

The Spice of Life

Written by
Nathan Shane Miller

From The Creative Minds Of
Jules Dash, Bryan Bishop & Gina Grad

Copyright (c) 2018

nathanshanemiller@gmail.com

EXT. LUSH INDIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Beautiful and green. Rolling hills and dappled sunlight shining through gently swaying trees.

A small dirt road winds through the resplendent countryside, and walking along it is MEG NUTMAN(40s).

A Tina Fey type, and looks gorgeous under the abnormally soft sunlight. Aside from makeup and her perfectly quaffed hair, she's dressed fittingly for the jungle and carries a satchel across her chest.

MEG (V.O.)

I came to Kerala, near the Anamudi in India in search of the most exotic spices.

(beat)

What I found instead, was something far rarer: Myself.

In the distance an elephant TRUMPETS.

Meg GASPS and turns toward the sound.

Through a thicket she spots a pair of elephants.

Meg smiles, then crouches down as she weaves her way closer.

As she approaches, the majestic beasts turn and face each other.

Head to head they raise their trunks, curling them at the top, touching tip to tip and forming the exact shape of a heart.

Meg smiles. A tear glistening in her eye at the beautiful sight.

Then suddenly a MAN (30s) emerges from the forest. Wild hair down to his shoulders. Deep eyes. Perpetually shirtless, his chiseled body is perfectly framed by the heart-shaped elephant trunks.

This is SABHYA.

Meg GASPS at the sight of him.

Then suddenly the sound of an ANGRY TRUMPET BLASTS! Meg turns to see a giant elephant CHARGING right at her!

She stumbles backward in fear and falls to the ground. Meg looks up in horror as the giant mammal is barreling down on her.

Then Sabhya suddenly JUMPS in front of the beast with his arms extended. He SHOUTS out something in Hindi and the elephant comes to a halt before him.

He glances back to Meg.

And extends his hand to help her back onto her feet.

SABHYA

You look like you're a long way from home.

He smiles broadly at her, with the whitest set of teeth.

MEG

You speak English.

SABHYA

(suave)

My tongue knows many languages. And many other things.

Beat.

MEG

I'm Meg.

SABHYA

Meg. Such a beautiful sound. Meg.

(then)

What brings you out here, Meg?

MEG

I'm looking for the White Bird's Eye Chili.

Sabhya nods.

SABHYA

Ah. Yes, the Kanthari Mulaku.

MEG

That's right. I heard it grows wild here.

SABHYA

It does. I know a place, but it's a bit of a trek that goes deep into the jungle.

Sabhya BARKS out an ORDER in Hindi and the elephant kneels before him.

He climbs aboard the mighty beast and beckons her to join him.

She hesitates.

MEG

Is it safe?

He leans in closer to her.

SABHYA

Nothing good is safe.

She breathes in deeply and takes hold of his arm.

He pulls her up and she slides in behind him, wrapping her arms around his glistening chest as the elephant lumbers along.

MEG (V.O.)

The locals called him Sabhya, and yet I was never sure if that was his real name.

(beat)

He was a master tamer, though he would later tell me that the hardest thing to tame was not an elephant, but a woman's heart.

(beat)

He had no idea how right he was.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Meg Nutman sits alone at a table surrounded by her book, *The Spice of Life: A Memoir No One Saw Cumin*.

A poster beside her on an easel declares: "NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR, MEG NUTMAN."

And yet despite that, she looks depressed.

The stark lighting isn't helping things either. Crows feet. Gray hairs. Looks like a woman actually in her forties.

There's a few WHISPERS from the bookstore STAFF as they stare at her from a distance.

Then, a MAN saunters over to the table, picks up a copy of the book and casually flips through it.

Tall, attractive, carries himself with the swagger of a con man. This is CHARLIE DENT (40s), but goes by Dent.

DENT
(looking at the book)
It's quite a story.

He tosses the book back onto the table.

DENT (cont'd)
Would you sign it for me?

MEG
Sure. Your name?

DENT
Charlie Dent. I'm your new manager.

She raises an eyebrow.

MEG
I didn't hire you.

DENT
Not yet, but you will.

MEG
Oh yeah? This is fate?

DENT
If you believe in that sort of thing.

MEG
I don't.

DENT
Well that's surprising, given how much you babbled on about God in your book.

MEG
That's different. And I hardly *babbled*.

DENT
You know what I mean, that eastern mumbo-jumbo -- say what you will about monotheists, but at least they can write a cogent sentence.

MEG
Maybe you just need to open your mind.

Dent grabs her book.

DENT
How about I open this instead...

He flips to a particular page.

DENT (cont'd)
(reading)
I believe that God is the quantum
mechanics of our souls. That God is
in me, and is me.
(to Meg)
And that's not babbling?

MEG
I'm sorry, are you here to represent
me or insult me?

DENT
I'm here to help you with your
penance to God.

He snaps the book closed and places it back on the table.

MEG
Ah, I see. I've offended your typical
white male, American monotheistic
God.

DENT
Yes, there is but one God, and her
name is Oprah -- her name be praised.
(beat)
And she is very upset.

Meg seems to shrink back.

DENT (cont'd)
Two million sold almost immediately
after she put it on her book club--

MEG
It was selling well before then--

DENT
Number one on the New York Times
Bestseller list for sixteen weeks--

MEG
Seventeen weeks--

DENT

But as Oprah giveth, Oprah can taketh away.

(then)

Your manager dumped you, your agency dumped you, your publisher is keeping its distance, you're being inundated with hate mail, and I even read that your lawyer is dropping you as a client.

MEG

Well you can't believe everything that you read.

DENT

Especially if it's in your book.

Beat.

MEG

And how exactly are you going to help me with this?

DENT

I heard Oprah invited you back on the show.

MEG

She did.

DENT

And you turned it down.

MEG

I did.

DENT

Why?

MEG

Cause I know what she wants to do to me.

DENT

Seppuku.

MEG

What?

DENT

It's Japanese. That's what she wants.

MEG

She wants to cum on my face?

DENT

Maybe. But that's bukkake. Seppuku is the ritual suicide.

MEG

Ah, well I think I'd rather be disemboweled than be back on her couch.

DENT

Seppuku is about *reclaiming honor*.

MEG

By *dying*.

DENT

Your career is already dead.

(beat)

But if you believe in reincarnation...

He takes back the book and writes his information in it.

DENT (cont'd)

Then come by my office.

He hands the book back to her and heads out.

Meg watches him go with a concerned look on her face.

PRE-LAP: We hear the sounds of THUNDER... a storm coming.

EXT. INDIAN JUNGLE - DAY

Meg squints her eyes tightly as rain pelts her face.

The dark skies above her RUMBLE with thunder and the clouds unleash a torrent of rain.

She sits alone atop the elephant. From somewhere in the thick foliage there's a SHOUT in Hindi and the elephant kneels.

Meg almost tips over, but manages to keep her balance, as Sabhya emerges from the jungle.

SABHYA

I'm sorry sweet Meg, the bridge is washed out.

MEG
Is there no way around?

SABHYA
There is, but it's a two day journey.

She shrugs.

MEG
I got no where else to be.
(beat)
Take me there.

He looks at her a long moment like he's staring into her very soul. She can't help but shrink back from his piercing gaze.

SABHYA
Alright. But for now we make camp.

EXT. INDIAN JUNGLE - LATER

The rain continues.

Sabhya and Meg use the elephant as a canopy, lying on brightly colored blankets beneath its belly, and resting their backs against its massive legs.

(Closed course, professional elephant tamer. Do not attempt.)

Sabhya stares at her with that penetrating gaze of his.

SABHYA
Why such determination for the
Kanthari Mulaku?

Meg shrugs.

MEG
I came here for the spices. Spice is
kinda my whole life.

SABHYA
Spice is meant to *complement*. To
enhance the flavor. It's never meant
to be everything.

Meg winces as his words cut deep.

SABHYA (cont'd)
Why did you really come to India?

She shrugs.

MEG
(softly)
I dunno.

Sabhya stares out at the streaking rain.

SABHYA
An Indian rain can wash away many
things.
(beat)
But not the past.

He brushes some water droplets from off her cheek.

She stares at him.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Meg stares straight ahead, lost in thought.

It's a modest office, sparse on decorations or personal touches, almost as if he moved in a week ago.

Dent enters the room in mid-speech.

DENT
I just got off the phone -- you're
booked for Oprah's show in three
days.

MEG
I'm still not sure about this.

DENT
You want a lasting career don't ya?

MEG
Yes.

DENT
Then you're sure.
(then)
You're gonna have to take your
medicine.

MEG
But does it have to be a suppository?

DENT
That's gonna depend...

He plops a dog-eared, highlighted, and heavily marked up copy of Meg's book on his desk.

DENT (cont'd)
On how much of this is total shit.
(then)
We got three days to go through this and come up with a good response for every single exaggeration, fib, and fabrication. Starting at the beginning.

MEG
With the cover?

DENT
There's a problem with the cover?

MEG
You think my actual name is Meg fucking Nutman?

DENT
I didn't know your middle name.

MEG
That's some cutesy shit the publishers wanted.
(then)
They can make up a name -- no problem there, but I can't exaggerate one or two or ten details.

DENT
You called it a *memoir*.

MEG
I called it *Meg Nutman's memoir*.

DENT
That's one defense, let's see if we can top it.

He opens up the book.

DENT (cont'd)
Chapter one.

INT. ALLSPICE ALL THE THYME SPICE SHOP - DAY

Meg Nutman, in an apron, is busying grinding some herbs in her spice shop.

MEG (V.O.)

Spice, like so many things, is all about proportion. Too much or too little can make or break the dish. Just like life.

(then)

Too much hate, not enough love. A pinch more tolerance, a handful less bigotry.

