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Ian Kennedy: Professional Writing

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doing a showcase performance in front of everybody.

SAJ: Eh? What sort of item!

FX: THE LADS JUMP DOWN AND REJOIN THE CIRCLE, SCRAPING CHAIRS TO SIT DOWN.

TYRONE: You mean we're not getting on the decks tonight?

KULJIT: No – me and Arun are gonna give you a demo in a bit, alright.

KAL: Sucks man.

KULJIT: Right! So! First, everyone's gonna introduce themselves. Everyone has to say who they are and one thing about themselves that no-one here already knew. OK?

SAJ: Eh?

KULJIT: I'll go first. So hi, I'm Kuljit, and my first kiss was with a girl five years older than me.

ARUN: Haha, no way!

GARY: Was it your mom! (LADS LAUGH)

KULJIT: Alright – you next Gary. Tell us who you are, and something we don't already know.

GARY: Hi everyone... I'm Gary – and I'm an alcoholic. (LADS LAUGH)

KULJIT: O-K--- Saj, you next.

SAJ: Hi yeah, my name's Saj, and the thing none of you know is how to spell my full name innit!



SCENE 3 **INT. PARKSIDE MAIN HALL** **1045**

FX: THE YOUTH GROUP SEATED IN A CIRCLE.

GARY: A GameBoy? That's the item that says most about your life! Yeah, like 'can't afford anything new', innit!

KULJIT: Alright then Gary, what've you brought? The item that says the most about your life...

FX: GARY PRODUCES A MAGAZINE. LADS SNIGGER.

GARY: I think this gentlemen's magazine says the most about my life... teaches me everything I need to know. Let me talk you through a few pictures that really speak to me...

FX: KULJIT SNATCHES THE MAGAZINE AWAY.

KULJIT: Alright! 'Thanks' for that Gary.

SAJ: Think Kuljit wants it for himself Gary!

KULJIT: Has anyone else brought a *genuine* item to help inspire their music?

SCENE 2 **INT. PARKSIDE MAIN HALL** **1820**

FX: MANI AND SWAY WATCHING THE YOUTH MUSIC GROUP. GARY IS TRYING OUT SOME MIXING, BADLY.

MANI: Looks like Kuljit's got a tough group here...

SWAY: Yeah, he's been struggling to keep them all on board... Gary's been a right handful since his dad's old mates got arrested.



MANI: And some work to do with their sound as well I think...! Well anyway – how’s the week going otherwise?

SWAY: Alright! Not bad. Listen, I gotta sort the next session, but hang around if you like.

MANI: OK, sure.

FX: SWAY LEAVES. SWITCH TO THE STAGE, WHERE KULJIT IS HELPING GARY ON THE DECKS. GARY MESSES UP A CROSSFADE FROM ONE SONG TO ANOTHER.

KULJIT: Just take it a bit easier – if you’ve got your timing wrong, a slower fade can help you get away with it. Look, let’s set it up again.

GARY: Nah forget it man, I’m rubbish at this, it’s pointless.

KULJIT: You’re not! You just gotta give it some practice Gary.

GARY: Nah. Let the others have their go, I don’t care.

KULJIT: Come on Gary, just give it a try. We’ll be doing this in front of everybody tomorrow night – don’t you wanna show them what you’re made of?

GARY: Whatever...

KULJIT: Alright, well, why don’t you have a go at making your rap. If you wanna go into the corner there and have a practice...?

GARY: Yeah yeah...

FX: GARY WALKS OFF.

SCENE 4 INT.>EXT. PARKSIDE MAIN HALL>FIRE ESCAPE 1855



FX: TYRONE MIXING ON THE DECKS. GARY IS IN A CORNER TRYING TO RAP.

GARY: Got my Dad dead in the ground, now his killer's just been found, the guy you think you trust, left him dying in the dust, gotta... uh... (THINKS FOR A BIT) gonna... (THINKS) Now his mates are in the can, cos they got... uh... Oh this is stupid! What's the point!

