

A SON OF THE CIRCUS

By John Irving

This original screenplay
is the property of
Garp Enterprises, Ltd.

Revised: 5 September 1995

⌘ THE ⌘
M A R I O N
R O S E N B E R G
⌘ OFFICE ⌘

8428 MELROSE PLACE
LOS ANGELES, CA 90069
TEL: 213-653-7383
FAX: 213-653-9268

Christmas music plays Over. A seven-year-old Indian girl stands in a sumptuous living room—a fire blazing in the fireplace, the Christmas tree surrounded by presents. The girl, MADHU, fingers the tree ornaments—an odd mix of typically Western, Christian decorations together with Hindu figures and other obviously Eastern trinkets. She removes a framed black-and-white photograph of Pinky and Ganesh from the tree; they are children, posing with a circus elephant.

Pull back: on her way to where her grandfather (GANESH) sits reading in a chair, MADHU picks up the TV remote and zaps off the TV—hence killing the source of the Christmas music (a children's choir singing "Good King Wenceslas").

MADHU

Grandpa, tell me everything about Pinky—again.

MADHU hands GANESH the photo; her English is plain Canadian—totally free of a Hindi accent. GANESH, who is about 60 years old, speaks English with a Hindi accent.

GANESH

There isn't time for Pinky's story before your bedtime.

An Indian woman in her thirties enters—Madhu's mother, Ganesh's daughter, SUMAN. (She also has a Hindi accent.)

SUMAN

Daddy, it's Christmas—tell her a Christmas story.

GANESH

I don't believe in Christmas—I don't believe in Hindus having Christmas trees either!

SUMAN

Daddy—we're not the only family in Toronto with a Christmas tree that doesn't believe in Christmas.

SUMAN takes the photo of Pinky and Ganesh and the elephant and returns it to the tree. She can't help but look at it.

MADHU

But I want to hear Pinky's story, Mommy!

SUMAN

It's not a proper bedtime story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1

GANESH

It's Christmas! Don't kids get to stay up later at Christmastime? Christmas must be good for something besides presents!

MADHU climbs into her grandfather's lap. They both look beseechingly at SUMAN. GANESH whispers something in MADHU's ear. She repeats what he's told her to say.

MADHU

Merry Christmas, Mommy!

SUMAN gives in, leaving them alone in the living room.

SUMAN

Well ... Merry Christmas to the two of you, I suppose.

MADHU in GANESH's lap: she still holds the TV remote, which she points at her grandfather—as if to turn him on.

MADHU

Okay—begin!

INT. BOMBAY VICTORIA TERMINUS DAY

2

Migrant families are camped out in the waiting rooms, their belongings in piles. Navigating this zoo are a mother and her two children, the mother stooped under bedrolls and pots and pans, the girl similarly burdened and holding the mother's hand—PINKY looks about thirteen. Following them in his wheelchair is GANESH, a fifteen-year-old boy. It is a three-wheel contraption, which GANESH steers with one hand by means of a device like a joy stick; the wheelchair is powered by a crank that GANESH turns with his other hand.

GANESH (V.O.)

I was named Ganesh, after the elephant god—the most popular god in Maharashtra. This turned out to be the wrong name for me because an elephant stepped on my foot when I was a baby. It was just an elephant stepping off a train, but my father had stupidly left me lying on the station platform while he was smoking a cigarette.

EXT. BOMBAY VICTORIA TERMINUS DAY

3

Leaving the huge Gothic station, PINKY and MOTHER make their way on DN Road as GANESH follows them in his wheelchair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3

GANESH (V.O.)

After I was crippled, my mother gave birth to a second child—my sister, Pinky. When my father knew he had a daughter, he left us and we never saw him again. He said that a daughter was more of a burden than a cripple.

EXT. BOMBAY SLUM ON SOPHIA ZUBER ROAD DAY

4

GANESH and PINKY and MOTHER are looking for a campsite in the slum. The police have restrained a lineup of vagrants who want to occupy the burlap shelter that has just become available because a former resident has died. Two stretcher-bearers in white dhotis carry the deceased away; neighbors of the dead man quarrel over his few pots and pans, but GANESH (with the authority afforded to a cripple) engineers his wheelchair past the police and takes possession of the residence for PINKY and MOTHER. PINKY charms the policemen with handstands while the lineup of vagrants protests, especially a scrawny old man with all his belongings heaped on a cart. He throws a fit.

GANESH (V.O.)

We came from a small town in Maharashtra. My mother was a sweeper, a cleaner of toilets. One day she reasoned that there were more toilets to clean in Bombay, and so we moved to Sophia Zuber Road.

EXT. BOMBAY MARINE DRIVE, AREA OF SMALL HOTELS DAY

5

GANESH does little stunts in his wheelchair while PINKY does handstands and other tricks; they are observed by the guests in a small seaside hotel—one of the guests throws a rupee.

GANESH (V.O.)

If Pinky and I were going to be beggars, we knew the begging would be better in Bombay. But from the beginning Pinky didn't consider herself a beggar—she always said she was a "performer." On the weekends, Pinky and I would do the small hotels on Marine Drive. The Arab clientele gave us the most money.

EXT. BOMBAY MARINE DRIVE, ARABIAN SEA NIGHT

6

A long shot of the string of lights around the bay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cut to: a black Mercedes speeds along Marine Drive; when it passes some street performers (children), its brake lights flash and it backs up toward them—the children run to the car.

GANESH (V.O.)

Of course we hoped to be discovered by the notoriously good-smelling lady who was a scout for the Great Royal Circus. Lady Muriel was famous for finding talented children. If she ever saw Pinky, I knew she would take her. But if Lady Muriel saw me, I doubted she would be impressed. What could a cripple do in the circus?

The tinted rear window of the Mercedes rolls down; inside is MURIEL, an English beauty in her forties—in dazzling attire. She points to one boy among the children; he climbs into the back seat with her. The others are left at the curb.

Cut to: PINKY and GANESH are passed by the cars traveling along Marine Drive. What appears to be the same black Mercedes passes them; then it stops and begins to back up toward them. Before PINKY and GANESH can respond, another gang of urchins beats them to the car. (They outrun the wheelchair.)

GANESH (V.O.)

The danger was that Lady Muriel wasn't the only talent scout in Bombay, and the Great Royal Circus wasn't the only circus in India.

The rear window rolls down again, but the passenger is an acid-scarred Indian man in a business suit. He points to a girl whom he ushers into the back seat beside him; the girl panics when she sees a row of small glass bottles displayed on a rack, and the man reaches for one of these (containing a clear, colorless liquid). The girl looks to her friends for help, but the window rolls up and cuts her frightened face from view.

Cut to: PINKY and GANESH at the shore of the Arabian Sea. Steps, framed by two pillars, descend into the sea. A Hindu family is scattering the ashes of a loved one there.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Why does he steal children?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

For the freak circus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

6

PINKY
(Hindi....)
Why is he called Acid Man?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
His scar. Also, because he pours acid on your face. You are so disfigured, not even your family would ever recognize you again! Only the circus for freaks would take care of you.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
If Lady Muriel discovers me, I'll take you with me to the Great Royal Circus. If Acid Man gets me, you must find me and kill me and scatter my ashes in the Arabian Sea—it means more to me than the Ganges. Promise!

GANESH
(Hindi....)
Okay.

EXT. BOMBAY STREETS OF THE CITY NIGHT

7

As music and credits play Over, we see a variety of child performers in Bombay, always from a moving car. Intercut these views of the street children with shots of a black Mercedes passing, and a fleeting glimpse or two of MURIEL and ACID MAN.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE COURTYARD DAY

8

Bells (as classes change); the schoolboys scatter from the courtyard, leaving only the mother who is raking the dirt.

GANESH (V.O.)
My mother got a job at St. Ignatius, even though she wasn't a Catholic. She said we would never be sold to the circus—not even to a good circus.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE TOILETS DAY

9

The mother is cleaning the upstairs toilets; as BROTHER GABRIEL enters, MOTHER scurries out into the second-floor corridor, where she bows to FATHER CECIL and FATHER JULIAN—and where PINKY and GANESH are talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

9

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
It's not bad to work for the Jesuits.

PINKY
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
Why?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
They're generally kind and well-
educated. They take vows of poverty,
chastity and obedience—these aren't
easy things to accept.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, COURTYARD CORRIDOR DAY

10

Different angles of the outdoor corridor with the light from the courtyard filtering in: the statue of the Virgin Mary stands on the serpent with an apple in its mouth; the photos of the Pope, and of Nehru as a young man; the bust of Christ (next to the fire-extinguisher); the portraits of students past—their Examination Certificates.

GANESH (V.O.)
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
St. Ignatius is many things: a mission,
a church, a school, a nice place to hide
from the rest of Bombay....

PINKY (V.O.)
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
Do you think Acid Man can get us here?

GANESH (V.O.)
(Hindi....)
Never.

Cut to: the staircase at the end of the corridor. Ganesh's empty wheelchair is parked at the foot of the stairs.

GANESH (V.O.)
(English, the
grandfather's voice)
I wasn't allowed to beg at St. Ignatius,
so I didn't really need my wheelchair.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, ICON COLLECTION ROOM DAY

11

BROTHER GABRIEL, who is slightly deaf, shows GANESH and PINKY the Russian and Byzantine icons. GANESH limps. GANESH stares at the gruesome depictions as BROTHER GABRIEL leads him to the next, and then the next. PINKY is appalled.

BROTHER GABRIEL

(Spanish accent)

"The Decapitation of John the Baptist,
15th Century Northern School."

GANESH

(reads in English)

"Our Lady of the...."

BROTHER GABRIEL

"Our Lady of the Way, 18th Century
Russian School."

BROTHER GABRIEL points to the next; GANESH tries to read the description—his spoken English (as a boy) is not as proficient as his grandfatherly Voice Over.

GANESH

"Adoration of the Maggy...."

BROTHER GABRIEL

The Magi!

GANESH

"16th Century Uk—"

BROTHER GABRIEL

Ukrainian School.

Camera closes in on GANESH and PINKY staring at the next: a 16th Century Transfiguration, Byzantine School. He can't say it.

PINKY

(Hindi with English
subtitles)

What are you doing?

GANESH

(Hindi with English
subtitles)

Learning English.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE COURTYARD DAY

12

The bells at the close of school; the boys in their white shirts and dark ties run to the buses, or to the cars of their parents. GANESH and PINKY stand in the shade of an archway, conspicuous among these upper-class children.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

12

Two priests, on either side of the mother, are approaching; BROTHER GABRIEL follows with the empty wheelchair. The Father Rector (JULIAN) is English; he speaks to FATHER CECIL, who is Indian and in turn speaks Hindi to MOTHER.

FATHER JULIAN

Tell her, some of the boys at St. Ignatius are charity cases, but if we admit a sweeper's son, every sweeper at the mission will be sending us their children. Tell her, we can do nothing for the girl because we are an all-boys school. But, in our spare time, we will do what we can—and of course they are welcome to attend Mass.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH EVENING

13

The children sit bewildered at Mass with MOTHER, who is bewildered, too, but she is trying to imitate the Christians. PINKY and GANESH exchange a deeply suspicious look. They are not taking part.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

What is Mother doing?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Becoming a Christian.

PINKY

(Hindi....)

Aren't we Hindus?

GANESH

(Hindi....)

Don't worry—we're staying Hindus.

EXT. BOMBAY SLUM ON SOPHIA ZUBER ROAD MORNING

14

Over a crude wood fire, PINKY is cooking parathas on a blackened pan; MOTHER is boiling tea and milk. GANESH is watching the scrawny old man with the cart piled high with his belongings—he is still looking for a place to live.

Pull back: towering over their campsite is a huge wall, on which a tattered movie poster reveals a giant likeness of a movie star—a lurid poster-portrait of the Bombay cinema (c. 1950).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

14

Another angle: burnt cooking oil remains in the pan and PINKY throws this in the movie star's giant face.

EXT. BOMBAY SLUM ON SOPHIA ZUBER ROAD NIGHT

15

On the ground, or in their crude shelters, most of the slum residents are asleep. But GANESH and PINKY are costuming themselves, dressing up their beggars' rags with bright strips of cloth—GANESH wears an orange headband.

The mother is asleep; both children bow and touch her feet. GANESH climbs into his wheelchair. There is a kind of running board where PINKY can stand; she can either ride, standing, and let GANESH crank the handle for the only power, or she can push and ride—thus helping GANESH to go faster.

EXT. BOMBAY A PITCH-DARK STREET, ANOTHER SLUM NIGHT

16

GANESH cranks the wheelchair while PINKY rides on the running board; they pass mounds of sleepers on the sidewalks.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was the time of night when we
imagined that everyone was Acid Man.

A frightful-looking thug rushes out of the dark and chases after the wheelchair. GANESH cranks the drive-handle harder and harder as PINKY screams in the thug's face.

EXT. BOMBAY THE GATEWAY OF INDIA NIGHT

17

An Englishman is taking flash pictures of the Gateway of India; his tired wife wants to go to sleep.

ENGLISH WIFE

Wendall! Could we at last go to bed?

WENDALL

It's the Gateway of India!

ENGLISH WIFE

I know perfectly well what it is. It
will be there in the morning!

WENDALL

(flashing away)

It looks splendid at night!

ENGLISH WIFE

I trust it will look rather the same
tomorrow night!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

17

GANESH and PINKY begin to perform; PINKY walks on her hands, GANESH tugs on WENDALL's sleeve—begging.

GANESH (V.O.)
We began with the bird-shit trick.

ENGLISH WIFE
Look what you've attracted—beggars!
You're not supposed to give them
anything.

GANESH
Sahib or Memsahib—Sir or Madam—please
give us one or two rupees. God will
listen to you.

EXT. BOMBAY TAJ MAHAL HOTEL NIGHT

18

Restrict shot to the old Taj—the mayhem of taxis, the confusion of arriving and departing guests, the hustling of porters, the authoritative whistles of the fierce Sikh doormen. WENDALL is taking PINKY's picture.

GANESH (V.O.)
No one at the Taj could take their eyes
off Pinky, so they never saw where the
bird shit came from. No one looks at
cripples.

WENDALL
The girl's rather talented, isn't she?

ENGLISH WIFE
Compared to the boy, do you mean?

The couple is distracted by PINKY. GANESH takes a plastic syringe from the wheelchair—it looks like a turkey baster and is filled with a messy white fluid. Unobserved, he squirts a great gob of this stuff on WENDALL's shoe; with the syringe once more concealed, GANESH points excitedly to WENDALL's shoe. When WENDALL and his wife see the "bird shit," the wife covers her hair with her hands as WENDALL searches the dark sky.

WENDALL
What sort of bird is flying at night?

ENGLISH WIFE
(disgusted)
I wouldn't call that flying!

GANESH wipes off the gob of bird shit with a rag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

18

ENGLISH WIFE

Oh, now you'll have to pay him!

WENDALL hands GANESH a two-rupee note; PINKY looks on. WENDALL hesitates; then he gives PINKY two rupees, too.

ENGLISH WIFE

That's quite enough. Could we please go to bed?

GANESH draws the syringe like a pistol and squirts the woman as she is walking away—a big gob on her calf! She cries out at the feel of it, she shakes her fists at the sky. GANESH tries to wipe it off her stocking, rubbing her calf. WENDALL kneels beside GANESH to get a closer look at the amount of bird shit smeared on his wife's calf; he slips GANESH another two rupees, then he looks up at his wife.

WENDALL

It must be the size of a vulture!

Suddenly a Sikh doorman grabs PINKY; he picks her up and holds her at eye-level while he shouts (in Hindi) in PINKY's face. GANESH wheels up to the Sikh and hits him with an uppercut in the balls. PINKY escapes with GANESH. From his knees, the Sikh weakly blows his whistle.

EXT. BOMBAY MARINE DRIVE DAWN

19

GANESH rests in the wheelchair as PINKY pushes. There seems to be little traffic.

Pull back: stopped in the road ahead, as if waiting for them, is the black Mercedes. PINKY and GANESH approach the car warily. The rear window rolls down, but no one is visible inside; it's just a black hole. As they are about to step off the curb, to approach the Mercedes, a London-style double-decker bus, moving fast, almost hits them. The bus is plastered with the movie poster we have already seen in the slum. When the bus passes, the Mercedes is gone.

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Limo roulette.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

What is "roulette"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

19

GANESH
(Hindi....)
A game of chance—pure luck.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH EVENING

20

Mass in progress—MOTHER is receiving Holy Communion. PINKY watches her from the pew, as if she might be sick. GANESH whispers to PINKY.

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
The bread is supposed to be Christ's
body. The wine is supposed to be his
blood.

PINKY
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
Aren't we vegetarians?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
Don't worry—we're staying vegetarians.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY

21

Workmen are moving a huge statue of the Virgin Mary into the church; they have a dolly and a winch to help them, but they appear inept in handling both. The Holy Mother has a chain around her neck. The workmen argue with each other.

GANESH (V.O.)
Mother was particularly impressed by
the Virgin Mary.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY

22

The mother is sweeping the church; each time she passes an aisle leading to the altar, she pauses to genuflect. The sounds of the workmen arguing (Hindi) carry Over.

GANESH (V.O.)
She told Pinky and me that she
experienced at least one vision of the
Blessed Virgin every day. St. Ignatius
intended to promote her.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY 23

The workmen struggle with the giant statue of Mary; they lose control of it, and it topples headfirst inside the church.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY 24

The workmen mill around the fallen Virgin Mary, all blaming each other. The priests, both FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL, push their way through the workmen and fall to their knees beside the body of the mother pinned under the statue of Mary; FATHER JULIAN anoints MOTHER's forehead with oil (Extreme Unction).

FATHER JULIAN

"Through this holy anointing and His most loving mercy, may the Lord assist you by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that freed from your sins, He may save you and in His goodness raise you up."

PINKY picks up the statue's nose from the floor of the church and hands it to GANESH; he puts it in his pocket.

GANESH (V.O.)

Not every new Christian is killed by the Blessed Virgin. But was this an honor or a curse?

EXT. BOMBAY MARINE DRIVE, ARABIAN SEA EVENING 25

At the steps, framed by the pillars, descending into the sea: GANESH is solemnly scattering ashes in the ankle-deep water. PINKY is crying inconsolably.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

What do you mean, they aren't Mother's ashes?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

She was a Catholic—Catholics can't be cremated.

PINKY

(Hindi....)

What will the Catholics do to her?

GANESH

(Hindi....)

I don't know—we're doing this, anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

25

PINKY
(Hindi....)
Maybe the Catholics will eat her!

