



# VIRSA

(Heritage)

*Shama Butt*



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### INTRODUCTION

This contemporary drama will portray a small, affluent, working class, Kenyan/Asian family, long living in Nairobi. The aim is to show how all the family members are torn between traditional (religious and cultural) values and the pressures, temptations and onslaught of modern life with all its exposures to foreign fashions and trends e.g. discos, drugs and alcohol etc.

### STORY-LINE

Chand's father died when he was still a child. His mother (Bibi-ji) struggled to bring him up and educate him to become a successful, highly paid engineer.

From his first marriage, to a European woman, Chand had a son, Neil (20 years old) and a daughter, Tanya (18 years old). His first wife died on the birth of Tanya. Neil was emotionally affected especially when Chand re-married Shabbo who proved to be a self-centred, non-caring type of step-mother. Her attention was mostly towards Chand's and her own son Vicky (15 years old) whom she pampers and spoils thoroughly. She often has conflicting arguments with her husband, mother-in-law and has a 'don't -care- a- damn' type of attitude towards the step-children.

Vicky and Tanya are prepared to listen to their grandma's ideas and advice about good morals, honesty, a virtuous life and keeping away from temptations (Heritage) but they do have their own defences for their actions and can freely argue with her.

Neil, a final year University student, being the most sensitive gets depression because of his own mother's death, the step-mother's neglectful attitude and the very frequent squabbles in the household. He starts on alcohol, smoking and drugs through peer pressure from his rich class fellow Kiran, as an escapism from the problems in his life. He has been lucky to find a decent girl Niki (also in the university) who thinks highly of Neil and has the impression that he is a straight-forward, "clean" person who loves her and has got engaged to him.

To her horror, one day she discovers that Neil is on drugs and she breaks the engagement. At the same time Neil finds out that he has failed his final University examinations. In desperation, he takes an over-dose of drugs and tries to commit suicide. Did he survive or die - let it be ambiguous!



## THE LOCALE

(I) Kiran's room, with a dim-lighted, smoky atmosphere. This can be in front of the 1st curtain on the stage with a single bed, table, stool, chairs and big posters on the walls. Eerie, 'mod' music in the back-ground.

(ii) Chand's living room, a tastefully furnished space in a house in an affluent suburb of Nairobi. This can be set in the beginning behind the first curtain. There should be trendy furniture, carpets, lamps etc.)

The episode takes place between 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon on a Saturday morning in 1997.

## CHARACTERS

### 1. Grandmother (Bibi-ji)

She is in her sixties. A pious, wise widow who struggled to educate her son, Chand. She has high moral values and is very uncomfortable with the modern trends in the present generation. Her dress is a modest 'salwar-kameez' with a 'dupatta' on her head. She has a pendent around her neck and a 'tasbi' on her wrist. Her way of talking is gentle but firm. She has conflicting views with her daughter-in-law but has quite a good rapport with the grand-children.

### 2. Chand

He is a mature man in his late forties. He is a respectable engineer in the private service. He is a down-to-earth, hard-working and honest person. He has a good sense of humour but can be haughty and stern when provoked. He is satisfied with his way of life. With his first wife, a European woman, he had a son, Neil and a daughter, Tanya on whose birth the mother died. With the second wife, Shabbo (Asian), he has a son Vicky. In the beginning he is wearing a jogging suit and sneakers. Later he appears in a two-piece western suit. When reading he uses spectacles.



### 3. Shabbo

She is Chand's second wife. She is in her early forties. A smart, beautiful, modern woman of rich back-ground. She is educated and wants more in terms of luxury and comfort in life. She has a streak of superficiality but has kept up some of her cultural values. Towards the step-children she has a bossy, bullying and generally neglectful attitude while she pampers and spoils her own son, Vicky.

Her dress is a fashionable *sharara-kameez* with / without the *dupatta* on her shoulder.

### 4. Vicky

He is Chand and Shabbo's son. He is younger to Tanya. He is a 15 years old, modernised, care-free type of lad who loves 'rap' and 'rock-n-roll'. He is repeating his 'O' levels and hopes to pass this time. He is pampered by his mother, expects support from her and generally gets away with anything that he does.

His clothes are 'hype'. He is wearing a tasselled shirt, flared jeans, platform shoes, modern hair-do, ear-ring and a 'walk-man'.

