

fucking won't make us human

by sahil nisha

“Rohit!” Rohit awoke to his mother pounding on the wall his room shared with the kitchen, aligned with the head of his bed. “Breakfast!” Why was she always pounding and yelling to talk to him, even when she knew he was awake? Their communication should have, by now, organically done away with the need for insignificant speech.

He could hear his father's muffled voice. He imagined his mother clicking her tongue through her teeth, silencing his father. She pounded the wall again, Rohit groaned. Sitting up, he surveyed his room in the natural light filtering through the leaves, through his blinds, and finally shining on the dust that was suspended in his stuffy room. In the corner by the window, Rohit slept on a twin bed. A slab he had inherited from his parents' early days as immigrants. Just opposite the window was a short, wide dresser. A chair from their dining table sat in front of it, forcing it to double as a desk. Opposite the wall he shared with the kitchen was a closet with a folding door. From the floor by his bed, Rohit pulled on a pair of baggy grey sweatpants, stained at the bottoms where the legs dragged along the ground with each step. He contorted his hips to the left so he wouldn't slam into his dresser/desk on his way to the kitchen.

He sat down at the table with too many chairs and not enough elbow room, thankful to not be sitting directly next to his father. His mother offered him a bowl stained yellow from the turmeric concoctions she would mix therein some evenings while preparing dinner. Pouring himself a bowl of Cocoa Pebbles he topped it with soy milk and watched the Pebbles float on top, expanding as they soaked up the milk.

“Beta, why don’t you wear a shirt?” Rohit’s mother complained.

“I’m at home, I should be comfortable.”

His father scoffed as he sipped his daily chai. Rohit’s head whipped towards the sound, his mouth agape, ready to defend himself against his father’s unspoken insult. Deciding against it, he slumped forward and raced to finish his cereal before it crumbled into the milk.

“Rohit.” Rohit, finally managing to chase down the last of his Pebbles around the bowl, turned his eyes towards his father’s, whose gaze bore through his own.

“Ha?”

“Who else is supposed to be there today?”

“It’s the first day, so we’ll have to wait and find out.”

“I still can’t believe it. My own son, stuck in summer school.” Rohit broke away from his father’s stare. He cupped the bowl in his hands and lifted it to his puckered lips. Closing his eyes and savored each drop of milk, sweeter today than usual, he must have let the cereal soak longer than he’d realized. As he drank, a rivulet ran down from the corner of his mouth, coming to a rest where his jawline became his chin. It broke once more and flowed down his outstretched neck and through the valley at the center of his chest, where it was interrupted by his course, albeit sparse, chest hair.

“Ay. There’s no problem,” his mother stepped in to defend Rohit, something he himself had yet to practice, “we don’t have to tell the universities.” His father didn’t look at her. Instead, he swirled his spoon around the shallows of his chai, removing the skim of the boiled milk. She turned to Rohit, her eyes tracing the trail the milk had blazed

down his body. “Finish? Then put a shirt on.” Rohit jumped up and scurried to his room. He was stopped by his mother, who wiped away the river of milk with a napkin. She ushered him along, past her.

“Rohit, make sure to find a friend today. He will need to give you a ride home, your mother is working and I refuse to pick my son up from summer school. Shame!” His father’s words chased him to his room. Rohit slammed the door against them. His mother banged on the wall again, imploring him to stop slamming doors.

“Ann?” Annabelle’s mom knocked gently on the door. “Do you want me to drop you off for your first day?”

“That’s okay, mom! I’m sure I can manage.” She did her best to strip the frustration in her voice, her mom’s knocking had startled her, skewing the liquid eyeliner she was trying to carve into short sharp wings. She dabbed a Kleenex on her tongue and salvaged what she could of the asymmetrical wing.

“Okay, then. I’m heading out for work, I don’t know if I’ll be home by the time you’re back from summer school.”

“Okay.” Annabelle furrowed her brow, “And you can just call it school.” She expected more of herself and resented her mom reminding her.