GANESH
(Hindi....)
Don't be crazy.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
They eat Christ's body—they drink his
blood!

GANESH
(Hindi....)
It isn't his real body—it's not real
blood.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
But whose ashes are you scattering?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
I burned Mother's clothes—these are
her clothes. They are almost her.

He throws something in the water that splashes.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
What was that?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
The Virgin Mary's nose.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, RECTOR'S OFFICE DAY

26

GANESH and PINKY sit together in one chair as FATHER JULIAN
paces back and forth—FATHER CECIL whispering to him, BROTHER
GABRIEL only partially hearing.

FATHER CECIL
We could mention their situation at the
parish meetings.

FATHER JULIAN
I hardly think the Meeting of Liturgical
Readers would be appropriate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

26

FATHER CECIL

We could make them the topic of the Adult Catholic Education Programme.

FATHER JULIAN

Not this month. The topic is "The Christian Today in the World of Non-Christian Religions."

BROTHER GABRIEL

But they're orphans! Someone has to take care of them!

FATHER JULIAN

I dare say that the other sweepers at St. Ignatius will start killing themselves if they think that the mission will adopt their children!

FATHER CECIL

Well, surely, they are our responsibility until another means of supporting them can be found.

BROTHER GABRIEL

May I remind us of one of the Holy Father's Intentions? "That Christians give an ever more authentic witness of support for the needy and fidelity to the poverty of the Gospels."

FATHER JULIAN

(sarcastically)

Thank you for reminding us.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, COURTYARD CORRIDOR DAY

27

An out-of-tune piano is playing Over, with children's voices trying to sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." PINKY and GANESH are peering into various classrooms off the corridor.

They peer into the Music Parlour where an Indian woman is playing the piano and teaching the Indian children English by leading them (in a desultory fashion) through "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." The woman playing the piano gives a most unfriendly glare to PINKY and GANESH in the doorway; she makes them move on. This is our first look at the bosomy MISS TANUJA.

PINKY and GANESH bump into a bewildered-looking American. MR. MARTIN is in his late thirties or early forties. He looks lost, and he is struggling with his luggage; he has trouble seeing the children clearly until he puts on his glasses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. MARTIN

Oh, excuse me.

GANESH takes him for a tourist and nails his suitcase with the bird-shit syringe.

Another angle: MR. MARTIN notices the bird shit on his suitcase. As GANESH wipes off the bird shit, the hapless missionary searches the sky—he offers no tip.

MR. MARTIN

Would you know where the Father Rector's office is? I'm looking for Father Julian or Father Cecil.

GANESH

What do you want with them?

MR. MARTIN

I'm the new missionary—the new teacher.

MR. MARTIN offers a handshake; only PINKY accepts.

MR. MARTIN

My name is Martin.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Is he an American? He sounds like an American!

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Calm down. Of course he's an American.
(in English to Mr. Martin)

She noticed you were an American.

MR. MARTIN

I'm from Boston, actually.

GANESH

Father Martin?

MR. MARTIN

(laughing)

No, no—not yet! I have taken my vows, but I won't be a priest for a few years. I'm what we call a scholastic. I just got up the nerve rather late in life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

27

GANESH
Brother Martin?

MR. MARTIN
 (laughs again)
 No, no—I'm not a brother.

GANESH
Mister Martin?

MR. MARTIN
 Just Martin. Is this the way?

PINKY, admiringly, holds MR. MARTIN's hand. GANESH, limping, holds out his hand—still no tip!

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 I dreamed that an American took us to
 the circus—to the good circus.

GANESH
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 You and your dreams.

MR. MARTIN
 What did she say?

GANESH
 She wants to show you who killed our
 mother.

MR. MARTIN
 (he stops walking)
 Your mother was killed! When?

GANESH
 Yesterday.

MR. MARTIN
Yesterday! Where?

GANESH
 Here.

MR. MARTIN
Here! How?

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 What's he so excited about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

27

GANESH
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 He wants us to show him who killed
 Mother.

PINKY
 (Hindi....)
 I like this guy.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY

28

The statue of the Virgin Mary (her nose is missing) stares down
 at PINKY and GANESH with MR. MARTIN.

GANESH
 She did it.

GANESH and PINKY act out (pantomime) how the statue fell and
 crushed their mother. MR. MARTIN is appalled. PINKY says
 something in Hindi while pulling her nose.

MR. MARTIN
 What did she say?

GANESH
 She said that Mother had just become
 a Christian.

PINKY speaks again; GANESH translates.

GANESH
 "A lot of good it did her."

BROTHER GABRIEL enters the church.

BROTHER GABRIEL
 Ah—there you are! The Father Rector has
 been expecting you.

MR. MARTIN
 I was just hearing about their poor
 mother. Is there a father?

BROTHER GABRIEL shakes his head.

MR. MARTIN
 They're orphans!

BROTHER GABRIEL
 Well, yes—we are temporarily looking
 after them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

28

MR. MARTIN
Temporarily! But do they live here?

BROTHER GABRIEL
 Well, no—that hasn't been discussed.
 They're quite comfortable where they
 are, really.

MR. MARTIN
 (to Ganesh)
 Where do you live?

GANESH
 In a slum.

MR. MARTIN
 A slum!

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 It's a good slum!

MR. MARTIN
 What did she say?

GANESH
 Pinky is terrified of the slum.

BROTHER GABRIEL
 I thought she liked the slum. I thought
 you both liked it!

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 I love our slum!

MR. MARTIN looks to GANESH for the translation. BROTHER GABRIEL
 hasn't heard PINKY.

GANESH
 "A slum is a slum."

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 What are you saying? What are you doing?

GANESH
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 If you like this guy, let's see what
 he can do for us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

28

PINKY smiles innocently at BROTHER GABRIEL and MR. MARTIN.

EXT. BOMBAY YWCA, COOPERAGE ROAD EVENING

29

Entering the building, MR. MARTIN is marched along by the unfriendly teacher we've seen earlier, MISS TANUJA; many overdressed ladies flock around them. Tonight MR. MARTIN wears a black suit and a clerical collar.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pinky's and my least favorite person at St. Ignatius was Miss Tanuja, who dragged poor Mr. Martin to the Young Women's Christian Association, where she was a most active member of the Catholic and Anglican Community for Christian Unity, the so-called Hope Alive Committee—whatever that means.

MR. MARTIN

Your English is very good. Where did you learn your English?

MISS TANUJA

At the Alexandria Girls' English Institution.

MR. MARTIN

You're Egyptian?

MISS TANUJA

(insulted)

Goodness, no! I'm from Bombay!

MR. MARTIN

(confused)

But you went to school in Alexandria? Alexandria is in Egypt—isn't it?

MISS TANUJA

The Alexandria Girls' English Institution is in Bombay.

MR. MARTIN

Oh! I see. It must be a popular name.

MISS TANUJA

(confused)

What name?

MR. MARTIN

Alexandria!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

29

MISS TANUJA

Certainly not! I don't know anyone by that name!

MR. MARTIN

Oh! Well ... neither do I!

MISS TANUJA is totally flustered, but attracted to him.

INT. BOMBAY YWCA, LECTURE HALL EVENING

30

MR. MARTIN addresses a room full of adoring women.

MR. MARTIN

(reading his lecture)

To the Jews at that time, death by crucifixion was thought to be the most humiliating form of death imaginable. And to the pagan Romans, crucifixion was simply the most painful form of execution they could imagine.

MR. MARTIN has a dry throat; he pauses to drink water.

MR. MARTIN

What we must remember is that Christ chose to be crucified. He chose the greatest humiliation and the greatest pain imaginable because he wanted to show his love for us in the extreme.

Something catches in MR. MARTIN's throat and he starts to cough; he swallowed the water the wrong way. MISS TANUJA beats him on his back, knocking him to his knees.

EXT. BOMBAY SLUM ON SOPHIA ZUBER ROAD DAWN

31

MR. MARTIN, in casual dress, stands shocked at the kids' campsite in the waking slum. Small cooking fires smoulder around them.

MR. MARTIN

You spent the night here?

GANESH

We spend every night here.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

We spend every night begging at the Taj!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

31

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)

Don't tell him that. He probably
doesn't like begging. Don't you know
how to look unhappy? Look frightened,
or something.

PINKY just smiles at MR. MARTIN.

MR. MARTIN
What did she say?

GANESH
She's so terrified all the time—all
she can do is smile. Look at her
grinning like an idiot!

PINKY, beaming, offers MR. MARTIN some tea.

GANESH
The water is boiled.
(Martin drinks)
But I don't know where it came from.

MR. MARTIN's mouth is full of tea, but he doesn't swallow.

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
Where did you get the water?

PINKY
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
From St. Ignatius Church—it's holy
water.

GANESH gestures to the surrounding slum.

GANESH
She says she found it in a puddle.

MR. MARTIN holds the tea in his mouth, not swallowing.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, MUSIC PARLOUR DAY

32

MR. MARTIN is playing the now-in-tune piano and singing a
stirring version of "The Church's One Foundation," leading the
suddenly enthusiastic boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

32

Pan to the doorway where an impressed FATHER CECIL and FATHER JULIAN are observing the new teacher. MR. MARTIN suddenly switches into another gear—a raucous, rollicking rendition of Foster's "Camptown Races." As MR. MARTIN turns into a wild man at the piano in a honky-tonk bar, FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL exchange an anxious look.

EXT. BOMBAY SLUM ON SOPHIA ZUBER ROAD EVENING

33

MR. MARTIN is packing up the children's belongings from their campsite in the slum; he is loading the wheelchair as if it were a shopping cart—PINKY is helping him, but GANESH sulks. Several vagrants are contending for the opportunity to seize their shelter as soon as they move out—including the scrawny old man with all his worldly goods on the cart.

MR. MARTIN

Oh, stop sulking—this is the first time your wheelchair has been put to some practical use. You're not the only cripple in Bombay. It's ridiculous to be ashamed of a little limp!

GANESH

It's a big limp!

MR. MARTIN

Well, I'm sure it was a big elephant that stepped on you. That's no excuse to spend the rest of your life hot-rod-ding around in a wheelchair. And you've never once seen a doctor! How do you know that your foot can't be fixed?

GANESH

No one can fix what elephants do.

The wheelchair is piled high; MR. MARTIN is pushing it away, but the children linger. PINKY says something in Hindi.

MR. MARTIN

Now what's the matter? What did she say?

GANESH

She says we shouldn't leave home without saying our prayers.

MR. MARTIN

Very sensible.

Another angle: PINKY and GANESH are singing a prayer-song and clapping their hands as they follow MR. MARTIN out of the slum—GANESH limping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

33

None of them notice the old man throwing another fit; this time a swarm of Muslim women, all in black, has beaten him to the hut of rags. The poster of the movie star is badly torn.

INT. BOMBAY CHILDREN'S CUBICLE AT ST. IGNATIUS MORNING

34

Camera pans cubicle, beginning with the crucifix between the two cots—as the handclapping from Pinky's and Ganesh's prayer-song continues Over. Camera comes to PINKY and GANESH clapping their hands and singing; they're praying to a homemade "temple" at the foot of their cots. They ignore FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL and BROTHER GABRIEL, who are removing books from the shelves of the former rare books room.

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin did not insist that Pinky and I stop begging, but he disapproved. He did insist that we move into a small cubicle, formerly for rare books, at St. Ignatius. Some aspects of our slum were more comfortable.

Another angle: MR. MARTIN enters the cubicle, waving The Times of India as a greeting. GANESH and MR. MARTIN begin to study the newspaper. MR. MARTIN points to an article.

MR. MARTIN

Begin with this one.

GANESH

(reads aloud)

"Ernakulam district in Kerala is striving to become the country's first district to achieve total literacy."

MR. MARTIN

Define "literacy."

GANESH

Doing this—what we're doing.

PINKY isn't interested; she does push-ups instead.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, RECTOR'S OFFICE DAY

35

BROTHER GABRIEL sits smiling in the office, watching the heated exchange between FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL and MR. MARTIN.

FATHER JULIAN

No, Martin. The issue of Pinky's education cannot be discussed because Pinky is a girl!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER CECIL

It really is counterproductive, Martin,
to discuss Pinky.

MR. MARTIN

And the boy?

FATHER JULIAN

You're doing very well with the boy.

MR. MARTIN

In my spare time.

FATHER JULIAN

Your spare time will have to do!

MR. MARTIN

A complete education would serve him
better than my spare time!

FATHER JULIAN

A complete education! Are we suddenly
responsible for a complete education?

FATHER CECIL

It's doubtful, Martin, that Ganesh could
make much use of a complete education.

FATHER JULIAN

Oh, Martin doesn't want us to be a
legitimate school—he wants us to
educate everybody!

There is a sudden knock on the door of the Father Rector's office; BROTHER GABRIEL jumps up to open the door, stopping the argument. Everyone stares at PINKY and GANESH in the open doorway. BROTHER GABRIEL welcomes the children inside; the others resume their argument, much more guardedly.

MR. MARTIN

(in a rising whisper)

I'm giving a talk at the Catholic
Charismatic Information Centre—on the
topic of "The Charismatic Renewal."

Priests aren't sure where MR. MARTIN's argument is headed.

MR. MARTIN

(heating up)

May I be forgiven if I feel a little
foolish for such a topic?

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

35

MR. MARTIN (Cont'd)

I mean, I'm supposed to address the issue of ecstatic religious experiences—speaking in tongues and spontaneous healing!—when our mission either cannot or will not take responsibility for these orphans!

FATHER JULIAN

(whispers harshly)

We are taking responsibility for them!

FATHER CECIL

(the peacemaker)

He means we're not taking enough responsibility for them.

FATHER JULIAN

(sputtering)

He'd have us feeding hot lunches to every child in Bombay!

MR. MARTIN

(hissing)

Father Rector, I'm saying we must be responsible for these children. If we put them in a shelter for homeless children, we'll never see them!

Camera closes on BROTHER GABRIEL, rocking PINKY in his lap—and with his hand on GANESH's shoulder. BROTHER GABRIEL is praying in a sing-song little voice, as a means of interfering with the children's ability to overhear this discussion.

BROTHER GABRIEL

"Keep us, Lord, as the apple of Your eye. Shelter us under the shadow of Your wings. Protect us while we are awake; O Lord, guard us while we sleep."

MR. MARTIN

Surely the responsibility that St. Ignatius bears for these children is greater than anyone's "spare time!" Surely the legal opinion would be that the mission owes them at least the equivalent of their mother's salary!

FATHER CECIL

I think it would be disloyal of you, Martin, to adopt a legal position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

35

FATHER JULIAN

It shouldn't be necessary for us to
remind you of your vows.

FATHERS JULIAN & CECIL

(in chorus)

Poverty, chastity, obedience....

FATHER JULIAN

I think, Martin, that your grasp of
theology is more sound than your sense
of obedience.

Throughout, BROTHER GABRIEL repeats and repeats his prayer.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, SCHOOL DINING HALL DAY

36

The well-fed schoolboys are wolfing down their lunch.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, KITCHEN DAY

37

PINKY and GANESH are eating in the kitchen with the cook's
helpers and the sweepers. MR. MARTIN is eating with them.

MR. MARTIN

It's the same food that the schoolboys
eat—don't you like it?

(kids eat dejectedly)

If you ate in the dining hall, with all
the schoolboys, they would be staring
at you. Would you like that?

(kids continue to sulk)

Well, this is the best I could do!

PINKY says something in Hindi.

MR. MARTIN

What did Pinky say?

GANESH

She thinks you're going to get in
trouble for eating with us.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE TOILETS NIGHT

38

FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL are peeing side-by-side in the
urinals as the toilet in the stall flushes loudly and PINKY
emerges; she walks casually past them, out the door. Priests
conceal themselves as best they can.

INT. BOMBAY HOSPITAL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN DAY 39

MR. MARTIN takes PINKY and GANESH through a waiting room of the hospital; other crippled children observe GANESH's limp.

INT. BOMBAY HOSPITAL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN DAY 40

In the examining room, PINKY handles everything. GANESH and MR. MARTIN are examining X-rays of GANESH's crippled foot as DR. DARUWALLA points to the foot itself and then to corresponding parts of the X-rays. DR. DARUWALLA is an elegant gentleman in his late fifties; he's exasperated that PINKY is touching his instruments.

DR. DARUWALLA

We're talking about an elephant—and this was an infant's foot at the time the elephant stepped on it. This could never be a normal foot. He'll always be a cripple. He's lucky the elephant didn't step on his head!

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

What did he say about the elephant?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

The elephant tried to step on my head. It missed—it got my foot instead.

CONRAD enters, carrying a dwarf; he appears confused about where to put the dwarf, since GANESH is on the examining table. DR. DARUWALLA makes GANESH hop off the table so that the handsome young CONRAD can put the dwarf down.

DR. DARUWALLA

Hop! Hop! You think you've got problems. Be glad you're not a dwarf.

CONRAD

(to Mr. Martin)

The incomplete elbow extension is typical—he can't straighten either arm. Not to mention the degenerative arthritis.

DR. DARUWALLA

Martin, this is Conrad—a fellow American. Conrad is my Visiting Medical Student in Orthopedics this year.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

40

CONRAD
(shakes hands)
Hi—I'm doing dwarf research.
Achondroplastic dwarfs comprise the
majority of circus midgets.

MR. MARTIN
Oh, really?

DR. DARUWALLA
I'm sending Conrad to a circus as soon
as I can find him an interpreter.

CONRAD
(very boring)
I'm really as interested in genetics
as I am in orthopedics—achondroplastic
dwarfs are the result of a mutation,
which then becomes a dominant
characteristic in their children. No
one has found a genetic marker for this
characteristic. My professor of
genetics at Dartmouth—I've got two more
years to go at Dartmouth—has encouraged
me to do blood analysis of achondro-
plastic dwarfs.

MR. MARTIN
I see ... that's fascinating.

DR. DARUWALLA
The problem is, they won't give him any
blood—the only dwarfs he's seen are
terrified of needles!

GANESH and PINKY are bored by this conversation but intrigued
by the silent dwarf; as a way of making friends, PINKY does a
complete back-stretch and handstand on the examining table—the
most outstanding maneuver we've seen her accomplish so far.
DR. DARUWALLA is impressed.

DR. DARUWALLA
Do that again!

MR. MARTIN
She does that kind of thing all the
time—it's all she does, in fact. I
can't get her to read anything.

DR. DARUWALLA
And you're worried about how they will
be taken care of!