(beat)

How many great flavors are we missing in the world, cause we lack the right mixture? Black and brown pepper, with white sea salt.

(beat)

Balance. Diversity. Proportion. That's what spice is all about.

JINGLE-JANGLE, the bell over the front door jingles and in walks SAFFRON (50s) a sassy black woman.

Saffron slips on an apron and circles back behind the counter.

SAFFRON

Mmmmmhmmmm, I love the smell of making spice.

Meg smiles at her.

MEG

Me too.

SAFFRON

Whatcha doin' in so early?

MEG

Oh I had to get an early start, cause I'm ducking out this afternoon.

(beat)

Today is the day.

Saffron's eyebrows raise.

SAFFRON

Today?

Meg smiles.

Then she sets down her bowl of spice and pulls out a ring box from her apron pocket.

She carefully opens it up and shows it to Saffron.

SAFFRON (cont'd)
Oh lordy, look at all them diamonds.
(then)
He's gonna love it.

MEG
You think so?

SAFFRON
I know so.
(then)
How are you gonna pop the question?

MEG
I got it all planned out. I pretended to be a new client, and I'm gonna cancel on him -- that way I know he'll be free.
(beat)
Then I'm gonna sneak into his house and surprise him with a bouquet of flowers.
(beat)
After that, we're off on a horse-drawn carriage to a beautiful lavender field for a picnic. And just at dusk, when the light is just perfect... I'll ask him to marry me.

Saffron smiles.

SAFFRON
Boy, won't he be surprised.

Then suddenly there's a twinge of sadness from Saffron.

SAFFRON (cont'd)
(gently)
Herald loved surprises... till the end.

Meg puts her arm gently on Saffron's shoulder.

MEG
The heart attack wasn't your fault.

SAFFRON
 (softly)
 I know baby, I know.
 (beat)
 Life is just like that. One moment
 you're throwing a surprise, and the
 next... the surprise is on you.

Saffron smiles weakly and Meg hugs her.

BACK TO:

INT. DENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Dent glances up from the book and looks across to Meg.

DENT
 Did you ever own a spice shop?

MEG
 I've owned a spice rack.

DENT
 What about your black friend?

MEG
 Never owned her either.

DENT
 Is that a slavery joke? I hope you're
 not planning on making slavery jokes
 on Oprah's set.

MEG
 Wasn't a joke, you just phrased the
 question funny.

DENT
 I'll rephrase, do you have any black
 friends?

MEG
 Loads.

DENT
 And they'd call you a friend?

MEG
 I'd like to think so.

DENT
I'd rather know so -- is Saffron
real?

MEG
Not the name.

DENT
Obviously. But the person?

MEG
She's more of a... composite.

DENT
Of your close black friends?

MEG
Well, "close" might be a bit of an
overstatement.

DENT
Would "friends" also be a bit of an
overstatement?

MEG
No, I have loads of black friends.

DENT
Such as?

MEG
You want me to list them off?

DENT
If you could.

MEG
Well, there's... Marquisha... and...
(mumbles)
Beyoncé.

Beat.

DENT
You're friends with Beyoncé?

MEG
Not *that* Beyoncé.

DENT
A different Beyoncé?

MEG
Yeah, you don't know her.

Long beat.

DENT
See, that's the kind of bad answer
that we're gonna want to avoid when
you're back on Oprah's couch.

MEG
Alright, fine. I have one black
friend.

He just stares at her.

MEG (cont'd)
I have one black acquaintance.

DENT
Is it Oprah?

MEG
(lying)
No.

Beat.

DENT
Not exactly a promising start.

He looks back to the book.

DENT (cont'd)
We can skip the section with the
boyfriend.

MEG
Good.
(then)
Why though?

DENT
Cause it's a hackneyed bit of writing
that's obviously made up.

MEG
Wasn't that obvious to me when I
lived it.

DENT

Yeah, I'm sure you had a breakup at some point, but I'm talking about the details.

MEG

What's wrong with the details?

DENT

Other than that they're absurd and stupid?

MEG

Oh I agree with that, but it doesn't make it untrue.

Dent cocks an eyebrow.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Meg slips through the front door carrying a bouquet of flowers.

She hears SOUNDS coming from upstairs and slowly follows them.

Her forehead furrows as she draws closer to the bedroom door. She can hear the sound of MOANING.

MEG

Jake?

She opens the door to find JAKE (40s) on the bed.

He's hogtied and decked out in a BDSM leather outfit, complete with nipple clamps and ball gag that is hanging loose around his neck.

BONDAGE PORN plays on the TV hanging on the wall and is the source of the MOANING sounds.

Meg GASPS when she sees him.

JAKE

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?

MEG

I came to... I came to...

She suddenly BURSTS out laughing.

MEG (cont'd)
Did I... did I just catch you
watching porn?

Jake laughs nervously.

JAKE
Yeah, yeah. Oh god, this is
embarrassing.

She glances at the porn on the TV.

MEG
I didn't know you were into this kind
of stuff.

JAKE
Yeeeeeah, I get, I get a little kinky
when I'm... when I'm watching porn.
(then)
Could you wait for me downstairs?

MEG
Or... I have a better idea.

She smiles wickedly and smacks him playfully on the butt.

MEG (cont'd)
I could make your fantasies come to
true.

He laughs nervously.

Meg tilts her head in confusion.

MEG (cont'd)
How did you tie yourself up?

Beat.

JAKE
Boy Scouts. You know you learn...
these things.
(then)
Seriously, could you wait for me
downstairs? I'm sorry, I'm just not
really comfortable--

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
You ready to be punished baby?

And of course out steps a DOMINATRIX (30s), who goes by the
name MASTER and carries a riding whip.

Everyone freezes.

MASTER
Look guys, I don't mean to be
judgmental, but I'm not cool with
threesomes.

MEG
Who the hell is this!?

Jake gives the heavy sigh of a man whose world is crumbling.

JAKE
This is... this is... Master.

MEG
Master?

MASTER
Hi. And you are?

MEG
His fiancé!

JAKE
Fiancé? Since when?

MEG
Since I was going to propose tonight!

JAKE
You were going to propose to me?

MASTER
(to Jake)
Did you say yes?

JAKE
I didn't even know about it!

MEG
I had it all planned out! A carriage
ride, a lavender field--

MASTER
Awww, that sounds sweet.

MEG
It was going to be! Now I gotta
cancel that and cancel the church!

JAKE
The church?

MEG
For our wedding!

JAKE
You booked a venue already!?

MEG
Well I had to move quickly if we were gonna get it for our wedding date.

JAKE
You picked a wedding date already!?

MEG
Well there weren't that many options after I got the tickets to India.

JAKE
What tickets to India!?

MEG
For our honeymoon!

JAKE
Who the hell wants to honeymoon in India!?

MEG
I told you that I always wanted to go on a spice tour.

JAKE
I thought you meant with the Spice Girls!
(then)
You just decided this without even discussing it with me? What the hell is wrong with you?

MASTER
I'm gonna have to agree with him on this.

MEG
(to Master)
No one is asking you!

JAKE
You're not asking *me*! You never asked me what I wanted. And you always do that, you just do whatever you think and I'm supposed to go along with it -- you're so... *domineering*!

MEG
I thought you liked that about me.

JAKE
What on earth gave you that idea?

Loooooong awkward beat as Jake, still hogtied and in his BDSM outfit, tries to play it cool.

MEG
(softly)
Well... I guess I don't know you at all.

She drops her flowers, turns around and leaves.

Beat.

Master smacks Jake on his rump with the whip.

JAKE
Not now.

BACK TO:

INT. DENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Dent looks across at Meg.

DENT
And all of that can be confirmed?

MEG
I wasn't actually there to propose, but the general gist of it is all true.

DENT
And the real Jake can corroborate?

MEG
Real Jake will deny it, but real dominatrix won't.

DENT
How would I find her?

MEG
She follows me on Instagram. Her name is Susan.

DENT
Well that's good.

MEG
Which part, that she's on Instagram
or that her name is Susan?

DENT
That it's *corroborated* and that it
makes you look sympathetic.

MEG
You mean pathetic.

DENT
No, that comes next.

He flips a page on the book.

INT. ALLSPICE ALL THE THYME SPICE SHOP - DAY

Meg lies slumped on the counter, ugly crying, while Saffron
tries to comfort her.

SAFFRON
Damn fool of a white boy. I oughta go
whoop his ass.

MEG
(weakly)
Noo...

SAFFRON
I'll get my whoopin' stick and I will
whoop his ass but good.

MEG
He'd probably just like it anyway.

SAFFRON
Not when I do it. He ain't never got
a black woman whoopin' -- that's not
some skinny-ass white cracker, fun
and games whoopin, it's a real
whoopin'. I'll give him a real black
woman whoopin'.

Meg starts to chuckle.

She forces a smile and wipes away some of her tears.

MEG

Oh Saffron, why don't people love me?

Saffron looks to her tenderly.

SAFFRON

(gently)

Aww, baby. You got so much love in your heart, but you got none fer yourself.

(beat)

Who's gonna love you, if you don't love yourself?

(beat)

Now you listen to ole Saffron. I say you take that ring and you propose to yourself, and when you finally open up your heart and say yes to you... that's gonna be a beautiful marriage.

(beat)

And you take those tickets and you go off to India on a spice journey in celebration of that love.

Meg smiles weakly.

MEG

I guess there's only one question then.

Saffron cocks her head to the side.

MEG (cont'd)

Will you be my maid of honor?

SAFFRON

Shiiiiit, of course I will.

They both laugh and embrace.

MEG (V.O.)

And that's what I did.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Meg in a wedding gown, exits the building with a broad smile on her face as all her GUESTS throw various colored spices into the air as she descends the steps.

MEG (V.O.)

