

ALL GOOD

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Trigger warning: Domestic abuse

EXT. 'THE BOX' ENTRANCE - MORNING

A glass-fronted, modern, pristine medical building. A Concierge wearing an immaculate suit hovers next to a set of automatic sliding doors, polishing the clinic name - "The Box". The sign glints in the sunlight.

Outside The Box's doors loiters HOPE (52) - a sweaty, dishevelled mess next to the neat building. Her hardened features and deep worry lines belie her troubled past.

Around her neck hangs a digital placard that alternates protest slogans:

"THE BOX CREATES ZOMBIES AND SOCIOPATHS!"
"MANDATORY REVERSALS, NOW!"

She lets out a dejected sigh as she surveys the clinic's busy car park. One client gives her a wide berth, another pretends not to notice her. She slumps against the building, fanning her face with a bunch of leaflets.

Concierge frowns and shakes a cloth at her. She drags herself upright. Concierge wipes the wall where she had slumped.

INT. FREDDIE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

CELINE (31), her petite frame swamped under dowdy clothing and hair scraped into a bun, eyes the clinic warily from the passenger seat of a modest car. She leans slightly away from-

-FREDDIE (33), a wiry but strong-looking man, who occupies the driver's seat. He appraises the clinic with steady eyes.

His face darkens as he observes Hope shoving a leaflet at a client. The client lets it drop, swats Hope away. The leaflet lies discarded outside the clinic entrance.

Freddie smirks. Turns to Celine with a charming smile.

FREDDIE

You know, not everyone is as lucky as you, Celine.

She shrinks further away from him.

FREDDIE (cont'd)

Not every husband would go to all this expense just to put a smile back on their wife's face.

Celine fishes for a response, her mouth twitching.

CELINE

But I... you...

He pulls her chin towards him such that they are eye-to-eye. She flinches then forces herself to relax.

FREDDIE

Your strength is more important than money.

He strokes her cheek. His smile is warm, his eyes cold. She nods, slides out of the car, eases the door closed.

EXT. 'THE BOX' CAR PARK - MOMENTS LATER

PRITI (29, British-Indian), dressed in jeans and smart top, a quality handbag slung over her shoulder, shambles towards the clinic. Her otherwise attractive face is drawn, dark circles blight her eyes.

She gazes at the shiny "The Box" sign, almost in a trance.

Celine examines a fading bruise on her arm as she trudges towards the clinic entrance, a few paces behind Priti.

Both distracted, they COLLIDE, exchanging pained smiles.

Shoulders hunched, Celine observes a client leaving the clinic wearing a dreamy smile. She straightens up, hopeful. Another client leaves in tears. Celine glances between the clinic and Freddie's car, paralysed by indecision.

Priti shrugs, catching Celine's eye.

PRITI

Must be a reversal.

Celine gives a single nod as they shuffle onwards.

CLYDE (45), an athletic alpha male adorned in a flashy outfit, with a permanent superior sneer, swaggers past the two hesitant women. Disdain written all over his face.

CLYDE

Amateurs.

EXT. 'THE BOX' ENTRANCE - SAME

Hope spies Clyde, Priti and Celine approaching. She looks at Concierge, who scoops up the discarded leaflet. Glances at the unmanned entrance.

She appraises the stack of leaflets in her hand. Smirks. Deliberately drops a few more. Tutting, Concierge stoops to gather the leaflets. Hope slips inside.

INT. 'THE BOX' DOOR WELL - CONTINUOUS

Hope roots herself between external and internal automatic sliding doors, blocking an intercom that secures the internal doors.

Clyde struts in. Celine and Priti shuffle in behind him, all in the door well. The external doors slide CLOSED. Hope addresses Priti, Clyde, Celine with desperate pleas.

HOPE

Can't you see? This place is screwing everything up! The Box is the only winner here!

Priti gulps. Celine glances at Freddie's car.

Clyde scowls and sweeps Hope aside with his arm, just as the intercom screen winks off. He presses the intercom. SILENCE.

Priti waves at the external door sensors. DOORS DO NOT MOVE. Clyde pounds the internal doors. Gesticulates at Hope.

CLYDE

Fuck being trapped with this nutcase!

She meets his derisive glare with a steady gaze.

HOPE

Trust me, Clyde, the feeling is entirely mutual.

Clyde seethes at her, teeth bared.

Hope scrutinises each client: Celine crouches against the external door. Clyde paces and fidgets. Priti huddles in a corner, her anxious eyes surveying the car park. She checks her watch. Hope zeroes in on her.

HOPE (cont'd)

What's your name, love?

PRITI

Um. Sarika.

Priti blushes furiously. Hope politely smiles away the lie.

HOPE

Hi Sarika. I'm Hope. Ironic really.
Hope hangs out at a place where hope
generally comes to die.

Hope snorts. Priti squirms.

HOPE (cont'd)

What are you here for?

