives queer identity and the expectations they place upon the protagonist. Regrettably, the research surrounding same-sex - particularly lesbian or bi-sexual - relationships in the South African Indian community is scant at best. Although I shall access the topic through research, I will further furnish my discussion by exploring the avenue of the personal. My positioning here is as storyteller, witness and participant.

I was raised in an exceptionally orthodox and high-performing Indian household in the small, backward town of Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu Natal. Dubbed the 'City of Choice' by Msunduzi municipality and, perhaps more accurately, the 'Sleepy Hollow' by long-time residents, Pietermaritzburg's 'drowsiness' hangs over the city like its notoriously thick smog. I believe that it is not so much a drowsiness, as it is a slowness; an immobility in the face of change. To me, this air of inertia - of moving neither backward nor forward - was suffocating. Whether it may be attributed to complacency or insular myopia is difficult to determine, but I never quite felt comfortable to be myself, without facing judgement or contempt. While I did not live in the apartheid-designated Indian suburbs of the city, I was still socialised in Indian society and raised with the very same expectations and sensibilities. I was schooled at a private predominantly white school and therefore encountered first-hand the cultural (and socio-economic) discrepancies between my own experiences and white identities as a normative framework. I endured the resulting friction and the disapproving attitudes of members of the Indian community toward my white friends and myself. Naturally, I often felt compelled to obscure aspects of my culture from white friends for fear of being ridiculed or misunderstood. It was here where I began to acknowledge a prevailing and pervasive socio-cultural dissonance.

Cultural diversity in contemporary relationships is spotlighted in *Sunny With A Chance*. Despite the fact that Sunny is not overtly religious in any way, she struggles to reconcile various Indian ideals and the Western customs expected by Naomi, her Caucasian sweetheart. One example is Sunny's need to respect and adhere to her parents' wishes, which stands in such stark polarity to the Western image of young adult independence and parent-offspring rebellion.

In addition to this, I was too acutely aware of how queer members of the Indian community become victims of derision and ostracisation; whether through popular Bollywood films, parents disowning children or the seemingly more innocuous passing comments and occasional homophobic slurs. I only ever considered alternatives to heterosexuality when I left home to study (otherwise I did my best to put being a 'moffie'<sup>1</sup> out of my mind) and that allowed me a place to embrace that which I had repressed.

## **QUEERNESS AND SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN IDENTITY**

In research, queerness in the South African Indian community is not a well-documented phenomenon (Akoob, 2017). Perhaps this is because queer bodies and non-heteronormative identities are condemned in Indian culture, resulting in a resistance toward expressing such sensibilities and an invisibilising of queer bodies (Træen, Martinussen, Vittersø & Saini, 2009: 662; Dave, 2011: 8, 18; Dayal, 2019: 2). A survey conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations shows that just 52% of their queer Indian sample were "more likely than not to be completely open about their sexuality" (Morris, 2017). Furthermore, a 2016 survey indicated that, of their sample, 42% of the respondents had faced discrimination (OUT, 2016).

Evidently, the concepts of sex and non-heteronormative sexuality are taboo within the South African Indian community (Jagmohan, 2017). A 2011 study by Dave, which delves into the experiences of queer South African Indian youths, reveals a prevalence of homonegativity within these circles. Virtually all of the interviewees were met with hostility from their communities and families (18-21). Upon coming out, one participant's mother responded "If you were pregnant or a drug addict, I would know how to cope with it" (21). Not only does this infer an intolerance toward queerness, but, as the participant remarks, an additional prejudice that homosexuality is synonymous with sex, promiscuity, and drug abuse (21-24).

Another individual displays tendencies of internalised homophobia, when confessing he does not:

*like this very stereotypical gay scene...very feminine guys [who] carry little handbags... have this squeaky voice... if you say you're gay then you get put into that box, which I don't see it as something that's positive because if I think you gay you can still be yourself, you don't need to feel gay and feel feminine (Dave, 2011: 23).*

It is troubling how, despite the participant embracing his own gayness, only selectively does he accept queerness in all its diverse constructs. He goes to lengths to underscore how his (assumedly superior, more correct) performance of gayness firmly departs from femininity, as if only more masculine or understated performances of gayness are valid. I feel that this relates strongly to the trait of toxic masculinity indelible

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of the derogatory, typically South African terms employed by many older members of my family to describe queer individuals, impress upon and perpetuate these persons perceived despicableness and non-humanness.

to Indian society, which intersects with prejudices against 'othered' identities that challenge their socio-cultural ideals. As discussed later, homosexuality is seen as conflicting with the values of the Indian community; principles which are known to be derived from heteropatriarchal knowledge systems that reward hyper-masculine behaviours (Akoob, 2018).

Reygan and Lynette corroborate that in order to determine what is 'normal' and 'acceptable,' the question of culture must be considered in conjunction (2014: 708). This, of course, can be applied to discussions surrounding sexuality. A 2016 Gauteng-specific study investigated cultural attitudes toward homosexuality. It identified a "relatively strong negative perception of homosexuality in Indian communities" (Mahomed & Trangoš, 2011: 1412, 1413). Saliently, it found that Indians were twice as likely to 'strongly agree' with the statement that "homosexuality is against the values of my community" than other race groups and were just as likely to 'agree' with the statement. According to Dayal, these distressing tendencies can be attributed to the conservative value systems within the South African Indian community, where religious conservativeness and cultural conventions are foregrounded (Dayal, 2019: 1).

The pervasive quality of these cultural prejudices and homonegative tendencies are likewise exposed in popular media. Two relatively recent local films *For Better or For Worse* (Veeran, 2010) and *Broken Promises 4-Ever* (Naidu, 2018) caricature and lampoon their Indian gay characters for the express purpose of comic relief. In *For Better or For Worse*, an exorcism is performed on a gay character. It is insinuated that non-heteronormative sexualities are akin to 'the work of the devil,' rendering sexuality a 'demon' which (can and) must be expunged. Among the innumerable jabs delivered in *Broken Promises 4-Ever*, most notable is how a character is described as "damaged" and "broken" due to his sexuality. Moreover, a relative of the character in question explains how being gay implies that one is "excessively sexed". The uncle presents him with cisgender heterosexual porn, which would surely "turn a gay person straight." In his scathing review of the film, Naufal Khan highlights his concern over the film, citing the already rampant degradation and discrimination faced by queers in the South African Indian community, which the ill-conceived film only promulgates (Khan, 2018).

It is also a well-known trope for queer, specifically gay, characters in Bollywood to be represented as "dehumanised clowns" (Mayet in Iqbal, 2018) and "effeminate" (Gopinath, 2000: 291), for the sake of cheap humour (294-295). This only serves to dehumanise Indian queer identities. Balabantary, in his investigation of Bollywood's impact on youth identity and cultural formation (2020: 6) recounts how Bollywood films generally portray queer characters insensitively (6). The films represent these individuals as separate to Indian society and, in doing so, play a crucial role in the construction and preservation of stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to queer identities (6). Box office hits *Student of the Year* (2012) and *Dostana* (2008) - amongst the highest grossing Bollywood films in their years of release - both reduce

their gay characters to comedic tropes. Balabantaray argues that other films such as the box office success, *Welcome* (2007), and *Heyy Baby* (2007), serve to sediment damaging attitudes toward homosexuality in the societal psyche (6). He also adds, however, that with the release of films like *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) and *Padmayat* (2018) comes a breath of acceptance for minority groups, signalling a change in Indian popular cinema.

In South African news media, the issue of intolerance toward queer Indians is also being increasingly brought to light. Naufal Khan, the founder and editor of Indian Spice - an online news platform directed at the South African Indian community - speaks widely on the injustices faced by queer individuals within these circles and cites his own encounters with homophobia (Khan, 2018). Khan describes being called a "f\*ggot" on his own Facebook page, voicing how such behaviour perpetuates "a cycle of abuse [that] leads to much larger and deadly situations for other victims, some of which never make the papers or a police docket." He challenges readers to "fight the good fight" toward eradicating homophobia and prejudice. Another article, published on IOL, retells the trauma endured by a mother who lost her gay son to suicide (Jagmohan, 2017). According to his mother, Akshay was constantly bullied, physically assaulted and ostracised for being "different." He struggled to reconcile with his divergent sexuality and attempted suicide multiple times. Akshay's mother urges that Indian parents and the community to listen to and accept their children despite their differences, underscoring the desperate need for change.

Despite not being well documented or even publicised, homophobia, a result of toxic masculinity and conservative value systems, is evident in the South African Indian community (Akoob, 2018). Clearly then, for Sunny, having to navigate not only the difficulties arising from her same-sex relationship with Naomi, but also the additional interracial (and, by extension, inter-cultural) politics, she faces a much more elaborate multiplicity of complexities.

The added dimension of Sunny's same-sex love interest being white creates further complication and facilitates a deeper probing into the psychology of prejudice and taboo. The Indian perception of whites exists in a kind of duality, where *goras* are seen as simultaneously 'dirty, trashy, and wild,' but also as 'superior.' While there is no research-based evidence to support this, I can point to how the Hindi word for beautiful, *goree*, is the very same word often employed to describe Caucasian women (Akoob, 2018), indicating both a conflicting hierarchical complex and a tendency towards colourism. In my experience, Indian males would often prefer white women to Indian women, but still regard them as promiscuous, dirty and ultimately exploitable. White Europeans and Americans are referred to similarly, yet Indians are happy to announce that their child's (Caucasian) partner is of American or European origin and encourage their children to study or work in these countries. Undoubtedly, racism and homophobia exist behind closed doors, but the manifestation of these discriminations are multifaceted and deeply entrenched (Moosa, 2017; Akoob, 2018).

## **THE 'GOOD' INDIAN DAUGHTER**

Moreover, the construct of the 'good, respectable Indian daughter' is one that is central to Sunny's motivations throughout the film and one that Naomi struggles to accept. Like many Indian daughters, and characteristically *not* sons, Sunny is expected to embody plainly impossible attributes and virtues: the purity of a Hindu Goddess, and the decency and reputation of a national dignitary. Correspondingly, the demeanour of a good Indian daughter is pleasant (friendly, but not boisterous; polite, but not too quiet). She does not engage in the raucous behaviour and trivial pursuits of others, is never 'wild' or 'advanced.' She is *physically incapable* of disobeying her parents or disrespecting the wishes and wise words of her elders (who, of course, are always right). Her only weakness? Relentless charm.

The heteropatriarchal expectations placed upon South African Indian daughters is not widely researched. However, due to the phenomenon of the internet, women of South Asian descent have begun to share their intergenerational trauma. In her blog post, Hunasikatti writes:

*Being a good, traditional, Indian daughter was an important concept for my parents. involved lots of math and science, marriage to an Indian man, and nothing that would shame the family... True, not all Indians are like this, but I have twenty years of being around many Indian families and groups to understand what the majority's mindset is towards those who don't live up to certain standards. I will be critiqued on how well I live up to the ridiculous image of what a good, traditional Indian daughter looks like (2013).*

However she also adds: "My family is my solid foundation; without them I wouldn't even [have] a clue of what it was like for South Asians who made it in this country." This indicates the complex nature of the relationship Indian daughters have with our parents, who are responsible for both our success and turmoil. Sunny certainly encounters the same nuanced and multifaceted relationship with her parents.

A favourite scene of mine from Netflix series *Kim's Convenience* (CBC, 2016) also perfectly exemplifies this strange duality in more Eastern styles of parenting. The series centres around Korean diasporic experience in America and the intergenerational tension between the older members of the Kim family and their adult children, whilst humorously critiquing popular stereotypes. In the aforementioned scene, Appa (the father figure) plays a card game with his Indian restaurateur friend, Mr. Mehta. They discuss how occidental forms of parenting are ineffective due to their lack of discipline - both verbal and physical. They go on to describe the children of nowadays as being unnecessarily pampered, enabling them to believe they are "tiny *maharajas*, so important." In the immediate context, their conjectures may seem well-founded: during the episode, we are shown on numerous occasions an unruly child destroying Appa's convenience store, devouring bags of chips without paying, bulldozing shelves and causing general mayhem, all because his mother refuses to use the 'N' word: no. Appa and Mr Mehta champion

the far sterner, and in some instances harsher, Eastern parenting style (“a swift cricket bat to the backside”) and agree that they have indeed “raised their kids the right way.” Then Appa inquires how his friend’s daughter is doing. Mehta responds that she is no longer speaking to him and asks Appa if he has spoken to his son recently. Appa simply inhales sharply. This scene perfectly critiques the ideologies of Eastern parenting through parody, by underlining how inflexible and draconian parenting styles may result in well-raised children, but come at a cost to one’s relationship with and connection to them.

Ritu Bhasin, life coach and “authenticity advocate” writes extensively on intergenerational oppression; specifically wrought by children striving to conform to their parents’ expectations and society’s views (2018). How our parents would like us to dress, speak, and behave, as well as who we love and befriend is often dissonant with our own intentions. Bhasin cites issues of “oppressive parenting, violence, abuse, mental health issues, addiction, and more” (2018). Most notably, she attributes the desire to fulfil the wishes of our parents to the effects of receiving conditional forms of love: we deserve love and affection, only if we meet their demands and requirements. Bhasin responds by promoting unconditional self-love and authenticity; something that Sunny strives toward in the screenplay and emerges as her underlying ‘need.’

Sunny mostly rejects these frankly unattainable expectations. However, she is forced to confront (and initially submits to) her parents’ wishes when they discover her relationship with Naomi. They present her with an ultimatum: she must leave Naomi and may continue her studies, or she is forcibly removed from art school, made to study accounting and effectively disowned. In this way, we are still able to see the embedded shrapnel of Sunny’s upbringing in her young adult character, whether she likes it or not.

From my experiences, I have come to understand that, within the explicitly Indian community, individuals are ostracised not only for being different, but for deviating from preconceived and predefined expectations surrounding identity (Zaidi and Ravindra, 2011). Additionally, these ideals appear to clash directly with queer and alternative orientations. Even now, as a 24 year old, I have not come out to my family - and certainly never will. I have never afforded myself the opportunity to explore serious same-sex relationships, despite being undoubtedly bi/pansexual. I never permitted myself to contemplate any other narratives, apart from those dictated to me by my parents and society; that of the good, respectable Indian daughter. Instead, I allowed fear to cloud my judgement.

Critically, Balabantary notes that many of these socio-cultural beliefs and assertions in Indian society (diasporic or not), stem from popular media. As noted previously, he specifically cites Bollywood films as perpetuating negative stereotypes surrounding same-sex partnerships, attitudes toward marriage, and the role of women within the public and private spheres (2020: 1-7).

It is therefore essential to engender an ideological shift in society, starting with the foremost purveyor of ideology: popular media. Evaluative, increasingly progressive representation in media texts may cultivate more sensitive representations of under and/or misrepresented minority identities. This is what *Sunny with a Chance* hopes to promote. The next section explores how 'visibilising' minority and othered individuals is key to the process of normalisation and social integration. I would like to think that *Sunny with a Chance* contributes to this endeavour.

## **QUEER FILMS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

What requires urgent attention is the under/misrepresentation of queer identities in mainstream media, literature and film (Cilliers, 2018: 332-334). This applies tenfold to queer persons of colour, by nature of their intersectionality. Following Lindsey Green-Simms rejection of the essentialist definition of queer world cinema as being "productions by or explicitly for queer people" (2018: 652), I too agree that this determination must take on a more capacious lens when applied to Africa, specifically one that is unfettered by the qualifications of Western socio-cultural belief and its presumptions of gayness. Furthermore, we should be cognisant of the involvement and permeation of Africa as "an epistemological object of knowledge" that is never quite resolved. Rather, Green-Simms's definition of queer African cinema necessitates a 'politics of place' (653). This understanding accounts for the paucity of queer filmmakers, the lack of a coherent queer-centred film movement, and the interference of censorship (654). One should then reflect on queer cinema through a categorically African, even South African, perspective, in order to process sensitivities of time and space.

Likewise, Robert Larue, in his probing of silence in queer-centred African short stories, notes how enactments of queer identity in the Global South differ from the 'extroverted' queer performances typified by the voices of the Global North (111). He postulates that, contrary to the loud exclamations and gestures of belonging emerging from the West, the exercising of queerness in the Global South is far more intimate (113). This is displayed principally in countries addled with societal homophobia (where same-sex relationships are permissible by law) and others where same-sex relations are actively criminalised (112). He is careful, however, to delineate the distinction between being withheld from speaking, or being unable to speak, and actively choosing not to, underscoring how silence is not necessarily devoid of agency. In contrast, it may be contested that agency may be found in choosing *not* to rally against - or publicly and politically challenge - oppressive forces (remembering, also, that this positionality is ultimately one of privilege). Therefore, an element of disconnect exists in the understanding of how individuals choose to engage with their realities. This occurs most strikingly when evaluating the intersection of queerness and countries of the Global South, arguably exemplified by South Africa.

The focalisation of silence is emphasised in *Sunny with a Chance*, where Sunny's exploration of sexuality and identity is meditative and introverted. Additionally, the screenplay is acutely aware of not invalidating more introverted queer sensibilities, but attempts to honour that one can, in fact, be queer without being required to openly exclaim such. This is reiterated by Andrew Tucker (2009, 10) in his study of 'the closet' in Western queer discourse. This concept is not interrogated widely enough in mainstream media, where queer characters are often relegated to side roles or portrayed in stereotypically crude ways (Levy, 1999: 442 and Cilliers, 2018: 336, 338). Familiar examples of these impressions include the sassy, gesticulative, loud gay best friend character, or the short-haired lesbian that is prone to adopting typically 'masculine' attire. While these characterisations may exist in reality (and are perfectly valid), being inundated by these images described to us as the 'singularly true' iteration of queerness may perhaps leave little space for more diverse understandings of queer identity. By ingesting these representations, mainstream society, and predominantly those who are unfamiliar with queer politics, come to perpetuate problematic stereotypes, and gain only a narrow understanding of queer culture. This may cause the consumers of these images to question or discount queer individuals, whose relation to their sexuality does not, perhaps, perfectly match this mould.

Now pinpointing the experiences of specifically black queers in post-apartheid South Africa, Xavier Livermon explores notions of freedom and visibility. South Africa is rendered in an ostensibly progressive light for its comprehensive constitution - the first of its kind in the world to decriminalise same-sex relationships and offer protection for gay and lesbian individuals in 1996, as well as legalising same-sex marriage in 2006. However, many theorists speculate that post-apartheid South African queers are not psycho-socially free to enact their queerness, despite being free to do so legally, politically and economically (Livermon, 2012: 299; Andrews, 2018: 56; Tucker, 2009: 2; Van Heerden in Morris, 2017; Dayal, 2019). This is due to the overwhelming heteronormativity and resultant homophobia engendered by the black community, where queerness is perceived as a 'threat to African culture and tradition' and 'as outside blackness,' racialising the queer body as white, in turn (Livermon, 2012: 299; Andrews, 2018:58; Tucker 2009: 2; Cillier, 2018: 355; Omonigho., 2018: 171). These realities are exceptionally damaging, since an embracing of queerness for a black body means either a "deracinated queerness or a blackness divorced from sexuality" (Livermon, 2012: 315).

More telling of the superficial nature of constitutional protection for queer South Africans is the contradictory actions and comments of prominent politicians and leaders. Former president Jacob Zuma is quoted to have said "when I was growing up an *ungqingili* [a gay person] would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out" (eNCA, 2015) and declared homosexual marriage "a disgrace to the nation and to God" (Seale, 2006). Zuma also stated that South Africa "respected Uganda's sovereign right to adopt legislation" that legalised the criminalisation of homosexuality (eNCA, 2015). Mmusi

Maimane has also expressed anti-queer sentiment, likening 'gay people' to sinners who, as a part of his mission from God, he was to befriend and, it is implied, repair (eNCA, 2015). Additionally, former Minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana walked out of an exhibition showcasing work by celebrated LGBTQIA+ and internationally-acclaimed artist Zanele Muholi in 2010. Xingwana commented that the photo series of partially nude lesbian women was "immoral, offensive and going against nation-building" (Smith, 2010). These sentiments indicate a prevailing homonegativity exemplified by certain leading South African figures, through their apparently unconstitutional comments.

In response to the heteronormativity and homophobia within South African, Livermon calls for a normalisation of queer identity, achieved through what he terms 'cultural labour' (300-301). In a country which bears the reputed title of corrective rape capital of the world (Essop, 2012; *The Rape Capital of the World*, 2012; Hull, 2011; Msanzi the 'world rape capital', 2012), inundated with case upon case of rape, beating and murder of black lesbians and other numerous expressions of homophobic violence (Omonigho, 2018: 171; Hull, 2011; Cillier, 2018: 352), it is only understandable that this impacts the visibility of the black queer body, in cultural and political contexts. In order to render the rights of the constitution meaningful, Livermon implores that the issue be resolved, not at a state, but community level. In other words, change needs to be enacted at the most foundational societal level; among friends, families and geo-spatial groups, for it to be impactful in the current context. Only then may queer bodies gain visibility, upon the assurance of safety and security (Livermon, 2012: 289-299).

While Livermon's study largely deals with queer visibility and experience in South African black communities, I would like to posit that these observations are also widely applicable to the South African Indian community. Suffused with similar afflictions of hyper-masculinity, male fragility, heteronormativity and homophobia, the Indian community in South Africa likewise regards queerness as a Western export (Dave, 2011: 3) against the values of their community (Dayal, 2019: 1-2; Mahomed & Trangoš, 2016).

Additionally, Indian women exist beyond their immediate cultural context and are arguably also at risk from broader violence toward same-sex couples, though they may not be as vulnerable to corrective rape as black women within the communities in which this is practiced. A 2016 South African study showed that, of all race groups sampled, Indian/Asian adults reported the lowest rate of people who "have not and would never physically assault gender non-conforming women". They also showed "the highest propensity for violence against gender non-conforming women in the past 12 months, and potential to do it in the future" (Sutherland, Roberts, Gabriel, Struwig and Gordon, 2016).

