

Seven Years at the Mayfair Mall

By Penny Penniston
From an original idea by
Jim Farrell

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Setting

A bus stop at the Mayfair Mall. Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 2004 - 2010

Characters

AMITA: Asian Indian female. A teenager.

DENNIS: White male. A teenager.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater commissioned this play and presented its world premiere in January of 2011. The play toured Milwaukee area middle and high schools. The original cast and creative contributors were:

Rukhmani Desai (Amita)

Michael Lindsey (Dennis)

David Hartig (Stage Manager)

Jenny Kostreva (Director)

Dedication

For Kathy & Martha, who first introduced me to Wisconsin. And for Neal, who is not from Wisconsin, but who married a nice Wisconsin girl and who gave me a tutorial on the Green Bay Packers.

2004 - SIXTH GRADE

A bench near the bus stop at Mayfair Mall in Milwaukee. It is Black Friday- the Friday after Thanksgiving.

The actors enter as themselves, in their base costumes. AMITA has her hair in pigtails. She wears jeans, UGS, a cami and a demure sweater. She carries a Hello Kitty purse. DENNIS wears cargo pants, a long sleeve undershirt, and a comic book T-Shirt. He carries a travel bag and a Milwaukee bus map.

AMITA

Two-thousand-and-four.

DENNIS

Sixth grade.

Now in character, they take their places for the scene. Dennis, playing age 12, goes off stage. Amita, playing age 12, waits on the bench. A huge duffel bag sits on the bench next to her. Dennis enters. He carries the travel bag and a bus map.

DENNIS

Where are you going? You going to West Allis? I'm going to West Allis. This is like-- my second bus. I took a whole other bus to get here. And now there's like-- two more. You going to West Allis?

Amita shakes her head "no." Dennis looks at his map.

DENNIS

I hope this is the right place. I think it is. Mom gave me this map. But... I mean... World of Warcraft? I can get you anywhere on World of Warcraft. But this... this is different. Busses.

AMITA

You're by yourself?

DENNIS

Huh?

AMITA

Taking the bus. By yourself?

DENNIS

Aren't you?

He indicates the bag on the ground.

AMITA

Oh. That--

DENNIS

My brother-- he used to drive me. Thanksgiving at mom's house and then we'd drive up to dad's. But he like-- joined the army you know? So now I get the bus. 'Cause Mom- she won't talk to Dad. And Dad-- he won't talk to mom. And so I like-

(makes a weaving motion)

Between them.

AMITA

By yourself.

DENNIS

Yeah. Can I like- sit down?

AMITA

Oh. Um...

Dennis moves the duffel onto the ground and sits.

DENNIS

All these people here, you know. Jesus. There's like-- no place to sit.

AMITA

It's the sales. Day after Thanksgiving? All the stores have sales. Crazy.

DENNIS

I hate malls. Girls-- all the girls I know like malls. They go and like-- just wander around in them. I mean, my friends and I-- we'll go to the arcade or something? Or the movie theater? I mean-- something cool? But the girls just like-- I mean HOW MANY LIP GLOSSES CAN YOU TRY ON?

Amita smirks.

DENNIS

You like seem-- different. You know... not like the trying-on-lip-glosses kind.

AMITA

Yeah. Different.

DENNIS

What's your bus?

AMITA

Oh, I um...

DENNIS

You need the map?

AMITA

No--

DENNIS

It's got everything on it.

AMITA

I don't need the map.

DENNIS

See, we're here- at the mall.

AMITA

I know where I am--

DENNIS

And the lines--- They're like the different busses.

AMITA

Yeah--

DENNIS

Places you could go.

AMITA

Do you think I'm stupid? A stupid head? I know. I don't need the map.

DENNIS

OK. Sorry. So where are you going?

AMITA

I'm going... to the airport.

DENNIS

By yourself?

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Cool.

AMITA

I always go by myself. Every year. Day after Thanksgiving, I go to the airport. I take trips.

DENNIS

On airplanes. By yourself.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

You do not.

AMITA

I do. Australia.

