

Zoners

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Shooting Script
28/02/25

BBC STUDIOS PRODUCTIONS
COMEDY

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Friday night. NIKHIL (24, professional overthinker) enters his flat. He hangs up his jacket on a hook right next to the door, then hangs his over-ear headphones on a smaller hook. He loosens his tie without undoing the knot, then hangs it on a final hook, which has an identical tie on it. He trudges into a warmly lit living room, with many cardboard boxes in it.

He looks at the sofa, where there is a person-shaped bundle covered in a blanket. Nikhil smells a prank - so he pulls off the blanket, which reveals a pile of pillows in the shape of a person. He sits down on the sofa...

He sees a pair of shoes peeking out from beneath the curtain, he picks up a small sofa cushion and throws it at the curtain...

NIKHIL
(calling out to the flat)
You didn't get me.

There's no one behind the curtain. Nikhil turns and sees SAMIR's (29, carefree to a fault) face behind where the cushion lay.

SAMIR
Didn't I?

Samir's hidden himself in the body of the sofa for a double bluff. Nikhil jumps, spooked but a little impressed.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
You thought I was in the curtain?
You look so stupid...

Nikhil offers his brother a hand getting out of the sofa. Nikhil throws his brother a PS5 controller which Samir catches like they've done a thousand times.

NIKHIL
Did you get anything done today?

SAMIR
I started organising my finances.

Nikhil looks at the coffee table, seeing that Samir has used loose change, blu-tac and paperclips to assemble a small model man, holding a rolled-up fiver as a sword.

NIKHIL
Didn't fancy tidying up?

SAMIR
Hey, don't bring your judgy vibes
to my bedroom.

NIKHIL

Bhaiyya, this is my living room!

SAMIR

Yeah you're right, you should tidy it up.

Mortal Kombat sound effects play. Samir takes a swig from a colourful looking bottle.

NIKHIL

What's that?

SAMIR

Milk...it's like flavoured milk. It's good. Like chocolate but better, caramel but more fun?

Nikhil inspects the bottle.

NIKHIL

Where'd you get it?

SAMIR

(distracted)

It was at the door. I figured it was yours?

NIKHIL

So you thought it was my milk, but you still drank it (beat) course you did. Well, it's not mine.

An aggrieved Nikhil inspects the box - it's addressed to "Ivan".

NIKHIL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Oh shit this is Ivan's milk!

SAMIR

Oh noooo! Who dat?

NIKHIL

You don't get it. This dude is **psycho**.

SAMIR

Chill out, we'll get him another one.

NIKHIL

He's fucking scary bro. And I've never seen this drink in my life.

Someone starts banging at the front door. Neighbour DEE (20s, skittish) bursts in.

DEE

Someone's taken Ivan's milk. He's going mental up there.

Nikhil glares at Samir, instantly team Dee.

NIKHIL

Yeh that'd be my older brother, Samir. Bhaiyya, Dee.

DEE

(to Samir)

Nice to meet you, what the flip are you doing? Sorry pardon me

NIKHIL

Yeh bhaiyya what the flip

SAMIR

Calm down! I'll go up there and apologise. He'll probably love me and invite us up for I dunno... borscht?

There's a loud BANG from upstairs, startling everyone.

DEE

(incredulous)

You think you can negotiate with Ivan?

Dee and Nikhil are both guffawing...

NIKHIL

There's no reasoning with him.

SAMIR

Well I'm feeling lucky. Look, I'm wearing my lucky trousers.

An object falls past the window. Dee, Nikhil and Samir hustle over to see what it was, and a flowerpot and plant have smashed on the ground.

NIKHIL

Not the peace lily.

DEE

So unmindful.

SAMIR

That could have been an accident -

A microwave flies past the window and smashes onto the ground.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Let's go buy some milk.
That way Ivan gets his drink and
nobody -

Samir belches.

SAMIR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

- has to take responsibility.

1A EXT. NIKHIL'S FLAT - EVENING

1A

Nikhil and Samir leave their flat.

2 INT. OFF LICENSE - EVENING

2

Samir and Nikhil burst into a brightly lit off-licence.
SHOPKEEPER (50s, Indian/Pakistani) sits behind the counter
texting on one phone, and watching videos on the other. Samir
heads off to the drinks fridge but before Nikhil can follow,
Shopkeeper taps on a sign. Nikhil stops and sees the sign
says **ONE SCHOOLCHILD AT A TIME**.

