

NOTE: ALL ITALICIZED DIALOGUE IS ORIGINALLY IN TELUGU.

EXT. CASH FOR GOLD PLACE - DAY

ANU (early 30s), South Indian, patchy beard, tired eyes, shaggy, unkept hair, stands in front of a store. He dons a reflective golden jacket, golden pants, and golden shoes. His face, neck, and hands are covered in reflective golden paint.

Around his neck hangs a cardboard sign that reads "CASH FOR GOLD HERE!".

He's frozen with his hands on his waist, his bust forward, and a big smile on his face. Near his feet lies a golden bucket that has "TIPS \$\$\$" written on it with green marker.

The bucket has a few dollars and coins in it. Beside the bucket is a blanket laid out on the floor with a small golden sculpture of a faceless man, standing just like Anu is. Another cardboard sign says "\$40 SCULPTURE!"

A KID (15), passes by. He's on his phone, distracted. He spits gum into his bucket and keeps walking by. Anu's eyes slowly move to look at the saliva ridden piece of gum in his bucket.

The cash and coins are now under an over-exaggerated amount of gum and spit. Anu blankly stares at his bucket. Water runs.

INT. ANU'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anu enters his small apartment and throws all the coins onto a dresser along with his keys. His keychain is of a small Ganesha figurine. He's still in the golden costume, just no face paint.

The dresser displays a framed photo of Anu at graduation, shaking hands. The rest of the room is small, with a shitty metal bed frame and a sunken in mattress. Anu lights incense.

The corners of the room are occupied by four-foot faceless humanoid sculptures, the head bigger than the body.

BEEP.

He steps up to a sculpture that's still wet, scalpel in hand. He has his phone tucked between his ear and shoulder. The sculpture slightly resembles a hummingbird mid flight, its beak poised to sip nectar.

ANU

Hey Mr. Hearst, it's Anu. I was just wondering if you got my estimate for the sculpture...

The scalpel glides through the clay, cutting out big chunks that sappily drop on the floor.

ANU (CONT'D)

The bird's almost done, coming along beautifully.

He dips his fingers in a small bowl of water and shapes the clay to look more like a bird.

ANU (CONT'D)

Just putting some finishing touches on it now...So yeah, just let me know....

He slowly comes to a stop and stares at the bird and lets out a sigh.

ANU (CONT'D)

Call me back whenever. It's Anu.

He puts his phone down as his eyes land on the framed photo.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Anu opens his door to reveal JAI, 38, full beard, bright eyes, wearing a relaxed collared shirt and khaki pants. Nice shoes. He looks up and down at Anu's outrageous costume.

JAI

Nice fit.

ANU

Jai, what are you- I told you I'd come down-

JAI

Anu, come on. It's not like I've never been here.

Jai tries peeking in. Anu moves the door to cover more of the apartment.

ANU

Stay here, I'll get the kurta.

Anu goes into his apartment and goes through the dresser. Jai enters the apartment and examines it.

ANU (CONT'D)
 Jai I said to stay-

Anu takes out an orange kurta from his dresser. Jai looks at the hummingbird sculpture. Anu tries handing him the kurta.

JAI
 Gonna sell this?

ANU
 Yeah. It's for this guy in the Hamptons.

JAI
 Oh?

ANU
 Yeah, my biggest client.

Anu prods Jai with the kurta. Jai takes it.

ANU (CONT'D)
 I mean he's my only client but-
 it's like five months of rent.

Jai nods.

JAI
 Chai?

Anu rolls his eyes.

INT. ANU'S KITCHENETTE- NIGHT

Anu's hands bring water, milk, cinnamon, ginger, cloves and cardamom to a simmer in a small saucepan on the stove.

ANU
 Why do you need a kurta?

JAI
 Amma wants to go to the temple day
 after.

NOTE: Amma means mother.

He adds in black chai, then strains the warm spiced mixture into two mugs.

INT. ANU'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clink. Anu and Jai sit on the bed, sipping chai. The mattress is leaning to one side, with the weight of the two on it.

