

OLDHEAD!

Written by

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NOTE: ALL ITALICIZED DIALOGUE IS IN TELUGU

INT. ASHOK'S KITCHEN- DUSK - LONDON

*King's Dead* by Nas plays on a CD player in a lived-in pre-war kitchen. The walls display antique copper pots and pans, and a small oak dining table sits by the window, surrounded by mismatched chairs and a worn indigo blue rug.

ASHOK, 60, South Indian, takes out a pan from the oven. He dons glasses, a white mustache and just a little bit of hair on his head. He lays the green bean curry from the pan onto a ceramic plate on the dining table.

The kitchen is flooded with natural light, which pours in through the tall sash windows, casting a soft glow. The windowsill is home to a few potted plants.

Ashok takes out a head of lettuce from the fridge. The fridge hums quietly in the background, its door plastered with pictures and illegible notes.

He cuts the lettuce and drops it to a mixing bowl with salt, pepper, and lemon juice. He tosses the lettuce around.

The table is now adorned with the green bean curry and the salad, nicely laid out on nice china. Ashok places a roasted chicken in the center, then looks at his work. He takes a breath of relaxation.

INT. ASHOK'S KITCHEN- NIGHT

The kitchen is now dimly lit with candles and lanterns. Ashok opens the door to his apartment to reveal PRIYA, 34, South Indian, and BEN, 33.

ASHOK  
Hello! Come in-

Ashok gets interrupted as 8 year old JAX, mixed, runs through Priya and Ben and tightly hugs Ashok's legs.

JAX  
*Grandpa!*

Ashok smiles and bends down to Jax's level.

JAX (CONT'D)  
Weekend with *grandpa!*

PRIYA  
Here's her stuff Dad.

Priya hands Ashok a bright pink backpack. Jax runs into the house.

BEN  
How's the rapping Ashok?

Priya nudges Ben with her elbow and shoots him a glare.

PRIYA  
(quietly)  
Ben.

Ashok stands up.

ASHOK  
Yeah- I was going to record something soon.

PRIYA  
Dad, come on. You need to rest at your age...not rap.

ASHOK  
It's not that big of a deal Priya- I showed some of my writing to some people at bingo and- wait, I'll grab my book and show you.

Ashok starts to turn around.

PRIYA  
Alright, we should get out of here.

Ashok looks confused.

ASHOK  
You aren't staying for a bit?

PRIYA  
Oh, no- we have a reservation for 9.

Beat.

PRIYA (CONT'D)  
You guys have fun! We'll be back Monday to pick her up.

Priya leaves. Ben leans in to talk to Ashok.

BEN  
If you wanna rap, rap Ashok.

Ashok smiles.

BEN (CONT'D)

See ya.

Ben leaves. Ashok closes the door, he's left alone in his kitchen.

JAX (O.S.)

*Grandpa!*

Ashok turns around.

ASHOK

Be right there kiddo!

Ashok looks at his chicken, then puts a cover over it.

INT. ASHOK'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ashok and Jax sit on the floor of the living room, dimly lit with lamps. In front of them are a couple hundred CDs, all scattered on the floor. Ashok picks up a CD.

ASHOK

You know this one?

He shows it Jax and she nods her head no.

ASHOK (CONT'D)

It's Illmatic by Nas. One of the greatest rap albums.

JAX

It looks old.

Ashok chuckles.

ASHOK

It's pretty old. Here, can you play this?

Jax gets up and grabs the CD from Ashok. She runs over to the CD player and presses start. The beat fills the room as Ashok closes his eyes and bobs his head to the beat. A faint smile on his face.

JAX

Okay, okay, this is pretty good.

Jax begins to jump around to the music.

ASHOK

Told you.

Nas starts rapping and almost instinctually, Ashok starts rapping along perfectly.

Jax stops jumping around at the sound of her grandfather rapping. She looks at him in awe for a moment.

JAX  
You're good grandpa!

Ashok smiles.

ASHOK  
You wanna see something?

Jax nods. Ashok reaches into a drawer and grabs a beaten down leather notebook. Jax comes to Ashok's side. Ashok opens the notebook. The notebook is chock-full of pages and pages of writing and photos.

JAX  
What is it?

Ashok keeps flipping until he finally reaches a page with a photo of a young Ashok, in this twenties.

ASHOK  
You know who this is?

Jax nods no.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
It's this kid who came to London long ago. Wanted to be a rapper.

Jax sits down next to Ashok, resting her chin on her knees.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Didn't know a lick of English. Just knew that the beats and rhythms of the music deeply moved him.

JAX  
Did he become a rapper?

Beat.

ASHOK  
No, no. He didn't become a rapper. No one takes a kid who barely speaks English seriously.

Jax pouts.

JAX  
What a dumb story grandpa.

Ashok's eyebrows furrow.

JAX (CONT'D)  
If he wanted to do it he should've  
done it!

Beat. The music comes to a stop.

ASHOK  
You wanna pick the next one?

Jax enthusiastically nods yes and looks through the CDs for a moment, before picking up a blank CD.