“Sure, sweetie. I love you! Call me if you need anything.”

“Love you, too.” Annabelle leaned towards her makeup mirror, radiating a soft light, she reapplied her eyeliner. Satisfied, she stood up and navigated her way to the full-length mirror. While her room wasn’t particularly small, it was crowded. A dresser

on either side of the bathroom door, which shared a wall with the door to her room. Across the room were two west-facing windows, beneath which sat the desk that she treated as a vanity. The shallow closet overflowed in the wall next to the desk. This left only the space beside her queen-size bed, a luxury she insisted on, for the mirror.

Her brown hair hung down to shoulder length, curling gradually as it approached the end. Her purple eyeshadow brought out the green in her eyes. She smirked at her ability to match the softness of her eyeshadow with the softness of her matte nude lipstick. Annabelle straightened her pink tennis skirt into which she had tucked a baggy, white shirt.

Noticing a loose thread, she pulled it taut and grabbed a pair of fabric scissors from her vanity. She snipped it off and let it fall. She watched in the mirror as the severed thread danced on its way to the floor. It was lighter than the vibrant pink that that same thread had been a part of just moments before. It landed on and clung to her black tights, from which she brushed it off before pulling her socks up. Finally, she slipped into a pair of black Converse sneakers that she had painted herself.

Annabelle, leaning one way to counter the backpack she'd slung across one shoulder, went into the kitchen and withdrew a bottle of drinkable yogurt from the fridge. She paused at the key rack, an unpainted wooden cross with hooks screwed into it. It was one of the few things her dad had added to the house that her mom had left intact after their divorce. Probably because Annabelle had helped him with it, when she was in middle school. It had been her job to sand the wood. She had done so by hand, the way the power-sander rattled the bones in her arms scared her. The job wasn't as

smooth but her dad preferred it, reminding her that Jesus would have sanded by hand. She grabbed her keys and, as she left, neglected to lock the front door behind her.

Annabelle sat in the center of the classroom. She took in her fellow students, trying not

She caught Rohit's eye and smiled, a polite acknowledgement of the other. He turned his head, loosing his wavy golden-brown hair

Rohit ducked into the passenger seat of the cherry red Volkswagen Beetle and dropped his bag between his legs. Annabelle started the car. He noted the gold ring dangling on a chain from the ignition. It was too large for her fingers.

"Are you okay?" Laying a hand on the back of his headrest, she twisted her torso around and peered out of the rear windshield.

"Huh?" His transfixion broke when she reversed out of the parking spot.

"You were staring."

"Sorry, I," He hesitated, debating whether or not to comment on the ring, "I must've zoned out."

As she pulled her body back around, her hand already on the gearshift, she paused, meeting his gaze. He offered her a soft smile, an instinctual response to awkward discomfort that he had yet to outgrow. She responded with a coy smile of her own, pulling one side of her lips up. She held for just a moment, shifted into gear, turned forward, and followed the handful of cars and trucks out of the student lot. She

turned left where most vehicles went right. They drove in silence until she came to the first stoplight and had to ask the way.

“Left.”

“Me, too.” After a moment of silence, “I’m sorry for asking this, I just want to make sure I get it right.” She trailed off.

“What is it?”

“I just want to make sure I say your name correctly: Row-hit?”

“Roh-hith.”

“Row-hith?”

“Roh-hith.”

“Roh-hit?”

“Roh-”

“Roh-”

“Hith.”

“Hith.”

“Roh-hith.”

“Roh-hith.”

“There you go.”

“Roh-hith!” She bounced excitedly. “Was that an okay thing to ask? I just never know how to pronounce exotic names.” Annabelle didn’t notice Rohit lip curl back as she finished speaking.

“I’m glad you did, most people just assume they have it right.” They fell back into silence under the weight of his statement. For a moment, all they heard was one another’s breathing gradually synchronizing. Once the road straightened out, Annabelle rested her right foot flat on the floorboard, lifted herself slightly, and crossed her left leg under her right one. She settled down and returned her right foot to the pedals.