Priti's lips clamp shut. She avoids looking at Hope. A PHONE RINGS. Priti retrieves it from her bag. Answers it.

PRITI

(into her phone)

Thought we said this morning?

Hope sweats profusely, fans her face. Priti glimpses her.

PRITI (cont'd)

(into her phone)

God this is all so fucked up. Sorry.
I wish there was some other way.

(pause)

Don't. It's not that I don't trust
you, it's...

Her face contorts. She channels her distress into her fists.

PRITI (cont'd)

OK, this afternoon. Promise me. I
just... I can't be her any more.

Priti trembles as she hangs up, her breathing erratic.

She tosses the phone into her bag. Hesitates, retrieves a water bottle. Glimpsing sweat-drenched Hope, she hands her the water. Hope swigs some.

HOPE

Thanks, you're a life saver.

They half-smile at each other. Hope removes her digital placard, rests it against the internal doors. It faces inwards, rotating slogans visible.

HOPE (cont'd)

Someone you'd rather forget?

As Priti puts her left hand to her mouth, holding back a wave of nausea, Hope clocks her engagement ring.

HOPE (cont'd)
When's the wedding?

Priti shoves her hand out of view. Talks through her sobs, focused on the floor.

PRITI
God, it's such a mess. It's not that I don't love him or anything... I think I just panicked about settling down and...

Hope holds her hands up.

HOPE
I'm not here to judge, love.

CLYDE
If only!

Clyde grabs the digital placard and turns it around, words no longer visible. Priti dry-heaves. Takes deep breaths.

PRITI
This place is so stuffy.

HOPE
Sure that's what's making you peaky?

Priti wilts under Hope's scrutiny.

PRITI
All the more reason to get it done, right? I'm in bits.

HOPE
Oh, people always justify it somehow. But without remembering how this is churning you up, how do you know you won't do it again?

PRITI
Because I don't do shit like this.

HOPE
Wasn't that also the case when you met Mr New Guy?

Hope's harsh words cause Priti to recoil.

PRITI

Look, I'm not stupid. And I'm not one of your "sociopaths" either.

She waves her hand towards the placard.

PRITI (cont'd)

I just... He just... got into my head. I need to get him out, get everything out. Get back to me.

HOPE

That's the problem with this place. Kidding people they're perfect. This was supposed to be for trauma victims, not for just anyone to purge their baggage onto a memory stick.

Hope gesticulates.

HOPE (cont'd)

Can't you see this is a revolving door?

Clyde looks at the sliding door, sniggers. Hope glares.

HOPE (cont'd)

Not literally.

Clyde continues pacing and fidgeting, never still. Priti retreats, hanging her head. Hope perches next to Celine, who sits hunched on the floor.

HOPE (cont'd)

You OK, love?

Celine tenses, instinctively covers the bruise on her arm. She gives a tight smile. Hope appraises her for a moment.

HOPE (cont'd)

Sorry. I'll leave you alone.

Heavy pause.

HOPE (cont'd)

Guess I'm not the one you have to worry about.

Hope micro-nods towards Freddie's car. Celine adopts a defensive position.

CELINE

You don't... It was... It was just a mistake.

HOPE

You know, I'd be willing to bet I would've recognised you too if my memory wasn't so shoddy.

Celine fumbles a vape pen out of her pocket, pointedly avoiding Hope's gaze.

HOPE (cont'd)

How can you possibly know that this was a "mistake", a one-off, when there's a facility here that lets abusers get away with their bullshit?

Celine vapes, attempting to be inconspicuous. Clyde strides over, yanks the vape pen out of her hand, jabs it at her. Celine cowers.

CLYDE

Put that filthy thing away.

The vape pen CLATTERS to the floor. Clyde resumes pacing.

HOPE

Was there really any need for that?

She hands the vape pen to Celine. Clyde rounds on Hope.

CLYDE

Nobody knows what that crap does to you long term. Fucking vapers, poisoning me with their strawberry-smelling shit!

He throws a disgusted sneer at Celine, who pockets the vape.

HOPE

Can't you see the poor girl's been through enough?

CELINE

None of you know what I've been through.

All eyes on Celine.

HOPE

Do you even know?

CELINE

You all assume he dragged me here. I was the one who wanted to be happy again. To go back to where we were.

HOPE

OK, so it was your decision? The one token rule that this place claims to enforce. And it was you who even started that conversation, was it?

Celine's brow furrows. Her ensuing SILENCE speaks volumes. Hope takes her hand reassuringly.

HOPE (cont'd)

If you genuinely believe he wouldn't do it again, then by all means, go ahead. But if you're in any doubt then do yourself a favour, love - get your arse outta here.

Priti peers at Freddie's car. He drums the steering wheel, his intense stare fixed on Celine. Noticing Priti, he smiles the same cold smile, causing Priti to shudder.

PRITI

Or you could pretend?

Celine considers as she unfurls her hair, which obscures her face and cuts Freddie from her peripheral vision.