DR. DARUWALLA dials a number on the phone.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT DAY

41

Music from the circus plays Over. Camera searches the empty tent, selecting some of Muriel's circus-performance photographs: on the trapeze, with the dogs, and with the birds. Camera stops on the ringing phone, which is on a piano.

DR. DARUWALLA (V.O.)
This child is a natural for the circus!

MR. MARTIN (V.O.)
The circus! They're children—not animals!

Pull back: two dwarfs, SHIVAJI and BEER BELLY, peer into the tent and stare at the ringing phone.

INT. BOMBAY HOSPITAL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN DAY

42

MR. MARTIN struggles with DR. DARUWALLA for the telephone; he forces the doctor to hang up. PINKY and GANESH watch with interest. CONRAD and the dwarf are alarmed.

MR. MARTIN
I thought you were a Christian!

DR. DARUWALLA
I am a Christian. I'm reputed to be an extra-zealous one, too—you know what they say about converts. But I am also an Indian, which you are not, and I assure you that these children would be safer in the circus than they are on the streets of Bombay! St. Ignatius isn't going to keep them forever!

GANESH
How much would the circus pay?

DR. DARUWALLA
For an untrained girl? No money until she's trained, but of course they buy her food and her clothes, and any medicine. After six months, she'll get three rupees a day.

MR. MARTIN
Three rupees a day! She's not for sale!

He looks at PINKY contorting herself into another handstand.

MR. MARTIN
Stop that!

She stops. MR. MARTIN turns to GANESH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

42

MR. MARTIN

You make more than three rupees a day now, don't you?

DR. DARUWALLA

(as Ganesh nods)

Three rupees a day plus three good meals a day, plus a bed to sleep in, and a whole family to look after them!

MR. MARTIN

It's not a family—it's a circus!

DR. DARUWALLA

The circus is a family. Besides—you disapprove of begging!

GANESH

But why would they take me?

MR. MARTIN

Yes! Here you are talking about the buying and selling of children ... what would a circus do with a cripple?

(to Ganesh)

Sorry!

DR. DARUWALLA

(to Mr. Martin)

That's your job—you've got to get them to take Ganesh, too.

GANESH nods. PINKY imitates him.

DR. DARUWALLA

It wouldn't go well for him in Bombay all alone, would it?

GANESH shakes his head. PINKY imitates him.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

What about the circus?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

It's your dream—it's coming true.

CONRAD

(points to Ganesh)

He speaks English! He could be my interpreter!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

42

MR. MARTIN

(to Ganesh)

Now wait a minute—I'm sure it's not easy, convincing dwarfs to give him their blood....

GANESH

I can do it!

CONRAD

Actually, it's almost painless—I don't know why they're so afraid.

DR. DARUWALLA again dials the phone.

MR. MARTIN

Wait a minute!

This time the phone is answered; the others follow DR. DARUWALLA's end of the conversation closely.

DR. DARUWALLA

Hello? Yes, of course it's me! Yes, I've found one for you—a brilliant girl! I mean two, actually. I've found you two!

CONRAD is gesturing crazily, pointing to himself.

DR. DARUWALLA

But you have to take my medical student. Yes, he's the one who draws the dwarfs' blood, but there's a boy who can calm them down. A remarkable boy, yes—no, he's not an acrobat. He was trampled by a herd of elephants—no, not his head! Yes, he can do odd jobs. Any odd job you want—he can do it!

The children smile to each other. MR. MARTIN looks anxious. CONRAD has a nice smile; he shakes hands with GANESH and PINKY. PINKY says something in Hindi.

MR. MARTIN

What did she say?

GANESH

She said her dreams always come true.

INT. BOMBAY CHILDREN'S CUBICLE AT ST. IGNATIUS EVENING

43

GANESH sits on the edge of his cot, doing his leg exercises; PINKY watches with interest. GANESH hangs one leg off the cot; he lifts a crude leg weight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

43

MR. MARTIN keeps looking out the door, expecting someone.

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)

Dr. Daruwalla said that no operation can help me. I am always going to limp. But there are exercises I can do to make the muscles that support my bad foot stronger. I can make my legs so strong that I can use my feet in other ways.

PINKY
(Hindi with English
subtitles)

Wouldn't you rather be just walking?

MR. MARTIN
The car is here!

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE COURTYARD EVENING

44

The black Mercedes is waiting as MR. MARTIN and the children approach; when the rear door opens, the children (thinking of Acid Man) are hesitant until they see the high-heeled shoes and pretty legs of a woman in a glittering dress. The camera moves up her legs to show us all of MURIEL. MR. MARTIN is shy upon meeting her, but the kids bound into the car with enthusiasm. (VINOD is the dwarf driver.)

GANESH (V.O.)
It was the right scout—it was the good circus! It wasn't Acid Man—it was the great-smelling Lady Muriel!

INT. BOMBAY MOVING CAR EVENING

45

In the plush albeit crowded backseat of the Mercedes, MR. MARTIN is constantly thrown off balance and into MURIEL. (VINOD is too short to see over the steering wheel.)

MURIEL
You can probably tell I'm an Anglican just by looking at me—I was told not to patronize with you Romans, but I never was prejudiced. My first boyfriend was a mackerel snapper!

MR. MARTIN
Well ... the Church is slow to change—one day, Catholics won't have to eat fish on Fridays.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINOD swerves the car to avoid a collision.

MURIEL

Watch where you're going, Vinod—you little fool!

(to Mr. Martin)

Vinod is remarkable, really—he does it all with hand controls because his feet won't reach the pedals.

MR. MARTIN

That is remarkable!

MURIEL

You don't look at all like a priest—actually, you seem rather normal.

MR. MARTIN

Actually, I'm not a priest yet—I'm a few years away from being ordained, although I've taken my vows.

MURIEL

You're in training for it, you mean? You're just sort of practicing chastity and the whole bit?

MR. MARTIN

Sort of.

MURIEL

That's rather interesting when you think about it—I mean, a man your age, turning to the priesthood. Did you get a late start in the religion, or was there some personal tragedy in your previous life? Doubtless you were in love with the woman of your dreams, and then she croaked—was that it? Keep your bloody little eyes on the road, Vinod! You damn dwarf.

MURIEL turns her attention to GANESH.

MURIEL

So, you're the cripple—that'll teach you to muck about with an elephant, won't it?

GANESH

Yes, Lady Muriel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURIEL

I'm no lady, dear boy—just Muriel, please.

MURIEL turns her attention to PINKY.

MURIEL

And you're the star, aren't you?

PINKY just smiles; MURIEL turns her attention to MR. MARTIN.

MURIEL

In my experience, the real stars never talk much—that's probably why I never shut up. If I were quiet, it would be overwhelming to be confronted with my own failures.

MURIEL suddenly takes his face in both her hands.

MURIEL

Bless me, this isn't a priest's face! I don't mean to pry into your love life—I mean, your past love life, if you even had a love life. It's just that men who've taken vows of chastity make me so nervous I can't stop talking to them. Vinod! You miserable midget!

MR. MARTIN and MURIEL are thrown into each other; he momentarily loses his glasses—they're in her cleavage.

MR. MARTIN

I hope you understand, I need to be very sure of the terms under which these children are cared for—both these children. I understand that the boy has no acrobatic potential, but however menial his work is, I want him to continue to study English—he has a gift for the language, just as Pinky has a physical gift. He learns by imitation, just as she learns, and it matters to me that he continue some form of education in the language—even if it's just The Times of India.

MURIEL

I don't suppose you want him learning my dreadful accent.

MR. MARTIN

You have a very nice accent..

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

45

MURIEL

Thank you for saying so. Now I remember! One summer I almost made it with a young priest I met on the Southend Pier.

MR. MARTIN

Really? Well ... I'll send you books for the boy. He's very bright. He'll get bored with the newspaper..

MURIEL

He'll get bored with that young Yank, I'll tell you—that medical student who wants to bleed the dwarfs dry! Have you met him?

MR. MARTIN

Yes—Conrad! He's not dangerous, is he?

MURIEL

It's only dangerous to have a conversation with him—he'll bore you to death! All he talks about is dwarf blood and dwarf joint-pain and dwarf-syndrome this and that....

MR. MARTIN

Oh, I don't know about this—the mission, I'm sure, will take a dim view of this kind of transaction.

MURIEL

Don't be so sure—it's two less mouths for them to feed, right?

MR. MARTIN

Oh, well ... and how is it that you know Dr. Daruwalla?

MURIEL

(hiking up her dress
to show him the scar)

He fixed my hip! A neat job—it came clean out of the socket! Of course I'm not an acrobat anymore, but I used to do some stunts that would pull your pants off! Vinod!

MR. MARTIN is thrown into her again.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, AUDIENCE AREA NIGHT 46

The first row: GANESH in MR. MARTIN's lap, PINKY in MURIEL's.

Another angle: as the Grand Entry music erupts, the elephants in their scarlet hoods and capes lope into the ring. Horses, chimps and acrobats follow the elephants around the ring.

GANESH (V.O.)

At first I thought that I would surely be stepped on again—if not trampled to death. But Pinky was unafraid.

Cut to: PINKY's serene face—she looks so confident.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pinky had seen where she belonged.

The lights turn green against PINKY's face as Lakshmi's Plastic Lady act begins.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT 47

The contortionist LAKSHMI does her "boneless" item as the lighting on her changes from green to gold. Intercut views of LAKSHMI with PINKY's observant face in closeup. PINKY says something in Hindi.

MR. MARTIN

What did Pinky say?

GANESH

She says this isn't hard—this is easy.

MR. MARTIN

It's not easy!

GANESH

She says she could learn to do it in about two days.

LAKSHMI stands on one hand.

MURIEL

Three days for that bit, love.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT 48

SUMI is leading some child acrobats through the Unicycle act. PRATAP is assisting her with the smaller children.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURIEL

(to Mr. Martin)

Pratap and Sumi train all the children. And they feed them and take care of them—they'll train Pinky and take care of her, too. They're like a tireless mother and father, only better—they won't beat her.

MR. MARTIN

(after Pinky has spoken)

Let me guess: she says she could learn this in one day.

GANESH

Half a day—easy.

MURIEL

Already talking like a star!

As SUMI and the children exit and the Load Cycle item begins, the camera singles out SWEETIE, standing disdainfully in the wing; she's a stunning young woman. Although PRATAP and SUMI are helping the children gather up their unicycles, SWEETIE offers no assistance. She just waits, proud and bored.

MURIEL

Now that's what a star does—absolutely nothing! Be careful you don't end up like her!

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

She's beautiful!

MURIEL

(to Mr. Martin)

She's a spoiled bitch. That's Sweetie—she's Pratap's and Sumi's daughter, their only child. Sweetie's not a good argument in favor of only children—if she were my daughter, I'd drop her off a trapeze!

The camera intercuts SWEETIE smiling cynically at the monotony of the Load Cycle item—a bicycle act.

MURIEL (V.O.)

Sweetie thinks she's too good for the circus. She's too good for unicycles, anyway. Once she fell off a unicycle and split her precious lip.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

48

MURIEL (Cont'd)

She made her poor father and mother send her to university—for five years! And she never got back on a bloody unicycle. Now she intends to marry a doctor—only she hasn't met him yet. She's got a fat chance of meeting him here! Not just any doctor will do for her either—it's got to be a doctor who lives abroad, she says. Sweetie thinks she's too good for India!

Another angle: the dwarf clowns are assembling in the wing; when one of them stands too close to SWEETIE, she whacks him on the head and he runs away.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

49

PRATAP the lion-tamer is putting the lions through their paces. PINKY's Hindi continues.

MR. MARTIN

Let me guess: she says lions are easy.

GANESH

She says lions are death—they are instant death.

A closeup of PINKY's serious little face: she speaks.

GANESH

She says that if she were a star of the circus, she would be sure to make friends with the lions.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

50

As PINKY and GANESH stop speaking Hindi, SWEETIE enters the ring in the spotlight and climbs the rope to the high trapeze. PINKY stares at SWEETIE preparing to skywalk.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pinky was sure. The circus was the only life for her. Pinky didn't care if Sweetie was a snob. Sweetie was a star. No one else could do the Skywalk—and Sweetie did it without a net. So what if Sweetie refused to get back on a unicycle? Sweetie could walk on the sky.

As SWEETIE skywalks, MR. MARTIN can't look.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

51

The darkness is speckled with light from the open tents as the camera moves along this avenue, allowing us to glimpse the life inside the tents—a dwarf is removing his makeup; the trapeze artists are being rubbed-down. The roustabouts are dusting off the elephants in a pen. Passing their dark cages, we hear the cough or grunt of a lion, we see a face pressed against the bars or a paw flicking out of a cage. We come upon PINKY and GANESH, walking with MURIEL and MR. MARTIN.

MR. MARTIN

You should be asking yourself, Ganesh: What would my role in the circus be, what would I really be doing with myself? You won't be taking the blood from dwarfs every minute. And, I assure you, you won't be standing on your head on a charging elephant....

MR. MARTIN steps in something, almost falls—MURIEL catches him.

MURIEL

Watch where you're stepping—oh, no! You'll have to pitch those shoes—I'm not having those shoes in my car.

MR. MARTIN

(as he removes shoes)
Merciful God—what is it?

MURIEL

That's elephant shit, love—unfortunately, it's the same color as the ground.

Barefoot, MR. MARTIN can hardly walk; everyone has to help him.

MR. MARTIN

I can't go back to St. Ignatius without my shoes—they're my only shoes!

MURIEL

Don't be such a baby—there's no saving your shoes from elephant shit.

MR. MARTIN hobbles between them toward the waiting car.

MURIEL

Now, Ganesh, you just saw what one of your jobs is going to be.

GANESH

Elephant shit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

51

MURIEL

Smart boy!

MURIEL opens the rear door of the waiting car, but there in the sudden light is ACID MAN, looking especially evil with his rack of small bottles. She quickly slams the door.

MURIEL

Wrong car!

The black Mercedes spins away in the dirt.

MURIEL

You filthy bastard!

MR. MARTIN

What's wrong?

MURIEL

Listen to me, love—where these children are going is safer than where they've been. You just listen to me.

The other black Mercedes pulls up to them; VINOD grins.

EXT. BOMBAY STEPS IN FRONT OF THE MAHALAXMI TEMPLE DAY

52

PINKY and GANESH and MR. MARTIN climb the steps to the place where the worshipers leave their shoes—MR. MARTIN stumbling in his new sandals.

GANESH

Leave your flip-flops here.

MR. MARTIN

(removes sandals)

I was just getting the hang of it.

INT. BOMBAY MAHALAXMI TEMPLE DAY

53

Passing the shining-gold idol of Laxmi, camera follows the children and MR. MARTIN outside the temple to the balcony view of the Arabian Sea.

GANESH

We have a Trinity, too. All creation is in the hands of three gods. First is Brahma, the God of Creation—there is only one temple in all of India to him. The second is Vishnu, the God of Preservation or Existence.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

53

GANESH (Cont'd)

And the third is Shiva, who everyone says is the God of Death and Destruction, but there is no finality—all creation is cyclic. I like to think of Shiva as the God of Change. That is our Trinity: Creation, Existence, Change.

MR. MARTIN

I see.

EXT. BOMBAY STEPS IN FRONT OF THE MAHALAXMI TEMPLE DAY

54

They are leaving: PINKY helping GANESH, who limps badly on stairs. MR. MARTIN is trying to put his new sandals on at the same time he descends the steps.

GANESH

The power of the gods is represented in female form. Durga, for example, is the female form of Shiva—Durga is the Goddess of Destruction.

MR. MARTIN

I thought you said that Shiva was the God of Change.

GANESH

Shiva is also the Destroyer. His female form, Durga, is the Goddess of Destruction.

PINKY speaks in Hindi.

MR. MARTIN

What did she say?

GANESH

Durga is her favorite. Pinky believes that Durga protects her—Durga is the one who looks after her.

MR. MARTIN

The Goddess of Destruction protects her?

GANESH

Right.

MR. MARTIN

I see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

54

MR. MARTIN stumbles putting his sandals on; he falls down the temple stairs, landing by the baskets of cobras belonging to the snake charmers, who all yell at him—the cobras hissing while GANESH and PINKY drag MR. MARTIN away.

MR. MARTIN

Why do they have snakes at a temple?

GANESH

Because Lord Shiva is usually depicted with a cobra around his neck.

MR. MARTIN

I see.

GANESH

You see, that was very Hindu!

MR. MARTIN

(limps like Ganesh)

What was?

GANESH

It's bad that you fell down the stairs, but it's good that the cobras didn't bite you!

MR. MARTIN

(bewildered)

I see.

He limps on, holding both children by the hand. Camera stays on the snake charmers, staring after the clumsy white man.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, RECTOR'S OFFICE DAY

55

FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL sit at a round table with MR. MARTIN while BROTHER GABRIEL serves tea.

FATHER JULIAN

The circus? You want to sell them to a circus?

MR. MARTIN

The circus is a family.

FATHER CECIL

It's a family?

MR. MARTIN

Absolutely ... yes. I think so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

55

FATHER JULIAN
They could be eaten by wild animals! They
could fall from those ... swinging
things!

BROTHER GABRIEL
Trapezes....

FATHER JULIAN
Yes! Trapezes are terribly dangerous!

MR. MARTIN
The boy won't be swinging from anything.
He'll do odd jobs. At least he won't
be begging!

BROTHER GABRIEL
At least the girl won't end up a
prostitute.

MR. MARTIN has never considered this. He looks horrified.

FATHER JULIAN
Better to be eaten by wild animals.

FATHER CECIL
Better to fall off the trapezes.

BROTHER GABRIEL gives MR. MARTIN a congratulatory wink, but MR.
MARTIN does not look confident about his success.

FATHER JULIAN
How much are they paying for them?

BROTHER GABRIEL
They're not paying us—they're paying
them.

FATHER CECIL
(disappointed)
Oh....

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT EVENING

56

As other dwarfs stand nervously in line, CONRAD is attempting
to interview SHIVAJI (the leader of the dwarf clowns). SHIVAJI
stands on a chair while CONRAD measures him. SHIVAJI is on the
lookout for the needle. GANESH translates.

CONRAD
Ask him if he knows why he's a dwarf.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONRAD measures the circumference of SHIVAJI's head while GANESH and SHIVAJI speak Hindi.

GANESH

Shivaji says he's a dwarf because the morning his mother conceived she looked out the window and the first living thing she saw was a dwarf.

CONRAD

His mother and father weren't dwarfs?

CONRAD measures SHIVAJI's arm span, as he would a bird's, while GANESH and SHIVAJI speak Hindi.