NIKHIL

But I'm a man...

Shopkeeper takes a frustrated deep breath, gestures Nikhil
away. Nikhil joins Samir at the drinks fridge.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)

Glup protein, Glup salted caramel
protein, Glup salted caramel
protein... Sandwich? Dude it's not
here.

SAMIR

That's fine we just need to find
something similar and fill this one
up.

NIKHIL

That's not going to work, maybe -

But Samir is already popping the caps off two bottles. He
swigs from both. Nikhil looks annoyed.

SAMIR

Hmm, it's just not... it's just not
thrilling enough?

Nikhil shakes his head and goes to the counter.

CUT TO:

NIKHIL

Hey boss.

Shopkeeper doesn't even look up.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)

Do you know -

Before Nikhil can finish his question, Shopkeeper taps on a new sign that says **NO QUESTIONS**.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)

Look we really need to find this drink and it's not on your shelves. Do you- ? No. Is there- ? (beat)

Nikhil trying not to break the NO QUESTIONS rule...

NIKHIL (CONT'D)

Your stockroom must have one.

SHOPKEEPER

Everything we have is on shop floor.

NIKHIL

That can't be true, what's the stockroom for? This is a bulk business. It's economies of scale.

Before Shopkeeper can answer Samir saunters over with a bunch of half opened, dripping drinks and drops them on the counter. Shopkeeper is suddenly irate.

SHOPKEEPER

Eh! You can't try before you buy! This isn't The Body Shop.

SAMIR

It's alright Uncle we'll pay for it. Here, try one of these.

Samir holds out a half-drunk drink.

SHOPKEEPER

(in Hindi)
You two are kids, you have no respect.

SHOPKEEPER

Tum dono bachein hain, koi respect nahin hai tumhare paas

NIKHIL

Please we *have* to find this milk.

Nikhil slams Ivan's milk on the counter. Shopkeeper's anger turns to fear.

SHOPKEEPER

(in Hindi)
Get out of my shop. I already told Ivan no!

SHOPKEEPER

Jaa yahan se. Maine Ivan ko nah boldiya already

Shopkeeper points to *another* sign that says **IVAN, NO!**

SAMIR
(in Hindi)
Listen Uncle, you seem like
such a kind man. We're in
trouble and you're our only
hope.

SAMIR
*Suniye Uncle. Hum bohot
mauseebat mein hain. Aap
bohot acha aadmi
lagraheinhain joh logon ki
madat kartehein, please
hamari bhi please madat
kardije.*

SHOPKEEPER
(in Hindi)
Hmmm alright I do know where
you might be able to get
some. But you buy five
scratchcards

SHOPKEEPER
*Acha theek hai, magar tum
scratchcards kareedne parega.
Paanch.*

SAMIR
(in Hindi)
One

SAMIR
Ek

SHOPKEEPER
(in Hindi)
Seven

SHOPKEEPER
Saath

SAMIR
(in Hindi)
Five

SAMIR
Paanch

Samir and Shopkeeper shake hands, Samir goes from satisfied,
to 'hang on a second'. Their stare suggests they're both
enjoying this exchange - finally a worthy foe.

SHOPKEEPER
(in English)
There is a person who comes in
here, speak to them.

The boys tap a card and leave. Shopkeeper is finally alone in
a calm shop. He looks at a framed photo of a white man in
orange robes and a red tika on his forehead.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
(in Hindi)
Good lord. Give me strength
Swami Stevenji.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
*Hai Ram mujhe taakat dedije
Swami Stevenji*

2A EXT. ELAINE'S ESTATE - EVENING

2A

Nikhil and Samir run towards an estate.

3 EXT. ELAINE'S FLAT BLOCK - EVENING

3

The brothers walk up the stairs of a council estate. Nikhil
is visibly nervous.

NIKHIL

Are you sure about this? We don't know what's in there! It could be a gang.

SAMIR

A *drinks* gang?

NIKHIL

Yeh, and they waterboard people with Fanta Limone?

SAMIR

Ah so sticky.

