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Bindu Patel and the Lost Spirit

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for the degree of Master of Creative Writing

ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of practice-led research in the form of a full-length script for a feature film; plus a 6000-word essay (exegesis).

A summary of the script is as follows:

Bindu Patel is a coming-of-age supernatural, romantic-comedy feature length screenplay set in Hamilton, New Zealand in the late 2000s. It follows the story of Bindu Patel, a reclusive teenager pining over an unrequited crush, who becomes friends with a spirit, Kahu, who has lost his memory along with his body and needs her help to find it.

Together they embark on an adventure which forces Bindu to confront her fears and learn how to be a more mature and empathetic person.

The script is framed by an Exegesis which is a 6000-word essay on the subject of:

- (a) the genre of the script
- (b) the development process from synopsis to second draft

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), not material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

BINDU PATEL AND THE LOST SPIRIT

A feature film by

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1

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. EARLY MORNING.

1.

There are boxes stacked around in the undecorated room.

BINDU (16), a girl with big bushy hair who some would describe as "adorkable", is snoring in bed among a mess of tissues and erotic graphic novels.

Her glasses are still on from the night before, along with the bedside lamp.

It flickers.

The loud whirr of a vacuum stirs our young heroine.

PRIYA (O.S.)

Bindu! You're going to be late!

MISSY (80+), a scraggly cat, slips out of the wardrobe purring, jumps onto Bindu and yowls.

Bindu buries her face in some tissues.

PRIYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

BINDU!

PRIYA (40), dangerously energetic, ready to slap anyone who crosses her, storms in, vacuum in hand.

Bindu jumps out of bed, furiously hiding her smut.

BINDU

Amma!

2

INT. KITCHN. DAY.

2

A pressure cooker blasts off.

ABHI (18), cynical teenager who probably gets all his information from Reddit, sits at the table, glued to his Gameboy.

BINDU

I told you to knock before coming
into my room!

She fills Missy's bowl with some left over roti and cat food.

PRIYA

When I was your age I shared a room
with five siblings, cooked,
cleaned, changed nappies and -

3 EXT. ENTRANCE HALLWAY. DAY.

3

PRIYA
- did the laundry and mopped the
floor and never complained!

Piles of unpacked moving boxes line the walls. Everyone
struggles to put their shoes on.

BINDU
(mumbling) You're complaining right
now.

PRIYA
What was that?

BINDU
Can you give me a lift to school?

PRIYA
I have to stay home, they are
delivering the rest of the
furniture soon.

She shoves a lunchbox into Bindu's hands.

BINDU
Where's Appa?

PRIYA
Somewhere, probably being useless.

4 EXT. PATEL HOUSE. DAY.

4

A two-storey derelict villa, the yard is overgrown. Abhi
is pulling out of the driveway in his second-hand car.

BINDU
Abhi?

ABHI
Nope.

He drives off.

BINDU
(under her breath) Dick!

PRIYA
Take a shortcut through the park!

Bindu looks over across the street. There is an entrance to a
leafy cemetery. It is definitely not a park.

BINDU
That's definitely not a park.

PRIYA
Very peaceful in there!

BINDU
We're all going to be murdered by
ghosts.

A shingle falls from the roof, smashing on the concrete.

Priya and Bindu look up... their faces drop.

PRIYA
SUNIL!!!

SUNIL (40), the type to wear the same sweater vest every day of the week, is balancing precariously on the roof next to the chimney. He is holding up a bright orange traffic cone.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
Sunil, what are you doing?!

SUNIL
Some bloody prankster left this up
here!

PRIYA
The ladder isn't even weighed down!

SUNIL
It's fine!

Missy saunters along and rubs herself against the ladder. It tips over.

SUNIL (CONT'D)
I will climb down! Catch!

He throws the cone down, it narrowly misses Priya and Missy. The cat hisses and shoots off. Priya curses in Punjabi.

Bindu checks the time on her watch, it's 7:20 am. She takes a deep breath, pulls her bag straps tight.

5 EXT. CEMETERY. DAY.

5

Bindu huffs and puffs down a winding path lined with leafy trees and old fashioned lamps.

She stops to gasp for air next to a prominent, scantily clad statue of an angel. The angel is pointing into the distance.

She continues running towards the exit of the cemetery.

A bus is waiting on the curb.

7 INT. BUS. DAY.

7

A crowded bus. Among the teenage passengers sit SARAH, HOLLY and TARA (16), Classic Mean Girl types. Sarah, pretty and venomous, is their leader.

HOLLY

Check out my fancy new gel pen.

SARAH

No one cares, Holly.

TARA

Yeah, Holly.

SARAH

Oh my god, look it's Bin-poo.

They giggle as they see Bindu exit the cemetery and desperately try catch the bus.

The BUS DRIVER (50), hates kids, closes the doors.

Bindu just manages to stick her hand in to stop them.

BUS DRIVER

Oi! Don't damage my bus, kid.

BINDU

Sorry.

Everyone stares as Bindu staggers on, gasping for air, hair a mess. Bindu quickly walks towards the backseat, Sarah sticks her foot out. Bindu trips. A chorus of giggling.

SARAH

Watch it, Bin-poo.

The bus jerks forward as Bindu picks herself up.

She manages to scamper to the backseat. She retrieves a comic from her bag and lowers her head, hiding behind it.

It's full of drawings of a sorceress defeating evil demons.

The sorceress has big bushy hair. The demons suspiciously resemble Sarah, Holly and Tara. Bindu smiles.

9 EXT. PLAYING FIELD. DAY.

9

Teenagers run around in their PE gear. Bindu lingers at the edge of the field eyeing Yosef as he kicks a soccer ball...drinks from his water bottle.

Pours water over his head.

Takes his shirt off.

Sarah, doing some drills with a soccer ball, aims at Bindu.

Bindu, totally transfixed, doesn't see the ball flying towards her.

It hits her square in the face.

10 INT. NURSES OFFICE. DAY.

10

A poster promoting safe sex, under it, Bindu holds an ice pack to her nose. Her glasses slightly askew.

NURSE

Gotta pay more attention out there,
Bindu. Hiyah!

He does a fake karate chop at Bindu. She doesn't react.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Poor reflexes. (he makes a note)
Luckily it's just a bruise this
time, off you go.

BINDU

Thanks...

Right by the door, there is a candy coloured bowl of free condoms. Bindu goes to pick one up.

NURSE

Oh, sweetie, maybe leave those for
the students who actually need
them! Not that you couldn't get
laid... I mean wait I shouldn't say
that to a student.

The bell rings.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Thank god.

He pushes Bindu out of his office and slams the door in her face.

11 EXT. CANTEEN. AFTERNOON. 11

Bindu eats her lunch alone, still holding the ice pack to her face.

She notices a note from her mother inside the lunchbox.

BRING IN THE RECYCLING BIN WHEN YOU GET HOME.

She turns it over.

STUDY HARD. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID. AMMA X

A group of NERDS walk past. One of them seems to want to talk to her.

NERD 1

No don't! If we talk to her we'll
become targets too!

They all rush off, avoiding eye contact.

12 EXT. SCHOOL YARD. AFTERNOON. 12

Students pour out of the school gates. Bindu walks towards her bus. She stops, noticing Sarah, Holly and Tara glaring at her through the window.

She pretends to look around. The bus drives away.

She sits down, rummaging through her backpack.

The school yard quickly empties.

She flips through the comic from before and finds the crumpled drawing of herself in it.

YOU SUCK.

She scrunches up the paper and throws it at a bin.

She misses.

BINDU

Ugggh! I DO suck!

Walking over to pick it up, she notices the bike racks...

Yosef's vintage ride is still there.

She looks around. The school yard is empty. Though there is a light on in the auditorium building.

As she approaches, she hears strange vocal warm ups echoing from within the building.

It would be creepy if it didn't sound so stupid.

13

INT. AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON.

13

Yosef and some SENIOR DRAMA STUDENTS are in the middle of a lit stage.

YOSEF

Red leather yellow leather.

DRAMA STUDENT 1

IRISH WRIST WATCH.

DRAMA STUDENT 2

PrrrrrrrrrrrrRRRRRrrrrrrRRRRR!

DRAMA STUDENT 3

Ma ma ma ma! Na na na na!

MR BINKS (40), Sri Lankan, fashionably dressed, chain-smoker, walks back into the auditorium from the back entrance, throwing a cigarette butt behind him.

MR BINKS

Okay okay, my ears are bleeding.
Let's jump into some improv.

Bindu sneaks in, using the shadows to stay hidden.

Yosef is miming with the other drama students. One of the male drama students starts thrusting at him from behind, one of them twerks in his face.

Music begins to play in Bindu's ears again. This is a teenage girl's dream.

MR BINKS (CONT'D)

Boys! Save your hormones for Bar
101!

Bindu tries to sneak closer to get a better look as Yosef, she accidentally kicks over a bucket.

DRAMA STUDENT 1

It's The Ghost of Macbeth!

DRAMA STUDENT 2

The play is cursed!

They all screech mockingly and cajole each other, like a bunch of jocks.

MR BINKS

My life is a curse. (he notices Bindu) Oi! Auditions are tomorrow!

BINDU

Sorry I - what?

MR BINKS

For the play, the auditions are being held tomorrow afternoon.

He points to a prominent sheet next to where Bindu is standing.

MACBETH AUDITION SIGN UP SHEET.

BINDU

Sorry, actually I just -

He hands her a sheet of paper.

MR BINKS

This is rehearsal schedule, your parents have to sign it. And here's the monologue for the audition.

BINDU

Actually I -

MR BINKS

Put your name on the sheet. I have to get back to coaching these idiots.

He walks away, pulling a cigarette out from under his cap.

MR BINKS (CONT'D)

I don't get paid enough for this.

The senior drama students are still doing sexual miming.

Yosef is in slow motion again.

Bindu examines the sign up sheet. Right at the top, written in bold, slightly childish handwriting is the name YOSEF NACHOWITZ.

14 EXT. CEMETERY. EVENING. 14

Bindu strolls down the winding path of the cemetery, carefully reading the monologue.

The lamps flicker as she walks past them but she's too preoccupied to notice.

A rustle. Bindu looks up.

A shadow dashes between tombstones.

BINDU

Missy?

She walks a little further and sees the statue of the angel...there is an orange traffic cone on its head.

15 EXT. CEMETERY ENTRANCE. EVENING. 15

As Bindu exits the cemetery she turns to check her back.

Nothing there.

Across the street is the Patel house. Lights are on, sounds of the pressure cooker and Priya yelling give it life. On the roof, the orange traffic cone Sunil removed in the morning is back.

As Bindu picks up the recycling bin on the curb, she looks up.

The streetlight is flickering.

16 INT. KITCHEN. EVENING. 16

Bindu pushes the food around on her plate.

SUNIL

The safest thing to invest in is power. Everyone needs electricity.

ABHI

Bitcoin is doing pretty good too.

SUNIL

Too risky, there's no point taking unnecessary risks in life, Abhi.

PRIYA

(to Bindu) Have you seen the cat?

BINDU

No, why?

PRIYA

You aren't supposed to let cats outside when you move house. They can get lost!

BINDU

I think she got out this morning when you two were arguing.

PRIYA

We were just talking.

SUNIL

She's probably dead.

PRIYA

Sunil!

SUNIL

Death is inevitable. Never forget, kids.

He points his spoon at Bindu.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

This is the youngest you'll ever be, it's all downhill from here.

Bindu looks at her distorted reflection in the spoon.

PRIYA

Stop being so morbid! These kids are going to get some messed up ideas from all your depressing lectures -

SUNIL

It's not depressing, it's a reality check! This is the real world.

Abhi picks up the plate and leaves.

PRIYA

Everyone is sick of hearing you go on and on about stocks and -

SUNIL

It's better than your airy fairy ideas about -

PRIYA
Focus on doing something useful -

SUNIL
I am fixing this house!

PRIYA
This broken down piece of -

BINDU
There's going to be a play!

PRIYA
What?

BINDU
The annual drama production at school.

SUNIL
I am not paying for tickets.

BINDU
No, I am - I was thinking about auditioning.

PRIYA
Bindu, this will be very distracting from your studies.

BINDU
Yeah but what if I just ask for a small part?

PRIYA
But still it would be so stressful for you.

SUNIL
You'd probably be more comfortable at home.

BINDU
So you think I can't act?

Beat.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Oh my god!

PRIYA
No of course you can! It's just, maybe it's just better if you try -

SUNIL

- writing or reading plays
instead.

PRIYA

I was GOING to suggest helping
backstage!

Bindu, teary eyed, gets up and stomps off. Priya shakes her head at Sunil.

Bindu returns, picks up her plate of food. Stomps off again.

17 INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

17

Bindu gloomily eats at her desk by the window. The monologue and permission slip next to her plate.

Her bedroom lights flicker. She looks up.

From the second floor, she has a good view of the cemetery across the street. It's quiet. The statue of the angel is very visible, thanks to the cone.

A figure appears from the shadows...

Bindu rolls up the monologue and looks through it like a telescope.

It's Missy.

She rubs herself against a tombstone.

BINDU

You stupid cat!

19 INT. CEMETRY. NIGHT.

19

Bindu creeps into the cemetery, flashlight in hand, holding a spare roti from dinner.

BINDU

Here Missy, Missy.

Missy yowls and runs away.

Bindu follows the lamp-lit winding path to the statue of the angel.

Missy is rubbing herself against the statue. She mews loudly at something - or someone behind it.

Bindu slowly walks around the statue and finds a DARK FIGURE, dressed in a black cloak and a wide brimmed hat, covering it's face.

He's trying to hide behind the statue of the angel by mimicking its pose.

MISSY

Meow.

DARK FIGURE

Shh! No no, go home!

He reaches down towards Missy.

BINDU

Don't touch my cat! Stand back!

The figure loses its balance and falls over.

DARK FIGURE

Ow ow ow.

BINDU

Missy! Come here you stupid cat!

DARK FIGURE

She's not stupid, she's just friendly.

BINDU

Who are you? What are you doing here? Why are you wearing that?

DARK FIGURE

Oh yeah, sorry, forgot I had it on.

He pushes his hat up and reveals himself to be a regular human boy, KAHU (16), a laid back type with wavy hair.

KAHU

I guess I look pretty weird.

He smiles.

He's got a lovely smile.

Kind of cute.

BINDU

Are you the one who's been leaving these cones around? It's not funny. My dad almost died trying to take one off the roof this morning!

BOY
I would never do that! I am not a
dick! Right, Missy?

MISSY
Meow.

KAHU
See?

He puts out his hand.

KAHU (CONT'D)
I am Kahu. I live around here.

Beat.

BINDU
I am Bindu, I live here now too I
guess.

They shake hands. The lamps flicker slightly. Bindu notices
some fireflies emerge from behind the statue.

Kahu stares at his hand in amazement.

PRIYA (O.S.)
Bindu! What are you doing!

Bindu turns and can make out her mother standing at the
entrance of the cemetery.

BINDU
I better go.

She turns back but Kahu is gone.

20 INT. ENTRANCE. NIGHT.

20

Bindu hands Missy to Priya.

BINDU
She's not dead.

PRIYA
Don't go out alone at night! It's
dangerous.

BINDU
I was just across the street!

21 INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

21

PRIYA

I know you think you're a grown up
but the world is still dangerous
for girls, Bindu. Don't be stupid.

BINDU

(flopping onto bed) Okay! I get it!
I going to sleep.

Priya picks up the leftover dinner from Bindu's desk, notices
the monologue and permission slip.