Despite Christianity not being followed by the vast majority of South African Indians (Kumar, 2016), various Indian community members follow more conservative and constrictive iterations of Islamism and

Hinduism do condemn same-sex relationships. Furthermore, even within the public sphere, homosexuality is still largely rejected and more ossified notions of culturally expected identity are favoured. This is relevant to *Sunny With a Chance* as it highlights the uniquely South African Indian slant on Sunny's intimate and quiet enactment of queerness. Additionally depicted is the conflicting duality of the 'black' queer body: where, *de jure*, Sunny cannot be legally punished for her same-sex relationship with Naomi, but she still encounters, *de facto*, extreme resistance to embracing her sexuality as a result of her stringent upbringing, as well as threats of punishment from her family - an extension of the heteronormative South African Indian society.

Livermon states that queer visibility is "not only about finding acceptance for difference within black communities but also about a defiance and a subversion of blackness in ways that are potentially transformative, thus ...giving freedom its substantive meaning" (2012: 301). Evidently, it is not sufficient to be accepted by a society, when a culture is so deeply entrenched in the constraints of a popularised and ultimately favoured heteronormativity. One needs to actively oppose these tendencies in order to create a true liberation. I believe that this may also be applied to the context of the Indian community.

Building on Livermon's contributions, Grant Andrews in his interrogation of South African queer films, touches on several pertinent factors regarding production and consumption within our country, spotlighting *Inxeba* (The Wound) as his case study. He provides invaluable insight into the context surrounding queer culture in South Africa and the shifting mindsets of the time.

Andrews observes a dissidence that exists within our country:

*South Africa has an ambivalent history with queer representation, being simultaneously one of the largest producers and consumers of queer media on the African continent, as well as often still exhibiting extreme homophobia and backlash when particular kinds of queer media are released in the country (2018: 52).*

This consumption and production of media in South Africa is also effaced by "racial and economic divisions" (52), further complicating the depiction of queer bodies. The white middle class mostly account for the market and production of queer South African film (52), even when representing black subjects. These identities are consequently subjected to white perspectives and the white gaze. In addition to this, it is also largely the white middle and upper class who consume South African queer media (Magade, 2020). This presents two polarising arguments, outlined by Andrews, namely the misconception of homosexuality as being an essentially un-African Western imposition (2018: 52), and more convincingly, the question of authenticity in black queer centred narratives told by black directors, considering that these stories are tainted by a 'more palatable' Western (or white South African) understanding of 'black culture.' Though consistently, as Andrews underlines, the most celebrated queer films emerging from South Africa

almost always deal with questions of culture, challenging heteropatriarchy, racism and cultural exploitation (53). In contrast to this is South Africa's pre-eminent film distributor and producer, Anant Singh of Videovision. The centrality of his role in producing and distributing some of South Africa's most distinguished anti-Apartheid films (*Place of Weeping, Sarafina! And Cry, The Beloved Country*) cannot be disregarded ("Anant Singh Biography", 2018). Moreover, he has also distributed many films relevant to the South African Indian community. While this may not translate to the strides in representation currently needed, it is not to say that his contributions are irrelevant.

Andrews remarks that there was little in the way queer representation under the apartheid regime, with "almost exclusively white with a few black queer characters appearing in literature but never explicitly in film" (2018: 54, 57). Even thereafter, despite more varied and nuanced, post-apartheid depictions of the queer body are still largely racialised as white. However, as seen in his study of *Inxeba*, when the queer black body is visibilised in visual media, it is received with a backlash. Andrews theorises that the majority of this consternation toward queer representation is due to black queer characters (57), evincing a propensity toward the "protectionism of culture" (58). Andrews underpins how the backlash received from substantially visual media - widely accepted as publicly accessible and culturally impactful - centres around the notion of 'culture' and how black queer bodies are "policed in black cultural and political spaces" (52). So even if black queer bodies are beginning to be visibilised in visual creative media, a lack of socio-cultural shift prevents them from truly enacting this liberty.

Like Livermon, Andrews advocates for the continued sharing of stories as the solution to disrupting the invisibilising of black queer subjects in South Africa (64): "These stories are vital within South Africa, and more of them are needed in order to disrupt the marginalisation of queer people, especially black queer people." In this manner, the queer body desists from being radicalised as un-African and begins an integration into the purported South African culture of freedom and equality for all.

From the above discussion, it is clear to see that "like any social relationship, sexuality is inherently spatial – it depends on particular spaces for its construction and in turn produces and reproduces the spaces in which sexuality can be, and was, forged" (Mitchell 2000: 175 in Tucker). This notion is central to Sunny's ability to construct her sexuality; Sunny's story is precipitated by a spatial move from her constrictive hometown to a liberal metropolis. Additionally, Sunny's performance of sexuality has different spatial scripts, that are determined by the contexts of home (family) and art school (authentic identity).

The performance of queerness in the Global South differs from that of the Global North, particularly the stereotypes typified in mainstream Western media. While queer individuals are constitutionally free to enact their sexuality, there exists an antagonism, most prominently within the content of Africa, toward visibilising the black queer body within psycho-social parameters. Accordingly, the rendering of the queer

black subject in mainstream visual media is lacking and is oft met with concerns regarding misrepresentation, stereotyping, and inauthenticity (Cilliers, 2018: 334). However, theorists and writers urge the dissemination of content relating the experiences of the queer black body. This action attempts to promulgate the normalisation and assimilation of marginalised groups into the public sphere, through the process of self-representation and self-critique (Tohlang, 2012: 68).

*Sunny with a Chance* is one of very few South African feature film scripts to explore queer identities in young Indian women of colour, and one that challenges the co-existence of authentic culture, and 'othered' identity. Sunny's enactment of sexuality diverges from many extroverted coming-out narratives circulating in mainstream visual media, in that it is far more intimate and quiet. Since the film is semi-autobiographical, it also offers a response to accusations of specious black queer representations in films as being filtered through a Western or white South African perspective. As confirmed by theorists such as Reygan and Lynette (2014: 708), Epprecht (2009), and Gevisser & Cameron (1994), the notion of culture being static and unchangeable requires challenging to cultivate a greater freedom in how people may construct and perform their identities. I would hope that *Sunny with a Chance* adds to South Africa's relatively lacking repertoire of queer cinematic productions, with the aim of subverting negative tropes and prejudices, while responsibly representing non-heteronormativity on the screen, specifically within an South African context.

## **INDIE FILM**

The word 'Indie' has come to signify many things. Michael Z. Newman, a widely published scholar in the discourse of Indie film, describes indie culture and, by extension, indie cinema, as deriving its "identity from challenging the mainstream" (2009: 16). Central to this definition is the economic distinction between what is deemed 'mainstream' and 'indie.' Newman argues that 'indie' implies "small-scale, personal, artistic, and creative," which stands in contrast to the large-scale consumerist mass culture of the mainstream and media industry that values money over art (16). Already, we begin to identify a synonymy between 'indie' and the cultures of art and rebellion. Furthermore, Newman notes that, in recent times, the term 'indie' has become a kind of 'buzzword' used to describe that which is "hip, edgy , [and] uncompromising" (16). This application is not only limited to film, but has also transformed into a popular cultural expression of identity. Within film, the Indie genre is also associated with opposition, autonomy, authenticity, the socially distinct, and alternative culture (19, 22, 24, 27).

Although Indie culture and cinema seem to profess an agenda of authenticity and an embracing of alternate identities (whilst branding themselves as hostile to the consumerist mainstream culture), it offers surprisingly meagre visibility of non-white and non-heteronormative sensibilities. In fact, Sarah Hengtes

notes that "one glaring characteristic of the mainstream is its whitewashed characteristics" (2006: 19). Yet indie culture and cinema does little to problematise this. Therefore, certain limitations exist within the genre; the most pertinent to this explication being the issues of elitism and the under/mis-representation of minority groups within the genre.

The paucity of minority representation, and underlying white privilege of indie cinema, as perpetuated by "the quintessential hipster auteur" Wes Anderson (Newman in Wilkins, 2018: 151), is meditated upon by Rachel Dean-Ruzicka. While there is much to be loved and learnt from the films of Wes Anderson - his almost obsessive attention to detail, eccentric characters and touching narratives that explore serious themes of loss, love and coming of age - it is difficult to ignore the more insidious aspects of whiteness that dominate his filmmaking. Dean-Ruzicka posits that although Anderson often includes a variety of racial, ethnic and national identities, these vignettes are ultimately skin-deep and only serve to reinforce themes of whiteness and white privilege present in the primary characters and narrative (2013: 25). She remarks, too, how "power and privilege always rests in the hands of the white characters, in ways that are never complicated or dealt with by the films themselves" (37). The representations of whiteness in Anderson's oeuvre remain largely uninterrogated and unchallenged, despite his acclaim within the spheres of popular media and scholarly work (37). This complacency is highly problematic; such narratives normalise and perpetuate performances of white privilege, masquerading as harmless 'quirkiness' or evocations of the 'outsider' (37). Hengtes, too, expounds upon how this leads to identities, cultures and ideas being appropriated and assimilated into the mainstream, under the guise of diversity and quality, usually through some sort of compromise (2006:19). Foster, as cited by Hengtes (2006: 19), claims that:

*whiteness, if not questioned and marked, remains omnipresent yet manages to escape scrutiny within studies of race, class, gender, and sexuality in popular culture. White privilege in society and in the arts remains generally unchallenged, and narratives and genres in which whiteness predominates remain unmarked.*

*Sunny with a Chance* selectively employs the aesthetic and ideological tenets of the Indie genre, embracing the form's penchant for authenticity and rebellion. This appeals to alternative youths, rendering the content fairly accessible, as well as providing a light hearted medium through which to explore more serious conversations about cultural and belonging. However, the screenplay departs from the stereotypically whitewashed representation and content of many films that fall within the category. Even more so, diverse minorities, living within a globalised world and navigating the complexities of hybrid identities, may look to Indie narratives that yield trendy, alternative and authentic images. Here, the genre is not limited to iterations of western white, privileged, heteronormative characters. Instead, it explores identity as accessed through the lens of a queer South African person of colour, as well as situating this

within the socio-cultural expectations of South African Indian life. In this way, *Sunny with a Chance* offers representation that aligns more with the sensibilities of the Global South and advocates for identification with the lived experiences of disenfranchised groups (specifically those within South Africa).

## **COMING-OF-AGE**

Judging from the nature of indie culture and cinema, it may seem fitting that coming-of-age narratives might opt to assume these modes. 'Indie' identifies itself as rebelling against the mainstream, branding itself as the epitome of individual authenticity and the distinct alternative. Naturally then, *Sunny with a Chance* was inspired by a number of texts that blur the lines between the Coming-of-Age, Coming out and Indie genres. These include *LadyBird* (Gerwig, 2017), *The Virgin Suicides* (Coppola, 2000), the Wes Anderson cinematic universe, *Submarine* (Ayoade, 2010), *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (Sciamma, 2019), *Girlhood* (Sciamma, 2014), *The Farewell* (Wang, 2019), *Moonlight* (Jenkins, 2016), *The Half of It* (Wu, 2020), *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* (Netflix, 2017), *Sex Education* (Netflix, 2019) and *Kim's Convenience* (CBC, 2016).

The coming-of-age genre is derived from the late 18th century literary mode *Bildungsroman*, which usually follows a young male protagonist on a journey to fulfilling his destiny and uncovering his true identity. This process of reaching manhood is described as being fraught with exodus and loss, signalling a departure from childhood (Monaghan, 2017:57). The modern iteration of the coming-of-age genre has since been significantly transformed. However, narratives generally centre around the protagonist's experience of adolescence and the rites of passage into adulthood (Butt, 2018), as well as the quest for autonomy and identity (Berghahn, 2010: 240).

It is important to note that, in recent times, adolescents are coming of age - and thus developing and forging a cultural identity - in a world that is increasingly and considerably more multicultural than that of previous generations (Jensen, 2003: 189). In addition to this, these individuals are inclined to reconcile diverse cultural behaviours and biases with the requirements of a rapidly globalising worlds, which often stand at odds (195). Following suit, adaptations of the coming-of-age genre have expanded to include the female, the post-colonial, the queer and black bildungsroman (Leseur and Stein in Berghahn, 2010: 240).

Daniela Berghahn, in her exploration of the diasporic youth film, provides a wealth of insight into coming-of-age narratives featuring especially ethnic minority identity. Berghahn maintains that the coming-of-age narrative is central to the work of diasporic film-makers. This is due to the largely semi-autobiographical nature of these films, which have a propensity to be rendered as portraits of the creators' lived

experiences coming of age 'in between' two cultures and negotiating the ensuing tensions between tradition, heritage and western value systems (240). Such texts include *East is East* (O'Donnell, 1999), *Anita and Me* (Hüseyin, 2002) and *Samia* (Faucon, 2000), and more recently, *The Farewell* (Wang, 2019), *Never Have I Ever* (Netflix, 2020), *Kim's Convenience* (CBC, 2016), *A Suitable Boy* (Netflix, 2020) and *The Half of It* (Wu, 2020) and more. However, Berghahn draws a distinction between the utilisation and purpose of the coming-of-age trope in prototypic American and diasporic narratives. In the American canon, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is usually a result of formative experience (including falling in love, sexual exploration, loss, a test of courage, or graduation). Yet, these events are not prioritised in diasporic depictions of coming of age. Rather, these narratives emphasise a search for cultural and ethnic belonging, according to Berghahn (240). It is common for them to revolve around a key moment where the protagonist must choose between cultures, and in doing so, establish their adult self. This then enables the character to explore the uncharted waters of adult maturity, as per the conventions of the coming-of-age genre (240).

In diasporic coming-of-age films, identity formation and narrative conflict often stem from cultural, and by extension, inter-generational conflict. These groups present with differing, or even discordant, value systems, traditional presumptions and societal beliefs (241). The conflict between parent and child is not exclusive to one individual diaspora or culture, but a common phenomenon faced by many - regardless of race, ethnicity or nationality (239). This lends to how the films, although reflecting narratives of youths coming of age in cultures different to their own, still garner transnational appeal (239).

In *Sunny with a Chance*, the importance of Sunny's coming of age is intrinsically linked to her navigation of traditionally Indian ideals and ideologies and following her heart (in both romantic and individual capacities). Perhaps falling in love or graduating may be construed as *the* formative experience that showcases coming of age within the narrative, but these events are complexified for Sunny. The key to finding her true identity is, in actuality, reconciling the multi-faceted and often conflicting pillars of her identity: who she is expected to be and who she desires to be. This friction is investigated through the inter-generational cultural tension signified in the involvement with her parents.

Due to the focalisation on cultural and ethnic identity formation as a transformational force, *Sunny with a Chance* promotes cultural diversity within the screenplay's representation and content. Hengtes affirms that "the white supremacy... deeply embedded in teen and girls' films is evident in attempts at 'multiculturalism'" (2006: 23-24). When characters of colour are included in these narratives, they are whitewashed and used as 'flavour,' and racism may be used flippantly or more overtly. This is because whiteness is still seen as the normative identity, which is culturally superior (2006, 24). By spotlighting questions of belonging and cultural diversity as a transformative force - to be centralised and thoroughly

investigated - *Sunny with A Chance* negates the tendency toward whitewashing and racism (covert or not) in coming-of-age films.

## **COMING OUT**

What must also be noted, and that which applies particularly to *Sunny With A Chance*, is the intersection between the coming-of-age genre and the 'coming out' narrative. Openly revealing one's non-heteronormative sexuality - or simply 'coming out' - is often portrayed in popular culture as a transformative, life-changing moment. In Western popular culture, which favours more extroverted performances of queer identity, coming out forms the pinnacle of queer identity performance (Monaghan, 2017: 56; Jonet, 2017: 1139).

Monaghan argues that there is a distinction between the coming out and coming-of-age narratives. The former usually involves an interrogation of identity, and navigation of psycho-sexual boundaries in exclusively queer characters. The latter centres around a transition from adolescence to adulthood, and questions of maturity. Monaghan further distinguishes between the two narrative choices by outlining how coming-of-age traditionally restricts itself to adolescent representations (2017: 57) and that characters that come out do not necessarily come of age within the same narrative. However, the boundaries separating coming-of-age and coming out stories are often blurred.

Although, the coming-of-age trope is embedded in queer culture, this inclination is relatively new in cinema and only several decades old (58). Eurocentric films, predating the late 1960s, that feature queer content gravitate toward presenting homosexuality as a form of "social, personal, or psychological tragedy" (Bronski in Monaghan, 2017: 58 and Cilliers, 2018: 334), where queer characters are 'punished' for their sexuality or 'outed' by other predominantly cis heterosexual characters, stripping them of their agency and power. As such, the lives of these queer characters are predicated upon secrecy, where being openly queer is not a voluntary performance, but something imposed and revealed by other heterosexual characters (Monaghan, 2017: 58). However, the success of the Gay Liberation Movement saw a rejection of this paradigm within Western queer films. Suddenly, films created by queer film-makers began foregrounding the 'coming-out' narrative as paramount to gay experience (58).

While we acknowledge the shift from presenting queerness as 'an affliction that must be overcome' to that which must be accepted and ultimately embraced, it is important to note how this proclivity - to situate coming out as *the* qualifying queer experience - is a quintessentially Western one. In the aforementioned investigation into the experiences of South African Indian queer youths by Dave, many participants admitted that they "did not believe in the term 'coming out' ... and did not find it necessary to 'come

out'." For them, 'coming out' appears to be a non-term (2011: 18). *Sunny with a Chance* rejects the archetype of the 'coming out' epiphany. Instead, it prefers to focus on the bond between Sunny and Naomi, as a celebration of queer love, rather than showcasing any 'loud' performance of queerness. The screenplay is also careful not to dwell on or villainise homosexuality, although it does still address the realities of prejudice and homonegativity within the South African Indian community.

Curiously, Bronski (in Monaghan, 2017:59) contends that the coming out narrative "is no longer fresh, says nothing new, and is often not emotionally, physically, or artistically challenging." He cites the reason being that filmmakers are expressly intent on imbuing "coming out - and by extension, homosexuality, in a positive light," limiting queer characterisation. Bronski's commentary does not account, perhaps, for ethnic and culturally diverse queer narratives, where coming out is placed within the context of a negotiation of traditional ideals and socio-political values. I feel that *Sunny With A Chance* may challenge Bronski's stance on the allegedly formulaic and now exhausted 'coming out' narrative, in that it is complexified by the nature of Sunny's hybrid identity and psycho-social positioning. Furthermore, the coming out narrative within *Sunny with a Chance* resonates more strongly with queer performances of the Global South. In coming out, we explore and challenge Sunny's identity in a more multi-faceted light, one that differs from the Western iterations of queer narratives Bronski essentially deems uninteresting and repetitious.

Additionally, while I acknowledge Monaghan's distinction between coming-of-age and coming out, I uphold that *Sunny with a Chance* is inherently a coming-of-age and coming out story, where one cannot exist without the other. Coming-of-age and coming out work in conjunction. They underscore Sunny's manoeuvring of a liminal space: seeking ethnocultural belonging (and conforming to corresponding heteronormative values surrounding identity formation) whilst uncovering her queer sexuality. Furthermore, through Sunny finding her autonomous voice and defining her individuality in a hybrid cultural context, she is able to embrace her sexuality. This would otherwise be taboo. Similarly, it should not be discounted that Sunny's queer identity forms an overriding impetus for reassessing her identity and asserting her autonomy in a more public manner. Thus, coming-of-age and coming out within the screenplay are inextricably intertwined. *Sunny with a Chance* positions 'coming out' as coming of age and coming into one's own identity.

## **CREATIVE CONSIDERATIONS**

Initially, I imagined the story as a far more simplistic vision, following similar veins to its current iteration, but involving a heterosexual Indian protagonist falling for a Caucasian male. It was only after a suggestion from my supervisor - at a time where I had just begun to accept and explore my sexuality - that I decided to reconsider the gender of the love interest and sexual orientation of the protagonist. This major revision created a space for extensive exploration into my own identity and sexuality and my

experiences did much to inform my representation of Sunny. Moreover, this approach, focusing on distinctly *non-heteronormative* interracial love, is something that has not been widely explored in popular films involving Indian and Caucasian couples - such as *Bend It Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002), *The Mistress of Spices* (Burgess, 2005), or *The Other End of The Line* (Dodson, 2008). Where interracial coupling is frowned upon in the Indian community (even under a South African democracy), homosexual relationships are unconscionable, disgraceful and misguided. It is time these ideologies are more widely and publicly challenged. Further to this, I feel that this major revision facilitated a deeper probing into the themes of womanhood, female companionship and connection, which are extremely relevant in today's socio-political climate.

Key to any discussion surrounding identity is the notion of representation. Responsible representation, an issue becoming increasingly foregrounded in contemporary content creation, was of great concern during my writing process. My anxiety, when it came to representing 'othered' groups in the screenplay, stemmed from the potential for misinterpretation on the reader's behalf (or inadequate explanation on mine). Would my writing inadvertently contribute to the very stereotypes and prejudices I wished to dismantle and perpetuate the narrow-minded thinking I was so fervently determined to change?

This was the foremost reason behind the decision to cull a main character in the screenplay. The character in question here was Senzo, Sunny's (would-be) gay best friend. This would prompt a near-total rewrite that I was unwilling to undertake: I felt that this character (despite existing within the repulsive 'gay best friend' cliché) was the life of the story. I struggled with representing him responsibly, constantly undermining my decisions and racking my brain, trying to manufacture a more authentic and resonant character arc. It was during a bout of writer's block that I realised the paradoxical answer. If I needed to labour so much over how Senzo might be forced into the narrative and afforded a purpose outside of Sunny, then surely he did not have a place in the narrative to begin with. Rather than incorporate a contrived, clichéd and underdeveloped character (belonging to an already misrepresented group), I acknowledged that it would be best to let him go, perhaps saving him in a personal character bank for later use as a main character in another story.