### 5. Tanya

She is Vicky's step- sister and Neil's real sister. A pretty teenager in high school. She has the 'mod' airs and an accent. She is figure and beauty-conscious, very talkative, bold, too frank and usually has the last word. In front of her step-mother she appears intimidated and suppressed. With the grand-mother she has a slightly retaliating attitude.

Her dress is a modern culottes and top. She has high-lighted her hair, has coloured lenses in her eyes and wears 'junky' jewellery.

### 6. Neil

A final year university student. He is in his early twenties. Since his mother died, he has felt neglected as the step-mother has shown no motherly care for him. He has gone astray due to wrong company, is on drugs but has a nice girl, Niki, as his fiancée. He has a disturbed personality, has a disillusioned attitude and suicidal tendencies.

He is dressed in casual jeans and shirt.



## 7. Niki

A smart, well-dressed, pleasant-looking, decent and self-confident young girl in her 1st year of university. She has a strong character and knows what she wants. She is Neil's fiancée. Her dress is a casual top and jeans.

## 8. Kiran

He is Neil's class-mate, a rich and spoilt lad. He is a typical "sugar" (heroin) junky. A thin, tall, lanky, care-free person who has managed by peer-pressure to influence and lure Neil into drugs through the pretext of studying together in his room. He is a fun-loving type of person. He is casually dressed in jeans and vest.

## 9. Narrator (Optional)

A powerful, authoritative voice only, preferably male. He must have clear diction and fluency in his speech. He has to introduce, depict the theme and conclude the drama. This could be a pre-recorded voice or 'live'



**SCENES**  
**FLOW / SEQUENCE**

1. Narrator - a male powerful voice only to give the general gist of the drama. (Optional)
2. In Kiran's room. Scene to depict Neil's character. Neglect of parents leading to present situation i.e. taking drugs etc. Confrontation with Niki in the presence of Kiran.
3. Shabbo and Tanya in argument in their living room over a parents meeting taking place in Tanya's school today morning.
4. Enter Chand after a jog. Has a short conversation with Tanya. Argument with Shabbo. The phone call. Exit of Tanya.
5. Entry of Grandma. Discuss Neil, conflict with daughter-in-law who threatens to leave the house. Chand tries to pacify the situation. Exit of grandma.
6. Enter Vicky, discuss Neil, tiff with Father. Mother siding the son. Chand scolds Shabbo.
7. Father leaves the room to get ready for his meeting. Mother pampers Vicky and gives him some money. Exit of mother.
8. Vicky, in his own world of dreams, imagines that he is dancing with his friends (some girls and boys) with some modern music. Appropriate lighting and other effects. A disco dance number.
9. Tanya enters. Step-brother and sister teasing each other and finally shouting at the top of their voices. Some comments on Neil's odd behaviour these days.
10. Enter Grandmother. She gives advice and is reminiscing.
11. Enter stressed Neil into the living room. He is looking weak with over-dose of drugs taken because of his failure in the examination and Niki's dumping him.
12. Panic as Neil faints and is taken to hospital. Everybody's reactions, feelings and emotions to be shown as Neil is in a critical condition and can die.
13. Grandmother's advice to youngsters and parents.
14. Conclusion

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## **-THE DRAMA-**

### **Sequence 1.** (optional)

Narrator.

(Voice only while glimpses and silhouettes of the characters are shown in subtle actions on the screen.)

He gives an introduction to the background of the family involved in the drama, arousing the curiosity of the audience and retaining the suspense of the happenings that will take place this Saturday morning.) *Story line - Para 1, 2 see Pg 1.*

### **Sequence 2.** ("DRUG SCENE")

(In Kiran's room with simple, scanty furniture and generally neglected and untidy. Low eerie music in the back-ground. Lights are dim. Neil is sitting on the bed with a cigarette and an alcoholic drink in a glass. Some syringes, drug powder etc. on a stool. Kiran is also there, sitting on a chair, puffing away oblivious of anything else. They are in the act of injecting themselves on their arms when Niki suddenly walks in through the door.)

NEIL: Oh, that's great! Kiran, I feel good already!

KIRAN: (laughs in high spirits) Neil, didn't I tell you so? It makes me forget all my worries.

NEIL: You can say that again Kiran. Look what I've been through. Since my mother died, I have felt so alone. Dad never had enough time for me. My step-mother has never shown any motherly affection towards me.....

KIRAN: Come-on Neil, forget these sob stories. That's why I always invite you over to drown your misery in this (points to glass of alcohol)

NEIL: Last night, Kiran, I had to stay here with you. I couldn't have faced my Dad after knowing how badly I have flunked my final university exams. What am I going to do, Kiran?