PRIYA

Do you really want to do this play
thing?

BINDU

Maybe. No. I don't know.

PRIYA

If you want to do something you
should be a hundred percent about
it! Don't be wishy-washy.

Bindu turns her back to Priya.

Priya almost says more but thinks better of it. Leaves.

PRIYA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And don't leave your dishes lying
around! This is a house not a
hotel.

Priya and Sunil begin talking loudly downstairs.

Bindu tosses and turns. Shoves her head under a pillow, then
gives up and puts on some headphones. An indie love song
starts to play.

She fishes out an graphic novel from under her pillows and
flicks through the page.

The hero looks suspiciously like Yosef. He is dashing, saving
a young girl from a monster.

Missy slinks out of the closet and jumps onto the bed.

MISSY

Meow.

BINDU

We all thought you were dead!

MISSY

Meow.

BINDU

Stay away from strange boys!

She slumps onto her bed, next to Missy and buries her face in the graphic novel.

22 INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. MORNING. 22

Bindu is snoring in the same position as last night, drooling on her erotica. The vacuum sounds up again. Priya shouting. Bindu starts awake.

BINDU

Shit!

She picks up her monologue and the unsigned permission slip.

23 INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY. 23

Bindu looks up at the audition sign up sheet. Yosef's name still glaring at her from the top...

She begins writing her name right at the very bottom edge of the page - in very tiny writing.

B I N

She get's half way then stops. Maybe this is a bad idea.

She turns around and sees Sarah glaring at her.

SARAH

Umm, what do you think you're doing?

TARA

Ew she's going to audition.

HOLLY

Maybe she could be one of the trees?

SARAH

I am not acting in the same show as this smelly loser.

She strides up to Bindu.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Take your name off.

BINDU
Leave me alone, Sarah.

SARAH
Holly, give me your pen.

HOLLY
But it's my fancy new glitter gel
pen.

SARAH
Just give it!

She takes the pen and pushes Bindu out of the way. She scribbles on the sign up sheet.

SARAH (CONT'D)
If I see you at the audition you're
dead.

TARA
Yeah, dead.

Holly worriedly examines her gel pen.

Bindu avoids making eye contact. The three bitches leave.

Bindu pulls the finger after them.

She looks at the sheet.

Under Yosef's name are the names "Sarah, Holly and Tara" written in fancy glitter gel pen. Bindu's name has also been graffitied over.

B I N P O O.

A trashcan with a pile of manure in it drawn next to it.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY.

Bindu stares at Yosef checking on the end of a pencil.

She looks at the crumpled monologue in her bag.

The bell rings.

Students rush out. Bindu drops the monologue in a bin.

Comes and fishes it out again.

INT. BACKSTAGE. AFTERNOON.

Bindu creeps down the backstage area. She stops outside the dressing room where Sarah, Holly and Tara are rehearsing their lines. The lights around the mirrors give them an air of Hollywood glamour.

TARA

Yosef is so cute though, right?

SARAH

He said hi to me this morning.

TARA

He's totally into you.

HOLLY

Guys I am trying to focus!

SARAH

We're going to get cast, we're literally perfect for the part. But work on your cackling, Holly.

Bindu speeds past as the girls do practise witch cackles. She approaches the back of the stage and peeks through the curtains.

KRISTOF (16), a butch drama student, is on stage, juggling. Mr Binks is sitting in the front row looking ready to expire. Next to him is an ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (17), teachers pet, furiously taking notes.

Behind him sit the rest of the students auditioning, Yosef is goofing around with his lads in the back row. They're listening to something on his iPod.

MR BINKS

Kristof! This is Shakespeare not a circus! Can you get into your monologue please?

Bindu gulps and backs away. She finds her way to the costume closet.

INT. COSTUME CLOSET. AFTERNOON.

A lone bulb illuminates the dusty room, overstuffed with colourful costumes and old props. Bindu studies the monologue.

MR BINKS (O.S.)
I think I've seen enough, okay who
do we have here... Bin-poo?

Bindu swallows.

MR BINKS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Binpoo? Are you here?

Bindu folds up the monologue.

INT. BACKSTAGE. AFTERNOON.

She steps out of the costume closet. On one side of the
corridor is the way to the stage - on the other side, is the
exit.

Beat.

She starts towards the exit.

Suddenly Sarah, Holly and Tara step out from the dressing
room.

SARAH
I told you to stay away.

The girls pounce on her.

INT. COSTUME CLOSET. AFTERNOON.

They push Bindu into the costume closet and slam the door
shut.

Bindu tries to open the door to no avail. It's been jammed
from the outside.

Cackling as the three bitches leave.

BINDU
Hey! Let me out!

She tries the door again. Nothing.

Her breathing becomes more laboured as panic begins to set
in.

She bangs the door.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Help! Someone! Hello?

The lightbulb flickers, then goes out.

Darkness.

Screaming.

INT. AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON.

Students rush to exit the theatre.

MR BINKS
Please exit calmly! It's just a
power cut!

More screaming.

INT. COSTUME CLOSET. AFTERNOON.

Bindu runs up against the door. The impact dislodges the broom from the outside, it swings open.

BINDU
Ow.

INT. STAGE. AFTERNOON.

Bindu stumbles onto the darkened stage wielding the broom for protection.

She spots the exit sign.

She looks down.

In front of her, illuminated by the green glow of the sign, is Kahu.

KAHU
Hi!

She screams and whacks him across the face with the broom. It goes through him.

She screams again.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Wait, Bindu!

The theatre lights come on, illuminating the stage.

KAHU (CONT'D)
I can explain.

BINDU
You're stalking me!

KAHU
No! I just came to talk!

Bindu tries to whack him again. He ducks this time. They circle each other.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Are you a witch?

BINDU
No! What the fuck! Who are you WHAT are you??

KAHU
I am Kahu! And I am obviously a spirit.

Bindu tries to dash past, but he blocks her way, she crashes into him. They fall over in a heap.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Auuuugh, wait Bindu please I need your help, you're the only person who can see me.

She gets up, he grabs onto her leg.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Please! I can't find my body! I don't remember how I lost it! You have to help me!

BINDU
No!!!

She lifts up her broom again ready to swing.

Yosef enters the theatre, whistling.

He goes to his previous seat to collect his iPod.

YOSEF
(to Bindu) The auditions got postponed by the way.

BINDU
I um, ah, er, coool.

He smiles at her revealing braces. Bindu melts. He exits.

She is still holding the broom mid-air.

KAHU
Let's make a deal.

BINDU
I am not selling you my soul!

She tries to move again, Kahu holds on.

KAHU
I am a SPIRIT not a DEMON.

BINDU
Whatever! Leave me alone!

KAHU
That guy - Yosef right? You like
him right?

BINDU
How do you know that?

KAHU
You were literally drooling all
over him just now!

BINDU
Shut up!

KAHU
I can help you get with him - and
get rid of those girls who locked
you in the closet.

Bindu stops struggling.

KAHU (CONT'D)
That was me, with the lights, I can
control electricity.

The lights flicker.

KAHU (CONT'D)
I can haunt your bullies! Stop them
bothering you! All you have to do
is help me find my body.

He stands up and offers his hand.

KAHU (CONT'D)
That's all I am asking.

BINDU
You'll help me impress Yosef?

KAHU
AND get rid of those chicks.

Beat.

BINDU
And you won't steal my soul?

KAHU
Bindu! If I were a demon would I be
begging a teenage girl to help me
find my body? No, I'd be like,
eating babies in Hell or something!

BINDU
Okay...fine. Deal.

They shake hands.

EXT. CEMETERY. AFTERNOON.

The duo walk the winding path, Bindu keeps her distance.

BINDU
So animals can see you but I am the
only human who can see and talk to
you?

KAHU
And touch me apparently!

He puts his hand on her shoulder, she shrugs him off and
takes a step further away.

BINDU
Why?

KAHU
You must be a witch! Or have some
powers.

BINDU
I don't think I have any powers,
you're the first ghost I've ever
met.

KAHU
I prefer the term spirit. And maybe
you never noticed the other ones?

They walk past the statue of the angel. The cone is still
there.

EXT. PATEL HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

BINDU
We have to find somewhere private
to discuss things.

KAHU
What's wrong with the house?

Priya shouting can be heard from within the house. The
pressure cooker blasts off.

Bindu gestures for Kahu to follow her.

EXT. PATEL BACKYARD. AFTERNOON.

A lone garden shed stands in the corner of the backyard,
overgrown shrubs and trees provide some privacy.

BINDU
I guess that will have to do.

INT. GARDEN SHED. AFTERNOON.

Bindu tries the light switch. It doesn't work.

KAHU
Let me try.

The light bulb flickers on.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Yeah boi. Spooky powers!

The shed is over crowded with boxes, plants, gardening
paraphernalia. There is a work bench.

BINDU
Okay so...what's the plan?

KAHU
Maybe we should get to know each
other a bit first you know, trust
exercises, team building -

BINDU
That wasn't part of the deal.

KAHU
Fair enough.

He goes to grab a plant. His hand goes through it. He looks at Bindu.

Bindu places the plant on the table.

He points to some other things. Bindu places some rusty nails, a rag, a black glove, a bucket of paint, a drill, a torch and solar lights around the plant.

KAHU (CONT'D)

This is Yosef. Look how lush he is!
Those three chicks, rusty, sharp.
Oxidized. Me, dark, handsome,
mysterious and finally here's you
all the way here.

BINDU

Why am I the rag?

KAHU

Shhh just listen! All the way here
for NOW. There's a three step plan
to get you to lush Yosef.

He grabs Bindu wrist and guides it to the glove.

KAHU (CONT'D)

First! I do some spooky shenanigans
and scare those chicks off so they
never bother you again.

The drill whirrs to life and Kahu uses Bindu's hand to swipe the nails away with the glove.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Then we give you a makeover.

Using the same technique me makes Bindu dunk the rag into the bucket of paint.

KAHU (CONT'D)

And then! Preferably using full
sentences you actually talk to
Yosef -

The rag splats down next to the plant.

KAHU (CONT'D)

- ask him out and then BOOM!

The torch and solar lights beam on and off like fireworks around the plant and paint rag.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Romance!

The plant falls over onto the rag.

BINDU

But how do I...just...talk to him?

KAHU

You have to get cast in that play!
Then you'll be forced to spend time
together!

BINDU

I don't know...the audition didn't
go that well today.

KAHU

Only because you got locked in a
closet! You were ready to give an
amazing performance, right?

BINDU

Well actually -

KAHU

Yes you were! Okay great, now we've
sorted out your plan, let's figure
out one for me.

BINDU

Okay...So we need to find your
body? Where's the last place you
saw it?

KAHU

I don't remember.

BINDU

Nothing at all?

KAHU

Nothing, I just woke up "dead" in
that cemetery.

BINDU

Shouldn't your spirit just pass
onto the after life when you die?
There must be a reason you're stuck
- you must have done something bad.

KAHU

Or MAYBE this is all just a funny misunderstanding and we need to find someone to talk to, like a death supervisor.

BINDU

Maybe you're lost? Do we need to find an entrance to the afterlife?

KAHU

We don't need to go to the afterlife because I am not dead!

BINDU

How do you know that?

KAHU

I just have a feeling okay? A really strong feeling.

BINDU

How can you just trust a strong feeling?

KAHU

I just can! I need to find my body. It's out there somewhere. Every minute we waste - it could be decomposing!

BINDU

Ew.

KAHU

Exactly! So what's the plan, Bindu?

BINDU

Well...We should retrace your steps. Look for clues.

EXT. CEMETERY. AFTERNOON.

Kahu lies in a grassy patch next to some tombstones.

KAHU

This is where I woke up.

Bindu writes something down in a notebook.

BINDU
 No fresh graves, so your body can't
 be buried here. Do you remember
 anything else?

KAHU
 I walked around and...

EXT. PATEL HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

KAHU
 I noticed that cone on the roof of
 your house and then you moved in.

BINDU
 That was just a few days ago! So
 you can't have been dead too long.
 You must be from this town, right?

KAHU
 Where are we?

BINDU
 Hamilton.

KAHU
 Oh.

BINDU
 Yeah. Anyway...

INT. LIBRARY. AFTERNOON.

A stern librarian stacks shelves in the mostly empty library.

BINDU
 We should check if there's been any
 missing persons reports.

Bindu types furiously on a computer.

She flips through several newspapers.

There's no missing persons, only reports about cones being
 left everywhere.

Public statues, the city hall, even a local diary.

She searches "Supernatural activity, Hamilton".

Several listings come up for covens, cults and clairvoyants.

BINDU (CONT'D)
That's it! We need to find a
psychic who can help you connect to
the spirit world!

KAHU
Like Sensing Murder?

BINDU
Exactly!

LIBRARIAN
Shhh!

BINDU
You don't remember anything,
there's no missing persons cases,
nothing in the news about hauntings
- going to a psychic is the only
option we have. They usually charge
though...

She fishes around in her pocket and produces \$20.

KAHU
I am sure they'd be willing to help
a real life ghost for a reduced
rate.

BINDU
I'll make a list of all the local
psychics.

She scribbles in her notebook.

BINDU (CONT'D)
We can start visiting them after
school.

KAHU
Great!

Beat.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Now what?

BINDU
How are you going to haunt Sarah?

KAHU
Make the walls bleed?

They quickly let go of each other, the remote falls through Kahu's hand. They brush themselves off.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Did you just...?

She touches Kahu's shoulder, he picks up the remote again.

PRIYA (O.S.)
Bindu! Dinner!

Priya walks into the room. Bindu lets go of Kahu, the remote drops through his hands again. Priya blinks.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
Hurry up, before it get's cold. And pick that up! Don't break things.

She turns around, shaking her head.

INT. ENTRANCE. NIGHT.

Kahu grabs Bindu's hand and picks out a rolling pin from one of the moving boxes.

KAHU
I can touch things if we're making contact!

BINDU
Keep it down!

KAHU
No one else can hear me!

BINDU
Oh. Right. Well, luckily my mum didn't see anything. We need to be more careful.

She grabs the rolling pin from Kahu and shakes it at him.

BINDU (CONT'D)
It would have just looked like a floating remote to her!

KAHU
We can use this to scare your bullies! Make them think you have powers!

PRIYA (O.S.)
Bindu!!!

BINDU
I'll meet you in the cemetery
tomorrow on my way to school.

KAHU
Can I stay here?

BINDU
No that's weird!

KAHU
It's creepy in the cemetery!

BINDU
Stay in the shed then.

Kahu pouts but she ignores him, reaching for the door handle.

KAHU
Don't bother. Spirit, remember?

He walks through the closed door.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Bindu enters the empty dining room. Her mother is standing by the kitchen sink, staring at a spoon.

Bindu picks up her plate of food.

BINDU
Where's everyone?

PRIYA
Eating in their rooms.

BINDU
Okay. Thanks.

PRIYA
Wash your plate after you're done.

Bindu scampers upstairs and shuts the door behind her.

INT. GARDEN SHED. DAY.

Bindu barges into the garden shed. Kahu is lying still under the workbench, arms crossed across his chest, like a corpse.

BINDU
Kahu! Wake up!

KAHU
Five more minutes!

She shakes him.

EXT. CEMETERY. DAY

Kahu and Bindu stroll down the sun dappled winding path.

BINDU
Why do you have to sleep? You're a ghost!

KAHU
There's was nothing else to do in there!

They pass the angel statue, still crowned with the traffic cone.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Anyway I wasn't actually sleeping - I was thinking of ways to get rid of the three bullies.