4

I/E. ELAINE'S FLAT - EVENING

4

The boys approach a front door on the flat balcony. Nikhil raises his fist to knock on the door, but hesitates.

NIKHIL

You knock.

Samir grabs Nikhil's raised wrist and moves his hand, forcing Nikhil to knock on the door.

SAMIR

Hi it's Samir and Nikhil. We text about the milk?

Elaine (30s, harmless lonely oddball) eagerly opens the door.

ELAINE

Hi! Come on in! Come in! Don't just stand there like a pair of flat cokes.

Elaine disappears into the flat. The brothers are surprised by her friendliness. They walk in and reach down to remove their shoes.

ELAINE (O.S) (CONT'D)

Don't worry about your shoes!

The brothers look at each other... no chance. They take their shoes off.

5

INT. ELAINE'S LIVING ROOM/HOME OFFICE - EVENING

5

Nikhil and Samir follow Elaine to the doorway of her living room, and they see that every corner of the room is filled with drinks on display. Hundreds of different cans, cartons, drinks posters and merch. From 1920s glass coke bottles to Tizer. It feels like a museum devoted to drinks.

NIKHIL
 (to Samir)
 Bruh, she's like a beverage baddie.

SAMIR
 (to Nikhil)
 A queen of quench.

SAMIR and NIKHIL walk into the room, still with eyes darting around at all the drinks.

NIKHIL
 (to Samir)
 Fizzee Rascal.

SAMIR
 (to Nikhil)
 Tinny Weasley.

SAMIR is agog at the mad display.

NIKHIL
 Fred Durst of Thirst.

ELAINE
 (Hasn't heard the boys)
 Take a seat.

The boys turn their attention to Elaine but they have one more zinger in them.

SAMIR
 The Yoda of soda!

NIKHIL
 The Yoda of soda!

ELAINE
 This is my personal collection,
 it's unrivalled. Despite anything
 you've heard from Aberdeen.

SAMIR
 What's in Aberdeen?

ELAINE
 Some deluded plumber lying about
 how many unopened Quatros he's got.

NIKHIL
 We thought you could help us, we're
 looking for this milk?

Nikhil turns to Samir, expecting him to present the bottle, but Samir is by the wall engrossed in the display.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)
 Bhaiyya? Bhaiyya!

ELAINE

(to Samir)

That's an original Indonesian
Sarsiparilla - from the 80s.

NIKHIL

That's cool. We're kind of in a
rush so...

ELAINE

It was flavoured with cucumber,
strawberry and breadfruit seeds,
which have hallucinogenic
properties.

SAMIR

Wha, psychedelic soda! How'd you
end up with it?

NIKHIL

(to deaf ears)

... time sensitive...

ELAINE

Well, a load of bottles were dumped
in Pemangkat. But the townsfolk
knew there was money to be made
exporting it overseas.

Nikhil's phone buzzes: we hear a video of a shirtless Ivan
shot through a window. He's chopping wood - we hear an axe.

NIKHIL

That's great but can we...

ELAINE

They created false orders
internally, and then shipped out
the Sarsiparilla overseas using
prohibited shipping channels.

SAMIR

There's no way Indonesia's coastal
guard would've let that fly though.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Because everyone knows the
Bakalma are a beacon of
excellence in preventing
maritime crime!

ELAINE

Because everyone knows the
Bakalma are a beacon of
excellence in preventing
maritime crime!

Nikhil rips the bottle out of Samir's hand...

NIKHIL

(crescendoing)

Elaine I don't mean to be rude but I really need you to shut up about your Underground Drink Smuggling network and just tell us where we can get this fucking milk!

Bubbly Elaine disappears.

ELAINE

Sorry I get carried away sometimes.

Samir puts an arm around Elaine.

SAMIR

(twisting the knife)

Nikhil, how could you.

ELAINE

I wish more people cared ya know. Not just an emotionally unavailable plumber from Aberdeen.

Samir goes back to being distracted by the drinks.

NIKHIL

I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

Elaine still looks upset.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, it's an amazing collection.

Elaine's demeanour turns menacing. Her voice sounds much chirpier than her expression.

ELAINE

Ah it's alright, I'm sure you know how it feels. Underappreciated at work, wearing the same two ties day in day out as you question it all on the 73 bus.