FX: GETS UP, KICKS A CHAIR OVER.

KULJIT: Gary?

GARY: Forget it!

FX: GARY STORMS ONTO THE STAGE.

GARY: Get this crap off Tyrone, put some decent tunes on!

FX: GARY REACHES FOR THE NEEDLE. TYRONE PUSHES HIM OFF.

TYRONE: Oi! Get off Gary, you had your go!

GARY: Don't touch me!

TYRONE: Leave it alone! Just cos you can't do it, don't take it out on me!

GARY: What you saying, I can't do it! I'll show you!

TYRONE: Get off!

FX: GARY AND TYRONE TUSSELE. THE DECKS ARE KNOCKED ABOUT. KULJIT RUNS OVER AND ANGRILY PULLS GARY BACK.

KULJIT: (FURIOUS) That's it Gary! You're coming outside with me!



FX: DRAGS GARY OUT BY HIS HAIR.

GARY: Argh, get off me! That kills, let go of my hair!

TYRONE: Yeah, sort him out Kuljit! He deserves it! Been asking for it all week.

KULJIT: You've gone too far this time Gary...

GARY: What you doing to me!

KULJIT: Outside...

SAJ: (CALLS) Haha, you've had it now Gary! Kuljit's gone psycho!

FX: THEY THUMP THROUGH THE FIRE DOORS.

KULJIT PULLS GARY ROUND THE CORNER AND PUSHES HIM AGAINST THE WALL.

GARY: This is abuse!

KULJIT: What do you think you're playing at!

GARY: Let go of me!

KULJIT: (IN GARY'S FACE) Everyone volunteered to come here, try something out, have a go – but you only came here take the piss!

GARY: No! I'm here cos –

KULJIT: All you've done all week is try and bring everyone down to your level, cos you're afraid to have a go in case you fail – well I'm not letting you do it any more Gary!

GARY: What... what are you gonna do!

KULJIT: Come or don't come to these sessions – it's your call. But if you come, have a try, and let everyone



else do their thing. If that's not what you've come for, you shouldn't be here.

GARY: I – I'm sorry – I didn't mean to damage the decks...

KULJIT: Jeez Gary, do you think that's what this is about? This is about you. About how you're treating them. Tyrone's supposed to be your mate! Why can't you let him prove himself?

GARY: (TEARFUL) Please... I didn't mean to! I'm sorry!
(CRIES)

FX: KULJIT PUSHES AWAY FROM GARY AND LETS GO.

KULJIT: (DISGUSTED) Look at yourself. You're a mess Gary!

GARY: (CRIES)

KULJIT: You wanna go your whole life, acting like this and blaming what happened to your dad? Well one day you'll get what's coming to you. I've grown up without both of my parents – sooner or later, you've gotta take responsibility for yourself. Cos no-one else is going to! You understand me!

GARY: I didn't mean this to happen... (BREAKS DOWN COMPLETELY)

KULJIT: (HAS SURPRISED HIMSELF) Whoa...

SCENE 6 EXT. PARKSIDE FIRE EXIT 1910

FX: GARY BLUBS. REGRETTING HIS ANGER, KULJIT IS TRYING TO CALM GARY DOWN NOW.



GARY: If my Dad's old mates go down, it's like I'm losing the only other people who feel how I do about his murder, you know!

KULJIT: Yeah... yeah...

GARY: And what can I do about it? I thought I could trust Imran, and it was him that did it! Everyone I try and turn to...

KULJIT: It's been a shock to everyone. But there might be stuff we still haven't heard.

GARY: Who've I got? My mum's never there; I can't talk to these lot, they're just...

KULJIT: I know... Look. I'm sorry I was a bit rough with you there. (BEAT) If you need to talk to someone in future... well, come find me, yeah?

GARY: (THINKS ABOUT IT)

KULJIT: I'm sorry I got angry with you.

GARY: Um. Yeah.

KULJIT: Why don't you take the day off now. You don't want them to see you like this.