This exclusion radically impacted both the content and cadence of *Sunny with a Chance*. It granted additional time and space within the plot to develop Sunny and Naomi's relationship, in a far more contemplative manner. Here, I was inspired by Marianne and Héloïse in *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*. The protagonists' lingering gazes and coy smirks are a language unto their own, their bodies and behaviours betray the crux of their attraction, despite their terse and professional conversation. Having removed Senzo from the narrative - where he had essentially functioned as an expositional plot device, introducing Sunny to queerness and providing context for Naomi's background of wealth privilege - Sunny is allowed

to come to these realisations in a more nuanced manner. Her journey to questioning heteronormativity is one that is deeply self-exploratory; signalled through the research of queer artists and the new perspective bestowed by her camera lens. Additionally, the companionship Sunny had found in Senzo is now found in Naomi (once the two overcome their early rivalry) enabling a much richer connection and stronger development of their bond.

This endeavour toward responsible representation is also vividly true of the protagonist. Sunny is not intended as an apologist or sympathiser of the problematic tendencies of Indian parents. She is an irrevocably unorthodox South African Indian daughter character, who actively resists the restrictive expectations placed upon her and readily confronts predefined ideas of normalcy and authenticity. Yet at the same time, the script also acknowledges the bond between parents and child and how this complicates Sunny's challenging of these ideologies.

I was likewise intent on avoiding the vilification of Sunny's parents, Arjun and Dimple, by sketching them with crude and unsophisticated pencil strokes that might relate an unobjectionably negative portrayal. Characters, like the people that inhabit our everyday lives, have individually-justified motivations for why they undertake certain decisions and act in the ways they do. Sunny's parents do actually care. They want the best for their child (the age old Indian adage) but their means of encouraging, or enforcing, this may be misguided. In this way, I hope to at least imbue these characters with some semblance of agency or relatability, even if they are terribly problematic with misplaced intentions. However, it is important to maintain, in my characterisations of Arjun and Dimple, that I am in no way justifying or condoning their (or the Indian community's) potentially discriminatory and unhealthy behaviour. Instead, the audience are offered a glimpse into their interiority and into the realities of the South African Indian community. Their depictions are based on what I have personally seen and heard from my and other Indian parents. Representation, most strikingly in this situation, is a fine balancing act.

Another consideration of mine was location, especially the protagonist's move from her small hometown to Cape Town's bustling metropolis. It can be argued that the urban centre is enables and is key to Sunny's exploration and performance of queerness, most conspicuously in the context of the Global South (Nabutanyi, 2018: 82-83). In this way, the city almost becomes a metaphor for cosmopolitanism, enlightenment and acceptance (83). Characters are granted the freedom to dream, as Sunny does when she begins to question the boundaries and barriers of the cultural expectations imposed upon her. Similarly, Sunny's hometown may also denote these same restrictive cultural biases and traditional ideals.

Artistic practice, in the screenplay, functions as a blank canvas with which Sunny is able to express and experiment with her identity. Art is an extension of the most rebellious, playful, and authentic facets of her

personality and this is literalised in how Sunny engages with art throughout the film. The more she embraces and ceases to repress the 'unorthodox' aspects of herself (her sexuality and authentic voice, in this case), the more she is able to succeed at her passion. Therefore, visual art is very much a reprieve and liberating force within Sunny's world, whilst existing concurrently as a means of identity performance. Art, specifically in the form of experimental aesthetic elements, capacitates a unique intimacy in the screenplay, growing out of Sunny's own love for visual art. These flourishes, overlays, and animations offer a glimpse into Sunny's private world, and the imagination that fuels her passion for art. We are also able to experience the character's interiority through the black 'noise' and darker elements of animation. Here, creativity becomes a definitive narrative device. It is also through artistic practice that she is forced together with Naomi, the impetus of their relationship. Even Naomi's love of poetry forms an avenue through which to explore the depth of Naomi and Sunny's bond.

In exploring art, and documenting her world through a lens, Sunny focuses on Naomi and their bond as a primary source of inspiration. Whilst the concept of the female muse and the gaze is rather anachronistic, I would like to believe that this female gaze, as in *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (Syme, 2020), departs from its misogynistic patriarchal beginnings and instead confers power to the subject. In this case, the gaze, evinced in Sunny's film and photographs, also form testimony for the intense and beautiful bond shared by the two characters.

Additionally, *Sunny with a Chance* eschews tropes of desire employed by many popular films in their illustration of queer characters. The narrative repudiates expectations and outcomes of desire typical in queer (mainly female same-sex), coming-of-age and romantic narratives (Jonet, 2017: 1139). Characters are not concretely paired off by the end. None have 'openly come out' - a seemingly Western expectation of the genre. Additionally, Sunny defies Western performances of queerness, in her more quiet meditation of her sexuality.

Perhaps a controversial decision is that of Naomi's somewhat stunted character arc. By the end of the narrative, Naomi has everything she wanted, having realised her true ambition and acted upon that passion. She receives a lump sum generously gifted from her wealthy mother for the purpose of opening a ceramics boutique. This may appear a cop-out, as Naomi does not completely develop as a character by the end of the script, and ultimately plays into (or perhaps embraces) the labels of privilege that she initially scorned. However, I feel that the current ending reflects a more realistic a portrayal of privilege. Naomi could be shown to have worked as a lowly intern for a couture ceramics retailer, or suffered (slight) disapproval and condemnation from her parents (certainly not as severe as that from Sunny's parents), but I do not feel that this representation would be credible, or even responsible. In addition to this, she does develop as a character and moves away from her initial antagonistic role. Naomi is

revealed as a more complex character with her own struggles and grows through opposing societal and self-imposed expectations.

Some discussion of the screenplay's resolution is also due. The final scenes of the film deliberately occupy a liminal space. Grant Andrews asserts that South African films have become "liminal in nature as well as liminal in approach... and create liminalities, spaces outside of space where queer subjects and same-sex intimacies can exist" (2018:53). The concept of 'liminality' in the fields of anthropology, psychology and literary theory generally denotes in-between moments, spaces, states or people (53). According to Bjorn Thomassen, the term may also be applied to minority groups (2009: 97). Victor Turner goes further to claim that these peoples exist "in another place [and] have physical but not social reality, hence they have to be hidden, since it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there" (97). Andrews acknowledges that although Thomassen's definition describes stateless people or illegal immigrants (19), he believes that it may be applied to "queer individuals in oppressive societies like South Africa, who are excluded culturally and invisibilised in many ways" (53). Queer bodies in South Africa exist in such 'in-between' spaces, where they are simultaneously present and excluded, vocal but silenced, and constitutionally free to perform their sexuality but inhibited, invisibilised and brutalised in society.

Andrews also articulates that a substantial number of films exploring South African queer experiences embrace the concept of the liminal space (2018: 53). For Sunny, liminality exists in practically every facet of her identity - culturally, sexually, socially, and racially. Culturally, Sunny is encouraged to maintain her diasporic Indian heritage and ancestry, as well as the according ideals. Yet, at the same time, Sunny comes of age in a globalised world, with overwhelmingly diverse and cosmopolitan sensibilities. She, like many youths today, must navigate and reconcile these two (often opposing) forces. This is intrinsic to Sunny's social experiences, particularly the way in which she relates to her parents. Sunny concurrently strives to please and respect them - thus fulfilling the role of the 'good, Indian daughter' - but also desperately seeks to concretise her own voice and experiment with her newly attained liberty. Sexually, Sunny attempts to maintain a heterosexual persona when interacting with those more traditionally-aligned (her parents), whereas in reality, she identifies herself as queer. There seems to be something almost unspeakable in Sunny's relationship with Naomi, neither ever truly announcing or officiating their bond, though still acknowledging what they have between them. This is also addressed in the relationship's racial liminality and the reconciliation of according traditions and beliefs.

Due to the inherently liminal nature of the screenplay's subject matter, it seems apt then to underscore this 'in-between' nature in the final scenes. The sequence moves between liminal spaces; a staircase, an airport, packing up in the deserted exhibition space. These scenes prompt the audience to contemplate the uncertainty of the future, but not exclude the possibility of hope.

The sequence is intended to be exceptionally quiet and understated, paired with the muffled peripheral conversations of the exhibition space and airport. Previously, I referenced the screenplay's reliance on softness and quiet, and how this correlates with the introverted vocalisations of queerness associated with the Global South. In a similar vein, I wished to impress upon the viewer Sunny's private and personal grappling with her identity in the final sequence. We cannot hear the words spoken between Arjun, Dimple, Sunny and Naomi. In Sunny's performance of identity and initiation of self-knowledge, and in many of ours, words often seem to fail, where action and emotion prevails. Similarly, the audience is not left with words, but instead a sentiment or feeling. 'In these silences, we find that queer desire remains' (LaRue, 2017: 112).

Additionally, I recognise that to resolve all of the complex issues explored in the screenplay - within the limited scope of one hundred pages - would mean potentially discrediting the journeys and challenges of certain queer identities. Portraying a 'happy' or neatly-resolved ending would then become derivative and essentialist. In order to emphasise the complex nature of Sunny's identity and its intersectional nature, I have chosen to end the screenplay in a liminal space, without providing concrete answers regarding Sunny's future. As in Celine Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, what is of significance here is the journey, not the ending. We have experienced falling in love and the companionship felt between Naomi and Sunny. Their bond and story is the crux of the narrative. I would like *Sunny with a Chance*, therefore, not to be remembered for a melodramatic ending, as so many other films depicting culturally diverse relationships are, but as an ode to love - whether heterosexual, homosexual or anything else.

## **CONCLUSION**

As one of very few South African feature film scripts to explore queer identities in young Indian women of colour, *Sunny with a Chance* initiates a dialogue surrounding performances of queerness as portrayed in the Global South. It validates more introverted expressions of queerness, but also provides a lens into the realities of homonegativity within the South African Indian community.

In the same way, the screenplay forefronts that coming of age may also be construed as a search for cultural and ethnic belonging. Sunny's navigation of the tension between traditional expectation and individual authenticity is key to her self-realisation. Coming out facilitates the process of coming of age, in that Sunny inhabits the liminal space of being required to accept her truth in order to grow and must mature and concretise her identity in order to embrace her sexuality. The refocusing on 'alternate' narratives encourages more progressive representations of minority groups - especially within the Global South - whilst resisting prototypical whitewashing in these films.

Additionally, the script prompts conversations about identity by appealing to youths through the use of tone and genre. These groups identify with the light-hearted and accessible mode of Indie film, which has come to connote authenticity and rebellion. Although the screenplay selectively employs the aesthetic and ideological tenets of the Indie genre, it rejects the whitewashing typical of the genre. Instead, it advocates for the recognition of lived experiences emerging from disenfranchised groups, particularly in the Global South. We are granted access to Sunny's interiority through the artistic and experimental elements included in the script. These components add a level of authenticity to Sunny's story, allowing for easier identification and access to her experiences.

An ideological shift in society, initiated through popular media, is necessary to cultivate more sensitive and progressive representations of minority identities, especially those existing liminal spaces. *Sunny with a Chance* hopes to contribute to this endeavour - through initiating a dialogue surrounding identity, authenticity and expectation.

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# SUNNY WITH A CHANCE



**CREATIVE PRODUCTION**  
*Feature-length Screenplay*

*Upasna Maharaj*

# TREATMENT AND PRODUCTION INFORMATION

## GENRE

Indie Coming of Age Drama

## DURATION

100 minutes

## LOGLINE

Sunny, a university fresher, sets her eyes on a significant award, but inadvertently falls for her rival. Despite cultural expectations and biases, Sunny discovers that being different isn't a crime.

## SYNOPSIS

*Sunny with a Chance* follows Sunitha 'Sunny' Singh as she navigates the throes of first year university. Sunny, an atypical South African Indian girl, moves cities to study her passion of art. After a confession from her parents that they won't be able to subsidise her university fees, Sunny's only options are winning one of the most coveted first year awards, or studying a fully-funded accounting degree that her orthodox parents surreptitiously applied to. Sunny sets her eyes on the illustrious New Signatures award. But she isn't the only student gunning for the prize. Naomi Mason, who oozes effortless confidence and talent (with privilege to match), poses more of a challenge than Sunny initially bargained for.

Sunny is forced to come face to face with Naomi at university. Up close and personal, the pull between the sworn rivals becomes undeniable. They soon develop a bond, complicated by the presence of Sunny's mother, seconded to the city for work. Sunny must confront uncomfortable truths: she knows the unapologetic love offered to her by Naomi is something her parents, burdened with longstanding cultural biases, could never accept. No good Indian girl would be caught dead in such a situation. Nevertheless, Sunny, nodding to the rebellious artist within her, musters up the courage to pursue her truth.

Just as Sunny begins to make major strides in her relationship and at university, Sunny and Naomi's secret is outed. Sunny's disgraced parents propose an impossible ultimatum: stop seeing Naomi or drop out. Sunny submits. Aggrieved, Sunny slips into a hazy dolour, forgetting her studies and commitment to the prize. Eventually, she slinks back to Naomi, the agony of guilt replacing grief. Although Sunny's grades have suffered, she channels her chaos into art and bounces back in time for the yearend prize-giving and exhibition. Yet, what is intended to be the best day of Sunny's life turns out to be her worst. Sunny's parents' make a surprise appearance, and glimpse the two back together. A hope for maybes as Sunny, her parents and Naomi sit down together.

## AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

I am a great lover of the Indie Coming-of-Age genre. But I never see, in these texts, anyone that looks like me, who share my sensibilities and cultural concerns. The stories and histories in this genre largely account for white experience and identity. On the other hand, perhaps due to the invisibilising of these identities in Indian societies, the narratives of queer South African Indian women coming of age and coming out are rarely seen on screen. With *Sunny with a Chance*, I hope to shift the focus to telling their (similar, but unarguably different) stories, sparking a change in the dialogue surrounding these individuals.

**ADDENDUM TO SCREENPLAY**  
**VISUAL REFERENCES**

Because both art and film are primarily visual mediums and only so much can be conveyed through written word, I have included here some visual references.

These references relate only to the experimental and artistic components of *Sunny with a Chance*, that tend to elude the typically succinct and pared-down description necessitated by the screenplay format. While I have attempted to illustrate these elements as accurately as possible in action description, due to their visceral quality, certain details are lost in 'translation.' To remedy this, I have included example images of these ideas might look like.

I have not included reference material, such as the mood board and visual inspiration for other aspects (characters, locations, key objects), as I hope their essence is more easily conveyed through the action description of the screenplay.

**Pg. 29**

**Naomi's Lively and Expressive Figure Drawings**

The artworks below reflect the imagined style of Naomi's figure drawing, in their use of loose and expressive strokes to suggest form and shadow.



Left: Overfield, D. 2015. *Drawing 396* [charcoal drawing]. Los Angeles: Private collection.

Right: Chai, K. 2020. *Untitled* [charcoal drawing]. California: unknown.

**Pg. 27, 30**

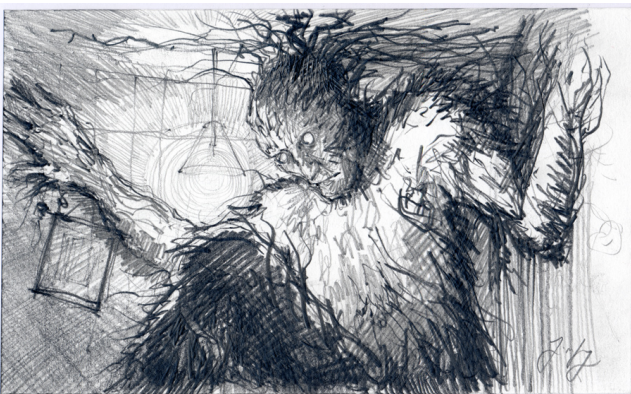
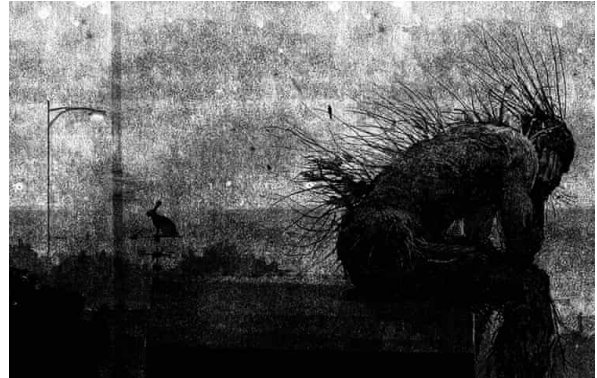
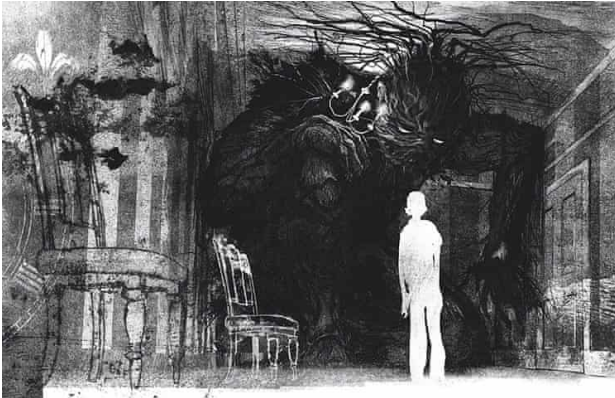
**Sunny's anatomical disasters:** terrible studies of the human body that become disproportioned zombie-like figures, animated with a flurry of agitated and writhing lines.

The following images represent much of the inspiration for the experimental elements in *Sunny with a Chance*. These particular components are intended to reveal Sunny's internal world and mental state.

The below illustrations, as they are, may seem inappropriate in juxtaposition with the tone and themes of *Sunny with a Chance*. However, my imagined 'anatomical disasters' adopt a similar, but simplified, style to that of the illustrations.

This is to ensure that they exist not as a 'singular artwork' but as 'artistic elements' interacting with and enhancing the story of *Sunny with a Chance*.

Think of the animation of the maggot-infested pig in Charlie Kaufmann's *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* (2020).



Above images selected from the graphic novel "A Monster Called" illustrated by Jim Kay.

Ness, P., Kay, J., & Dowd, S. (2011). *A Monster Calls*. Somerville, Mass, Candlewick Press.

Left: Sally Muir, Unknown.

Pg. 89

**Sunny's Nightmare**

The scene describes a wolfish hound with red and bleeding eyes, a milky-eyed horse, rotting flesh hanging off the bone, and an animated figure shrouded in dark and vibrating scribbles (dressed like a dishevelled circus man).

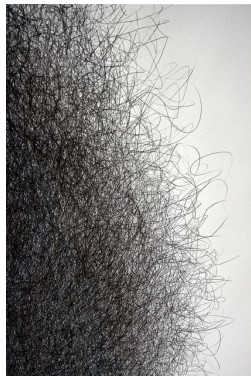
Below are personal drawings of the animals. The animated figure would be rendered similarly to the Jim Kay's illustrations above and simplified in terms of the writhing scribbles below.



Pg. 19, 20, 89, 100

**Writhing black scribbles (internal noise)**

This is an animated element which would overlay the video.



Left: Nystrom, M. 2012. *Winds* [pen drawing]. Unknown.

Right: Turton, V. 2015. *Ritual Drawing (detail)* [pen drawing]. Unknown.

**ADDENDUM TO SCREENPLAY**

**POETRY**

**Pg. 63-64**

**When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer**

BY WALT WHITMAN

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure  
them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause  
in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

**Pg. 100**

**Movement Song**

BY AUDRE LORDE

I have studied the tight curls on the back of your neck  
moving away from me  
beyond anger or failure  
your face in the evening schools of longing  
through mornings of wish and ripen  
we were always saying goodbye  
in the blood in the bone over coffee  
before dashing for elevators going  
in opposite directions  
without goodbyes.

Do not remember me as a bridge nor a roof  
as the maker of legends  
nor as a trap  
door to that world  
where black and white clericals  
hang on the edge of beauty in five oclock elevators  
twitching their shoulders to avoid other flesh  
and now  
there is someone to speak for them  
moving away from me into tomorrows  
morning of wish and ripen  
your goodbye is a promise of lightning  
in the last angels hand  
unwelcome and warning  
the sands have run out against us  
we were rewarded by journeys  
away from each other  
into desire  
into mornings alone  
where excuse and endurance mingle  
conceiving decision.  
Do not remember me  
as disaster  
nor as the keeper of secrets  
I am a fellow rider in the cattle cars  
watching  
you move slowly out of my bed  
saying we cannot waste time  
only ourselves.

Audre Lorde, "Movement Song" from *From a Land Where Other People Live*.  
Copyright © 1973 by Audre Lorde. Source: *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*  
(W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1997)

I chose not to include Audre Lorde's full poem in the dialogue of the screenplay as it is quite a long poem and the action description of the montage, in which it appears, is short. This is also to promote clarity in the action description of the scene.

SUNNY WITH A CHANCE

Written by

Upasna Maharaj

upasna.maharaj471@gmail.com  
082 786 8131

INT. SINGH RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S BEDROOM - EARLY HOURS

A full, messy bedroom.

Remnants of childhood: photographs and posters plastered on wall, cupboards adorned with stickers, a collection of much-loved Du Mauriers.

Our protagonist, SUNITHA 'SUNNY' SINGH (17) digs in a drawer. Yawns, as she pulls out some vintage dungarees.

Out slips an old photograph, but Sunny doesn't notice.

She tosses the dungarees into her luggage bag strewn open on the floor.

Sunny slams the bag shut and sits down on it, tugging the zippers together with all her might until they *almost* meet.