KIRAN: Ahh.... Don't give a damn Neil.... here take a puff! You can always repeat the year, can't you?



NEIL: (taking a puff) Kiran you don't understand! What will I do when Niki, my fiancée finds out about all this (points to the alcohol and the drugs) She is one person who has shown some concern for me. Yes! She loves me. Since our engagement she's literally worshipped me. She thinks I am her ideal. If ever she found out the truth... I'm sure she will want nothing to do with me again ...and... I oh.... I'd kill myself!

KIRAN: Don't be funny, yaar. Stop this non-sense and self pity. Can't you forget Niki for now..... Forget it all ..... Just enjoy the present life!!

( A knock at the door)

KIRAN: Who could that be? (slurred speech)

NEIL: Who cares! Here give me that drink again.

(Kiran gives him the glass)

(Louder knocking at the door)

KIRAN: Okay, Okay, I'll get it. (Gets up, almost falls and staggers to the door. He opens the door)

KIRAN: ....and who are you? (sleazy look)

(Niki looks at Kiran, is shocked, shoves him aside and moves towards Neil. She is stunned and very angry indeed.)

Niki: Kiran!

Kiran: Niki!

NIKI: (shocked and angry) Neil, you've been drinking again? Oh my God, Neil! Do you realise I've been looking for you the whole of yesterday. Your results were out and I wanted to see you badly. I guessed you would be holed up here!

(Looks at the alcohol, syringes etc. and is flabbergasted)

NIKI: What are you up to Neil? You.... you.. on drugs!

KIRAN: Sh....Sh... don't make a fuss! We are enjoying ourselves!

(Walks back to his original place on the chair)

NIKI: Neil, stop it for God's sake!

(Turns to Kiran)

So, this is what you two have been doing all this time! You were always pretending to everybody that you two study together here! Your secret is out now!

NIKI: (To Neil) Please Neil, Stop this now! Don't you know you are ruining yourself? Problems never get solved with drugs! (Tries to snatch the syringe from his hand but in vain)



NEIL: (already a bit high....laughs) Oh Niki, my dear, stop lecturing! This is the real life... come...come....try it yourself!

NIKI: (trying her best to be patient) Neil, don't you know that I love you. I care for you. We are engaged, we were supposed to marry soon. What's come over you? I thought you were my friend. I loved you with all my heart! This is the most dreadful disillusion of my life..... I thought you had such high morals and exemplary virtues.

NEIL: Virtues! High morals!

(laughs hysterically and kicks a stool nearby, making everything fall on the floor)

Cut it out! Don't give me any more crap woman! It's all hypocrisy! You know very well how my parents have neglected me for their own personal businesses and misunderstandings. And yes, I've flunked those damned exams, so what? What's there left for me in this cruel world ..... and .... anyway THIS... THIS.... (points to the drug powder etc.) is my solace, my own world....

NIKI: (very emotional with tears in her eyes) Very well Neil! Stay in your world alone. I will not be part of it. Good-bye, good-bye for ever and here is your damned ring! You cheat, double-faced punk! You junky - I hate you, I hate you!

(She holds him from the shoulders and shakes him thoroughly, then removes the ring from her finger and throws it at his face. Neil holds her wrist and twists her arm to hurt her. After a bit of a tussle, Niki manages to free herself and storms out of the room. On the way out she smashes a vase onto the floor, breaking it.)

Niki: It's all over ..... Go to hell!!

NEIL: (Laughs hysterically and starts giving himself another shot) Yeah, Yeah! (sarcastic tone) Go, go ahead dump me ..... even you can abandon me.... Nobody has really cared for me anyway!!

Niki leaves the room banging the door behind her.

KIRAN: Yeah, let her go yaar! Women! Who needs them! Here take another shot!

(Both Neil and Kiran begin drinking profusely and start injecting themselves with some drugs, finally staggering onto the floor. Stage darkened, end of this scene)



### Sequence 3

(A living room with trendy furniture, carpets, lamps, wall hangings, clock, a music system telephone, dining / coffee table etc.

Shabbo almost ready to go out, is manicuring her nails . She is humming an original song and trying to relax, blowing at her nail varnish and enjoying herself.

Tanya comes in with a letter from her school.)

TANYA: (Holds the mother's shoulder but Shabbo shrugs her off) Mum, Hi! You are looking 'fab' as usual. Are you getting ready for the Parent's Meeting at my school today morning? I came to remind you that Dad and you must be there at 11.