It was a perfect wedding. Every detail just right, from the church, to the vows, to the flowers, to the dress, everything was exactly like I'd always imagined it -- minus the groom of course.

Meg waves to her GUESTS. She blows a kiss at Saffron and then boards a horse-drawn carriage and takes off down the street.

MEG (V.O.) (cont'd)

But not minus the love.

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A wild, highly erotic, if not totally depressing, bout of self-love making.

A FIGURE beneath some sheets TWISTS and TURNS.

MEG (O.S.)

YES! YES! YESSSSSSSS!

Meg's satisfied face pops out from beneath the covers as she regains her composure.

She smiles contentedly.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MEG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg frowns.

She lies on her bed wearing sweatpants and sipping a glass of wine through a crazy straw.

Her laptop is open and rests on her chest as she watches a video.

ON HER SCREEN: We see Meg being interviewed by OPRAH (60s, but is actually eternal).

OPRAH

That's certainly odd though.

MEG

Yeah, of course it was. And sure it was silly, but it was empowering when I needed it. Right? As women there is just so much pressure on us...

OPRAH

Mmhmm.

MEG

... to conform and to live up to somebody else's ideals. And I needed to live up to my own ideals, and to embrace and love myself, as I am, not as someone wants me to be. And marriage was a silly symbol, but it was a symbol that I needed at that point in my life.

OPRAH

Well it's a powerful story.

(beat)

The book is called The Spice of Life, and we'll be right back with author Meg Nutman.

Meg scowls and closes the laptop.

She gives a long hard drag on her straw, slurping up the remainder of her wine.

EXT. MEG'S HOUSE - DAY

Dent KNOCKS repeatedly against the door.

After a moment, Meg, looking horrendous and still dressed in pajamas opens the door.

DENT

Hey. You're alive...

(beat)

I think.

Meg GRUNTS something and turns back inside the house, leaving the door ajar.

Dent follows her in.

INT. MEG'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dent follows behind Meg as she makes her way to her kitchen and pulls out a bowl from her cabinet.

DENT
I've been calling you. Left you all kinds of messages.

MEG
Mmmhmm.

She pours cereal into her bowl.

DENT
Should I be worried here?

MEG
No.

Dent watches as Meg pours some vodka into her cereal.

DENT
That looks like a reason to worry.

She shrugs.

MEG
I'm out of milk. What am I supposed to do?

DENT
Have toast.

MEG
Vodka doesn't pair well with toast.

DENT
It's not even noon.

MEG
Well you can't eat cereal in the *afternoon*. Don't you have any class?

DENT
I guess not.

Dent pulls open his bag and retrieves Meg's book from inside it.

DENT (cont'd)
So... you were on your way to India.

Meg gives a loud and long GROAN.

MEG

Do we have to do this now?

DENT

We were supposed to do this two hours ago -- when would you like to do it?

MEG

Never.

DENT

In forty-eight hours you're gonna be on Oprah's set.

MEG

Can we push that back to never?

DENT

Only if you never want to write another book again.

MEG

That's tempting.

DENT

If that's how you feel, then we're done here.

MEG

I don't think you even like my writing.

DENT

I like your name.

MEG

You like Meg *Nutman*?

DENT

No, but I like that it's a name that was on the cover of a book that sold millions of copies. Do you have any idea how difficult that is?

(then)

You'll get half a million people picking up your next book out of curiosity alone. You're a guaranteed success in a business with very little guarantees.

MEG
You said my career was dead.

DENT
That was before you signed with me.

MEG
Cause you're a miracle worker?

DENT
No, I'm just a fibber who told you,
you needed a miracle.

Beat.

MEG
So you never thought I was toxic?

DENT
Well, let's not get crazy, you're a
little rough around the edges.

MEG
But I'm still good for five hundred
thousand copies?

DENT
Of *one* more book. But if we do some
damage control that number can go way
up and we can have multiple books.

MEG
If that's true then why did my other
reps dump me?

DENT
Cause they have scruples that I
don't.

(then)
They also have other successful
clients--

MEG
Which you don't.

DENT
Which makes it easier to have
scruples.

She stares at him a moment, unsure of what to think or say.

DENT (cont'd)
So...

(MORE)

DENT (cont'd)
(beat)
You arrived in India.

MEG
What if I didn't?

Her eyes flick over to Dent.

MEG (cont'd)
What if it's all nonsense?

DENT
Is it?

MEG
What if it is? What if I don't even
have a passport? What if I got some
Indian food one night and just took
some Molly and that's it?

Beat.

DENT
Is that what happened?

MEG
What if it was?

DENT
Were.

MEG
What?

DENT
Were, not was.

MEG
What?

DENT
Grammatically it should be were, not
was.

MEG
Why?

DENT
Because it's an unreal conditional
sentence.

MEG
No it wasn't.

DENT
So you're saying that *is* what
happened?

MEG
I'm saying what if it were, or was?

Beat.

DENT
Then I guess we'd argue that you
accurately recorded a trip you took
to India, and that you just forgot to
mention that it was psychedelic.

Another beat.

DENT (cont'd)
Is that what happened?

MEG
No. I went to India.

DENT
Good.
(beat)
So... you arrived in India.

Dent crosses back to her book and opens it up.

DENT (cont'd)
New Dehli.

EXT. NEW DEHLI STREETS - DAY

A lost Meg Nutman walks along the filthy and bustling
streets of New Dehli.

MEG (V.O.)
And there I was on my honeymoon,
trying to find my way to the Kendriya
bus terminal... when the universe
intervened.

Suddenly a HORDE of CHILDREN rush around Meg.

They SHOUT in Hindi at her and touch her hair and clothes
like she is a walking angel.

She smiles politely at them.

MEG

Hi. Hi.

The kids don't move and keep BABBLING and groping at her. Eventually she tries to keep walking through the mass of children blocking her way.

MEG (cont'd)

Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me...

The children still don't move.

Then a bigger child, RAAHITHYA (11) wearing sneakers, torn jeans and no shirt SHOUTS out something to the kids.

They all look his way and Raahithya squeezes past them to get to Meg.

RAAHITHYA

This way, this way.

He creates a path for her and Meg slips out of the pack of children.

RAAHITHYA (cont'd)

This way... come on, come.

He grabs her by the hand and leads her away.

MEG

Thank you.

RAAHITHYA

They think you're a goddess.

Meg chuckles at the thought.

MEG

I'm no goddess. I'm just a woman.

RAAHITHYA

Aren't all women like goddesses?

MEG

What do you mean?

RAAHITHYA

They can create life.

Meg thinks about it a bit.

MEG

I guess you're right.

RAAHITHYA
So where are you going, goddess?

MEG
(spiritually)
I've been asking myself that a lot lately.

He cocks his head at her.

RAAHITHYA
Are you lost?

She's ponders the question deeply for a moment.

MEG
I dunno. Maybe.

RAAHITHYA
I can help you.

MEG
(condescending)
Oh yeah? Are you a yogi?

She smiles at him.

RAAHITHYA
Yogi? I can take you to yogi.

MEG
Really?

RAAHITHYA
Yes. No hassle. I take you.

She thinks for a moment and then nods.

MEG
Okay, I guess I could use some guidance.

RAAHITHYA
I take you for ten rupee.

MEG
Oh. Ten rupee, eh?

She smiles at the little entrepreneur.

RAAHITHYA
No hassle.

MEG
 Alright. It's a deal.

He takes her by the hand and leads her along the street.

RAAHITHYA
 What brings you to India?

MEG
 Well... I'm here for a spice tour.

RAAHITHYA
 Oh, I like Sporty Spice.

Meg laughs, way too hard at that.

MEG
 No, not that kind of tour.
 (beat)
 Actually I'm more here on a kind of
 quest for spiritual enlightenment.

RAAHITHYA
 What does that mean?

MEG
 It's a search for self-actualization.

RAAHITHYA
 Like how I search for food in garbage
 cans?

MEG
 Yeah, something like that.

RAAHITHYA
 This way.

He leads her down a...

ALLEY

That dead ends.

Meg's brow furrows.

MEG (V.O.)
 It was a dead end, and for a moment I
 thought it was the first lesson from
 a master yogi or the universe itself,
 telling me that my life was going
 nowhere, and I needed a change.
 (MORE)

MEG (V.O.) (cont'd)
 (beat)
 And in a way I guess it was.

Meg GASPS as Raahithya TEARS her purse off of her and dashes away.

Meg spins around.

MEG
 HEY!

She runs after him.

She rounds the corner and loses him almost immediately in the sea of people.

MEG (cont'd)
 HEY!

She rushes through the onslaught of PEDESTRIANS, glancing frantically for any sign of the boy.

MEG (cont'd)
 Thief! Thief!

Lots of people look her way, but they're of no help.

He's gone.

She stops and scowls, feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about what to do next.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - DAY

Meg sits, on the verge of tears, before a CONSULAR OFFICER (40s).

CONSULAR OFFICER
 Anything else stolen?

MEG
 It was everything. My passport. My wallet.

CONSULAR OFFICER
 Okay, well, we'll notify the local law enforcement and they'll try to track down your belongings.
 (beat)
 Though, I wouldn't hold my breath on that.

(MORE)

CONSULAR OFFICER (cont'd)
 (then)
 Actually I would, those local boys
 got some funk on them.

Consular Officer chuckles to himself.

Meg does not appreciate the joke.

CONSULAR OFFICER (cont'd)
 In the meantime we'll get you a
 temporary passport and you can use
 our phones or the internet to wire
 transfer some money.

MEG
 Thank you.

CONSULAR OFFICER
 Sure. But next time be more careful.
 There's a lot of those slumdogs out
 there.

MEG
 (offended)
 He wasn't a dog.

CONSULAR OFFICER
 You know what we actually call'em?

He leans in close.

CONSULAR OFFICER (cont'd)
 Little shits. Cause they're tiny,
 brown, and smelly. Get it?