Sunny takes a breather, resting elbows on knees. Attempts to rub the sleep out of her eyes.

The photograph on the parquet flooring catches Sunny's attention. She moves to pick it up.

INSERT - old photograph

Sunny, miniaturised, grins ear to ear as she holds up her prize painting of an owl along with a 1st Place Rosette.

Parents on either side.

Sunny flips the photograph over.

Perfect cursive in scratchy blue ballpoint pen, on yellowed photograph paper:

Arjun, Sunitha & Dimple Singh

Grade 1 Art Exhibition

Not far from where the picture had emerged, an old, banged-up Kodak film camera peeks out amongst reams of handled drawings and paper mâché disasters.

Sunny sets the photograph down.

Fishes the old device out. Turns it over in her hands.

She pries the dungarees from the bag, bundles the camera in them. Stuffs them, along with the photograph, back into her luggage.

From elsewhere in the house, DIMPLE SINGH (42) calls.

DIMPLE (O.S.)  
Sunitha, don't forget to pack your  
*Bhagavad Gita*!

The sacred Hindu text sits thick and heavy on Sunny's shelf.

Meanwhile, the travel bag seems ready to burst open.

Sunny retrieves the book and wedges it into her bag. A defiant corner protrudes amongst the clothes.

Sunny begins wrenching the zippers toward one another again, but they refuse to meet. The corner of the *Bhagavad Gita* remains poking out.

She hurls herself atop the suitcase, leaning over to compress the contents and yanks at the zippers once more.

Still they don't budge.

ARJUN SINGH (45) raps on Sunny's closed door, his footsteps CLACKING on wood as he flurries past.

ARJUN (O.S.)  
C'mon girls! Let's go! Let's go!

Sunny bites her lower lip and pauses for a moment. Removes the sacred book.

She's now *just* able to tease the zippers closed.

Sunny flops over on her back atop the suitcase.

EXT. KING SHAKA AIRPORT - HOURS BEFORE DAWN

SUNNY  
Why are we always late?

The Singh family vehicle swerves into a drop off area bay.

Rear lights dim.

DIMPLE  
This is not the time to be asking  
such questions.

INT. KING SHAKA AIRPORT - DOMESTIC DEPARTURES - EARLY HOURS

Arjun, Dimple and Sunny rush to the baggage check-in counter. Arjun manoeuvres the luggage trolley piled high with suitcases.

CUT TO:

According to the flight information board, Sunny's flight to Cape Town is boarding right now.

At the security check gate, Dimple hands Sunny a large, cumbersome cooler bag.

ARJUNBETI

Lunch Mummy made for you. Warm it up nicely before you eat it.

Dimple hands Sunny another cooler bag.

SUNNY

Thanks. Will this get through security?

Arjun considers this but Dimple simply ignores the comment.

DIMPLE

Don't forget to eat the *rhot*, it's *parsadum* (sanctified food).

Dimple grabs Sunny and kisses her goodbye.

ARJUN

We love you, *beti*.

Sunny hugs her dad tightly.

CUT TO:

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT (29) at Sunny's boarding gate makes an announcement over the intercom.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

This is the final call for passenger Sunitha Singh on Flight FA607 to Cape Town. Please identify yourself-

She spots Sunny hobbling toward the boarding gate - saddled with two cooler bags, laptop case, backpack, and carry-on luggage.

The flight attendant hangs up the intercom and yells to Sunny down the corridor.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)  
Run faster! We're going to offload  
you!

INT. BOEING 737 AIRCRAFT - DAWN

Sunny gazes through the airplane window.

The PILOT makes an announcement over the intercom.

PILOT (VO)  
Good morning, it's your pilot  
speaking to you from the flight  
deck. We'll be making our descent  
into Cape Town in the next ten  
minutes.

Below Sunny, the city of Cape Town - finally.

The rising sun bathes sky, sea and mountains in a wash of  
gold.

PILOT (VO) (CONT'D)  
A gentle tailwind should carry us  
through to an early landing.  
Weather looking good this morning;  
sunny with a chance of showers.

Sunny sighs deeply.

INSERT title card: Sunny with a Chance

EXT. MONS MENSÆ ACADEMY OF ART - CAMPUS - LATE MORNING

Sunny races down the plazas and pathways of a sprawling  
campus and navigates her way through throngs of students into  
an ivy-adorned building.

INT. MONS MENSÆ ACADEMY - LECTURE HALL - MIDDAY

A few LECTURERS stand at the front of the old hall. Seventy  
bright faces opposite them in the pews.

On a pull-down white screen, a slideshow projected.

INSERT slideshow:

Welcome to The Mons Mensæ Academy  
of Art!  
BA Fine Art  
Orientation

Lecturers DAMIAN (56), ATHENKOSI (60) and others introduce the students to the course and discuss expectations.

DAMIAN

You're not in high school anymore.  
You are responsible for yourself.  
It is your duty to keep up to date  
with assignments.

Sunny bursts through the wooden doors of the lecture hall.

Damian and the class pause to look at her.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

I know you all think you're the  
next Basquiat, but punctuality must  
be observed. Especially in the art  
world.

Sunny hangs her head and takes the first available seat, next to a boy typing away at a laptop decorated with society and club stickers.

Instead of paying attention, Sunny studies her peers. Her lecturer's address fades to a muffled drone.

Sunny glances down at her plain attire - standard jeans and a loose-fitting t-shirt. She is dressed very conservatively, in comparison to the glitter-cheeked, hair-dyed, skin-pierced, free-spirited style of those around her.

NAOMI MASON (19), for example, who sits directly in front of Sunny, dons a my Little Pony crop, revealing a tattoo of a spotted dog. Her dark bob frames glitter-glued cheekbones and dark almond eyes.

Naomi turns briefly to look at Sunny and places an attendance register on the lecture pew in front of her.

Sunny glances at it momentarily. Purses her lips and takes on air of confidence.

She taps Naomi on the shoulder. Naomi whips around.

SUNNY

Can I borrow a pen?

NAOMI

Late and unprepared?

She sighs and turns away.

Sunny bites back a retort.

Naomi retrieves a pen for Sunny from her tote bag and offers it to Sunny.

SUNNY  
(reluctantly)  
Thanks.

She signs her name on the register and passes the pen back.

NAOMI  
At least bring a pen next time.

Naomi flicks her hair over a shoulder and returns to watching Damian again.

Sunny is stunned by the exchange.

Naomi raises her hand, in the middle of Fabian's drawl.

DAMIAN  
Yes?

Sunny snaps out of her interior conversation, as attention is drawn to Naomi. Lays down her ballpoint pen.

NAOMI  
Naomi Mason.  
(beat)  
What about the end of year art  
exhibition and prize giving?

A wave of murmurs washes over the room of students.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Will it be held this year?

Athenkosi steps forward to speak.

Silence. Sunny watches intently.

ATHENKOSI  
We will be hosting the exhibition  
and prize giving this year, and we  
expect you to offer your best  
selves. The New Signatures Award  
is, after all, the most sought  
after undergraduate achievement in  
our discipline.

Nearby, ANDY DECKARD (18) shakes his head.

ANDY  
(beneath his breath)  
Why should us plebs even try?

Naomi glares at him, disbelieving.

NAOMI  
(loudly)  
What did you say?

All the students in the lecture theatre snap around to get a better view of Naomi and Andy. Tensions are running high.

DAMIAN  
Now-now, students.

ANDY  
(loudly now)  
You ever done anything on your own strength, trust-fund baby?

Naomi's face goes red. All eyes on her.

ANONYMOUS STUDENT (O.S.)  
Ohh shitt!

She lunges over her pew at her accuser.

Damian shrieks.

NAOMI  
(through clenched teeth)  
Fuck you.

Sunny huffs softly.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - QUAD - AFTERNOON

The sun is out. O-Week Expo is alive and bustling.

Sunny wanders between brightly coloured tents.

Sunny spots Naomi and turns abruptly in the opposite direction, busying herself at the nearest tent.

She finds more appropriate company with ZETHU (19) at the "Film, Art and Music Society" tent.

Zethu peeks out from behind a stack of books on the trestle table.

ZETHU  
Hey, I saw you at orientation today. I'm Zethu.

SUNNY  
Sunitha. Er. Sunny.

Zethu raises a brow but let's it go.

ZETHU  
So New Signatures! How wild?

Zethu widens his eyes on the word 'wild.'

SUNNY  
Totally. Who's your bet on?

ZETHU  
Well, Naomi is quite obviously a strong contender.

Sunny scoffs.

SUNNY  
The girl who tried to lay one on that other kid?

ZETHU  
(adopting a posh accent)  
She was born from the artist's womb.

Sunny raises her eyebrows.

ZETHU (CONT'D)  
But literally. Her mom's an artist. They own a gallery and everything.  
(reconsidering)  
But I don't know everyone. There could be a few *wild cards*.

Sunny only rolls her eyes in response.

SUNNY  
What's the big deal anyway?

ZETHU  
Subsidised fees for the whole of undergrad? An internship working under a prominent artist? Wouldn't you want that?

SUNNY  
My brown parents would.

ZETHU  
Right?!

Sunny huffs.

ZETHU (CONT'D)  
 Anyway, I'm supposed to be  
 convincing you to join the *fam*.

She hands Sunny a pamphlet, which she skims.

SUNNY  
 The *fam*?

ZETHU  
 Film, Art and Music Society. FAM?  
 But, y'know, we're also one big  
 family-

Sunny looks up, laughing.

SUNNY  
 - of nerds? No convincing needed.

ZETHU  
 You should come to our 'Welcome to  
 the FAM' party next Saturday. See  
 what it's all about.

Zethu gives Sunny a wink. The corners of Sunny's lips turn up  
 in a contemplative smile.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

A shared student bedroom, bright, and in the process of  
 becoming homey.

Sunny speaks to her parents over Skype.

Sunny's roommate, GABBI (19), is sprawled on her bed,  
 earphones in, bopping her head to her favourite song.

DIMPLE  
 Do you know you left the *Bhagavad*  
*Gita* at home?

SUNNY  
 (casually)  
 I did? Must've slipped my mind.

DIMPLE  
 (aggravated)  
 'Slipped your mind?' I'm sure I  
 told you-

SUNNY  
 -But don't you want to hear about  
 my first two weeks at uni?

Dimple purses her lips. Arjun chuckles.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I joined a society and made a friend! Her name is Zethu.

DIMPLE

A nice, decent girl, I hope?

ARJUN

Choose your friends wisely! Does she have any dirty habits?

In the periphery, Gabbi snips something into fine pieces.

SUNNY

I don't know, I just met her.

Arjun's eyes go wide.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

(quickly)

And anyway, I'm here to study.

ARJUN

That's my girl.

DIMPLE

(softly, to Arjun)

Maybe we shouldn't discourage her from making friends. Remember what happened in high school?

SUNNY

(mortified)

Oh my god, Mum! I can hear you! And that was one time-

ARJUN

*Ye Bagwaan!*

Sunny reaches for a glass of water on her bedside table.

In the background, Gabbi begins rolling up a joint, but Sunny doesn't notice.

DIMPLE

-we only want to set you in good stead. You should meet up with your cousin while you're in town. Such a lovely girl. So friendly. But always polite.

SUNNY

Kiyarah is a boring goody-two-shoes.

ARJUN

She doesn't have wild tendencies,  
like drinking and *jolling*. That's  
how she got into BCom: hard work.

Sunny raises the glass and does a mock jiggle. Arjun laughs.

DIMPLE

(sighing)

It's difficult to find girls like  
her these days.

Sunny raises her eyebrows but Dimple doesn't notice.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

I can't wait to see her when I come  
to Cape Town for my secondment.

Sunny regards her mother, stunned.

SUNNY

Um, hello? Your daughter here?

ARJUN

Come on, Sunitha.

Sunny takes a sip of water from the glass.

DIMPLE

You girls could "Netflix and  
Chill"! Or whatever you youngsters  
do these days!

Sunny almost chokes on the water. Promptly sets the glass  
down on the side table.

SUNNY

Please don't ever say "Netflix and  
Chill" again.

DIMPLE

Don't worry, darling. I'll be  
joining you soon-soon. Then *I*  
can be your Cape Town friend.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I have friends!

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Won't you be working?

DIMPLE

I'll be there for two *months*, not a  
few hours! And it's just system  
upgrades - all routine - but I'm  
the only one who can do it.

(MORE)

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

So not so busy that I won't have  
time to see my baby girl!

SUNNY

And Kiyarah, apparently.

ARJUN

One day, we won't be here to-

SUNNY

Dad, stop! Not again!

Gabbi is now licking the tobacco paper to form a perfect  
cross joint.

ARJUN

You can't deny the truth, *beti*.

SUNNY

Don't say things like that!  
(changing the subject)  
I must tell you about our new  
project for printmaking.

Arjun and Dimple glance at one another, as if sharing some  
secret sentiment.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - PRINTMAKING STUDIO - DAY

SUNNY (VO)

So we had to make an image that  
symbolises who we are, but it had  
to include our initials.

Sunny draws a combination of waves, *mendhi* designs and  
flowers around a two letter 's' serifs on a linoleum sheet  
with pencil.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I chose waves, which are  
tumultuous, but also majestic and  
beautiful. Life is like that, you  
know? And flowers. I had to have  
flowers.

The image becomes animated.

DIMPLE

For *Saraswati-ma*?

SUNNY

Sure.

Waves crash over the initials, around which flowers creep.

The designs come to life, all as Sunny plans out her piece.

She begins to cut into the linoleum sheet, which SUPERIMPOSES and FADES into the printed finished edition.

SUNNY (VO) (CONT'D)

The lecturer really liked mine. I think it was the best.

DIMPLE

Sunitha, is that smoke?

FLASHBACK ENDS:

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

SUNNY

Wha-what? Where?

It is only when Sunny moves her laptop screen that she sees that Gabbi has lit up on the bed across from her.

Sunny glances up at the smoke detector, sheathed in a condom.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ.

ARJUN

What was that?

All Dimple and Arjun can see are Sunny's posters of artworks by Raja Ravi Varma, Athi-Patra Ruga, and Paula Rego, and the photo of her family at her primary school art competition.

Sunny mouths the words 'WHAT THE HECK' at Gabbi, who shrugs, then offers the joint to Sunny.

DIMPLE

I saw smoke-

Sunny, big eyes, mouths an elaborate 'NO.'

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

Beti, are you ok?

Gabbi takes another long drag.

ARJUN

Sunitha?

SUNNY

(sweetly)

Just one moment, Mummy and Daddy.  
It seems Gabbi has burnt her  
dinner. Let me go help her.

Before her parents respond, Sunny hits the mute button on the call, wrenches off her earphones and thrusts the laptop down.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

We talked about this!

Gabbi shrugs. Poised to take another drag.

But before the joint can reach Gabbi's lips, it is snatched away by Sunny.

Gabbi leaps toward Sunny and attempts to prise it from her grasp. The two roll about, wrestling over the joint.

Sunny drops the lit cross joint in the glass of water on her bed side table and promptly flings the contents of the glass out the window into a thicket of bushes.

Gabbi lets out a howl and scampers for the door.

Sunny smells her fingers, grimaces and goes to the bathroom to wash her hands.

Sunny stares into the eyes of her reflection.

Then returns to her bed and resumes the call.

ARJUN

Everything okay?

SUNNY

Yes. Anyway, as I was saying, I'm  
doing pretty well!

(jokingly)

At this rate, I might even win the  
New Signatures award.

DIMPLE

(sheepishly)

Would it help cover your school  
fees?

SUNNY

Theoretically. But only if I won.

A pregnant pause.

DIMPLE  
Sunitha, we need to tell you  
something.

ARJUN  
Now we don't want you to fret.

Sunny's brow furrows.

SUNNY  
Tell me.

DIMPLE  
Your father is being hospitalised  
tomorrow.

SUNNY  
For what? He's fine!  
(to Arjun)  
You're fine, aren't you, Dad?

Arjun chews his lower lip.

ARJUN  
It's my gall bladder. They have to  
take it out.

SUNNY  
Stones again? Can't they dissolve  
them?

DIMPLE  
I am afraid not. It's worse now.  
He's been in terrible pain,  
constantly vomiting.

Arjun shoots Dimple a look, as if to say 'enough'.

Sunny is unable to speak.

ARJUN  
It's a fairly simple procedure,  
*beti*. I'll be out of hospital  
within a day.

DIMPLE  
But your father's not on medical  
aid. We'll manage, I just-  
(sighing)  
-I don't know how we'll afford the  
rest of your school fees.

Sunny's eyes are wide with fear.

Eventually she speaks, her mind made up.

SUNNY

I'll sort it out. Dad needs to get better. That's the most important thing.

Her parents give her a sympathetic smile.

Got to go. I promise to call you tomorrow evening after the procedure. I love you both so much.

ARJUN

We love you, *beti*.

Sunny shuts the laptop. Hands on her head as she falls back onto her bed.

INT. STUDENT DIGS - LOUNGE - EARLY EVENING

A speaker blares folk pop. Various individuals mull about in easy conversation across the domestic setting.

Naomi and Zethu are among a small group huddled together watching a film - *The Lighthouse* - projected onto a wall.

Above the projection, a banner reads 'Welcome to the FAM: Film, Art and Music Society'.

INT. STUDENT DIGS - BALCONY - EARLY EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Sunny sits opposite Andy, chessboard on the patio table between them.

Andy thinks hard while Sunny plays Candy Crush on her phone. Finally, Andy makes his move.

Sunny finishes her glass of wine, sets her phone on the table and moves her queen.

SUNNY

Checkmate.

Andy flips the board, sending the pieces flying.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Better pick that up.

Sunny rises, scoops up her wine glass, and leaves.

Her phone, forgotten on the table, vibrates. Dimple's face appears on the screen, along with the text 'Mummy'.

INT. STUDENT DIGS - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A student kitchen. Cheap veneered counter tops, fridge from the 90s (yellowing slightly) and plastic wine glasses.

Sunny sloshes box wine into her empty glass, and all over counter.

PARTIER

Take it easy, lightweight!

Sighing, Sunny eyes the spill threatening to splash onto the tiled floor.

She takes a discarded dishtowel and wipes down the counter in exaggerated strokes. Admires her handy work.

She picks up the glass and downs it promptly.

INT. STUDENT DIGS - KITCHEN - LATER

Sunny is alone in the kitchen, washing dishes at a small sink.

Naomi enters the kitchen, yellowing Antjie Krog anthology in hand. Pulls out a pack of Lucky Strikes and lights one up.

The vintage analogue clock above the kitchen door indicates that it's just after eleven.

Naomi leans back against the fridge in the dim light emerging from the door, cigarette bobbing between her lips. She thumbs through the anthology.

Naomi glances toward Sunny as if noticing her in the room for the first time. She monitors Sunny, hunched over at the sink, thinking extraordinarily hard about the already spotless mug she's scrubbing.

NAOMI

Didn't know you stayed here.

SUNNY

I don't.

Naomi goes back to her Antjie Krog. A snippet of raucous laughter escapes the lounge.

NAOMI

They're too loud for me to get any  
*meaningful* reading done, of course.

Sunny stops, hands submerged in dishwater.

She looks up, lost in thought for a moment.

Naomi eyes Sunny as she squeezes a spiral of dishwashing liquid onto a plate and begins to scrub.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Then why are you washing the  
dishes?

Sunny looks over at Naomi, opening her mouth to respond.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You don't live here?

Sunny pauses.

SUNNY

They're still dirty?

Naomi chuckles. Puts out her ciggie.

She moves toward the sink, takes the plate from Sunny and wipes it down.

The two continue their assembly line of crockery cleaning for a few quiet moments. The lull of music and conversation wafts in from the next room.

For a brief moment, Sunny comes to.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Why are you drying the dishes? You  
don't live here.

Naomi begins to laugh. Sunny smiles.

NAOMI

Am I imagining it or do these  
dishes smell like wine?

Naomi pulls Sunny closer, holds a cup up for her to smell.

They sniff the cup, their noses almost touching. Sunny bursts into laughter as she catches a whiff of the wine. Naomi too.

Sunny grabs the wine-drenched dishcloth and holds it up. The two stand giggling together.

Their laughter subsides. Naomi and Sunny are left gazing into the other's eyes.

Zethu enters, bearing Sunny's phone.

ZETHU  
Sunny, is this your phone?

Sunny's head snaps toward her.

ZETHU (CONT'D)  
Your mom has been trying to get a hold of you.

Sunny takes her phone from Zethu without a word.

She scrolls through reams of missed calls from Dimple and Kiyarah. Messages inquiring 'R u still goin to call ? Dad wud <3 to hear 4rm u' 'Where r u ?' 'R u ok? Pls respond'

Zethu and Naomi watch as Sunny rushes out of the kitchen.

INT. STUDENT DIGS - BATHROOM - LATER

Sunny locks herself in the bathroom.

Dark and frazzled scribbles circle her head like visual noise. Pale-faced and giddy, she leans against the door in the dark.

Sunny lurches toward the sink. Gulps water from the tap, then collapses in the empty bathtub, black noise still hovering over her.

She texts Dimple a message: 'Hi. How is Dad?'

Sunny's phone RINGS immediately. She lolls her head backward and answers.

DIMPLE (V.O)  
Sunitha? Are you okay?

SUNNY  
I'm fine. I was studying at a friend's and forgot about my phone.  
(weakly)  
You can call off the search party.

DIMPLE (V.O)  
You couldn't tell us you weren't going to call? Your father and I thought you were *dead*.

SUNNY  
I'm really sorry.

ARJUN (V.O.)  
Do they normally play the music so loud when you study?

SUNNY  
Yes, we're working on our art. Same as studying.

ARJUN (V.O.)  
Where are you, Sunny?

Sunny holds her head.

