

TUCK/RELEASE

Written by

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OVER BLACK

SUPER: "I was born twice. Once when I was born and again when I came to Pittsburgh. I am thankful to say I have lived two lives." -Roberto Clemente.

INT.ROYAL RAJ STAGE-NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: INDIAN DISCO MUSIC (Jeena Bhi Kya Koi Jeena Hai, Pt 1)

CLOSE UP on a BROWN WOMAN's hips shimmying in time with the music. Tied around her waist is a hip scarf with beads that vibrate and shimmer with her movements.

We start to slowly pull out, revealing more of the dancer's tanned hips.

INTERCUT:

EXT.BRADDOCK, PENNSYLVANIA, NEIGHBORHOOD-NIGHT

A row of abandoned brick houses. Crooked, dirty signs hang on the chain link fences guarding the properties, reading: "NO TRESPASSING" and "CONDEMNED".

BACK TO:

INT.ROYAL RAJ MAIN STAGE-NIGHT

Back to the woman on stage, we zoom out, revealing more of her torso and thighs.

She spins around, her hips moving effortlessly and quickly with the drum beat. She has a faded tramp-stamp with a sun and moon.

INTERCUT:

EXT. BRADDOCK ABANDONED TRAIN TRACKS-NIGHT

Rusted over train tracks with empty cargo cars sitting idle for what appears to be decades. A few of them are tipped over.

BACK TO:

INT.ROYAL RAJ STAGE-NIGHT

We pull back further from the dancer, revealing more. Her breasts adorned with a bedazzled pushup bra that are supporting...a lot. It catches the light as she expertly rolls her chest and shimmies it.

CUT TO:

EXT.BRADDOCK CITY LIMITS-EVENING

A cracked and unkempt sign that reads "Welcome to Historical Braddock, Neighborhood of Pittsburgh. EST. 1897. Population 1,293"

In the distance, the smoke from the EDGAR THOMPSON STEEL WORKS plumes into the already grey sky.

BACK TO:

INT.ROYAL RAJ STAGE-NIGHT

We finally pull back to see the rest of our dancer: CHAMILA, 42, South Asian and utterly seductive, belly dancing. She snakes and winds her way across a small stage. A blinding smile plastered on her face. She is captivating.

We pull back even further, revealing the sad reality of the Royal Raj.

To call the Raj a strip club would be generous. It's a crammed room, the kind with sticky floors and smells like stale cigarette smoke.

Uncomfortable seating surrounds a stage at the front of the space, with a short bar crammed to the side.

The audience is maybe 6 people. A group of OLDER WHITE MEN-the blue collar type ogle Chamila, their eyes following her shimmying hips.

Her boss, MATTEO, 68, an Italian American opportunist, is leaning against the bar watching her.

Chamila comes off the stage and rounds the handful of patrons. She shakes her hips close to the men's faces, and they react as enthusiastically as a man of that age could react.

DAVEY, 66, grubby in every sense, tucks a crumpled-up dollar into her g-string.

Chamila smiles gracefully. She goes back on stage for her big finish.

CUT TO:

EXT.ROYAL RAJ-NIGHT

A crumbling brick building with a neon sign that reads "THE ROYAL RAJ: EXOTIC DANCERS," the lights for a few letters are out. There is graffiti that reads "MOM PUSSY" on the side of the building.

A MAN is trying to sell his mixed tape to the few patrons who amble around the establishment.

BACK TO:

INT.ROYAL RAJ STAGE-NIGHT

Chamila throws her arms up in the air and shimmies in a dizzying fashion as her big finale. The music bursts to a halt, and Chamila holds her pose.

A pathetic smattering of applause echoes across the space. Chamila doesn't falter.

INT.RAJ DRESSING ROOM-NIGHT

Chamila enters the dressing room after her performance. Her smile has faded, her shoulders slouched, and her demeanor is far less flirtatious. She is no longer performing.

The dressing room is full of 3 other FEMALE DANCERS who are all women of color in 'exotic' outfits. They are all getting ready, putting on sparkly feathered bras, applying makeup, and chatting.

Chamila immediately throws on a big t-shirt. She undoes her waist scarf and puts on basketball shorts.

TARA, MILLY, and LAURA are all younger dancers in their late twenties, sitting on the floor of the dressing room doing TAROT CARD READING. Tara draws a card.

TARA

Ooohh ten of pentacles. Prosperity
is coming your way!

CHAMILA

Not tonight, you aren't, babygirl.
It's all but Dick Out Davey out
there.

LAURA

Maybe I'll tap into an unknown
wealth of his.