GARY: (SNIFFS) Yeah. Alright.

KULJIT: Come back whenever you want, yeah?

GARY: OK...

KULJIT: And let's give you a real go on those decks – show 'em what you're made of.

GARY: You think?

KULJIT: Look after yourself, yeah?



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GARY: Yeah.

**FX: GARY LEAVES. KULJIT SIGHS TO HIMSELF AND
GOES BACK INSIDE.**

END OF EPISODE.



>An example of a distinctive project designed to blend community, faith, children, story, and CGI animation: *Talib & The Woid*. Satisfying all of the partners and contradictory impulses behind the venture was a considerable challenge, so this was the setting and allegory I created to move the project forward (along with a full script). I could see that charm and humour and energetic storytelling would be as important as fidelity to the Islamic messages the project was looking to promote. A pilot was successfully produced for Noor TV (Sky 822) late last year which has broadcast many times since, and we're currently working towards realising a full series based on the premise detailed below, which would be of benefit to Noor TV internationally and children's channels, as well as for teaching English to children in the Islamic world in an enjoyable and counter-extremist way. Each story is an allegory based upon one of the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him).

The Settings

The Lightside

The top half of the world is bathed in the Light that gives it warmth and nourishment, though it is weaker at the fringes.

The City Of Light

At the heart of the Light Side, The City of Light is protected by faith and the eye and ear of its protector, the Woid, which can empower its citizens to defeat their enemies. However the everyday world creates many distractions which prevent the citizens from paying as much attention and respect to the Woid and the Light (ie Allah) as they should.

The Darkside

The underside of the world is a desolate, cold place, illuminated only by cold eternal fires. At its Fringes, some of the Light shines, and the Darksidiers often gather there for warmth, envious of the Light and the happiness of those that enjoy it.

The Great Nothing

Wrongdoers are finally consumed by The Great Nothing, a massive Zero that strips them of their humanity and tortures them with envy for the Light, driving them to do evil in their efforts to conquer the Light and the world for themselves.



Characters

Talib

Son of Mr. & Mrs. Majnoon, brother of Maymoona and Sadiqah. Friend of Asmina. A thoughtful boy, curious about the world – the central character.

Asmina

Talib's friend, the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jubna. Doesn't get enough attention or respect from her parents, but is honest and true-hearted.

Father Alfalfa

Cynical, cruel spreader of deceptions. Claims to know everything and is very persuasive, but is actually picking and choosing what he uses from The Great Book (ie The Qur'an) to do so. Despite his big talk, he's ultimately a coward who lets others take the flak for his wrongdoing and always talks his way out of a compromising situation.

Sister Saira

Unlike Father Alfalfa, Sister Saira has studied The Great Book honestly and at length, and knows she still has a great deal more to learn from it. Where he is arrogant she is humble, but this means that her wise guidance is often not given the attention it deserves, except by Talib and Asmina.

The Big O

Father Alfalfa's most loyal follower Omar is persuaded to enter The Great Nothing (a massive zero) where the fires of Hell strip him of his flesh and his humanity. From there, as The Big O (a giant skull), he hatches evil plans to take over the City Of Light and despatches evil forces into the world, but away from The Great Nothing his powers and influence diminish in proportion to the strength of the Light.

The Pixels

The followers created by The Big O are made from splitting nothing in half: he separates a zero into an equal positive and negative (use opposing colours to show this). Every time two Pixels of the same kind touch each other, they merge into a bigger Pixel; but when made to touch their opposites, they neutralise and become nothing again. The Pixels do The Big O's bidding in the world for him, sometimes in disguise.

Mayor Jubna

The mayor of The City of Light is a self-important, but likeable man, distracted by power and his wishes to please his selfish trophy wife. He is Asmina's father but is usually too busy to give her much attention.



Mrs. Jubna

Attractive and selfish, Mrs. Jubna is materialistic and greedy. She is always trying to persuade her husband to help her shopping mall wipe her competition out of business. She largely ignores her daughter Asmina.