Elaine makes eye contact with Nikhil, momentarily revealing a darker side. Nikhil freezes.

NIKHIL

...that's my bus...

SAMIR

(oblivious)

So can you help? We'd owe you one!

ELAINE

(chirpy)

Hm, okay.

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

This is an Armenian brand, (beat)
started in 1968. It's delicious.
Tastes like when you dare to climb
a tall tree for the first time.

SAMIR

(finally)
That's it!

ELAINE

(thinking)
It's not in wide circulation but it
comes in on the third Friday of the
month.

Elaine checks a small calendar.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Today! You'd better get down there.

Samir is elated, but Nikhil still seems unsettled.

SAMIR

For real how'd they get the
Sarsiparilla out because I have a
mate -

NIKHIL

(annoyed)
Dude. Let's go.

Nikhil pushes Samir out the door. Elaine waves them out.

ELAINE

Ah I didn't offer them a drink.

6

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - NIGHT

6

Samir and Nikhil frantically run through an industrial
estate. Despite the tension, they are racing like kids. We
hear a voice note that Dee has left Nikhil:

DEE (V.O.)

(heavy breathing)
Nikhil he came knocking on my door
so I told him you have the milk.
I'm sorry I had to, I have a cat!

Nikhil wins the race...

7

I/E. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE UNIT - NIGHT

7

SAMIR and NIKHIL walk into an industrial estate unit. It's
quiet, like everyone has left for the day.

NIKHIL
We're too late. Ugh, I knew it.

SAMIR
Nah, you hear that?

They hear the sound of conversation from the next room...

7A

INT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE UNIT - NIGHT

7A

They cautiously walk into the back room, where they find MISHA (30s, intimidating) and ALI (30s, vacant) playing cards on a plastic table and sitting on boxes.

NIKHIL
Are you guys the guys?

SAMIR
We're looking for that good stuff.

NIKHIL
We're not cops. And I know that's what a cop would say, but it's also something someone who *isn't* a cop would say.

Nikhil shows them the bottle. Misha sizes them up.

MISHA
We're closed.

SAMIR
(pointing)
Come on, what about that one?

Samir points to a bottle of Ivan's milk behind Misha.

MISHA
It's not for sale, it's mine.

ALI
And he works very hard. He deserves a treat.

MISHA
Ali I'm handling this.

NIKHIL
You've got to sell it to us!
Please! Name your price.

MISHA
I don't need your money geez.

Nikhil spots the game, he's nervous to suggest this but he's pretty amped up.

NIKHIL

Play us. If we win, you give us the milk.

Samir is surprised, he's supportive.

SAMIR

Yehhh Nicky with the big dicky I like it! But what if they win?

ALI

(from behind Misha)
Those trousers are pretty cool.

Ali looks at Samir's trousers.

SAMIR

My lucky trousers?

MISHA

Ali, stop trying to convert me to cargo pants.

ALI

They'll accentuate your frame.

NIKHIL

Deal.

SAMIR

(Only just realising)
What?

7B EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - NIGHT

7B

The industrial estate at night.

8 INT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE UNIT - NIGHT

8

Moments later: Samir, Nikhil, Misha and Ali sit around the game. Samir and Ali are out, Misha and Nikhil are down to one final hand. Nikhil's sweating. He looks down at his cards, it's **a pair of jacks**. The boys whisper quietly between themselves.

SAMIR

That's a good hand.

NIKHIL

It's okay...

Nikhil tries to read Misha's body language. He's calm and cocksure.

SAMIR

You got this.

NIKHIL

I'm trying to figure out the probab-

SAMIR

(mocking)

I'm tryna wahwahwah. Nik, fortune favours the bold. Throw them down.

(beat) jack him off.

Nikhil's leg starts shaking again.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

Come on, trust me.

Nikhil takes Samir's advice and throws his cards down...

NIKHIL

Jack pair.

Misha looks momentarily shocked. The brothers can't believe they won...

MISHA

King pair. I win.

ALI

Yayyy

Samir and Nikhil can't believe it. They're defeated.

SAMIR

Listen fellas we -

MISHA

The trousers, boy.

NIKHIL

Give him your trousers bhaiyya.

SAMIR

No.

Misha straightens up, puffing his chest out.

NIKHIL

What?!