CHAMILA

I've been tapping on it for years.
Let me know if you find some.

CHAMILA (CONT'D)

Not tonight, you aren't, babygirl.
It's all but Davey, Johnny, and his
brother out there.

LAURA

Maybe I'll tap into an unknown
wealth of his.

TARA

Don't tap anything of that man's.

CHAMILA

I've been tapping on it for years.
Let me know if you find some.

BRITT, 49, an Arabic woman who doesn't take any shit and
carries herself as such, comes up to Chamila.

BRITT

If Davey gifts you some secret
wealth, you'd best share it with me
and Chamila. We've been his fluffer
for decades.

CHAMILA

His poor wife.

BRITT

Poor us. Making the big bucks
today?

Chamila pulls the dirty dollar bill out of her shorts.

BRITT (CONT'D)

Don't spend it all at once, now.

CHAMILA

I know none of those men have money
either, but dear lord.

BRITT

Recession, I guess. Recessions are gonna kill this neighborhood-haven't you heard?

CHAMILA

The last of Braddock, Pennsylvania - one strip club and steel mill to rule them all.

Matteo enters the dressing room. He moves far too confidently in a space occupied by mostly nude women who work for him.

MATTEO

Hello, my darlings!

A chorus of unenthusiastic acknowledgment from the women. Matteo goes up to Milly. He tucks a piece of hair behind her ear. She shrinks before him.

MATTEO (CONT'D)

This costume looks beautiful on you, chickadee.

MILLY

Thanks, Matteo.

Chamila moves between Milly and Matteo.

CHAMILA

Matteo, stop flirting with Milly-she doesn't want you.

Matteo ignores her and waves a piece of paper around.

MATTEO

Schedule time! Tara, I tried my best to work around your plans, but some things can't be helped.

TARA

My mom is getting married!

MATTEO

Not my fault.

Matteo pins the schedule to the wall. The dancers crowd around it. Chamila and Britt are first in line to see the schedule.

Britt frowns at the schedule. Chamila seems confused.

BRITT

Ayo Matteo. I think you made a mistake. You forgot me and Chamila this weekend.

MATTEO

You're just not scheduled on Saturday.

BRITT

But we are always scheduled on Saturday, for, like, the past 15 years.

MATTEO

I'm just switching things up.

CHAMILA

Switching things up, how?

MATTEO

Don't worry about it, ok?

BRITT

Uh, I am going to worry about it because Saturday is one of the only nights when this place is worth a damn.

MATTEO

It's just a temporary change.

TARA

Well, is someone going to replace them on Saturday? Or do we have to pick up the slack?

CHAMILA

Replace?

Matteo goes to Chamila and Britt and puts an arm around each of them.

MATTEO

Now you two hens have been running the Raj since before Homestead Steelworks closed. You made the Raj what it is! The club is just undergoing some difficulties. I just thought some fresh sets would do the club some good.

BRITT
We can come up with new
choreography.

CHAMILA
Are I-we not ...fresh?

Matteo gives them both a once-over.

MATTEO
No, my darlings, you both are as
lovely as ever.

BRITT
Then give us our Friday slot back.

Matteo's eyes flicker around nervously like a cornered
animal.

MATTEO
I believe it is time for you two to
get on stage, my dears!! Hup Hup!
Big smiles, yes?

He gives them both awkward side hugs and ushers them out of
the dressing room. g

INT.ROYAL RAJ-MAIN FLOOR

Chamila and Britt strut on stage, in performance mode. They
are received with the same pathetic smattering of applause
and some wolf whistles. They pose on stage, awaiting the
music.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1
Yeah baby!!

Fast tabla drum music starts on the PA system. Britt and
Chamila assume their position for the choreography.

Their hips move both elegantly and athletically. Together on
stage, they are a dynamic sexual force.

Suddenly, an audience member, Davey, starts choking and
holding his hand over his heart.

He falls out of his seat and writhes on the floor. The other
AUDIENCE MEMBER and the BARTENDER rush to him.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 (CONT'D)
I think he's having a heart
attack!!

BARTENDER
Matteo! Call 911!

Chamila and Britt stop dancing while this chaos unfolds. Both
of them wear a look of shock and horror on their faces.

BRITT
Oh hell no.

Britt retreats backstage, leaving Chamila watching the scene.
She looks at Matteo, watching the man in dismay.

Matteo and Chamila make eye contact. Matteo looks away and
goes to the wall phone to call 911.

EXT. ROYAL RAJ-LATE NIGHT.