DENNIS

You are not going to Australia.

AMITA

I have cousins in Australia.

DENNIS

Wow.

AMITA

Big family. All over the world. Every year I go somewhere.

DENNIS

That is so cool. I totally want to go to Australia. They have Koala bears there. Have you seen Koala's? They're like totally cute, you know. Little paws...

AMITA

I love Koalas.

DENNIS

You go every year? Someplace new?

AMITA

Yeah. Thanksgiving at home and then the next day... mom drops me off here and I go to the airport.

DENNIS

Here. This bus stop.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

So we'll see each other.

AMITA

Where?

DENNIS

Here. I mean-- next year. The bus stop. I like-- always go out to Dad's after Thanksgiving. And I don't think my brother's going to be back to drive me. So-- we'll see each other.

AMITA

Oh. Maybe. I mean-- busses come and go.

DENNIS

Yeah. Well... I hope we see each other. It'd be cool Someone to talk to. I mean-- I'm not really supposed to be talking to anybody. My mom's like "Don't let anybody look at you. Or talk to you. And if anybody tries to touch you, you KICK THEM IN THE NUTS." But I think she means grown ups.

AMITA

I'm not supposed to talk to anybody either.

DENNIS

Our secret then.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Ah! Twenty-eight. I think that's my bus.

Dennis rises to leave.

DENNIS

My name's Dennis. Look for me next year. Dennis. And I'll look for you. What's your name?

AMITA

I think you'll remember me.

DENNIS

A year is like-- a long time.

AMITA

Amy. I'm Amy.

DENNIS

OK Amy! Bring me a picture of a Koala bear or something.

Dennis waves goodbye and exits.

2005 - SEVENTH GRADE

The actors change costume. Amita takes her hair out of the pigtails and puts it up in a ponytail. She exchanges her demure sweater for a pink jacket. She puts on rubber bracelets and carries a shiny fake patent leather purse. Dennis puts on a Brett Farve Green Bay Packers jersey.

DENNIS

Two-thousand-and-five.

AMITA

Seventh grade.

They exit. Same bench. One year later.

Amita, now playing age 13, enters. She carries the same huge duffel bag. She drops it onto the bench and plops down, tired.

Her brow wrinkles, remembering something. She sits up. She looks around to make sure that no one is watching. She takes the duffel bag from the bench and moves it onto the ground (leaving the seat next to her on the bench now empty).

Dennis, now playing age 13, enters. He wears a Brett Farve Packers jersey and listens to headphones. He's absorbed in what he's listening to. He doesn't notice Amita.

DENNIS

Aw man!

He pulls off his headphones in disgust. He sits down on the bench, grumpy.

AMITA

Something wrong?

DENNIS

Pittsburg sucks. That's what's wrong.

AMITA

Dennis, right?

DENNIS

Do I know you?

AMITA

Um... yeah.

DENNIS

Oh! You're the-- from last year!

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Amy.

AMITA

No.

DENNIS

It's not Amy?

AMITA

No. Amita.

DENNIS

Amita?

AMITA

Yes. Dennis.

DENNIS

Don't be all-- you told me your name was Amy.

AMITA

I did not.

DENNIS

You totally did. Amy. I would have remembered "Amita." That's like-- a weird name.

AMITA

It's not... weird. I told you my name was Amy?

DENNIS

Yes.

AMITA

Oh.

A silence.

DENNIS

It's like-- a strange name.

AMITA

You said.

DENNIS

That like... Arab or something?

AMITA

Arab?!

DENNIS

My brother-- he's like over there fighting the Arabs.

AMITA

It's Indian. The name is from India.

DENNIS

Oh.

Amita sits in an angry, frustrated silence.

AMITA

Arab. India's like-- a whole other continent.

DENNIS

It's not in the Middle East?

AMITA

No.

DENNIS

Sorry. I'm like-- I can barely even figure out the bus map.

AMITA

Never mind. I shouldn't be talking to you anyway.

DENNIS

Why not?

AMITA

I'm not supposed to talk to boys. Especially not white boys.