JAI
You should come.

Anu scoffs.

ANU
Please. The moment I see her she'll say something.

JAI
Come on. She just, you know, isn't a fan of the whole art situation you got going on here.

Jai waves his hand around, gesturing to the sculptures. Anu frustratedly squirms in his spot.

JAI (CONT'D)
Bathroom?

Jai stands up.

ANU
Uh... pipe's broken.

Anu avoids eye contact and puts his head down. Jai takes a deep breath.

JAI
Anu, I can talk to someone at work and get you a temp job. Nothing pretty but you'll have money.

Beat.

ANU
No...no, I'm good. Once that bird is finished I'll be good.

Anu points to the sculpture. An awkward silence as they both look at the bird. Jai quickly finishes his chai.

JAI
Should go now, gotta drive home.

Anu half-heartedly smiles at him, then stands up and takes the cup from Jai. Anu puts the cups in the sink and walks back to Jai, who's now holding out \$50 to Anu.

ANU
Jai, come on.

JAI
Take it- It's like rent. For the
kurta.

Jai waves the kurta at Anu.

ANU
I'm not taking money from you.

JAI
I'm not leaving till you do. Just
take it.

Anu longingly looks at the money.

INT. ART STORE - DAY

A CASHIER's hands place a huge vacuum sealed lump of clay in
a bag.

ANU (O.S.)
Oh, I don't need a bag.

Anu is now wearing a loose-fitting, tie-dye shirt and
oversized red pants. His Ganesha keychain hangs from his
pocket. His hair is still unkept.

The cashier eyes the size and weight of the clay.

CASHIER
You sure? Two fifty.

ANU
I'm good.

The cashier nods and slams the lump of clay on the register.
They reach out with a twenty dollar bill and a few coins. Anu
grabs the clay with both his hands, then takes the money.

He walks away, holding the clay in both his hands, and
pinching the bill with his fingers.

ANU (CONT'D)
Have a good one!

EXT. SIDEWALK- DAY

Anu awkwardly walks down the sidewalk with the clay and money occupying all the space in his hands. The sidewalk is busy, with people walking faster than Anu surrounding him.

SETH, 34, white, suit, 6 foot 2, is talking on the phone. He bangs on Anu's shoulders. The clay and money fall onto the ground. Seth keeps walking.

ANU

Prick.

Anu bends down and starts collecting his money and putting it in his pocket. Seth stops and looks back at him at for a moment. Seth hangs up the phone, walks back to Anu and bends down, helping him.

SETH

Soo sorry about that man.

Anu doesn't respond, he looks for all his coins then gets up. Seth grabs the clay from the grounds and hands it to him.

Seth recognizes Anu.

SETH (CONT'D)

Anu?

Anu looks up and examines Seth's face.

SETH (CONT'D)

Holy shit, it's been fuckin forever!

Anu doesn't respond as Seth forcibly daps him up.

SETH (CONT'D)

It's Seth dude!

ANU

Oh, yeah, Seth, I know. How are you?

SETH

I'm good, I'm good. Oh my god, Anu Dasari in the wild, that's so crazy.

Anu lets out a forced laugh. Seth looks at the clay in Anu's hands, now fully deformed into an irregularly shaped pancake.

SETH (CONT'D)

Workin on something?

Anu realizes the predicament he's in.

ANU
Oh, yeah. Just a... little
sculpture.

SETH
Got an exhibition coming up?

Beat.

ANU
Um, yeah, it's for a client.

Seth makes an "oh?" face.

ANU (CONT'D)
He's in the Hamptons...

An awkward beat. Seth starts to dig for his wallet in his coat.

SETH
I'm actually having a little dinner
party this weekend, you should come-

Seth hands a black business card to Anu. Anu briefly inspects it. In bold Times New Roman, it reads, "SETH RORY, ARTIST", and lists his address and phone number.

ANU
What for?

SETH
The Guggenheim's featuring one of
my sculptures.