The Royal Raj has closed early for the night. Chamila and
Britt smoke cigarettes outside, their faces lit up by the red
lights of the ambulance. A gurney manned by TWO EMTs with the
Davey lying on it. Luckily, he is moving, just barely. Matteo
follows the EMTs out and thanks them.

Matteo walks up to Chamila and Britt.

MATTEO
He's going to live.

CHAMILA
Oh...

BRITT
He's a good tipper.

CHAMILA
He's a creep.

BRITT
Same shit, really.

CHAMILA
We're not being, like, fired,
right?

MATTEO
It's not your fault he had a heart
attack. I mean, probably. But you
know. He probably can't sue.
Anyway, see you ladies on Monday!

Matteo leaves the two of them.

PITTSBURGH PRIMO, 28, a loser wannabe rapper, continues to try to sell his mixtape outside the Raj.

PRIMO

Hey, ladies, anyone wanna buy my new track?

Chamila and Britt just look at him.

PRIMO (CONT'D)

C'monnnnn.

CHAMILA

Primo, I bought your tape last week, and it had one song on it. And it was the same exact song as all the other CDs.

PRIMO

I remixed it!

BRITT

Go home, Primo.

PRIMO

Ain't no rest for the wicked.

Britt turns to Chamila.

BRITT

He's booting us out. Matteo thinks we are the problem.

CHAMILA

I don't know. It's just Matteo being Matteo. He's always got schemes to turn this place around. Remember when he opened an illegal gambling ring in the back room after watching *Uncut Gems*? He'll try to reinvent the place for a week and then realize old habits die hard.

BRITT

It seems more like old habits are dying.

Britt gestures to the ambulance that is now backing out of the parking lot. Chamila follows it with her eyes.

BRITT (CONT'D)
They get older and we are not
staying the same age-are we?

Chamila shrugs.

BRITT (CONT'D)
You drive?

CHAMILA
Yeah. Might drive around a little
before going home. I think Sam
might have a...friend over.

BRITT
Well, give him and his 'friend' a
kiss from me.

CHAMILA
I will not.

BRITT
Sam is a hottie, I'll be his
'friend' if he wants.

Britt winks at Chamila. Chamila shoves Britt away jovially.

Britt kisses Chamila on the cheek.

BRITT (CONT'D)
Love you.

CHAMILA
Love you too.

Britt leaves. Chamila continues smoking her cigarette. Primo
pulls out a CD player and inserts his mixtape. A horrible
track starts playing. Chamila watches him, cringing at the
music.

She pulls a wad of cash out of her pocket- her earnings for
the night. She pulls out \$3 and hands it to Primo. Primo
beams and hands her a CD.

PRIMO
You're gonna love it, I promise.

Chamila nods and goes on her way. The lights of the Raj
flicker behind her.

INT./EXT. CHAMILA'S CAR-LATE NIGHT

Chamila drives down the empty dark streets of Braddock.

She passes an old church with a broken steeple and a letter board that clearly has not been touched in years, which reads "LETS GO BUCS!" on it.

In the distance, the looming silhouette of the steelworks sits.

At a stoplight, Chamila puts Primo's CD into her car's CD player. A low-quality generic hip-hop backing track starts playing. Primo's voice is badly blended into the track.

PRIMO (V.O.)
(rapping. Or more like yelling) GO
PRIMO GO PRIMO GO! GO PRIMO GO!

CHAMILA
Oh lord.

PRIMO (V.O.)
VERSACE VERSACE VERSACE! GUCCI
VERSACE GUCCI VERSACE!!

Chamila turns down the music.

EXT.CHAMILA'S HOUSE-LATE NIGHT

Chamila's house is narrow and tall and obviously neglected. An upstairs window is boarded up. The small lawn outside the house is unkempt and brown. Leaves overflow from the gutters. Moss clings to the sides of the house. An old rusted "NO TRESPASSING" sign hangs on the chain-link fence outside the house.

Chamila unlocks the three dead bolts on the front door before letting herself in.

INT.CHAMILA'S HOME LIVING ROOM-LATE NIGHT

Chamila's home is bare, but not minimalist. It's not minimalism if you are poor.

Peeling paint. A sagging hand-me-down couch. An old TV is sitting atop old cardboard boxes.

Chamila drops herself onto the couch. She picks up a half-smoked joint from an ashtray on the rickety coffee table and lights it up. Weed has found its way into every nook and cranny of this table.

Also on the coffee table is a LATE PAYMENT STATEMENT for their power bill. Chamila picks it up and then decides to ignore it.

Chamila looks around the living room, making sure the coast is clear before digging in her bag and pulling out a MINI VIBRATOR.