DENNIS

What's wrong with white boys?

AMITA

You don't know where India is.

DENNIS

Look, just because I'm not... you know... a walking Wikipedia or whatever-- there's nothing wrong with being white.

AMITA

Not wrong, but... not allowed. For me.

DENNIS

Not allowed? This is Wisconsin. White guys. We're everywhere.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

You can't just like-- not talk to us.

AMITA

It's a rule.

DENNIS

What rule?

AMITA

A rule.

She sits in stubborn silence.

DENNIS

(coming at her like a zombie)

White boy... Whiiiiite boyyyyy...

Amita giggles.

DENNIS

It's a dumb rule.

AMITA

It is not. It's just... my parents.

DENNIS

You're parents are weird.

AMITA

They're not. They're Indian. They're different. We're different.

DENNIS

And so... you can't talk to me. Because you're different.

AMITA

Yes. No. Never mind. You don't get it.

DENNIS

Well I'm trying, but it like-- doesn't make sense.

AMITA

The rules are different. And it's my parents. And my culture and it's not the same, OK?

DENNIS

OK, Amita. But last year you told me your name was Amy.

AMITA

I just--

DENNIS

You did.

AMITA

I thought maybe-- You know-- I wanted you to like me. But never mind.

DENNIS

Oh. I like you. But you know-- that's 'cause we talked. So if we can't talk...

Silence.

AMITA

It's not like-- so different. I didn't-- I wasn't even born in India.

DENNIS

No?

AMITA

Pittsburgh. Until fourth grade? Pretty much like here. Except there are mountains. And we're Steeler fans.

DENNIS

(appalled)

Oh!

AMITA

I know. My older brothers got me this set of Pittsburgh Steelers underwear. I'm like- I CANNOT wear this to school.

DENNIS

Yeah. The locker room? A good Wisconsin girl would kick your butt.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Still, Pittsburgh. It's somewhere. Somewhere else. I've like-- I've never even been outside of Wisconsin.

AMITA

Never?

DENNIS

I'd like to-- you know-- go somewhere. Someday. India sounds cool.

AMITA

You don't even know anything about India.

DENNIS

I know it's different. It'd be cool to be someplace... different. I never go anywhere.

AMITA

You go to West Allis. By yourself.

DENNIS

Yeah. By myself.

(Looks up)

That's my bus. Have fun on your trip.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Where is it this year?

AMITA

London. I have an aunt in London.

DENNIS

London...

AMITA

It's far away. England.

DENNIS

But you'll come back.

AMITA

Definitely.

DENNIS

OK. Next year. Amita.

Dennis exits.

EIGHTH GRADE - 2006

The actors change costume. Amita exchanges her pink jacket for a denim jacket. She puts on a pair of dangly earrings and carries a floral bag. Dennis exchanges his Packers jersey for a blaze orange hunting vest. He picks up a cell phone.

AMITA

Two-thousand-and-six.

DENNIS

Eighth grade.

Same bench. One year later. Dennis, now playing age 14, sits at the bench and waits. Amita, now playing age 14, enters with the same large duffel bag.

DENNIS

Hey.

(singing)

Amita. Amita Amita Ameeeeeta!

AMITA

Shhhhh!

DENNIS

What?

AMITA

Someone might hear.

DENNIS

Oh. Right. White boy.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

I was like-- waiting. I was wondering if you'd be here.

AMITA

I'm always here.

DENNIS

There was a bus-- my bus-- I let it go. Wanted to make sure I saw you. And then I was worried-- maybe I missed you already.

AMITA

You shouldn't have done that. Skipped your bus.

DENNIS

There'll be another one. Dad's house is lame anyway. He's got this new girlfriend. She's like-- really neat and stuff. And she has this weird thing where she whispers. Everything she says-- whispers. And it's super weird. It's like

(whispering)

"Do not upset your father." Or "You should know-- I put pickles in the salad." Mindy. And my brother-- he doesn't have to deal with any of this. Hasn't even met her. Hasn't even been home in a year.

AMITA

The army, right?