SHABBO: (curtly) Listen Tanya, I am getting ready for my Kitty party today. I have to go to Linda's place at 11. Sorry child! I cannot make it to your school.

TANYA: But Mum, everybody's parents come to discuss their children's progress with the teachers. You people never come for any of my school functions!

SHABBO: Oh stop whining all the time. I've already told you I cannot make it to your school today. Why don't you ask your Dad to go? I wanted to talk to him last night but he came in so late from some meeting and now he's already out jogging!

Anyway, I had asked you to bake a cake for tea, have you done it?

### Sequence 4

(Chand enters, in a jogging suit, ruffled hair and towel in hand. Panting a little, stretches and starts looking for his spectacles and the newspaper)

TANYA: Yes, Mum, I've already put it in the oven. But, my parents' meeting, Mum.....

Chand: (to Tanya) How is my Tanya today?

Tanya: Fine, Dad. How was your jog?

Chand: Oh, it was long and tiring, as usual!

Tanya: (in a haughty tone) Dad, It's my parents' meeting today. I always get embarrassed when the teachers ask me why my parents never come for any of my school occasions.



(Chand has settled on a chair)

CHAND: Shabbo, honey, why don't you attend Tanya's school function?

(Tanya starts making tea for the parents)

SHABBO: Oh I've to go for my kitty party at 11.

(checking watch) I mustn't be late.

CHAND: (looking at newspaper) Since when this punctuality. From your life style, I would have thought there is no hurry in Africa - and - kitty party! You women! I don't understand what you do at these Kitty parties - sit and gossip over pastries and samosas, and shred some poor husband to pieces! ... tch .. tch - utter waste of time ...

SHABBO: (laughing and looking into a mirror)

Come on Chand, as if you men don't ever waste time - like when you are glued to the T.V watching that wrestling - I should call it bone breaking!

CHAND: (gets up and goes to the music system)

Oh that is exercising - our eyes! .... and do you know sports is the micro-cosm of life!

SHABBO: Now don't give me that rubbish!....

(to Tanya) Tanya, don't just stand there! Pour the tea for you Dad!

Tanya: Yes Mum.

Shabbo: (to Chand)

And that reminds me - How come you came home so late, last night? Were you and your 'friends' enjoying at the 'Mujra' again?

CHAND: (angry, gets up as if to slap her but controls himself in time)

How dare you say such a thing in front of Tanya! I told you I had a meeting at the office - there is a very important project going on. I don't know why you have such a suspicious mind. Why can't you concentrate on your home and forget your silly 'kitty' parties!

SHABBO: Well, aren't you forgetting that you were the one who stopped me going to work in the first place! What should I do in the house the whole day? It gets so boring. I have to get out of the house. That's why I keep myself busy with my 'silly' kitty parties.

CHAND: Why can't you do something more constructive?



SHABBO : My job was constructive , Chand, but you ruined my career.  
(mimicking him)

"I don't need your money " you said . You never wanted me to keep my individuality. You always wanted me to live in your shadow. Now you want me to stop having the little social life that I have .(fuming)

CHAND: Social life! Shabbo you should be giving more quality time to the children. They need you. I keep telling you this but it falls on deaf ears...

Tanya: (Disgusted) There you go again! I can't stand these arguments all the time! I'll go check on my cake.  
(Tanya exits)

SHABBO: They are old enough now. I cannot baby-sit YOUR children all the time.

CHAND: (head on his hands) You know Shabbo, you intentionally ignore both Neil and Tanya. When Neil's mother died he was very young and your neglect has turned Neil to an alien to this house.

SHABBO: Now don't you start talking to me about that woman. You can't get her off your mind, can you?

CHAND: Oh, come on, Shabbo! You don't have to feel this way. You know, I love you. I am just worried about Neil's frequent absence from the house. He's hardly ever around. Even last night, he didn't come home. I just wonder what he is up to!

SHABBO: (laughing scornfully) Poor Papa, missing his 20 year old baby, is he? Well, since he got engaged to sweet Niki, he doesn't have time for you. He must be with her most of the time!

CHAND: (to Shabbo)  
..... and my Tanya.... she is always looking up to you for motherly affection. Do you give her any attention? I'm sure, you wouldn't treat her like this if she were your own daughter.