DIMPLE (V.O.)  
Are you lying to us? I called everyone. Do you know how disgraceful this is?

SUNNY  
I'm not lying.

DIMPLE  
I'm calling Kiyarah now to pick up you up.

SUNNY  
Don't. I'm going home now anyway.

ARJUN (V.O.)  
If you are throwing away our hard-earned money not taking your studies seriously, we will take you out of that nonsense art school.

SUNNY  
What? No.

DIMPLE (V.O.)  
Can't you just be a good daughter?

The scribbles writhe violently and expanding and contracting.

On the edge of tears, Sunny doesn't register Dimple's words.

SUNNY  
Don't take me out of school. I'm trying my best. I'm not lying!

ARJUN (V.O.)  
Just wait until Mummy comes there to sort you out!

(MORE)

ARJUN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Maybe if you were studying  
 accounting, like Kiyarah, you  
 wouldn't have time to fool arou-

SUNNY  
 (cutting the call)  
 No!

Sunny hunches over, sobbing into her knees.

Black noise engulfs her.

FADE TO:

EXT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - MORNING

Sunny is a motionless mound on the bed beneath her duvet.

Her phone vibrates on the bedside table.

She sticks out a hand from under the covers, grasping for the  
 cellphone. When found, she raises it to her ear.

SUNNY  
 Hello?

SPLIT SCREEN

Sunny, eyes still shut and in bed, on the LEFTHAND-SIDE.

On the RIGHTHAND-SIDE is Zethu in the First Year Studio  
 (bright, paint-splattered and bustling).

ZETHU  
 Hey. Just checking in. You left in  
 such a hurry last night.

Earphones in, Zethu adds a few brushstrokes to her study of  
 an apple.

SUNNY  
 I'm fine.

ZETHU  
 (awkwardly)  
 That's good.

SUNNY  
 Chat tomorrow, okay? Thanks for  
 checking up on me.

ZETHU

We could meet for coffee after our studio work dawnie? Lord knows I'll need a pick-me-up after our crit.

SUNNY

Crit?

ZETHU (CONT'D)

Like, I'm literally working right now.

ZETHU (CONT'D)

Our first group critique?

Zethu glances about the busy studio and over at Sunny's empty workspace.

Sunny's eyes fly open.

ZETHU (CONT'D)

Please tell me you didn't forget?

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - LATER

Sunny speeds in, carrying two takeaway coffee cups, and carefully dodges students in the crowded workspace.

She sets one next to Zethu's work station. Zethu looks up at Sunny, smiling in surprise.

SUNNY

I owe you one.

Zethu 'clinks' her coffee cup against Sunny's.

ZETHU

To not completely embarrassing ourselves in our first critique.

SUNNY

To churning out two weeks of art in one afternoon.

Sunny's smile falters when she looks over to Andy's brimming workstation.

Andy sits on his desk, swinging his legs idly, and eyes Naomi. He notices Sunny and jeers at her.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - MUCH LATER

Although dark, Sunny and Zethu are still at the studio. The other few remaining students are packing up and clearing out.

Sunny's workspace is a bit fuller - a small monochrome study of an apple, a pencil sketches of a still life, gestural abstracts, and some mixed media experiments, adorn the space.

SUNNY

The last bus leaves at 23:20. Let's finish up at home.

ZETHU

(chuckling)

We should go before your mom calls the po-po.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sunny's pen moves rapidly across the pages of her art journal, illuminated by the warm glow of a lamp.

She sips coffee and looks over at Gabbi, fast asleep.

She raises her cellphone to her mouth to record a voice note.

SUNNY

Hi Papa, how you? Sorry I'm whispering. Gabbi's asleep. And, sorry for forgetting to call you. But I haven't forgotten about you. I hope you're feeling better. I love you tons.

Sunny sighs and places the phone on her desk. Flips a page.

Adds some final touches to a watercolour thumbnail.

Sunny reaches for her mug, picks up the paint pot instead, and brings it to her lips. Stops short.

During the early hours of the morning, Sunny falls asleep at her desk, head on her art journal.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - LATE MORNING

Sunny stirs and wakes from deep slumber. She wipes away some drool and glances over at the clock on her bedside table.

It is 08H50.

Sunny slams the art journal shut. Gets up. Knocks over the chair. Flings her belongings into her bag and rushes off.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - MORNING

Naomi stands poised before her work station, more art works, drawings and annotations, than pin-up board.

Students sit on the floor in front of the workspace.

Athenkosi, Damian and CHARLIZE (53) attend with notepads.

NAOMI

-dealing with themes of womanhood,  
gender and femininity.

She pauses to listen to the fast, heavy footfalls on the wooden corridor outside.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Ultimately, my work is a personal  
exploration of identity.

Sunny bursts through the double doors, huffing and puffing.

The class and lecturers stare at her.

ATHENKOSI

This is university. Being late is  
unacceptable, and a disrespect to  
your peers and lecturers.

Naomi shifts uncomfortably.

Hanging her head, Sunny dumps herself down on the floor.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

Colleagues, comments?

DAMIAN

(to Naomi)

You were really just supposed to do  
a few studies and *attempt* a more  
conceptual piece. We just wanted to  
see where you're all at-

Athenkosi clears her throat.

DAMIAN (CONT'D)

But at first year level, this is  
truly impressive! A very mature  
handling of subject matter too.

ATHENKOSI

Precisely!  
(to the class)  
(MORE)

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
Students, take note! You could  
learn a thing or two from Naomi.

CHARLIZE  
Truly, the apple doesn't fall far  
from the tree.

ATHENKOSI  
My only advice: onwards and upward!

NAOMI  
Thank you.

Naomi returns to sit with the hoard of students.

CHARLIZE  
Who is our next victim?

The class chuckles nervously.

Sunny makes herself small and avoids making eye contact with  
the lecturers.

ANDY DECKARD  
How about Sunny, since she arrived  
late?

Sunny glares at Andy.

CHARLIZE  
Sunny, you've been volunteered!

Sunny shakes her head, panic-stricken.

ATHENKOSI  
Oh, come on. Everyone has to go.

Athenkosi eyes Andy from the corner of her eye.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
And Andy will go *first* next time.

Andy's expression sours.

Sunny pulls herself up off the ground and heads to her work  
station. The students and lecturers follow.

The pieces Sunny worked on the previous night are still out  
and arranged at her station.

Sunny hands Athenkosi her art journal.

While the lecturers peruse the journal and surveil her work,  
Sunny twiddles her thumbs.

Athenkosi squints at the mixed media disasters.

DAMIAN

You have the technical ability.

ATHENKOSI

Indeed, the studies aren't bad. But your *attempt* at concept is quite-  
(frowning)  
-underwhelming.

CHARLIZE

Can you tell us more about your concept?

SUNNY

(stammering)  
It's about identity - what it means to be who you are.

The students stare at Sunny blankly. Someone coughs.

ATHENKOSI

I don't know if I quite get that from the artworks. Can you help me understand?

Sunny is panicked, eyes darting from face to face.

SUNNY

Am I the good Indian girl who studies hard, fasts on Mondays and makes her parents proud?

Sunny shrugs.

Or am I still figuring out what it means to be me in a world where cultures collide?

Lecturers and students alike are bewildered.

Sunny heaves a sigh.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I don't know what my art is about! I'm not some artist's kid who has all the answers, okay?

Naomi's eyes are ablaze. Sunny's audience is speechless.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

(looking away)  
I didn't mean that.

Naomi glowers at Sunny, is about to get a word in.

DAMIAN

(quickly)

Why don't we open up the  
conversation to the floor?

He gestures to the students to provide feedback.

The students look at one another. Cough. Fidget. But not even a whisper escapes their mouths.

Sunny huffs.

Charlize purses her lips and scratches an ear.

CHARLIZE

Conflict is so very evident in your  
work.

Hushed giggles from some of the class.

ATHENKOSI

Looks like you have work to do.

Sunny studies her feet, trying (and failing) to gulp down the lump in her throat.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - LATER

Students, busy at their easels, charcoal sticks in hand, surround a nude male model.

ATHENKOSI

The human form is a thing of  
beauty, so why should we fear it?  
Simply draw what you see, not what  
you perceive.

Sunny grimaces. A blank drawing pad, resembling jotting paper, sits before her.

Sunny begins by drawing gestural ovals for the model's upper body. Stops. Glances over at her peers working away, then back at her ovals.

Roughly erases what she's drawn, crumpling the thin, recycled paper and leaving echoes of line and mark.

Slowly these marks splice together, creating a mesh of human form. More and more, zombie-like line drawings, two mismatched eyes, begin flooding the page until -

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
Having some trouble starting,  
Sunny?

Sunny snaps out of her daydream.

SUNNY  
Uh-

ATHENKOSI  
(winking)  
Just have fun with it.

Athenkosi squints at Sunny's drawing pad. Feels the paper between her fingers.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
This paper won't do you any  
favours.

Paper TEARS in the background.

SUNNY  
This was the only one the shop had.

Naomi appears, as if out of thin air.

NAOMI  
Here you go. You can use mine.

Naomi, smiling sweetly, offers Sunny a crisp page of exquisitely-textured Fabriano paper.

ATHENKOSI  
How kind of you, Naomi.

Sunny accepts the page.

SUNNY  
Thanks.

ATHENKOSI  
Nice to see you're making friends!

Naomi smiles radiantly at Athenkosi.

Athenkosi gives Sunny's shoulder a squeeze as she walks away.

Naomi's smile dims as Athenkosi walks further away.

NAOMI  
If we were friends, you wouldn't  
call me 'the artist's kid.'

Naomi looks a stunned Sunny up and down, then wheels around.

SUNNY  
Wait. I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

Students have made progress on their drawings, the easels before them showing torsos and bodies.

Despite the paper being worked to its limits, Sunny's rendition of the male model looks promising.

Although, she has elected to omit his genitals.

ATHENKOSI (O.S.)  
This is really fantastic. I just love how you've played with the medium.

Sunny turns toward Athenkosi's voice.

Sunny and her peers crowd around Naomi's easel.

She has produced a lively and expressive line drawing.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
Have you always had this style?

NAOMI  
What style?

Athenkosi opens her mouth to speak, but instead, beams at Naomi, hands clasped beneath her chin.

Sunny sighs and returns to slouching at her easel.

CUT TO:

Sunny shifts her weight from one leg to the other, lifts the conté from the page and bites her lip.

Naomi appears from behind Sunny's easel.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Let's see what you've done to my page then.

Before Sunny can refuse, Naomi begins scrutinising the drawing silently.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Definitely missing *something*.  
And - just a tip - it'll help if  
you stand back from the easel once  
in a while. Gives you whole new  
perspective.

Sunny narrows her eyes.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Also-

Naomi leans past Sunny and draws two linear axes over the  
model's waist and shoulders.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

-the angle of the shoulders and  
waist need to be on one plain.  
You're welcome.

Sunny blinks aggressively at the lines across her drawing.

She glares as Naomi saunters off.

Then storms out the studio.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

Sunny bursts through the building's large wooden double doors  
and races down the stone stairs.

The unfinished, disproportioned sketches from before have  
come to life as zombie-like figures, shadowing Sunny.

EXT. GARDENS STREET - EARLY AFTERNOON

Sunny wipes her eyes aggressively as she passes the towering  
historical buildings of the CBD.

INT. BLANK CANVAS ART SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

TINKLE TINKLE.

Sunny enters the art supplies shop, red eyed.

A SHOP ASSISTANT (late 20s) in black dungarees sits behind a  
computer.

Sunny distracts herself by considering the assortment of  
creative merchandise.

She takes a longing loop of the store's paint section - stopping at a tray of watercolours with a child's painting on the exterior.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SINGH RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Miniature Sunny presents a water colour painting to Dimple, beaming.

SUNNY

Do you think I'll be an artist one day?

Dimple smiles at her sadly.

DIMPLE

Hopefully not.

Sunny's small face scrunches up in confusion.

Art is a good hobby, but it won't get you anywhere, *batcha*.

CUT TO:

Sunny discovers her owl painting on which telephone numbers have been scrawled. Alongside it, a discarded first place rosette. Her face darkens.

Sunny places the painting and rosette in a box with similar drawings (with inscriptions like 'Happy Mothers' Day' or 'Happy Birthday!'), also covered in telephone numbers.

END FLASHBACK

Sunny moves on and finds the canvas and paper section. She selects a Fabriano drawing pad from the display rack, turning it over to check the price.

CUT TO:

Sunny places the pad of paper on the cashier's desk.

The shop assistant scans and pops it in a cardboard bag.

A large, hardcover book displayed at the counter, catches Sunny's attention.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Our bestseller. That's 315 for the pad.

INSERT - book cover

An image of a woman who has a longer version of Naomi's dark hair, and almond eyes.

Big, bold and capitalised letters read: ANGELA by ANGELA MASON

Sunny pays quickly.

Grabs the book off its perch and peruses it, flipping from section to section.

She examines images of artworks and a biographical insert. The artist's take on motherhood and artistry. An image of baby Naomi.

Then a high school photo of Naomi brandishing her school's art award trophy. Sunny's eyes tear through the description. A caption below the image reads 'Like Mother, Like Daughter.'

Sunny slams the book shut.

EXT. SEA POINT PROMENADE - MORNING

Athleisure moms and prammed tots, colourful buskers and dog walkers enjoy the morning sun and sea spray.

Earphones in, Sunny sits on a bench overlooking the ocean, with her film camera strapped around her neck.

She is on a call with her mother.

Sunny snaps a shot of a gull floating on the wind, lowers the camera.

DIMPLE (V.0.)

Don't you think it's about time you think realistically?

Sunny's brow furrows slightly.

SUNNY

How do you mean?

Dimple sighs.

DIMPLE (V.0)

Listen to me first, okay? You've been accepted to study BCom, at campus here.

Sunny's brow knits together tightly, confusion on her face.

SUNNY

I told you before that accounting doesn't interest me. I didn't even apply for that programme.

DIMPLE (V.O.)

But we did.

Sunny inhales sharply.

DIMPLE (V.O. CONT)

Think rationally, *beti!*

SUNNY

Was this your idea, or dad's?

(shaking her head)

I can't believe how you could-

DIMPLE (V.O.)

This is an opportunity.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

-violate my privacy and disregard my autonomy.

DIMPLE (V.O.)

We just want what's best for you!

SUNNY

Just because I'm not doing so well at art right now and things are hard-

DIMPLE (V.O.)

You're not doing well?

SUNNY

-doesn't mean I want to drop out!

DIMPLE (V.O.)

You won't even consider it!

SUNNY

Just let me *be!*

DIMPLE (V.O.)

(shrieking)

We let you be! Then you went out partying or doing God knows what instead of calling to find out if your own father was okay.

Sunny exhales, defeated.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - ATHENKOSI OFFICE - MORNING

Sunny, wide-eyed, glances about the room, studying the immaculately restored period furnishing.

ATHENKOSI

Sunny. How can I help?

SUNNY

I want to do better. I just don't know how, or where to start.

ATHENKOSI

You've got to use what you have. What inspires you?

Sunny has to stop herself from rolling her eyes, but Athenkosi catches her and chuckles.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

I'm being serious! Do you collect anything? Stamps, poetry-  
(gesturing)  
-antiques?

Sunny shakes her head.

SUNNY

Do you really think collecting stamps will help me win the prize?

ATHENKOSI

(eyebrows raised)  
The New Signatures Award?

SUNNY

I need that bursary. Or all I'll be collecting are taxes when I'm forced to take up BCom.

ATHENKOSI

So what will you do about it?

Sunny, at a loss, shrugs.

Athenkosi nods toward Sunny's camera, strap almost falling off her shoulder.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

What about that?

SUNNY

(uncertain)  
This old thing?

ATHENKOSI  
You collect memories.

SUNNY  
I hardly even use it.

ATHENKOSI  
Then start.

Sunny just blinks at Athenkosi, as if resigning herself to the fact that she is beyond help.

SUNNY  
(somewhat doubtfully)  
Okay, will do.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - LIBRARY - DAY

Sunny sits hunched over at a PC, fingers a-flurry on the keyboard. She hashes out a paragraph in her "AHIS101 Essay Assignment - Queer Resistance Through Art" document.

Books lay strewn open or in piles around her.

Sunny toggles through various internet tabs - double checking references - and flips through a book on queer South African artists.

Finally, she sends the file off to be printed. Sits back in her chair and stretches.

A flyer is placed on Sunny's desk.

Sunny moves to inspect the flyer - an advertisement for an exhibition opening by artist LEMMY JACOBSON (36).

Frowning slightly, she flips back a few pages in the queer artists book, and sets the flyer next to an image in the book.

The artist on the flyer and in the book are one and the same.

Sunny types a message on Skype to her mum: "Can we postpone? Need to study."

INT. GALLERY MASON - EVENING

Sunny, dressed in a vintage teal frock, enters the white-walled contemporary art gallery in its bustling inner-city locale. Her Kodak is slung around her shoulders.

A GALLERY ASSISTANT flits between art-admirers, offering glasses of wine.

GALLERY ASSISTANT  
Some wine, Miss?

SUNNY  
Um, no, thank you.

Sunny casts her eyes over the words 'GALLERY MASON', looming over the entrance. Grimaces.

She mills about before approaching an art installation. Raises the camera, focuses and then snaps a photo.

Sunny's attention shifts from the installation to a painting a little way off - a sensitive rendition of Naomi with particularly expressive eyes.

Naomi stands close to her mother, ANGELA MASON (50s), conversing with guests.

Naomi's attention move from the guests to Sunny admiring her portrait.

INT. MONS MENSÆ ACADEMY - DAY

MONTAGE - SUNNY WORKS DILIGENTLY

A) Sunny cuts out and pastes bits of photographs on to a painted canvas. Zethu shows Sunny an artist who uses a similar process. She immediately notes the artist down.

B) Naomi leaves her easel for a moment. Sunny watches Andy sneak up to Naomi's easel and inspect her work. Naomi returns with fresh linseed oil. Looks Andy up and down.

C) Slowly Sunny's workspace begins filling up. Andy scowls at Sunny's work jealously.

D) A rubric for Sunny's studio prac bears a large red 'A'.

E) Sunny hand-builds a bowl. The clay is too runny and the bowl becomes wobbly. To rescue her abomination, Sunny slaps on more clay, making the vase walls uneven in width.

F) Sunny watches as Athenkosi pats Naomi on her shoulder for her outstanding ceramics project.

G) Sunny places her lopsided ceramic wares in a kiln. Every time, a new disaster: cracks, explosions, distortions.

H) Sunny gets a rubric marked with a "D" for a ceramics prac.

I) Sunny presents a slideshow of her art history research paper. The audience claps, Damian most enthusiastically.

END MONTAGE

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - DAY

Sunny stands tall in front of her work station.

This time, Sunny's artworks have taken over her work space and marked their presence with found objects and annotations.

Lecturers and students face Sunny, admiring her body of work.

ANDY

(muttering)

If only she could do this well in ceramics.

CHARLIZE

Thank you for volunteering to present. It seems you have made remarkable progress this semester.

Sunny means business and she knows it.

A half smile teases the edges of her lips.

With a sense of finality, Athenkosi closes her notebook and looks up. Damian and Charlize take notes furiously.

She pauses to regard Sunny for a moment. Then turns to address the students beside her.

ATHENKOSI

See that, students? That's what we call the gold standard.

(to Sunny)

We can't wait to see what else you have in store for us. Keep it up.

Sunny smiles.

Naomi's lip quivers, no light behind her eyes.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - LATER

The studio has cleared out. Only Naomi remains.

Sunny slips in and heads to her work station.

She stops, frowning. Naomi FLICKS on a lighter.

Naomi isn't aware of Sunny's eyes on her. Sucking on a Lucky Strike, she raises a drawing, holding it over the flame.

Once lit, she tosses it into a metal wastepaper basket. It flickers amongst the ashy remains of other illustrations.

Sunny backs out of the studio.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - DAY

Sunny waits attentively at her table in the ceramics studio, dark eyes surveying.

She thumbs through a series of rubrics on her lap, below the table, out of sight. Top marks for every subject, apart from ceramics.

Athenkosi hands papers to various students.

Stops at Naomi's table, regards the pile of papers in her hand, then hands one to Naomi, who smiles up at the lecturer.

ATHENKOSI

(to Naomi)

Phenomenal. With a capital 'P!'

The lecturer turns her back to return more papers.

Sunny rolls her eyes.

Athenkosi comes over to Sunny and sets hers down, blank side up.

Sunny snatches up the page, eyes darting left and right. Her face tenses up.

Sunny sighs, glaring at her sorry, lopsided excuse for a vessel and cracked bowl sitting amongst beautifully crafted wares across the classroom.

Hers is objectively the worst.

Athenkosi switches on the smart board. A slideshow reading 'Task 5: Vibrant Vessels''

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

I trust you've all received your rubrics for project five? For your next task, you will work in groups.

Unanimous groans from the class.

Athenkosi skips to the next slide, where student names are paired into two.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
 This is to promote collaboration!  
 So you can learn from one another!

More moaning.

Sunny's eyes find her name. Below it is Naomi's.

Naomi's hand shoots up.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
 (exhaustedly, to Naomi)  
 Yes?

NAOMI  
 It's clear you've paired stronger  
 students with-  
 (beat)  
 - less capable ones. I don't think  
 this is fair.

Sunny blinks furiously.

ATHENKOSI  
 In the working world, you don't get  
 to choose who you work with!

Naomi is unconvinced.

ANONYMOUS STUDENT  
 We're still in first year!

ATHENKOSI  
 Look, the weaker students are able  
 to learn from the stronger  
 students, and the stronger students-

NAOMI  
 (coolly)  
 -get to do all the work?

Athenkosi flashes Naomi a warning glance.