DENNIS

Yeah. Still. I don't know, there's some thing where people who signed up can't get out, even if they want to get out, because the army needs them or whatever. So... you know-- he has no idea about Mindy.

AMITA

I'm sure he wants to come home.

DENNIS

Yeah. Hey. I got a cell phone. Finally. We should exchange numbers.

AMITA

I can't.

DENNIS

Not to-- you know-- talk or anything. Not if it's going to get you in trouble. But just so... you know-- like-- I was waiting and I didn't know if you were coming. So like-- a text message or something.

AMITA

My parents read my texts.

DENNIS

God. It's like prison.

AMITA

You don't-- Don't be like that.

DENNIS

I'm not. I'm-- I just want us to... you know.

AMITA

What?

DENNIS

You know...

An uncomfortable silence.

DENNIS

Look, it's not just your parents who are-- My dad also. He sort of freaked out about you. I was at his house. About three or four weeks ago? And he's telling Mindy,

(imitating dad)

"You have to tell Dennis how to talk to girls. He never has the nerve to talk to girls." And Mindy leans over

(whispering)

"Dennis. Are you afraid of girls?" And I'm like

(shouting)

"NO. I AM NOT AFRAID OF GIRLS. I TALK TO GIRLS ALL. THE. TIME." I mean like-- my dad would even know, right? So I tell him "Amita. I've been talking to her since sixth grade." Well my dad like-- throws up his hands-- "WHAT KIND OF A NAME IS AMITA?" And he starts in about immigrants and how they're taking over the country and the way he's yelling at me about it? It's the exact same way he screams at the football refs. On television. You know-- whenever they blow a call. And it's like... I've lost him the game or something. And it's just... I mean... I like you. Why does it have to be so... crazy?

AMITA

I like you too.

Dennis makes a move to touch her, but then chickens out.

DENNIS

Hey. Check it out. I brought a map.

Dennis pulls a world map from his bag. He unfolds it.

DENNIS

It's like the whole world.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Like this is us-- Wisconsin. And... India. See? I looked it up. Where's your family from?

AMITA

Mumbai. Here.

She points. Dennis moves his finger to the spot. Their hands touch. Amita pulls her hand away.

DENNIS

So where are you going? This year?

AMITA

Oh.

DENNIS

How about the Amazon? You should go to the Amazon.

AMITA

That's... jungle.

DENNIS

Yeah. Maybe one year you'll go to the Amazon. And I'll like-- come with you. And we'll explore. Through the jungle.

AMITA

People get lost in the Amazon. And eaten. Probably eaten.

DENNIS

So where are you going?

AMITA

Um... Russia.

DENNIS

Russia? Indian people live in Russia?

AMITA

Sure. Russia.

DENNIS

Russia. They speak Russian there. Hey. Where's your passport?

AMITA

Oh.

DENNIS

I want to see your passport.

AMITA

Uh--

DENNIS

Does it have like stamps and stuff?

AMITA

Sure.

DENNIS

Show me.

AMITA

I um... don't have it. Right now.

DENNIS

But you're going to the airport.

AMITA

Russia. You don't need a passport.

DENNIS

Yeah you do.

AMITA

No.

DENNIS

You do. For anywhere. My brother. He has one. He told me about--

AMITA

I don't have a passport... with me.

DENNIS

But you need one. It's going to mess up the trip.

AMITA

There is no trip!

DENNIS

What do you mean?

AMITA

I mean: I don't go on trips. I've never taken a trip

DENNIS

But--

AMITA

My parents don't let me talk to boys do you really think they're going to let me go-- to the airport-- and fly-- around the world-- by myself?!

DENNIS

You don't go anywhere?

AMITA

I go to India. Sometimes. With my parents. But not-- you know- by myself. Never anywhere by myself.

DENNIS

But then... what are you doing here?

AMITA

My mother likes the sales.

DENNIS

What?

AMITA

Black Friday? We come here every year. All day. At the mall.

DENNIS

You have a suitcase.

Amita opens the duffel bag. It is filled with shopping bags.