SHABBO: (Angry tone)  
Go on! Blame me.... blame me for everything that goes wrong in the house! What about yourself? Chand, how much time do you give to your kids? You are always on site or attending some meetings. The children are also your responsibility! Don't pass the buck onto me all the time! And that reminds me....you go for your Tanya's parents' meeting today!



( The phone rings . Chand waits for Shabbo to pick it, but she ignores it.  
Chand has to get up and take the phone)

CHAND: Hello?

Yes , Chand here (pause)

Yes, David, what is it (pause)

What , today on a Saturday ? (irritated) OK . OK . I'll be there .

( He puts the phone down and turns to Shabbo.)

CHAND: Shabbo ! It's going to be impossible for me to go to Tanya's school.  
I have to be on site by 12. There is another urgent engineers' meeting. It  
had to come up today ! Shabbo, just get my clothes organised.

SHABBO: ( Still angry . Keeps sitting )

You can get your things yourself! The maid is not around today. You know,  
she's gone for her mother's funeral . I don't think she'll be back till next week .  
Oh, I don't know how I'm going to manage. That's why I'm always telling you  
- we need two house-maids .

CHAND: ( has poured himself another cup of tea and is sitting at the dining-  
table)

There you start again - always complaining , for ever wanting more, tell me!  
What don't you have - lovely kids , a new car, a spacious house - what  
more do you want?

SHABBO:( Starts counting on her fingers) Well another maid for  
starters , our own swimming pool ,...my personal Jacuzzi....

### Sequence 5

Enter Grandma. Stands quietly and listens to the argument going on. She  
has a horrified look on her face!

CHAND: Greed, greed ... and false prestige - that's what I call it. You have  
no limits to your wants and desires . Just think of those unlucky ones, who  
don't even get one square meal a day - forget about a roof above their  
heads . I bet the cost of one swimming-pool could feed a thousand hungry  
mouths for a whole year! (Gets up and walks to his brief-case)

SHABBO: Hhmmph! Oh you and your philosophy of compassion . ( With  
exasperation , starts arranging some flowers in a vase)



GRANDMA: 'Toba, toba!' My God! Arguments early in the morning! When is this household ever going to have a peaceful day? I pray day and night for your welfare but God help you! Chand...

Chand: Yes Ma.

Grandma: Chand 'betay', did you see or talk to Neil at all last night? I'm worried about him. He seems to keep away from the house too often. Shabbo, did you see him?

Shabbo: I keep busy. I don't know anything about him.

Grandma: hun... busy!.... and would it be asking you too much to avoid these early morning arguments? When are you going to start setting good examples to your growing teen-aged children?

SHABBO: Oh, spare me from your usual "holier-than-thou" attitude. Please! Stop interfering.

GRANDMA: Yes, you can say I am always interfering but how can I ignore the happenings under one roof? You two are always busy or at daggers with each other, even in front of the children. The mother-less Neil and Tanya are always being ignored and neglected and you Shabbo... are always pampering your own Vicky. It's not fair, Shabbo! If you really loved Chand you would treat all the children equally!

SHABBO: (to Chand) Chand! Tell her to stop provoking me. Her sermons make me sick. She always preaches that 'bahus' are like your own daughters, but, does she treat me like her own? She's always finding faults and criticising me all the time! Sometimes, I wish I could just go away somewhere else. Chand, if I decide to leave this house, it will be all because of this woman! (almost crying)

GRANDMA: (to Chand) (very emotional) Hun, hun, Tantrums! See.... see .... betay, how she talks to me! As your mother don't I have any right to point out wrong doings going on in this household? I would never want this household to break apart. I just wish you would all live together more harmoniously.

CHAND: Ma, Ma, please calm down. I have so many other things on my mind. Take it easy. Everything will work out, I hope! Shabbo, you don't have to answer back so rudely. She says things for our good, you know!

SHABBO: Yeah, yeah, take her side, as usual - She's always right and I'm always wrong. How these mothers manipulate their sons!

GRANDMA: Toba, toba. God help us!!

(Grandma adjusts her dupatta on her head and walks out, muttering under her breath)



## Sequence 6

(Enter Vicky with ear phones and a walk-man, shaking with the rhythm of the music, walks past parents without acknowledging their presence. He stops near the music system.)

CHAND: (removing glasses , he snaps his fingers in front of Vicky) Morning Vicky! Isn't everybody up early today?

Shabbo gestures to Vicky to make the music low. Vicky comes to the Father and Mother. He has removed his ear-phones.

Vicky: Hi Dad, Hi Mum!

Chand: Any plans up your sleeve?