Mr. Majnoon

A market trader, Mr. Majnoon is always under pressure to make enough money to support his family. He is a hard-working, honest man, always hassled by the world he lives in and therefore not always giving as much attention as he would like to his children, the Light and the Woid.

Mrs. Majnoon

A warm-hearted housewife, Mrs. Majnoon always tries to make ends meet and teach her children about the Light and the Woid, but often struggles to keep them under control.

Maymoona

Argumentative and sly, Talib's eldest sister is selfish and often horrible to her siblings.

Sadiqah

Comes across more sweet and innocent than her elder sister Maymoona, but Sadiqah is actually a devilish schemer and equally selfish.

Big Abdullah

A big and strong simpleton with a heart of gold, generous and easily led.

Finbar

A robot cat, playful and rude, and a match for the twins.

Plot

"A man follows the religion of his friend; so each one of you should take care in selecting your friend."

Scene 1

The people of the City Of Light are surprised to hear that Father Alfalfa has returned from reading The Great Book so quickly, and worry after Sister Saira who went with him as they gather to hear his speech. Father Alfalfa is welcomed back by Mayor Jubna and makes a speech telling the people misleading information. Only Talib and Asmina notice that the Light fades and the City is colder while Alfalfa speaks.

Scene 2

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After everyone leaves, Father Alfalfa persuades his most loyal follower Omar to come with him to the Darkside – he has a special mission for Omar. Omar is afraid of the Darkside but very keen to do as Father Alfalfa tells him.

Scene 3

Talib is worried about the fade in the Light, but Mrs. Majnoon dismisses it and tells Talib and his sisters today's Hadith. Talib thinks about the Hadith, but Maymoona and Sadiqah are distractible and make trouble for each other which their mother has to sort out.

Scene 4

Father Alfalfa persuades Omar to cross from the Lightside to the Darkside with him. They enter the Darkside.

Scene 5

Talib meets Big Abdullah in the street and is worried that what Big Abdullah is saying (repeating things Father Alfalfa said earlier) contradicts the Hadith he has been given. They wonder where Father Alfalfa is, so they can ask him what the truth is, but he is nowhere to be seen.

Scene 6

Father Alfalfa leads a terrified Omar to the Great Nothing. Omar is reluctant to step into it as Alfalfa demands he do, and in the end Alfalfa pushes him in. When Omar is consumed by dark flames, Alfalfa is also terrified that he will be engulfed.

Scene 7

Talib finds Asmina, who can't get the attention of either of her parents. Asmina and Talib talk about Father Alfalfa. Something about him doesn't seem right – their parents are all telling them that he is a wise and learned man who knows The Great Book better than anyone, but it's been colder and darker in the City Of Light since he came back. They wish Sister Saira was back too – she was always kind and thoughtful, and she knew a lot about The Great Book too.

Scene 8

The flames die down in the Great Nothing, and Father Alfalfa is terrified by what Omar has become – The Big O. The Big O tells Alfalfa of what has become of him, and how he now has the power to overcome the Light. They hatch an evil plan to capture the City of Light, and The Big O generates Pixels who they can send into action there. Father Alfalfa returns to the City of Light to disguise his true intentions.

Scene 9

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Talib returns home to find Maymoona and Sadiqah arguing over which of them gets to keep a cat – Finbar – they have found in the street. But Finbar plays hard to get and makes a fool of them both. Talib tries to ask his mother about the Hadith she gave him earlier but she is too busy with the other two and her housework to help him understand. Asmina comes to tell Talib that Father Alfalfa is back and the two of them go to ask him about it, and why the Light has faded.

Scene 10

Father Alfalfa distracts the Mayor while his Pixels begin to enter the City. Talib and Asmina try to ask Father Alfalfa about The Great Book but he evades. They are unnerved by the Pixels entering the City, but Mayor Jubna has been convinced that it's nothing to worry about and lets them carry on. Talib and Asmina follow some of the Pixels to find out what's going on.