Anu looks up Seth.

ANU
Oh, holy shit that's huge man.
Congrats...

Seth smiles, he's heard this a million times.

SETH
A bunch of people from school will
be there. They'd be excited to see
you.

Anu says nothing.

SETH (CONT'D)
I should get goin, see you this
weekend?

Anu nods. Seth pats Anu on his back and walks away. Anu looks at the business card in his hands, along with the clay. "SETH RORY, ARTIST".

INT. ANU'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

Anu works on his hummingbird sculpture in a dirtied wife-beater and blue pants. The sculpture is closer to being finished. Anu's on the phone.

 ANU
Hey Mr. Hearst! How you doin? Just
calling to check, I never got a
reply from you about the estimate.

He uses a soft cloth to gently buff the surface of the bird.

 ANU (CONT'D)
Just let me know. Cash, cheque,
anything works.

He uses a small exacto-knife to add details in the wigs.

 ANU (CONT'D)
It's Anu, by the way.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Anu opens the door to reveal HOMER, 45.

 HOMER
You got rent Anu?

 ANU
Look, I got-

 HOMER
I need the full thing dude, you've
been late for months now.

 ANU
Please man, just lis-

 HOMER
I've been generous Anu- I need the
full thing by Friday. Or you're
out.

Homer starts to turn around.

ANU
Wait, wait.

Anu goes to his dresser and searches each drawer. He collects as many dollar bills as he can find.

He then lifts his mattress and collects the few hundred dollar bills stuffed there. The mattress thumps back on the bedframe, releasing a huge puff of dust.

ANU (CONT'D)
Look, I got-

Anu counts the money.

ANU (CONT'D)
I got money- almost all of it right here.

Homer takes the money.

ANU (CONT'D)
Give me a week more and I'll have the rest, please. I'm waiting on money from a client.

Homer counts the money.

HOMER
End of next week.

Anu nods. The door closes. Anu walks back into his apartment and looks at the hummingbird.

He picks up the scalpel and works on it.

EXT. JAI'S HOUSE - DAY

Anu stands outside a upper class house. He's wearing the same tie-dye shirt as before but in a different color and forest green sweatpants. Ganesha hangs out from his pocket.

He takes a deep breath, then rings the bell. Jai opens the door, wearing the kurta. He has his phone tucked between his chin and shoulders.

Jai mimes Anu to come in.

INT. JAI'S HOUSE - DAY

Anu walks into Jai's house. It's much, much bigger than his apartment. To his right, in a prayer nook, he sees his mother, AMMA, 70, loudly ringing a small bell in one hand, and a small lamp with a lit wick being waved in front of the deity in the other as she recites a Hindu hymn.

Anu slowly approaches Amma.

ANU

Amma.

Amma turns around, but doesn't stop reciting the hymn. She extends the lamp to Anu. Anu instinctually holds his hands over the lamp, allowing the heat and light to touch their palms, then waves his hands over his head. The prayer comes to an end.

AMMA

Ah, Anu. Coming to the temple?

ANU

No, no, I just came to look after Shri.

Amma vocalizes a "Mmmh", then puts down the lamp and bell.

AMMA

No work today?

Anu guiltily nods no.

AMMA (CONT'D)

Something practical in college and you could've had a job. Jai told me you don't have anything with art.

Anu says nothing.

SHRI (O.S.)

Anu Māma!

NOTE: Māma means Uncle.

SHRI, 4, runs in from another room and tightly hugs Anu's legs. Anu bends down and rustles his hair. Jai enters the room.

JAI

Amma, let's go. Cab's here.

Amma gets up and starts to walk to the door. She stops near Anu.

AMMA

Try to get a job Anu.

She cracks her knuckles on Anu's temple, then walks out. Jai follows her.

JAI

Money's on the counter for pizza.
We'll be back in like an hour.

AMMA (O.S.)

Three hours.

Jai shakes his head. He pats Anu on the shoulder and leaves. The door SHUTS. Anu looks at Shri.