VICKY: Hey, I'm so excited today I'm going to this new club. I am attending a party at the 'Moto-Moto' club to-night.

CHAND: Vicky, you are always going for parties on your own. Why don't you include Neil in your activities? You know it well enough that he prefers staying aloof but I think you should try to be a friend to him rather than just a younger brother.

SHABBO: Oh, my Vicky is so self confident; he makes friends so easily. It's Neil who always seems confused. Sometimes I feel he acts quite impulsive and fickle. He is so secretive, too. In my opinion he has a disturbed personality!

VICKY: Come on Mom! Neil's really cool. He's been really slogging hard for his finals with his friend Kiran. His exam. results were supposed to be out yesterday. But he never came home last night, so I wonder how he fared. (changing the subject)

Anyway, Dad, can I have some cash for to-night?

CHAND: What? Again? This is the second time this week. Where do you spend all this money, by the way?

(Vicky ignores the question)

CHAND: (Takes wallet out of his pocket)  
Any way, how much do you want today?

VICKY: (avoiding Father's eyes) Just five thousand.

CHAND: What! Five thousand! That's too much!  
(Puts wallet back without giving him anything.)



VICKY: But Dad. I need it . All the other guys are gonna be there in the evening and they always have enough money to burn. I don't want to look miserly in front of them. I want to have real fun! I want to look cool!

CHAND: (glaring) I don't think highly of your "other" guys. They always look and behave as if they are high. I'm sure they are into drugs. What do they call them these days - Smarties. Disco Biscuits!!

SHABBO: There you go again! Whenever he wants to go out with his friends you start harping about drugs and alcohol. (walks to Vicky and pats him) My Vicky is not like that. Have you ever enquired from Neil where he spends most of his time and your money? Come on, Chand, let Vicky, too, have a good time. You are young only once, give him the money!

CHAND : Shabbo, Shabbo. It is not a question of money - it's the principle that matters. He is provided with everything in this house - what does he need extra cash for? Don't you know, the more money youngsters have the more venues they discover to squander it. And isn't he supposed to be concentrating on his studies to pass this time? I still haven't compromised with his repeating his 'O' levels!!

VICKY: Oh chill out Dad, calm down. It's no big deal. I'm sure to sail through this time. You'll see.... (walking with cereal bowl towards side bar)

CHAND: (disgusted, walking out of the room. He has taken his jacket and towel and put it around his neck. Reaches near the door)  
I am always making you children aware of your responsibilities and priorities. The rest is up to you It is a question of your own lives after all.  
(to Shabbo)  
I have to get ready for my meeting. Shabbo, you can deal with him!

( Chand leaves the room .)



Sequence 7

SHABBO: (to son) Take it easy Vicky. Your Dad means no harm. I would hate to see you go astray.  
(puts her arms around her son)

VICKY : (angry) Yeah, yeah. I know that but, Mom, I don't like him breathing down my neck  
(speaking under his breath -mumbling)  
He's such a grouch sometimes! God!!

SHABBO: Buus, buus! You don't have to be rude. Here's some money  
(removes it from her purse).

Make do with it!

(going out)

Oh, I still have to do my hair - (Shabbo rushes out of the room. Vicky puts the money in his pocket but is not so happy)

Sequence 8

(Vicky sighs deeply. Then he walks to the music system, changes the C.D. and starts dancing with the loud music, oblivious of anything else.  
Disco effects, coloured lights etc.)

VICKY: Oh, this music takes me to another world.

(He goes into a trance )



Sequence 9

(Tanya walks in carrying a cake in a plate. She puts it down on the coffee table, mimics Vicky a bit and then switches off the music to bring him down to earth and get his attention. The imaginary boys and girls have disappeared. The atmosphere is the same as before.)

TANYA: (cheekily)

Vicky, Vicky! Can't we have some peace and quiet here!

VICKY: And what's bugging you, Tanny baby?

TANYA: Oh, don't call me a 'baby'. I hate it! The grown-ups in this house are always behaving more childishly and immature than us kids!

VICKY: Ah, take it easy, sis. Life is too short to bother about petty squabbles and arguments. Hey, did Neil come home last night?

Tanya: I don't think so!

Vicky : I worry about Neil. I wonder what he is up to!

TANYA: Yeah, I don't believe that Kiran and he spend all that time studying together. I bet they are up to no good!

(changes the subject)

Anyway, here try some cake. I made it!

(cuts a slice and offers it to him. Licks off some cream herself, too)

VICKY : A fine way to finish me off, eh?