He laughs again.

Meg stands to her feet defiantly.

MEG
 How dare you!

CONSULAR OFFICER
 What?

MEG
 You're a vile racist pig.

CONSULAR OFFICER
 Excuse me?

MEG

You're not excused! This is the most unpleasant experience I've had today, and I was robbed earlier. I knew I should've gone to the Canadian embassy -- they know how to treat people.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Are you a dual citizen?

MEG

I'm a citizen of the world!

Meg storms off.

INT. ALLSPICE ALL THE THYME SPICE SHOP - DAY

The phone RINGS.

Saffron answers it.

SAFFRON

Allspice All The Thyme Spice Shop.

There's SOBBING on the other line.

MEG (O.S.)

(between sobs)

Saff-ron.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED:

EXT. CANADIAN CONSULATE - DAY

Meg on a pay phone outside the Canadian consulate building.

MEG

Saffron.

SAFFRON

What's wrong baby?

MEG

I need money... I was robbed. And the Canadian consulate is really being no help at all!

DENT (O.S.)

Wait a minute, wait a minute...

BACK TO:

INT. MEG'S HOUSE - DAY

Dent makes a mark in the book. He glances across at Meg who is still in her pajamas and working on her second bowl of vodka and cereal.

DENT

You say you called Saffron at work.

MEG

Yeah. So?

DENT

There's like a ten hour time difference. Your shop wouldn't be open.

MEG

Oh yeah, I guess not.

She laughs and shrugs.

DENT

So it's safe to say this call never happened?

MEG

Are you seriously asking me whether or not I called the black friend I don't have, at the spice shop I don't own?

DENT

No I'm asking if you made a call at all. The time inaccuracy puts the whole account into question.

MEG

You think people will notice that?

DENT

If I did, someone else will too. Is there any part of this that's true?

MEG

I'm sure I called somebody at some point. My mom maybe, I think.

DENT

Uh-huh, but more importantly, I take it that you didn't spend your afternoon defiantly standing up against casual racism in the U.S. Embassy?

MEG

I was poolside at a five star hotel.

DENT

And you also weren't robbed?

MEG

Well, the continental breakfast left a lot to be desired.

(then)

But I did meet a street boy named Raahithya. Cute kid.

DENT

You used his real name?

MEG

Yeah, why not?

DENT

Cause you call him a thief but you weren't robbed.

MEG

I liked the kid, I wanted to include him in my book. I thought it'd be fun.

DENT

Lawsuits aren't fun.

MEG

I very much doubt that he's litigious.

DENT

I doubt he's literate, that's not the point.

MEG

All those kids are thieves. That's how they get by. They beg, they scavenge, and they steal. Ask anyone.

DENT

Let's not ask anyone. Let's never mention this again. To anyone.

MEG

Fine.

Dent turns back to the book.

DENT

Alright, so the next day you take a bus trip out to Kerala.

MEG

Mmmhmm.

DENT

And that's where you meet the adonis elephant tamer.

MEG

(lustfully)

Sabhya.

DENT

Who takes you deep into the Indian jungle in search of White Bird's Eye Chili.

(beat)

But a storm comes and the bridge is washed out.

(then)

Was there really a storm?

Meg snorts a laugh.

DENT (cont'd)

What?

MEG

Weather and time zones, that's what you're interested in?

DENT

Weather and time zones can be *verified*.

MEG

Most people would be more interested in Sabhya.

DENT

You're all alone in the jungle, so who's to say whether or not you ran into an elephant tamer. Oprah's research staff isn't gonna be able to disprove that.

(beat)

But weather is a different story. Was there a storm?

MEG

There was thunder. There was rain.

DENT

And a bridge washed out?

MEG

Which bridge?

Dent nods.

DENT

True, you never mention what bridge -- that gives us wiggle room.

MEG

And in the book I never see the bridge. Sabhya says it's washed out.

DENT

You think Sabhya was lying?

She shrugs.

MEG

Maybe he just wanted to spend some more time with a beautiful American woman.

DENT

Yeeeeeeaaah, we're already straining credulity as is, don't you think?

MEG

Screw you. Why wouldn't an adonis fall instantly and madly in love with me?

DENT

You're wearing pajamas and slurping vodka from a bowl.

MEG

Screw you again, I look hot in pajamas.

DENT

A hot mess is not the same as *hot*.

MEG

Just cause you're sober and wearing underwear doesn't mean you have it all together.

DENT

I'm not claiming that.

MEG

You're not wearing underwear?

DENT

No, I mean, I'm not claiming that I have it all together. I just don't see you and Sabhya together.

MEG

Cause he's too good for me?

DENT

I dunno. Maybe he's just not the right fit for you.

MEG

You're talking about the love of my life.

DENT

Meg Nutman's love, not yours.

Meg arches an eyebrow.

MEG

What does that mean?

Dent opens his mouth to speak, but he hesitates.

He reconsiders.

DENT

Nothing. I'm speaking out of turn. Let's get back to the book.

His eyes flick back to the pages.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Sabhya and Meg come riding into the village on their majestic elephant.

MEG (V.O.)
We rode through the night and Sabhya
brought me to a small village with
friendly locals.

They dismount from the elephant and Meg glances around at the VILLAGERS.

She sees a bunch of KIDS playing soccer with a completely deflated ball.

She frowns at the pitiful sight and clutches at her chest.

THUMP! The deflated ball lands near her feet.

The CHILDREN SHOUT in Hindi at her, to toss the ball back.

She doesn't though. Instead she gets an idea and starts rummaging through her satchel.

She pulls out a pen and kneels down next to the ball. Then she quickly disassembles the pen and removes the plastic tube from it.

Meg bites at one end of it and jams it into the soccer ball hole and starts inflating the ball by breathing into the plastic tube.

Sabhya watches her from a distance.

PFFFFFF. PFFFFFFF. PFFFFFF. The ball grows bigger and bigger.

The CHILDREN gather around her, watching in wonder as the ball starts to take its spherical shape.

PFFFFFF. PFFF. PFFFFFFF.

She pulls out the tube from the ball and tosses it toward the band of kids. The now firmly inflated soccer ball bounces along the ground.

MEG
There you go.

She smiles and rubs her hand through one of the boy's hair.

The kids SQUEAL in joy as they run off to play with their fixed ball.

Sabhya sidles up next to Meg.

Meg makes a face and then spits.

MEG (cont'd)
That ball tasted a little weird.

Sabhya nods his head and then gestures toward the children.

She turns and sees the children casually playing the beautiful game through a layer of COW MANURE.

SABHYA
You've been kissed by the gods.

She coughs.

But then smiles and flips her hair back, seductively.

MEG
Well... I do love to be kissed.

They lock eyes.

And stay there a moment before he breaks eye contact and walks off.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - LATER

Meg walks through the village and kneels down next to some WOMEN who are making some bead necklaces.

MEG (V.O.)
Time stood still here. And I marveled at these people, who couldn't read or write, but who knew far more than most people back home would ever know in a lifetime.
(beat)
They knew what mattered. And more importantly, what didn't. They knew the beauty of a cool breeze. They knew the majesty of roaring rivers. They knew how to measure their days, one bead at a time.

An OLD WOMAN (30s) looks to Meg and smiles broadly, missing most of her teeth.

Meg smiles back.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - RIVER - DUSK

Meg stares out at the river as a setting sun creates a million bits of shimmering light along the glassy water.

Sabhya comes up next to her.

SABHYA
Do you like it here?

MEG
No.
(beat)
I love it.
(then)
It feels like home somehow. And
yet... nothing like home.

She turns to him.

MEG (cont'd)
Do you know what I mean?

He can only smile.

SABHYA
I'm afraid not. I grew up in a
village much like this one.
(beat)
You don't have villages like this in
America?

MEG
No.
(beat)
We have cities. Concrete and steel.
Industry and capitalism.

Sabhya nods.

SABHYA
High life expectancy though.

MEG
But for what kind of life? A life of
iPads and iPhones? A glossy life, but
an empty one.

He gives an understanding nod.

SABHYA
A life without spice.

MEG
That's not for me. I want this life.
I want to dive deep into it.

Meg suddenly rips off her shirt and gives a devilish smile.

MEG (cont'd)
Let's go swimming.

She slips out of her pants down to her underwear and Sabhya's eyes go wide.

SABHYA
You don't want to do that.

MEG
Yes I do.

She kicks her pants toward Sabhya and rushes toward the river.

SABHYA
I mean not here. That's the river we
poop in.
(beat)
The river we bathe in is further up
stream.

Beat.

MEG
Oh.

Meg laughs at herself.

MEG (cont'd)
I have so much to learn. It's so raw
here, so connected to nature.
(beat)
Teach me. Show me.

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Meg jumps into the river with a mighty SPLASH.

She breaches the surface and turns to Sabhya.

MEG
Come on in.

Sabhya smiles and rips off his pants, revealing nothing underneath.

Meg GASPS and turns away in embarrassment.

There's a SPLASH as Sabhya jumps in behind her.

She turns back around as a naked Sabhya floats up next to her.

There's an intense moment as the two lock eyes.

A small smile forms at the corner of Meg's mouth and she playfully SPLASHES him in the face.

He looks at her horrified, but then of course smiles right back and the two immediately get into an epic splash war.

Meg LAUGHS as a wave of water crashes against her face.

MEG (V.O.)
Under a setting sun, in that cool
rushing river was a bit of heaven.

She gives a sultry look across at Sabhya.

MEG (V.O.) (cont'd)
And I soon learned that the most
potent spice of all, was love as it
first bloomed.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Meg and Sabhya, dripping wet, walk back to the village.

There are ANGRY SHOUTS up ahead.

Sabhya stops in his tracks. His eyes narrow.

MEG
What is it?