AMITA

My mother really likes the sales.

DENNIS

Wow.

AMITA

Yeah. I was late today because the pashminas are two-for-one at Macy's.

DENNIS

So you don't take trips?

AMITA

I never go anywhere. Not even West Allis.

DENNIS

'Stallis is not that great.

Amita shrugs.

DENNIS

(looks up)

Crap. My bus.

AMITA

You shouldn't miss another one.

DENNIS

But...

Dennis stands and picks up his bag.

DENNIS

Look um... if you don't go on trips...

AMITA

Never.

DENNIS

Then... are you here-- you know the bus stop-- every year because...

AMITA

Because I hate malls.

DENNIS

Oh.

AMITA

And I like... you know... talking to you.

DENNIS

Me too. I um... a lot.

Suddenly, awkwardly, he gives her a kiss good bye. It's not much more than a lingering peck on the lips, and takes Amita by surprise. She touches his face for a millisecond, then pulls away- panicked that someone has seen them.

AMITA

Don't do that.

DENNIS

I was just--

AMITA

You'll miss your bus.

DENNIS

But I thought-- you know maybe you could be my girlfriend.

AMITA

No!

DENNIS

Oh.

AMITA

And you can't kiss me again.

DENNIS

OK.

AMITA

Never.

DENNIS

Fine. I won't. Definitely.

Embarrassed and trying to cover it, Dennis marches off to the bus.

NINTH GRADE - 2007

The actors change costume. Amita changes from her denim jacket into Product Red (Gap) sweatshirt. She carries a small backpack. Dennis puts on a hoodie and a set of headphones.

DENNIS

Two-thousand-and-seven.

AMITA

Freshman year.

Same bench. One year later. Amita, now playing age 15, sits on the bench and waits nervously. The duffel bag is at her feet. Dennis, now playing age 15, enters. He does not take off his headphones.

DENNIS

Wasssup?

Dennis slouches down onto the bench. He ignores Amita and bounces his head to music.

Amita rolls her eyes. She picks the large duffel bag up off of the floor and throws it onto the bench so that it lands firmly between them. She opens a magazine and reads.

TENTH GRADE - 2008

The actors change costume. Amita takes her hair out of the ponytail. She puts on a North Face jacket and a pair of sunglasses. No purse. Dennis wears a concert T-shirt over his undershirt. He carries a flower.

AMITA

Two-thousand-and-eight.

DENNIS

Sophomore year.

Amita walks off stage. Dennis, now playing age 16, sits at the bench with a flower. He waits. And waits. And waits. And waits.

Amita, now playing age 16, enters upstage. She sees him, considers joining him, then decides against it. She exits.

Dennis leaves the flower on the bench. He exits.

Amita returns. She finds the flower.

ELEVENTH GRADE - 2009

The actors change costume. Dennis puts on a Packers windbreaker and baseball cap. Amita changes from UGS into ballet flats. She wears a leather jacket and carries a large fringed purse.

DENNIS

Two-thousand-and-nine.

AMITA

Junior year.

Same bench. One year later. Amita, now playing age 17, takes a thick book and highlighter from her purse. The duffel bag is on the bench next to her. Dennis, now playing age 17, enters with his traveling bag.

DENNIS

Hey.

AMITA

Hi.

DENNIS

I missed you last year.

AMITA

I was hiding. At the food court. I spent all day at the food court. It was loud. And crowded. And I hate baked pretzels.

DENNIS

I was a jerk. Ninth grade? Not talking to you.

AMITA

A little bit of a jerk. Yeah..

DENNIS

I was going to apologize. Last year? I like had this whole apology ready. A flower and everything thank you very much. But then you weren't here.

AMITA

I saw the flower. I saw you even. But I couldn't... It was too... anyway- I hid.

DENNIS

Is it um... too late? For the apology.

AMITA

I don't know... give it a try.

Amita moves her duffel bag from the bench onto the ground so that he can sit down.

DENNIS

Sorry.

AMITA

It's OK.

DENNIS

I was so...

AMITA

It's OK. And I'm sorry for you know- not showing up.