TANYA: Of course not, silly. If I wanted to do that, I would just push you over your stupid boots!

VICKY: Then why are you always trying your new recipes on me? Have it yourself! Put on some more fat, as if you don't have enough already.

TANYA: What! Fat! ME! (walks around him)

Look at yourself - look at your hair - as if a lawn-mower has gone hay-wire!

Look at your ear-ring -- getting familiar with your feminine side eh?

(Really angry - throws the newspaper (or cake) at him.

VICKY: Oh stop it and shut up you fatty, fatty bumbola!



TANYA: Shut up yourself, you brute.... wait till I tell Dad about those 'porno' magazines hidden under your mattress and ..those cigarettes.....

VICKY: You, you devil...tell-tale... you've been going through my things again! I've told you to keep away from my room and mind your own business !! Fat Witch!!!  
(moving as if to strangle her)

### Sequence 10

(Grandmother walks in, disgusted at the din. She is in salwar-kameez and the dupatta is on her head)

GRANDMA: 'Toba, Toba! What on earth is happening here?  
Vicky betray, stop teasing her. I've told you so many times before not to call her  
fatty. She is my delight, my beauty, call her by her lovely name  
Tanya - I named her myself

(Tanya has run behind the grandma and makes faces at Vicky)

TANYA: You see Dado, he's always teasing me. He thinks he is a super man and he can get away with anything. Even Mom favours him all the time. He always gets his own way. Do you know he is going to that 'Moto-Moto' Club again. Dado, even I want to go too, please, please, Dado!

GRANDMA: Oh ho. Slow down Tanya! "Moto-moto"! Toba, toba my child. What kind of evil name is that? That's not a place for a decent girl to go to.

TANYA: Why? If Vicky can go anywhere he wants to, why can't I? Is it because he is a boy? Even I want to be 'in', not old fashioned and narrow-minded!

GRANDMA: Now Tanya, don't get too over-clever! You know very well that we all love you both. It's just that Vicky can look after himself and you - we don't want you to get into any sort of trouble - we'd be doomed ... if something happened to our baby... We restrict you only because we CARE..



TANYA: Oh, I feel suffocated here. I'm tired of being nagged - don't do this, don't wear that, don't go out with him, don't bring her home.... I wish you people would trust me a bit more and care a bit less!  
(Vicky mimics her)

GRANDMA: Less? Did you say less? We should care less? What are you saying child? Do you know what happens to those boys and girls who are not cared for? Tanya, you read magazines and newspapers - you should know more than me about child molestation, rape, teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, drunkenness and this new dreadful disease that I keep hearing about these days what is it called .... A.I.D.S. !

TANYA: Dado, I know about all this - but.... I can look after myself. I am strong and confident!

GRANDMA: Come, I want to share something with you.

GRANDMA: I could have gone astray but I always kept in mind what your grandfather used to say, "*Bibi, stick to high morals, respect family values, never be afraid of hard work, do what is right and always trust in God.*" I want you also to remember this and appreciate the values of a virtuous life!

My children, this is our true "Heritage" and I do not want you to ever forget that!

(The children are sitting around their Grandma while she is reminiscing. Vicky could be drinking some juice etc. Grandma starts brushing and plaiting Tanya's hair which was open before.)

GRANDMA: (continues) Through my stitching, I managed to make ends meet with dignity. Even your father, Chand could have fallen prey to peer pressure and ruined himself but with the grace of God, he did not falter and he is blessed today. Everybody respects him for his honesty and hard work.



VICKY: (Having some juice) But Gran... when you guys were young - those were ancient times - those traditions and ways are irrelevant now - you never had what we have now - the media, T.V. foreign movies, computers, inter-net - name it - we are exposed to all foreign values - and you guys are the ones who have introduced all this into our lives. The 21st century is around the corner, you can't lock us up behind cages now!

GRANDMA: Toba, toba! Who said anything about locking up? Limits - my children - limits. You have all the freedom to pursue any career, any job - but character degradation, we will not tolerate! I know today, life for the youth is harder than ever before. You are exposed to so much more temptation. But, why do you want to ape the negative aspects of foreign cultures? Ask yourself - where are you people going? What is the purpose of your life? Will this moral decadence ever end??

(Urgent knocking at the door.)

TANYA: Oh, I'm sick and tired of all this! Let me go and see who it is!

(Tanya goes to get it.)