GANESH

His mother and father were normal. Shivaji's wife is normal, too—in fact, she's almost beautiful. He says he got to marry her because she was so poor she had no dowry; only a dwarf would marry her.

CONRAD

Interesting ... tell him that if he has children, they will probably be dwarfs. Or does he already have children?

GANESH and SHIVAJI confer.

GANESH

Shivaji and his wife have a child who's a dwarf. That's because the morning his wife conceived, the first living thing she looked at was Shivaji. He says he told her not to look at him when she woke up, but she forgot.

CONRAD

Interesting ... ask him if he knows what a gene is, a dominant gene.

GANESH

I already know he doesn't know.

As CONRAD reaches for a blood-pressure cuff (from his bag), the other dwarfs scatter. SHIVAJI whimpers.

CONRAD

I just want to take his blood pressure.

GANESH

They think it's the needle!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONRAD

No needle—not yet. Just family history, and blood pressure.

SHIVAJI flinches every time CONRAD presses the bulb.

CONRAD

Does he have lower back pain?

GANESH

(after translation)

Yes.

CONRAD

Did he have recurrent ear infections as a child?

GANESH

(after translation)

He says that all dwarfs are half-deaf.

CONRAD

Does he know why he waddles?

GANESH

All dwarfs waddle—he knows that.

CONRAD

It's because his pelvis is tilted.

GANESH

He won't believe you.

SHIVAJI asks something; all dwarfs murmur in approval.

GANESH

He asks: "What do you want with our blood?"

CONRAD

Tell him I'm looking for the secret thing that made him a dwarf.

GANESH

(after translation)

He says it's no secret.

CONRAD

Tell him I'm looking for something in his blood that, if I find it, will help other people not to give birth to dwarfs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

56

GANESH

(after translation)

Why should he help you put an end to
dwarfs?

CONRAD

Tell him it doesn't hurt to give blood.
The needle doesn't hurt.

All the dwarfs laugh. SHIVAJI speaks.

GANESH

He says they will watch you take blood
from yourself first.

CONRAD

Interesting....

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

57

MURIEL is guiding the birds through their stupid bird tricks.

Pull back: in the entry wing, MR. MARTIN is watching as MURIEL finishes with the birds and exits the ring. She is disgusted, but MR. MARTIN is clapping along with the crowd.

MURIEL

Why are you still here? Are you checking
up on me, or what?

MR. MARTIN

No! Well ... I just wanted to thank you
for taking care of the children, and
... uh, wish you good luck in looking
after them.

He spots a feather on the shoulder strap of her singlet and plucks it off her. She slaps the feather out of his hand.

MURIEL

Don't touch the dirty feathers! Those
vile birds are covered with lice!

MR. MARTIN furiously whacks his hand against his pants.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

58

MR. MARTIN stumbles after MURIEL (returning to her tent).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURIEL

Listen, love—I'm not going to be a nursemaid to the little beggars. I'll look after them in my own way. You've given them a chance to make it here—that's all you can give them. You've got to let them be.

MR. MARTIN

I'm really just very grateful for your interest in them.

MURIEL stops at her tent.

MURIEL

What is your interest in them? Isn't it just their souls you're supposed to be interested in?

MR. MARTIN

(irritated)

I'm not as abnormal as you presume. I'm as interested in their lives in this world as you are.

MURIEL

(apologetic)

Oh, I'm sorry—I always shoot my mouth off. You don't seem so abnormal to me.

(suddenly flirtatious)

Ah, why don't you have a look inside my tent ... at my memorabilia, I mean!

MR. MARTIN

(reserved)

No, thank you. I have to be getting back to the mission—before I step in more elephant shit.

MURIEL

(as he's leaving)

So ... is that what I am? Am I just more elephant shit to you? Is that it?

(hollering after him;

what she says makes
him wince)

Now you are acting abnormal ... so go on and be a bloody priest then!

(to herself)

He must masturbate like a chimpanzee, I suppose....

She storms inside her tent.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING DAY

59

The little girls are practicing the Table item. PRATAP stands by to catch PINKY if she falls. PINKY is lifted to the top of a pyramid of girls.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING DAY

60

SUMI is instructing a number of younger girls how to descend from the top of the tent by means of the dental trapeze. The focus is chiefly on PINKY paying close attention to SUMI, but the ladderlike device for skywalking is stretched across the top of the tent and PINKY keeps gazing up at it.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

61

SWEETIE is beautifully dressed; MURIEL, like a jealous older sister, is walking behind SWEETIE. MURIEL is imitating the exaggerated sway of SWEETIE's hips. A dwarf flees past them, ducks under a tent flap—with CONRAD and GANESH in pursuit.

CONRAD

Tell him it's only an interview!

GANESH shouts in Hindi as CONRAD peers into the tent; two very offended young women from the Load Cycle troupe push him out.

CONRAD

(as Ganesh translates)

Oh, I'm sorry—excuse me. I was just looking for a dwarf.

MURIEL prods CONRAD to meet SWEETIE.

MURIEL

Conrad, have you met our star? Sweetie is our very best acrobat, and a very well-educated, unmarried woman.

CONRAD

(extremely shy)

It's nice to meet you—I'm a great admirer, although I've never been very athletic myself....

SWEETIE is disdainful of anyone chasing after a dwarf, but she's quite surprised to see a handsome young American at the circus.

The dwarf flees from the Load Cycle troupe's tent, with GANESH screaming in Hindi after him; CONRAD is clearly distracted—torn between the escaping dwarf and the beautiful SWEETIE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

61

MURIEL
 (to Sweetie)
 Conrad is going to be a doctor—is it
 just two more years of medical school
 that you have left, love?

CONRAD
 (looking for dwarf)
 Yes, I've had the pre-clinical
 courses—I've still got the clinical
 years ahead of me, just two....

MURIEL
 (embarrassing Sweetie)
 Just two years—then he's a doctor!

As the dwarf races past them, with GANESH hollering in pursuit,
 CONRAD takes up the chase.

CONRAD
 Uh, excuse me—it was nice to meet you.
 Stop! Stop him! There's no needle—I have
 no needle!

To SWEETIE's shame, MURIEL hollers after CONRAD.

MURIEL
 She's not only unmarried, you miserable
 moron—she's reputed to be a virgin!
 (to Sweetie)
 Aren't you, darling?

SWEETIE is furious. CONRAD pursues dwarf.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ENTRY WING DAY

62

GANESH (as a roustabout) stands poised with his wheelbarrow and
 shovel. Music from the Elephant act plays Over.

Another angle: the elephants performing in the main ring. As
 one of the elephants balances on a stool, it takes a huge shit.

GANESH (V.O.)
 You must believe that every new thing
 you learn is for a higher purpose.

Cut back to GANESH: an older roustabout whacks him on top of
 his head. This sends him limping into the ring with his
 wheelbarrow and his shovel.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

63

In medium closeup: as a lion mounts the stool for the Lion act, it pisses all over the stool and stamps its feet in the puddle.

Cut back to GANESH watching the lion piss.

GANESH (V.O.)

What would life be like without learning new things?

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION CAGES MORNING

64

With a bucket of soapy water, GANESH is scrubbing a lion's stool clean; a stack of such stools stands nearby, awaiting him.

GANESH (V.O.)

Lion piss is worse than elephant shit. This is because elephants are vegetarians and lions eat meat.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH MORNING

65

MR. MARTIN is kneeling at Mass; he notices two beautiful, flirtatious girls in the pew beside him—on either side of an Indian lady who appears to be their mother.

GANESH (V.O.)

Meanwhile, poor Mr. Martin had run into some difficulty in attempting to bring the Christian message from St. Ignatius into the real life of Bombay.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH MORNING

66

After Mass: MR. MARTIN smiles and nods hello/good-bye to the two beautiful girls, who smile and nod to him in return; the Indian lady also nods and returns MR. MARTIN's smile. As the women depart, BROTHER GABRIEL speaks to MR. MARTIN.

BROTHER GABRIEL

It's too bad they're prostitutes—otherwise, they're pretty good Catholics.

MR. MARTIN

They're prostitutes?

BROTHER GABRIEL

The old lady is the madam of a brothel in Kamathipura.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

66

BROTHER GABRIEL (Cont'd)
 But I suppose it's commendable that she
 tries to convert as many of her girls
 to Christianity as she can.

MR. MARTIN
 Prostitutes! Actual prostitutes?

INT. BOMBAY TAXI EN ROUTE TO KAMATHIPURA AFTERNOON

67

DR. DARUWALLA rides in the careening taxi with MR. MARTIN; in
 Hindi, DR. DARUWALLA gives instructions to the taxi driver.

DR. DARUWALLA
 I think this is very ill-advised. You
 can't stop prostitution in India. It's
 a way of life—a better way of life than
 many of these poor girls have had.

MR. MARTIN
 How can you say that? As a Christian or
 as a doctor?

DR. DARUWALLA
 Martin, I'm an orthopedic surgeon—I
 really don't think these prostitutes
 are going to listen to me.

EXT. BOMBAY BROTHEL IN KAMATHIPURA AFTERNOON

68

DR. DARUWALLA and MR. MARTIN enter the brothel.

MR. MARTIN
 It was in Rome where St. Ignatius Loyola
 said that he would sacrifice his life
 if he could prevent the sins of a single
 prostitute on a single night.

DR. DARUWALLA
 Bombay isn't Rome. St. Ignatius never
 came here.

DR. DARUWALLA speaks in Hindi to the prostitutes, who are
 unresponsive and increasingly hostile.

MR. MARTIN
 Ask for the Christians—the madam and
 at least two of the girls are
 Christians. I don't see them.

DR. DARUWALLA
 I am asking for the Christians!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

68

DR. DARUWALLA talks to the whores in Hindi.

INT. BOMBAY BROTHEL IN KAMATHIPURA AFTERNOON

69

In the crowded brothel, girls emerge from the hall and back rooms; they surround MR. MARTIN and DR. DARUWALLA—the latter nervously repeating his "message" to the girls, who view MR. MARTIN with extreme hostility.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was most unfortunate that the madam was out shopping. The madam would have recognized Mr. Martin from her attendance at St. Ignatius Church. And apparently the two girls who were new converts to Catholicism were working in the back rooms.

MR. MARTIN

Are they Christians? I don't think these girls are Christians. Where are the Christians?

Prostitutes attack MR. MARTIN. His glasses go first.

MR. MARTIN

What did you say to them?

DR. DARUWALLA

I told them you wanted them to stop being prostitutes!

EXT. BOMBAY BROTHEL IN KAMATHIPURA AFTERNOON

70

DR. DARUWALLA and MR. MARTIN try to escape the angry prostitutes, who succeed in dragging MR. MARTIN down to the ground; they kick him and beat him with their slippers. DR. DARUWALLA protests in Hindi, but to no avail.

DR. DARUWALLA

(Hindi with English subtitles)

He only wants the Christians to stop being prostitutes! If you're not Christians, you can do what you want to do!

MR. MARTIN

What are you telling them now?

DR. DARUWALLA

It doesn't matter—it's not working.

INT. BOMBAY HOSPITAL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN AFTERNOON

71

DR. DARUWALLA has already patched MR. MARTIN's eye. The doctor binds one of MR. MARTIN's legs in a knee-brace.

MR. MARTIN

They were definitely not Christians.

DR. DARUWALLA

Definitely not.

MR. MARTIN

Thank God the children are safe in the circus!

DR. DARUWALLA

Yes, thank God....

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH EVENING

72

Before Mass: the madam and the two beautiful prostitutes smile at MR. MARTIN who is awkwardly attempting to abandon his crutches in the aisle and hop his way into a pew. The crutches fly off in one direction; MR. MARTIN sprawls full-length on the kneeling pad. The prettiest of the prostitutes fetches the crutches for him while the madam helps MR. MARTIN into the pew; there she gives him a meaningful wink. BROTHER GABRIEL helps.

BROTHER GABRIEL

You're in a fine fix, now. The prettiest one is named Sarsu, which is short for Saraswati—the Goddess of Learning. Since her conversion to Christianity, she has been hoping to meet a nice Christian man. I think she has mistaken your interest in saving her soul for an interest of another kind. Naturally, she has heard all about your efforts to put an end to the evils of prostitution.

SARSU says something.

MR. MARTIN

What did she say?

BROTHER GABRIEL

She says she will give up this evil immediately—if you will marry her. She is almost definitely in love with you, she says.

SARSU says something more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

72

MR. MARTIN

Now what?

BROTHER GABRIEL

She says "love marriages" are usually
the best kind.

FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL pass the pew, frowning.

BROTHER GABRIEL

I must warn you, Martin, this does not
look good—regarding your chastity.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS EVENING

73

MR. MARTIN (on crutches) is strolling with MURIEL and GANESH.

MR. MARTIN

When I think of what you've done for
these children ... you're a saint to
have rescued them! They have escaped a
city that is morally chaotic, randomly
violent!

MR. MARTIN's crutches slip out from under him and he falls.

MURIEL

Oh, dear—be careful! Are you all right?

MR. MARTIN

Was it elephant shit?

GANESH

I think it was just a rock—a rather
small one.

MURIEL

Bless me, you look so beautiful when
you're in pain.

MR. MARTIN

(as she helps him up)
You were born to help people. Was it
the Church that brought you to India?

MURIEL

What church?

MR. MARTIN

The Church of England. You said you
were an Anglican, didn't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

73

MURIEL

The Church didn't bring me to India—it was a nightclub act!

MR. MARTIN

Oh, well, I see ... that's fascinating! That's remarkable!

MURIEL

It was a rather ordinary act, really.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT EVENING

74

SUMI and MURIEL are helping SWEETIE fuss with her hair, her makeup, and her exquisite sari; SWEETIE looks beautiful but peeved. PRATAP looks on anxiously.

MURIEL

(to Sweetie)

He's not going to ask you to marry him if you don't say a word to the poor bugger!

SWEETIE

He's too busy trying to bleed the dwarfs!

MURIEL

Well, dearie, you've got to make him notice you!

SWEETIE

He's not a doctor yet—he's only a medical student!

MURIEL

You can marry him now and he'll be a doctor in two years. And what do you care if he's a bit boring? One never listens to a husband, anyway.

SWEETIE

Two years is a long time—at my age.

MURIEL

(to Pratap and Sumi)

If she were my daughter, I'd drop her off a trapeze....

SWEETIE

But you heard him say he wasn't very athletic!

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

74

SWEETIE (Cont'd)

I don't want to bring up my children in a circus, but I want them to be well-coordinated! After all, I'm well-coordinated!

MURIEL

He never said he was uncoordinated! You don't see him falling out of his chair. What do you care if your children are well-coordinated? You don't have to be well-coordinated to live in the United States! He's going to be a doctor, Sweetie! If your clumsy kids break their legs, your husband can fix them!

SWEETIE

It's Conrad's choice: dwarf blood or me.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT EVENING

75

The dwarfs are gathered around the chair and table where CONRAD is preparing to take his own blood—with GANESH's assistance, and as a demonstration that giving blood is painless.

CONRAD

You've told them that this is awkward to do to yourself—it's not painful, but it may look awkward.

GANESH

They don't believe me.

CONRAD

See that rubber band? Make it tight. And release it when I tell you.

(as the blood flows)

Now! No! You're making it tighter!

GANESH

I'm trying!

CONRAD

Jesus! You're tightening it—don't tighten it! Release it! Release it!

The dwarfs are in a panic as CONRAD tries to reassure them.

CONRAD

It doesn't hurt—tell them! I don't feel a thing! It's painless—really. It's just because of the rubber band!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

75

GANESH is blathering in Hindi but the dwarfs stare transfixed at the blood, which is overflowing from the suddenly full vacutainer; CONRAD removes the needle from his arm but, because the rubber band is still tightly tied, the blood now spurts from his vein. He tears at the band with his teeth.

CONRAD
(covered with blood)
Tell them this is nothing—no pain!

Dwarfs flee from the tent.

GANESH
They think you're bleeding to death!

CONRAD chases them outside.

CONRAD
No! Come back! I don't feel a thing!

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OUTSIDE DWARFS' TENT EVENING

76

MURIEL and the beautiful SWEETIE watch the dwarfs flee; CONRAD races out of the tent after them, a bloody needle in one hand, blood spurting from his other arm. He is caught off guard to see MURIEL and SWEETIE.

CONRAD
Oh! An unfortunate experiment, but everything's fine. I was simply showing them that there's nothing to fear.

At the sight of so much blood, SWEETIE faints.

MURIEL
What a way you have with women,
Conrad—you relentless clod!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

77

MR. MARTIN pokes his head into Muriel's tent; she's not there, but he sees the piano and cautiously approaches it, leaning his crutches against the bench—then he sits down to play. His first effort is the dwarfs' song from "Snow White"—he doesn't sing, he just plays the melody to "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, it's off to work we go!"

Another angle: BEER BELLY the dwarf peers into Muriel's tent; MR. MARTIN sees him and stops playing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He improvises at the keyboard, finding his way into "We're Off to See the Wizard" from "The Wizard of Oz," which leads him to "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"; suddenly MURIEL is there, sliding onto the bench beside him, singing the words to his music. In embarrassment, he peters out at the piano.

MURIEL

Look who's here! Come to see my memorabilia, I hope!

MR. MARTIN

Uh, well ... actually, I've been waiting for a private moment ... to apologize. If what I said about the elephant shit seemed at all ... uh, personal to you....

MURIEL

Oh, don't mind my sensitivity, love—I've forgotten all about it. I've been called a lot worse than elephant shit! What else do you play?

MURIEL picks up his hand and plunks it down on the keyboard, but he quickly takes his hand away.

MR. MARTIN

But, you see, I wasn't for a moment implying that you were elephant shit—that wasn't what I meant. It was an unfortunate misunderstanding.

MURIEL more forcefully puts his hand back on the keyboard.

MURIEL

Your apology is accepted. Now play something!

When he again withdraws his hand, she puts it back on the keyboard and starts singing as she moves his hand over the keys. Eventually, she draws him into her song. MURIEL gives her best Bessie Smith imitation of "Alexander's Ragtime Band"; she's almost sitting in MR. MARTIN's lap when, in an effort to move away from her, he knocks his crutches over—then he bangs his head on the keyboard trying to retrieve his crutches. MURIEL's spell is broken.

MURIEL

Would you have a drink of something? Or, I suppose, you have to be trotting along....

MR. MARTIN

Actually—I do have to be going.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

77

MURIEL

Ah, well ... okay!

MR. MARTIN

Well....

MURIEL goes to kiss him but he vigorously shakes her hand.