DENNIS

It's all right. I deserved it.

AMITA

The kiss--

DENNIS

Please. Let's not talk about it.

AMITA

I just wanted to--

DENNIS

It was three years ago.

AMITA

It caught me by surprise, that's all. My first kiss--

DENNIS

Really?

AMITA

You couldn't tell?

DENNIS

Mine too.

AMITA

Really?

DENNIS

Yes. That's why I was so--

He makes a spazzy clumsy gesture.

AMITA

I just thought--

DENNIS

What--

AMITA

You know. White boy.

DENNIS

What?

AMITA

My parents are so paranoid! The way they talk-- I think they convinced me that all of you start having sex in middle school.

DENNIS

Middle School. Some do. I guess. Not me.

AMITA

Some do. Middle school?

DENNIS

Some. Maybe. Like one or two. I know a guy. He did that. He says he did that. Might be true.

AMITA

Seems... young.

DENNIS

Seems... sad. Not really getting to be a kid. Me? I was a kid.

AMITA

I know.

DENNIS

Comic books and Nintendo.

AMITA

I know. I met you.

DENNIS

Yeah. So anyway-- first kiss. And you seemed... and I was embarrassed. And that's why I-- you know-- the next year.

AMITA

It's OK.

DENNIS

I kiss better now.

AMITA

I'm sure.

DENNIS

Lots of practice.

AMITA

I'll take your word for it.

DENNIS

No sex yet--

AMITA

Oh my God my parents would flip if they knew I was having this conversation!

DENNIS

We're just talking.

AMITA

In my culture, this is not something we talk about. Not with...

DENNIS

White boys.

AMITA

Exactly.

DENNIS

It's OK. I'm safe. I've got a girlfriend.

AMITA

Really?

DENNIS

Karen.

Dennis takes out his phone. He shows her a picture.

AMITA

She's pretty.

DENNIS

Yeah. And cool. You'd like her.

Amita looks around, as if afraid someone is watching. Then she takes out her phone. She shows him a picture.

AMITA

Raj.

DENNIS

Indian boy.

AMITA

Yeah.

DENNIS

Do your parents know?

AMITA

God no. I mean-- they know him. But they don't know that we... we sneak around. I'm getting very good at sneaking around. It's so... stupid. Because really-- I'm actually a very-- I mean... compared to some of my friends? Even my Indian friends? But my parents are like-- even a little hint that there's a guy-- and it's like OH MY GOD SHE'S GOING TO GET PREGNANT AND RUN OFF WITH THIS BOY AND NEVER GO COLLEGE OR GRADUATE SCHOOL OR DO ANYTHING WITH HER LIFE EVER.

DENNIS

They worry. It's nice that they worry. Means they care.

AMITA

I'm sure your parents care.

DENNIS

Honestly? I don't think they have time. I mean-- they care. They try to. But dad got laid off. So mom took an extra job. And now I'm working. And then dad and Mindy had a kid-- so there's a stepbrother now. Meanwhile Kyle-- he's still in the army. So you know- all the worry and care is spread a little thin.

AMITA

Dad and Mindy, huh? The whisperer.

DENNIS

Yeah. Married. Almost two years.

(whispering)

She still makes me crazy.

AMITA

Ugh. I should have been here last year.

DENNIS

Yeah.

AMITA

I've missed too much.

DENNIS

Me too. I looked for you on Facebook. After last year? When I wanted to apologize. Like a dozen Amitas in Milwaukee. None of them were you.

AMITA

I'm... I like privacy.

Dennis holds his hands up in a respectful, "hands off" gesture.

DENNIS

I get it.

AMITA

No, not privacy from you. Privacy with... I know this is silly but... you're like-- I think this is the only thing in my life that no one else knows anything about. Every year, with you-- I get like this-- secret day. I don't... you know, want it on Facebook or whatever. I like not sharing it.

DENNIS

Oh I tell everybody about you.

AMITA

Really.

DENNIS

Oh yeah. I mean-- come on-- you're like the most interesting thing about my life.