“Thanks for the ride, by the way.”

“Honestly, it’s not a problem. I remember, before I had a license, waiting for my mom to come pick me up. I hated it.”

“I have my license but my parents won’t get me a car. I thought I would get one for my birthday, but then I ended up flunking bio.” Annabelle came to a stop sign and looked expectantly at Rohit. “Forward.”

“Oh, I guess I’m lucky my mom works too much to be able to do that.”

“Yeah, I wouldn’t mind if my parents got off my back sometimes. Right now, all my license is good for is running errands.”

“I don’t mind that so much, it’s like a little arrangement with my mom. I get to have a car and she gets someone to do the grocery shopping.”

“Which sounds really nice, but, like I said, I don’t have a car.” Rohit watched Annabelle’s focus break. Satisfied with himself, he changed the subject. “I’ve never seen Chucks like that.”

“That’s because I painted them myself!” She smiled and wagged her left foot. “I did it in sixth grade. I love that they still fit.” From what Rohit could see, she had painted a night sky across the canvas, using the Converse logo as a full moon. There was

a thin white line of paint connecting the brighter stars. The rest of the stars were smaller, forming a backdrop.

“What’s the constellation?”

“Aries. My star sign.” She glanced down and noticed that the line was fading, “Hmm. I need to touch them up a little.”

“That’s really cool. I’m a Libra.”

“The sign of balance. That’s important.”

“Yeah. I wish I had a better understanding of my chart. My mother insisted they have one made when I was born. Indian star charts are in-depth, too. Jyotish,” the word strangled his tongue on its way out, “I think that’s what they’re called, write predictive biographies.”

“That sounds really cool. Have you just not taken the time to read it?”

“I can’t read it. It’s written in Hindi,” he furrowed his brow, “I think.”

“Could your parents help you?”

“My mother used to read it to me before bed.” He sighed and placed his head against the headrest. “Eventually, she decided that I was too old for bedtime stories. Now she’s too busy and my father won’t read it to me. He doesn’t really believe in it.”

“What does he believe in?” She stopped the car at a red light and looked at him, noticing the length of his neck. It was disproportionate to the rest of his body. It wasn’t the length, although it was longer than she would have expected for someone his size, but the thickness that really threw her off. Rather, its lack of thickness. It started wide at his rounded jaw and ran hairless along its length. It broke only at his Adam’s apple,



which, much like his shoulders and collarbone, was made prominent only in his neck's lack.

"Everyone has a job and they should work hard in that job. It got him here and he's convinced it will get me further."

"I kind of see where he's coming from, but I don't entirely agree with him."

"Neither do I, honestly." He lifted his head from its resting place and looked around. "Wait, this isn't the way to my house."

"I know." She smirked at him. "I was thinking you could come over for a bit."

Rohit's leg starts shaking.

"I- I should probably check with my parents."

"Oh." Her tone was sunken. "I can always take you home, if you'd rather."

"No, it's okay." He tucked his hand under the shaking leg and gripped it just above the knee. "If they really wanted to keep tabs on me, I would have a phone by now." He turned to her, offering her a genuine smile for the first time. "I'd love to come over."

"Good, because we're here." She pulled into the empty driveway, parking closest to the front door. Rohit leaned forward and craned his neck to see the whole house. A two-story house with off-white paneling. It was nothing special but, to Rohit, it was impressive, especially compared to his one-story house with just enough space for him and his parents. Annabelle turned the car off and reached into the backseat to grab her backpack. "Come on." She teased him out of the car.

She led him into her room where she sat at the foot of her bed and removed her shoes. He stood in the doorway, unsure of where to place himself.

“You can come in.” She chuckled softly. “Close the door behind you.”

“Right. Umm.” He stepped into the room, swinging the door shut. He stepped out of his *chappals* just inside the room. “Can I sit?”