Chamila opens her phone and pulls up Pornhub. A pop-up screen asks what porn she would like to watch- "GAY OR STRAIGHT". Her finger hovers over straight before clicking on gay.

She scrolls until she finds a video of a BROWN GAY MAN having sex with another guy titled "MOCHA MUSCULAR DOM POUNDS BOY PUSSY". She clicks on it.

Right as she is pulling down her basketball shorts, THUDDING FOOTSTEP descends the stairs.

Chamila turns off her phone and hastily shoves the vibrator in the couch cushions.

She looks up to see a GRUFF WHITE MAN, 40s, come down the stairs and look through the fridge. He doesn't appear to notice her.

Chamila's eyes widen in shock.

CHAMILA

Uhhhh. There's probably nothing in there besides beer. And ketchup. Shit ton of ketchup.

The man jumps, whipping around to see Chamila.

GRUFF MAN

Ah sorry. Didn't see you there. You must be Sam's roommate.

CHAMILA

I'm his wife, actually.

The man is stunned.

GRUFF MAN

Oh uhhh.

CHAMILA

It's ok. We are separated. Obviously.

GRUFF MAN

Ummmm...right.

Another set of footsteps barrel down the stairs. This time it is SAM, 42, a warm-hearted, large man - Chamila's (separated) husband. He immediately looks fretfully between Chamila and the man.

SAM
Ah, Chamila, hey. I see you two
have met.

GRUFF MAN
Ummmmmm.

The man looks to Sam. Sam shrugs. The man closes the fridge and trudges towards the front door. Sam follows him and opens the door for him.

SAM
I'll see you at work, yeah?

The man nods. Sam pulls him into an indulgent kiss. Showing off to Chamila.

Chamila studies them and their kiss.

The man takes his leave, and Sam closes the door behind him. He turns to Chamila.

SAM (CONT'D)
I can explain.

CHAMILA
Yeah, no, I think I figured it out.

SAM
You look confused.

CHAMILA
You've...Well, you've never brought
a man home before, is all.

SAM
Is that a problem?

Sam looks to Chamila, seeking her approval.

CHAMILA
Hey man, your business is your
business.

Sam lets out a breath.

CHAMILA (CONT'D)
Besides, I always had my
suspicions.

SAM
No, you didn't.

He plops down on the couch next to Chamila. She hands him the joint, and he takes a hit.

CHAMILA
I did tell him I'm your wife.

SAM
Dude!

CHAMILA
I AM your wife.

SAM
You separated from *me*.

CHAMILA
Semantics.

Sam doesn't respond.

CHAMILA (CONT'D)
Ok, sorry, sorry. I'm being a bitch... How was it?

SAM
Not a complete waste of time.

CHAMILA
So did you...or did he...? Ya know-

Chamila makes a circle with her pointer finger and thumb with one hand and sticks the pointer finger of her other hand through the circle.

SAM
Does it not bother you to talk to me about my sex life?

CHAMILA
I compartmentalize. And I mean, we are friends. Friends talk about these things.

SAM
Well, it's just like, you don't sleep with anyone, which is surprising considering your line of work.

Ouch! Wrong thing to say! Chamila looks away.

SAM (CONT'D)

Sorry. That wasn't what I meant.
What I meant to say is you're
super, super sexy and have an
incredible hourglass figure.

CHAMILA

You're such a cunt I can't believe
I ever married you.

SAM

It was for the same reason I have
many suitors of the night.

Chamila raises an eyebrow.

SAM (CONT'D)

My fat cock.

Chamila laughs and hands the joint back to Sam. A comfortable
silence falls between them, and they both sink into the
couch.

SAM (CONT'D)

How was work?

CHAMILA

Fine. Actually bad. Davey had a
heart attack during me and Britt's
set.

SAM

Oh? My god?

CHAMILA

Yeah.

SAM

(excited) Is he ok?

CHAMILA

Unfortunately, I think he will
live.

SAM

Damn. He's so gross.

CHAMILA

He's a good tipper.

SAM

Is Matteo worried about, I don't
know, his clientele aging out?

CHAMILA

Britt is more worried about us aging out.

SAM

Britt's biggest fear in life is wrinkles and saggy tits. I don't know if she's a reliable barometer of age.

CHAMILA

I mean, she's not wrong. I don't look like what I used to. And. We got taken off the schedule for Saturdays.

SAM

Damn. Are you going to find another job?

Chamila doesn't respond.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm not saying you are getting booted. But, I mean, it's a pretty seedy club.

CHAMILA

I guess. It's just like, what else is there to do?