BINDU
You mean three bitches.

KAHU
I don't think I should use that word.

BINDU
Just tell me your plan!

KAHU
Okay so you need to freak them out -

BINDU
Is it possible to do it so they don't know I am involved?

KAHU
What, why?

BINDU
They might want revenge if I do something to them.

KAHU
But I was thinking of making them think you have powers! It'd be so badass!

BINDU
No, it's too risky. We can't be
badass. We have to be more
undercover.

KAHU
Ugh...fine, covert espionage
mission. I can make it work.

Just then Bindu gasps, riding through the park, on his
vintage ride, is none other that Yosef.

Sounds fade away as Bindu ogles him riding through
the sun dappled park.

KAHU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Bindu! Bindu! Were you even
listening?

BINDU
Yeah yeah...get them in a room...

KAHU
Look if you want Yosef you have to
do exactly as I say okay? This is
serious!

Bindu nods.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY.

The school bell rings.

Sarah, Holly and Tara are milling around in an empty
classroom.

TARA
Shouldn't we get go to PE?

SARAH
I don't feel like it today. I told
the PE teacher you're pregnant.

TARA
What?!

HOLLY
Why didn't you tell me?

TARA
I am not pregnant!

Sarah's phone rings.

SARAH
Hello?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE
Hello, Sarah. How are you?

SARAH
Who is this?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE
I know your secret.

SARAH
What secret?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE
THE secret! And if you don't do
exactly as I say -

EXT. HALLWAY. DAY.

Bindu and Kahu are in the hallway, crouching under the lockers.

KAHU
I will find you and kill you.

BINDU
That seems a little...violent.

KAHU
Just say it!

BINDU
Okay - hello? She hung up!

KAHU
Rude!

Bindu's phone start ringing loudly. Sarah comes out the classroom, followed by Holly and Tara.

SARAH
Ugh, how did YOU get my number?

BINDU
Shit shit shit.

She turns to runaway but Kahu turns her around.

KAHU
Wait wait just repeat after me!

BINDU
 Ummm ahhhh...Listen here
 you...chick.

SARAH
 Chick?

KAHU
 I summoned the devil last night and
 now -

BINDU
 I got spooky powers.

The lights flicker erratically.

KAHU
 So if you don't want to get messed
 up you better leave me alone!

BINDU
 So-so if you don't - Um -

SARAH
 Oh my god you really are a freak!
 Stop stalking me.

She starts towards Bindu with clenched fists.

Kahu grabs Bindu's hand and then takes Sarah's phone from
 her.

Sarah, Holly and Tara freeze in terror as they see the phone
 floating in mid-air. It starts to ring and smoke, the
 electricity inside it bursting. Holly screams.

BINDU
 (to Kahu) what are you doing?

KAHU
 They didn't seem freaked out by the
 lights!

SARAH
 Stop it!

Kahu drops her phone, it explodes in a bout of electrical
 discharge. All the girls scream and run away.

KAHU
 Well... I think that went pretty
 well.

BINDU
They saw me!

KAHU
So they'll leave you alone!

BINDU
They'll come back for revenge!

KAHU
No way, they are gonna be way too
scared of you now!

BINDU
Ughhhhhh! Kahu! What if she makes
me pay for the phone?

KAHU
No one will believe you made that
phone explode.

Bindu tears up.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Hey, don't worry! They can't get to
you as long as I am around. I'll do
some spooky shit and they'll run
away!

BINDU
Yeah...okay.

KAHU
You algood?

BINDU
Yeah.

KAHU
Excellent!

INT. GARDEN SHED. AFTERNOON.

Holding onto Bindu, Kahu sweeps aside the rusty nails with
the black glove.

KAHU
Consider part 1 a success! Now we
can move onto part two of my
ingenious plan...

He picks up the rag.

KAHU (CONT'D)
MAKEOVER.

MONTAGE

INT. COSTUME CLOSET. AFTERNOON.

Kahu bursts into the costume closet, the light bulb and some discarded props and fairy lights flicker on and then becomes much brighter with his powers. Bindu follows awkwardly.

-- Bindu tries on various styles of costumes.

-- Kahu thumbs down the various attempts.

-- They try to tame her hair.

-- Kahu also tries on some things with Bindu's help.

-- They finally settle on a costume suspiciously similar to Kahu's. Dark, mysterious, handsome.

KAHU
Perfect.

INT. AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON.

Bindu and Kahu bust out of the costume closet and walk towards the stage, lights shining behind them.

BINDU
Oh shit...I can't remember my
lines!

KAHU
Just take the monologue with you!

INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY.

Bindu shuffles onto stage holding the monologue in front of her like a shield.

MR BINKS
Ah it's you! Excellent, when you're
ready, Binpoo.

SARAH
Oh let me hold that script for you,
Binpoo.

Bindu doesn't move.

SARAH (CONT'D)
 Oh, surely you've learnt your lines
 like the rest of us?

Bindu begrudgingly hands over her script.

KAHU
 Son of a -

MR BINKS
 Okay thanks Sarah, sit down, we
 don't have all day!

Bindu takes a deep breath and opens her mouth. She sees Yosef
 in the audience and freezes.

Mr Binks checks his watch.

Kahu scampers around the auditorium desperately looking for a
 script. He tries to grab some tucked away but is unable to
 touch anything.

He finally finds a part of a script left on the floor.

KAHU
 Bindu! Repeat after me!

BINDU
 The raven himself is hoarse
 That croaks the fatal entrance of
 Duncan
 Under my battlements

Mr Binks blinks in surprise and nods with approval.

KAHU
 Come, you spirits. That tend on
 mortal thoughts, unsex me here.

BINDU
 Come, you mortal spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts

She looks at Yosef again.

BINDU (CONT'D)
 Sex me here - wait I mean uhh sex I
 mean UN-sex me here -

MR BINKS
 Okay thank you, Binpoo!

Bindu quickly shuffles off the stage. The three bitches swoop
 on cackling.

SARAH

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Mr Binks rubs his face in exasperation. The Assistant Director furiously scribbles notes.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY.

Bindu rushes outside, towards the bike racks. Kicks a bin.

KAHU

That was great!

BINDU

Don't lie just to make me feel better.

KAHU

Auditions are really hard! You did well everything considering.

Student begin to stream out of the auditorium.

BINDU

I suck. Yosef must think I am an idiot.

KAHU

If you ask ME I think you had strong delivery, and you dressed for the part too. Gosh, I wonder who your acting coach was!

BINDU

Okay fine, you're right. It would have been a lot worse without you. Thanks for helping me.

KAHU

Was that so hard?

Yosef approaches the bike racks and sees Bindu.

YOSEF

Oh hey, your audition was really funny. See you at rehearsal.

KAHU

Funny?

He rides off. Bindu just gapes.

BINDU
I got a part?

INT. AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON.

The Assistant Director sticks up the cast sheet on the front of the entrance.

Kahu and Bindu rush up and desperately look for Bindu's name.

Yosef is Macbeth, of course.

Sarah, Holly and Tara are the three witches, of course.

And Bindu is tree #5...of course.

INT. PATEL GARAGE. AFTERNOON.

Bindu opens the garage door and starts dusting off a bike.

KAHU
Yosef SPOKE to you! He knows you exist!

BINDU
Kahu, I am a tree.

KAHU
Tree number five!

BINDU
Just get on! I have to be home before dinner.

Kahu waves his hand through the bike.

KAHU
Spirit!

BINDU
Hold onto me!

He grabs her and takes a seat.

EXT. STREET. AFTERNOON.

They ride down a leafy street. Bindu peddles, a bit wobbly.

KAHU
Do you even know how to do this?

BINDU
You're heavy!

She progressively gets more confident. They approach a hill.

BINDU (CONT'D)
No no no no.

Kahu holds onto her tighter.

They ride down the hill, screaming in fear at first, then exhilaration.

EXT. DARK MENACING MANOR. AFTERNOON.

Bindu uses the old doorknocker. Kahu fidgets with his cloak.

The door opens, SHILO (30s), flowing hair, dressed in white and very serene, smiles dreamily at them.

INT. CREEPY OLD HOUSE LOUNGE. AFTERNOON.

Shilo stands in stark contrast to the old and dark surroundings.

SHILO
So you'd like a reading?

BINDU
Actually I was wondering if you communicate with spirits.

SHILO
I communicate with the spirits through the cards.

She flourishes a deck of tarot cards on the coffee table.

Shilo gestures. Kahu points out a card. Bindu reluctantly picks it up. It's a Queen of Hearts, reversed.

SHILO (CONT'D)
Ah, someone with great potential, if only she could get out of her own way. I can give you a full reading, for \$50.

BINDU
I only have \$20...

Shilo smiles.

SHILO

Would you like a crystal?

She gestures towards a shelf displaying a range of crystals ranging from \$5 to \$10.

SHILO (CONT'D)

This one will help you open your heart chakra.

Bindu crosses Shilo off her list.

INT. MODERN ZEN HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Tea being poured into a ceramic cup.

Kahu and Bindu sit in a zen inspired interior.

BINDU

Can you see anything, weird, around me?

DEBORAH

For \$300 I can.

INT. YOGA STUDIO. EVENING.

Kahu and Bindu sit on yoga mats. Sanjeev (20), a young yogi, lifts two fingers in front of his face.

SANJEEV

This breathing technique will help you focus in your studies.

BINDU

I am looking for someone who can talk to spirits.

SANJEEV

We don't talk to spirits, we sell Spiritz.

He gestures to the counter which has a large display of colourful glass bottles labelled SPIRITZ.

SANJEEV (CONT'D)

It's a special yogic batch brew kombucha! It's light as a spirit, in alcoholic content and calories!

Bindu crosses his name off the list.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Bindu eats her food quickly.

SUNIL

So the thing about compound
interest is -

BINDU

I got cast in the play.

Everyone looks god-smacked.

PRIYA

Oh, well done, beta!

ABHI

What part?

BINDU

Just a small part so it won't
distract from my studies or
anything. Can you sign this
permission slip? So I can attend
all the rehearsals.

SUNIL

Do you have lines to learn?

BINDU

Not exactly -

PRIYA

Do you need to attend ALL the
rehearsals? Why so many?

BINDU

You just have to be there.

ABHI

Are you lying so you can sneak
around after school?

BINDU

No Abhi! Don't be a dick!

PRIYA

Bindu! Language!

ABHI

Then why aren't you telling us what
part you got? She obviously didn't
get a part.

BINDU
I did! I got cast as a tree!

Beat.

Abhi laughs.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Shut up, Abhi!

PRIYA
No that's good beta, everyone is important.

SUNIL
Though anyone could play a tree, really. Why do you want to play that part?

Bindu gets up, with her plate of food and leaves. Priya begins shouting at Sunil again.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Bindu snuffles, eats her food at her desk. The lights flicker in her room. She looks up - through the window across the street.

Kahu is standing at the entrance of the cemetery.

He waves.

INT. GARDEN SHED. NIGHT.

Bindu sits at the work bench. Kahu sits opposite. He gestures to the plant and rag.

KAHU
You just have to talk to him!

BINDU
How do I do that?

KAHU
Ask him some questions!

BINDU
Like...how did you get so hot?

KAHU
No Bindu! How was your day? What are your hobbies?

(MORE)

KAHU (CONT'D)

What your favourite movie? Just like a normal conversation. Okay look, pretend I am Yosef and ask me some questions.

BINDU

Okay, um, do you like water?

KAHU

Let's start with - What's your favourite colour?

BINDU

I like yellow.

KAHU

Why?

BINDU

I don't know, it's bright and happy.

KAHU

Great! Now you try. Remember I am Yosef!

BINDU

Okay okay, hi Yosef.

KAHU

Hey, tree girl.

BINDU

Um, are you right or left handed?

KAHU

I am left handed actually!

BINDU

Oh cool! So do you like do everything with that hand?

Awkward pause.

KAHU

Bindu!

BINDU

Sorry I can't help it! He's so hot! Even thinking about him makes me all weird!

KAHU

Let's try taking baby steps. Have a conversation with me. Like I am one of your classmates and not a random spirit.

BINDU

Okay, okay. Hi Kahu. How are you?

KAHU

Hi Bindu, I am great thanks. How are you? How was your day?

BINDU

I am good. My day was fine, a little stressful but fine.

KAHU

Why was it stressful?

BINDU

I am trying to help someone find something but it's not working out.

KAHU

I am sure you're trying your best and making steady progress. And I am sure this person appreciates your efforts!

BINDU

Oh thanks. Um, what's your favourite film?

KAHU

Little awkward there on the transition.

BINDU

Kahu!

KAHU

Sorry, okay well I only know one film, the one we watched together.

BINDU

Oh right.

KAHU

But it was nice, maybe we should do it again sometime.

BINDU

Oh you want to watch more films?

KAHU

Okay how would you wrap this up if we were in class and you wanted to hang out more?

BINDU

Oh! Um so you're kind cool, should we maybe go see a movie sometime?

KAHU

Yeah sounds great, maybe we can go after rehearsal?

BINDU

Okay!

KAHU

And scene! See that wasn't so hard was it?

BINDU

Yeah cause I am talking to YOU. Not Yosef.

KAHU

Just imagine you're talking to me when you talk to Yosef then.

Bindu makes a face like she is grossed out. Kahu whacks her playfully.

MONTAGE

-- Bindu marks her rehearsal schedule and opening night date on a calendar. In a different pen she marks out time for Kahu's investigation.

-- Bindu does warm ups with the other students, notices Sarah running lines with Yosef.

-- Kahu demonstrates more tactics using the plant and rag in the shed.

-- Kahu and Bindu ride through the streets on her bike.

-- Bindu and Kahu try to read tea leaves with a cat lady.

-- Bindu runs past her parents arguing over a paint colour.

-- During rehearsal Bindu edges towards Yosef while acting as a tree. Mr Binks yells at her to be more tree like.

-- Dates gradually get crossed off the calendar.

- Kahu and Bindu sit with a bunch of goth Uni students, around a pentagram.

-- Kahu and Bindu lie in the grass in the cemetery trying to stratgise.

-- They watch another movie together.

-- Bindu passes her dad sleeping on the couch.

-- Bindu sees Yosef struggling with some sword fight choreography.

-- Kahu and Bindu practice sword fighting in the shed.

-- Bindu tries to approach Yosef to help with his sword fighting but is beaten to it by Sarah.

EXT. DAIRY. AFTERNOON.

Bindu stops her bike outside a local dairy.

There is a traffic cone on the roof.

She checks the address in her notebook.

It's the last place on the list.

INT. DAIRY. AFTERNOON.

The door buzzer goes off as they enter. At the counter is MR YASIN (50), an Malaysian gentleman who could be anyone's grandpa, standing very still. On closer inspection he is asleep.

BINDU

Excuse me, we're - I am here to see the psychic?

Mr Yasin starts awake almost knocking over his tea.

INT. BACKROOM OF DAIRY. AFTERNOON.

MR YASIN

Honey, some kid wants to see you.

MRS YASIN (50), sharply dressed, very thick glasses, is sitting on a small sofa intently watching a wall of screens streaming security camera footage of the dairy.

On closer inspection she is watching a South Korean drama on one of these screens.

MRS YASIN
Speak up, sweetie.

MR YASIN
SOME KID WANTS TO SEE YOU, HON.

MRS YASIN
You don't have to yell! Come sit.

Mr Yasin puts on a kettle. Kahu and Bindu sit awkwardly in the narrow space. Everyone is almost touching knees.