JAX  
This one doesn't have a picture.

Ashok takes the CD into his own hands and looks at it longingly.

ASHOK  
Uh... this one's blank.

Beat.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Why don't you pick another one?

JAX  
Okay.

Ashok's smile fades away as Jax goes back to look through the collection of CDs. He looks at the blank CD.

INT. ASHOK'S STUDY - NIGHT

Ashok sits at a dark brown desk. He opens a drawer to reveal a worn out CD booklet. Written on it with marker, it reads "1980-1995". He opens the booklet and flips through the CDs to find a free space.

There's CD, after CD. He stops mid flipping to take a breath. He opens another drawer and goes through the various knick-knacks to find an old CD player.

He sets it up on top of his desk, then takes the blank CD and inserts it into the CD player.

He presses play.

After a bunch of scratching and fuzz noise, we hear the voice of a young Ashok, passionately rapping over a bodacious beat.

After a moment of listening to it, he shuts it off, then closes his eyes.

INT. ASHOK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ashok uses a long handled shoe horn to put on worn out white Reeboks.

ASHOK

Jax! Come on, we gotta get going.

Out from deeper in the apartment, emerges Jax. With all her might, she carries an old boombox into the living room. Ashok, at the sight of his granddaughter carrying something that's four times the size of her, runs to her.

ASHOK (CONT'D)

What- what are you doing?

Ashok grabs the boombox from Jax and places it on the ground.

JAX

I found this! Can we use it today  
Grandpa please! Let's take it to  
the park!

Ashok looks at the boombox, then at Jax.

ASHOK

Yeah, sure. Come on, we wanna get  
you ice cream right?

Jax shrieks with joy and starts to run to the door. Ashok grunts as he picks the boombox up and follows her. *Iron Maiden* by Ghostface Killah plays.

EXT. RICHMOND PARK - DAY

The duo sits on park bench, boombox beside them. The boombox roars out *After The Smoke Is Clear* by Ghostface Killah, and Jax watches as her grandpa raps along, with an almost finished strawberry ice cream cone in her hand.

JAX

Do you remember all the words to  
all the songs?

ASHOK

Some, not all. They just come to me  
when the music starts playing.

Jax finishes her ice cream. She tugs on Ashok's shirt. Ashok looks at Jax, and vocalizes a "huh?".

JAX

My hand is empty.

Jax makes her eyes all big.

ASHOK

Jax, come on. I'm not getting you  
*another* one.

JAX

Oh, please! Mom never lets me have  
ice cream.

Ashok looks at Jax.

ASHOK

Fine. Last one though!

Ashok gets up and walks to the ice cream cart about ten feet away from them.

ASHOK (CONT'D)

(to shopkeep)

Another strawberry cone please.

Ashok looks back at Jax to see a group of ROWDY TEENAGERS on bicycles near Jax, yelling at her and trying to grab the boombox away from her. Ashok rushes to her.

KID 1

Come on girl, turn that crap off.

JAX

It's not crap!

Ashok approaches the commotion.

ASHOK

What's happening?

JAX

These boys are trying to take it!

Jax runs over to Ashok's side.



KID 2  
Oh, what? This old head's gonna  
save you?

JAX  
My grandpa could kick your ass!

ASHOK  
Jax, please.

He turns to the kids.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
What's your problem?

KID 1  
The girl won't shut that shit off.

JAX  
(yelling)  
My grandpa's music is good!

The kids look at each other.

KID 2  
You listen to this?

ASHOK  
(quietly)  
Yeah...

He turns to the rest of the group.

KID 2  
The old head listens to rap!

A small giggle from the group of kids. Kid 2 approaches  
Ashok.

KID 2 (CONT'D)  
Spit some shit old man.

JAX  
He can! Do it grandpa.

ASHOK  
Jax come on, we should leave.

KID 2  
Granddaddy's scared!

Ashok takes a breath.

KID 2 (CONT'D)  
Old head wants to rap now.

Ashok looks up at him.

KID 2 (CONT'D)  
So he steps up to the mic, sounding  
like a cow.

A small and dull "ooo" sound from the kids.

KID 1  
Let's head, the man's old.

Kid 2 nods.

KID 2  
See ya. Oldhead.

He spits gum next to Ashok's shoes.

The group turns around and starts walking back.

ASHOK  
You're boring.

The group turns around.

KID 2  
What?

ASHOK  
Your lyrics are boring, they're  
putting me to sleep now.

A small "ooo" from Jax.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Your rhymes are rusty, like that  
old bike you found.

The group of teenagers erupts into "OOOOO"s as Kid 2 looks embarrassed. Jax points and laughs at him. He opens his mouth to reply but-

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Taking too long, it's time for you  
to know. You're drowning in this  
pressure should've learnt to row.

Ashok does the motion of rowing a boat and the crowd once again blows up in laughter and "oooo"s.

KID 3  
OLD HEAD GOT BARS!

Ashok smiles and looks at Jax. He bends to get closer to her.

ASHOK  
You wanna get that ice cream!