SABHYA
Could be dacoity.

MEG
Dacoity?

SABHYA
Bandits.

He rushes toward the sound.

MEG
Sabhya!

She chases after him.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

Meg rushes up and finds Sabhya and several VILLAGERS standing in a semi-circle.

At the center is a FATHER (40s) he SCREAMS something foul in Hindi and tosses a YOUNG WOMAN (20s) to the ground.

The young woman cries and wails as a young man, the SON, (20s) tries to stop his father.

Meg's eyes narrow.

MEG
What is this? What's going on?

Sabhya stops Meg before she can rush over to help the young woman.

SABHYA
She's a Dalit.

MEG
What?

SABHYA
An untouchable.

Meg scowls.

MEG (V.O.)
I had heard about the Indian caste system. But I had never seen it.

Meg turns to Sabhya.

MEG
I don't understand.

SABHYA
We are Sudra.

He gestures at the son who is PLEADING with his father to stop.

SABHYA (cont'd)
The son loves the girl.
(MORE)

SABHYA (cont'd)

(beat)

But she is untouchable. There will be no arranged marriage. The father forbids it.

(beat)

He calls curses down on the son if he touches the untouchable.

Meg shakes her head in dismay.

MEG

We've got to stop this.

SABHYA

Why?

She looks at him, baffled.

MEG

What caste am I?

SABHYA

What do you do?

MEG

I own a spice shop. And I'm a dreamer.

SABHYA

You're Vaishya.

Her jaw tightens.

MEG

No. I'm not.

Meg steps out boldly and storms through the crowd to stand between the young untouchable woman and the berating father.

MEG (cont'd)

NO! STOP! STOP!

She holds out her hand to the father in the universal sign for stop.

The father goes silent.

MEG (cont'd)

I'm a Vaishya in your system. Vaishya.

She stares judgmental daggers at everyone who has been watching this spectacle with approval.

MEG (cont'd)
You call her untouchable. But look...

She reaches out her hand and caresses the face of the young woman.

MEG (cont'd)
I touch her.

Beat.

MEG (cont'd)
I kiss her.

Meg kisses the young untouchable woman full on the lips.

The young woman... not super into it.

Oh god, now Meg's using tongue.

The son seems to like it though.

Eventually Meg breaks away from the kiss and stares straight at the father, who looks rather perplexed.

MEG (cont'd)
Love knows no caste.

She grabs the young woman by the hand and boldly walks her over to the son.

She grabs the son by the hand and forces them to hold hands.

Sabhya watches from the distance with a scowl.

He turns and walks away.

MEG (cont'd)
Love knows. No caste.

She smiles brightly at the father, who looks shell-shocked.

CLAP.

CLAP.

A slow clap gets started by the VILLAGERS.

The father frowns in shame as all the villagers start clapping in uproarious approval.

Meg smiles as she turns and looks for Sabhya.

But she can't find him, and her brow furrows.

INT. INDIAN HUT - NIGHT

Meg enters into a hut to find Sabhya making some preparations to leave.

MEG
What are you doing?

He snaps at her.

SABHYA
Did you come here to judge us?

MEG
No.

SABHYA
To judge our ways to judge our people?

MEG
(gently)
No.

SABHYA
Then why did you come?

Meg shrinks back from him.

MEG
(softly)
I dunno.

SABHYA
You foolish American girl, you don't know what you're doing.

Beat.

MEG
I know what I feel.

Sabhya shakes his head in dismay.

SABHYA
(softly)
He'll be an outcast. He'll be an untouchable and his family will be disgraced. His father was doing what was right by his son.

MEG

But he wasn't doing what was *right*.

She takes a step closer to him and locks eyes.

MEG (cont'd)

I'm Vaishya, you're Sudra. Would that make us a disgrace?

His eyes flick away.

SABHYA

I don't live by their rules.

MEG

So why should they?

SABHYA

Cause the world does.

(beat)

And most people aren't strong like you Meg.

Meg shakes her head.

MEG

I'm not strong.

SABHYA

Yes you are. You had the strength to love yourself. To come to India and to open your heart. That's courage.

(beat)

And most people don't have that. Most people cannot stand outside the rules of the world.

She reaches out her hand and caresses his face.

MEG

Then we change the world.

Beat.

SABHYA

(softly)

How?

MEG

By being brave for them.

She leans in close to him, their lips an inch apart.

MEG (cont'd)
By breaking their rules.

She kisses him passionately, he kisses her right back and wraps her up in his muscular arms.

They collapse onto the bed together.

MEG (V.O.)
That night I became the master tamer.

BACK TO:

INT. MEG'S HOUSE - DAY

Meg fans herself with her hand and shoots Dent a playfully seductive look as he takes a break from the book.

MEG
Pretty good, huh?

Dent gives a small grin.

DENT
That's one adjective to describe it.

MEG
What's another?

DENT
Irrelevant.

MEG
You're saying you didn't like it?

DENT
I'm saying it doesn't matter whether or not I like it.

MEG
If you don't like this then you don't have a heart.

DENT
Is that really the organ this was meant to stimulate?

MEG
Among other things.
(then)
But it didn't stimulate yours?

DENT
Guys and girls are different I guess.

MEG
Girls like good literature.

DENT
There's that adjective again.

MEG
Do you even like my writing at all?

DENT
I'm here to analyze the veracity, not
the quality of the writing.

MEG
That's a no.

DENT
Over four million sold, who cares
what I think?

MEG
I do.

DENT
Why?

MEG
I'd like my manager to believe in me.

DENT
I believe strongly in your market
potential.

MEG
I want you to believe in my *writing*.

DENT
I believe your writing has market
potential.

MEG
(dryly)
That's a ringing endorsement.

DENT
It's the only endorsement that
matters. My job is to make us both
money, not to criticize your syntax.

MEG
What's wrong with my syntax?

DENT
Nothing.

MEG
Gimme one criticism of the book.

DENT
It's labeled a memoir.

MEG
Gimme another criticism, this time
about the writing.

Dent gives a heavy sigh.

MEG (cont'd)
If you're worried about hurting my
feelings -- don't worry.
(then)
You see what people say about me? You
see my hate mail? I can take a
critic. Do you know how many times
I've been called a disgusting cunt?
You're criticism couldn't possibly be
worse.

DENT
But it'd be just as *constructive*,
which is, not at all.

MEG
Actually it was, I changed my gyno.

DENT
The book is written, the book is out.
My thoughts on it aren't
constructive.

MEG
It's constructive for the next book.
Don't you think I'd have more market
potential if I were a better writer?

Dent shrugs.

DENT
Possibly.

MEG
So gimme a criticism. What didn't you
like about it?

Beat.

DENT
I didn't like the character.

MEG
Which one?

DENT
The main one.

MEG
Ouch. Fuck you.

DENT
Oh *that* hurt your feelings?

MEG
You do realize that it's written in
first person--

DENT
Yes.

MEG
And that *I'm* the person?

DENT
It doesn't sound like you -- which is
why I didn't care for the writing.
(then)
If you think about it, it's actually
a compliment.

MEG
I'm thinking... I'm not quite hearing
the compliment.

DENT
Meg Nutman is an obnoxious,
delusional, pretentious, self-
righteous, insufferable little twat--

MEG
Oh, now I hear the compliment.

DENT
You're not Meg Nutman.

Beat.

MEG
Thanks... I guess.
(then)
But if you say that in public I'll
deny it.

DENT
As you should.

Dent gets to his feet.

DENT (cont'd)
And on the subject of deniability, I
think we're good here.

He closes up the book and stuffs it back in his bag.

MEG
So what do we say to Oprah?

DENT
We say this part happened. There's no
mention of the village name. No
distinct regional characteristics to
find it -- I don't think we have much
to worry there.

He slings the bag over his shoulder.

DENT (cont'd)
Plus, Oprah's not gonna want to pull
too hard on this thread. Even if its
wrong in fact, it's right in spirit
with repudiating the caste system.

He heads for the door.

DENT (cont'd)
I'll see you at my office tomorrow.
Real clothes. Underwear. Sober.

MEG
I can promise you two of those,
probably not all three.

DENT
I'd go with clothed and sober.

MEG
It's not your pick.

Dent gives a slight smirk.

DENT
I'll see ya.

He heads for the exit.

MEG
Hey.

He turns back.

MEG (cont'd)
If I wrote a book -- that wasn't
penned by Meg Nutman, but was from
me...
(beat)
Would you read it?

They lock eyes.

DENT
I dunno.
(beat)
But I'd be interested.

There's a moment.

DENT (cont'd)
See you tomorrow.

She nods as he heads out.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dent sits at the counter, nursing a drink and lost in his thoughts.

After a moment he pulls open his bag and retrieves Meg's book.

He starts flipping through it, reading through a passage.

VOICE (O.S.)
Oh my god.

Dent turns to see a HOT BLONDE (20s) looking his way.

HOT BLONDE
I loooove that book.

DENT

Oh yeah?

Dent gives a grin.

HOT BLONDE

I mean, I did, till I found out that,
that girl is full of shit.

(then)

Did you know that?

DENT

You mean the author?

HOT BLONDE

Yeah, I read on the internet that she
made the whole thing up.

DENT

It's a little more nuanced than that,
isn't it?

Hot Blonde thinks for a second.

HOT BLONDE

No.

She slides up next to Dent.

HOT BLONDE (cont'd)

Still, you don't see a lot of guys
reading that.

(beat)

Buy me a drink.

Dent cocks an eyebrow at her.

DENT

Was that a question?

HOT BLONDE

Should it be?

She gives a playful smile.

Dent smiles back and signals for the BARTENDER.

DENT

Let me ask you something.

He holds up Meg's book to her.

DENT (cont'd)
If she were to write another book,
would you check it out?