MURIEL

Oh—a good handshake is just the thing,
isn't it? I'm out of the habit—there's
not much handshaking in this country.

They say an awkward good-bye. When he's gone, she tries to
continue playing and singing "Alexander's Ragtime Band," but,
alone, her heart isn't in it. She stops playing.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, WIDE VIEW MORNING

78

The roustabouts are hauling on the ropes to force out the air
and collapse the tent.

GANESH (V.O.)

Then the circus left Bombay.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS CHIMP CAGES MORNING

79

ARJUN is teaching the chimp Subaru the "biting" trick; they're
both behaving as if they're trying to bite each other, as an
unhappy SWEETIE and MURIEL pass, suitcases in hand.

GANESH (V.O.)

These were two unloved women.

EXT. THE CIRCUS TRAVELING ON A TRAIN DAY

80

On the chaotic train: glimpses of the animals, the roustabouts,
the performers, the passing landscape; at last, MURIEL's sad
face in the window—then SWEETIE's.

GANESH (V.O.)

Muriel was in love with Mr. Martin.
She was sure she would never see him
again. And Sweetie thought she was in
love with an uncoordinated kind of
vampire!

EXT. TRAIN STATION IN THE CIRCUS TOWN EVENING

81

The roustabouts are unloading the train. We see the motorcycle pulling the advertisement for the circus, a billboard on a trailer: "Don't miss to see in your town."

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin wouldn't have approved of the English at the circus, although Muriel's English was very good and she was true to her word—she taught me English every day. We read The Times of India together. What a newspaper!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT DAY

82

MURIEL is lounging on her bed piled high with pillows, GANESH beside her—The Times of India spread out before them. GANESH reads aloud to her. SWEETIE is doing her nails.

GANESH

"Youth Killed. A youth was beaten to death by irate villagers near Nelamangala on the outskirts of Bangalore on the mistaken presumption that he was a juvenile delinquent."

MURIEL

(testing Ganesh)
Define "irate."

GANESH

Pissed off?

MURIEL is not satisfied.

GANESH

Violently pissed off?

MURIEL looks to SWEETIE for help.

SWEETIE

Exceedingly angry.

MURIEL points to another article.

GANESH

"Food Poisoning. Two children died and eight others were hospitalized after they consumed some stale food from a garbage dump in the Shakurpur area of east Delhi."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

82

SWEETIE

Stale food? They don't mean "stale" food.
You don't die from "stale" food! They
mean rotten ... contaminated!

MURIEL

(approvingly)

You should teach English to this blessed
newspaper, Sweetie.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

83

Camera selects certain of Muriel's mementos—photographs of her
as a young and beautiful woman, photographs of her with various
men. Music from the circus plays Over.

MURIEL (V.O.)

I began my career in a variety show in
London's East End—not the nicest sort
of place. I came to India to be an
erotic dancer in a cabaret, but I ran
away with too many of the clients.
After running away with one of them,
I lost my entire body—never mind what
that means. You're too young.

Cut to: MURIEL is sprawled on her bed where GANESH is giving
her a back rub. MURIEL is naked from the waist up.

MURIEL

It's better to be an acrobat than a
dancer—different muscles. It hurts
where my muscles used to be—I used to
have muscles, you know.

GANESH

I know.

MURIEL

I used to do things Pinky couldn't do!

GANESH

I know.

MURIEL

They didn't always stick me with the
stupid dogs and the dirty birds!

GANESH

Now they don't even give you the dogs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURIEL

I know!

(she closes her eyes)

And men used to give me back rubs—
wealthy businessmen.

GANESH

Acid Man looks like a businessman.

MURIEL turns to face him; he's shocked to see her breasts.

MURIEL

What do you know about Acid Man?

GANESH

(frightened)

He takes children to the wrong circus—
the one for freaks.

MURIEL grabs him by his shoulders.

MURIEL

And what does he do to you before he
takes you to the freak circus?

GANESH

He makes you a freak.

MURIEL

How does he make you a freak, love?

GANESH

(almost a whisper)

With acid?

MURIEL hugs him to her bare bosom.

MURIEL

Listen to me, Ganesh: you're only a boy,
you're nothing but raging hormones!

GANESH is excited to find his face against her breast.

GANESH

What?

MURIEL

Listen to me: Acid Man looks like a
businessman because he is a businessman.
He's in the business of selling
children—after he makes sure only one
place will buy you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

83

GANESH

Why does he do it? Is there so much money
in the freak circus?

MURIEL

(she shakes her head)

No, love—he does it because he likes
to do it. He'd even like to do it to
me! He says he'll put acid on my face—he
says he'll put acid on my titties!

GANESH is petrified.

GANESH

Why?

MURIEL

He fancied me, and he's the sort who
doesn't take kindly to being rejected.
But I'm safe here—this is my home.

GANESH

This is your home?

MURIEL

It's my home—I run away, they take me
back. Your home takes you back.

Medium closeup: GANESH is eye-to-eye with one of MURIEL's
nipples; his face is pressed into one of her breasts. He lays
a tentative hand against her other breast but she quickly shoves
him away from her and rolls over on her stomach.

MURIEL

Watch out for your raging hormones. This
is a back rub—it's not a seduction.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS ELEPHANT PEN MORNING

84

MURIEL is posing PINKY and GANESH with the elephant in its
scarlet hood and robe. She takes the photo we have seen (in
black and white) on the Christmas tree. The kids are nervous
about standing too close to the elephant.

MURIEL

Come on, give us a smile—these are for
poor, lonely Mr. Martin. Mr. Martin
wants to see what you look like. He
doesn't care about the bloody elephant.

GANESH

What if we make the elephant angry?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

84

MURIEL

When an elephant gets angry, two holes open on the sides of his head and a liquid pours out; if the liquid reaches the elephant's mouth, he will doubtless kill you. Do hold still.

PINKY and GANESH look closely for these holes in the elephant, as CHANDRAKANT passes with his troupe of dogs. They all bark at MURIEL; she kicks one.

MURIEL

Filthy flea hotels! I'll send you to China—in China, they eat dogs!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT MORNING

85

All the children sit on rugs as SUMI cooks and serves breakfast. MURIEL is snacking as she whispers to CONRAD about SWEETIE. CONRAD keeps stealing looks at SWEETIE.

MURIEL

Look at her! She's going to make some young doctor a long-suffering slave to love! But it's not going to be you, doc, if you can't come up with something that makes you look well-coordinated.

CONRAD

(whispers back)
Well-coordinated? Me? Why?

PINKY says something in Hindi.

GANESH

She says we should take a picture of Sweetie for Mr. Martin.

MURIEL is hurt and angry. She hands the camera to SWEETIE.

MURIEL

Sweetie's entirely too young for Mr. Martin! Mr. Martin needs a woman closer to his own age. You should be sending Mr. Martin pictures of me!

GANESH

Are you the same age as Mr. Martin?

MURIEL

I'm close enough!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

85

SWEETIE waves the camera and motions them to stand together; MURIEL fusses with her hair before she allows SWEETIE to begin. Then MURIEL flirts for the camera. PINKY and GANESH start out standing in front of MURIEL, but MURIEL rearranges the pose with herself in the foreground.

MURIEL

After all, the poor man should have something to look at while he says his silly prayers!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT EVENING

86

In the cruder, more boisterous atmosphere of the cook's tent: dwarfs, roustabouts, cook's helpers, including GANESH, are all served from the big pots.

GANESH (V.O.)

Most of the week I didn't eat with Pratap's troupe. I ate in the cook's tent with everyone else.

Cut: later at night. GANESH's "bed" is a cubby under sacks of peas and lentils; he prays before a "temple" that he has assembled out of tea and spice cans. The elephant god (Ganesh) is prominent; there is also a postcard of Christ on the cross (from the icon collection), and a photograph of Ganesh and Pinky with their mother, and one of Mr. Martin with Dr. Daruwalla.

GANESH (V.O.)

It smelled good to sleep in the cook's tent, even though the mice were attracted by all the food. Brother Gabriel sent me postcards from the St. Ignatius icon collection, and Mr. Martin was faithful about writing letters and sending me photographs, too. I also heard frequently from Dr. Daruwalla.

INT. MERCEDES; INSIDE LIGHT IS ON NIGHT

87

A dream: a thug driver sits smoking at the wheel of the parked car; he and his thug companion keep leering into the back seat where MURIEL is bound and gagged. ACID MAN tears open her dress to expose her breasts. Then ACID MAN uncorks a small glass bottle and pours acid on MURIEL's breasts, which instantly start to smoke and hiss. She screams.

GANESH (V.O.)

At night, I tried not to dream about Acid Man and what he threatened to do to Muriel.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT NIGHT

88

GANESH in his sleeping cubby: he looks asleep, then his eyes pop wide-open.

GANESH (V.O.)

Of course, I tried not to dream about Muriel at all.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT

89

PINKY is going to bed; the other little girls—RATNA and RADHA—are crawling into their beds, too. The older girls, HANSA and LAKSHMI, are still brushing their hair.

Camera closes in on Pinky's "temple," similar to Ganesh's: there's a photo of Ganesh and the mother, and one of Mr. Martin—and a terrifying, warlike portrait of ten-armed Durga, the Goddess of Destruction. PINKY is praying to Durga.

GANESH (V.O.)

The more dangerous the acrobatics that she learned, the more Pinky prayed to Durga, the Goddess of Destruction, who Pinky believed was her protector. Durga, Pinky said, had ten arms to catch her if she ever fell.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING MORNING

90

Medium closeup of PUSHPA, balancing the pole; PRATAP stands beside her, looking up the pole, as the camera pulls back. There at the top of the pole is PINKY, practicing.

GANESH (V.O.)

She was in Durga's ten hands, Pinky said. If she ever fell and Durga didn't catch her, that would be because Durga wanted her to spend the rest of her life with the gods and goddesses—performing for them. In this world or in another, Pinky said she was in Durga's hands.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT MORNING

91

GANESH is chopping a mountain of garlic and onion. MURIEL is stuffing her face.

MURIEL

Don't be so stupidly obsessed with your little sister. In your own way, you're moving up in the world, too—aren't you, love?

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

91

MURIEL (Cont'd)

You're no longer at the elephant-shit
and lion-piss end of things—you've
graduated to the eating end of things.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING EVENING

92

An evening performance: the Farting Clown item is in progress. Camera follows the dwarf as he "farts" baby powder around the periphery of the ring. The audience laughs.

GANESH (V.O.)

I would rather have been a Farting Clown
than a cook's helper, but of course I
wasn't a dwarf.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING MORNING

93

GANESH and CONRAD are watching SUMI train the child acrobats on their unicycles. CONRAD keeps looking at a unicycle leaning against the boundary for the ring. He picks the unicycle up.

GANESH (V.O.)

Conrad wanted to be a performer, too.
Muriel had convinced him: Conrad needed
to demonstrate to Sweetie that he was
genetically capable of producing well-
coordinated children.

While CONRAD is trying to mount the unicycle, PINKY unicycles into the ring; this deflates CONRAD's confidence and he puts the unicycle down. He pretends indifference as PINKY brilliantly practices her unicycle routine.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT NIGHT

94

CONRAD is taking blood from GANESH, to demonstrate how painless the process is. Dwarfs are gathered around.

CONRAD

You see? No pain. Go on, tell them!

GANESH babbles unconvincingly in Hindi; he is bug-eyed and sweating while he puts on a frozen, teeth-clenched smile.

CONRAD

It's almost over—don't grit your teeth!
Keep smiling—good boy. They're
convinced—you've done it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

94

The needle is out. GANESH is showing his puncture mark to the curious dwarfs; they are still doubtful. SHIVAJI shoves a protesting BEER BELLY into the chair; he puts BEER BELLY's arm on the table, but BEER BELLY quickly withdraws it. Finally, with urging from the other dwarfs and GANESH, a tense BEER BELLY submits to the needle.

GANESH (V.O.)
Beer Belly was our first volunteer.

CONRAD
(as Ganesh translates)
Tell him to make a fist.

As CONRAD gets the needle in and removes the rubber band, BEER BELLY begins to whimper in pain.

CONRAD
(as Ganesh translates)
Tell him to relax—tell him to unclench his fist! No! He's clenching it tighter! Doesn't he know what "relax" means?

BEER BELLY screams and screams in pain. Even after CONRAD removes the needle, BEER BELLY continues to wail.

CONRAD
It's all over! You see? That's all there is to it! My God—what a baby!

BEER BELLY carries on as if mortally wounded; the other dwarfs flee. CONRAD views his one blood sample.

GANESH (V.O.)
It seemed there was no good way to get blood from dwarfs.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING

95

SHIVAJI is carrying a cup of tea back to his tent. GANESH is following him very purposefully. GANESH points excitedly up in the sky—shouting. When SHIVAJI looks up, GANESH squirts him in the foot with the bird-shit syringe. SHIVAJI hops up and down, spilling his tea; then GANESH shows him how the trick works. At first SHIVAJI is angry, then interested.

GANESH
(Hindi with English subtitles)
Calm down—it's just a bird-shit trick. It would be a good item for you clowns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

95

SHIVAJI
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 Let's see if Beer Belly likes it.

SHIVAJI points excitedly to the sky—shouting. When BEER BELLY looks up, GANESH nails him with the bird shit. BEER BELLY is enraged. When SHIVAJI and GANESH show BEER BELLY how the trick works, BEER BELLY knocks GANESH down and kicks him—SHIVAJI has to pull him away.

SHIVAJI
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 He likes it! He likes it!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

96

In performance: SHIVAJI wheels a handcart into the ring; on the cart is a painted box with a crank handle on the side and a Gramophone (as for a radio or phonograph) on the lid. From the other side of the ring, BEER BELLY approaches, inquiring what the curious box is. SHIVAJI points to the sky, then to the crank. When he turns the crank handle, bird songs screech forth—actually, from the circus loudspeaker system. BEER BELLY holds his ears and shouts at SHIVAJI to stop the racket, but SHIVAJI keeps pointing to the sky (the roof of the tent); he keeps cranking the handle. More bird screeches.

GANESH (V.O.)
 They called me Bird-Shit Man.

GANESH, in full bird costume and with a beak on his face, pops out of the top of the Gramophone like a jack-in-the-box. He squirts BEER BELLY with a giant syringe full of shaving lather and then pops back inside the box.

(It's just a painted box with a lid, with the fake Gramophone attached to the lid.)

From another angle we see children's faces in the audience: they are all laughing.

Cut back to: GANESH pops out of the Gramophone jack-in-the-box and dumps a whole bucket of "bird shit" on BEER BELLY.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OUTSIDE DWARFS' TENT NIGHT

97

A happy-looking BEER BELLY is bespattered with lather. He disrobes and washes himself in a water basin with a running hose, ending with a shampoo. As GANESH limps past in his bird costume, BEER BELLY flicks shampoo at him.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT MORNING

98

Dwarfs are lined up—line extends outside tent. They're pushing each other to get to the front of the line. CONRAD is taking blood from a fearless SHIVAJI; a bold BEER BELLY is next.

CONRAD
(as Ganesh translates)
Tell them not to shove—everyone will
get a turn!

SHIVAJI is finished and BEER BELLY bravely takes his seat.

CONRAD
He wants to do it again? I've already
got him—I only need one sample per
dwarf.

GANESH
It doesn't matter—he wants to do it
again.

SHIVAJI moves to another table; he sits in a chair opposite MURIEL, who shows him a '50s swimsuit calendar.

CONRAD
(as Ganesh translates)
Next!

BEER BELLY is anxious for his turn with the swimsuit women; he pushes SHIVAJI out of the chair while he rubs the needle mark on his arm and takes his turn with the calendar.

MURIEL
If you had a better calendar, Conrad,
you could bleed these buggers dry.

MURIEL notices GANESH gawking at the calendar; she hits him.

MURIEL
Don't excite your raging hormones.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH MORNING

99

MR. MARTIN kneels at Mass; he has recovered from his beating.

Camera pulls back: in the same pew with MR. MARTIN, the madam and her two Christian prostitutes are praying. SARSU looks up from her prayers to steal a look at MR. MARTIN.

Another angle: in the pew directly behind MR. MARTIN is MISS TANUJA, who gives SARSU a most critical look before turning her adoring eyes to MR. MARTIN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. MARTIN

They cut off his arm and sent it to Rome—as proof. For canonization.

DR. DARUWALLA

But first they brought his body to Goa to show it to the pilgrims.

MR. MARTIN

His whole body?

DR. DARUWALLA

Of course. But there was a woman among the pilgrims who lost control of herself—in a frenzy, she bit off his toe!

MR. MARTIN

St. Francis Xavier's toe?

DR. DARUWALLA

Yes, she bit his whole toe off.

MR. MARTIN

Really? How grotesque!

They pass stacks and stacks of books; they enter a reading room with a ceiling fan and an old man asleep with his head on a vast table piled high with manuscripts.

DR. DARUWALLA

Well, I was in Goa with my wife and children. One night I dreamed I was St. Francis's body and the crazy pilgrim was biting off my toe.

MR. MARTIN

(disappointed)

Oh, it was only a dream....

DR. DARUWALLA

No! In the morning, there were teeth marks on my toe. My toe was so swollen and bruised, I could hardly walk!

MR. MARTIN

(exasperated)

Just what are you saying?

DR. DARUWALLA

(exasperated, too)

Well, obviously, it was the spirit of the pilgrim who bit St. Francis—it was her ghost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

100

MR. MARTIN
Why would her ghost bite you?

DR. DARUWALLA
(whispers loudly)
Well, who else could have bitten me?

MR. MARTIN
Maybe it was your wife! Had you been arguing?

DR. DARUWALLA
No!

MR. MARTIN
Well, then, what about your children?
Children do wild, unpredictable things.

DR. DARUWALLA
(too loudly)
Why would my children bite my big toe?

MR. MARTIN
I don't know. Did you ask them?

The old sleeper rouses among his manuscripts on the table.

OLD SLEEPER
Ssshhh!

MR. MARTIN
(stubbornly whispering)
Did you ever ask your children about the biting?

DR. DARUWALLA
(exasperated)
My children are all grown-up! They're married!

MR. MARTIN
I'm not suggesting they'd bite your big toe now! But how old were they then?

DR. DARUWALLA
Well, they were eleven, thirteen, fifteen ... what does it matter?

MR. MARTIN
(condescendingly)
Those are biting ages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

99

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin had bad luck. Not only did Muriel and Sarsu the prostitute want to marry him. Miss Tanuja had decided that her Christian activities were rather hard work—they might be more fun to do with someone else.