Scene 11

Talib and Asmina follow the Pixels and listen in on their conversation. They are very worried to hear that the Pixels are planning to take over the City. They hurry back to the Mayor.

Scene 12

Mr. Jubna doesn't believe Talib and Asmina, who realise that they'll have to stop the Pixels themselves somehow.

Scene 13

Talib and Asmina confront the Pixels, who boast of their plans and say there's nothing anyone can do about it. They're about to put their plan into action, and Talib and Asmina don't know what to do. Then the Light shines on Talib, and he has a thought. He recites the Hadith from earlier, and is then transformed into The Woid. The Woid battles the Pixels, and when he throws them together they are both neutralised. The Woid becomes Talib once again and he and Asmina discuss what just happened.

Scene 14

Watching the defeat from The Great Nothing, a furious Big O summons Father Alfalfa back to him.

Scene 15

Talib and Asmina return to Mayor Jubna and try to tell him what happened, but he credits the story to the children's overactive imaginations and says that the disappearance of the Pixels proves that they were nothing to worry about. Father Alfalfa bursts in to say that he has to go away very urgently. Mayor Jubna asks if he is going back to The Great Book, and Father Alfalfa pretends he is. Talib and Asmina are less easily convinced but Father Alfalfa gets away



before they can challenge him. Mayor Jubna tells them to go home, he has a lot of work to do.

Scene 16

Father Alfalfa returns to The Great Nothing, and assures The Big O that this is just a minor setback and soon they will be able to take over The City of the Light once and for all. They vow to hatch new schemes. Soon the world will be theirs!

Scene 17

Talib returns home. Maymoona and Sadiqah are still making trouble. He tells his mother that the Hadith she told him helped him today, and she says she is proud of him. Things return to normal in their house.

THE END!



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>A short, sharp film conceived in collaboration with the Director (Pavan Deep Singh): *By Arrangement*. Designed to make an eye-opening impact while being as flexible and practical to film as possible, the film can in fact be filmed in just one location for a very low budget while looking much more expansive; a good example of how my production experience benefits my writing.

INT BAR/RESTAURANT NIGHT 2000

A fairly cool modern nightspot, nice atmosphere but not too loud - the characters have to raise their voices a little. Youngish female BALJINDER, dressed attractively for a date, sits at a table waiting nervously. Similarly aged male RANJIT, also dressed attractively for a date, arrives. He's more relaxed than her, they awkwardly kiss on the cheek and sit at the table together.

RANJIT

Sorry, haven't kept you waiting have I!

BALJINDER

No! No it's fine. Honestly.

RANJIT

It's good to see you again.

BALJINDER

You too! (Laughs, embarrassed)

RANJIT

Did you order drinks already?

BALJINDER

No! Should I?

RANJIT

You sure? I could've sworn I just heard the ice breaking...

It takes a few moments for her to get the joke. She laughs a little awkwardly. He smiles.

EXT STREET NIGHT 1950

BALJINDER and her friend JASPREET (young female) walk towards the nightspot where BALJINDER will meet RANJIT. BALJINDER is dressed as previously and JASPREET is also

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(but less conspicuously) attractively dressed. BALJINDER is nervous and in no rush to get there.

JASPREET
Come on then...!

BALJINDER
Sorry.

JASPREET
You're having second thoughts, aren't you.

BALJINDER
No, I just... don't want to rush.

JASPREET
You've met him twice already.

BALJINDER
Yeah, but that was at an auntie's...

JASPREET
So this should be a lot easier. Neutral territory.

BALJINDER
I guess.

JASPREET stops BALJINDER and faces her.

JASPREET
Do you want to sit down and talk about it first? It's a big step you're taking.

BALJINDER
I know.

JASPREET
I mean - marriage. Is that really what you want?

BALJINDER
I don't know.

JASPREET
You don't know! How can you be thinking of getting married to this guy, if you don't know!

BALJINDER



(sighs) Look, I... I'm finding out, OK. That's what I'm doing.