Bindu looks at the screen playing the South Korean drama - the main character turns into Yosef. He finger hearts Bindu.

KAHU
Bindu!

Mrs Yasin is offering her a cup of tea.

BINDU
Thank you...aunty.

MRS KUMAR
Excuse me do I look old enough to be an aunty?

BINDU
No sorry, Mrs Yasin. I am looking for someone who can talk to spirits.

KAHU
For a reasonable price!

BINDU
Please, I don't have a lot of money but it's for a good cause.

MRS YASIN
You have a strange energy around you. I think we need to cleanse your aura.

She takes out a red chilli and burns it. Kahu sneezes.

MRS YASIN (CONT'D)
We need something stronger.

MR YASIN

Honey, can you do some of that hokus-pokus on our roof top? That cone is back!

MRS YASIN

Darling, it's not a ghost who's doing that! It's some drunk teenager!

MR YASIN

Looks like a ghost to me, sweetie!

MRS YASIN

Don't be stupid, honey, that's clearly a boy in a costume!

Mr Yasin rewinds the security footage on the screens to the night before.

A DARK FIGURE is haphazardly climbing onto the roof and planting the traffic cone. It is stumbling around, clearly drunk.

The footage is grainy but there's no doubt, this figure is wearing the exact same costume as Kahu.

BINDU

Uncle - I mean Mr Yasin - did you see anything? Hear anything? When did this happen?

MR YASIN

It's been going on for weeks! Every time I take the cone off, the next day it is on again! I am here, awake 24/7 but I never hear anything -

MRS YASIN

Awake 24/7? You could sleep through an earthquake! Honey!

Kahu quickly exits the backroom. Bindu goes to follow.

MRS YASIN (CONT'D)

Ahem!

She holds out a hand. Bindu hands her the \$20.

MRS YASIN (CONT'D)

Honey, give her a soft serve!

EXT. DAIRY. AFTERNOON.

Kahu is pacing outside, Bindu comes out holding a soft serve.

BINDU

Kahu we have a lead! What's wrong?

KAHU

Yeah, no it's great! Sorry I just -

Beat.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Bindu...Why is this happening to me? Maybe I did do something terrible to deserve all this.

He sits on the curb.

BINDU

No, Kahu. You're a good person. You're the nicest person I know. I am sure there's a logical explanation for everything. Don't worry we'll figure it out.

She puts her hand on his shoulder and offers him the ice cream. He tries licking it.

KAHU

I can taste it!

They look at each other for a moment.

KAHU (CONT'D)

We should probably go - it's almost dinner time right?

Bindu offers Kahu a hand up, he takes it.

EXT. CEMETERY. EVENING.

Lamps along the winding path turn on as the sun sets.

KAHU

I always thought the spirit world would be super busy. All your ancestors just running around, looking out for you.

BINDU

Yeah it's strange isn't it. So quiet.

KAHU
Where is everyone?

BINDU
You must feel lonely.

KAHU
At least I got you to talk to.

BINDU
Ha, I am still not good at that.

EXT. STREET. EVENING.

They emerge at the entrance of the cemetery.

BINDU
I am not used to talking to people.
Or spirits.

KAHU
You talk fine! Once we get rid of
your bullies, you'll have a chance
to show people. You'll make plenty
of friends.

She blushes.

BINDU
Thanks. You must have heaps of
friends. They probably miss you.
Don't worry, we'll get you back in
your body.

Across the street Sunil is in the front yard pointing at the
roof. The cone is back.

SUNIL
It's back! Again!

PRIYA
We need to call the police.

The streetlight next to Kahu and Bindu flickers.

BINDU
Kahu! Those cones! They keep
reappearing - especially when
people try to move them. It's your
body! It's coming back to replace
them! So if we knock some over -

KAHU
It'll come to put them back -

BINDU
And if we're ready for it -

KAHU
We can lure it into a trap -

BINDU
And get you back in your body!

KAHU
Bindu you're a genius!

They high five.

PRIYA
Bindu! Why are you home so late?

BINDU
Meet me here after everyone's gone
to sleep!

She runs across the street.

Kahu stares after her.

She turns around. The streetlight catches her hair, creating
a halo like effect.

She waves. Kahu waves back. He smiles.

EXT. PATEL HOUSE. LATER.

The old villa, windows illuminated, hustle and bustle of
cooking and yelling. Slowly the noise winds down.

One by one, each window darkens.

Stillness.

After a moment, a faint light comes on in Bindu's bedroom.

Another moment later, she appears from the front door,
carefully closing it behind her.

INT. GARDEN SHED. NIGHT.

Bindu kits herself out with a trowel, rope and binoculars.

INT. CEMETERY. NIGHT.

The statue of the angel adorned with the orange traffic cone. A rope swings up and loops around it.

Bindu pulls hard and it comes off.

She stows the cone in a nearby bush and settles into the shadows to wait. She examines the cemetery through a pair of binoculars.

KAHU

Do you think it's like a zombie?
What if it tries to eat you?

BINDU

Why would a zombie be moving cones
around?

KAHU

Why would anyone be moving cones
around?

BINDU

It's your body - maybe you have a
cone fetish.

KAHU

It does have two holes on either
end.

She hits him.

The night lingers on.

Bindu sits in the tall grass, shivering.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

BINDU

I am fine.

Kahu takes off his cloak and puts it around her.

As she dons the cloak, ghostly fireflies appear in the air, lazily floating through the tall grass. They give off an otherworldly glow.

Bindu looks up to see the night sky lighting up with thousands of stars she couldn't see before. They shimmer like a iridescent cloak covering the sky.

Astonished, she grabs Kahu's hand.

KAHU
Ah! You're freezing!

He looks up at her.

She looks at him.

BODY
MOTHER FUCKER!

They quickly turn away from each other and look through the binoculars. A dark figure, identical to Kahu, is stumbling through the gravestones. Muttering and cursing.

BODY (CONT'D)
Who 'he bloody 'ell keeps messin'
me around like this!

He stumbles around and eventually manages to locate the cone, he goes to pick it up.

BINDU
NOW!

Kahu and Bindu take an end of the rope each and run at the body, he ducks.

They try again, he jumps over the rope.

They try again, it turns into a skipping routine.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Up!

They pull the rope up and it catches the body between the legs. He keels over in pain.

Kahu runs over and tries to apprehend him, there is an electric spark as soon as they touch. Kahu stops, surprised. The Body takes the opportunity to grab the cone and shoves it over Kahu's head.

He makes a run for it.

Bindu helps Kahu remove the cone.

They chase after the body, down the winding path through the cemetery.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT.

The body runs towards the bus stop. Oddly, there is a bus there at this late hour.

He runs into it, the doorframe emits a strange glow for a second. Bindu and Kahu follow.

INT. BUS. NIGHT.

They burst through the doors and face a crowd of passengers.

No sigh of the body.

Bindu's cloak gets caught as the doors shut behind them.

The bus starts moving.

BINDU
Where did he go?

KAHU
Bindu...look.

BINDU
At what?

She yanks the cloak off her and tries to pull it free from the door. As she removes the cloak, all the passengers disappear.

Bindu stares wide-eyed at Kahu. She grabs his hand, all the spirits appear again. She lets go. They disappear. She dons the cloak, they appear.

She turns to the BUS DRIVER.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Excuse me, where are we going?

He ignores her.

KAHU
Excuse me, sir but we need to get
off the bus -

LEAH
He can't hear you.

They both turn to see LEAH (16), an attractive, intelligent looking girl, sitting next to VLADIMIR (40) a dour eye patched man dressed in a black suit complete with pocket watch.

LEAH (CONT'D)
Trust me, I've tried.

LEAH

Oh...That's okay, you can join us!

VLADIMIR

No. It is not protocol.

LEAH

But they look lost, Vlad!

VLADIMIR

I would prefer if you do not refer to me by that name.

LEAH

You're so funny, Vlady.

Bindu looks around the cabin, there are mostly old and middle aged spirits, all of them are accompanied by a figure in black formal old fashioned attire, mostly suits but also sherwanis, dresses and other types of robes.

She sees some young children, a baby as well, accompanied by a Reaper rocking it back and forth.

KAHU

So you're a spirit as well? Do you remember how you died?

Leah giggles.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Sorry, is that an awkward question? I was just asking cause I don't remember how I died.

LEAH

No, it's okay. I don't remember either. Vlad says all spirits forget their past life when they leave their body.

KAHU

Woah really? Why is that?

BINDU

Kahu I think we -

The bus suddenly comes to a halt and the passengers begin to move off.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE. DAY.

They step out into a grassy field, stars dazzling above, a long line of spirits leads to the entrance of a lighthouse.

At the entrance is an official looking tent and pair of desks manned by clerks. Reapers with spirits in tow present passports and papers to the clerks, who stamp them. The spirits are then admitted through the entrance which glows as they enter.

Along the line, merchants are set up selling goods from their stalls or baskets. Essentials for the after life. Coins for the river Nile, ghostly last messages to loved ones. Curses for your enemies. A small tent promoting demon equal rights seems popular.

It's as busy as a fish market.

LEAH

We're heading to the departure gate.

Kahu eagerly follows Leah, getting in line. Bindu follows sheepishly.

KAHU

Those guys at the desks look pretty official. Do you think we could report... some sort of crime?

VLADIMIR

Crime? There is no protocol for this.

BINDU

Kahu I think we should leave.

KAHU

Yeah but what if there is like a body snatcher on the loose?

LEAH

I am sure we can talk to those guys and sort something out!

Kahu begins to walk away with Leah.

Bindu turns around trying to scope out the situation. The Reapers don't look like a bunch to entertain questions as the quickly usher spirits and stamp paperwork.

BINDU

Kahu I think we should stick to the plan...

She turns around but Kahu is gone.

BINDU (CONT'D)

Kahu! Kahu?!

She is surrounded by spirits. No sign of Kahu.

Bindu is pushed to and fro as she tries to find him.

Finally, she takes off her cloak.

Everything disappears.

Kahu is standing in the distance, very close to the lighthouse now, talking to someone Bindu can't see.

She runs up to him, donning the cloak as she nears him.

All the spirits reappear.

She sees Kahu is talking animatedly with Leah.

LEAH

Oh hey!

BINDU

Kahu, we need to stick together!

KAHU

Sorry I thought you were just behind us.

BINDU

We need to leave.

KAHU

Just a second, Leah is gonna help us talk to those Reapers.

BINDU

We don't have a second!

KAHU

Oh my god, Bindu! Can you chill? This is the first time we've met other spirits!

Beat.

BINDU

Fine! Go through the portal! Go be
dead with your dead ghost
girlfriend!

Bindu rips off the cloak and stomps back towards the bus
stop. Kahu picks it up and runs after her.

KAHU

Hey! Hold up, you can't just leave!
We made a deal! We still haven't
got my body back!

BINDU

Screw your deal! Yosef still
doesn't know I exist!

KAHU

Because YOU can't suck it up and
just talk to him!

Bindu begins to tear up. She turns and keeps stomping.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Bindu! Bindu wait!

BINDU

Leave me alone!

KAHU

Bindu seriously!

He grabs her wrist. The spirit world reappears.

They are surrounded by Reapers.

BINDU

...Hi.

VIKRAM (40s), a turbaned Reaper, Steps forward. He is
boasting a sword at his hip, he must have been an imperial
guard in his past life.

VIKRAM

Why is this spirit unchaperoned?

VLADIMIR

It appears it is a lost spirit.

VIKRAM

Impossible! This is not following
procedure!

The Reapers begin to close in around them.

VLADIMIR
Unfortunately without a Reaper or
passport this Spirit is -

VIKRMA
Illegal! What is your name child?

Kahu jabs Bindu in the ribs. She looks around, sees the
lighthouse entrance. Looks at Kahu.

VIKRAM
Your name!

Bindu kicks Vikram in the shin, grabs the cloak from Kahu and
whacks Vladimir in the face with it.

They make a dash to the Lighthouse, pushing through the crowd
of spirits.

The Reapers are close behind them.

Kahu grabs a heap of paper work and throws it in their faces.

They just manage to make it through the lighthouse entrance.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

They crash through a doorway in the middle of a dark forest,
falling onto each other.

Bindu pushes Kahu off her.

They look through the doorway but see only forest. Bindu
sticks her arm in, nothing. She walks through it. Nothing.

It is just an empty doorframe standing in the middle of the
woods.

She shuts the door. It falls over.

It's dark.

A morepork squawks in the distance.

KAHU
There must be a way back.

BINDU
We wouldn't even be here if you'd
just listened to me!

KAHU
I thought we were onto something.

BINDU
You should have listened to me!

KAHU
Can you get off my ass? I made one
mistake -

BINDU
All you've done is make mistakes
since I met you.

KAHU
I've been trying to help!

BINDU
I don't need your help, my life was
perfectly fine till you showed up.

KAHU
You were miserable! Sure I make
some mistakes but so do you! You're
not perfect either!

BINDU
OBVIOUSLY! You know that, Yosef
knows that. I know that!

KAHU
So you're mad because I said you
can't talk to some dude? Bindu I
could be stuck like this forever if
we don't figure out what's going
on!

BINDU
So you think my problem isn't as
important as yours?

KAHU
That's not what I said, but kind
of!

BINDU
You don't know what it's like.
Being invisible to everyone around
you!

KAHU
Bindu that is LITERALLY my exact
problem! I am a spirit!

BINDU

But if people could see you they'd
like you, you'd have plenty of
friends, you'd be like everyone
else. You wouldn't even know I
exist!

Beat.

KAHU

Bindu, how can you even think that?
After everything -

There is a sudden banging from the fallen door.

It swings open and VINCENT - a lanky man dressed in 17th
century doctors robes and a birdlike plague mask bursts out.

VINCENT

Kahu! Greetings!

Kahu and Bindu scream and make a run for it through the
woods.

They come upon a glade full of free-standing doors.

Vincent bursts through one.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Kahu I am your Reaper!

BINDU

It's a trap! Run!

They keep running, Vincent bursts out through another door in
front of them.

VINCENT

You're stuck in limbo, this is the
only way out.

Vincent gestures to the doors.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Pick any door! You must picture the
place you need to go with utmost
clarity. Pick somewhere you know
well. And hold onto each other
otherwise you will be separated.

Beat.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

If you make it home - meet me in
the graveyard at noon tomorrow!

He shuts the door and is gone. Kahu and Bindu are alone once again.

BINDU

What if it's a trap?

KAHU

I don't see another way out.

BINDU

Fine.

She marches to one of the doors.

BINDU

Are you coming?

They try to make physical contact, but are still mad at each other so it's a bit awkward.

Bindu begrudgingly grabs Kahu's hand, takes a deep breath and rushes through one of the doors.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

They burst through the closet in Bindu's room.

Bindu notices all her erotic graphic novels strewn across her bed.

She quickly throws Kahu's cloak over the erotica.

Awkward silence.

KAHU

I should go.

BINDU

Yep.

KAHU

So that's it then?

BINDU

Well, technically we found your
body. You helped me talk to Yosef.
I guess the deal is done.

KAHU

Fine.

He walks towards the window.

KAHU (CONT'D)

You know, Yosef isn't going to magically fix all your problems. Instead of worrying about what a random guy thinks about you, maybe you should worry more about what YOU think about you.

He waits for her to turn around. She doesn't.

He leaves through the window.

Silence.

Bindu finally turns around and sees she's alone.

She slumps down on the bed.

Missy slinks out from the closet and purrs at her feet.

Bindu picks up Kahu's cloak and wipes her nose with it.

