

Muse

written by

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1. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

An extremely clean and professional looking interview room, spick and span. A young man, in his early 20s, sits at a table. Visibly nervous, his eyes stay glued to the floor and his hands endlessly fidget. This is ASHTON.

DR. RICHARD (O.S)

So, Ashton.

Ashton stops fidgeting and looks up at the men hesitatingly.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)

We've looked through your achievements, and we're very impressed.

Ashton flashes a small smile.

ASHTON

Thank you sir.

DR. KELVIN (O.S)

It would be great to have you enrolling in our university. Someone passionate and interested. As such, we've decided to offer you a place in our institution.

Ashton's small smile blossoms into a full blown, ear to ear grin.

DR. KELVIN

You can join before the next semester.

An envelope is pushed towards Ashton, along with the files.

DR. RICHARD

Most of the information you will need is included here. Do remember to fill up the forms and mail them in, along with the fees as soon as possible.

As soon as Ashton hears the word 'fees', his smile slowly withers to a sombre and nervous expression.

ASHTON

S..sir...the fees...I might not...

Ashton takes a deep breath.

ASHTON

Is there a deadline of some sort?

A moment of silence from the hidden figures.

DR. KELVIN

We understand. No worries, the school will be able to give you a half scholarship with six months to pay up the remainder.

ASHTON

That will be enough sir. I'll enrol as soon as possible. Thank you.

Ashton takes the envelope and files. The two men and him shake hands, and he stands up.

DR. RICHARD

We look forward to you joining us, Ashton. Have a nice day.

ASHTON

Thank you sir. Have a nice day too.

Ashton is all smiles, but as soon as he turns away from them, a worried expression takes over. He slowly walks and exits the room.

## 2. INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An Indian man lies in a bed, eyes looking up at nothing. A blanket is draped over him. This is VINCENT. A woman walks into the room carrying a cup of tea. She looks at the man, her expression slowly changing to a concerned one, albeit with a small smile. This is ALICE. She walks beside the man and places the cup near him. He coughs profusely and she raises the cup to him. Off-screen, the sound of the doors being opened.

She looks up with anticipation, hears knocks on the door, and in walks Ashton.

ALICE

Oh, you're home!

Alice gestures for Ashton to leave the room, and he does so. A while later, Alice follows suit, closing the door behind her.

## 3. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The two walk into the living room.

ALICE  
How was the interview?

ASHTON  
Was okay ma.

Ashton lays his bag at the sofa and sits down, looking extremely exhausted.

ALICE  
Okay..?

Alice takes a seat beside Ashton.

ALICE  
Ashton, what actually happened? Were you accepted?

There is a brief moment of silence. Alice gives him a prying look.

ASHTON  
Mom, please, I don't want to talk about it now.

Again with the look.

ALICE  
Ashton-

ASHTON  
(suddenly)  
..Yeah. I got it. But I don't think I'll be accepting it.

Alice is startled by what he said, and furrows her brows.

ALICE  
Why?

Ashton takes a deep breath.

ASHTON  
The fees, ma. Way too much. They offered to pay half, but even then...it's, like, a lot.

Alice contemplates.

ALICE

Ashton. Why are you worrying about THIS? I'll handle it, la.

ASHTON

Come on, ma.

CUT TO

Vincent stands behind the door, his ear pressed to it. Meanwhile, the conversation continues outside.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

Look at your husband's condition. You barely have enough as it is.

Alice tries her best to conjure up an answer but to no avail.

4. INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Vincent, wrapped in a blanket, and Alice sit on a sofa, watching TV. Alice's eyes shift and dart everywhere, and she looks to be in deep thought, almost disturbed.

Vincent notices Alice's uncharacteristic behaviour and ponders for a bit.

VINCENT

Is everything okay?

Alice nods half-heartedly. Vincent looks at her for a while before shuffling closer to her.

ALICE

Ashton got into his uni.