ATHENKOSI  
 The stronger students reinforce  
 their own knowledge and are  
 challenged. They learn *patience* and  
*compassion*. It's a win-win  
 relationship. Symbiosis, if you  
 will.

NAOMI  
 (beneath her breath)  
 More like parasitism.

ATHENKOSI  
 So get into your groups now and  
 think on it.

Student mope about, searching for their equally-reluctant partners.

Sunny looks askance. Gets up, and instead, rushes over to Athenkosi's desk.

SUNNY  
 Do I have to work with Naomi?

ATHENKOSI  
 Have you seen your ceramics marks?

Sunny's turns bright red.

SUNNY  
 It's only this module I can't seem  
 to get the hang of.

ATHENKOSI  
 Then surely you'd agree some  
 mentoring-

Sunny's face sours at the word.

-some *teamwork*, couldn't hurt?

SUNNY  
 But why *her*?

ATHENKOSI  
 Do you want to win the New  
 Signatures Award?

SUNNY  
 So much.

ATHENKOSI  
 Then you'll need to improve your  
 grades for this module.  
 Significantly. This is how.

Sunny turns around to glance at Naomi, then at Athenkosi, and nods.

She drags her feet across the studio and dumps herself down on the seat next to Naomi.

On the table, various shapes and sizes of bisque vessels stand before them.

NAOMI  
 (without looking up)  
 Just show up at class on the  
 deadline and I'll sort everything  
 else out.

SUNNY  
 Not a fucking chance.

Naomi looks up in surprise.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
 You think I can't do anything  
 because of how badly I mould-

NAOMI  
 -build-

SUNNY  
 -or because I exploded my pots?

NAOMI  
 -Vessels.

SUNNY  
 This is my *first time* ever doing  
 ceramics.

NAOMI  
 Yet, you'd think as a child, you  
 might've played with putty or  
 something.

SUNNY  
 (gesticulating)  
 I'm not Venus, emerging from my  
 hand-thrown scallop shell on a wave  
 of slip.

Naomi bursts out laughing. Sunny just blinks.

NAOMI  
 Well, do you have an idea for how  
 we're going to glaze and fire these  
 vessels?

SUNNY  
 We could make them into animals-

NAOMI  
 Childish.

SUNNY  
 (sharply)  
 What do you suggest?

NAOMI  
 Poetry. But it's a mural.

SUNNY  
 Could you be any vaguer?

Naomi doesn't respond and continues jotting down notes and sketching the vases in a notebook.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
 Four vases - I mean, vessels - need to be prepped, painted and fired by next week. The glazes need time to dry and pots need time to cool down-

NAOMI  
 -if it's too much for you, I told you, I'll do it myself.

SUNNY  
 Ever seen that blue china crockery?

NAOMI  
 Who hasn't?

SUNNY  
 Now imagine a South African landscape in that cobalt blue. See, it's an allusion to globalism and colonialism?

Naomi regards Sunny passively.

NAOMI  
 Alright. We'll meet tomorrow after class. But only briefly.

INT. MONS MENSÆ ACADEMY - QUAD - DAY

On one side of the quad, an INTERVIEWER (30s) addresses Naomi.

They are seated in front of a number of Naomi's paintings and a side-lined plinth showcasing a small ceramic vase.

She smiles at the interviewer scratching in his bag.

INTERVIEWER

I won't keep you long. Busy young lady like you has places to be, I'm sure.

The interviewer chuckles amicably at his own joke, but quietens down when he sees Naomi's forced smile.

Across the quad, Sunny, Zethu and a few other first years watch the proceedings over steaming cups of coffee.

The interviewer taps his hornbill specs.

INTERVIEWER

So I'll begin by asking you a few questions and then I'd love to get some photographs of you with your art for the magazine.

He raises a tape recorder.

INTERVIEWER

You don't mind, do you?

Naomi shakes her head.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

So speaking specifically about your group show here at Article, what inspired you?

NAOMI

Everyday beauty and trinkets I loved as a young girl. I loved art since childhood, I was a very tactile kid.

INTERVIEWER

I'm sure growing up in an artistic household helped with your budding talent.

NAOMI

I would say so.

INTERVIEWER

And now, how does it feel to be a young, successful artist?

NAOMI

I'm hardly an artist yet. I've just started art school and this was just one, small group exhibition.

The interviewer jots down notes.

INTERVIEWER

So, in your opinion, it takes art school and many solo exhibitions to be an artist? Interesting.

Naomi blinks in shock.

NAOMI

No, no. I never said that.

INTERVIEWER

How much of your success, would you say, you might owe to your family? Specifically your mother, Angela Mason?

Naomi stares the interviewer up and down, then looks away.

Her eyes find Sunny.

NAOMI

I don't see how that's relevant to this exhibition.

INTERVIEWER

Will you be exhibiting at Gallery Mason?

NAOMI

Not in the immediate future.

INTERVIEWER

Are you planning to take over the family business at Gallery Mason? What is your vision for the iconic space?

Naomi glares at the interviewer.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Naomi sits in the studio, afternoon light streaming in. She adds a cobalt oxide detail to a vessel: a scene from her favourite South African poet.

Sunny walks in. Stops when she sees Naomi's already glazed vessels.

NAOMI

I got a bit of a head start.

SUNNY

To show me what to expect?

Sunny removes the vases from her locker and proudly places them on the table next to Naomi's.

They are also glazed - rolling South African vistas, blue cranes, dappled with fynbos - and ready for the kiln.

Naomi eyes them quizzically.

NAOMI

Your glazing needs work. But not bad, for an amateur.

Sunny is miffed.

SUNNY

And you? Being an artist's kid makes you a professional?

Naomi huffs and narrows her eyes at Sunny.

NAOMI

Why do you keep harping on that?

SUNNY

(indignantly)  
Because everything seems so easy for you. Like your success is preordained.

Naomi raises an eyebrow at the word.

NAOMI

I only succeed because I have no other choice.

SUNNY

(rolling her eyes)  
Who would say that?

NAOMI

Want to know my secret? It's the perfectionism that comes with always feeling like you're never good enough.

Sunny is silent for a moment.

SUNNY

Surely you must know you're the best.

NAOMI

I feel like I could blink and misstep.

SUNNY

Me too. Except for me it's crippling, not encouraging.

NAOMI

I never said it was a positive thing. Some mornings I can hardly get out of bed. Pressure gets the best of us, and everyone expects me to nab the award. Of course, you don't help much.

Sunny looks up.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

And, God, isn't Andy Deckard a pain in the ass?

SUNNY

Such a pain! Not as much as you, though.

Naomi huffs in amusement and offers Sunny a wry smile.

NAOMI

Speak of the devil!

Andy and Zethu approach the pair, on the way to the kiln with their vessels.

ZETHU

Naomi. God, why are you so talented?

Naomi rolls her eyes playfully.

NAOMI

It's not all me.

Zethu turns to Sunny, impressed.

ZETHU

Good for you!

ANDY

Wow.

A smile teases at Sunny's lips.

ZETHU (CONT'D)

I can't wait to see them after they're fired!

ANDY  
 (to Zethu, bristling)  
 Can't say the same for yours.

Zethu, peeved, marches off toward the kiln room.

Andy shakes his head and follows her.

Naomi glances at her clock and turns to Sunny.

NAOMI  
 I have to go. Family meeting. Do  
 you think you could fire these  
 yourself?

SUNNY  
 Absolutely.

NAOMI  
 You know what to do?

SUNNY  
 Firing at 1050 for 3 hours.

Naomi inhales sharply, her eyes wide.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
 Just kidding, it's stoneware. 1250.  
 Everyone knows that.

Naomi exhales, and looks Sunny dead in the eyes.

NAOMI  
 Please! I won't be able to reglaze  
 mine before Monday. And I have to  
 work on the art history paper on  
 Tuesday, and our project is due on  
 Wednesday-

SUNNY  
 -I know, I know. I won't mess up.

Naomi gathers her belongings off the table.

She casts one last, furtive glance over the stoneware.

NAOMI  
 They'll be alright?

Sunny nods emphatically. Naomi heads off.

CUT TO:

The kiln door opens. With the utmost care, Sunny places the wares in the kiln and shuts the door.

The wares turn fiery red and the glazes solidify in rich blues and whites. Suddenly, the pots explode.

The kiln doors fly open, revealing Sunny's stricken face.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - MORNING

Naomi and Sunny stand silently over the exploded vessels.

SUNNY

I made one tiny mistake.

Naomi stalks off. Sunny chases after her.

NAOMI

We're going to fail. Thanks to you.

SUNNY

We can ask for an extension-

Naomi stops. Eyes ablaze in fury.

NAOMI

-No, Sunny. We are not doing anything. Leave me alone.

Sunny looks at her pleadingly.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I fucking warned you. You knew what was at stake for me.

Sunny is left helpless as Naomi walks away.

EXT. COMPANY GARDENS - AFTERNOON

Bare trees line stoned walkways. A handful of people are out and about, bundled in scarves, hats and windbreakers, and scattered across the gardens.

Sunny sits on a bench below a tree. She whips out her phone.

A text bubble, dated yesterday, hovers over Sunny's head.

SUNNY

Can we talk? I'm so sorry.

Still no response.

Sunny puts the phone away and the text bubble disappears.

She gets up, paces up and down.

Takes out her phone again and raises it to her ear.

It RINGS faintly, then goes to voicemail.

NAOMI'S VOICEMAIL

You've reached the voicemail of  
Naomi. Please text me like a normal  
person. K bye.

Sunny lowers the phone.

There are seven missed calls to Naomi in the call log.

Sunny paces and types furiously. Then stops suddenly.

SUNNY

Argh!

Sunny exhales deeply.

Lifts her phone to her face to send a voice note to her  
parents.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Hiya. Sorry I haven't been keeping  
in touch. Things got hectic at  
school. And I messed up big time...

INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

Sunny waits in the crowded arrivals hall, holding a small  
bouquet of flowers.

She cranes her neck, searching for Dimple.

SUNNY (V.O. CONT)

...anyway, I just wanted to let you  
know that I miss you so much and  
I'm thinking of you. Looking  
forward to seeing you soon. I love  
you.

The voice note from the previous scene ends.

When Dimple emerges from the sliding doors, Sunny's face  
lights up immediately.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Mum!

She races to a beaming Dimple and pulls her into a tight hug.

DIMPLE

Sunitha?

Not letting go, Sunny buries her face into her mother's shoulder for a few moments longer.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

Oh, *beti*. Tell me everything.

EXT. MASON RESIDENCE - MORNING

On a quiet road in rich suburbia, Sunny mulls about, occasionally snapping photographs on her camera.

She stands outside a wooden gate flanked by green hedges. Behind them peeks out a large but quaint townhouse.

Sunny eyes a white Porsche Cayenne parked on the curb.

Mutters to herself. Nods. Raises her hand to buzz the intercom and then cops out at the last moment.

While Sunny quietly berates herself, about five dogs scurry and yap in the direction of the house.

Then, the slam of a door.

Sunny does not notice. She stands facing the gate again and takes a deep breath in.

Suddenly the gate swings open, revealing a perplexed Naomi.

Both girls jump.

NAOMI

What are you doing here?

SUNNY

I wanted to talk.

NAOMI

So you stand outside my house like a stalker?

Sunny frowns.

SUNNY

Look, we can salvage our pots. Do you know *kintsugi*? It's a Japa-

NAOMI

-You want another chance to fuck everything up? I think not.

Naomi pushes past her.

Sunny grabs her arm.

SUNNY

I'm trying really hard. Just, please?

NAOMI

No.

Naomi jerks her arm away and strides off.

Sunny watches her go.

Then lets out a cry of frustration.

SUNNY (OS)

Why do you always have to be such a bitch?

Naomi, a few feet away, whips around.

NAOMI

Why do you have to be such a fuck-up?

Sunny is silent. The vitriol has done its work.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Can you even imagine the amount of pressure I'm under?

Sunny's eyes glaze over.

SUNNY

(broken)  
Pressure?

NAOMI

I am so sick of you and everyone else.

Sunny collapses, a sobbing mess.

For the first time, Naomi does not know what to do.

She grits her teeth and squeezes her eyes shut.

Then finally blinks them open.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
(beneath her breath)  
Jesus.

Sunny continues sobbing on the ground.

Naomi walks up to Sunny. Sits beside her in the middle of the road.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Sunny.

She puts an arm around Sunny hesitantly, and pulls her in.

SUNNY  
(blubbering)  
I'm sorry.

Sunny puts her head on Naomi's shoulder.

Naomi strokes Sunny's hair until she quietens.

Sunny wipes her eyes and looks up at Naomi. They hold one another's gaze.

Naomi leans in and presses her lips gently onto Sunny's.

Both pairs of eyes shut for the briefest moment.

Sunny pulls away.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
This is all wrong.

Sunny shrugs off Naomi's arm.

She stumbles up off the ground and sets off at a brisk pace.

Naomi is left to watch as Sunny walks away.

INT. CROWN HOTEL - LOBBY - RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON

A large chandelier hangs overhead. Soft, smooth jazz pairs with the muted CLINK of cutlery on crockery.

Mother and daughter eat dinner together.

Sunny has merely picked at her Thai stir fry.

Dimple looks over at the water feature.

DIMPLE  
What a hotel, hey!

Sunny stirs her tea without looking up.

Dimple inspects the curry she's just mopped up with her roti.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
Pity about the 'chicken curry'  
though.

Sunny continues stirring.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
Is something wrong, *beti*? You seem  
like you have a lot on your mind.

Sunny looks up.

SUNNY  
Hmm?

DIMPLE  
Are you okay? Did it not work out  
with your friend?

Sunny shakes her head.

SUNNY  
It was a rollercoaster and a half.

Dimple frowns.

DIMPLE  
I keep telling you, you don't need  
friends.

Sunny looks away annoyed.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
Do you want to talk about it?

SUNNY  
Not really.

Dimple's face drops slightly.

She attempts to mask her disappointment with another mouthful of  
curry and roti.

Sunny recognises this.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
 Actually, I was hoping you would  
 come to the studio with me  
 afterwards.

Dimple swallows quickly.

DIMPLE  
 Oh?

SUNNY  
 I mean, only if you're free, and  
 you want to.

Dimple smiles.

She fidgets in her handbag, pulls out a couple of notes and  
 places them on the table.

DIMPLE  
 Let's go, shall we?

Sunny's face brightens.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
 (teasing)  
 It would be nice to see what we're  
 paying these "lecturers" to teach  
 you.

SUNNY  
 Mum!

Dimple laughs.

DIMPLE  
 Let it come from your heart.

SUNNY  
 (brow knitting)  
 Pardon?

DIMPLE  
 Your friend, tell her how you  
 really feel. Make her some rotis. A  
 good batch of rotis can mend any  
 broken friendship. Just not rubbery  
 ones like these.

Dimple clasps the roti between two fingers and jiggles it  
 side to side.

SUNNY

That's not-

(beat)

I don't even know how to make rotis.

DIMPLE

See, you've become too westernised living in Cape Town.

Sunny rolls her eyes playfully. Then concedes with a chuckle.

SUNNY

Better learn then, shouldn't I?

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - LATER

Sunny and Dimple amble between easels and work stations.

SUNNY

So how's work? Is the office nice?

DIMPLE

Nice enough.

SUNNY

It's in the CBD right?

Dimple nods.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Must be fancy, then?

DIMPLE

It's not too bad.

SUNNY

Have you spoken to Dad recently?

DIMPLE

Just this afternoon.

Sunny gestures as they reach her work station.

SUNNY

How is he?

Dimple's eyes wander over Sunny's work, lips slightly parted.

DIMPLE

Alright. Ask him yourself.

Sunny looks away.

SUNNY

He's still angry at me.

DIMPLE

Nonsense. He loves you. And he would love to hear from you - that you are doing well.

Sunny purses her lips.

Dimple takes a closer look: art works sit on easels, drawings are pinned to board and strewn on desks.

Dimple pauses at a self-portrait, admiring the expressive brushstrokes, and pastel palette.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

This one is my favourite.

Sunny smiles softly to herself.

SUNNY

Really? Because I thought you'd absolutely *adore* this one-

Sunny shuffles through some papers on her desk and pulls out a line drawing of a fully nude male.

She presents it to her mother, posing innocently with drawing in front of her torso.

DIMPLE

(shrieking amusedly)  
Sunitha! You are *vulgar*!

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FAYE'S CAFETERIA - MIDDAY

Students file out lecture halls and studios in droves.

Some take their meridian luxuriating on the lawns, cigarettes in hand, beneath the oak trees.

Others, like Sunny, head to the cafeteria to grab a quick bite before their next class.

Sunny waits to collect her order, slip in hand. Eyes a notice board.

INSERT:

Film, Art and Music Society  
Film Festival  
Enter now!!!

Categories include:

- Short
- Feature
- Wild Card

Prizes to be won, fun to be had!!!

FAYE

Order 175!

Sunny grabs the brown paper bag and scans the room for an empty table.

Youths (vintage sweaters, Doc Martens) hang around every table, hunched over MacBooks or sharing coffees with friends.

In a corner, Naomi waves Sunny over.

Sunny stands frozen in the middle of traffic.

Then huffs, trudges over to Naomi and takes a seat.

NAOMI

Hey.

Sunny responds without looking up.

SUNNY

(uncomfortably)

Hi.

Sunny removes her cheese toastie from the paper bag, blows, and takes a small chunk off the corner.

NAOMI

It's outrageously good, isn't it?

Sunny, mouthful of food, hardly looks up and doesn't respond.

A pregnant pause. Sunny swallows and raises the sandwich to her mouth again.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

So our project - I think we can take the *kintsugi* approach. If you're free tomorrow maybe?

Sunny, sandwich still raised to her mouth. Hunched over, she glances up from her toastie for a moment.

SUNNY  
(somewhat hesitantly)  
Hundred percent.

Sunny takes a very large bite of her sandwich.

NAOMI  
Sunny?

Naomi tries to find Sunny's eyes.

Sunny chews rapidly, refusing to make eye contact.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
What exactly was wrong with what  
happened between us?

Sunny swallows hard. Finally meets Naomi's gentle gaze.

She gets up and gathers her things.

SUNNY  
I'll see you tomorrow.

Naomi's eyes follow Sunny as she exits Faye's.

INT. MONS MENSÆ ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - MORNING

A radio spins sweet indie harmonies from somewhere behind Naomi and Sunny.

Sunny paints on swathes of gold leaf onto the broken pieces and Naomi fusses over assembling.

SUNNY  
Where'd you get this gold leaf  
from?

NAOMI  
Mother had some lying around.

Naomi eyes Sunny's handiwork. Furrows her brows. Her face goes slack and she sighs.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
Let me.

SUNNY  
I can do it myself.

NAOMI  
(rising)  
Let me help.

Naomi stands behind Sunny, leaning over her to work on the broken wares. Naomi's brushstrokes are fluid as she paints on the gold leaf. Sunny is as rigid as a pole.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Hold these together.

She hands Sunny the base of the vessel, assembles and holds together three small shard, which Sunny presses together.

Naomi then quickly paints two larger broken pieces and leans over Sunny to hold the vessel together again.

Naomi's arms brush over Sunny's as they allow the gold leaf lacquer to set. They stay like this for a long moment, but soon enough it is over.

Sunny glances sideways at Naomi.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

That should do it.

Naomi retracts her arms.

Sunny is somehow both panicked and exhilarated.

SUNNY

(blurting)

You know, you're a great potter.

Naomi has begun repairs on the next vessel, laying out the exploded pieces and smaller shards.

NAOMI

So I'm told.

SUNNY

Without even trying. It's so -

NAOMI

- frustrating?

SUNNY

Yeah.

Silence between them.

NAOMI

It's frustrating for me too.

Sunny frowns.

Naomi selects a large piece and fits it perfectly in place.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Not being able to do what I want, I mean.

Sunny selects a few smaller pieces, placing them in front of Naomi. She glides her eyes over them.

Naomi pushes one of the pieces back to Sunny.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Not that one.

She pieces together a section of the vessel before beginning with the gold leaf.

INT. MASON RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Art deco meets modern minimalism with a pop of colour. But house is eerily empty, as if devoid of life in totality.

Naomi sits silently on a decorative armchair.

Her eyes gloss over the wall above the marble fireplace displaying Angela's expressive paintings and etchings.

Naomi is drawn to a painting of a young girl in school uniform, set against a kitchen of deep burgundy and mustard.

NAOMI (V.O.)

In a parallel universe, I'm a ceramist. I have my own boutique and all that.

SUNNY (V.O.)

And in this universe?

INT. MASON RESIDENCE - ANGELA'S STUDIO - MORNING

High ceilings, enormous windows, a doorway framed by Grecian columns. Tables neatly taped in newspaper.

Naomi ambles through her mother's studio.

NAOMI (V.O.)

Pottery isn't really art, in actuality. It's a craft.

SUNNY (V.O.)

According to who?

NAOMI (V.O.)  
 We're the only art school in the  
 country that recognises it. Barely.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - MORNING

Sunny and Naomi are in close proximity, as they reassemble  
 their next vessel.

SUNNY  
 But what does that even matter if  
 it's what you want?

Sunny turns to Naomi, searching her eyes, for a moment.  
 She pulls Naomi closer and kisses her deeply.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - CERAMICS STUDIO - EARLY MORNING

Glazed vessels are propped on tables. Bedraggled students  
 with that end-of-semester-look plod around the studio.

ATHENKOSI  
 First up, Sunny and Naomi.

NAOMI  
 This is called Kintsugi or  
 Kintsukuroi, a Japanese artistic  
 technique emerging from the wabi-  
 sabi movement.

SUNNY  
 Our take on the project  
 incorporates elements of a  
 globalised initiative, focusing on  
 the South African landscape whilst  
 combining it with Japanese  
 glazework.

Naomi hands a journal over to the lecturer, who flips through  
 drawings, images and annotations.