HOT BLONDE
Hell no. Fuck that bitch, she lied to
Oprah.

DENT
(mumbling)
Her name be praised.

HOT BLONDE
(not hearing him)
Hmmm?

DENT
Nothing.
(then)
But you liked the book?

HOT BLONDE
I loved the book.

DENT
So what's the difference really? You
liked the story, you were
entertained.

HOT BLONDE
But... it's not true.

DENT
There's some truth in it.

HOT BLONDE
I dunno about that. I talked to my
yogi--

DENT
You have a yogi?

HOT BLONDE
Of course.
(then)
And he says it's all shit.

DENT
How would he know?

She looks at him like he's nuts.

HOT BLONDE
He's a *yogi*.

DENT
Right. But... he wasn't there.

HOT BLONDE
He's everywhere. He's a *yogi*.

DENT
I think you're thinking of God.

HOT BLONDE
Same thing.

DENT
Is it?

HOT BLONDE
Sure. It's just eastern or western,
it's all the same god.

DENT
(mumbling again)
Her name be praised.

HOT BLONDE
Huh?

DENT
And what does your *yogi* say about
forgiveness and redemption?

HOT BLONDE
Oh soooo much good stuff. And I've
really needed that. Like when I
cheated on my old boyfriend, and my
new boyfriend, and with my sister's
fiancé.

DENT
And they all forgave you?

HOT BLONDE
No, but I forgave myself. And I've
been telling them for forever to get
my *yogi*.

DENT
What about forgiving others? What
about forgiving this author?

HOT BLONDE

Ewww. No. You don't get to lie to everybody for money. She's a lying, worthless cunt.

Long beat.

DENT

You know what...

He pulls out some cash and slaps it onto the counter.

DENT (cont'd)

Pay for your own damn drink.

He grabs his book and heads out.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Meg and Sabhya ride out of the village aboard their elephant as the VILLAGERS send them off with CHEERS a petals being thrown.

MEG (V.O.)

We were sent off with honor, like we were royalty. And for some reason my mind drifted back to the recession at my wedding.

(beat)

As I reflect on it now, I think our send off was a recession too.

(beat)

But not for our wedding.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Sabhya leans in close to Meg as they ride along.

SABHYA

Close your eyes.

Meg gives a smile.

MEG

Okaaay.

She closes her eyes.

SABHYA

What do you smell?

Beat.

MEG
The elephant.

SABHYA
Keep your eyes closed.
(beat)
Breathe in deeply.

Meg does so.

SABHYA (cont'd)
Don't open your eyes until you can
sense it.

CLOSE ON MEG'S FACE:

She shuts her eyes tightly and inhales and exhales deeply.
Suddenly she GASPS and her eyes go wide.
When she opens them she looks around to see that she is in
the...

EXT. KANTHARI MULAKU FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Vibrant green rolling hills, dotted with brilliant white
from the White Bird's Eye Chili.

Meg's mouth droops open as she takes in the wondrous sight.

SABHYA
Kanthari Mulaku.

MEG
Oh. Wow.
(beat)
We're here.

She looks back and smiles at Sabhya.

EXT. KANTHARI MULAKU FIELD - LATER

Meg brushes her hand against the White Bird's Eye Chili as
she walks through the field.

She picks at one and holds it up to her nose breathing in
deeply as she closes her eyes.

Sabhya watches her with a smile.

Meg pulls a large spice canister from her satchel and starts picking some of the chili and placing it in the canister.

MEG
And this is all wild?

SABHYA
Tended by only the gods.

MEG
So, it's totally organic?

Sabhya gives a hearty laugh.

SABHYA
Of course.

MEG
Wow.

Meg smiles again as she gazes around the picturesque field.

MEG (cont'd)
(softly)
It's so beautiful.

Beat.

SABHYA
That's not the best part.
(beat)
You see that ridge over there?

He points.

SABHYA (cont'd)
It's a good site with a view of the valley.

Meg's nose crinkles as she looks over at Sabhya.

SABHYA (cont'd)
I was thinking... it would be a good place for a house.
(beat)
A home.
(beat)
For us.

Meg freezes.

MEG
Us?

SABHYA

Yes.

(beat)

Stay with me, here.

Meg shakes her head, suddenly feeling dizzy.

MEG

I can't... I can't do that.

SABHYA

Why not?

MEG

I have a life back home.

SABHYA

We'll make another life. Together.

MEG

I have a spice shop.

SABHYA

You have a field full of wild
Kanthari Mulaku. What more do you
need?

She looks at him with eyes of sadness.

MEG

That's one spice.

SABHYA

With *me*.

(beat)

Don't you love me?

MEG

Don't put that on me.

SABHYA

You don't love me?

MEG

I'm not some elephant for you to
tame!

Tears start forming in Sabhya's eyes.

SABHYA
 (softly)
 Then say it.
 (beat)
 Tell me you don't love me.

Long painful beat.

Meg looks to him.

MEG
 (a whisper)
 I do love you.

She takes a step closer to him and takes his face gently in her hands.

MEG (cont'd)
 But you're asking me to close my
 heart off to every other spice in the
 world.
 (beat)
 And I can't do that.
 (beat)
 Not now. Not after I've finally
 learned to love myself.

Sabhya gives a sorrowful nod, but he relents.

SABHYA
 The hardest thing to tame is not an
 elephant.
 (beat)
 It's a woman's heart.

Meg smiles weakly.

Just then the elephant gives a scared TRUMPET BLAST and runs off quickly into the forest.

Sabhya SHOUTS after it in Hindi, but it ignores its master.

MEG
 What was that?

Sabhya's eyes narrow.

SABHYA
 Something spooked him.
 (beat)
 Come on.

He grabs her by the hand and leads her in the direction that the elephant ran off.

EXT. POPPY FIELDS - DAY

They come across a poppy field.

Sabhya kneels down next to the plant and exams it with his hand.

He frowns.

SABHYA

Poppy.

Meg bends down next to him.

MEG

That's legal here, right?

SABHYA

Only in designated fields.

He looks to her and his eyes say it all.

This is no designated field.

SABHYA (cont'd)

We need to go.

There's suddenly a RUSTLE behind them. Someone's coming.

Sabhya's eyes go wide.

SABHYA (cont'd)

(harsh whisper)

Down.

They drop to the ground in the poppy field and start army crawling along the ground, disappearing from view.

They stop as soon as they hear the sound of HINDI being casually spoken, accompanied by the sound of FOOTSTEPS heading into the field.

Sabhya glances at Meg.

He motions for her to be quiet.

Two MEN (20s) armed with machine guns and katars strapped at their sides, walk through the poppy fields. DACOITS. Indian criminals.

Meg's heart starts racing as their FOOTSTEPS draw closer and closer.

She wants to bolt and locks eyes with Sabhya, who is silently pleading for her not to move.

A FOOT steps right next to her face.

She GULPS. But doesn't move.

The men keep walking.

Meg quietly exhales, letting go a breath she didn't realize she was holding.

Then suddenly the men stop.

They CHAT back and forth.

Meg glances up with just her eyes and then GASPS as her eyes meet those of an Indian criminal.

He's surprised to see her and reflexively raises his gun at her.

Sabhya grabs the KATAR from the dacoit's belt and in one quick motion STABS him through the belly.

The man SCREAMS.

The other dacoit then turns and immediately opens fire.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Bullets TEAR through into the criminal and into Sabhya.

Both SCREAM and fall to the ground.

MEG

SABHYA!

Meg gets to her feet.

CLICK.

She turns and sees the other dacoit, with his gun leveled at her. He cocks the gun again for some inexplicable movie reason, and takes an intimidating step forward.

He says something softly to her in Hindi and then licks his lips in the universal sign for, "I'm gonna rape you."

Meg backpedals away from him.

He smiles at her in a super creepy way.

Then... THUNK.

A katar FLIES through the air and PLUNGES into his CHEST.

Blood squirts out of his mouth.

He makes a GURGLING sound and falls to the ground.

Meg turns and sees Sabhya standing and clutching at his wounded body. Blood streaks down across his chiseled abs.

MEG (cont'd)

Sabhya!

She rushes to his side just as his legs give way and he falls to the ground.

She glances at his wounds.

MEG (cont'd)

You're going to be alright, you're gonna be okay.

He stares at her. Not believing a word of her lies.

He runs his bloodstained hands through her hair.

SABHYA

Meg. Such a beautiful sound. Meg.

Tears fill Meg's eyes.

MEG

Stay with me.

SABHYA

I'm sorry. I don't think I can.

MEG

No! Stay with me. And I'll stay with you.

(beat)

We'll have that house and be together and every morning pick from the wild fields of Kanthari Mulaku.

Sabhya smiles weakly.

SABHYA
That was one life.
(beat)
But it's not this one.

He brushes the tears from off her cheeks.

SABHYA (cont'd)
Death may be a bitter spice. But it
brings out all the other flavors.
(beat)
Savor them Meg. Savor them.

And with that Sabhya breathes his last.

Meg cries, summoning every childhood pain she's ever
experienced in order to give an Oscar worthy performance.

EXT. KANTHARI MULAKU FIELD - DUSK

A pyre has been crudely built.

Sabhya's body lies on top of it.

Meg covers him with a richly colored blanket that was once
covered the elephant.

She holds a torch and sets the pyre on fire. The flames lick
up the wood and spread quickly across Sabhya's body.

She stares wistfully as the fire consumes him.

MEG (V.O.)
I sent his body back to the earth. In
a field of White Bird's Eye Chili,
where we were going to make a home.
(beat)
He gave his everything for me. A cost
I could never repay in this life. But
he gave it because he loved.
(beat)
And to this day, whenever I taste the
spices derived from Kanthari
Mulaku... it always tastes bitter-
sweet to me.

Meg cries as the sun fades and the sky grows dark.

