

INT. AMARA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

A WOMAN'S HANDS move through the air, grabbing, and turning.

The woman's face is covered by a beaten up VR HEADSET. She moves her hands, but then ZAP. Her face flinches as we see the device shock her. She tries to play through it. ZAP.

AMARA (21, Mixed) yanks off the headset. Frustrated, she storms out of the room, headset in hand.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Amara enters to find PRIYA (50s, Indian) over the stove, uncovering a pot of boiling curry.

START →

AMARA

This is such a piece of junk!

Amara tosses it on the table, knocking over a stack of HOME GOODS and PAPERS. Priya turns to see the mess.

PRIYA

Nt- Amara- I was trying to find a place for all that.

Amara frustrated at the headset and now at herself too, sighs and goes over to tidy the mess. She looks around, unsure where to put the items, when she sees a tiny available shelf.

AMARA

It's 7 generations old. Every practice test on it's irrelevant.

PRIYA

Some kids only have paper prep, and they do just fine.

It seems impossible everything Amara is holding will fit on the shelf but she's trying. Priya grabs the 'APT Preparation Guide' from Amara's stack, points at the tagline, and reads.

PRIYA (CONT'D)

A "perfect assessment of innate ability" -innate.

She taps the cover as though she's proved her point.

AMARA

You can't tell me I'm going to do better than the kids who have all the latest versions to practice-

Priya stops her with a bite of curry, then leans over and gives Amara a comforting kiss. Amara smiles wanly.

PRIYA

Extra ginger. Tomorrow your brain will go mmm. Listen.

(grabs Amara's shoulders)

It will see how smart you are. You will get a good job. We can then say goodbye to this place when You get us out of here.

AMARA

What if I can't do it?

PRIYA

You will.

Priya turns back to the stove. Amara turns and shoves the last item into the remaining gap. Looking around their kitchen, the stark realities of their modest means are impossible to ignore.

AMARA

But I-

PRIYA

Eh- enough. You will.

Priya is done with this conversation, but Amara looks more nervous than ever. Suddenly decisive, Amara pulls out her phone. She glances to make sure her mother isn't looking, then a text: "Still have it?" Ding. Amara reads a response we don't see and looks up.

END →

AMARA

I need some air.

Priya barely notices as Amara walks out, leaving the broken headset next to the now perfectly packed shelf.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Amara ducks into an alley, looking around nervously to see if she's being watched.

DEALER (O.S.)

Cus don't make it weird, just come over here.

The DEALER steps out of the shadows. But he doesn't look shady - if anything, he looks like a tech bro. Clean cut, preppy, and also Indian. Is he Amara's wealthy relative?