While doing this she notices something...The very prominent tags sewn inside the cloak are for a local costume store.

THREADS AND THINGS.

PLEASE RETURN.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. DAY.

The calendar shows opening night for the play is that evening.

Bindu shoves the cloak and her tree costume (mainly just a green sparkly wig) into a backpack.

INT. PATEL HOUSE. DAY

Priya is making breakfast. Bindu drags her feet as she heads for the door.

PRIYA

Where are you going?

BINDU

Dress rehearsal.

Bindu shoves her feet into her shoes.

PRIYA

Bindu, I heard some noise last night, were you doing something?

BINDU

I was practising my tree dance routine.

PRIYA

Don't do anything stupid, Bindu. I know kids your age have lots of funny ideas, running around with boys.

BINDU

Mum! I am not cool enough to have a boyfriend.

She slams the door behind her.

EXT. CEMETRY. DAY.

Kahu lies in a grassy patch staring at the sky. Vincent looks over him. Bindu looks at them from behind a tree.

VINCENT

We must find the body!

KAHU

Yeah, well we don't exactly have any leads to go off.

VINCENT

You weren't supposed to die for another 80 years! I haven't even finished my Reaper training!

KAHU

I am gonna live to 96?!

VINCENT

I don't even know what kind of report to fill out for this situation!

KAHU

Chill man! Let me think!

Bindu takes a deep breath.

BINDU
Kahu! I found a clue!

KAHU
Oh it's you.

BINDU
Your costume - I can't believe you didn't notice this before.

She shows them the tags.

BINDU
It's from this shop, maybe if we go there...

KAHU
I don't need your help anymore. I got Vincent.

BINDU
What, but I -

KAHU
Let's go Vincent. We got plenty of clues. And ideas.

VINCENT
I thought you said you didn't have any leads -

KAHU
Shut up man!

He grabs Vincent and they quickly scamper off.

BINDU
Fine! I don't need your help either!

She shoves the cloak into her backpack.

INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY.

Hustle and bustle. Dress rehearsal before opening night.

MR BINKS
Kristof! Exist stage LEFT, if you can't tell left from right tattoo it onto your wrists. Sarah, are you a woman or a mouse? PROJECT. Bindu you're a TREE don't move!

(MORE)

MR BINKS (CONT'D)

Yosef, you better remember your lines before tonight or I will step in for you. EVERYONE TAKE FIVE.

He marches out, pulling out a cigarette. The Assistant Director follows after him, fanning him with a clipboard.

The whole cast deflate, dropping their swords and shields and sitting on stage. Yosef is right next to Bindu.

BINDU

Are you right handed or left handed?

YOSEF

Huh?

Bindu takes a deep breath.

BINDU

Are you okay?

YOSEF

Yeah, sometimes I forget my lines just before a performance.

BINDU

Nervous?

YOSEF

Yeah.

BINDU

Just imagine, somewhere in the world something much more important is happening right now. A high school production isn't the end of the world. You're a great actor, you'll be fine.

YOSEF

Huh. That is very insightful -

BINDU

Bindu.

YOSEF

Bindu. Thanks.

Sarah, observing this exchange, seething, snaps her witches wand in half.

MR BINKS

Okay everyone, let's finish this run so you can have a break before the show tonight.

INT. BACKSTAGE. AFTERNOON.

Bindu stows her sparkly wig in her bag. Sarah, Holly and Tara appear behind her.

SARAH

It's the ugliest tree in the forest. Should've been cast as dirt.

Bindu tries to push past them, Sarah pins her against a wall.

SARAH (CONT'D)

How is a loser like you even allowed to be in the same room as us? You better pretend to break a leg because if I see you at the show tonight I AM gonna break it!

HOLLY

Umm Sarah, wouldn't that ruin the show?

TARA

Holly shut up.

SARAH

She's a stupid tree! No one is gonna care if she doesn't come.

Tara grabs Bindu's sparkly wig from her bag. Sarah rips it in half and throws it on the ground. She stomps off. Tara and Holly follow, looking scared.

Bindu stares at the sparkly mess on the floor.

INT. THREADS'N THINGS. DAY.

A crowd of mannequins, many of them clown themed. The STORE MANAGER is bored at the counter, playing a game of worm on their phone.

Bindu enters the shop.

BINDU

Excuse me, I was wondering if you could tell me about a particular costume form here.

STORE MANAGER

Sorry kid, lots of costumes never make it back here. Especially from those bloody school productions.

He looks up at her.

STORE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Are you from one of those productions? You have to pay to replace any lost items.

BINDU

No no, just...asking for a friend.

She turns around, heading for the exit, when she notices fireflies appear, flitting amongst the antiques and costumes. She follows them into the next room.

INT. THREADS 'N THINGS DARK ROOM. DAY.

There is a group of costumed mannequins suspiciously similar to Kahu's.

They are all in a semi circle facing each other.

A firefly lands on Bindu's palm. She looks up.

A group of spirits appear, dressed in the same costumes as the one of the mannequins. WONHO (30s) a Reaper, is tied up in the middle of the circle. WENDY (30s), TAI (20s) interrogate him.

WONHO

Look if we stop this right now we will only have to write up 10 reports.

WENDY

Shut up about your reports!

WONHO

Wendy, you don't have to do this. The afterlife is actually pretty okay. You might even get reincarnated!

WENDY

I don't want a new life! I want revenge.

WONHO

Against who?

WENDY

How do I get my memories back?

WONHO

It's impossible, your memories died with your body. You're a rageful lost spirit. You need to come with me.

TAI

Hey, is this chick staring at us?

They all look at Bindu.

BINDU

Uhh.

WENDY

Who're you?

BINDU

I am a journalist for the afterlife.

WENDY

And I am the Queen of England.

BINDU

No really!

She produces her notebook.

BINDU (CONT'D)

I am gathering complaints from spirits for an expose on Reapers. See look, I've already interviewed all the psychics in town. So now I am going on interviewing - lost spirits?

WENDY

We aren't lost! We don't want to move on! They can't force us!

WONHO

It's procedure!

BINDU

Why do you not want to move on?

TAI

Well ugh, we can't exactly remember.

WENDY

We all died together. There must be a reason.

WONHO

They all made a deal before they died. Probably a cult thing because apparently it was strong enough to keep them bound to these ridiculous costumes after death. Totally illegal!

TAI

Give us our memories back!

WONHO

I can't! Come with me and you'll be put out of your misery!(To Bindu)
Reapers NEVER use force! It's been illegal for decades now! Write that down.

BINDU

Oh right. (pretends to write this down)

She looks around at the mannequins - one of them is naked.

BINDU (CONT'D)

One of these costumes was bought - you all must have seen who bought it!

WENDY

Yeah, Thomas. They sold him like a dog!

WONHO

That's what happens you attach yourself to a COSTUME.

TAI

He's very directionally challenged though. He hasn't come back here since his costume got bought.

WENDY

He must be looking, hopefully
leaving a trail to follow.

WONHO

He won't remember anything if he's
entered a new body. He would have
forgotten you.

WENDY

Shut up!

BINDU

A trail...

TAI

Hey how come you aren't writing any
of this down?

Bindu runs.

WONHO

Oi! Don't just leave me here!

EXT. CEMETERY. AFTERNOON.

Kahu and Vincent laze around on a bench.

BINDU

(panting) Kahu - I - Found -

KAHU

Stop stalking me.

BINDU

I am not! I came to tell you -

KAHU

Vincent, tell her to stop harassing
me!

BINDU

Kahu! I am sorry! You were right -
I was being selfish and immature.

Kahu only seems half convinced.

BINDU (CONT'D)

And I am sorry if I hurt your
feelings. You're not like everyone
else, you're not an asshole. I was
being the asshole.

(MORE)

BINDU (CONT'D)

I've never had a friend before and well it just felt too good to be true.

KAHU

I didn't mean to hurt your feelings either. Being ignored by someone you like does suck.

BINDU

That's okay - being a spirit and having your body hijacked is definitely worse than a boy ignoring you.

KAHU

Yeah, it sucks but, it's been kind of cool seeing the afterlife. And meet you too - I guess its not all bad.

BINDU

Yeah same, I mean I am glad we met too and um yeah.

Beat.

KAHU

We cool?

He puts out his hand. She shakes it.

BINDU

I think I know how to find your body. Look!

She points to the angel statue with the traffic cone on it's head.

KAHU

What have the traffic cones got to do with anything?

They follow where the angel is pointing - another traffic cone in the distance!

QUICK MONTAGE

They follow the trail of cones left around town - they have all been placed in such a way that they are visible from on location to the next, leading them towards...

EXT. BEAUTIFUL VILLA. AFTERNOON.

A beautiful villa with a lush garden. Haunting accordion music echoes from within the house.

They trio sneak into the backyard of the villa. They peek through the window. MR HERMAN-SMITH (60s), a jovial sailor looking type, is playing the accordion on the couch while MRS HERMAN-SMITH, an academic type, is reading, sipping a cup of tea.

KAHU

Are you sure we're in the right place?

They notice a back door. A heap of traffic cones have been left next to it.

They creep to the next window.

They look through into the bedroom of a teenage boy.

There on the bed, still in full costume, is Kahu's body. Snoring loudly.

They all gape at the sight, then duck as Mr and Mrs Herman-Smith enter the room.

MR SMITH

He's still in costume.

MRS SMITH

He's really taking this role seriously.

MR SMITH

Method acting.

MRS SMITH

Such a good boy.

MR SMITH

We're proud of you, son.

They take turns kissing him on the head before leaving the bedroom.

KAHU

I AM your real son! Be proud of ME!

BINDU

Calm down, Kahu! We're almost there.

KAHU
Let's find a way to get in -

AROHA
Can I help you, dear?

Aroha is standing by the backdoor.

BINDU
Ah! Yes! Um! I am Kahu's...school
friend.

AROHA
He goes to an all boys school.

BINDU
Yes well, we met, at the library.
Anyway he borrowed a book and he
needs to return it to avoid late
fees. I just came to warn him.

AROHA
I see! I will pass along the
message, thank you, dear.

Bindu and Vincent begin to walk away.

Kahu lingers back, he reaches for Aroha as she turns to close
the door.

He touches her hand.

INT. BOYS HIGH THEATRE. NIGHT.

Kahu walks out of the changing rooms, adjusting a pendant
around his neck

He sees a pile of cables, someone's water bottle has spilt
over the cables.

KAHU
Well this is a Health and Safety
Hazard.

He goes to pick up the cables and is electrocuted.

EXT. PATEL HOUSE. DAY.

The three stand by the front door.

KAHU
I remembered when I touched her!

BINDU

But why would touching her help you remember?

VINCENT

Strong physical and emotional bonds can keep spirits connected to this realm. We learn that in Reaper Class 101!

KAHU

I must have died or become unconscious for a moment.

BINDU

And you were wearing the costume that sprit was attached to!

KAHU

It must have given him the chance to take over my body!

BINDU

Now we know where he is, we can use limbo to get into his room.

KAHU

MY room!

BINDU

We'll ambush him while he's asleep in YOUR room. Once we got him and remove the cursed costume the possession should end and then Kahu can get back into his body - right Vincent?

VINCENT

Yes in theory you should be able to re-enter the body by touching it, if it's empty.

They face the front door of the Patel House.

BINDU

We can go right now. Focus guys!

They all take a deep breath, Bindu reaches towards the door handle - before she can even touch it, the door bursts open.

PRIYA

Bindu! Why are you home so late?

BINDU
We were prepping for opening
night!

PRIYA
Is your costume ready? You need to
eat before you go!

Bindu pushes past and runs up the stairs.

BINDU
Yeah it's in my bag. I'll come down
soon!

PRIYA
Sunil! Don't forget about that play
thing tonight!

Priya opens Bindu's bag and finds the wig ripped in half.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOMS. AFTERNOON.

Bindu shuts the door behind her. The trio stand in front of
her closet. Missy meows from Bindu's bed.

BINDU
Okay seriously, focus, imagine
Kahu's bedroom.

They hold onto Bindu, she grabs the closet handles.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

They emerge into the Limbo forest and look for another door.

KAHU
This is awesome, I remember how I
died, I'll be back in my body soon,
I can eat things and sleep! We can
hang out!

BINDU
Kahu, I forgot to mention
something... important.

KAHU
I want to tell you something too!
You go first.

BINDU

When you re-enter your body. You might forget everything that's happened to you...while you were a spirit.

KAHU

Everything?

BINDU

Maybe. Remember what Leah said?

KAHU

Oh.

Beat.

KAHU (CONT'D)

Maybe there's something we can do to help me remember once I am back in my body? Like when I touched my mum, I remembered some things!

VINCENT

Strong emotional bonds can transcend -

KAHU

Yeah, yeah, we get it, Vincent. Let's make another deal.

He sticks out his hand.

KAHU (CONT'D)

I promise I won't forget any of this when I am back in my body.

BINDU

But what if you do?

KAHU

Then you have to do something to make me remember! Anything! It would really suck to forget all of this.

They look around the forest, with its fireflies and ghostly stars. He looks at her.

BINDU

Okay. Deal. Hope you don't regret this.

They shake on it.

BINDU (CONT'D)
What did you want to tell me?

VINCENT
Children!

They turn to see Vincent has located a black lacquered door.

INT. KAHU'S BEDROOM. AFTERNOON.

The three creep into Kahu's room.

The body is snoring loudly on the bed. Bindu carefully removes his hat.

Then unbuttons his shirt, revealing an antique pendant. She starts to unzip his trousers.

BINDU
Wait this is really weird.

KAHU
Bindu! Strip me!

She begins pulling his pants down, very, very slowly. Turns to look away.

KAHU (CONT'D)
For the love of -

He holds onto Bindu and starts taking the pants off faster.

BINDU
Kahu! You're gonna -

BODY
Oi! Whattare ya doin'
you perverts?!

The body spring up on the bed, pants half way down.

KAHU
Get out of my body!

BODY
It's my body now!

He notices Vincent.

BODY (CONT'D)
If I am going to hell, I am taking
you with me!

He smashes a glass bottle.

BINDU
No one is taking you to Hell!

He swings the bottle at Bindu.

KAHU
Oi! Don't swing that at her!

Kahu grabs the body's wrist, causing an electric charge to spark off and break the bottle into smithereens.

AROHA (O.S.)
Is everything okay in there, dear?

The body rushes past them. Bindu grabs his pants, he kicks them off and make a dash for the closet. Them manage to grab onto his cloak as he runs through the closet.

EXT. LIMBO. NIGHT.

The trio chase Kahu's body through the woods. He runs through another door.

KAHU
Shit!

BINDU
Vincent you stay here and look for him. Kahu.

She grabs his hands.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Think about the places he might go!

INT. DAIRY. DAY.

They rush through the dairy. Mr Yasin is sleeping at the counter.

Bindu manages to grab the body's shirt - he pulls it off as he runs through another door.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

Vincent misses grabbing him.

INT. PATEL HOUSE. DAY

The body dashes past Missy. Bindu and Kahu follow.

PRIYA

Bindu, you're going to be late!

They run through the backdoor.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

They rush into the forest straight into a circle of. Vincent is waiting among them. They apprehend the Body.

BODY

Get off me you bloody bastards!

VIKRAM

Finally! Excellent work, Vincent!

VLADIMIR

The amount of paperwork we will have to do.

WONHO

I wish we could just go back to eviscerating souls like in the old days.

The Reapers murmur nostalgically,

VIKRAM

No, no, we must be fair and put him on trial.

The all groan and mutter about paperwork.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

That one is coming with us too.