EXT. KANTHARI MULAKU FIELD - DAY

Ash is all that remains of Sabhya.

Meg takes some of the ash in her hands and places it in her spice canister.

She then mixes it in with a bit of ground White Bird's Eye Chili.

She gives a soft, and somewhat sad smile, before she snaps the lid closed.

MEG (V.O.)
I had lost my love. My friend.
(beat)
But worse... my guide.

The skies RUMBLE over head.

EXT. INDIAN JUNGLE - DAY

Rain pours down as Meg stumbles through the forest completely lost.

She starts to cry.

MEG (V.O.)
I wandered through that thick
impenetrable Indian jungle.
(beat)
Lost. Alone. Afraid. And losing all
hope.

Meg falls to her knees and extends her arms out to the sky.

MEG (V.O.) (cont'd)
There was nothing I could do.
(beat)
Except pray.

MEG
Oh God, or gods, or universe. Hear
me. Help me. Help me universe.
(then)
Why bring me all the way out here to
teach me love and then let me die?
Help me. Please. Please help me.

There's a RUMBLE from up ahead.

Meg blinks open her eyes.

She turns her head to the sound of the RUMBLING.

Then suddenly an elephant comes upon her.

And not just any elephant, Sabhya's elephant.

The elephant kneels before her.

Meg smiles.

MEG (cont'd)
(softly)
Sabhya.

Then she climbs on top of the mighty beast.

MEG (V.O.)
The universe heard my call, and I had
a new guide to lead me home.

EXT. NEW DEHLI STREETS - DAY

Meg, striding atop the mighty elephant, rides with pride
through the crowded streets of New Dehli.

Traffic stops and PEDESTRIANS look at her in awe.

She beams, smiling at all of them as she passes by.

INT. DENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Dent glances up from the book.

Meg is seated across from him, staring at her cell phone,
and looking rather dejected.

DENT
This isn't holding your attention?

MEG
Not as much as these one star reviews
on Amazon. Listen to this...
(reading)
Meg Nutman is a liar, in that she
claims to be a writer and not a
mentally impaired, hormonally
imbalanced baboon.
(beat)
One star.

DENT
Let's focus here.

MEG
 (reading)
 Worse than Eat Pray Love.
 (to Dent)
 Is that true?

DENT
 No. Nothing's worse than Eat Pray Love.

MEG
 (reading)
 This is not a memoir. It's also not compelling, or interesting, or competent, or a book.
 (beat)
 One star.

DENT
 Riding a wild elephant through New Dehli would probably be noticeable. There'd be cell phone pictures or--

MEG
 (reading)
 Like authentic Indian cuisine, this one will give you the runs.

Dent glowers.

DENT
 Maybe you should focus on the five star reviews instead.

MEG
 Sure.

Meg scrolls up to one.

MEG (cont'd)
 (reading)
 I had to write a report on this in a feminist studies course I was taking. I didn't read it. But I did crack it open, put my penis in it and slam it shut as hard as I could. So I think I got the gist.
 (beat)
 Five stars.

Beat.

DENT

Let's get back to the elephant.

MEG

This is the elephant in the room.

She gestures at her phone.

MEG (cont'd)

We're busy trying to save something
that maybe shouldn't be saved.

(beat)

I wanna be a writer sure, I dreamed
about being a writer, but that
doesn't make me a writer.

DENT

You got paid to write. That makes you
a writer.

MEG

Yeah I got paid.

(beat)

I got paid more than most real
writers get paid in a lifetime and
why? Cause Oprah Winfrey by random
chance stumbled upon my book--

DENT

And *liked* it.

MEG

As a memoir. Not as a novel. Not for
the writing. And that's the thing
isn't it? These reviews, they're not
wrong.

(beat)

I'm a failure. That's the truth. I
tried to be a writer and I sucked at
it. And I failed.

(beat)

So whether or not I can make more
money doesn't really matter, does it?
Cause the dream is already dead, even
if the career isn't officially.

There's a long moment between them.

DENT

(gently)

Do you love writing? Do you love it?

Meg gives a small nod.

DENT (cont'd)
I can get you paid to do something
that you love, *that's* the dream.

Meg forces a smile.

Beat.

DENT (cont'd)
Alright, let's take a break.
(then)
You hungry?

MEG
I could eat.

DENT
Let's get some dinner.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dent and Meg sit at a high top table, already a few drinks
in.

DENT
Horses on beaches.

MEG
Horses?

DENT
On beaches -- that's important.

MEG
Horses on beaches. Sounds like a
swear word.
(like she's cussing)
Horses on beaches!

Dent chuckles.

DENT
It's short hand for a sub-genre of
terrible writing.

MEG
I can't imagine that horses on
beaches is a big market. What's the
demographic for horses on beaches?

DENT
Women entering their first week of
menopause.

MEG
Ah.

DENT
Anyway, that wasn't particularly
lucrative so I tried to branch out to
other stuff. But... that didn't go so
well.

MEG
How come?

DENT
One or two or ten misfires and I got
pigeonholed as only having a good eye
for women's lit.
(then)
So I dropped out of the agency and
got into managing. Sorta to...
redefine myself.

MEG
Why did you get into women's lit to
begin with? You don't seem like an
avid reader of the genre.

DENT
I liked reading my bank statement.
(then)
But mostly, I fell into it by falling
for a girl.

MEG
You liked her so you repped her?

DENT
(defensive)
No. It was all consensual.

Beat.

MEG
I said *repped*.

DENT
Oh.
(beat)
Yeah that was consensual too.

MEG

And what happened with her?

DENT

Same thing that happened to Sabhya.

MEG

She died?

DENT

Sorta.

MEG

How can you sorta die?

DENT

Well, she's dead to me.

MEG

My condolences. Was she also gunned down by Indian gangsters in a poppy field?

DENT

Of course not. It was Mexicans in a marijuana field. Either that or she dumped me, dumped the agency and went on to be very successful -- I don't remember.

MEG

Wow. Guess she wasn't the only one who got *repped*.

DENT

Me too sister, me too.

(then)

Anyway, no pressure, but I'd love it if you were a really successful author just so I could rub it in her face.

MEG

What makes you think I wouldn't dump you too?

There's a moment and Dent eyes her.

DENT

I dunno.

(beat)

But you wouldn't.

MEG
You don't know me that well.

DENT
I know you well enough.

MEG
Oh yeah? What's my favorite color?

DENT
Who gives a shit?

MEG
No that's my favorite shade of brown,
not my favorite color.

DENT
You're not trite enough to have a
favorite color.

Meg eyes Dent and gives a slight smile.

MEG
That is... surprisingly the correct
answer.
(beat)
Though I would also have accepted
teal.

She smiles at him.

He smiles back.

There's a moment.

DENT
This is what I don't quite get about
the memoir. Obviously Meg Nutman
isn't you, but is she even who you
want to be?

Beat.

MEG
No.

DENT
Then why'd you write her?

Meg gives a heavy sigh.

MEG

She's a character. She's a character that I thought an audience would like.

DENT

So she's a total fabrication?

MEG

No, there's a part of me in her. But that doesn't mean I want to be her anymore than Mark Twain wanted to be Ebenezer Scrooge.

DENT

That was Dickens.

MEG

Dickens wanted to be Ebenezer Scrooge?

DENT

No.

MEG

Then my point stands. Neither Twain nor Dickens wanted to be Scrooge.

DENT

So where are you in Meg Nutman?

MEG

You're the one who claims to know me, you tell me.

She takes a big hit off her drink as Dent considers the question.

DENT

(finally)

Raahithya.

She looks at Dent like she's impressed.

DENT (cont'd)

That's the one part we haven't talked about yet.

I/E. RADISSON HOTEL - DAY

Meg slides off the elephant in front of the doors to the Radisson.

A nearby BELLHOP (18) stares up in amazement at the elephant.

MEG
Watch my ride, would ya?

She smiles as she enters the hotel.

As soon as she's spotted, the front desk EMPLOYEE signals to a uniformed police officer -- a Superintendent of Police or SP (30s).

The SP approaches Meg.

SP
Miss Nutman.

MEG
Mrs. Nutman, I'm married.

SP
A thousand apologies.
(then)
Could you come with me please?

Her nose crinkles.

MEG
Is there a problem?

SP
No. It's just a matter of the robbery
you reported. Come with me please.

The officer leads her out.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

The SP brings Meg before a holding cell.

Inside the cell is Raahithya looking afraid and forlorn.

The SP hands her, her passport and other items in a plastic bag.

SP
Are these your things?

MEG
Yes.

SP

And is this the boy who stole them?

She looks at Raahithya.

Long beat.

MEG (V.O.)

He looked so afraid there. So
helpless. So lost. As I once was...

SP

Mrs. Nutman?

MEG

(softly)

Yes.

SP nods.

SP

Very good. Thank you for your time.

He gestures that she's free to leave.

MEG

Wait...

She looks back at Raahithya.

MEG (cont'd)

What's going to happen to him?

SP

He shall be sent to the Punjab
Orphanage.

MEG

Oh.

SP

And be forced to work in the Kali
mines.

He smiles brightly and leans in excitedly.

SP (cont'd)

That's where they filmed Indian Jones
and the Temple of Doom.

(whip sound)

Waa-kish!

(then)

Do you like Indy?

Meg doesn't answer.

Her eyes stare with pity at Raahithya.

MEG (V.O.)
I didn't even know his name at that point. But I knew what I needed to do.

MEG
(softly)
No.

She pivots to the SP.

MEG (cont'd)
No. I'm adopting him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A drunk Dent helps a drunker Meg out of an Uber and onto the sidewalk.

DENT
Easssssssy does it.

MEG
(slurred)
I'm not easy, you take that back.

DENT
I would never think or say such a thing.

MEG
Though I am gonna be seppuku'd on national television tomorrow.