INT. BOMBAY ASIATIC SOCIETY LIBRARY DAY

100

MR. MARTIN and DR. DARUWALLA ascend the grand staircase.

DR. DARUWALLA

(whispering)

I come here because it's so quiet. After my conversion, I wanted a place where I could read in peace.

MR. MARTIN

(too loudly)

Tell me about your conversion—I love conversion stories!

DR. DARUWALLA

(whispering)

As miracles go, it was a modest miracle.

MR. MARTIN

(almost shouting)

There was a miracle? You were an actual witness to a miracle?

DR. DARUWALLA

Ssshhh! It was only a little miracle. It happened to the big toe of my right foot.

MR. MARTIN

Your big toe?

DR. DARUWALLA

You know the story of St. Francis....

MR. MARTIN

His body didn't decompose....

DR. DARUWALLA

Yes, he was buried in China but when they dug him up, his body was miraculously intact.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

100

DR. DARUWALLA
(loudly)
Biting ages!

The old sleeper wakes up.

OLD SLEEPER
Ssshhh!

MR. MARTIN continues whispering, but he changes the subject.

MR. MARTIN
I've got pictures of the children. I think Pinky's gotten much taller, and Ganesh has put on a little weight.

We see the photos he's showing to DR. DARUWALLA; suddenly, they're all of Muriel. MR. MARTIN passes impatiently through these—looking for the children—but DR. DARUWALLA keeps looking at Muriel's pictures. They keep whispering.

MR. MARTIN
Why are there so many of Muriel?

DR. DARUWALLA
I think she'd like to persuade you to not become a priest!

MR. MARTIN
That's quite impossible.

DR. DARUWALLA
She's known as the Good Samaritan of Bombay, you know.

MR. MARTIN
She is? Well, I know she's a good soul to those children.

DR. DARUWALLA
She's also got a terrific figure!

MR. MARTIN takes the photos to have a look for himself.

MR. MARTIN
How old is she?

DR. DARUWALLA
(tactfully)
Oh, she's about your age!

MR. MARTIN
(too loudly)
Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

100

The old sleeper throws a fit. He jumps on MR. MARTIN.

MR. MARTIN

Is he crazy? I thought you said this place was peaceful.

DR. DARUWALLA

(pulls old man off)

I think most places are peaceful until you get there!

INT. BOMBAY WILLINGDON CLUB EVENING

101

DR. DARUWALLA and MR. MARTIN are having a beer in the atmosphere of the Raj.

DR. DARUWALLA

I presume you're attractive to women—not only to Muriel and, you know, Christian prostitutes....

MR. MARTIN

I don't do anything to attract them!

DR. DARUWALLA

That is evident. But are women—I mean on some level—are women attractive to you?

MR. MARTIN

That's not really a relevant question for a man preparing for the priesthood.

DR. DARUWALLA

So you are attracted! And here I thought that, for you Jesuits, only the love of Christ was a beacon and a constant, whereas physical attraction was ... well, you know, just physical. Here I thought that it was exactly as Marcus Aurelius has written: "In the life of a man, his time is but a moment ... his body a prey of worms...."

MR. MARTIN is frowning, not sure if he's being mocked.

MR. MARTIN

I believe that denying oneself is a part of any vow of substance. Certainly I have my doubts about my chosen life. Doesn't any man? Don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

101

DR. DARUWALLA

But I haven't taken any vows. No vows,
no doubts!

DR. DARUWALLA raises his beer glass in a toast.

DR. DARUWALLA

To your vows! And to your doubts!

MR. MARTIN hesitates before he drinks.

DR. DARUWALLA

Okay, okay—make it only to your vows.

MR. MARTIN cautiously drinks.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING MORNING

102

PINKY is riding her unicycle, speaking Hindi to camera.

Pull back: CONRAD is balancing very unsteadily on a unicycle; he keeps one hand on MURIEL and the other on GANESH.

CONRAD

What's she saying?

GANESH

She says you just have to do it!

CONRAD sails forward, out of control and screaming, as PINKY continues to instruct him in Hindi. CONRAD reels and falls.

CONRAD

What's she saying now?

GANESH

She says, "Not that way."

CONRAD

(ready to try again)
Interesting....

This time his effort is extraordinary, as PINKY pursues him around the ring on her unicycle—shouting in Hindi while he screams. This time his fall is spectacular. MURIEL and GANESH run to him as PINKY continues to instruct him.

CONRAD

(flat on his back)
Now what's she saying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

102

GANESH

She says she's not noticing any significant improvement.

CONRAD closes his eyes and groans.

CONRAD

How about something with a ball—or on a bicycle? I'm pretty good with balls. I can ride a bicycle!

MURIEL

I told you, you dense oaf—Sweetie is impressed by unicycles. Ever since she fell off one and split her stupid lip, she can't even look at a unicycle without utterly panicking.

CONRAD

I can see why.... How about something safe with a lion?

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING DAY

103

In performance: PINKY is bent over with one of her legs raised; her hands rest on the hand-wheel.

GANESH (V.O.)

Sometimes Pinky was such a little star, I hated her. Of course I don't mean that I really hated her, but everything came so easily to her.

Pull back: SUBHASH and RATNA pedal their unicycle-contraption up behind PINKY, picking up her leg and pushing her in front of them as she steers the hand-wheel.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, ICON CHAPEL EVENING

104

MR. MARTIN and MISS TANUJA are sitting in a pew together. MISS TANUJA clutches her crucifix between her considerable breasts; she is distraught, and breathing heavily.

GANESH (V.O.)

With Muriel's help, I wrote to Mr. Martin that I envied Pinky to the point of distraction. But Mr. Martin had his own distractions to deal with.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

104

MISS TANUJA

I know I'm not attractive—not in the conventional sense. But I have assets of a more substantial, invisible kind.

(Meanwhile, her breasts are very visible under her blouse.)

MR. MARTIN

(oblivious to her breasts)

Physical attraction is not important, Miss Tanuja....

MISS TANUJA

But you're attractive—you must know that you are!

MR. MARTIN

My attractiveness is not important to me, Miss Tanuja—in fact, it has often been a burden.

MISS TANUJA

(ready to embrace him)

Oh, yes—I can just imagine that women have always been a burden!

MR. MARTIN

(not noticing her)

Only the love of Christ is a beacon and a constant, whereas physical attraction is ... well, you know, just physical. It is exactly as Marcus Aurelius has written: "In the life of a man, his time is but a moment ... his body a prey of worms...."

MISS TANUJA, despairingly, repeatedly bangs her head on the back of the pew in front of them.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT DAY

105

SWEETIE is practicing the Skywalk across the roof, PRATAP watching her closely. As she "walks" upside down, swinging from loop to loop in the skywalking device, her head is only a few feet from the floor. PINKY watches closely.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pinky said Sweetie was brave, but Muriel said Sweetie lacked imagination.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ROOF DAY

106

A view of the same skywalking device, attached to the top of the main tent; then a reverse angle, looking down (eighty feet) from the top to the ground. Staring up at camera, as if they were watching Sweetie perform, are PINKY and GANESH.

GANESH (V.O.)

Sweetie didn't have the brains to imagine what she'd look like after falling eighty feet.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

107

SWEETIE runs into the ring and takes a bow; she climbs to the trapeze at the top of the tent.

Another angle of SWEETIE as she hangs upside down and prepares to skywalk. She starts to swing, then takes her first step.

GANESH (V.O.)

The Skywalk is only sixteen steps, but you're upside down ... at eighty feet.

Cut to PRATAP and SUMI following under her.

Cut back to SWEETIE nearing the end of the Skywalk.

GANESH (V.O.)

Just imagine: three times a day, every day of the week, someone is walking on the sky.

Another angle: the worried CONRAD in the crowd.

Cut to SWEETIE descending on the dental trapeze.

Cut to PINKY's watchful face in the entry wing as SWEETIE takes her bow in the ring. Music plays Over.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT DAY

108

RATNA practices the Skywalk across the roof of the tent, PRATAP and SUMI instructing her. PINKY scowls at RATNA. MURIEL scolds PINKY. GANESH translates into Hindi.

MURIEL

If Pratap says you're too small to skywalk, then you're too bloody small. If he says your legs aren't strong enough, they aren't.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

108

MURIEL (Cont'd)

If you're too impatient to build up your leg muscles, then you're too impatient to skywalk at all. And don't give me anymore of your lip that anything Ratna can do, you can do better! Ratna is strong!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT DAY

109

As GANESH strains to do leg-lifts from MURIEL's bed, MURIEL plunks at the piano; it sounds like she's trying to pick out the keys to "Alexander's Ragtime Band"—without much success. Angrily, she gives up.

MURIEL

Would you stop that before you have a hernia?

GANESH

I think I can make my legs strong enough for skywalking—my legs are already stronger than Pinky's!

MURIEL

You're as crazy as your sister! You're both as nuts as Sweetie! Why don't you try to have sex with the lions, too? That would be about as sensible as skywalking! Conrad better get Sweetie to marry him soon or she'll be dead! Oh, excuse me, love—she'll be bloody reincarnated, I mean....

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION CAGES EVENING

110

PINKY and GANESH in front of Tex's cage. The lion and PINKY stare at each other.

PINKY

(Hindi with English subtitles)

Muriel is angry all the time—she's always angry! What's the matter with her?

GANESH

(Hindi with English subtitles)

She's in love with Mr. Martin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

110

PINKY
(Hindi....)
Being in love makes you angry?

GANESH
(Hindi....)
It makes you crazy, too—if it's not
working out.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
I will never be in love—it's too
stupid.

GANESH
(Hindi....)
It just happens to you, like a cold—you
can't do anything about it.

PINKY
(Hindi....)
I love only the gods and goddesses—and
some animals. Like Tex. I love Tex.
Look at him—he loves me, too. It
doesn't make him stupid.

Close on PINKY with Tex ... the lion's inscrutable face.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING NIGHT

111

In the Peacock Dance, we can't see that it's PINKY and RADHA
in the peacock costumes. SWEETIE enters the ring and dances
with the peacocks.

Cut to the lovestruck CONRAD, watching SWEETIE.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ENTRY WING NIGHT

112

As the music for the Peacock Dance continues Over, we see the
lions entering the holding tunnel; they are prodded into the
tunnel (from their cages) by the roustabouts, who jab their paws
with long metal poles to keep them moving forward. Two lions
become tangled up with each other and a fight flares up. The
roustabouts beat them apart with their poles.

Another angle: the Peacock Dance ends, SWEETIE and the two
peacocks exit from the ring, and the motorcyclists begin their
insane ride in the steel ball—the Globe of Death.

Another angle: roustabouts rush about, putting up the lion pen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

112

Another angle: the lions are going crazy in the holding tunnel, but we can barely hear them roaring because the motorcycles in the Globe of Death are so loud.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

113

With the noise of the Globe of Death and the lions Over, camera follows SWEETIE as she walks back to Pratap's tent—her dance costume covered by a robe, her anklets chiming as she walks. In and out of the patches of light from the open tents, the two peacocks (still in costume) continue to dart around her, still acting as if they were peacocks, still doing the dance.

GANESH (V.O.)

Would Sweetie fall to her death while skywalking or would she move to Hanover, New Hampshire, and be the wife of a Dartmouth Medical School student? Muriel said this was a "timeless" question.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT

114

SWEETIE is helping the two little peacocks out of their costumes. Only now do we see that the peacocks are RADHA and PINKY as SWEETIE (literally) takes off their heads.

MURIEL (V.O.)

Living in Hanover, New Hampshire, with Conrad might be a fate worse than death.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OUTSIDE PRATAP'S TENT DAY

115

SWEETIE and RATNA stand on a table. MURIEL is rubbing a salve on their ankles.

MURIEL

You're a couple of morons. In addition to dying, there's another small problem with skywalking—the loops chafe the skin off your ankles!

Camera comes in close on SWEETIE's and RATNA's ankles.

MURIEL

Someone else has got to learn how to skywalk, Sweetie—not even someone of your insensitivity can keep doing it three times a day, every day of the week. And look at Ratna—she has to lay off at least a week. She's got a nasty skin infection—I'll probably catch it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 115

Pan to PINKY smiling secretively at RATNA's ankles.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT DAY 116

With SUMI'S and PRATAP's assistance, PINKY is practicing the Skywalk. Pan to GANESH staring enviously at his sister.

GANESH (V.O.)

And so the little brat got what she wanted. I sometimes think that Pinky always got what she wanted!

Pull back: upside down, PINKY still manages to stick her tongue out at GANESH.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT 117

GANESH lies sobbing in MURIEL's arms.

GANESH

Pratap won't even let me try to skywalk! He knows my legs are stronger than Pinky's—he knows how strong I've made my ankles—but he won't even let me try!

MURIEL

Pratap knows that Pinky isn't afraid.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING DAY 118

In the midday heat, a lone roustabout is watering the dusty ground. MURIEL stands with GANESH under the skywalk device; they stare up at it.

MURIEL

Have you ever been up there? Why don't you go and have a look?

She points to the rope ladder ascending to the trapeze alongside the skywalk loops. GANESH starts to climb. He begins with bold resolve, but the higher he climbs, the more he gives in to fear.

A view from where he is, at the top, looking down at MURIEL, eighty feet below.

MURIEL

How strong do your legs feel now? Are your legs strong enough to skywalk now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

118

GANESH wants to reach out and catch hold of the trapeze, but he doesn't dare let go of the rope ladder. GANESH hugs the ladder and closes his eyes.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT NIGHT

119

Closeup: GANESH's bird face in the mirror as the paintbrush applies the finishing touches. GANESH looks sad. A tear rolls down GANESH's face, spoiling the paint job.

MURIEL (V.O.)

Be a man, Bird-Shit Man. Be a man.

Pull back: SHIVAJI is holding the paintbrush; he views his ruined work. BEER BELLY looks sad, too.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT DAY

120

SUBHASH is sitting on a bed, sewing sequins on his costume; SWEETIE is brushing her hair. Camera surveys the adjoining tents: SUMI is cooking; RATNA is sweeping the kitchen; GANESH fixes LAKSHMI a cup of tea. MURIEL is snacking.

GANESH (V.O.)

There was always someone in Pratap's tent.

GANESH's eyes wander to the skywalk device on the ceiling. MURIEL watches him.

GANESH (V.O.)

If I wanted to practice the Skywalk by myself, it would have been impossible.

PRATAP enters the tent with his whip, which he puts away. He looks at GANESH looking at the skywalk device. GANESH looks away. MURIEL whacks GANESH.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ROOF DAWN

121

The skywalk device at the top of the empty tent.

GANESH (V.O.)

I slept in the cook's tent, by myself. No one would have seen me get up, if I got up very early. If I wanted to practice the Skywalk, there was only one place I could practice where no one could stop me.

Another angle: GANESH stares up at the skywalk device.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

121

GANESH (V.O.)
 "If I fall," Sweetie said, "death happens." But I was afraid. If no one sees you die, no one says any prayers for you.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

122

GANESH is curled on the bed as MURIEL writes a letter.

GANESH (V.O.)
 Muriel wrote to Mr. Martin that I was in the midst of a spiritual crisis.

MURIEL
 I think I should include a photo....

She shows GANESH a sexy picture of herself.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, ICON COLLECTION ROOM DAY

123

A trancelike MISS TANUJA walks through the Icon Collection Room and into the Icon Chapel; MISS TANUJA is undressing herself.

MISS TANUJA
 (whispers)
 Ravish me!

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, ICON CHAPEL DAY

124

Alone in the chapel, MR. MARTIN is praying. Camera moves closer to him; he looks suddenly at camera, as if startled.

GANESH (V.O.)
 Mr. Martin was having a spiritual crisis of his own.

Pull back: a half-naked MISS TANUJA throws herself on MR. MARTIN. He loses his glasses.

GANESH (V.O.)
 Miss Tanuja had lost control.

MR. MARTIN
 Miss Tanuja ... my vows!

MISS TANUJA
 Ravish me!

She tears open his shirt, discovers he's ticklish.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, SECOND-FLOOR CORRIDOR DAY

125

FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL are walking past the door to the Icon Chapel and the Icon Collection Room; they hear Mr. Martin's wild giggling laughter; they look anxiously at each other. Then the door flies open and MR. MARTIN struggles into the corridor, his shirt untucked and unbuttoned. He tries to tuck himself back in and button up; without his glasses, he needs to squint in order to see the Father Rector and FATHER CECIL.

MISS TANUJA, half-dressed with her chest heaving, rushes out the door after MR. MARTIN. When she sees the priests, she takes hold of her crucifix and closes her eyes in prayer. As the priests enter the Father Rector's office and close the door, MISS TANUJA pursues MR. MARTIN, who races down the long corridor to escape her (his glasses in his hand).

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin couldn't free himself from his duties at St. Ignatius until the Christmas holiday. He told Muriel he'd come visit us for Christmas. He said he wanted to study in detail how dangerous the Skywalk was.

A long shot of the courtyard from the balcony outside the Icon Chapel and the Icon Collection Room. MR. MARTIN is streaking across the empty courtyard, MISS TANUJA racing after him.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, RECTOR'S OFFICE NIGHT

126

The priests, FATHER JULIAN and FATHER CECIL, are criticizing MR. MARTIN at the round table, where BROTHER GABRIEL serves tea.

FATHER JULIAN

But if you don't do anything to invite these advances from women ... from a prostitute is one thing, but even from poor Miss Tanuja, who, to my knowledge, has never thrown herself at any man ... well, what I mean is, you must do something to make women behave in this unlikely fashion!

FATHER CECIL

You do have an inviting sort of smile, Martin....

FATHER JULIAN

Yes—definitely give up the smile.

BROTHER GABRIEL

He could shave his head....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

126

FATHER CECIL

Do Jesuits shave their heads?

FATHER JULIAN

In this instance, I suppose he could. I mean, it would be inappropriate for us to instruct him to—but if he chose to do it, we wouldn't necessarily have to forbid it. Would we?

FATHER CECIL

I'm not sure....

BROTHER GABRIEL

I was just kidding!

MR. MARTIN

May I be allowed to say that, however many women have thrown themselves at me, I have never ... uh, well, given in. And I won't—I would never give in to that temptation!

FATHER JULIAN

But there is something needless, not to mention unseemly, about such vigorous temptations to your vow of chastity.

MR. MARTIN

But I'm not tempted! I'm not!

The priests look full of doubt.

BROTHER GABRIEL

Just because I would be tempted by all the attention, that doesn't mean that Martin would be.

The priests give him a condemning look.

BROTHER GABRIEL

Just kidding....

