

INT. A FANCY RESTAURANT

Spotlight up on stage right, where PRIYA is seated at a small round table for two, set with a white tablecloth and a long-stemmed rose in a silver vase.

NEEL stands downstage at stage right, in front of the curtain, awkwardly holding a cabaret microphone.

NEEL

Uh, hi. I mean, hello. I mean, good evening, everyone. I'm Neel. Uh, Gupta. Neel Gupta. The beautiful girl there? She's Priya.

PRIYA, elegant and refined, smiles. SHE acknowledges the audience with a graceful inclination of her head.

We've been engaged since we were kids. Our parents think we're a great match.

NEEL pauses as HE and PRIYA look at each other awkwardly.

Anyway, tonight we're, uh, celebrating. I've just got a brilliant job and Priya's graduating, so we're getting married.

(NEEL clears his throat)

We're very lucky.

THE BAND strikes up the music, playing bold jazzy chords which swell into song.

WHAT ARE THE ODDS I WOULD HAVE FOUND YOU
JUST BY DATING AROUND?
WHAT ARE THE ODDS I WOULD HAVE MET YOU
IF MY PARENTS DIDN'T VET YOU
WE KNOW OUR INTEL CAN'T BE WRONG
WE KNOW OUR FOLKS WILL GET ALONG

NEEL (CONT'D)

My friends think arranged marriages are totally outdated. Me? I don't see how their approach is any better. Mina keeps breaking up with her boyfriends after a few dates. Kim keeps putting dating off for her career. And then there's Marco.

Lights up on stage left, at the Garcia residence in the formal dining room, where MARCO is at dinner with his parents and a nice, COOKIE CUTTER GIRL.

As NEEL sings, an awkward meal unfolds on stage left.

NEEL (CONT'D)

WHAT ARE THE ODDS YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN ME
SEARCHING ON YOUR OWN

(MORE)

NEEL (CONT'D)
 WHAT ARE THE ODDS YOU WOULD HAVE SEEN ME
 IF YOUR BETROTHED HADN'T BEEN ME?
 I'M YOUR PERFECT PARTNER BY DESIGN
 AND I AM POSITIVE YOU'RE MINE

Lighting change on the Garcia residence. The COOKIE CUTTER GIRL leaves, and the BAD GIRL enters.

As NEEL continues to sing, dinner at the Garcias' progresses from awkward to antagonistic.

NEEL (CONT'D)
 IMAGINE IF WE LEFT IT TO CHANCE
 TO LOOKS AND CIRCUMSTANCE
 AT A BAR OR A DANCE
 WITH A TOUCH OR A GLANCE
 SUCH IRRATIONAL ROMANCE

The simmering hostility swells into confrontation at the Garcia household. MARCO'S FATHER storms out; MARCO'S MOTHER runs after him.

MARCO slips the BAD GIRL a fifty and she saunters out of the room. MARCO sits back, feeling vaguely guilty but satisfied that his mission is accomplished.

NEEL (CONT'D)
 IT'S MUCH BETTER SETTLED IN ADVANCE!
 (short instrumental break)

Another lighting change on the Garcia household. This time, MARCO'S PARENTS are already seated with CATALINA. MARCO walks in, stops, and stares at her.

MARCO'S MOM
 (over underscoring between verses)
 You remember Catalina.

As MARCO stands motionless in shock, CATALINA moves toward him. She stops an arm's length away (further in his personal space than he finds comfortable); they look at each other as NEEL sings.

NEEL
 YOU'RE JUST PERFECT - YOU'RE THE APPLE
 OF MY MOTHER'S EYE
 WHEN WE MAKE IT TO THE CHAPEL
 WE'LL MAKE OUR MOTHERS CRY

CATALINA pulls MARCO into a dance; still shocked, he does not initiate. MARCO'S parents smile in satisfaction as CATALINA back-leads MARCO, who steps dispiritedly to NEEL's beat.

I'M SO GLAD SHE CHOSE YOU
 I SUPPOSE THIS REALLY SHOWS YOU
 WHY MOTHER KNOWS BEST
 LEAVE IT TO THOSE WHO KNOW YOU BEST!

CATALINA twirls herself out of MARCO'S arms into a hug from MARCO'S MOTHER. MARCO is left standing alone; he pulls out his phone which has photo of him with ALEX. Lights down on the Garcia household.

Spotlight focuses on NEEL, whose imagination transforms the Garcia household into a den of sin. On a bare stage, under red lighting, MARCO and black-clad DANCERS enact the debauchery NEEL most fears.

NEEL (CONT'D)

IMAGINE ENDLESS FIRST IMPRESSIONS
 ON DATES IN QUICK SUCCESSION
 ALWAYS GUESSING, SO DISTRESSING
 WE'D SAY YES UNDER DURESS
 AND ACQUIESCE TO LIFELONG REGRET
 NO -- MOTHER KNOWS BEST

(musical interlude for
 extended dance sequence)

MARCO and DANCERS exit. Lights down on stage left. Spotlight on PRIYA.

BECAUSE THE ODDS ARE GOOD, THE CHANCES HIGH
 THAT OUR LOVE IS TRUE
 AND THESE FACTORS PROVE EXACTLY WHY
 I WAS MEANT FOR YOU

(musical lead out)

Spotlight fades out on NEEL and PRIYA as NEEL rejoins her at the table. He takes her hand.

Spotlight on MARCO and CATALINA on stage left. CATALINA reaches for MARCO; he stops her. He starts to reach out to touch her face, but instead drops his hand and walks away. CATALINA is left standing alone.

Blackout.