“Of course.” She patted the spot next to her, closer to the door. As he sat down, she stood up. She crossed in front of him to put her shoes away. He sat with his hands in his lap and watched her tennis skirt sway with each step she took. She produced a towel from one of the dresser drawers and tossed it behind him. She sat down next to him, Rohit’s leg started shaking once more. This time, Annabelle placed her hand on his knee. He shifted and turned towards her, shaking his knee loose, causing it to clack against hers. They locked eyes, she noticed him struggling to stifle his instinctual smile.

Annabelle realized she was going to have to lead, she placed her hand on his cheek, “It’s okay to be nervous.” Rohit released a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding. He looked past her and noticed the sky tinting pink. Softer than that of her skirt, but just as striking. “Hey.” Annabelle called his attention back to her by rubbing his cheek softly with her thumb. She leaned forward and pressed her lips against his.

He inhaled deeply through his nose, he lifted one hand and mirrored how she was cradling his face. She lifted her leg onto the bed and pushed up using her grounded foot. Rohit slowly lay back, he raised his other hand and rested it on her waist. She took her hand from his face and pushed herself away from him. His lips continued writhing despite her absence. He savored the moment before opening his eyes. The sunlight

swirled with his dark brown irises, strikingly similar to the cloud of milk his mother poured into his father's chai each morning.

"Was that okay?" Her voice soft, bordering on concerned.

"Yeah." He breathed. She rolled onto one side of him, inviting him to match her by pulling at his waist. He licked his lips hungrily. She smiled, satisfied with her impact on him. He leaned forward and kissed her, rolling her onto her back, his hand tugging the edge of her top from her skirt.

Annabelle's nails, filed flat, dug into Rohit's back. She felt his back tense against her unexpected intrusion.

"Oh! Row-hit!" She moaned in his ear.

He sighed but managed to make it sound like a choked groan. A knock resounded through the room, they froze.

"Did you lock the door?" She mouthed.

"I don't think so."

"Mom?" Annabelle found her voice, placing a hand over his mouth.

"Hi, sweetie!" Her mom called through the door. "How was summer school?"

"It was okay. I-" she struggled to think of something, her legs still wrapped around Rohit. "I have some homework that I'm working on right now."

"Okay. I'm going to get dinner started and then take a quick shower. Do you think you can finish by the time the food is ready?"

“Umm.” Annabelle raised her eyebrows at Rohit, who shrugged. “Sure, mom. I can do that.”

“Great!”

They waited until her mom’s footsteps were inaudible and continued. Rediscovering their rhythm, she kept her hand clamped over his mouth. To keep herself quiet, she gagged herself with his shoulder, forcing him to use only his lower body. He brought his legs forward, dropping onto his haunches, and used them to thrust harder, albeit slower. Her legs tightened around him. He took that to mean he was doing something right and continued to thrust. Her back arched against him. Tempted to cry out, she bit harder on his shoulder, breaking the skin.

A groan rose from his chest and rumbled against her hand. His blood gushed into her mouth. After the initial shock, she welcomed the sensation and swallowed what had flooded into her mouth. The hand pressed over his mouth clamped tighter. She could feel him clench and unclench his jaw with each breath. Their movements slowed before coming to a grinding halt. She unsank her teeth from his shoulder. He jerked and let out a low grunt. She shifted her hand from his mouth to the nape of his neck and pulled his lips to hers.

The metallic taste of his blood overwhelmed that of the sweat from her hand. She sighed and let her legs drop to either side of him. He peeled off of her and sat upright on the towel, his legs folded under him at the knees. His hands ran along her legs before settling on his knees. He averted his gaze from her body, settling just to the right of where her head lay. She looked up at him, watching his blood run down his chest and

arms, tracing the hills and valleys of his body. Annabelle tugged the towel out from under him and rolled off the bed.

She led him to her bathroom sink. He observed the blood that had cut rivers across his torso and down his right arm. In the mirror, he watched Annabelle as she wet the towel. She turned to him and wiped the drying blood from his chest and arm. He winced when she got to his shoulder.

“Sorry.”

“Perfectly fine, that’s fine.”