AMITA

(wary)

Uh-huh.

DENNIS

Everybody I know is the same. I mean-- even Karen-- who I love, but-- you know, we're all... the same. So it's like-- I don't know-- makes my world feel bigger or something? Like hey, I know somebody different.

AMITA

Somebody strange.

DENNIS

No. Not strange.

AMITA

Strange. Because I'm Indian.

DENNIS

No. Different because you're Indian. Strange because you like the Pittsburgh Steelers.

AMITA

(smiling)

You know... I have to ask...

DENNIS

Yeah?

AMITA

And I hope it's not too personal...

DENNIS

(wary)

Yeah?

AMITA

I mean-- it must be horribly embarrassing--

DENNIS

(very wary)

Uh-huh.

AMITA

What ever happened to your Brett Favre jersey?

DENNIS

Oh!

AMITA

Did you burn it and cry?

DENNIS

Oh you are...

AMITA

I thought you probably cried.

DENNIS

You. Back off. Back of Pittsburgh panties-- that's right-- PANTIES. I remember. PANTIES EVERYONE! PITTSBURGH STEELERS PANTIES.

AMITA

Shhhh.

DENNIS

That's right. Be careful. I know all your secrets.

AMITA

This is why you can't find me on Facebook.

Dennis makes a lock motion over his mouth. They sit in a comfortable silence.

AMITA

Maybe we'll end up at the same college or something. Wouldn't that be cool? We could be friends in college.

DENNIS

We're friends now.

AMITA

But college... everything will be different.

DENNIS

We're fine. Just like we are. Besides, I don't know about college.

AMITA

What do you mean you don't know about college?

DENNIS

I doubt I'll go to college.

AMITA

Everyone goes to college.

DENNIS

You really do live in a different world.

AMITA

Everyone I know. You can't... not go to college.

DENNIS

It's expensive.

AMITA

There are loans... and scholarships... and things.

DENNIS

And you have to be smart.

AMITA

You're smart.

DENNIS

I didn't know where India was. Remember?

AMITA

But, you know now, right?

DENNIS

Yes. I do know now.

Amita gives him her book.

AMITA

Here. Take this.

DENNIS

"The Everything College Guide"

AMITA

It's like got advice on applications. And loans. And everything.

DENNIS

Don't you need this?

AMITA

Please. I've got like-- a million of these. My parents keep buying them. I have to make notes. And then we have like-- these meetings to map out my future.

DENNIS

Your parents are control freaks.

AMITA

Yes. Definitely. But they would tell you to go to college. Take. The. Book.

DENNIS

OK.

AMITA

Your bus.

DENNIS

I'll see you next year?

AMITA

Yes.

DENNIS

You promise.

AMITA

I promise.

DENNIS

OK. Next year.

TWELFTH GRADE - 2010

The actors change costume. Dennis puts on a flannel shirt over his undershirt. Amita puts on a cardigan sweater and long chain necklaces. She carries a metallic purse.

AMITA

Two-thousand-and-ten.

DENNIS & AMITA

Senior year.

Same bench. One year later. Dennis, now playing age 18, waits. Amita, now playing age 18, enters with the duffel bag.

DENNIS

Sale at Macy's?

AMITA

Scented candles at Pottery Barn. Freaking heavy.

DENNIS

Here.

He helps her with the bag. After he sets it down, she opens her arms for a hug.

AMITA

Hi.

DENNIS

Hug huh? Not against the rules?

AMITA

Oh I break rules all the time.

He hugs her. He picks up the book on colleges from the bench, it is now more worn and dog eared.

DENNIS

Thanks for the book.

AMITA

Are you going? College?

DENNIS

I applied.

AMITA

Me too. God. I'm so glad that's done.

DENNIS

All those essays.

AMITA

I know. The personal one is the worst. What'd you write about?

DENNIS

I wrote about a bus stop.

AMITA

It's good to see you.

DENNIS

You too. Final year. Final year here, I mean.

AMITA

I don't know. Don't you think you'll always do the same thing for Thanksgiving? Dinner at mom's and then bus to dad's?