They grab Kahu.

KAHU

Vincent, what's going on?

VINCENT

They need you as evidence, for the trial. I am sorry I didn't think this would happen.

VLADIMIR

The girl is free to go.

BINDU

I am not going anywhere without Kahu.

VIKRAM

Don't worry we'll return him once we're done.

BINUD

When will that be?

VIKRAM

Well there's a little bit of a back long with our trials...

VLADIMIR

Perhaps a couple of hundred years.

VIRKAM

Getting speedier every year!

BINDU

What?! You can't keep him for that long!

VIKRAM

Actually...this child has seen so much, perhaps we can use her as evidence too.

They start encroaching on Bindu.

KAHU

Bindu, you should go.

BINDU

No way Kahu, I am not leaving you -

KAHU

It's okay I'll be fine

BINDU

We've come this far...

She looks at Kahu intently, signalling with her eyes. He nods.

She rushes towards the Body, rips the pendant off, the last remaining piece of the costume. The Body falls over, life less. Kahu lunges forward and makes contact. There is a brilliant spark of electricity. He disappears.

TOM, a large Scottish man, dressed in Kahu's costume lies next to him. He groggily wakes up.

TOM
What the bloody hell -

The Reapers swarm on him.

VIKRAM
Illegal spirit!

Bindu rushes to Kahu and shakes him. His eyes flutter open.

KAHU
What's going on...where are my
clothes?

BINDU
Kahu, it's me.

She takes his hand.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Remember?

Kahu stares at her blankly.

KAHU
Sorry what's going on here?

BINDU
Kahu...

Vincent grabs Bindu.

VINCENT
I am sorry but this is for the
best.

He pushes her through a doorway.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOMS. NIGHT.

Bindu falls through her wardrobe and lands on her butt.

BINDU
Ow!

She rushes back to the closet and flings it open...nothing.

She opens her bedroom door. Nothing.

She tries the front door. Nothing.

PRIYA
Bindu! What are you doing?

She stomps in holding a tree costume, which includes the sparkly green wig - taped back together.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
You're going to be late! Get in the car!

INT. CAR. AFTERNOON.

Bindu is rushed into the car with Priya, Sunil and Abhi.

PRIYA
I told you to get ready! What is wrong with you kids?

SUNIL
Time management skills are very important, Bindu.

PRIYA
Why bother doing this play thing if you're not even going to take it seriously? I told you, if you want to do something you have to commit to it 100 percent. When I was your age I'd take myself to work on a scooter. My job was in the neighbouring town but I was always on time!

ABHI
You won't let us drive scooters.

PRIYA
Because you're soft! Too dangerous for you two.

SUNIL
Have you memorized your lines?

PRIYA
Sunil! She's a tree, remember?

SUNIL
Oh right.

PRIYA
And why was your wig all ripped up? You need to learn to look after your things Bindu. If you want to be treated like an adult, you need to act like one.

BINDU

Oh my god, Amma! Why would I rip up my own costume?

PRIYA

I don't know why you do anything.

BINDU

Why do you always do this? Why are you always so critical?

PRIYA

If I am not then who else will be?

BINDU

Everyone! All the time! You, Appa, Abhi. The kids at school! They make fun of me ALL the time! Who do you think ripped up my costume? And then when I come home you're always telling me how nothing I do is good enough, and how I shouldn't do this or shouldn't do that. And I just sit in my room and don't do anything and I never say anything to anyone, I don't have friends, I don't go out, I just mind my own business but STILL for some reason everyone just picks on me! It'd be nice if just once you said I CAN do something, I AM good at something, just once!

Stunned silence.

PRIYA

Well no one ever told us we were doing well when we were young. You should tell yourself that.

BINDU

How did it make you feel when no one ever said anything nice to you? How does that make you feel now? You and Appa never say anything nice to each other!

PRIYA

It's just not the way we do things.

BINDU

Well I hate it and Abhi hates it too! It SUCKS.

PRIYA

Bindu!

BINDU

Why are you even trying to fix that old house? What's the point of having a nice house if everyone in it is miserable?

She gets out of the car and slams the door behind her.

INT. BACKSTAGE. AFTERNOON.

Bindu opens the costume closet. Nothing.

She tries another door. Nothing.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Bindu! Call time was an hour ago!
The show's already started!

Bindu quickly gets into her costume and lines up with the other trees for their cue.

Some classical music starts up.

INT. AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON.

The audience are bored stiff, a few parents yawn and almost fall asleep. Priya, Sunil and Abhi step in front of people, trying to find seats. Mr Binks is sitting in the front row, biting his nails.

The three witches, Sarah, Holly and Tara, are stirring a cauldron full of slime. Yosef is sitting on a throne, contemplating.

On a lighting cue, the trees file in.

Sarah spots Bindu at the back on the line. As she walks past she sticks her foot out and trips Bindu up.

SARAH

(under her breath) Loser.

Priya sees the whole thing. Someone in the audience laughs.

Bindu lies there for a moment. Sees her reflection in the cauldron.

PRIYA

Bindu! Get up!

Bindu grits her teeth and stands up.

She pushes Sarah into the cauldron.

BINDU
I am not a loser!

The audience gasps then cheers. Bindu grabs some slime and flicks it at Holly and Tara who squeal and run off stage. The other trees begin to move around to see what is happening. Mr Binks faints.

YOSEF
Bindu what are you doing!?

He tries to stop her but she pulls the sword out of his sheath and points it at him.

BINDU
Move!

YOSEF
I -

BINDU
Get out of my way, Yosef!

SUNIL
I didn't realise she had a speaking part.

PRIYA
Oh my god.

Bindu looks back at the audience and then towards the theatre curtains. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

BINDU
I am coming for you, Kahu.

She opens her eyes. She sees ghostly fireflies fluttering out from behind the stage curtains.

She leaps forwards, pushing through the curtains.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

The fireflies leads Bindu to the edge of a cliff.

There is a doorway right on the edge of the cliff with a sign clearly marked UNDERWORLD with an arrow pointing down. Bindu looks.

It's a long way down. The fireflies flutter around her.

Bindu jumps through the door.

The world turns upside down as she falls...

INT. UNDERWORLD HOUSE PARTY. NIGHT.

Bindu emerges in a pool, she's in the middle of a house party in a huge mansion. A live band of demons are playing a groovy tune on an outdoor stage.

Spirits are drinking and dancing - they have a number around their necks ranging from 10 to 10,000,000.

A few Reapers sit at the bar, drowning their work sorrows, some writing their reports.

Someone cannonballs into the pool splashing Bindu.

INT. MANSION. NIGHT.

Bindu pushes her way through the throng of spirits.

She spots Kahu sitting at a table. He is drinking a milkshake with the aid of a long straw.

BINDU
Kahu! KAHU!

KAHU
WHAT?

BINDU
I CAME TO SAVE YOU.

KAHU
WHAT?

BINDU
I CAME TO SAVE - CAN WE GO OUTSIDE?

KAHU
WHAT?

EXT. UNDERWORLD POOLSIDE. NIGHT.

KAHU
Oh that's much better. So who are you? What do you want? Why are you dressed like that?

BINDU

Kahu! My name is Bindu, I am a friend.

She grabs his hand.

BINDU (CONT'D)

Remember, we made a deal?

KAHU

Sorry I think you have the wrong guy. I am in line for trial. I am number 300,231.

He tries to free himself.

BINDU

You're not even a spirit! You're not supposed to be here! You have to come with me!

KAHU

Woah lady, I am not going off with some stranger.

Kahu manages to free himself.

Suddenly the lights change. A bassy slow song comes on.

Bindu looks around. Spirits old and young pair off and slowly dance to the mournful song.

Kahu turns to leave.

KAHU (CONT'D)

I am gonna go finish my milkshake.

BINDU

Kahu.

She grabs his shoulder.

BINDU (CONT'D)

Do you trust me?

KAHU

No! I literally just met you!

BINDU

I am only doing this because we made a deal.

KAHU

What are you -

She kisses him.

The party lights flicker.

She pulls away. He stares at her, mouth agape.

KAHU (CONT'D)
... Bindu?

He hugs her.

INT. BAR. NIGHT.

The bar is stacked with empty shot glasses and paperwork.

VIKRAM
It's just hard you know, I am just
doing my job, haven't gotten a
promotion in 300 years. My wife
doesn't even look at me anymore.

VLADIMIR
Vikram, you do not have a wife.

VIKRAM
In my dreams I do, Vladimir. And
even in my dreams she doesn't look
at me.

WONHO
That's rough man. We're not allowed
to date spirits, ae?

VLADIMIR
Conflict of interest.

WONHO
Are we allowed to date other
Reapers?

They all look at each other.

VINCENT
Vikram! We have a problem.

VIKRAM
For the love of -

They look over to see Kahu and Bindu running past.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
That's it.

He draws his sword. He is obviously drunk.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)
Sometimes the old fashioned way is
the best way.

INT. UNDERWORLD HOUSE PARTY. NIGHT.

KAHU
There's no doors here. It's all -

BINDU
Open plan. Shit!

They turn around and see they are surrounded.

VLADIMIR
I haven't seen a good beheading in
centuries!

VIKRAM
Mortals who meddle in the affairs
of the spirit world are a danger to
the BALANCE OF THINGS.

CROWD
The Balance of Things!

Kahu and Bindu are pushed onto their knees.

VIKRAM
And, on a personal note, I'll be
damned if I have to write another
report to explain this wandering
spirit and his weird mortal friend!

He raises his sword.

VIRKA
By the power invested in me I
condemn Kahu Herman-Smith and
Bindu Patel to evisceration!

He brings down the sword.

Bindu blocks his blow with her prop sword.

BINDU
Wait! I can help you! I have spooky
powers! I can see spirits who
aren't supposed to be spirits!
(MORE)

BINDU (CONT'D)
I can help you find more lost spirits. I'll even do all the paperwork. PAPERWORK!

VIKRAM
...Paperwork?

BINDU
Yes, PAPERWORK!

VLADIMIR
Paper. Work.

WONHO
That does sound pretty good to be honest.

VIRKAM
A mortal, doing OUR paperwork?

WONHO
Honestly, we have been looking for interns.

VIKRAM
Team meeting!

The Reapers huddle and murmur amongst themselves.

VIRKAM
Okay.

BINDU
What?

VIRKAM
Okay. We accept.

He shakes hands with Bindu.

WONHO
You too, kid!

Kahu shakes hands with Vikram. Bindu and Kahu wince as a strange symbol appears on their hands.

VIKRAM
We've made a contract. If you do not do the paperwork and help us like you've said, your souls will be eviscerated.

KAHU

Wait, where do we get the paperwork?

VIKRAM

We'll mail it to you! Now get out of here!

Some Reapers carry a door through the crowd and place it in front of Bindu and Kahu.

They enter through it.

EXT. LIMBO FOREST. NIGHT.

BINDU

Holy shit I can't believe that worked!

KAHU

Did we just make a deal with the devil?

BINDU

Reapers! Big difference! Maybe we can help other spirits like you now.

KAHU

How did you find me?

BINDU

I just...thought about what I wanted most. And I had some help from these guys.

She points to the fireflies.

KAHU

How can you see spirits now?

BINDU

Maybe we spent too much time together. Or maybe cause I threw a witch into a cauldron.

KAHU

You what?

BINDU

I'll tell you later.

They are at the cliff face again, there is a doorway reading EXIT on the side of the edge of the cliff.

BINDU (CONT'D)
Oh man not this again.

KAHU
Are we supposed to...go through that?

BINDU
Ugh, yes. A bit dramatic. Do you trust me?

She offers her hand.

KAHU
Yeah, of course.

He takes it.

They step through the doorway.

They hang in mid-air for a second.

Slowly they begin to float, like gravity has been reversed.

They fall, gently at first, then all of a sudden.

The world turns upside down as they fall into the sky.

EXT. CEMETRY. NIGHT.

The cemetery is still and quiet.

Out of the ground, a trap door suddenly pops open. Kahu and Bindu are spit out. It closes, blending perfectly into the ground again.

They lay on the grass and look up at the sky.

It's full of stars - only the ones visible to mortals.

It's still beautiful though.

INT. BINDU'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Bindu is snoring in bed. An alarm clock goes off. She rolls over onto her erotica.

INT. PATEL HOUSE. DAY

Priya and Sunil are painting the lounge.

BINDU
It looks good.

SUNIL
Yes...Not bad.

PRIYA
Good choice.

They look at each other and smile awkwardly.

PRIYA (CONT'D)
Bindu! Bring in the recycling bin
after school.

BINDU
Okay have a good day.

PRIYA
And if those girls bother you
again, you tell me!

BINDU
It's fine!

ABHI
You're up early.

BINDU
Can I get a lift to school?

ABHI
No.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR. DAY.

Bindu walks down the corridor.

NERD 1
Oh my god, it's Bindu the Bitch
Slayer!

STUDENT 2
Can you sign my comic?

STUDENT 3
You wanna sit with us at lunch?

BINDU
Sorry I have detention for the rest
of the week.

NERD 2
Badass.

Nerd 2 high fives her as she walks into a classroom with a
DETENTION sign stuck up on the door.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY.

Bindu takes a seat at the front, next to YOSEF. The three
bitches are quietly sulking in the back.

BINDU
Hey sorry I got you all in trouble.

YOSEF
Algood, made that show way more
interesting to be honest.

KRISTOF
We all know Sarah started it
anyway.

YOSEF
We're still having an after party
for the show, wanna come?

BINDU
Yeah, that'd be nice. Can I bring a
plus one?

MR BINKS
You! I better see a 5000 word
apology by the end of this
detention period of else! The WORST
tree I've ever had the displeasure
of directing!

He smacks a ruler down on the desk.

EXT. CEMETERY. EVENING.

Bindu cracks her wrist.

She sees Kahu waiting for her by the angel statue laden
with a huge stack of files. They walk down the winding path.

KAHU
Promising to do paperwork for those
Reapers was THE stupidest idea
you've ever had!

BINDU
I saved your life!

KAHU
At what cost?!

KAHU (CONT'D)
You know we're going to have to do
this for EVERY lost spirit we find.

BINDU
You know for someone who almost got
beheaded you aren't very grateful.
A "thank you" would be nice!

1 EXT. PATEL HOUSE. NIGHT.

1

Kahu and Bindu stroll towards her house. The chill of winter
is beginning to set in.

BINDU
By the way, there's this after
party for the production - I was
wondering if you wanted to come?
Seeing as you're basically the only
reason I got a part in the first
place.

KAHU
A party without Reapers trying to
kill us sounds pretty cool.

BINDU
Who knew the underworld would be
so...lit?

KAHU
Yeah. Ha ha.

Awkward silence.

KAHU (CONT'D)
Hey by the way, you're right. I
never thanked you properly. For
saving me and everything.

He puts down the files and fishes out a handmade card from
his pocket. He hands it to her.

THANK YOU

It reads.

It has a crudely drawn picture of Bindu in it. She's wearing a cape and holding a sword. Kahu is next to her, shooting electricity out of his hands.

KAHU (CONT'D)
I've been meaning to ask, you know
when you kissed me -

BINDU
It was to shock you! I mean usually
you'd ask before doing something
like, right?

KAHU
Right.

BINDU
Like if it was for real.

KAHU
Yeah.

BINDU
Like if you like someone you'd
ask...

KAHU
Yes.

Beat.

KAHU (CONT'D)
I wouldn't mind if you did it
again. Is what I was going to say.

BINDU
Oh.

He leans forward.

She leans in.

They kiss.