She continued, more softly. When she was finished, he took the towel from her and wiped around her mouth. As he traced a drop that had rolled down her chin and between her breasts, he thought of the soy milk that had run down his chest at breakfast. She pulled a first aid kit out from under the sink and withdrew an alcohol wipe, gauze, and some medical tape. He inhaled sharply at the sting of the alcohol, Annabelle did not pause this time. She laid the gauze over the bite marks and taped it down.

“Find your shirt, we need to see if the bandage is hidden.”

“Good idea, my parents would kill me if they saw this.”

He put his shirt on and returned to the mirror. The medical tape was just visible under the wide collar. Annabelle pulled it to the left, revealing his clean shoulder. She took his hand and laid her head against his exposed shoulder, a contented smile formed on her face.

“If my mom’s showering, I can take you home real quick.” Annabelle pulled on her skirt and didn’t bother tucking her shirt into it. She crept down the hallway and listened for the noise of the shower from her mom’s room. Rohit pulled his pants on and sat on the bed, waiting.

“Come on.” Annabelle called Rohit, who quickly slipped on his *chappals* and went down the stairs.

“No shoes?” Rohit pointed out.

“Oh. Wait here.” She pounced upstairs, leaving him in the foyer.

Rohit took a closer look at the cross, at the center of which Annabelle had hung her keys. From the hook, the gold ring dangled to the halfway point on the vertical axis of the cross. It was about where Rohit imagined Jesus’ testicles would be. Annabelle crept up behind him and lifted the keys by the gold ring.

“Stop bothering with it, it’s fine.” Annabelle scolded Rohit, who was compulsively checking his shoulder in the mirror of the Beetle’s sun visor. He sighed, returning the visor to its original position. Resting against the headrest, Rohit gazed out of the moonroof, watching the stars pass above.

“What street do you live on?”

“Maple Common.” He mumbled.

“Oh, I know where that is.” She drove with both feet by the floorboards this time.

“Did you... have fun?” She struggled to fully form the words.

“I did.” His gaze still locked on the sky, he reached over and rubbed her thigh.

She smiled at the small gesture.

“I’m glad.”

“I’m glad I came.”

“Me, too.”

“Can I ask you something?” His head lolled towards her, his long neck seeming to twist like that of a snake.

“Sure.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Your shoulder? I’m sorry. I didn’t want to hurt you but I needed—”

“No. I mean, why did you,” he felt her tense at his hesitation and decided to hold out for an extra moment, “why did you have sex with me?”

“Oh.” She hung her head, forgetting that she was at the wheel. “I wanted to see if it was...” Her head jerked back up to the road, “different.”

He scoffed, much like his father had done just that morning, and fell silent. He withdrew his hand and once more gazed at the night sky. The ghost of his handprint gave her goosebumps.

“Why did you?” She asked, her voice quivering with the chill.

“Because you let me.” He retorted.

“Oh.” She turned onto Maple Common. “Which house is yours?”

“You can let me out here, my parents would freak if they saw you.”

Annabelle stopped the car and Rohit stepped out. He leaned back in to retrieve his bag, but Annabelle intercepted his hand. She pulled him towards her and gave him a kiss.

“Do you want to do this again? I’ll make sure my mom doesn’t interrupt us.”

“I guess it was different, huh?”

“There isn’t enough data to say.” She winked, “I’ll just have to keep doing research.”

Rohit offered her a faint smile and withdrew from the car. He slung his bag over his left shoulder and walked down the street. Annabelle sighed and turned her car around.

“Rohit!” His mother greeted him this evening as she did each morning. “Where have you been!?”

“You told me to find a friend.” He shrugged, “So I found a friend.”

“Don’t speak to your mother that way. Come sit down for dinner.” His father said in one breath.

“That’s why I was late, I went to a friend’s house for dinner.”

“Join us anyway.” His father insisted.

“I’ll have a little. Let me change quickly.” He rushed to his room.

“Wear a shirt this time, *haan?*” His father called out behind him. Rohit gently closed the door behind him.