DENNIS

Dad's moving. He got a job in Madison.

AMITA

Oh.

DENNIS

I could still take the bus out here. Visit. If, you know, you'll be back.

AMITA

(coming to a decision)

Or. I could give you my cell number.

DENNIS

That would be easier. Yes.

She takes paper and a pen from her purse.

DENNIS

What about your parents?

AMITA

I don't know. I think I've got to be... less scared about all that? I have to be. You know--this summer, my uncle got me this job. He runs like-- this computer consulting firm? Pretty big. All kinds of people work there. Indian some, but all kinds. And there was this secretary who had had a baby and I was like-- filling in for her. And my desk was right next to the lounge. So I could hear-- you know-- all the conversations. And I'd listen to these people-- these grown ups-- and there was the lady complaining about her boyfriend or the guy who never really did any work or the two people sneaking around having the affair. And I'm thinking... this is just like high school. All these people-- they're just like the people I know in high school. Only they got older and then somebody put them in charge of the WORLD. It was like... THESE are the grown ups? These are the people I've been so in awe of? And if they're all... you know... real people with all their messed up stuff. Then maybe, you know, my parents are too.

She gives him the slip of paper.

AMITA

So anyway, you can have my cell number.

She gives him the number.

DENNIS

Brave girl.

AMITA

We'll see. But with college coming? My parents and I can't just keep on like this. The fight will happen sooner or later. And if it's going to happen, it should be about you.

DENNIS

Wow. I'm sort of flattered.

AMITA

Yeah?

DENNIS

That I'm worth the fight.

AMITA

You're worth it.

DENNIS

So are you.

AMITA

There's a fight?

DENNIS

Every year. Every year since I first mentioned... which is crazy. Because really? Everything that's been screwed up about our lives? The divorce and Mindy and dad loosing his job and Kyle-- the army-- and the only thing that anybody freaks out about is that I hang out with a girl from India. Once a year.

AMITA

They freak out?

DENNIS

Oh I don't know. Mom's Catholic. Very. So she just... frowns. And lectures me about going to church. And dad -- he starts spewing a bunch of stuff about immigrants. And America changing. And nobody speaking English. And then crazy crap about Indian people-- taking over the hotel business. And I'm like "Dad, why do you care who runs a Days Inn? You never GO anywhere." And really? None of it actually has anything to do with you. They don't even know you. It's just me. They just freak out that I do something...

AMITA

Off the map. My parents too. Some things about my life are just... off the map.

DENNIS

There's a map?

AMITA

Yeah. You know. A map of the world? But like- in the middle ages or whatever-- when they got to the edge of everything they knew, it was like-- what's beyond that? And they imagined all these terrible things. Dragons. Lions. And that's what they drew. Monsters. For everything off the map.

DENNIS

So we're like... explorers then.

AMITA

Yeah. Charting the new world.

DENNIS

Here.

He pulls piece of paper from his pocket.

DENNIS

Full name. Cell phone. Mom's phone. Dad's phone. E-mail. Facebook. And... Twitter.

AMITA

You came prepared.

DENNIS

Oh I wrote that stuff down every year. This is the first year I've actually managed to give it to you.

Amita takes the paper. She puts it in her purse. She tucks the purse over her shoulder.

AMITA

We should go somewhere.

DENNIS

Really? Now?

AMITA

I am so sick of this mall. We should go somewhere.

DENNIS

What about the bag?

AMITA

I'll stick it in the car.

DENNIS

What about your mom?

AMITA

Are you kidding? There's a shoe sale. And she's with my aunt. Trust me. They're not coming out for hours.

DENNIS

OK. So. Where do we go? From here?

AMITA

Exploring. There's like six bus lines. We'll find somewhere... new.

DENNIS

Somewhere new. Maybe someplace with pancakes.

AMITA

I like pancakes.

DENNIS

I don't have a map.

AMITA

We'll make our way.

DENNIS

Without a map.

AMITA

We'll make our way.

He picks up her duffel bag. They exit.

END OF PLAY