SAMIR

They're my lucky trousers. What am I gonna wear back home?

NIKHIL

FUCKSAKE Bhaiyya.

Nikhil starts taking off his own trousers.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)
 (whilst removing trousers)
 Here take mine, that's what you do.
 You take and take and take.

SAMIR
 I'm not going to -

NIKHIL
 AHHH

With his trousers at his ankles, Nikhil tackles Samir and tries to wrestle off his brother's trousers.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)
 Gimme those legs.

SAMIR
 Get off man.

NIKHIL
 (grunting)
 Had to drink that fucking milk.
 What are you... a cow?

SAMIR
 (panting)
 Cows make milk.

NIKHIL
 They drink it too.

Misha and Ali watch, fascinated and perplexed at two grown men wrestling with their trousers at their ankles.

NIKHIL (CONT'D)
 You only think about yourself. No wonder Mum's stopped talking to you.

Surprised, Samir stops resisting. He stands and takes the trousers off and hands them to Nikhil.

ALI
 Oof, domestic.

SAMIR
 Here.

Nikhil hands the trousers to Ali. Nikhil turns back to Samir, but he's already started walking off... trouserless. Nikhil follows.

Nikhil catches up with Samir. The boys walk in silence. After a few moments they hear something behind them.

ALI
Hey! Hey wait up!

The boys turn around. Ali produces the bottle of milk.

ALI (CONT'D)
You two should have this.

Nikhil and Samir are momentarily speechless.

NIKHIL
(sincerely)
Thanks. Thanks so much.

SAMIR
Misha let you take it?

ALI
Doesn't matter. I'm his boss.

Samir and Nikhil look at each other

ALI (CONT'D)
Was that not clear?

The boys can't believe their luck. They get ready to leave but...

ALI (CONT'D)
I can't stand to see two brothers fight.

The brothers leave.

ALI (CONT'D)
I'd do anything to see my brother again.

The boys stop. They politely turn back, but it's obvious they want to leave urgently.

ALI (CONT'D)
But he moved to Dubai...

Samir and Nikhil are desperate to go, they tune out of Ali's diatribe, staring at the bottle. Nikhil elbows Samir. Samir elbows Nikhil. Someone has to be a dick...

SAMIR
Ah sorry that happened-

ALI
(increasingly emotional)
...and its hurts to be apart. I'd hate to see that happen to the two of you -

NIKHIL

Ah it could never -

ALI

(Almost wailing)

You seem like good boys. Feels like there's not many of us out here and-

Samir and Nikhil can't wait any longer

SAMIR

Cool.

NIKHIL

See ya!

SAMIR and NIKHIL leg it, leaving behind emotional ALI, mid-speech. ALI swallows his emotions.

10 EXT. NIKHIL'S FLAT BLOCK - NIGHT

10

Samir and Nikhil approach Ivan's door. Samir is about to knock but Nikhil beats him to it. Like a big boy. The door opens and a large shadow falls over them.

NIKHIL

This was delivered to our flat, I think it belongs to you?

Nikhil and Samir hold still, terrified at their fate until... IVAN lets out a vaguely approving grunt, reaches out and takes the bottle. He slams the door.

10A EXT. NIKHIL'S FLAT - NIGHT

10A

Establisher of Nikhil's flat.

11 INT. NIKHIL'S FLAT - NIGHT

11

Nikhil and Samir enter the living room. Nikhil throws the controller to Samir but this time it hits the floor. Nikhil looks up and sees Samir doing some tidying up. Nikhil recognises the gesture, makes a 'leave it' gesture.

SAMIR

Good thing I wore my lucky trousers.

NIKHIL

How were they lucky?

SAMIR

We got the milk didn't we?

NIKHIL

Well let's see how you play without
your lucky trousers.

Samir is putting on another pair of trousers, as he sits on
pile of pillows on the sofa.

SAMIR

(yawning)

I'll be alright, because *these* are
my real lucky trousers.

NIKHIL

You can't have two pairs of lucky
trousers.

SAMIR

They're all lucky.

NIKHIL

They can't all be lucky.

SAMIR

But they are.

They begin playing Mortal Kombat but within seconds Samir is
asleep. Nikhil puts a blanket over his brother. And then
pulls out a marker pen. **END.**