BALJINDER

You can't marry some stranger unless you really mean it. What if it doesn't work out! It's totally unfair on him.

JASPREET

I know... I know.

INT BAR/RESTAURANT 2010

RANJIT pours them both a glass of wine.

BALJINDER

You really didn't have to get the expensive one.

RANJIT

I like to live well. I'd like you to be a part of it too.

BALJINDER

You're too kind.

RANJIT

Not at all. I know what I like.

RANJIT smiles at BALJINDER. She smiles back.

INT. GAY NIGHTCLUB NIGHT 0000

RANJIT, dressed provocatively for a gay club, flirts with ALEC on the dance floor to a pounding dance song under strobe lights.

They reach a quieter corner and kiss. They are all over each other.

RANJIT looks slyly up at ALEC.

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT NIGHT 2015

The glasses have been partially drunk.

RANJIT

So are you used to guys taking out and showing you a good time?



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BALJINDER

Er - no! Not really... I do like going out with my mates though. I'm not someone who likes to stay at home - I can let my hair down when I want to.

RANJIT

I'm glad to hear it. Though your hair's looking pretty great already.

BALJINDER laughs. She's starting to relax.

RANJIT

Well. I hope that tonight is the beginning of a habit for us both.

BALJINDER

Yeah. Me too.

EXT STREET NIGHT 1955

Continuous from earlier scene.

JASPREET

What makes you think you could get married? It's not something you've ever talked about before.

BALJINDER

It's... it's just something I'm ready to think about now.

JASPREET

You've not been unhappy, or lonely - you've always had a good time. What's changed?

BALJINDER

Nothing's changed, it's... complicated.

JASPREET

Complicated how! You're not pregnant are you.

BALJINDER

No of course not. Don't you think I'd have told you!

JASPREET

Well I don't know, do I. This has just come out of the blue. I'm hurt you didn't talk to me about this first.

BALJINDER

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I didn't know what to do.

JASPREET

Really? Or you knew what I was going to say.

BALJINDER

Jazzy...

JASPREET

No, it's fine. I'm only your best friend. What's it got to do with me!

JASPREET begins to walk off. BALJINDER keeps up with her.

JASPREET

I'll be in the next bar along. In case you need me to tell you you're making the biggest mistake of your life.

BALJINDER

Jazzy, look. My parents have been putting me under pressure. They're worried I'm going to be over the hill soon. And you know how much I want to make them happy, I love them! So...

JASPREET

The way you'd love your husband?

BALJINDER

I just want to make them happy. That's all.

JASPREET

What about what makes you happy?

BALJINDER

I could be happy, with a husband who loved me.

JASPREET

And if he didn't?

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT NIGHT 2020

BALJINDER's glass is going down fast, and RANJIT tops it up while she's talking.

RANJIT

Tell me about yourself. What makes you happy?



BALJINDER

Well... good times, with the special people in my life.
People I care about, and who care about me, you know?

A man walks past and RANJIT eyes him up while BALJINDER
isn't looking.

RANJIT

Oh yeah.

BALJINDER

Going out, feeling special... someone there to look after
me. Someone who loves me. That's what would make me
happy.

RANJIT smiles a little regretfully, and puts the bottle
down.

INT. GAY CLUB NIGHT 0010

RANJIT and ALEC stop kissing.

ALEC

So do you mean it then? About this girl?

RANJIT

Well, it's just... if my parents knew about us, it'd kill
them. And they're starting to wonder why I've never had a
girlfriend.

RANJIT cups ALEC's head in his hand.

RANJIT

It won't affect me and you. She'll never need to know. We
can keep it casual.

ALEC

What if I don't want it to stay casual?

RANJIT

Alec?

ALEC

Well, what if I don't. What if I'm in love with you.

RANJIT

Hey, now, whoa there, we haven't -



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ALEC

You marry this girl, you'll be breaking my heart Ranjit.
Not to mention hers.

RANJIT

I promise it won't change a thing.