ANU

You want pizza?

Shri enthusiastically nods his head yes.

INT. JAI'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Anu and Shri sit on the floor. An empty pizza box and a bunch of crayons are scattered on the floor. Shri is drawing what seems to be a portrait on piece of paper, and Anu is looking over his shoulder.

ANU

Is that dad?

Shri nods his head no.

SHRI

It's you!

Anu smiles.

ANU

Sorry, I couldn't tell because the eyes are missing.

SHRI

I don't know how to draw eyes...

Beat.

ANU

It's easy, here.

Anu reaches around Shri's shoulders and guides his hand to draw.

ANU (CONT'D)
Eyes all look like almonds.

He pauses.

ANU (CONT'D)
What's almond in telugu?

Shri thinks for a moment.

SHRI
Bādam.

ANU
You got it!

Shri smiles at Anu. Anu resumes drawing with the crayon.
Shri's eyes light up. Anu smiles.

SHRI
Wow! You're good Māma!

Anu chuckles.

ANU
You're good Shri! I just helped.

Shri smiles, then grabs another piece of paper and starts
drawing. Anu longingly looks at Shri. A running sink.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM- NIGHT

Anu is staring at himself in the mirror- now dressed an all
black suit that seems like it's from prom, small on him. His
face is wet. He takes a deep breath. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Anu
looks.

ANU
Occupied.

Anu goes back to looking in the mirror. Beat. KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK.

ANU (CONT'D)
OCCUPIED!

MAN 1
PUBLIC DUMP YOU SCHMUCK. BEEN
HOGGING IT FOR 20 MINUTES YOU ASS.

Anu sighs frustratedly and turns the sink off, and wipes his face with the dirty hand towel on the wall. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK-

ANU
GIVE ME ONE MINUTE.

Anu takes yet another deep breath and stares at himself in the mirror.

INT. SETH'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A grand house with about a dozen people, all dressed to the nines, golden accents to the clothing. Anu enters through a massive doorway and his eyes immediately fill with awe and jealousy.

Sculptures of all sorts fill the room.

SETH (O.S.)
Anu!

Seth walks up to Anu, and pats him on the back.

SETH (CONT'D)
I'm so glad you made it man.

Anu looks at him and nods.

SETH (CONT'D)
Come, my friend Anna wanted to meet you.

Seth guides Anu with his hand on his back.

ANU
This is your house?

Seth looks confusedly at Anu for a moment.

SETH
Yeah.

He leads him to ANNA, 32, loud.

SETH (CONT'D)
Anna, look who's here!

Anna turns around with a glass of champagne in her hand.

SETH (CONT'D)
It's my friend Anu I was talking to you about!

Anu still hasn't processed the world around him.

ANNA

Anu! Pleasure to meet you, I've heard so much about you!

Seth turns to Anu.

SETH

I've been telling her about your sculptures from school. She was very impressed.

Anna stares at Anu for a moment. Anu awkwardly chuckles. An awkward pause.

SETH (CONT'D)

Alright, I'm gonna let you two talk, I got business to attend to.

Seth pats Anu on his back once again. He walks away, and Anna smiles as he does so.

ANNA

Isn't this so great, I'm so happy for him.

ANU

Yeah it's grea-

ANNA

I remember my first- at the Moma. It was such a cool experience.

ANU

You've been at the MOMA?

Anna looks taken aback.

ANNA

Yeah! I was mainly international before, you know. The British Museum, The Tate, yada, yada.

She leans in closer to Anu.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Between you and I, Seth's kind of a late bloomer.

Anu expressionlessly does an "oh" nod.

ANNA (CONT'D)

How about you?

Anu looks expressionless at Anna.

ANU

I've been, um, working on this piece for a client...in The Hamptons.

ANNA

Oooh, The Hamptons! My family has a summer house there, it's great for when you wanna get out of town. You go there often?

Beat.

ANU

Um, yeah... do you know where the bathroom is?