ATHENKOSI  
 So the breakages were deliberate  
 then? How did you manage that?

Sunny nods. Naomi shakes her head.

Athenkosi cocks an eyebrow.

SUNNY

Not quite. But the basis of *kintsukuroi*, and *wabi-sabi*, is to embrace the indelible features of an object, its history and context. Not disguise it as an imperfection.

ATHENKOSI

And you're able to link this to your artistic concept?

Sunny chews her lip.

SUNNY

(somewhat hesitantly)

Yes. In the view of cultural hybridity and globalisation.

Athenkosi stops to read a passage of text in the journal, looks up.

ATHENKOSI

Well, I'm thoroughly impressed. And you've made something out of an otherwise unpleasant situation. What a fine way to end the semester.

In her relief, Sunny squeezes Naomi's hand.

Sunny glances down at their clasped hands. Then up at Naomi, who beams at her.

INT. MUSUEM OF NATURAL HISTORY - PLANETARIUM - DAY

Naomi and Sunny lie on the floor next to one another in the dark, gazing upward at the constellations projected onto the domed ceiling above.

NAOMI

Who's your favourite poet?

SUNNY

I don't know.

(quickly)

Yeats.

NAOMI

*O body swayed to music, O  
brightening glance, / How can we  
know the dancer from the dance?*

Sunny is stunned into silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
 You look like someone who would  
 like Yeats.

SUNNY  
 I do?

NAOMI  
 Of course I don't mean that in a  
 bad way.

Sunny's eyebrows, lightly furrowed, relax as Naomi laughs  
 gently.

There is silence between them.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
 Do you know Walt Whitman?

SUNNY  
 Walter White?

NAOMI  
 (laughing again)  
 No. *When I heard the learn'd  
 astronomer,/*

Sunny drops her head over toward Naomi.

*When the proofs, the figures were  
 ranged in columns before me,/*

FLASH TO:

INT. SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY - EXHIBITS - DAY

Sunny lowers her camera.

The two roam the maritime exhibition, between taxidermies of  
 evolutionary sea mammals and massive coral exhibits.

NAOMI (V.O.)  
*When I was shown the charts and  
 diagrams, to add divide and  
 measure/ them,*

Sunny snaps a shot of the majestic whale skeleton suspended  
 over the auditorium.

INT. TWO OCEANS AQUARIUM - DAY

Sunny arranges a shot of an aquarium.

Naomi wanders into the frame, observing a clown fish.

Sunny shoots an ultramarine Naomi amongst the colourful blur of fish.

NAOMI (V.O.)  
*When I sitting heard the astronomer  
 where he lectured with much  
 applause/ in the lecture-room,/*

Sunny stops to ponder Naomi.

INT. SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM - PLANETARIUM - DAY

The two lie side-by-side, eyes on the domed constellations above. The light of the projected conjunctions dapples their faces, moving ever so slightly.

NAOMI  
*How soon unaccountable I became  
 tired and sick,/ Till rising and  
 gliding out I wander'd off by  
 myself,/ In the mystical moist  
 night-air, and from time to time,/*

Sunny steals a glimpse at Naomi.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
*Look'd up in perfect silence at the  
 stars.*

Sunny moves her hand an inch over to Naomi's.

Pauses, before they touch.

And takes her hand.

MONTAGE - SUNNY AND NAOMI BOND

A) Beach - Shot on film. Naomi, donning a bucket hat, pulls another hat over Sunny's head. Sunny, in a full-body cozzie, produces an umbrella from her back pack. Naomi takes the plunge, but Sunny tests the water and shakes her head.

B) Lelani Student Res - Sunny documents their relationship on camera. She shoots Naomi in her bedroom, posing jestingly. Sunny plucks a Hello Kitty Sticker off Naomi's phone and presses it on to Naomi's nose. Naomi continues posing, eventually sticks it on Sunny's camera.

C) Crown Hotel - Sunny plants a kiss on Dimple's cheek before rushing out of her hotel room, leaving Dimple a little perplexed at her excitement.

C) Vintage Cinema - The two sit, arms around knees, feet on the theatre seats. They are alone in a dark theatre, munching popcorn and drinking cokes as they watch the last screening of a film on circuit. Sunny leans her head on Naomi's shoulder, who rests her head on Sunny's too.

D) Lecture Hall - The girls work silently together, jotting down notes during Fabian's lecture. A 'Welcome back. Semester 2' slide is projected on the board before them.

E) Fine Art Studio - Sunny explains her artworks to the class. The lecturers nod and students make notes. Sunny locks eyes with Naomi, who smiles at her.

F) Promenade - In the darkness, set against the glistening black ocean and iridescent moon, Sunny and Naomi lick their ice creams in silence.

Sunny swipes a smudge of ice cream off Naomi's chin with her thumb, then pulls her in for a kiss.

END MONTAGE

INT. MASON RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Sunny and Naomi sit at the dining room table, books and papers strewn around them.

Sunny snaps a shot of the kitchen window on her camera.

NAOMI

Are you entering the FAM film festival?

SUNNY

Nah.

NAOMI

Why not?

Sunny shrugs reluctantly.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

You need to take your work further.

Sunny regards her unchangingly.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Sunny, you're brilliant.

SUNNY

Now, I wouldn't say that-

Naomi pulls a face, as if to say 'Are you kidding me?'

SUNNY (CONT'D)

It's hardly art, collecting memories.

NAOMI

Aren't you the one who's telling me to pursue ceramics?

SUNNY

Yeah, but you're *actually* talented.

Angela Mason pops her head through the hallway arch.

ANGELA

Morning, girls!

NAOMI

Good night out?

ANGELA

Agh, you know me and the *Vin de Constance!* Exquisite.

Angela brings her fingers to her lips for a kiss.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You should have been there.

She winks at Naomi, then realises Sunny is still present.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Is this the Sunny my Minnie Mouse won't stop talking about?

Naomi huffs in mock annoyance. Sunny's cheeks turn red.

SUNNY

(awkwardly)

Hello, Mrs Mason.

Angela looks Sunny up and down approvingly.

ANGELA

None of that, now. It's nice to finally meet you in the flesh.

(to both girls)

Crumpets, anyone? I'm starved.

NAOMI

I'm having mine with blueberries!  
Sunny?

SUNNY

I'd love some, thanks.

Angela glides out.

NAOMI

Things are moving so quickly,  
aren't they? You've met my mother-  
(semi-jokingly)  
-why don't we make it official and  
I meet yours?

Sunny taps a pencil against the oak table.

Naomi regards Sunny expectantly.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

She's around, isn't she?

SUNNY

You wouldn't want to meet her.

NAOMI

Or do you mean she wouldn't want to  
meet me?

INT. SHAYONA RESTAURANT AND TAKE AWAY - MIDDAY

Sunny and Dimple sit at a modest Indian restaurant.

At the counter, various Indian fare (beans curry, sweet meats, and sev and nuts) are displayed beneath glass. Overhead, a blown-up menu next to a faded Coke advert, and drinks cooler.

Behind the counter, shelves are stacked high with every Indian condiment, spice and grain, alongside Indian hair dyes, skin whiteners and other (mostly Himalaya) cosmetics.

A WAITRESS arrives with a crowded tray. Sets down a masala tea and a plate of steaming beans curry and roti before Dimple, then Sunny's mouth-watering aloo paratha and lassi.

DIMPLE

I'm happy to see you still fast on  
Mondays.

Dimple puts the first spoonful in her mouth, savours the taste with closed eyes. Sunny smirks.

SUNNY  
Still think I'm too Westernised?

Dimple opens one eye and swallows.

DIMPLE  
You know, I might stay on a while.

Sunny laughs. So does her mum.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
On a serious note, they want to  
keep me on for another month or so.

Sunny takes a sip of her lassi.

SUNNY  
Well, that's great. If you enjoy  
the work.

DIMPLE  
I do. I also get more *moola*.  
(pinching Sunny's cheek)  
And I get to see you!

SUNNY  
(guiltily)  
We should celebrate then.

DIMPLE  
Yes, why not!

SUNNY  
I'm attending a performance at the  
Museum of Contemporary Art tomorrow  
afternoon. But I'm free, otherwise.

DIMPLE  
I haven't been. Why don't I meet  
you there?

Sunny gulps down a bite of paratha.

SUNNY  
At the museum? I'm going with a  
friend.

DIMPLE  
You and I can tour the museum in  
the morning, before.

SUNNY  
I guess so.

DIMPLE

And your friend can join us.

SUNNY

She's probably busy, and it's such late notice. I'm not even sure I can afford a ticket to the actual museum-

DIMPLE

-my treat. And, don't look so worried, *beti*. I won't make you late for your performance!

Sunny attempts a smile, but it comes out all wrong.

INT. MUSUEM OF CONTEMPORARY ART - AFTERNOON

Views of Cape Town's CBD - set against a backdrop of majestic mountain scapes, framed by black, angular window frames - encompass the art museum's trendy exhibition space.

Sunny, Naomi and Dimple wander through rooms of contemporary art - sculptures, mixed media, paintings, photographs.

CUT TO

Dimple, Sunny and Naomi lounge around on beanbags.

In their little viewing room alcove, video art flashes on a wall before them.

DIMPLE

So this is where I can expect to see your art, Sunitha?

She raises her eyebrows teasingly at an unimpressed Sunny.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

Oh, I mean, *Sunny*.

She chuckles to herself.

Sunny rolls her eyes.

NAOMI

I'm certain Sunny is destined for far greater things.

Dimple huffs.

DIMPLE

And what about you, Naomi?

NAOMI  
Me? I'll probably end up an art  
school drop-out.

DIMPLE  
Oh?

SUNNY  
But Naomi wants to start her own  
ceramics business.

Dimple smiles weakly and sets her cup down.

DIMPLE  
(to Naomi)  
How's that going?

NAOMI  
Of course, it's just a concept at  
this point, so-

A CHILD scampers into the viewing room, shrieking. Everyone  
turns, before an APOLOGETIC PARENT yanks it out by the arm.

Naomi still hasn't had a chance to respond, but the moment  
has passed.

SUNNY  
(to Dimple)  
Did you enjoy it though? The  
museum?

Sunny takes a long stretch over her bean bag.

DIMPLE  
Absolutely! You've got such a  
resource here.

Sunny knows where the conversation is headed.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
You should be using this art to  
inspire yours, but you just don't  
seem interested.

Naomi glances over at Sunny.

DIMPLE (CON'T) (CONT'D)  
But I will admit, some of it was-

Dimple shrugs her shoulders.

Sunny latches onto this, eager to change the subject.

SUNNY  
 (sitting up)  
 Oh, which ones?

DIMPLE (CON'T)  
 Uh, those ones that looked like a  
 science project? I loved the  
 landscape photo series though.

Sunny shakes her head in mock judgement.

SUNNY  
 Of course you liked those. They're  
 so normal.

DIMPLE  
 Not everyone is as strange as you,  
 Sunitha.

Naomi notices Sunny's face sour.

Having weathered the conversation, Sunny opens her mouth to  
 voice her indignation.

NAOMI  
 (rising)  
 We should leave before we miss the  
 show.

Sunny springs up.

DIMPLE  
 I suppose you have to be strange to  
 be an artist.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
 (rising)  
 Nice to meet you, Naomi.

NAOMI  
 And you, Mrs Singh.

Dimple smiles pleasantly, her eyes lingering for a moment  
 over Naomi's unfeminine vintage leather jacket.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
 (to Sunny)  
 Tinkle time. Meet you upstairs?  
 I'll save you a spot.

SUNNY  
 Mm-hm.

NAOMI  
 (to Dimple)  
 Bye, Mrs Singh.

DIMPLE  
 Bye-bye.

Naomi departs. Dimple's gaze follows her out.

CUT TO:

Sunny presses a button to call the lift.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
 I'll drop you at the auditorium.

SUNNY  
 No need. I'll be okay.

Dimple gives her a look.

DING.

Sunny enters the lift first, hits the floor number, and Dimple follows after her.

DIMPLE  
 A ceramics start-up? What next.

Dimple unclips a hairpin from Sunny's hair and refastens it.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
 What kind of company are you  
 keeping, *beti*?

Sunny turns away from her to gaze upon the museum's concrete atrium soaring above them.

The lift doors slide shut.

INT. MUSUEM OF CONTEMPORARY ART - AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

An expansive auditorium swathed in greys and blacks. Twelve dozen chairs, quickly filling up, face the stage. An anticipatory buzz fills the air.

Naomi sits among the crowd. Her scuffed vintage jacket is neatly placed on the seat next to her.

Sunny arrives, snatches up the jacket and assumes her seat.

NAOMI  
 About time.

Sunny shoves the jacket over to Naomi.

SUNNY

It would have been quicker, and  
less painful, to take the stairs.

A SMARTLY DRESSED WOMAN takes to the stage.

She addresses the audience into a mic, and the buzz lulls.

WOMAN

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.  
Our performance piece shall begin  
in just a moment. You're reminded  
to switch off your phones. Enjoy.

NAOMI

(whispering to Sunny)  
I understand now. Thanks for  
trying.

Music plays and the artists begin their performances.

Sunny shrugs. Naomi monitors her, then squeezes her hand.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - MIDDAY

Sunny, Naomi (speaking animatedly) and the rest of their  
class emerge from the arched double doors. A passing  
CLASSMATE gives Sunny a pat on the shoulder.

Some way off, Dimple arrives on campus, on her way to  
surprise Sunny with some home-cooked Indian lunch.

Suddenly, Dimple stops dead in her tracks.

She observes as Naomi hugs and pecks Sunny on the lips.

Dimple turns her back abruptly. Raises a hand to her mouth.

CUT TO:

Athenkosi approaches Naomi and Sunny.

Naomi takes Sunny's hand for a moment.

NAOMI

I'm so proud of you.

She smiles at Athenkosi and takes her leave.

ATHENKOSI

So am I, Sunny. Shall we speak in my office?

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - ATHENKOSI OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Sunny assumes the same veloured vintage chair.

ATHENKOSI

You've had a stellar crit, but don't allow your success to make you complacent.

SUNNY

I'm not-

Athenkosi raises a hand and Sunny shuts her mouth.

ATHENKOSI

There are still strong contenders for the prize, not just Naomi.

SUNNY

(quietly, to herself)  
The Dickwad.

ATHENKOSI

I beg your pardon?

SUNNY

Deckard. Andy Deckard?

ATHENKOSI

Ah, yes. He's done extremely well for himself this year, hasn't he?  
(beat)  
I've been thinking.

Sunny raises her brows.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

I want to see *more* from you.

Sunny regards Athenkosi blankly.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)

I'm challenging you to make your work *more personal*. You've got your camera and you've been using it so exceptionally. But I would like to you to reflect what we call *interiority*.

SUNNY

How do you mean?

ATHENKOSI

You're part of Film, Art and Music Society, aren't you? Why don't you enter the film festival? See what happens.

Sunny contemplates this.

EXT. MASON RESIDENCE - GARDEN - LATE AFTERNOON

The girls have laid a blanket under the shade of the trees near Angela's rose garden next to the pool.

Naomi lies on her belly, *The Luminaries* face open and against the ground.

Sunny sits cross-legged, sunglasses on and sipping a glass of lemonade, and reading through a bunch of art history notes on Modernism and Post-Modernism.

NAOMI

What have I been telling you this whole time?

Sunny mock-scowls at Naomi, who shakes her head in amusement.

SUNNY

Yeah, but I need your help.

NAOMI

With what? You're perfectly capable.

SUNNY

Like, your opinion and stuff.

NAOMI

(jokingly)  
You never listen to me, anyway.

Sunny slaps her art history notes on the floor and lunges at Naomi.

SUNNY

(jovially)  
Liar!

Naomi shrieks.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

I've *been* telling you to go ahead with the ceramics boutique thing. You don't listen to *me*.

NAOMI

Actually I do. Why do you think I'm reading instead of studying for tomorrow's pop quiz?

Sunny frowns and sits upright.

SUNNY

Wait. Why aren't you?

NAOMI

I'm dropping out.

SUNNY

You're joking.

NAOMI

The prize is meaningless to me, it's just an accolade. I don't need the funding, or the internship. I'm digging myself a deeper hole by playing into expectation.

Sunny is simultaneously shocked and impressed.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I don't need that pressure anymore. I don't want it.

SUNNY

Good on you.

NAOMI

I haven't told Mother yet. I don't know how she, anyone, our family friends, art community, those guys, would react to me pursuing a - a non-art. Naomi, the craftswoman.

She goes quiet. Sunny monitors her.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I'm working on a PowerPoint presentation. To ask for a small loan, you know?

SUNNY

Need some help?

Naomi nods.

INT. CROWN HOTEL - DIMPLE'S HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Mother and daughter are together in the hotel room. A heavy silence hangs between them.

Sunny, applying mascara at the dresser, seems unaware.

Seated on the bed, Dimple packs a suitcase in silence.

DIMPLE

Do you always make those faces?

SUNNY

It's practically mandatory.

Dimple doesn't respond and instead continues to fold and pack away her work clothes.

DIMPLE

There's a vintage market at the Company Gardens this morning-

SUNNY

-Can't. I'm busy.

DIMPLE

But won't you spend some time with me? I'm leaving tomorrow, remember?

SUNNY

Tomorrow *evening*.

DIMPLE

You love those vintagey things.

SUNNY

We're spending the whole day together tomorrow.

Dimple clicks her tongue but says nothing more.

Sunny uses Dimple's lip gloss, under the hawk-eyes of her mum.

DIMPLE

Which friend are you seeing, anyway?

SUNNY

Naomi.

DIMPLE  
(imitating Naomi,  
scowling)  
*Of course.*

Sunny side-eyes her mother. Grabs her woolly jacket and heads to the door.

SUNNY  
See you later, Mummy.

The pressurised room door shuts itself behind her.

Dimple rises from the bed, leaves the room momentarily.

She returns with a tissue. Walks over to the dresser, uncaps the lip gloss and proceeds to wipe it down until the white tissue has turned a shade of blush.

INT. INTERCITY BUS - MORNING

Sunny sits with her head on Naomi's shoulder.

The bus comes to a jerky stop and Sunny's eyes flutter open.

NAOMI  
We're here!

EXT. COUNTRY TOWN - DAY

Sunny and Naomi roam the dusty streets of a small, rural mountain town. With the skies overcast, they are bundled in jackets and trainers.

They pass antique shops, stop for hot coffee at a quaint cafe and inspect the window of a second hand book shop.

Sunny takes a picture of a row of Cape Dutch style houses.

Suddenly, it begins to snow.

Sunny gasps, raising a hand to the sky.

She takes Naomi's hand and spins her around. Naomi grins at Sunny, pulls her into a hug.

SUNNY  
You're my best friend.

NAOMI  
I love you.

EXT. NEWLANDS FOREST - MORNING

Overcast and foggy, perfect hiking weather.

Mother and daughter trudge up an incline, along a gushing river.

Sunny ploughs ahead, apparently in her comfort zone, whereas Dimple is anything but, and trails behind.

Things are strangely tense but Sunny doesn't quite understand why.

DIMPLE

(huffing)

Why did you bring me here? Couldn't we have gone for brunch instead?

Sunny, a few metres ahead, stops and turns around.

SUNNY

We can get food afterwards. Where are you going to find forests like this back in Maritzburg, eh?

Sunny raises her hands and twirls around.

Dimple continues her ascent, paying little attention.

DIMPLE

We have bot gardens.

SUNNY

(crinkling her nose)

Oh, don't be so boring!

Sunny turns back, ambling up the trail.

Dimple eyes Sunny sharply.

DIMPLE

Maybe I'd like it if the weather weren't so morose.

SUNNY

Seems like you're spending your last day in Cape Town complaining.

DIMPLE

Seems like you still have a tendency to throw buck.

(beat)

Why don't you come back with me?

SUNNY

What would I even do there?

DIMPLE

Seems like everything back home is boring to you now. Us included.

SUNNY

I didn't say that.

They walk on in silence for a while.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Right here.

They take a path off to the right, trudging through suddenly tropical vegetation and emerge in a large clearing.

Above them is a waterfall with rivulets streaming off mossy edifices.

A group of BLACK YOUNGSTERS are picnicking at a rest area.

DIMPLE

Looks like a taxi dropped off the whole lot of them.

SUNNY

Oh my god. You know you can't say that. Why can't we just enjoy our last day together?

DIMPLE

Hmph. It's clear you don't discriminate.

Sunny frowns to herself.

SUNNY

What is that supposed to mean?

DIMPLE

Sometimes it's best to keep to what you know. What is familiar isn't always boring.

Sunny just shakes her head.

INT. UBER CAR - EVENING

A typical Cape Town winter downpour. Rain peppers Sunny's window, turning robots and headlights into streaks of light.

Sunny and her mother sit in the back of the large Uber, suitcases piled behind them.

Sunny reaches into her bag and produces a small packet, handling the thin paper with care.

SUNNY  
(turning to Dimple)  
These are for you.

Dimple accepts. Reaches in and pulls out a pair of ceramic earrings.

SUNNY (CONT'D)  
I made them.

DIMPLE  
Stunning.

Sunny regards Dimple expectantly. Watches as her mother opens her purse and tosses them in like a bag of spare change.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)  
Sunitha?

SUNNY  
Mm?

DIMPLE  
Will you think before bringing  
disgrace upon this family?

Sunny frowns in confusion.

SUNNY  
Hypothetically speaking?

Dimple shakes her head, shame smeared across her features.

DIMPLE  
(darkening)  
You must leave that girl.

Sunny is stricken into silence.

Suddenly, she regains composure.

SUNNY  
What are you talking about, Mummy?  
What girl?

DIMPLE  
Did she teach you how to lie?

Sunny's world falls to pieces, a knot beginning to untie.

SUNNY

No.

Tears streak Sunny's cheeks. Her breath quickens. She stares out the window, wishing she were anywhere else.