SAM

Jesus, you're 44, not dead. Not to mention, I'm not sure I'm quite comfortable taking you on as a sugar baby since we are separated and all.

CHAMILA

Uh-huh, you and all your Heinz factory money.

SAM

Hey man, the union is thinking of striking for a raise!

CHAMILA

Ketchup union, *catching up* to a living wage?

SAM

I'm serious!

CHAMILA

You've been saying that for years.
You know I make more money at the
Raj.

SAM

Well... I might have also secured a
gig downtown. That *pays*.

CHAMILA

A gig?

Sam mimes playing a guitar.

CHAMILA (CONT'D)

Oh, you're still doing that music
thing?

Sam appears dejected at Chamila's dismissal.

SAM

Yes, Chamila, I am still doing that
music thing. I'm getting paid \$150
to perform at-

CHAMILA

I saw we're late on the power bill.
Maybe you should focus on the union
instead of fucking your coworkers.

Chamila leans back into the couch, the pleasant buzz of the
joint rolling over her body. Sam watches her, observes her
for a moment.

SAM

Maybe you should see about getting
another job. It's not like you even
want to do this.

CHAMILA

I'll just talk to Matteo. It'll be
fine.

Sam puts out the joint and gets up. Chamila pays no mind.

SAM

Goodnight, Chamila.

CHAMILA

Hmmmm.

Chamila snuggles up on the couch and closes her eyes. Sam
covers her with a blanket and goes to the stairs.

CHAMILA (CONT'D)
You're walking with a limp!

Sam flips her off as he ascends the stairs. A small smile spreads across Chamila's face as she falls asleep.

EXT. ROYAL RAJ-EVENING

The sun is setting as Chamila races into a parking spot at the Raj. She parks crooked, and she doesn't bother to fix it.

Primo is free-styling outside as Chamila gets out of the car.

PRIMO
(rapping poorly) Yuh Yuh. I out
here rapping, Chamila's out here
capping. Her cheeks be clapping.
The paparazzi snapping because she
looks too fine. Yuh! She's sublime.
Uhh yeah she's more than a nine!

A poster not previously present hangs on the Raj. It's a pin-up sketch that has a woman in a sexy red dress. She's lifting the dress, revealing a penis underneath. The text reads "Two for the price of one!!"

Chamila is too much in a rush to notice it.

CHAMILA
Thanks Primo.

Chamila rushes into the Raj.

INT. ROYAL RAJ-MAIN FLOOR

The staff and dancers of the Raj are gathered around the stage listening to Matteo, who is talking to them.

Next to him is STAR, 19, a confidently posed, angular trailer park princess. Star looks up at Chamila as she barrels in.

MATTEO
Nice of you to join us, Chamila.

Chamila shuffles into a seat next to Britt. Britt appears livid and shakes her head at Chamila.

CHAMILA
What's going on?

MATTEO
Staff meeting.

BRITT

We have a new friend.

MATTEO

This is Star. She'll be joining the Royal Raj family.

CHAMILA

Doing what? We weren't informed of a new hire.

STAR

I'm a dancer. A performer.

Chamila is taken aback. Britt scoffs.

CHAMILA

Britt and I audition the dancers.

MATTEO

I handpicked Star myself. To cater to some of our loyal customers with particular tastes.

CHAMILA

...what particular tastes? I mean no offense but...

BRITT

No no. The gag is that "she"

Britt points to Star.

BRITT (CONT'D)

Is really a 'he'

Chamila looks at Star for a long moment. Star raises her eyebrow in defiance.

CHAMILA

Wait...What?

STAR

I'm just me, baby.

CHAMILA

But...But..

MATTEO

And she is the something I think we are missing at the Raj. We are very excited to be welcoming Star, yes?

BRITT

That's why you took me and Chamila
off Saturdays? So he could play
dress up?

Chamila looks uneasily between Britt, Star, and Matteo.

STAR

I'm sorry, what is it that you do
here that isn't playing dress up?

BRITT

This cunt.

CHAMILA

Wait, I'm confused.

BRITT

Girl, catch up.

STAR

Yeah, catch up, girl.

Chamila and Britt both glare at Star.

BRITT

Oh you-

MATTEO

-ok ok! I know today is an exciting
day and things are changing, but
don't worry! I'm sure we have space
for the lovely Star! And everyone
else, of course.

Matteo hops off the stage. Star remains on stage, she grabs
the pole in the middle of the stage and swings around
elegantly, in her own world.

BRITT

You believe this shit? Getting
replaced by a tranny.

CHAMILA

We are not getting replaced. I'm
going to talk to him.

Chamila catches up to Matteo in his office.