The streetlight above them flickers and goes out.

THE END.

EXEGESIS

Introduction

This is a two-part exegesis: the first part, a comparative study, will place the screenplay *Bindu Patel and the Lost Spirit* (Singh, 2021) in the context of other screenplays and examine how they dramatise similar core stories. I will compare and contrast the texts and their various script devices to illuminate their different goals and perspectives, investigate commonalities and differences when compared to my own script and theorise as to why these exist and what we can learn about storytelling based on these findings.

In the second part of this exegesis I will analyse *Bindu Patel and the Lost Spirit* (hereafter referred to as *Bindu Patel*). Here I will break down the elements of the script and explain why certain decisions have been made in the crafting of the screenplay.

Part I - Comparative Study

Bindu Patel is a coming-of-age supernatural, romantic-comedy feature length screenplay set in Hamilton, New Zealand in the late 2000s. It follows the story of Bindu Patel, a reclusive teenager pining over an unrequited crush, who becomes friends with a spirit, Kahu, who has lost his memory along with his body and needs her help to find it.

Definition of Core Story

The core story can be defined as the main conflict or action propelling a narrative forward. The core story can be external (e.g. will they destroy the meteor heading towards Earth?), internal (e.g. will she be able to overcome her fear of public speaking?), or relational (will father and daughter finally put aside their differences to save the family business?).

The core story of *Bindu Patel* is internal, focusing on the protagonist standing up for herself and fighting for her love interest in order to overcome her safe but isolated life.

Other terms used in this exegesis

Inner Line - The inner conflict a character must confront and resolve to achieve their goal, get what they want or, more importantly, what they need. Also referred to as the character arc.

Relationship Line - The dynamics between two characters and how this changes over time.

Action Line - The external force acting on the character or the goal the character is pursuing. Usually something tangible (destroying the meteor, getting the guy/girl, finding the lost treasure etc.).

Romantic-comedy – A genre in film where the relationship between the protagonist and their love interest is the main focus of the story.

Genre Trope - Devices that have been used so often that readers will recognise them immediately. They are any common plot elements, themes, images, characters, motifs, and settings that are used in works of fiction to help an audience identify the genre and help set their expectations for how the story will be told.

Comparative Texts - Synopsis and Core Stories

Wall-E (Stanton & Reardon, 2008)

WALL-E is the last robot left on Earth. He spends his days tidying up the planet, which humans have abandoned due to over-pollution. After 700 years, he's more than a little lonely. Then he spots EVE, a sleek probe sent back to Earth on a scanning mission for life. Smitten WALL-E ends up in outer space when he attempts to help EVE with her mission.

Core Story: Wall-E must learn how to use his unique abilities to help humanity return to Earth and win the love of Eve.

Shrek (Elliot, Rossio, Stillman & Schulman, 2001)

Shrek is a reclusive ogre who enjoys his peaceful swamp life away from the judgment of society. His idyllic lonely life is ruined when his land is overrun by fairytale characters banished from their homes by Lord Farquaad - the dictatorial self-appointed Lord of the kingdom. In order to claim his land back, Shrek and his sidekick Donkey, must rescue the cursed princess Fiona and present her to Farquaad to be his wife.

Core Story: Shrek must overcome his selfish nature in order to connect with those around him.

10 Things I Hate About You (McCullah & Smith, 1999)

Popular, pretty Bianca Stratford is in a dilemma. A family rule forbids her from dating until her unpopular, rebellious, boy-hating older sister Kat gets a suitor of her own. In an attempt to win Bianca, a potential boyfriend sets up a bet with Patrick Verona, another rebel who may just be able to win Kat's heart - for a price. Things get complicated when Patrick falls for Kat.

Core Story: Kat and Patrick must open up and shed their anti-social identities to be with each other.

Princess and the Frog (Clements, Musker & Edwards, 2009)

Tiana, a workaholic waitress desperate to fulfil her late father's dream of opening a restaurant, is set on a journey to turn a frog prince back into a human being - only to be turned into one herself upon kissing him. Together the two must find a princess to break the spell if either have any hope of being human again.

Core Story: Tiana must realise there is more to life than work in order to live a meaningful life.

Spirited Away (Miyazaki, 2001)

Chihiro, a young girl moving to a new town with her mother and father is trapped in the spirit world after her parents gluttonously eat the food of an abandoned fairground's unattended stalls. In the spirit world, Chihiro meets a boy, Haku, who instructs her to find work at the bathhouse and make a deal with the owner-sorceress, Yubaba, in order to survive. Chihiro must find a way to save her parents and return to her world.

Core Story: Chihiro must learn how to work and use her courage and wits in order to rescue her parents and Haku.

While these scripts vary in terms of genre and tone, commonalities between the protagonists, antagonist, villain, narrative structure, endings/resolutions and tone serve to bring out their similar core stories.

Similarities and Differences

Protagonist

In all texts, the protagonist is an isolated figure, someone set apart from the rest of society or their social group. Shrek, Tiana and Kat have actively chosen an isolated life, whereas WALL-E and Chihiro are forced into their isolation. The main similarity is that they all long for genuine connection, acceptance and belonging.

On their journey to rescue Princess Fiona, Shrek tells his companion, Donkey, that “Ogres are like onions, they have layers”. This is in response to Donkey asking why Shrek did not use violence to stop Lord Farquaad putting people on his land. Shrek is trying to tell Donkey that, despite what people think, he is not actually a violent person. It is an act he puts on so they will leave him alone.

When Shrek does try to shed his layers - approaching Fiona’s cottage to confess his love for her - he overhears her conversation with Donkey, explaining her curse. He hears her describing herself as “ugly and hideous” but mistakenly thinks she is talking about him. Hurt he refuses to talk to her the next day and does not protest when Lord Farquaad comes to collect her as his bride. Donkey accuses him of being so wrapped up in his layers, he can’t see Fiona’s feelings for him.

Tiana in *Princess*, is similarly so focused on herself that she doesn’t realise Naveen is trying to confess his feelings for her and even propose during a romantic dinner because she is so fixated on her restaurant. He perceives this as disinterest and decides he must marry a real princess in

order to regain his wealth and help Tiana realise her dream of owning a restaurant. After losing him, Tiana realises what she really longs for is the connection she felt when she and her father brought together their community with food. Without love, the dream of opening her restaurant would mean nothing.

Kat in *10 Things* adamantly states she does not care what other people think of her. She is a rebel at school, hated and feared by students and teachers alike, seemingly untouchable. Yet she is deeply hurt when Patrick rejects her when she tries to kiss him (while she is drunk). She doesn't accept his apology and refuses to listen to his explanation until he serenades her in front of the school. When he asks her why she acts the way she does, she admits it's because she doesn't want to be disappointed by people.

It is clear through examining the behaviour of these protagonists that they are acting anti-social in order to protect their feelings and egos, as they do not wish to be hurt or disappointed.

We can see that they are making the people around them miserable and even actively harming them because they are so wrapped up in protecting their ego. Shrek is mean to Donkey, Kat is cruel to her sister by denying her a normal high school experience and Tiana worries her mother with her constant work. This character question - what exactly is wrong with a character - is set up early in the script. The audience watches to see if the protagonist will become a better person and earn the love and connection they desire underneath their anti-social facade.

It is in meeting their love interest that the catalyst for change is spurred. These new feelings and relationships force the protagonist to face their inner demons.

When Patrick begins to show genuine feelings for her, Kat questions his motives for spending time with her and pushes him away. When it is revealed he was paid to take her out, she refuses to listen to his explanation. It is only after she opens herself up at the end and shows her vulnerability while reading a sonnet written about him in front of the class that she is able to accept his explanation and genuine feelings for her.

Shrek, realising his mistake, bursts into Fiona's wedding to confess his feelings, kissing her and breaking her curse. Similarly, Tiana forgoes becoming human to be with Naveen in front of her best friend.

Love forces these heroes to develop an understanding of themselves and self-awareness; by falling in love and being loved, the characters are able (or forced) to reveal themselves. Better understanding themselves, allows them to better understand others. They learn love is a true and genuine concern for others, an act of vulnerability and shared empathy. Once they reveal themselves and publicly confess their feelings (showing they are no longer afraid of showing their true selves to others) Shrek, Kat and Tiana are rewarded with having their feelings reciprocated.

The fact that these stories require the hero becomes more empathetic to be accepted and able to receive love says something about the values of our society. Storr (2020) states that protagonists and stories are structured in this way to reward good social behaviour within society. When heroes act in a way benefitting society (such as slaying a dragon, saving the princess etc.) they are rewarded - through wealth, prestige or love.

Even in *WALL-E* and *Spirited Away*, WALL-E and Chihiro, though not actively pushing people away, are only rewarded once they learn how to be useful to others - Wall-E finds the plant and brings humanity back to earth and Chihiro uses her courage and wits to save her parents and Haku.

The overarching message seems to be that the protagonist must think of the greater good and the tribe, in order to deserve love. Belonging to a community, wanting love and being loved is a universal human desire - which is probably why these kinds of protagonists who need to learn how to love and give back are effective for dramatising this core story.

Antagonist / Love Interest

Another key similarity between these scripts is the nature of the antagonist. In the romantic-comedy, the antagonist manifests as the love interest who is a mirror to the protagonist. They reflect what they are missing in their life and push the protagonist to confront their inner conflict.

In these texts, the main antagonist is a person who is carefree and sure of themselves. They appear after the protagonist's regular life, behaviours and character questions are established, acting as the catalyst which shakes the protagonist's world.

Princess Fiona is elegant, beautiful and confident - even later when she is revealed to be cursed - unlike Shrek she is still sincere with her emotions and willing to share them with others.

Naveen has never worked a day in his life, but he knows how to have fun, love and be loved. He understands it is people that make his life fun.

Patrick, though a rebel like Kat, is not afraid to show his emotions in front of others - perfectly showcased when he sings a love song to Kat in front of the whole school.

In *Spirited Away*, Haku is a mature boy, sure of himself and his place in the world, quite the opposite of Chihiro. Later, when he is injured, Chihiro must confront her fears - she must go on a long journey to an unknown place to seek help. She becomes the mirror of who she was earlier in the film, a child upset at moving away from her hometown, afraid of the unknown. Her love for Haku has motivated her to step up, similar to how Shrek, Tiana, Kat and Wall-E are made to step up emotionally through the challenges their antagonist/love interest presents. They are only able to do this because the antagonist has shown them a new perspective on life and a new way of being.

Having an antagonist who is a mirror to the protagonist is a useful device for this type of core story where the inner conflict of a character is the central issue. It's through the relationship, and trials and tribulations these two go through together that the audience is able to see the nuance of

the protagonist, their inner turmoil and the true meaning of their character arc (that is, how they change from start to finish).

Villain

In these films the villains are clearly there to harm the protagonist or their love interest (emotionally or physically). The Shadow Man in *Princess*, AUTO in *Wall-E*, Joey in *10 Things*, Yubaba and Lord Farquaad are all immediate threats to the budding romance or protagonist's goal. In creating more obstacles and raising the stakes, these villains push our protagonist to look deep within and find the courage to step up in order to surpass whatever challenge has been created by the villain.

The stakes are elevated to life and death in *Spirited Away*, *Wall-E*, *Princess*, creating dramatic moments for insight, and thus change, for the protagonist as they dig deep to overcome the odds.

Yubaba holds Chihiro's parents captive as pigs and refuses to heal Haku who is dying. AUTO attempts to kill both WALL-E and EVE, The Shadowman attempts to kill Tiana and keep Naveen imprisoned as a frog. WALL-E sacrifices himself, Tiana uses something she learnt from Naveen to help her escape and Chihiro overcomes her fear of the unknown to save their lover.

In a less fantastical setting, such as the high school in *10 Things*, Kat must overcome social humiliation caused by Joey to be with Patrick - quite high stakes for a teenager.

These villains put our heroes in the worst possible situations that are often a matter of life or death - by overcoming a huge challenge to gain personal insight, the audience is satisfied to see them rewarded in the end when they end up with their lover. These villains help ensure the protagonist's victory feels earned.

This conflict is important to establish credibility for the protagonist - we need to believe they have suffered because change is not easy. If achieving their goals and resolving their inner conflict was too easy, the story would lose impact as it would not feel emotionally truthful.

Therefore, these scripts utilise their villains to create exceptionally difficult obstacles, externalising a character's inner development to clearly communicate the core story to the audience.

Ending/Resolution

All stories, except *Spirited Away*, end with the genre trope of the protagonist and antagonist ending up as a couple and living 'happily ever after'.

In romantic-comedies, the protagonist and their love interest becoming a couple is a genre trope, signalling to the audience that it is the end of the story. It clearly illustrates that the protagonist has changed and they are being rewarded for this change. However, a love story does not need the protagonist and antagonist to end up together in order to be satisfying.

In *Spirited Away*, which is a coming-of-age animated film, Chihiro is able to save her parents and Haku, and though they seem to have a budding romance, in the end she must return to the mortal world and forget Haku. This may seem like a sad resolution, but during her time in the spirit world Chihiro has become sure of herself ready to face any new challenge in life and embrace change. She has come of age and matured and is not the same helpless child she was when she first entered the spirit world. Even though it is not a 'happy' ending it is still a 'satisfying' ending because Chihiro was able to get what she needed through her relationship with Haku.

Hart (2019) argues that an audience does not need a 'happy' ending, but a 'satisfying' ending to understand and appreciate the core story. He defines a satisfying ending as an ending where the character may not necessarily get what they want (a material thing, an ego-driven desire) but gets what they need (inner desires, resolution of inner conflict). This is the inner line, also referred to as the dramatic question or the character question (what is this character's problem and what do they need to do to resolve it?). As long as the character in the story ends up getting what they need, the audience will be satisfied - this doesn't necessarily mean they need to end up with their love interest, as shown in *Spirited Away*.

Therefore, it is not the pairing off of the protagonist and antagonist at the end that makes these stories satisfying, but the fact that the protagonist has had a major insight and genuinely changed themselves for the greater good. A coupling as resolution helps clearly illustrate the core story and change which has occurred, but is not always necessary, as long as it is clear the protagonist has changed and is better off than they were at the start of the script.

Tone/World

Establishing credibility for characters and worlds is important for fantasy settings such as *Shrek*, *Wall-E*, *Spirited Away* and *Princess*. These worlds quickly establish their rules and stick to them and characterise the protagonists in human ways to make them relatable to the audience.

To ensure characters are credible and relatable, the writers of these scripts have strongly characterised their protagonist - Wall-E may be a robot but he has very human habits, he needs to charge himself in the morning just like someone grabbing their morning coffee to wake up. He takes his lunchbox to work, and he puts on the TV when he gets home and he clearly feels lonely and in need of connection.

The spirits in *Spirited Away* go to the bathhouse to rest from their work as spirits. They eat, sleep, work for a living and have their routines, just like humans.

Shrek reads on the toilet, brushes his teeth and lights a candle for dinner despite the fact he is a monster. Most importantly he is insecure about his looks, something many can relate to. These characters are not human but the audience buys into their humanity because they exhibit familiar human behaviour.

The rules of each world are clearly defined early on, usually by supporting characters explaining to the protagonist what they can and cannot do. Haku tells Chihiro she must work in the spirit world to survive. Naveen and Fiona are told they need to find their true love to break their curse. WALL-E is told they must find the plant in order to return humanity to Earth.

Mernit (2001) describes this as establishing credibility for the world and character. A world can be fantastical as long as it operates within its own logic and the audience can understand and relate to a character's choices and behaviours. This is important to feel invested in their journey as they progress through the story.

