

UNTITLED

A play by Getanjoly Roy

CHARACTERS

- RASAM A Bengali Hindu, bisexual, 17-years old. She identifies with her religion a lot, and participates in the temple a little bit, through dancing at religious functions. She is close with her father.
- JAAN Pakistani Muslim, 18-years old. Though her faith is strong, she is not extremely religious. She does not wear the hijab like her father wants her to.
- BABA Rasam's father. He's extremely religious, has raised his daughter alone, cares a lot for her and is quite open minded. Has an almost Indian sounding accent.
- BHAI Jaan's brother, his name is the Urdu word for "brother." He does try to be obedient to his father while defending his sister. Due to fear of his father, he often stays silent after trying for a little bit.
- ABUJI Jaan's father; his name is the Urdu word for "father." He is very closed minded and rooted in his traditions. He is controlling and almost abusive at times. Speaks with a Pakistani accent.
- AMIJI Urdu for mother. She is quiet and subservient, and does not say much. Also speaks with a Pakistani accent.

FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

When I was writing this, I was thinking about Romeo and Juliet, but as two South Asian girls from different religious cultures and the struggles they would face.

ACT 1

SCENE 2

(A man who is somewhat old—maybe in his 50s, is praying in front of his family deity, the Goddess Durga. There is a red powder dot on his forehead. Slowly and quietly, his daughter comes in.)

RASAM

Papa, hey—

BABA

(His look of peace stops for a moment and he looks over at his daughter.)

Stop. I'm praying. One minute, okay?

(She nods. Ahbir goes back into his silent and prayerful mode, mumbling foreign words in prayer. He finishes, reaching down to touch the "feet" of the statue of the goddess, before turning back to his daughter.)

BABA

(Firm, yet kind.)

Why were you speaking to me?

RASAM

Papa, I'm sorry, I—

BABA

It's okay. Just remember, Rasam, every morning I pray to the Goddess, and you are to be quiet when I do that, okay?

RASAM

Yes, Papa. I'm sorry.

BABA

It's fine. Can you give a portion of your food to the flame?

RASAM

For the offerings, right?

(She rips a piece of her bread and puts it on the altar.)

Done.

BABA

Aish. You know, your...mother. She was always very good. She always prayed. She was very good at this...I don't know it as well as she did.

RASAM

Hey, Papa?

BABA

Yes, my child?

RASAM

Um...what was Ma like?

BABA

(With a faraway look, and a distant, sad smile.)

Don't you have school today?

RASAM

Uh, yeah, I do. But it's not like they're doing anything important today. It's not a school day, it's just a service project day. Besides, I want to stay home and spend some time with you.

BABA

I suppose that would be okay. You are not missing any of your studies, yes?

RASAM

Correct.

BABA

Well, I...I don't know.

RASAM

Oh, c'mon, Baba, it's not like you haven't talked about her before.

BABA

Yes, that is with family. That is very...different.

RASAM

You know what would be real nice? If when my friends talked about their parents, I have something I could say about Ma.

BABA

Okay, fine. Sit down and eat. I'll tell you about your mother. Okay?

RASAM

Hm. Okay.

(She sits and tears a piece of naan, and begins eating.)

BABA

What do you want to know?

RASAM

How did you meet?

BABA

We ran away together, you know.

RASAM

Wait, what?!

BABA

I never told you? We married inter-caste. It was a big no with our families. She was a Kshatriya, I was a Shudra. Though our entire village was after our heads—

RASAM

Pa, that's kind of...epic. Like Romeo and Juliet.

BABA

Ah? How?

RASAM

You met how, exactly? At the temple, right? Both of your families were against the marriage and you ran away to New York, where you wouldn't be discriminated against based on your castes.

BABA

Yes, that's correct. You know, you look exactly like your mother. Especially when you smile.

RASAM

Really? I think I remember her. Kinda. I remember being on a bed and this woman singing to me—

BABA

Yes, that was her. Do you remember the song?

RASAM

Some old song, I think—I remember the melody but not really the words.

BABA

I...I don't know. From a very old film. I remember, you used to dance to it a lot.

RASAM

Is that how I started dancing at the Temple?

BABA

Yes. You had the beauty of Madhubala and Madhuri Dixit in one person. Just like your mother. You will make one lucky man extremely happy one day.

RASAM

Uh....dad, about that. Can I talk to you about that?

BABA

Hanji, yes, Go ahead.

RASAM

Dad, I...I'm not...I don't like...

BABA

What is it, Janu?

RASAM

...Never mind. This is nice. I'm happy I can be here with you, today, Dad.