DENT
Again, that's not what that means.

She stumbles and Dent catches her -- their faces close together.

Their eyes locked.

Beat.

MEG
Why don't you just admit that this was a mistake taking me on?

DENT
You'll be fine tomorrow. Don't worry.
(beat)
Just be the real you and the audience
will love you.

MEG
How can you be sure?

DENT
Because...

There's a moment where it looks like they might kiss.
But the moment passes.

DENT (cont'd)
Because I just know.

Beat.

He lets her go and she walks up the...

DRIVEWAY to her house.

She suddenly stops and spins back to Dent.

MEG
You know the real Raahithya was a
real cute kid.

DENT
You mentioned.

MEG
Funny too.
(beat)
And living in absolute squalor.
Begging. Scavenging in garbage.
(beat)
You know for a split second I did
think about adopting him.
(beat)
It was maybe silly and impulsive, and
there's probably a mountain of legal
issues I didn't even consider, and
I'm sure it couldn't have ever been
done.
(long beat)
But see, that's the thing about Meg
Nutman -- even if you don't like
her -- she would've at least tried.

And with that she turns back around and heads inside her house.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. OPRAH WINFREY SHOW - GREEN ROOM - DAY

There's a KNOCK at the door and Dent enters the room to find Meg waiting on the sofa.

DENT

Hey.

MEG

Hey.

There's an awkward moment between them.

DENT

(finally)

They treating you alright?

MEG

Yeeeeeah. It's been a little hostile.

She grabs a water bottle.

DENT

Hostile, how?

Just then the STAGE MANAGER enters the room.

STAGE MANAGER

Five minutes. Five minutes. Or as your book would say, ten.

And with that the stage manager leaves.

Dent cocks an eyebrow.

Meg looks down at her water bottle and holds it out to Dent.

MEG

Could you taste this for me?

DENT

I'm sure it's not poisoned.

MEG

Yeah, me too.

(beat)

Still, could you taste it for me?

Long beat.

DENT

No.

INT. OPRAH WINFREY SHOW - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Dent and Meg stand nervously waiting for Meg's entrance.

OPRAH (O.S.)

Everyone by now is familiar with the controversy. But we wanted an opportunity to discuss what happened in detail and to have a broader dialogue about truth in America.

(beat)

So with that said, let's bring out Meg Nutman. Meg.

STAGE MANAGER furiously waves Meg along.

Meg takes a deep breath a steps out onto the...

OPRAH WINFREY SHOW SET

Bright lights greet her along with BOOOS from the audience.

Meg forces a smile and takes a seat across from Oprah.

OPRAH

Well, thank you for coming.

Meg just nods.

OPRAH (cont'd)

You heard the audience response there.

MEG

Yeah.

OPRAH

People are angry.

MEG

I know.

OPRAH

I'm angry.

MEG

Yeah.

OPRAH
Can you understand why we're angry?

MEG
Of course.

OPRAH
I feel betrayed. I don't know what's true and what's not.
(beat)
Let's start with the article that appeared in Ricochet -- was what they wrote accurate?

Beat.

MEG
From what I read, yeah.

OPRAH
You don't own a spice shop?

MEG
No. Never have.

The audience BOOS again.

BACKSTAGE Dent scowls.

OPRAH
So that's a lie. That's just straight up a lie.

MEG
Well--

OPRAH
What possessed you to write that? To say that you owned a spice shop, when you didn't?

MEG
That was more about the connection of spice and India... and it was really meant as a metaphor.

OPRAH
A metaphor?

MEG
A metaphor for a spiritual *truth*.

OPRAH
I see. A spiritual truth.

MEG
Yeah.

OPRAH
How much of this is metaphor? Cause we looked into it, and we could hardly corroborate anything. Does that surprise you?

MEG
I'm... I'm not sure. I'm not sure what you mean.

OPRAH
Well I'll tell you one thing that really stood out to me is that there is no record of you adopting an Indian boy.

MEG
Uh-huh, well... you know, the paperwork is still... you know...

OPRAH
I don't. I don't know.
(then)
Did you adopt an Indian boy who was living on the streets?

MEG
Raahithya was a real boy that I met in India.

OPRAH
And did you adopt him?

Beat.

MEG
I wanted to.

More BOOS from the audience.

Meg winces.

OPRAH
So how much of this book is real?

There's a long moment as a thousand thoughts start to swirl in Meg's mind.

She glances back to where Dent is backstage.

OPRAH (cont'd)

Meg?

Beat.

OPRAH (cont'd)

Meg?

Meg turns to back to Oprah and gives a heavy sigh.

MEG

What's the difference? I wrote a book. If you liked it, if you enjoyed, if it meant something to you, then what's difference if it happened to me or not?

OPRAH

Because the truth matters.

MEG

The truth?

(beat)

The truth is I wanted to be a writer. And I got an idea for a book. So I went to India to do research for the book and I put my heart and my soul and my time into trying to write a good one. And I send it out to every lit agent and every publishing house and I got rejected everywhere. And I mean everywhere.

(beat)

Can you image what that feels like?

Meg looks like she's getting emotional.

BACKSTAGE Dent watches her intently.

MEG (cont'd)

I felt like a complete loser. I was depressed -- my hopes were dashed. And then... and then one morning I get an email.

Meg gives a wistful smile.

MEG (cont'd)

I had accidentally queried a nonfiction lit agent.

(MORE)

MEG (cont'd)

(beat)

But she was very interested in my book. The only one who was.

(beat)

They thought it was a memoir though. And they asked, is this true? And I said yeah. And I just... I just went along with it.

(beat)

I didn't... I didn't think it'd blow up like this.

Long beat.

OPRAH

So you're saying all of this is made up?

There's a lone GASP in the audience.

MEG

(softly)

Yes. It's just fiction.

There's a moment of silence and then suddenly the audience BOOS.

Dent's jaw tightens and he charges out onto the set.

DENT

(at the crowd)

HEY!

SECURITY moves in, but Oprah waves them back, intrigued by what's happening.

DENT (cont'd)

Stop that. Stop treating her like that. You don't know her.

(then)

And if you all care so damn much about truth then maybe you should be honest with yourselves.

(beat)

How many of us wouldn't have done the exact same thing if we were in her shoes? Or at least be tempted by it.

(beat)

That was mistake. It was. But it wasn't monstrous. It was human.

(MORE)

DENT (cont'd)

(beat)

You have this narrative about her,
but it's no more true than Meg's
story.

(beat)

You don't know her.

(beat)

I know her.

He turns away from the audience and looks to Meg.

DENT (cont'd)

I know her.

(beat)

I know that she's interesting. And
she's smart and funny. And she likes
her cereal with vodka.

Meg snorts a laugh.

DENT (cont'd)

And I know that she's got a good
heart. Better than most.

Dent kneels down next to her.

DENT (cont'd)

And I'm not saying that cause I'm
your manager. I'm saying that
cause...

(beat)

Cause I love you.

There's another lone GASP from the audience.

Meg's mouth droops open in delighted surprise.

MEG

(softly)

You do?

DENT

Even if I'm the only one in the world
who does.

(beat)

Meg Nutman's the kind of spice I
could use more of in my life.

She smiles.

MEG

That's a Meg Nutman kinda line.

She kisses him firmly and passionately.

The audiences loses its every-loving mind and CHEERS.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE YEAR LATER

INT. OPRAH WINFREY SHOW - SET - DAY

Meg and Dent are seated on the couch next to Oprah as Oprah addresses the camera.

OPRAH
We're back with authors of the
hottest selling nonfiction book on
the market, How Lying Led to Love.

She holds up the book.

The audience APPLAUDS and Meg and Dent are all smiles.

Oprah turns to them.

OPRAH (cont'd)
So, it was just a year ago that you
came onto this very set -- and you
Charlie, proclaimed your love for
Meg.

Dent chuckles.

OPRAH (cont'd)
A grand romantic gesture. That was
quite a moment.

MEG
It was. And it's been a roller
coaster ever since.

DENT
A good roller coaster.

MEG
The best.

DENT
But seeing as how that was such an
important moment for us...

MEG
We thought that it would be only
fitting to share -- right here on
your set -- another important moment
for us.

Meg dramatically lifts up her left hand displaying a
glittering diamond.

MEG (cont'd)
We're getting married!

The audience GOES WILD.

Meg and Dent smile at each other and kiss.

Oprah looks on approvingly and smiles, waiting for the
audience's cheers to die down.

OPRAH
Am I invited to the wedding?

Meg and Dent laugh.

MEG
Of course.

DENT
And she's got it all planned out
already. The date, the venue -- no
input from me.

A few CHUCKLES from the audience.

OPRAH
And do you know where you're going to
honeymoon?

Dent and Meg share a look.

DENT & MEG
India!

They laugh again and the audience CHEERS again.

EXT. OPRAH WINFREY STUDIO - DAY

Meg and Dent exit through the side door of the studio and
walk toward the street.

DENT
Well that went well.

MEG

Yeah.

Meg grabs Dent by the arm, stopping him once they get to the sidewalk.

MEG (cont'd)

Hey.

DENT

Yeah?

MEG

I never thanked you for saving my career.

DENT

Oh. Well... I never thanked you for saving mine.

She gives a slight smile.

Beat.

DENT (cont'd)

So... I guess I'll see you around? I guess.

He holds out her hand.

She shakes it, very professional.

MEG

Uh... yeah. I guess so.

Beat.

DENT

Alright. Bye.

MEG

See ya.

They turn and walk off in opposite directions.

Meg smiles as she walks. And just as we all come to realize that our protagonist has learned nothing, and didn't grow in the slightest, we...

FADE TO BLACK

CREDITS ROLL:

NO REFUNDS.

AT LEAST IT WAS BETTER THAN EAT PRAY LOVE.