PRITI (cont'd)

Go in, come out. Maybe even see if you can get a reversal, so you'll know if you've been here before?

CELINE

What if I don't wanna know?

HOPE

Some memories are there to protect us.

Clyde scoffs.

CLYDE

Why do you even give a shit, anyway? Really think you're gonna change the world, one Box client at a time?

HOPE

Better than sitting there waiting for the world to get better on its own.

Clyde snatches up the digital placard, brandishes it at her, taunting her.

CLYDE
Keep your preachy crap to yourself,
ain't gonna work on me.

HOPE
And that Mr Cool act ain't gonna work
on me, *Clyde*. Or whatever your real
name is. You haven't stayed still for
a second, itching for your next fix.

His jaw clenches as he dumps the placard on the floor. He exhales through his nose, like a bull about to charge.

HOPE (cont'd)
You have a go at her for what she
might be doing to your body, but you
clearly don't give a damn what you do
to your head.

Clyde gets right up in Hope's face. She stands solid.

CLYDE
Fuck you.

HOPE
Oh, we've all got our demons. Even I
came here once.

CLYDE
Oh I'm gonna enjoy this. Grab your
popcorn, folks!

Clyde looks her up and down. She glowers. Priti gives her shoulder a reassuring rub.

HOPE
My son begged me not to, but... I
dunno... I couldn't handle it, my
head was wrecked.

She pauses, taking deep breaths, fanning her sweat patches.

HOPE (cont'd)
He decided to teach me a lesson.
Whilst I was in there, he had his own
procedure, wiped me clean away. This
was in the early days, when it was
the Wild fucking West-

She chokes up.

PRITI

Look, whatever happened, I'm sure it'll all work out. Sounds like he just lashed out, or-

HOPE

-No, you don't understand. The reversal didn't work.

Hope sinks to the floor, buries her face in her hands, rocks back and forth. Celine hugs her.

HOPE (cont'd)

I hope none of you ever have to know what it feels like to have your own son, who you've raised for eighteen years, not even know who you are.

Stunned SILENCE.

Intercom CRACKLES to life. Both sets of doors OPEN. Everyone freezes momentarily.

Clyde snaps out of it, sneers at Hope as he saunters inside. Celine hugs Hope again. Shuffles inside with a nervous backward glance.

Priti follows Celine. Halts. Rounds to the external doors.

EXT. 'THE BOX' ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The fresh air hits Priti, prompting her to dry heave. She leans against the building for a moment. Heads for her car.

Hope gallops after her, clutching the digital placard under one arm.

HOPE

You won't regret it.

PRITI

Oh, I'm sure I will. But that's all part of the process, right?

Hope grimaces.

PRITI (cont'd)

Fancy some company here tomorrow?

HOPE

Why? Erm, I mean... Yes, obviously! But why?

PRITI

Figure I owe the universe a favour.
Might need another of those.

Priti nods to the placard. Hope snorts as she slings it on.

HOPE

Thanks, Sarika.

Priti winces at Hope's knowing smile, shakes Hope's hand.

PRITI

I'm Priti. Nice to meet you.

Priti discreetly wipes her now sweaty hand on her jeans.
They both chuckle.

EXT. 'THE BOX' ENTRANCE - LATER

Clyde drifts outside in a dead-eyed trance. He inhales,
bringing himself round. Winks at Hope. She scowls back.

He spies an attractive woman (40) idling in a convertible,
roof down. License plate roughly reads BONNIE. She wears
sunglasses, feminine scarf - classic chic. She grins.

Clyde grins back, jogs to the car, hops over the side. They
share a passionate clinch. She speeds off, TYRES SCREECHING,
scarf fluttering.

INT. PRITI'S CAR - SAME

Priti slouches in the driver's seat. Sound of TYRES
SCREECHING. Her red, blotchy face is streaked with tears.

She sees Celine emerge from the clinic, sunglasses on,
shuffling in an apparent trance towards Freddie's car. She
slaps the steering wheel in frustration.

Celine's head flickers in Priti's direction. Priti sits
upright, starts her ENGINE.

EXT. 'THE BOX' CAR PARK - MOMENTS LATER

As Celine is equidistant between Priti and Freddie's cars,
she swerves towards Priti. Freddie thunders out of his car.

Priti's passenger door flies open. Celine darts in.

INT. PRITI'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Celine's eyes widen, breaths come in fits. She hugs Priti.

CELINE
Thank you, thank you!

Her face falls.

CELINE (cont'd)
What the hell are we supposed to do
now?

Freddie pounds the outside of Priti's car. Celine cringes.

PRITI
Get back to ourselves?

She pulls away, leaving Freddie agape in the car park.

EXT. 'THE BOX' ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Hope waves enthusiastically as Priti and Celine pass her.

Concierge appraises her with fresh admiration.

Hope stands tall and beams at Concierge - her first genuinely happy smile.