(She nervously taps her fingers against the table.)

BABA

Good. I am, too.

(End scene.)

SCENE 3

(Jaan is at home and with her family. On the stage is a single table, with an older man, maybe in his 30s or 40s. He is reading a newspaper in Urdu. A woman is across the stage, in a sort of "kitchen." Jaan comes in with a cup of coffee.)

JAAN

Morning.

AMIJI & ABUJI

(In unison.)

Assalaam-walaikum.

JAAN

(Rolling her eyes.)

Walaikum-salaam.

ABUJI

What is that tone about?

JAAN

(She almost tenses up.)

Nothing, Papa. I'm just...tired.

ABUJI

Tired-ness is not an excuse. I would have thought you would understand this by now.

AMIJI.

(She calls out from the kitchen, coming to the doorway.)

Pyare, don't worry about it. She is simply a teenage girl.

JAAN

Can I just remind you guys that I'm gonna be 20 years old? It's only a few years away.

AMIJI.

Yes, pyare, but you will always be our little girl, and you know that we have your best interests—

ABUJI

(He gives a pointed look to the Mother, who almost tries to look back defiantly, but instead, she just seems to shrink back into the kitchen. The father looks back at his daughter.)

Janu, you have to have religion.

JAAN

(Visibly shaken, she nods.)

Yes, Papa, I know.

ABUJI

(He makes a sort of whistling noise, to call out for his wife. She comes out from the kitchen.)

Make my tea.

(He looks back at his daughter as his wife goes back into the kitchen.)

It is not good to have no religion.

JAAN

Papa, I know.

ABUJI

Then you ought to behave like it. Your brother is good Muslim.

(Almost as if on cue, the brother walks in. He walks with a bit of a withdrawn attitude, as if he isn't there.)

ABUJI

Assalaam-walaikum, my boy. How are you?

BHAI

Walaikum-salaam.

(He also nearly jumps at the sound of his father's voice.)

I-I'm good, Papa.

ABUJI

See, my boy. I was talking to your sister. About how she ought to be more like you.

BHAI

Oh----! Yes. Definitely, Papa. In what respects do you mean?

ABUJI

You're a good boy. You are going into a steady field—

JAAN

I'm going to be a lawyer.

ABUJI

You are a good Muslim—

JAAN

What is a good Muslim again?

ABUJI

(Another look, almost threatening.)

You will only speak when I tell you to speak. Thikhai?

(JAAN looks down, mumbling, “hanji.” While the father is still glaring at JAAN, her brother does a quick breath check.)

Well, you stupid girl? Say something.

JAAN

(She looks up, and her voice cracks as she speaks.)

I’m sorry, Papa.

ABUJI

Damn right, you are.

BHAI

(With a slightly forced tone, and a smile. it’s almost as if he doesn’t want to say this.)

You ought to be more like Ma, Jaan

JAAN

(She is clearly exasperated.)

I’m not going to get married at the age of 20. Nor am I going to be uneducated. I’m going to college.

ABUJI

(He puts his fingers on his temples, clearly stressed.)

We will fix you. Maybe not all now, or even any time soon.

JAAN

I have to go to school, Pa.

ABUJI

Yes, go.

(She exits and he bangs his fist against the table.)

Aish.

BHAI

Everything okay, Papa?

ABUJI

No, of course not. My daughter does not listen to me.

BHAI

I know.

ABUJI

She does not cook. She does not clean. She does not pray or read the Qu'ran. She does not wear hijab. She is not proper. She is.....very...

(Snapping his fingers, like he's looking for a word.)

BHAI

She thinks with her own mind.

ABUJI

Yes! Exactly.

BHAI

You know to a lot of folks, that's good.

ABUJI

It is not her place. What made her like this?! Your mother is not like this.

BHAI

Well, it's not like she grew up in Pakistan. She grew up here. In the city.

ABUJI

A very wrong decision. I see this now.

BHAI

I-I...

(Gathering up courage.)

I think you're wrong. This country is good for us—for her, for me. She...she can make something for herself in this country. You know, she is very smart, she has a lot of o-opinions and—

ABUJI

Enough.

BHAI

I'm not—

ABUJI

(Slamming his fist against the table, he stands up.)

No. You are done speaking. You will not be spreading such-----such LIES.

(Shouting)

Okay?!

BHAI

(Scared, but resigned nodding. He looks down at his lap.)

I-I'm sorry.

ABUJI

(He takes a breath, sits down, and calls out to his wife in the kitchen.)

Where is my tea?!

(End scene)