ALEC

I know we can't be together - properly together - cos you
couldn't tell your family, cos of what it would do to
them. I can accept that now. But what about her? How can
you ask her to accept it, when you're in love with
someone else!

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT NIGHT 2025

RANJIT and BALJINDER are tucking into their starters.

BALJINDER

So were you thinking about a summer wedding? All the
traditional dresses and dances... Lots of flowers and
confetti...

RANJIT looks away, and realises what he must do. He turns
back to her.

RANJIT

Look. Baljinder. I'm really sorry. But there's something
I've got to say.

INT. NEARBY BAR NIGHT 2035

JASPREET sips her glass alone, staring intently out of
the window to the bar that BALJINDER is in. A man comes
towards her.

MAN

Excuse me...

JASPREET (short tempered)

Not - interested!

MAN

Oh... sorry.



Out of the window, JASPREET sees BALJINDER rushing out of the bar, head buried in her hands, convulsing, seemingly in tears.

JASPREET
Bal!

JASPREET hurries out to her.

EXT. STREET NIGHT 2040

JASPREET rushes over to BALJINDER, who is still convulsing.

JASPREET
Bal! What's he said to you! What's happened!

BALJINDER looks up, and we realise she has been laughing her lungs out.

JASPREET
Bal?? What - what's happening?

BALJINDER
Jazzy. You're not gonna believe this...

JASPREET
What!!

BALJINDER
He's gay!

JASPREET
He's - gay?! No. You're joking.

BALJINDER
I know! Isn't it perfect?

JASPREET
Perfect?

BALJINDER
We're getting married.

JASPREET
You are?



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BALJINDER

So now we can all get what we want.

JASPREET

I don't understand.

BALJINDER takes JASPREET into her arms. They kiss tenderly, then passionately.

Fade to black.

THE END.



>From the WhatsOnUK monthly tabloid, November 2007. I enjoy provocative, humourous pieces (my satiric past website Trash FM is also a good extended example, www.geocities.com/darchus) and I think they're particularly good for attracting the young audiences that are always early adopters of new types of content.

AgOny Got a problem? Ask Ingrid.

Post-Natal Frustration

DEAR INGRID, since I gave birth my husband has been increasingly distant from me. He spends all the time he can with our daughter and always volunteers to get up if she cries when I'm trying to turn him on. How can I make myself attractive to him again?

Amy, Woking

Dear Amy, There is something that only someone with my desperate life experience, and years of wallowing in other people's sufferings, can tell you. Your husband has transferred his sexual attraction from you onto the baby. I know that's hard for you to accept – every day I still have to convince myself that was why my husband left me, after I gave up my wretched little aberration for adoption. But if you hold fast to that belief, and have your horrid husband locked away forever, he'll never break another heart again. And in the end, isn't that what every man deserves?

Doled Out

DEAR INGRID, Since I was laid off from the factory I work in, I've been suffering from depression and a lack of motivation to find new work. I know I'm supposed to be applying for jobs and trying to avoid repossession of my home, but I just can't find the will to do it, and when I try it's obvious to possible employers that I'm no longer inspired by the work that's available to me. How can I get out of this rut?

Andy, Bradford

Dear Andy, I also used to suffer from a lack of motivation to work, brought on by ignorant businessmen refusing to help me clone Coco Chanel and launch a new perfume from her distilled essence. It took me ten years to recognise an alternative employment, and through making a fortune out of other people's miseries ever since, I am now rich enough to produce that perfume myself. It's a long road – but at least you're starting off on the right foot.



StarOn The future starts now! (Unless you picked this up yesterday.)

Aries

21 Mar-20 Apr

Mr. Lloyd Webber, I foresee dread tidings if you do not forthwith renounce Cats and withdraw it from the public consciousness immediately, as you know you finally must. Specifically, I see myself with a petrol bomb inside your props cupboard while the building's unattended. We can't fight the future – give in now. You have been warned. Destiny is a dish best served hot.