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PARKING LOT NIGHT

127

The black Mercedes is alone in the lot. ACID MAN hands out the bottles of acid to his two thugs; they throw them into the circus—over the fence and high above the troupe tents.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION CAGES NIGHT 128

The lions pace in their cages—their restless grunts and coughs are punctuated by the sound of the small glass bottles breaking.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT 129

A frightened MURIEL lies wide-awake, listening to the lions and the tinkling glass. She holds her breasts.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING 130

Dwarfs poke a broken acid bottle with a stick; it is still smoking and hissing.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION CAGE AREA MORNING 131

PRATAP, with GANESH's assistance, has roped a young lion cub to a table top where he's medicating the cub's paw. MURIEL enters frame.

MURIEL

Did the bastard get Sita?

GANESH

Just her paw. The bottle broke against the bars of her cage, and Sita touched the acid with her paw.

MURIEL instinctively grabs her breasts.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT 132

SWEETIE and GANESH and MURIEL are huddled together on the big bed in MURIEL's darkened tent.

GANESH

Is this a ghost story?

MURIEL

No, love, it's worse—it's a true story.

GANESH

But you said you rejected him—you said you turned him down!

INT. BOMBAY WETNESS CLUB, CABARET NIGHT 133

An unscarred ACID MAN, looking very suave, moves as gracefully as a cat through this striptease joint, his eyes on the stage where MURIEL is performing as an erotic dancer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

133

She sees him coming closer; she starts performing for him.

MURIEL (V.O.)

I lied. I didn't turn him down the first time.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

134

SWEETIE and GANESH are wide-eyed as MURIEL tells her story.

MURIEL

His face was different then—no scars.

GANESH

No acid!

INT. BOMBAY WETNESS CLUB, DRESSING ROOM NIGHT

135

MURIEL is dressing; ACID MAN lounges on a couch. A ragged girl (Pinky's age) is tidying up the room. MURIEL is unaware that ACID MAN never takes his eyes off this girl; the way he looks her over is so creepy, the girl is terrified.

MURIEL (V.O.)

No, there was always acid—I just didn't know about it. I didn't know about the unfortunate children either.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

136

SWEETIE and GANESH have climbed under the covers with MURIEL—they're so frightened.

GANESH

And you didn't know about the freak circus!

MURIEL

There was no freak circus—there is no freak circus, Ganesh. That was a rumor I started—so that kids like you would be afraid of him!

GANESH

What's he want with the children then?

MURIEL

What men always want—sex. Either he gets the sex or the kids get the acid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

136

GANESH

What happens after the sex?

MURIEL

(eyes closed)

He's a pimp—he owns a kids' brothel.

SWEETIE

Child prostitutes!

GANESH

(to Muriel)

So you ran away to the circus?

(as Muriel nods)

And every kid who can be an acrobat—
you try to get that kid out of Bombay!

MURIEL

(opens eyes)

But he copied me—he imitated my method.
He just pretends to be a scout for the
circus so he can seduce other kids.

GANESH

And now he's after you?

MURIEL

It's for pure revenge, love. Have you
seen his face?

GANESH

You did it to him!

INT. BOMBAY BROTHEL, CHILD PROSTITUTES NIGHT

137

MURIEL moves through the labyrinth of rooms, disturbing customers with the children. (One child's face is disfigured with acid.) In a foul room, she surprises ACID MAN with one of the children—she grabs the acid bottle off the bedside table before he can reach it. As the child flees, MURIEL throws the acid in ACID MAN's face.

MURIEL (V.O.)

When I found out what the creep was doing, I gave him some of his own medicine.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

138

SWEETIE and GANESH are curled up with MURIEL in her bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

138

MURIEL

You bet he's after me. He thinks he owes me one.

Pull back: the flap of MURIEL's tent is flung open; a tall, dark figure stands in the opening, looking in, as GANESH and SWEETIE and MURIEL all scream at the top of their lungs.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT NIGHT

139

The dwarfs sit up in their beds and scream.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

140

PRATAP, in his lungi and carrying his whip, comes running as the screaming carries Over.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

141

The tall figure in the opening of MURIEL'S tent is CONRAD, who holds SHIVAJI the dwarf by his lungi. SWEETIE and GANESH and MURIEL are on MURIEL's bed as PRATAP enters.

CONRAD

(shaking dwarf)

Ask him what he's angry about! He's throwing rocks at my tent!

As CONRAD releases the dwarf, SHIVAJI babbles in Hindi—GANESH translates.

GANESH

He wants his blood back.

CONRAD

He wants it back?

GANESH

They all want their blood back.

CONRAD

I can't give them their blood back!

GANESH

They thought you were only borrowing it.

CONRAD

Who gave them that idea?

SHIVAJI (still babbling) points to SWEETIE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

141

GANESH
Sweetie told them.

CONRAD
Why would you tell them that?

SWEETIE shrugs and smiles.

GANESH
Now they think you're selling it.

CONRAD
Selling it! Who would buy it?

SHIVAJI points to SWEETIE, who doesn't wait for CONRAD to question her; she pushes past him as she exits the tent.

SWEETIE
Their blood ... or me.

CONRAD looks at SHIVAJI, who shrugs and smiles (like Sweetie).

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ROOF MORNING

142

Up high, near the skywalk device on the roof of the big top, PINKY is hanging upside down from the trapeze. As she moves, PRATAP and SUMI and SWEETIE call up to her (in Hindi); their voices sound impatient. PINKY continues to swing.

GANESH (V.O.)
Practicing the Skywalk had changed Pinky. She had always been almost totally without fear, but now she seemed too brave. And she would listen to no one, not even Sweetie.

SWEETIE calls to PINKY—first in Hindi, then in English.

SWEETIE
Come down, you brat!

For a second, PINKY looks as if she might stay up there, but she comes down; she is expressionless, in a world of her own.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT

143

It's bedtime: PINKY is saying her prayers to her "temple"; camera closes on Durga.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

143

GANESH (V.O.)

I was afraid that Pinky was becoming a fundamentalist—she was listening only to Durga.

Freeze to a still on Durga's terrifying, ten-armed image.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PARKING LOT DAY

144

MR. MARTIN arrives by rickshaw.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT EVENING

145

In the overcrowded tent, the acrobats and children are all listening (in dismay and disapproval) to Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" on an ancient record-player.

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin brought us a Christmas present: we had never heard anything like it.

Audience is repulsed—all except CONRAD and SWEETIE who stare pathetically at each other.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was obvious to everyone that Sweetie and Conrad were in love with each other, but Conrad was depressed. He had given up his dwarf-blood project. It would be forty-five years before someone would discover the gene for dwarfism that Conrad had been looking for—some guy in California would find it. More important, Pinky said that Conrad's progress on the unicycle had been slow.

MURIEL is smiling seductively at MR. MARTIN; he keeps looking at her nervously, and quickly looking away.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was even more obvious that Muriel and Mr. Martin were in love with each other, but with older people it is not as simple as demonstrating that you can be athletic. Older people have to talk to each other.

CONTINUED:

146

MR. MARTIN

Well, no, actually, it was only a statue of Christ.

CONRAD

(disappointed)

Only a statue—you mean, it was real?

MR. MARTIN

Of course it was real—it was at the end of a parking lot, at the school. I used to see it every day—twice a day, actually. It was just a white, stone statue of Christ in a typical pose.

MR. MARTIN demonstrates the pose of the supplicant.

MURIEL

It sounds truly tasteless—Christ in a parking lot!

MR. MARTIN

Well, it wasn't very artistic—occasionally it was even vandalized.

CONRAD

(sarcastically)

I can't imagine why.

MR. MARTIN

Well, anyway, I was directing a school play—it was a musical, I can't remember which one—but when it was time to go home, I couldn't find my car. Someone asked me if I remembered where I'd parked, and I said, "Right in front of Christ." I meant the statue in the parking lot, of course.

CONRAD

Of course....

MR. MARTIN

But it was dark. I'd never been in the parking lot when it was dark before. The statue of Christ wasn't visible in the darkness, yet I knew exactly where it was. I actually pointed to where Christ was, even though I couldn't see him. It was a funny moment. I felt: I can't see him but I know he's there.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

146

MR. MARTIN (Cont'd)

When I got in the car and turned on the headlights, there was Christ—he stood out in the light, exactly where I knew he'd be.

MURIEL

(exasperated)

Where else would he be? He was a statue! Do statues move around in Boston?

MR. MARTIN

(to Conrad)

I was so excited I couldn't sleep. I felt I'd been shown what believing in Christ was like for me. Even in the darkness, there was a certainty that he was there. Do you understand?

CONRAD

Well, uh ... interesting. Your hammock's ready. Hop in!

MR. MARTIN doesn't know how to get into it.

MR. MARTIN

(to Muriel)

Do you understand what I mean?

MURIEL

I guess I'm not quite making the necessary leap. I mean, believing in Christ is one thing, but wanting to be a priest ... how do you get from the parking lot to wanting to be a bloody priest?

MR. MARTIN is struggling with the hammock.

MR. MARTIN

Well, that part came a little later.

MURIEL

That's the part that's unclear to me.

The hammock rolls over and MR. MARTIN clings to the underside of it, like a bat.

MR. MARTIN

I'm not quite getting the hang of this!

CONRAD

It's more comfortable if you lie on top of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

146

Flailing, MR. MARTIN falls out of the hammock. MR. MARTIN sits dazed on the floor of the tent as CONRAD attempts to untwist the tangled hammock. MURIEL fusses over MR. MARTIN who, among other indignities, has lost his glasses.

GANESH

You think you've got problems, Conrad—
just imagine Mr. Martin on a unicycle!

MURIEL snaps at GANESH.

MURIEL

Mr. Martin doesn't have to perform any
stunts to impress me!

GANESH sullenly continues his leg-lifts.

GANESH (V.O.)

I was mad at Muriel. She had convinced
Mr. Martin that skywalking was too
dangerous for me. There was no way
Pratap would ever let me do it.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING

147

MR. MARTIN is cautiously navigating the avenue, on the lookout for elephant shit, when he spots MURIEL in the opening of her tent; staring at her, he walks into a tent rope; he falls flat, breaks his glasses. MURIEL pounces on him.

MURIEL

Jesus God—just look at you! Someone's
got to take care of you every minute!
We've got to have a talk.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT MORNING

148

MURIEL pulls MR. MARTIN inside; he holds his broken glasses. She shoves him on her bed and sits beside him.

MURIEL

With all your training, I suppose you're
waiting for the heavens to open before
you make your move! Or is it the burning
bush or the parting of the Red Sea that
you're waiting for? You can't be waiting
for some miracle or a signal from
God—you've got a good woman in love
with you!

MURIEL pins him to his back on her bed.

(CONTINUED)

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS CONRAD'S TENT NIGHT

146

CONRAD is stringing up a second hammock for MR. MARTIN, who is nervous about MURIEL; she swings herself in CONRAD's hammock while GANESH does leg-lifts.

MR. MARTIN

It's awfully kind of you to put me up.

CONRAD

I'm happy to have the company—I never spent any time with anyone who wanted to be a priest before.

MR. MARTIN

Well, actually, I didn't want to be a priest—not for the longest time! My mother was indifferent to religion, my father was a lapsed Catholic, but I was sent to Jesuit schools—just because they were fairly good schools, I suppose. I mean, I always thought I believed in God, but that's not the same as knowing you believe.

MURIEL

But knowing you believe in God isn't the same thing as wanting to be a priest—is it?

MR. MARTIN

Well, no, actually—you're right, of course, that's perfectly true—but I was a good deal older when I first saw what it was I believed in.

MURIEL

You had a vision? You were bleeding from your hands and feet! Or from your side?

MR. MARTIN

Well, no, not exactly. I was teaching in a Catholic school in Boston. Not a very good school, actually....

MURIEL

But what did you see? You said you saw something!

MR. MARTIN

Well, it was nothing really—I simply saw how Christ existed for me.

MURIEL

(frustrated)

You saw Christ himself?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURIEL

You love me, don't you? You've never felt like this before, isn't that the truth?

Terrified, MR. MARTIN nods.

MURIEL

Don't you speak? You don't have to be so afraid of me!

MR. MARTIN

(standing)

My vows ... they mean everything to me.

MURIEL

(standing, too)

Do one thing for me—close your eyes.

MR. MARTIN

(in a panic)

What? Why?

MURIEL

Just do it—just close your bloody eyes!

(he closes them)

I want you to imagine that parking lot where you saw Christ. Is the bugger still there?

MR. MARTIN opens his eyes in shock.

MR. MARTIN

Well, I don't know—the school was always under construction. I suppose they might have torn up the parking lot. They might have moved the statue.

MURIEL

That's not what I mean! Close your eyes!

(he closes them)

I mean, you said that you knew Christ was there—even though you couldn't see him. Well, isn't he still there? Whether you're with me or not, Christ is still in that parking lot—isn't he? Isn't he still there? Can't you still see him? Keep your bloody eyes closed! Can you see Jesus Christ or can't you?

MR. MARTIN

(eyes tightly closed)

Yes. I can see him.

MURIEL moves closer to him; she brushes his cheek with hers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

148

MURIEL

Then you can have me and not lose him, can't you? You can have me and Jesus Christ. You must know it's possible to be a good Christian without being a Catholic priest.

MR. MARTIN opens his eyes and steps back from her.

MR. MARTIN

I'm not a total innocent. I'm as inclined to sex as any man.

MURIEL

(unprepared for this)
That's hard to believe....

MR. MARTIN

I was attracted to a woman—the same woman—for almost ten years. She was a constant temptation; she not only made me feel that I was unfit for the priesthood—she made me doubt everything I believed. But, finally, the attraction lessened....

MURIEL

The attraction "lessened"! You mean you never pulled the trigger? I wonder how you left her feeling—like shit warmed over! You must have had a charming mother!

MR. MARTIN

Actually, my mother....

MURIEL

Oh, the hell with your mother—I don't want to hear about your mother. Haven't you got the balls to begin?

MR. MARTIN

I don't know how to begin.

MURIEL kisses him violently.

MURIEL

How's that? That's a good beginning, isn't it?

MR. MARTIN looks ready to bolt. MURIEL turns away.

MURIEL

Like that but maybe not so hard....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3) 148

When she turns to look at MR. MARTIN, he's gone; she's crying.

MURIEL
Maybe not so hard.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OVERVIEW, ENTIRE CIRCUS NIGHT 149

An aerial view of the circus grounds.

PINKY (V.O.)
(after a piercing
scream)
Tex! Tex! Tex!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT NIGHT 150

Exactly the same as Scene 139: the dwarfs sit up in their beds and scream.

PINKY (V.O.)
Tex! Tex! Tex!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS CONRAD'S TENT NIGHT 151

MR. MARTIN falls out of his hammock. CONRAD helps him up.

PINKY (V.O.)
Tex! Tex! Tex!

MR. MARTIN
Who's Tex?

CONRAD
One of the lions!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT 152

PRATAP and SUMI and SWEETIE and GANESH stand over PINKY, who is sitting up shivering in fear in her bed.

PINKY
Tex! Tex! Tex!

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)
You're dreaming—it's just a dream!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

152

PINKY
 (Hindi with English
 subtitles)
 I know I'm dreaming!

MR. MARTIN and CONRAD and MURIEL arrive.

GANESH
 (English)
 It's just a dream—she's always
 dreaming.

MR. MARTIN
 (beside Pinky's bed)
 There's no lion here. Look—where's
 the lion? There's no lion....

PINKY just stares at him.

GANESH
 She takes her dreams too seriously.

MURIEL
 Can't she dream quietly?

PINKY
 (Hindi with subtitles)
 Don't talk about my dreams! Don't talk
 about my dreams! Don't talk about my
 dreams!

GANESH
 (Hindi with subtitles)
 Okay—okay!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING MORNING

153

PINKY is all alone in the ring, practicing on her unicycle. SWEETIE is all alone in the audience area, reading a book; from time to time, as PINKY rides up and down a ramp, SWEETIE watches uncomfortably—remembering her lip. Then something catches SWEETIE's eye; it causes her to bite her lower lip.

Simultaneously with her seeing him, the camera pulls back, revealing CONRAD in a tight singlet with sequins; he stands with his unicycle resting cockily against his hip.

GANESH (V.O.)
 Muriel said it took balls to fall in
 love. Conrad thought he was ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

153

As he mounts his unicycle, CONRAD almost falls. But then he is up, and—as the music begins—the more he moves, the more confident he becomes. Soon he is racing around the ring with PINKY racing after him. SWEETIE touches her lower lip.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT MORNING

154

Unicycle song plays Over; SUMI and PRATAP are dancing.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pratap and Sumi were glad Sweetie wouldn't grow old in the circus.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING

155

Unicycle song plays Over; dwarfs are dancing in the avenue.

GANESH (V.O.)

The dwarfs were delighted that Conrad and Sweetie would be leaving.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT MORNING

156

MURIEL is crying in her bed.

GANESH (V.O.)

But not every guy had the balls to fall in love, Muriel said.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING MORNING

157

GANESH and MR. MARTIN are transfixed by CONRAD and PINKY, who are now "dancing" on their unicycles as the song plays Over. SWEETIE, entranced by love, walks into the ring.

GANESH (V.O.)

Sweetie was convinced that Conrad could produce well-coordinated children. Muriel was convinced that Conrad would produce boring children. From Sweetie, the children were sure to inherit her lack of imagination.

Cut to: MR. MARTIN in closeup, his head in his hands.

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin had to make up his mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

157

Cut back to: CONRAD and PINKY. They are dancing up and down the ramp when CONRAD flies out of control and crashes to the ground. SWEETIE rushes to him; with her fingertips, she touches his lips. Finally, they kiss as the song plays Over.

GANESH (V.O.)

This is the world we want to believe in. There is Brahma, the God of Creation; there is Vishnu, the God of Existence; there is Shiva, the God of Change. That's it, that's our Trinity—Creation, Existence, Change. This was Change.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION HOLDING TUNNEL NIGHT 158

The lions are prodded from their cages into the holding tunnel.

GANESH (V.O.)

But the female form of Shiva is Durga, the Goddess of Destruction.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ENTRY WING NIGHT 159

RADHA is fully costumed; SWEETIE smiles at PINKY as she covers her head with the peacock's head.

GANESH (V.O.)

Pinky was always right: she was in Durga's many hands.

As the previous act leaves the ring, the little peacocks enter to the eerie music. The ring darkens. The sound of the lions is constant Over.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION HOLDING TUNNEL NIGHT 160

The roustabouts stab the lions' paws with their long poles. A lion bolts the wrong way, backward down the holding tunnel, clawing his way over other lions.