The sound of windscreen wipers and cars splashing through puddles do little to distract from the silence in the car.

The Uber pulls up at the airport. The DRIVER gets out and begins offloading Dimple's luggage onto a nearby trolley.

Before Dimple can open the car door, Sunny grabs her sleeve.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Don't tell Dad. Please.

Dimple gets out the car, leaving her daughter in tears.

Sunny clambers toward the open door.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Promise me!

Dimple's only response is to lean in and kiss Sunny's hair.

She closes the door. Sunny shuts down.

A drop of black ink from the ceiling splashes onto Sunny's jeans.

More and more droplets, falling on her hands too. She holds them up, covered in the dark liquid.

From inside the car, Dimple's words are just barely audible.

DIMPLE (O.S.)

(to the driver)

Keep the change. Take her straight to Lelani Residence. Do you know where that is?

(beat)

Good. Nowhere else.

FADE IN

INT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON

Sunny scans the aisle of junk food before her.

Selects a packet of microwave butter popcorn from the shelf.  
Sets it back down.

MAN OVER THE INTERCOM  
Feeling down this Winter day? Why  
not warm yourself up with a Cuppa  
Soup? Ten percent off today only!

She reaches for a value box of three and tosses it into her  
basket, next to a tin of cocoa powder.

Sunny lines up at check out and hands the cashier a bag.

Her phone JINGLES in her pocket. She reaches for it.

Sunny unpacks her basket while reading the message.

A chat bubble from Naomi appears and hovers above Sunny's  
phone.

NAOMI'S TEXT  
Sunny, where are you? We were  
supposed to meet half an hour  
ago...

Sunny jams the phone back into her back pocket.

Meanwhile, the cashier tallies Sunny's stash.

SUNNY  
(to the Cashier)  
And this please.

Sunny grabs a box of Astros off the shelf next to the till  
and places it on the counter.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - MORNING

The room is unnaturally dark. Rain pelts against the window.

Sunny's cellphone on the bedside table lights up, but Sunny  
does not move.

NAOMI TEXT  
Why aren't you answering?

Sunny sits on her bed, looking ahead, earphones in and  
expressionless.

She glances down at her computer screen.

ARJUN  
Why my daughter?

DIMPLE

We are telling you this for your own good, *beti*.

ARJUN

We sent you to art school. Gave you what you wanted and this is how you repay us? You are a first-rate disgrace!

Dimple winces.

Sunny's breathing grows shallower and more irregular.

DIMPLE

We just want you to be a good girl. That's all your father is asking.

ARJUN

If you don't leave that *gora*, we will know. We'll send private investigators to tell us just how you are squandering all our money.

DIMPLE

(to Arjun)

Should she see a *pandit* (priest)?

ARJUN

Why our daughter?

Silence.

DIMPLE

At least we know she can't be pregnant.

SUNNY

I'm sorry.

ARJUN

Sorry? You'll be sorry when I pull you out of that sham of a university!

Sunny inhales sharply.

DIMPLE

Arju-

ARJUN

If you don't stop this nonsense, I'll see that you never set foot at that "academy" again.

(MORE)

ARJUN (CONT'D)

If I ever find you with that girl,  
you'll be left with just the  
clothes on your back.

Dimple gets up and leaves.

ARJUN (CONT'D)

Studying accounting will set you  
straight. Then at least you can  
learn how to be a good girl from  
Kiyarah. She only brings honour to  
her family, but you-

A soft ringing begins, growing louder, eventually drowning  
out Arjun's voice entirely.

The whites of Sunny's eyes show.

She stares ahead, at nothing at all.

FADE TO:

INT. LONG-STREET - TABOO NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The club is alive with the thrashing of bodies. Music blares.

Sunny is completely intoxicated.

She has entangled herself in the muscled arms of a MAN (late  
twenties, ebony-skinned, tight white top). Sunny's camera is  
slung over a shoulder.

As she comes up for air, she holds a weak finger up to her  
new friend. He waits.

She races to the toilets and promptly throws up in the sink.  
She wipes her mouth with the back of her hand.

Andy Deckard catches sight of Sunny from the male lavatories.

ANDY

Sunny? Is that you?

Sunny squints at him, stumbling a little.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You look *kak*.

He rakes a hand through his hair.

SUNNY

(provocatively)  
Are you randy Andy?

Andy just stares at her. She becomes bored.

Wanna make out?

He shakes his head.

Sunny slumps down to the floor, resting against the lavatory wall. Picks up her camera and snaps a shot of him.

ANDY

Bru, we've got the big semester test on Monday.

(when she doesn't respond)

Art history 101?

SUNNY

Then what are you doing here, Dickwad?

(sarcastically)

Oh, I forgot. You're so naturally intelligent, you don't need to study.

Andy scrunches up his face in disgust.

ANDY DECKARD

I was the opening act, but you're clearly not sober enough to remember that.

EXT. LONG STREET - REMEDY NIGHT CLUB - MIDNIGHT

A BOUNCER shoves Sunny out of a different club.

Fascinated by the reflection of neon lights on the damp road, Sunny reaches for her camera - but it isn't there.

Suddenly feeling very sober, she searches her body and all around her with frantic hands.

Staggeres back to the entrance of the club, but the bouncer stands solidly in her path.

Sunny collapses on the sidewalk, hands on her face.

Lies back on the pavement and gazes up at the night sky.

Nothing but clouds.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - BUS STOP - MORNING

Sunny and Zethu, notebooks in hand, are among the first students to alight the university bus.

ZETHU

You'll be fine. It's just a test.

Andy sidles up to them.

ANDY

Look at you eager beavers.

Sunny spots Naomi carrying a box of her art materials across the quad. Andy follows her gaze.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Word on the street is she's dropping out. Too good to school with us plebs, hey.

ZETHU

(to Andy)

Stop *skinnering*. You're just happy you *might* have a chance at the prize now.

Andy's expression sours. He stalks off.

ZETHY

(to Sunny)

C'mon, let's go.

SUNNY

(distracted)

I'll catch up with you in a bit.

ZETHU

Okay. But don't be late!

Zethu hurries off.

Sunny waits until the bus has emptied of students before scrambling back in.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - LECTURE HALL - MORNING

The feverish SCRATCHING of pens on paper echoes through the large hall. Students sit hunched at desks under the watchful eyes of Damian.

Zethu stops writing. Looks over at the empty desk beside her.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - DAY

Sunny dumps her bag on the floor. Draws the curtains. Gets into bed. Pulls the cover over her head.

Popcorn POPS.

Among the dirty cups on her bedside table is an empty bag of microwave popcorn. Then another, and another.

Discarded wrapper after empty container of junk food mount up. A couple bottles of booze.

CUT TO:

Sunny is asleep in bed. She twists and turns, flipping herself over so that she falls off the bed.

But she continues falling into black space until she hits a blanket of dark water. Sinking, drowning, thrashing against the force of some invisible weight. She screams without a sound.

Sunny's eyes fly open.

CUT TO:

Sunny takes a shower, sitting on the shower floor.

EXT. TOWN - STREET - DAY

Sunny (mismatched clothes, unbrushed hair, shadows under her eyes) trudges home. She carries a brown medication bag.

Stops abruptly at a store front. A WORKER pastes gold lettering on the window: 'MASONRY - Bespoke Ceramic Wares'. The inside of the shop is being prepared and renovated.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sunny reaches for two white pills and a bottle of Savanna.

Her phone JINGLES on the bedside table. It's Zethu. Sunny declines the call.

The phone screen reveals rows of unopened messages and email notifications from Sunny's lecturers.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - SUNNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door wakes Sunny.

Gabbi isn't around, so Sunny gets up to answer the door.

She is met with a figure, shrouded in vibrating scribbles. Alongside him, a wolf bleeding from the eyes. Suddenly, there's a milky-eyed horse, rotting flesh hanging off bone.

Sunny moves to shut the door. The man jams a foot in the doorway, forcing it open. The frothing wolf stalks Sunny. Black scribbles envelop her.

Sunny jolts awake, gasping for air. The scribbles fade. She looks over and sees Gabbi asleep across from her.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - ATHENKOSI OFFICE - DAY

An unsettled Athenkosi gazes through her office window.

Damian and Charlize seated at a low coffee table, compare their class registers. On each of the attendance registers is a row of zeros next to Sunny's name, highlighted in yellow.

Athenkosi's eyes settle on Zethu in the quad.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - QUAD - DAY

Zethu tacks a flyer to the notice board: a last call for entries to the Film, Art and Music Society Film Festival.

EXT. TOWN - STREET - DAY

Sunny trudges down the street, heavy bags beneath her eyes.

She plays a voice note on her phone from her parents.

DIMPLE (V.O)

Hello *beti*. How are you darling? We hope you're being a good girl-

ARJUN (V.O.)

-not seeing anyone you're not supposed to, hm-

Sunny stops the voice note short.

She fidgets with some papers in her hands.

First is a grocery list which she skims over: popcorn, those ginger cookies, sufficient (underlined thrice) booze.

She begins counting a scrawny stack of notes. Sighing, she shoves them in her pocket and continues walking.

EXT. MASONRY - STREET - DAY

Sunny stops at Naomi's ceramics boutique, peeking in.

Amongst ceramic wares framed against beige walls and minimalist plinths, an ATTENDANT arranges bowls on a shelf.

Sunny jerks away. Propels herself down the street.

EXT. TOWN - STREET - DAY

Out of breath, Sunny stops to lean against a shop window. Still panting, she casts her eyes over the window display.

It's her banged-up camera, she's *almost* sure of it.

She races in. Shoves a group of cursing tourists aside.

There it is, the Hello Kitty sticker and all. She opens the film hatch; the reel is somehow still intact.

Sunny practically slams the camera down on the cashier's desk with her grocery money.

The CASHIER looks at her expectantly, raising the paper price tag between two fingers.

CASHIER

You're short?

Sunny turns her wallet upside down and shakes out some coins.

SUNNY

Is that enough?

The cashier pushes some coins toward her and takes the rest.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - COMPUTER LAB - EVENING

Sunny sits alone in front of a PC monitor, headphones on.

In a video editing programme, she scrubs through the cut and spliced-together clips retrieved from her camera. A blur of images flash on the screen.

A tear rolls down Sunny's cheek. She removes her headphones and wipes it away.

EXT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - QUAD - MORNING

This is the first time in weeks Sunny has set foot on campus.

Sunny spots Zethu moving between classes and runs up to her.

ZETHU

Sunny! Where have you been, girl?

Up close, Zethu examines Sunny in undisguised concern.

Are you *okay*?

SUNNY

Can I still enter my film?

She holds out a flash drive.

ZETHU

That's all you have to say? Entries closed days ago. The festival is *next week*.

SUNNY

Please. It's important.

Sunny glimpses Naomi carrying boxes across the quad. Zethu's gaze follows Sunny's.

Sunny and Naomi make eye contact. Naomi looks away.

Zethu notices that Sunny is visibly hurt by this.

ZETHU

Alright. I'm doing this for you.

Sunny pulls Zethu into a hug.

SUNNY

Thank you!

She hands over the flash drive to Zethu.

ATHENKOSI

Sunny?

Sunny turns to see her lecturer jogging toward her.

ZETHU

(to Sunny)

You're a wanted woman.

SUNNY

I'll call you. Promise.

Zethu grins and takes her leave.

ATHENKOSI

You're harder to get a hold of than  
arts funding. Do you know how long  
I've been trying to contact you?

SUNNY,

I'm sorry.

ATHENKOSI

Are you alright?

Sunny waggles her head.

SUNNY

But I have something to show you.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - ATHENKOSI OFFICE - A BIT LATER

Athenkosi and Sunny watch a snippet of Sunny's short film,  
complete with animation and editing, on a computer monitor.

The screen fades to black.

Athenkosi sits back in her chair, arms folded, and smiling.

ATHENKOSI

More.

FADE IN

INT. THE BIOSCOPE - CONNOISSUER FILM FESTIVAL - AFTERNOON

Students file into the auditorium, Naomi among the crowd.

Some flags and signs in the space read 'Film, Art and Music  
Society Film Festival.'

Zethu stands at the front and speaks into a mic.

ZETHU

We hope you enjoyed your break.  
Remember our cafe's open until 4PM  
so don't forget to grab snacks.

The audience have all assumed their seats.

ZETHU (CONT'D)

Without further ado, let's begin  
our FAMtastic short film section.  
First up, a last minute entry from  
Sunny Singh!

Naomi stiffens. She turns to look through the crowd.

When the lights cut, Sunny pops in at the back.

Big Thief's "Shark Smile" plays over the speakers. Naomi's eyes grow wide as she watches the opening sequence of Sunny's film, their memories played back to her.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. MASONRY - MORNING

Naomi is behind the counter when Sunny enters the shop. She glances up from *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*.

NAOMI

You didn't get my permission.

She slams the book on the counter top.

Sunny stops, her face shrouded in confusion.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

For my appearance in the film?

Thrown-off, Sunny blinks. With her lips slightly parted and eyes glassy, she looks on the brink of tears.

Naomi begins laughing quietly, then louder.

Sunny watches in silence, wipes away a tear.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Congratulations on your film  
getting an 'Honourable Mention.'

(beat)

I'm glad you're here.

She steps out from behind the counter and moves toward Sunny.

SUNNY

My parents found out. They  
threatened to pull me out of  
school. I didn't know what to do.

Naomi's features darken.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

Naomi, I'm so sorry.

NAOMI

Are you okay?

Sunny bites her lip and shakes her head.

Naomi pulls Sunny into an embrace.

NAOMI (CONT'D)  
 You look like shit. Don't you ever  
 do that again.  
 (into Sunny's hair)  
 They'll never find out. You're  
 alright now.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - DAY

SUNNY (O.S.)  
 Get in! Before someone sees.

Naomi is shoved into the room, followed by a fretful Sunny.

Gabbi sitting on her bed with a textbook, throws off her  
 headphones when she sees Naomi.

<p>NAOMI          (to Sunny)          You don't think they were          serious about the private          investigators, do you?</p>	<p>Naomi!</p>	<p>GABBI</p>
--	---------------	--------------

Gabbi throws her arms around Naomi.

GABBI (CONT'D)  
 Thank goodness you're back. She's a  
 mess. Can't control her. Can't  
 reason with her. Impossible to live  
 with her. She's wild and everything  
 has gone to ruin without you-

Sunny gives Gabbi a sharp look and she quietens down.

SUNNY  
 That's an exaggeration.

Naomi glances about, astounded at the state of things.

NAOMI  
 No, I think Gabbi's right.

A fat line of masking tape divides the room. Gabbi's half -  
 orderly and well-kept - is the antithesis of Sunny's.

Dirty clothes lie strewn amongst empty crisp bags and  
 chocolate wrappers.

GABBI

At what stage do we consider this a health hazard?

SUNNY

(to Gabbi)

To think I let you smoke in here!

GABBI

You smoked in here!

Naomi walks over to Sunny's bed, which looks like it hasn't been made in weeks. Even empty alcohol bottles are scattered on the floor beside the bed.

NAOMI

Well, we can't have this.

Naomi scoops up a heap of rubbish and dumps it in Sunny's already overflowing trash can.

SUNNY

We're going to need a bigger bin.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - FIRST YEAR ART STUDIO - DAY

Sunny leans over a work station. Rushes to ink up a linocut. Naomi sketches designs for new wares in a notebook.

Sunny removes a piece of paper resting in a basin of water, smudging black fingerprints on the ivory sheet.

She exclaims in frustration.

She wipes her brow, smearing black ink on her forehead.

NAOMI

Need a hand?

SUNNY

It's fine.

Naomi watches her wrestle with a pair of gloves and rises to help Sunny with a new sheet of textured paper.

NAOMI

Are you okay? Honestly.

SUNNY

I just want the exhibition to be over already.

NAOMI

Only a few more days of stress.  
Then it's all done.

(beat)

And everything with your parents?  
Admit you're taking toll.

Sunny inks up the linocut and places it on the printing press. Naomi arranges the paper over it.

Sunny yanks the wheel of the press, turning the mechanism.

SUNNY

I won't lie. Between the paranoia  
and guilt, it's no walk in the  
park.

Naomi prises the sheet of paper away from the linoleum.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

But it's worse without you.

They stand back to admire the print: a flurry of landscape.

INT. LELANI STUDENT RESIDENCE - DAY

Sunny sits on the bed, working at her computer. Her room has been restored to its previous tidiness.

Headphones on, she edits her film, adding final touches with a drawing tablet. Annotates furiously in her art journal.

The reflection of images light up her dark eyes.

The flash of colour and movement subsides. Sunny shuts the laptop and sighs, leaning back against her pillows.

Sunny raises her phone to her face.

SUNNY

Hiya. Remember that big exhibition  
prize giving thingie I told you  
about? It's tomorrow! Don't forget  
to wish me luck and send a quick  
one up. Anyway, I'm exhausted. But  
I hope I make you proud.

FADE TO

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - GALLERY - EVENING

Tonight's the night. First years, family and friends buzz about, an air of anxious excitement shimmering off the crowd.

Guests interact with sculptures on plinths, amble along curated white walls lined with oil-painted canvases, delicate watercolours, sketches and mixed media experiments.

Sunny's central piece, framed by supportive materials, is a multi-media multi-screen video installation. It combines elements of paint, print, animation and film.

Sunny and Naomi watch a COUPLE from afar. Naomi squeezes Sunny's hand and Sunny hugs her from the side.

The couple, transfixed by the film, remove their headphones, and engage in eager conversation when the screen fades.

NAOMI

It's fun listening to people, when they don't know you're the *artist*, standing right *next* to them.

SUNNY

(disbelieving)  
Is it?

NAOMI

Sometimes I even start debates.

Sunny chuckles.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

But I've never heard commentary so resoundingly positive. They're practically cooing.

SUNNY

But they're *singing* for Andy.

They turn to Andy's corner, where a large crowd has gathered. Andy, glowing, shakes hands with an AUDIENCE MEMBER.

NAOMI

Must've paid them off.

Sunny laughs, looks away and glimpses Arjun and Dimple across the crowd.

The ceramic earrings Sunny gifted her mother sway as Dimple searches the crowd for her daughter.

Sunny inhales sharply, grabs Naomi's elbow.

A TINKING of glass emerges above the crowd.

SUNNY  
We need to leave now.

NAOMI  
Why?

SUNNY  
My parents are here.

Athenkosi standing on a podium, holds a mic and the trophy.

ATHENKOSI  
It's been a long, hard year. But  
you made it, and it's time to  
celebrate. Now's the time we've all  
been waiting for.

Athenkosi's voice fades into the background as the two rush  
to the exit.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
Sunitha Singh!

Nearby audience members spin around to look at Sunny.

Sunny stops. Turns slowly. Locks eyes with her parents.

She looks as though she's about to be sick.

Arjun wipes tears of disappointment from his eyes.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
Sunny? Is she here today?

Sunny is thrust in the direction of the podium.

She walks up in a daze, accepts the prize as if it's tainted.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
(hugging Sunny)  
I'm so proud of you. I knew you  
could do it. You *deserve* this.

Sunny pulls away.

ATHENKOSI (CONT'D)  
(into the mic)  
Anything you'd like to say, Sunny?

Athenkosi hands over the mic.

Sunny fumbles, blood draining from her face.

SUNNY

I'm at a loss for words. Thank you.

She clambers off the podium and rushes for the door, while the crowd claps for her.

Dimple and Arjun hurry toward her and Naomi tears through the crowd, assessing the situation.

Suddenly, Arjun grabs Sunny's arm, tears streaming from her eyes.

SUNNY (CONT'D)

She's here because she helped me with my project. That's all.

ARJUN

More lies.

DIMPLE

We came here to *support* you. For what?

Naomi races toward them, but stops a little way away.

SUNNY

Why can't you just let me be?  
What's wrong with who I am?

Arjun shakes his head.

DIMPLE

How could you lie to us like this?

SUNNY

Because it's not who I am. Take me out of art school, force me to study accounting. It's not going to change what you wish isn't true.

Arjun and Dimple are stunned into silence, only able to look at Sunny, red-eyed and distressed. Arjun holds his head.

CUT TO:

Arjun and Sunny sit down together on the steps leading up to the second floor of the gallery, in a quiet corner.

Sunny looks at Arjun who hangs his head.

After a moment, he looks up and into her eye.

ARJUN

You are my child.

Sunny takes hold of his hand.

BEGIN ZOOM OUT:

Dimple brings Naomi over. They all sit together.

INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

Sunny say goodbye to her parents at departures.

Dimple hugs Sunny, holds her daughter's face in her hands and searches her eyes. She releases Sunny to join Arjun, who is already at the security check point.

Sunny looks beyond the barricades, toward her father. Waves. After a moment, he raises a hand, then turns to walk through.

INT. MONS MENSAE ACADEMY - GALLERY - EVENING

Sunny and Naomi dismantle and pack up Sunny's artworks in the deserted exhibition space.

SLOW PAN TO:

MONTAGE - SUNNY'S VIDEO INSTALLATION

Naomi reads *Movement Song* by Audre Lorde over the images.

Sunny's film features snippets of her memories of Naomi, showcasing their intimate bond, along with interpretive animated accents and mixed media inclusions.

Of the clips included, these are a few examples:

- A) Promenade - a black ocean reflects a full moon. An animation of Naomi cycling across the seascape, in white.
- B) Mons Mensae Academy - Sunny fiddles with her hands, fingers intertwined with animated black scribbles.
- C) Lelani Residence - The two dance to music on the radio.
- D) Country town - Falling snow/rain turn into tiny airplanes.
- E) Cape Town CBD - Sunny and Naomi attend a performance art piece, where they walk Cape Town's historic CBD at night.
- F) Bus - Sunny rests her head on Naomi's shoulder.

FADE OUT.