Taurus

21 Apr-21 May

Take me back Natalie, please I beg you, think of the times we're yet to have, the whole world and our lives ahead of us. It's all at our feet Natalie, I love you and I'm desperate and if you don't take me back something terrible is going to happen to you. It's the future – we can't fight it! I've seen it all. Destiny is a place between my loins.

Gemini

22 May-22 Jun

What sort of a sick mind would take pleasure in plucking the legs off woodlice, bringing them to the boil, and serving them to your mother in a Cup-a-Soup? Then arranging a fire alarm in her care home, just to make all the other residents share it with her in the cold? Hell, I don't know, but count me in! Destiny waxes her legs lyrical.

Cancer

23 Jun-23 Jul

Man you won't believe what I saw in your sign today, stuff that was totally out there, unreal to a T, beyond anything you've ever seen before man! There were crabs gambolling on Saturn's skirts, a tree dancing the Macarena, and Michael Moore wailing in a high chair! But anyway I was on 'shrooms so I



gotta check again in the morning, leave it with me yeah? Destiny dithers in a department store.

Leo
24 Jul-23 Aug

All in all it'll be a breezy day across the north, with light drizzle coming in from the West as we wait for this warm front of high pressure. Highs around 14, falling to 7 overnight. Moving into the weekend, expect cooler spells and even a little ground frost in more remote parts. But all in all it'll be mild, with some risk of showers. And that's the forecast! Destiny updates her status hourly.

Virgo
24 Aug-23 Sep

Whoa, I don't know how to break this to you man, but next Wednesday you are gonna have the most TERRIBLE, painful, traumatic – oh wait, it's Libra! Haha! How bout that. Man you got off light. Anyway, hope no-one you care about is a Libra, they ain't gonna know what's hit them. Destiny needs an especially aromatic bath.

Libra
24 Sep-23 Oct

Next Wednesday is gonna hit you like some mega kick-ass plot twist from 24, you know? You ain't seen nothing yet. Think The Crying Game meets The Matrix, smacking into your constellation like a daddy-beating off Orion's belt, then it all gets worse. Man I wish I could see it happen. Other than just figuratively, y'know. Anyway. Destiny devours careful drivers.

Scorpio
24 Oct-22 Nov

The LORD is calling, but will you heed? Will you hear the Word, and repent, and spend your life as a missionary evangelist going door to door, and escape the agony of a thousand deaths on fiery spikes roasting upon Hellfire? Or will you just laze there again and watch Hollyoaks. Ah well, at least we're going down together. Destiny derides your attempts at lovemaking.

Sagittarius

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23 Nov-21 Dec

If you don't look up right now, you'll miss a glimpse of something that will transform your li- ...for goodness sake, too late, again. Why do I even bother? You wouldn't know fate if it was bashing your head in with a fire extinguisher. Destiny knows Spider-Man 3 sucked, but still can't resist a triple DVD deluxe boxed set in black wrapping.

Capricorn 22 Dec-20 Jan

You talk down to other people about their lives so as to disguise your own sickening self-pity, don't you? You're pathetic, always projecting your own faults onto others. How many years will they have to sit through your interminable tirades and perpetual victim complexes. Oh – I don't believe it! I'm doing it *again*...! Destiny rolls her eyes once more.

Aquarius 21 Jan-19 Feb

No matter how many falafels you try, you can't stop yourself visualising dung beetles at work. Try chili sauce as a last resort. And meanwhile, have you tried those new wraps from the cafe round the corner? Darling they're gorgeous, you must try one – I recommend the duck in Hoi Sin sauce, washed down with a carafe of Beaujolais. Destiny has better things to be doing than work this afternoon.

Pisces 20 Feb-20 Mar

You know how I discovered I could tell the future? I was at this party and I'd had a lot to drink, and I couldn't tell why but things felt different – unreal. And then I had this vision – I thought, I'm going to be sick. And then – I WAS. I knew right then and there I could tell the future. Anyway, this week it happens to you. Destiny is undressing for you.