GANESH (V.O.)

Tex was Pratap's favorite lion. He was Pinky's favorite lion, too.

Another angle: the end of the holding tunnel that opens into the cage area; as one of the lions is entering the tunnel, Tex slithers out.

GANESH (V.O.)

Tex always tried to go back to his cage when he heard the peacock music.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT

168

ACID MAN pinches the acid bottle in his lap between his thighs while he twists on the cork. Suddenly MR. MARTIN intrudes, carrying flowers; first he becomes entangled in the tent flap, then he stumbles into ACID MAN.

MR. MARTIN

Oh, excuse me!

MR. MARTIN steps on ACID MAN's foot. The bottle of acid spills in ACID MAN's lap. There is terrible hissing, and smoke billows from ACID MAN's crotch as he writhes on the rug.

MR. MARTIN

Oh, I'm awfully sorry!

ACID MAN's associates flee as ACID MAN howls and his crotch hisses and smokes. MR. MARTIN ungags MURIEL.

MURIEL

They let out Tex! They let out Tex!

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS BEHIND TROUPE TENTS NIGHT

169

PINKY and RADHA are still playing peacocks. The head of a dwarf pops out of a tent; he's startled to see the peacocks darting by. It's BEER BELLY, made-up for the bird-shit trick.

GANESH (V.O.)

Poor Beer Belly was the only one who saw it happen.

BEER BELLY cries out in alarm. Tex the lion, in a blur, passes through the frame in the semidarkness.

Another angle: Tex grabs one of the peacocks and shakes it. The lion tosses the peacock high in the air.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS DWARFS' TENT NIGHT

170

RADHA as a peacock runs screaming into SHIVAJI's tent where GANESH and SHIVAJI sit in their costumes with their painted faces. RADHA pulls off her peacock's head, which she clutches in her hands. She screams and screams.

RADHA

Tex! Tex! Tex!

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OUTSIDE DWARFS' TENT NIGHT 171

BEER BELLY, crying for help, kneels over PINKY—he removes her peacock's head and we see her beautiful face, her eyes staring the wide stare of death.

GANESH (V.O.)
Pinky was in Durga's hands.

Another angle: Tex panting in the semidarkness.

GANESH (V.O.)
It wasn't Tex's fault.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS LION CAGES NIGHT 172

PRATAP returns Tex to his cage; PRATAP might have to hit Tex with the bamboo stick. Then, as Tex cringes, PRATAP rubs the lion's face and mane consolingly.

GANESH (V.O.)
Tex didn't know he was killing Pinky.
Tex believed he was killing a peacock.
The problem was, Pinky was too good at being a peacock. She was too good at everything.

Camera closes on Tex's face.

GANESH (V.O.)
Tex almost starved himself to death—he didn't eat for almost two weeks. After he killed Pinky, Tex wanted to die.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PARKING LOT NIGHT 173

The black Mercedes—headlights out, motor not running—is the only car in the parking lot, where the roustabouts with their long metal poles (for prodding the lions) have surrounded the two associates of Acid Man. First the roustabouts sweep the legs out from under the men with the long poles; then they expertly begin to jab and strike them with the metal poles.

GANESH (V.O.)
Dr. Daruwalla was right: the circus is a family.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS NIGHT 174

Two stretcher-bearers in white dhotis are running with the body of ACID MAN, curled in a fetal position on the stretcher—his face glazed in pain, smoke still drifting from the area of his crotch. Two policemen follow, running.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

174

GANESH (V.O.)
We try to protect our own.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT

175

PINKY'S body is being prepared for the cremation ceremony; she is wreathed in flowers. GANESH's head is being shaved as MR. MARTIN tries to comfort him.

MR. MARTIN
You're not alone—please remember that.

GANESH
I'm alone. And don't tell me that her soul has flown up to Heaven—she had her own religion.

MR. MARTIN
Okay, I know. But you're not alone.

GANESH
I'm alone.

MR. MARTIN
I'm here. You could come with me....

GANESH
Come with you where?

MR. MARTIN
I could adopt you—I would, you know.

GANESH
Priests can't adopt children.

MR. MARTIN
But I would....

GANESH
I'm alone—I want to be alone! You don't even believe in cremation, but Pinky is going to be cremated—it's what she wanted.

MR. MARTIN
Okay, I know. I'll scatter her ashes for you. You tell me where.

GANESH
Brother Gabriel knows where.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

175

MR. MARTIN

Okay—consider it done. But what about you. I'm thinking about you.

GANESH

Don't. I'm alone.

MR. MARTIN

Okay—you're alone. But I'm still thinking about you.

GANESH

Don't!

MR. MARTIN bows his head.

MR. MARTIN

Okay.

GANESH touches MR. MARTIN's head. MR. MARTIN looks up.

GANESH

You can think about me a little.

MR. MARTIN

Okay.

EXT. BOMBAY MARINE DRIVE, ARABIAN SEA DAWN

176

At the steps, framed by the two pillars: BROTHER GABRIEL watches MR. MARTIN walk into the sea, scattering Pinky's ashes from a gold urn. Pinky's ashes immerse in the water.

GANESH (V.O.)

Mr. Martin took Pinky's ashes to the Arabian Sea, because Pinky was a good Hindu and she wanted her ashes scattered and immersed in the water that meant more to her than the Ganges.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING

177

GANESH limps beside Pinky's little unicycle. His head is shaved from the cremation ceremony.

GANESH (V.O.)

What did the circus need me for? It had been Pinky they wanted.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS OUTSIDE DWARFS' TENT MORNING 178

SHIVAJI watches as GANESH limps by with the unicycle.

GANESH (V.O.)

They didn't need me to do the Bird-Shit act—another clown could do it. Anyway, the audience preferred the dwarfs to me. They could always find another Bird-Shit Man.

EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING 179

BEER BELLY looks sympathetic as GANESH passes.

GANESH (V.O.)

You don't keep someone in the circus for one lousy Bird-Shit item.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT MORNING 180

Respectfully, but awkwardly, the people in the cook's tent make room for GANESH; the cook hands GANESH a cup of tea. A boy is chopping a mountain of onion and garlic.

GANESH (V.O.)

I wasn't necessary in the cook's tent either. Anyone can chop onion and garlic. They could always find a beggar who would be happy to sleep there and make friends with the mice.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT MORNING 181

RATNA practices the Skywalk as PRATAP and SUMI coach her.

GANESH (V.O.)

Even Pinky would be replaced.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT NIGHT 182

MURIEL cries, alone in her bed.

GANESH (V.O.)

Muriel had no idea when she'd see Mr. Martin again. She wasn't sure if she would see Mr. Martin again! Mr. Martin had a lot of things to figure out. What would he tell the Father Rector and Father Cecil? And what was he going to do? Was he going to be a priest, or was he going to marry Muriel?

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS CONRAD'S TENT NIGHT

183

SWEETIE sits with her arm around GANESH as they rock back and forth in CONRAD's hammock; GANESH is slumped against SWEETIE's shoulder.

SWEETIE
(Hindi with English
subtitles)

If the circus throws you out, Conrad
and I will take you to New Hampshire.

GANESH
(Hindi with English
subtitles)

What would I do in New Hampshire?
Probably freeze.

CONRAD stops the hammock from rocking.

CONRAD
Come on, Ganesh. Think. What would
Pinky want for you? What would she want
you to do? Pinky would want you to grow
up. She would want you to be able to
take care of yourself, wouldn't she?
Isn't that what Pinky would want?

Camera closes on GANESH huddled close to SWEETIE.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT DAWN

184

GANESH crawls out of his cubby under the sacks of lentils and peas; he looks quickly and warily around—he's all alone.

GANESH (V.O.)
Mr. Martin said he would adopt me. I
loved Mr. Martin, but I didn't want to
be his son.

Another angle: GANESH limps out of the cook's tent.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, RING DAWN

185

GANESH, alone, stands far below the device for skywalking, looking up at it.

GANESH (V.O.)
I knew where I belonged. I wasn't meant
to be Mr. Martin's son—no more than
I was meant to be a Christian. I was
meant to be a son of the circus.

(CONTINUED)

- CONTINUED: 185
- GANESH climbs the rope ladder; he scrambles to the top. He swings out on the trapeze—the relative safety of the rope ladder is cast away.
- INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT MORNING 186
- MURIEL wakes up with a start, as if from a nightmare.
- INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT MORNING 187
- PRATAP and SUMI are shaken awake by MURIEL, who runs through the adjoining tents, waking SWEETIE and all the others, too. Everyone gets quickly out of bed.
- INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, ROOF MORNING 188
- GANESH hangs unmoving upside down, his feet in the loops. He is getting up the nerve to let go with his hands. Very delicately, he lets go. He hangs only by his feet.
- GANESH (V.O.)
There's a moment when you must let go with your hands. I never knew whose hands I was in then. I couldn't think about hands at all. I couldn't think about the gods. I tried to concentrate on my feet.
- INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS COOK'S TENT MORNING 189
- CONRAD is down on all fours, peering into Ganesh's empty cubby under the lentils and peas. He jumps up and rushes away.
- GANESH (V.O.)
I think there's always a moment when you must decide where you belong.
- EXT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS AVENUE OF TROUPE TENTS MORNING 190
- The dwarfs are running as they pull on their clothes.
- GANESH (V.O.)
At that moment, you're in no one's hands. At that moment, everyone walks on the sky.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, FROM THE TOP MORNING 191

With a slight swaying motion, the camera looks down eighty feet at CONRAD and PRATAP who are staring straight up—at camera. They take a small step, then another, keeping themselves directly under the camera (as the camera moves); they are joined by SUMI and SWEETIE and MURIEL—then by LAKSHMI and SUBHASH. They all follow with their eyes fixed at camera; all move together, like a dance step, one step at a time. Everyone keeps a silent count of the steps above them.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, FROM BELOW MORNING 192

GANESH is halfway across. Camera moves up from ground-level, closer and closer to him. His eyes are fixed on his feet.

GANESH (V.O.)

What I told myself was: I was just walking. I didn't think skywalking, I thought just walking.

Another angle: close on PRATAP's face, his lips are counting.

Cut to MURIEL, SWEETIE and CONRAD—all counting.

GANESH (V.O.)

That was my little secret. Nobody else would have been much impressed by the thought of "just walking."

Cut back to GANESH nearing the end of the Skywalk.

GANESH (V.O.)

But for me, you see, the thought of "just walking" was the most exciting thing I could imagine.

GANESH gets to the last loop. He pulls himself up and looks down at the rest of them—all standing under him, all looking back up at him. MURIEL speaks to CONRAD.

MURIEL

Next thing you know, he'll be having sex, too.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT DAY 193

PRATAP and SUMI and SWEETIE are instructing GANESH, who is practicing the Skywalk across the roof of Pratap's tent. PRATAP and SUMI are jabbering in Hindi; SWEETIE speaks English.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

193

SWEETIE

You could have been killed, you little imbecile! You're not ready to skywalk across the roof of the big top until you've done it here, without falling, for two weeks!

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MURIEL'S TENT EVENING

194

GANESH is writing as MURIEL oversees his letter.

GANESH (V.O.)

I couldn't wait to write to Dr. Daruwalla. I told him that I'd learned to walk without a limp!

MURIEL

"Limp" is spelled with an "i," not a "y."

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS PRATAP'S TENT NIGHT

195

GANESH is arranging a new "temple" around his new bed, in the sleeping quarters for Pratap's troupe.

GANESH (V.O.)

I also wrote to Mr. Martin. I told him I was no longer sleeping in the cook's tent with the mice.

EXT. BOMBAY CRAWFORD MARKET DAY

196

MR. MARTIN walks in a daze through the immense and busy market; DR. DARUWALLA walks, concerned, beside him. They move through a maze of stalls selling tropical birds, monkeys, other curious pets (behind the Kipling fountain). MR. MARTIN is oblivious to his exotic surroundings.

DR. DARUWALLA

They are unrelated events, they are totally unrelated. Pinky's death is not your fault. Falling in love with Muriel is not a failure of your faith.

MR. MARTIN, eyes closed, trips on a monkey cage.

DR. DARUWALLA

Open your eyes! Why do you keep closing your eyes? Is this some idiotic trick you learned at the circus?

EXT. BOMBAY SASSOON DOCKS, COLABA DAY

197

The enormous fish market: walking past slabs of sharks and piles of smelts on blocks of ice, DR. DARUWALLA once more accompanies the self-absorbed MR. MARTIN who is deaf to the shrill cries of the fishwives.

DR. DARUWALLA

Christ hasn't failed you, Christ hasn't abandoned Pinky. Pinky was a believer. She's in the hands of the gods she believed in. Give Muriel a try! Open your eyes!

MR. MARTIN, eyes closed, walks into a bin of fish.

EXT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, THE COURTYARD DAY

198

MR. MARTIN, with DR. DARUWALLA, is saying good-bye to a friendly BROTHER GABRIEL, a sober FATHER CECIL, a solemn FATHER JULIAN (the Father Rector). A piano plays "Camptown Races" Over.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was the moment of reckoning that Mr. Martin needed: to realize that the world did not turn upon his commitment to remain as a missionary in India; to accept that his failure to become a priest did not mean that he had failed as a Christian or as a human being.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH DAY

199

As "Camptown Races" continues (badly), SARSU the prostitute is alone in the church; she kneels in a pew near the altar—she is praying and weeping.

GANESH (V.O.)

Poor Sarsu. Back to the evils of prostitution.

INT. BOMBAY ST. IGNATIUS, MUSIC PARLOUR DAY

200

MISS TANUJA at the piano: she is crying while she tries to play and sing "Camptown Races." Boys file into the parlour. When she sees them, she screams and bangs her head on the piano until all the boys have fled the room.

GANESH (V.O.)

Poor Miss Tanuja. Back to her Christian activities—alone.

EXT. TRAIN STATION IN THE CIRCUS TOWN DAY

206

SWEETIE kisses PRATAP and SUMI good-bye; CONRAD shakes GANESH's hand. This ritual is repeated with MURIEL and MR. MARTIN (he hugs GANESH). SWEETIE wears a beautiful sari.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was hard to imagine Sweetie wearing blue jeans instead of saris.

BEER BELLY is crying when he says good-bye to MURIEL.

GANESH (V.O.)

It was harder to imagine Muriel in Boston, where Mr. Martin would be teaching English. At the time, I presumed that no one spoke English in Boston!

The two couples wave good-bye from the train; from another angle, we see those left behind at the station—they are receding from view as the train pulls away. GANESH waves.

INT. GREAT ROYAL CIRCUS MAIN TENT, FROM THE TOP NIGHT

207

The view from the top of the tent, looking down at PRATAP and SUMI; they look up, at camera. Skywalk music is Over.

Cut to GANESH in a brilliant sequined costume, hanging upside down. (His hair has grown back from the cremation ceremony.) He lets go with his hands and hangs straight down; he starts to swing before taking his first step. GANESH begins to skywalk. (PRATAP and SUMI follow under him.)

GANESH (V.O.)

When I walked on the sky, I imagined that Pinky watched me; I imagined that I was performing for her—just as I knew she was performing for Durga, and for the other gods and goddesses. I knew that Pinky was performing for them.

PRATAP steps forward as GANESH, on the dental trapeze, descends into frame and into PRATAP's waiting arms. PRATAP lifts him up to the cheering crowd. The sound of the crowd fades.

Another angle: camera rises to the high roof of the tent as the sound of the crowd disappears completely.

Another angle: a beam of light scans the empty device for the skywalk and the hanging trapeze. No one is up there.

Another angle: the beam of light searches the roof of the great tent; it searches the ring, which is empty; it searches through the empty seats for an audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

207

It is a vast and empty tent that the beam of light searches.
No music, no sound.

GANESH (V.O.)

Once Pinky had seen me skywalk, I knew
 she would never rest until she was
 skywalking better than me.

Another angle: PINKY in a gorgeous costume hangs upside down
 on the skywalk device; the searching beam of light finds her
 and holds on her. Her arms point straight down; she is as still
 and as concentrated as an angel. As she starts to swing, the
 camera moves up very close on her. She has a great smile as
 she takes her first, confident step across the loops.

MADHU (V.O.)

Do you still see her when you close your
 eyes, Grandpa?

GANESH (V.O.)

Yes, always—when I close my eyes.

INT. TORONTO FOREST HILL HOUSE NIGHT

208

The living room (like the Christmas tree) is a mixture of
 Western and Eastern memorabilia. The fire is dying. Camera
 pauses on the framed photo of Pinky and Ganesh, hanging on the
 tree. Camera stops on MADHU in GANESH's lap.

MADHU

Is Pinky still skywalking, do you think?

GANESH

Yes, I'm sure she is—when you skywalk
 for the gods, they let you do it
 forever.

MADHU runs to the window, still holding the TV remote, with
 which she zaps on the TV as she runs. It is still the
 children's choir, now singing "Little Town of Bethlehem." MADHU
 jumps up and down by the window.

MADHU

Look, Grandpa—it's snowing! Can we take
 a walk in the snow?

GANESH

If you're quiet about it—don't let your
 mother hear. And if you bring me my
 coat.

It is difficult for GANESH to stand—he's been sitting so long
 in the chair.

EXT. TORONTO FOREST HILL STREET

NIGHT

209

The snow has been falling on the street and sidewalk for quite a while. Christmas lights are most evident in this wealthy residential neighborhood. The door to the nearest house opens and MADHU emerges, hand in hand with GANESH. As they make their way along the sidewalk, we recognize his limp. Camera follows them through the falling snow as "Little Town of Bethlehem" (Over) fades out.

MADHU

Does it ever snow in India?

GANESH

Not in my India—never once in the circus.

MADHU

Are Mr. Martin and Muriel still together?

GANESH

Well ... they are both dead now, but this doesn't necessarily mean that they are not together. I think they are still together.

MADHU

And Conrad and Sweetie—are they together?

GANESH

They have five children, an excessive number in this day and age—and too many grandchildren to count. All of them well-coordinated.

MADHU

And Shivaji and Beer Belly—are they still in the circus?

GANESH

No, those dwarfs are long gone, but their families are still in the circus—there are other dwarfs in the circus.

MADHU

Why did you leave the circus, Grandpa?

GANESH

Actually, I never really left the circus. I just learned English—it was only the English that took me away. It is the language that travels, you know.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

209

GANESH (Cont'd)

So I suppose I had to travel ... with
my English.

Start the music—the Unicycle song. Fade to black. End credits
as music plays Over.