INT. SETH'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Anu LOCKS the door to the bathroom and gets his phone out of his tight prom trousers. It slips and falls to the ground. He picks it up, the screen is now cracked.

ANU

Shit.

Anu paces around the bathroom as he navigates through his phone. He holds it up to his ear. It rings.

ANU (CONT'D)

Pick up, pick up, pick up.

The ringing stops. A deep, scratchy, old voice on the other end.

MR. HEARST (O.S.)

Hello?

A huge smile appears on Anu's face.

ANU

Mr. Hearst! I've been trying to reach you, the bird's done, I can send it off whenever, just wanted to confirm on the estimate-

MR. HEARST (O.S.)

Who is this?

Beat.

ANU

It's Anu. I was working on the hummingbird sculpture for you?

MR. HEARST

Oh, I don't need it anymore.
Thanks.

Genuine confusion on Anu's face.

ANU

Wait- don't need it anymore? It's done already- I bought all the material, it was expensiv-

MR. HEARST

Look, look. I wanted it for my friend but I just bought him a couple bottles of whiskey okay? Don't need the bird anymore.

The smile fades away, Anu's voice is shaky.

ANU

But...but, I already finished it.

A deep breath over the phone.

MR. HEARST

I got shit to do man. Don't bother me again, please.

BEEP. Tears stream down Anu's face. He slowly turns to the mirror and stares at himself, everything around him darkens.

EXT. CURB - NIGHT

Anu sits on a curb, smoking a cigarette. His eyes are red. He slowly smokes the cigarette as the red and yellow lights of the cars pass by him. A few groups of people pass by him as he finishes the cigarette and crushes it with his shoe.

EXT. JAI'S HOUSE - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Anu stands outside Jai's house with a brown paper bag.

The door opens, with Amma on the other side.

ANU

Oh, Amma, is Jai here?

AMMA

He just left for work, but he told me to give you your kurta. Come.

Amma walks in.

INT. JAI'S HOUSE

Anu sits on the olive green couch, clutching his brown paper bag. Amma enters with Anu's kurta and hands it to him. Anu smiles and takes it.

ANU

Amma. I have something for you.

Amma takes a seat across Anu. In between them is a table FILLED with newspapers. Anu hands her the brown paper bag. She reaches in and takes out the hummingbird sculpture. She inspects it for a moment.

AMMA

What is this?

ANU

Um, it's a hummingbird.

Amma looks at it for another moment.

ANU (CONT'D)

Do you like it?

AMMA

It's fine.

Amma looks at the newspapers on the tables. She picks up a newspaper and puts down the sculpture on top of the rest.

Anu's eyes are shocked as he looks at his work of labor, reduced to a paper weight.

AMMA (CONT'D)

Did you get a job?

INT. GANESH TEMPLE - NIGHT

Anu stands in front of a towering statue of Ganesh.

The walls are decorated with murals depicting scenes from Hindu mythology and intricate patterns, with the sound of prayers and chanting filling the air.

The light emanating from the lamps and candles is soft and warm, casting a gentle glow on the intricate carvings and vibrant colors of the temple walls.

Anu closes his eyes before taking a deep breath, taking the atmosphere in. Anu bows his head, feeling the weight of his dreams heavy on his heart. The sound of his own breath fills his ears as he prays and lets the warmth and serenity of the temple envelop him. A few silent prayers escape his mouth.

He opens his eyes, feeling lighter.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE - NIGHT

Anu sits in a cubicle with a harsh, fluorescent light being casted- a sterile and uninviting glow over the space.

Wearing a spiffy blue collared button up and a tie. His hair is in a combover. He wears a small headset.

The walls of the cubicle are drab and gray with a plain, utilitarian desk. The only sounds are the whirring of computers, the clicking of keyboards, and the occasional murmur of muted conversations.

Anu's desk is relatively empty, apart from a few papers and folders stacked there. There's also one of his humanoid figures from before. It's face has etched in, "FOOL'S GOLD".

End.