These strong set ups of the world and its rules pay off during key turning points, creating conflict or showing character development, helping express the core story. In *Shrek*, Fiona is told she will only break the curse that causes her to turn into an ogre at night when she kisses her true love. It is established early on that breaking the curse will make her beautiful. When Shrek finally kisses her in the end, the spell is broken - but Fiona is now permanently an ogre. Confused she wonders why she is not beautiful. Shrek, having become a more empathetic character by accepting himself, is able to look at her and tell her she is beautiful. This perfectly encapsulates the core story of self-acceptance in *Shrek*. Shrek has gone from believing he is an unlovable ugly beast, to loving someone who looks just like him.

This ending would not have been as impactful if the rules of the world and credibility of the characters were not set up early on in the script.

Relationship to Bindu Patel

Bindu Patel shares some commonalities and differences with these texts which serve to dramatise its similar core story.

Protagonist

Bindu, like Shrek, Kat and Tiana, is reclusive and anti-social at the beginning of the film. She is preoccupied with protecting her ego and is so absorbed in her fantasy of being with Yosef that she doesn't appreciate the help Kahu has been offering her. It takes a major fight and break up with Kahu for her to realise he has his own problems and is also a complex human being who she has been treating poorly.

By acknowledging the gravity of his situation, she realises there are more important things in the world outside of herself. This enables her to become a more mature character who is capable of giving and receiving love and helping those around her.

Her newfound empathy and determination to help Kahu in turn makes her more assertive. Throughout the story, she learns how to stand up for herself and in the process realises that she is actually a happier person for doing so. By allowing herself to risk caring about things other than herself, she's opened to new experiences and feelings.

Antagonist,

Kahu is the opposite of Bindu - he is extroverted, sure of himself and knows how to have fun - similar to Naveen, Patrick and Fiona. He trusts his feelings, he knows his body is out there because he *feels* it. Bindu on their other hand is completely confused by her feelings. She has no idea what is out in the world or what she truly needs.

Kahu is the catalyst in Bindu's journey - he pushes her to go after Yosef, the boy she thinks she wants. He challenges her, asking her why she cares so much what others think of her and helps her gain the insight she needs to become a more mature and empathic person.

Villain

Sarah is the main villain of the story, as well as the Reapers. Sarah actively torments Bindu, pushing her to the edge. Ultimately, she attempts to humiliate Bindu in front of the whole school, her parents and Yosef (similar stakes to Kat in *10 Things*). This moment of ultimate social humiliation pushes Bindu to dig deep and overcome her fear to fight back.

The Reapers similarly threaten to imprison Kahu indefinitely, and even kill him near the end, prompting Bindu to again step out of her shell and save him using her wits.

Endings/Resolution

Bindu, like Shrek, Kat and Tiana, learns she must open up in order to get what she truly needs. She reunites Kahu with his body, which causes him to lose his memory. She is unable to express herself to him before being forced back into the mortal world. To re-enter the spirit world, Bindu must acknowledge her feelings for him, and finally confess publicly to him in order to help restore his memory. Her overcoming her greatest inner conflict allows her to earn the love of Kahu, resulting in a satisfying ending.

Tone / World

The rules of the spirit world are established early in the script through Kahu and Bindu's trial and error as they try to figure out where his body might be and are later clearly defined by Leah and Vladimir - a spirit and Reaper they meet on a bus. The fact that spirits lose their memory is an important rule to establish. Bindu realises Kahu will forget her when he reunites with his body, but she has grown as a character by this point and is willing to risk losing him so he can be happy.

Reapers having highly bureaucratic jobs, with lots of paperwork, is used to ground the spirit world in reality and show it has rules and procedures to follow. This makes the world more credible and also establishes higher stakes for Kahu, being an anomaly in a system which fears anomalies.

Conclusion

Despite the story content varying drastically, what clearly works in expressing *Bindu Patel's* and similar core stories is shown by these scripts' similar use of devices: an isolated protagonist who exhibits anti-social behaviours, an antagonist who mirrors the protagonist and pushes them to confront their inner conflict, villains who create exceptionally difficult obstacles, satisfying resolutions of the character question, as well as strong rules and characterisation which give credibility to the world and characters of the stories.

PART TWO | Story Analysis of *Bindu Patel*

Synopsis

Bindu Patel is a lonely, repressed teenager whose family have recently moved into a derelict villa across the street from a cemetery. Her parents are on the brink of divorce, her older brother ignores her and she is tormented by her bullies at school. One day, Bindu discovers her unrequited crush, Yosef Nachowitz, is going to be in the school's annual Shakespeare play. The drama teacher urges her to audition, which her family discourages. That evening, Bindu meets a charming, oddly dressed boy in the cemetery. His name is Kahu. They shake hands by way of introduction, but before Bindu can learn more about him, he disappears.

Bindu tries to audition for the play but is locked in the costume closet by her bullies. There is a power cut, causing the auditions to be postponed. Bindu manages to escape and runs into Kahu in the darkened theatre. He reveals he has caused the power cut - he is a spirit who has lost his body. They strike a deal - he will help haunt her bullies and win over Yosef if she helps him find his body. Bindu and Kahu embark upon an adventure between the mortal and spirit world to solve the mystery of his missing body. Kahu helps scare off her bullies and build Bindu's confidence to talk to boys.

Eventually they discover Kahu's body is possessed by an angry spirit, but the afterlife authorities are more keen to brush this under the carpet than help. Bindu manages to reunite Kahu with his body, causing him to lose his memories as a spirit. She is forced back into the mortal world, leaving him behind. Despite being able to talk to Yosef now, Bindu quickly realises she is deeply unhappy without Kahu. During the play, she is tripped onstage by her bully, Bindu finally stands up for herself and shoves her bully into a cauldron before leaping through the curtains back into the spirit world. She finds and confesses her feelings to Kahu, kissing him and restoring his memories. They strike a deal with the afterlife authorities to help find other lost spirits and return to the mortal world.

World

The script is set in the late 2000s, Hamilton, New Zealand. The story has four distinct worlds which Bindu must navigate.

Home - Where Bindu is repressed by her family who fear her getting hurt. They are overprotective but this manifests as them discouraging her from taking risks in life and being herself. The family values safety, security and success - such as having a conventional job and keeping emotions and feelings repressed to avoid conflict. Bindu's mother embodies these values in particular as the matriarch who dictates how Bindu should behave within and outside the household.

School - Where Bindu is bullied inside 'girl world'. Girl world values good looks, social skills and boys. Bindu has none of these things so is considered a loser and outsider for her weird looks, interests, and ineptitude with the opposite sex. Sarah is the main authority figure of girl world and relentlessly bullies Bindu to enforce her status.

The Spirit World – In which Kahu and other spirits inhabit. Reapers (guides who help spirits transition from the mortal to spirit world) rule this realm though highly bureaucratic means such as rigorous paperwork documenting anything afterlife related. They fear anything which deviates outside their procedures, such as lost spirits and possessed bodies.

Bindu's Private Life - Where she has respite from others judgement and can indulge her fantasies. Bindu's private world is the one place she can relax and be herself - this includes things like swearing/being assertive under her breath, reading erotica and fantasising about Yosef. She fears anyone discovering this part of her - her true self and feelings.

Theme

Intention

At its heart, this story is really about embracing your unique identity. It's about learning that what makes you different makes you valuable to society. Difference should not be shunned but rather celebrated and shared. I was drawn to telling this story from personal experience as a migrant to New Zealand. Our cultural and ethnic differences are often viewed negatively and shunned by the dominant society. We are made to feel less than for who we are, like an alien or outsider - much like Bindu and the other protagonists referenced in this exegesis. But by harnessing the unique perspectives and experience we have from our lives and backgrounds, we can make this "weakness" into a strength, by contributing something unique to our society and community. By finding the strength to be ourselves, we can change perspectives, break stereotypes and create bridges between people.

The audience

Intellectually, I would like the audience to understand that by embracing yourself and your differences you can live a more authentic and honest life. You can show the world who you really are - there will be those who don't like you, but there will also be those who love you for who you are - if only you are willing to reveal yourself to them.

This is illustrated through Bindu's character arc as she goes from a miserable isolated life when she is hiding her true self, to a fulfilling life where she embraces who she is and stands up for herself.

Emotionally, I want the audience to feel hopeful about love, friendship and that a more united, more empathetic world is possible if we embrace ourselves and each other's differences.

Key elements to help the audience feel this way is the resolution at the end of the script, as not only does Bindu manage to save Kahu, but she also manages to save her parent's relationship by

challenging them to be kinder to each other. Bindu and Kahu have also agreed to help find other lost spirits - showing the audience that they have created room for the outsiders in the spirit world.

Key image

A key image near the end of the screenplay which encapsulates the big takeaway is when Kahu and Bindu exit the spirit world by jumping through a doorway on the edge of a cliff. This illustrates the significant change Bindu has made from the beginning of the film.

Through her trials and tribulations and through the changing force of love, she has grown as an individual. She has learnt that she is capable of standing up for herself and facing the unknown. By embracing her true identity and revealing herself to Kahu, she has earned his love and trust. She has the confidence in herself now to take a leap of faith, to truly experience life and relationships in their full spectrum.

In contrast to the opening image, she is no longer alone in her journey - she is holding hands with a true friend and lover who is taking the leap with her.

Protagonist

a) Motivation

Bindu's goal is simple - she wants to be with Yosef. For most of the screenplay, her main motivation is to get him to notice her. She makes a deal with a spirit, Kahu, in order to haunt her bullies so she will be able to get closer to him. She pushes herself out of her comfort zone to audition for the play to get him to notice her. But when she gets Yosef in the end, she realises she is not happy because she is actually in love with Kahu - the boy who truly knows and values her for who she is.

b) Stakes

For a teenager with a fragile ego, the stakes are incredibly high. She needs the validation of the object of her desire to feel a sense of self-worth. Without this validation, Bindu is nothing. Bindu is continuously set back by her circumstances and people ridiculing her decisions, including her bullies and her parents.

The stakes get higher when Bindu starts to empathise with Kahu and develop feelings for him. He will be cursed to live his life as a spirit or be taken away by Reapers and held captive indefinitely unless they figure out the mystery of his possessed body.

Ultimately the stakes are not only risen to life and death for Kahu, but Bindu losing the one true emotional connection she has had with another person, ever.

Bindu puts her ego and her social standing, on the line when she pushes Yosef out of the way to try to get to Kahu. She even puts her life on the line when she stands up against the Reapers and begs them to let Kahu return to the mortal world.

c) Arc

At the beginning of the script, Bindu is an immature girl, unable to voice her opinions, stand up for herself or take responsibility for her situation. Through her adventure with Kahu, she learns how to be assertive and active in her own life. She is forced to come up with and execute a plan to find his body, she is forced to talk to a range of people, including Yosef, and ultimately learns to stop thinking only of herself when she begins to care about and empathise with Kahu - willing to forgo her original goal of impressing Yosef so she can save him.

She pushes her bully out of the way and even stands up to her domineering mother, questioning her parents' relationship and expressing how she truly feels. In the end, she makes a pragmatic deal with the Reapers in order to save Kahu and return to the mortal world.

These final three acts symbolises her coming-of-age - she is no longer a self-pitying child, but someone more mature and able to take on responsibility, help others and stand up to authority

figures for what she believes is right - be it her parents, bullies or Reapers.

Antagonist

Kahu is the main antagonist as the love interest of Bindu. He challenges her and forces her to confront what is missing in her life. The bullies leader, Sarah, and the Reapers serve as the secondary antagonists for the action line - they create obstacles for Bindu to get what she wants and needs.

Kahu is extremely conscious of what he is doing because, in the beginning, he needs Bindu to come out of her shell so she can help him find his body. Kahu's main strategy for helping Bindu to come out of her shell is positive reinforcement and forcing her into situations where she has to act.

His own drive to find his body leads him to push Bindu into any scenarios he thinks will help him find his body. During the course of their investigation, as Bindu comes out of her shell, this becomes less conscious as he simply begins to enjoy her company.

Sarah and the Reapers progressively get more violent in stopping Bindu from getting Yosef or Kahu. They compel Bindu to become more active and physically stand up for herself in the face of adversity.

The Core Story

The core story of *Bindu Patel* focuses on the protagonist accepting herself and fighting for love in order to overcome her safe but isolated life.

This question is set up on page 5, where Bindu sees Yosef. She sees him through rose-tinted glasses, in slow motion, completely removed from reality. She is clearly infatuated but is hiding behind a tree the whole time, too love struck to even keep her mouth shut.

Her bully, Sarah, is clearly more confident, saying hi to Yosef, twirling her hair and glaring at Bindu as a challenge. Instead of trying to talk to him or confront Sarah, Bindu scampers away, retreating under her backpack like a turtle. She is too afraid and timid to stand up for herself or even be seen - literally retreating under a shell. The audience is now waiting to see if Bindu will fight back and get the object of her desire.

Set-up

The set-up is complete on p 24 when Kahu and Bindu formally strike a deal to help each other achieve their goals. This is a key turning point as there is no going back to her regular life after this agreement. Meeting Kahu and striking this deal is the catalyst which sets into motion her plans to be with Yosef.

Midpoint

The midpoint takes place on page 57 - when Kahu and Bindu almost kiss while waiting for his possessed body to appear in the cemetery. In this moment, they both realise they are attracted to each other. Immediately after this, they enter the spirit world - their whole view of reality has shifted and they are now in too deep to back out of their plan - there is no turning back.

Climax

The ending section begins at page 87, where Bindu and Kahu are separated - physically and also emotionally as Kahu has forgotten who Bindu is. It is the darkest hour for Bindu and she is confronted with a life without Kahu.

Resolution

The dramatic question is resolved on page 93, where Bindu confesses her feelings for Kahu and kisses him. She states she can't live in a world without him, she is being open and honest, vulnerable, and actively fighting for his love at that moment. She has overcome her insecurities

and is willing to fight for herself and others, clearly expressing she does not want to live an isolated life anymore.

Character Question

The audience is waiting to see if Bindu will pluck up the courage to stand up for herself. In the beginning she is meek, cursing under her breath, not talking back to her mother, letting her bullies tease and mock her. She needs to develop a sense of self-worth so she isn't afraid to be herself and fulfil her need for love and connection.

Bindu is torn between staying safe in her closed off world where she takes no risks, where there is no unpredictability, and the need to connect, be herself and experience life and the unknown. This inner need gnaws at her continuously. She is very unconscious of this need in the beginning and it is only through developing a relationship with Kahu, being confronted with new experiences and emotions that she is able to begin to realise what she wants (Yosef) may not be what she needs (genuine connection). This comes to a head when she gets the ability to be close to Yosef but has lost Kahu and realises what she wanted is not what she truly needed all along.

Ultimate decision

When Bindu is tripped on stage by Sarah in front of the whole school, she faces the dilemma of lying down, remaining in the familiar patterns of her life, or fighting back, putting her ego on the line, taking a risk and going after what she truly wants.

Completion of character arc

The audience can see that Bindu has changed irrevocably when she stands on stage, with the whole school watching her, including her parents and Yosef, and flights back against Sarah, pushing her into a cauldron, showing them all she is no longer meek and timid.

Bindu has a key insight in this moment: if she does not act now, she will regret this moment forever. This new Bindu is not going to be pushed around, she has grown a sense of self-worth and is willing to fight for herself and others, in what she believes is right. This illustrates her character arc and resolution of inner conflict which leads her to be able to find and confess her feelings to Kahu.

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