Jax nods yes, and Ashok takes the boombox. Jax holds her grandad's finger as they walk away from the group of teenagers, who're still making fun of Kid 2.

INT. ASHOK'S KITCHEN- NIGHT

Ashok, Ben, Priya, and Jax sit at the dinner table and eat.

BEN  
Did you have fun with grandpa Jax?

JAX  
Yeah! He saved me! He's awesome!

Ashok smiles and kisses Jax on the forehead.

PRIYA  
Wait- saved you? What happened?

JAX  
We went to the park and these boys were bothering me.

Priya widens her eyes at Ben.

JAX (CONT'D)  
And grandpa totally kicked their ass!!

Ben spits out water.

PRIYA  
Jax! You can't use that language!

JAX  
Sorry.

ASHOK  
I didn't actually, you know, fight them. I just- told them off.

JAX  
He rapped against them! He won.

Priya widens her eyes again. Ashok squirms in discomfort.

ASHOK  
You know, like battle rap.

Priya drops her fork on her plate.

PRIYA  
Battle- battle rap?

BEN  
What did you say?

ASHOK  
This one kid came up to me and started and it just-

PRIYA  
Dad- you can't do this! Someone your age shouldn't be doing things like that. I- That's why Jax is swearing? You've been showing her those stupid vulgar songs? I-

BEN  
Babe I think it's fine. It's just music-

PRIYA  
It's not fine! Oh my god. I can't believe this. Dad- you can't be doing this rap shi-

She looks at Jax.

PRIYA (CONT'D)  
Stuff. You can't keep doing this rap stuff.

Beat. Ashok says nothing for a moment. An awkward aura surrounds the dinner table.

ASHOK  
Fine.

Ashok starts eating. No one else on the table does.

BEN  
I think it's fine to keep-

ASHOK  
No it's fine. She wants me to stop so badly, so I'll stop.

Priya looks down, avoiding eye contact. So does everyone else except Jax.

JAX  
You can't stop grandpa.

Everyone looks at Jax.

PRIYA  
Honey, come on. Your grandpa is old. He needs to rest- for his health.

JAX  
But it makes him happy.

Priya is left speechless. No one says anything, and dinner resumes.

INT. ASHOK'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ashok and Priya hug as Ben stands by.

PRIYA  
Thank you for dinner dad, and for taking care of her.

Ashok smiles. He shakes hands with Ben.

PRIYA (CONT'D)  
Jax! Time to go!

Jax emerges with her backpack, and the CD for *King's Dead II* by Nas.

JAX  
Can I keep this?

She holds it up, presenting it to the audience. Ashok looks back at Priya, then at Jax.

ASHOK  
Sweetie, I don't think it's- um, appropriate for you...

Jax pouts as she hands it back to Ashok. She drags her feet to her parents. Priya mouths a "thank you" to Ashok, and he nods.

Ben and Priya leave the house, and Jax almost follows suit before-

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Jax!

Jax turns around.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Come here!

Jax runs over. Ashok hands her the CD.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Quick, put it in your backpack.

Jax smiles and quickly does so.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Don't let your mother see it okay?

Jax nods. Ashok tightly hugs Jax.

JAX  
Thank you grandpa!

Ashok smiles.

INT. ASHOK'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom is densely filled with the steam from the running shower. The door opens and Ashok enters with a CD player.

He sets it up on the counter. The color of the plastic seems to change depending on the angle and intensity of the light. A deep and lustrous black, with just a hint of metallic sheen. The buttons on the front panel are perfectly aligned.

Ashok plugs in the power cable and connect the audio cables to the output jacks. As he turns on the amplifier, a faint hum emanates from the speakers, promising the possibility of rich and full sound.

He presses the power button on the CD player and the tray slides open, revealing a soft and velvet-lined interior.

He places a blank CD in the tray and press the play button. As the disc spins and the fuzz begins, we hear the subtle whirring of the mechanism as it reads the data from the disc.

As the beat begins, the bass fills the room. The rhythm is hypnotic, with a steady and unrelenting kick drum that hits like a punch in the chest.

Ashok enters the shower, and takes a deep breath. He starts nodding his head, feeling the groove take hold.

The snare drum joins in, the beat now has a sharp and metallic quality to the sound, almost like a crack of lightning. The high-hats shimmer and sizzle as the tension on the beat builds.

ASHOK  
Yeah, check.

The beat drops.

Ashok starts passionately rapping, performing like he's on stage.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
Still, I mastered this art,

Sixty years strong, with a fire in my heart....

He raps and raps, the passion increases the more he gets comfortable. His hands start to move along as he spits bars. He gets more and more into the performance.

The final beats of the song.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
...Got the wisdom of the ages,  
scars of the past. Still pushing  
boundaries, still making these  
rhymes last.

He catches his breath.

ASHOK (CONT'D)  
...I command your attention, please  
don't fret. I'm the oldhead, pay  
your respects.

The beat still goes on. Ashok is left breathless, completely drained with his performance.

TITLE: OLDHEAD!