VINCENT

That's a good thing what!... what's the problem?

Alice does not respond, and instead looks him up and down slowly.

ALICE

The money. It's way too much, Vincent. I have no idea how I'm going to manage.

VINCENT

How much?

ALICE

10k. In six months.

VINCENT

Hmm...How are this month's finances?

ALICE

Not very good. My pay kena cut, the rent's going up...

Alice pauses, and sighs.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Plus..plus your dialysis.

VINCENT

Any other options? OT work?

ALICE

I can't, I want to take care of you.

VINCENT

Can we ask someone?

ALICE

Haven't we borrowed enough? I'm already getting chased by some of them.

VINCENT

Wah.

There is an awkward silence in the room. The couple cannot bring themselves to look each other in the eye. Finally Vincent turns to her.

VINCENT

Alice ah. There is another option.

Alice turns and looks at him, confused. Vincent breaks eye contact. Realisation slowly dawns upon her.

ALICE

No.

VINCENT

Okay. Now hear me out. Remember what the Dr. Goh said? It's terminal. I'm

gonna be here for what? 1 or 2 years.  
After a w-

ALICE  
(interrupting)  
Are you fucking joking? You want to  
stop your surgery for UNIVERSITY FEES?

VINCENT  
And what's wrong with that? Not like  
surgery's going to magically make me a  
healthy man. I'd rather you spend the  
money on him.

ALICE  
He can go to uni anytime, Vincent!

VINCENT  
You really think that? With our  
current financial situation, he's  
never going to make it!

Vincent stops, and takes a deep breath.

VINCENT  
Please Alice. Don't waste the money.

ALICE  
How is it a waste?

VINCENT  
Spending it on a dead man IS a waste.

There is an awkward silence.

VINCENT  
(whispering)  
...your son eh.

ALICE  
You wouldn't do the same if I had lung  
problems, right.

Vincent stutters as he tries to answer her question

VINCENT  
I..No..Please. Of course I -

ALICE  
(interrupting)  
Would you?!

Vincent pauses.

VINCENT

I wouldn't.

A silence dawns upon them, which is broken by the sound of footsteps after a while. They belong to Ashton, who arrives well dressed, carrying a file in his hands. Alice greets him as he opens the gates while Vincent's stares intently at her, followed by Ashton.

5. INT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Ashton awakes from his sleep, groggy and grunting. The sounds of frantic footsteps and knocking startle him. He stands up and walks to the living room, and finds his mom walking in and out of the rooms, distressed.

ASHTON

Ma? What's going on?

Alice, still pacing, walks past him without even looking in his direction.

ASHTON

(agitated)

Ma!

Still no reply. An angered Ashton storms down the living room, and catches sight of his parents' room in the process. The sight of the empty bed shocks him. He enters and looks around.

Eventually, Alice comes into the room, panic-stricken.

ASHTON

Ma..

ALICE

I can't find him since morning Ashton.  
I woke up and he wasn't there. I've  
called all his friends.

Ashton becomes increasingly flustered, and looks at her worriedly.

6. EXT. STREET - EVENING

Ashton and Alice slowly trudge out of a police station, their faces dejected. Ashton holds a police report, looking defeated, while Alice is on the verge of tears.



After a while Ashton puts a hand around his mother.

ASHTON  
We'll find him, ma.

Alice manages a small, forced smile at him. They walk some more until Ashton gets a phone call, which he rushes to answer. Ashton talks on the phone call for a while, and his look morphs into one of shock and confusion.

After a while, he puts down the phone and slowly looks up at Alice, who's staring at him in anticipation.

ASHTON  
I'm in the course, ma.

There is a silence.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Dad paid my fees.

A tear slides down Alice's face, soon becoming a full on cry. Ashton slowly looks down and away from her, confused yet melancholic.

7. EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The silhouette of Vincent sits on a park bench looking up at the sky. After some time, he stands up and leaves.