### Sequence 11

VICKY: Who can that be? (Nibbling at some snacks)

(Neil comes in looking weak and depressed, holding a result slip in his hand)

TANYA: (screaming) What! Oh my God! (expression of shock and horror)

VICKY: Oh Neil, waz-up? We missed you last night, bro. What happened about your results yesterday?

(Neil staggers to the couch near the grandma)

GRANDMA: Yes Neil *betay*, what's wrong? Are you feeling all right?



NEIL: It's over...Everything.....Everything is finished.... I am fed up of this life! (Hysterical, a bit unbalanced , appropriate actions and expressions.

TANYA: What's happened Neil. You look sick brother. Were the results that bad?

(Holds his hand )

NEIL: (Pushes Tanya away)

It is the end for me. My results.....(trying to stand up)

VICKY: .....so.....what about them !

NEIL: I flunked.... the whole year's slogging has gone down the drain. I am a good for nothing .....I.....I ...

(gives Vicky the result slip and feeling dizzy)

..... Nobody can help me.....s Nobody loves me.

(Vicky reads the result slip and comes close to Neil to console him)

NEIL: Oh.....I....hate....myself..... (pause) ..Niki..... Niki.....

( Some symptoms- heart fluttering, jaw-clenching and teeth grinding)

TANYA:

Niki, your fiancée!

What about her, where is she?

What's happened?

NEIL: She ...she broke off the engagement with me.

(Hysterical) Here, Vicky - you can give her back this ring.

VICKY: Now, calm down, big brother! We can talk this over. I'm sure Niki will come round. It's just a misunderstanding.

NEIL: No , no. She found out ..... I know I could not have hidden this fact from her for ever.

GRANDMA: '...Found out what, betay?



Grandma : .... What ! !

NEIL: .... that I am on drugs. Forgive me Grandma, I have fooled you and every-body else. It just started as a prank in school together with Kiran. One thing led to another and I became addicted - I became so dependent that I couldn't live without it.

(falls down)

(Grandma and others are horrified)

VICKY: But, how did Niki find out about it?

NEIL: Today morning, she caught me in Kiran's room while we were both giving ourselves the shots. Then hell broke loose.....

(extremely emotional and hysterical)

She threw the ring at my face, called me all sorts of names and left, banging the door on my face..... she doesn't want to see me again. She told me to go to hell and I am..... I am..

GRANDMA:

Oh God !

(Neil faints) What have you done to yourself? Speak up my child.....speak up!

(Shakes him. Tanya brings a glass of water. Vicky holds Neil's hand.)

NEIL: I.....I.....I've taken an overdose of..... I'm going to die..... Let me die.....Nobody cares anyway.....

(Faints. Symptoms like sweating, clenching etc.)

### Sequence 12

TANYA: Don't say that Neil. We all love you. We need you, my brother. Don't leave us!

(very emotional, starts crying and shouts)

Mum, Dad! Hurry up! Come here quick! Neil's here!

(Chand and Shabbo hurry in. Chand is in a suit now.)

CHAND: What's going on in here? Neil, my son, what have you done to yourself?

(Sees Neil lying on the sofa. Feels his pulse and shakes his head)

VICKY: (Panic) He's taken an over-dose!



TANYA: (Crying)

Niki's ditched him! He's also flunked his exams.

GRANDMA: O my God! This curse was bound to fall on this trouble-ridden household.

(starts wiping tears from her eyes)

O God help my child, my poor, sensitive lad!

Shabbo: What is it Chand? Are you sure he is not pretending?

Chand: Stop it woman! His pulse is hardly there and you are saying he is pretending.

Shabbo: How should I know! Hun.... hardly any pulse! What!

Chand: Stop panicking. His condition is critical. We must get him to the hospital as soon as possible. There is no time to waste! He could drift into a coma or even die! We could lose our Neil for ever!!

Vicky: Neil, don't leave us my brother.... don't do this to us ...Neil....don't go.....!

### **Sequence 13**

(They all gather around unconscious Neil on the verge of carrying him out. The scene freezes here. The siren of ambulance can be heard in the distance. Tragic (death) music in the background. Only the Grandmother comes to the front of the room. In a pensive mood and very sad indeed.)

The grandmother's tearful and very emotional voice echoes:

" Neil is just one of the many victims of troubled house-holds and the tribulations and frustrations of modern living. We as parents and as a society have a duty- to set good examples, give the right guidance and to channel the growing minds of the youth towards making the right decisions in spite of the temptations which in many forms have been and will always be there."



Sequence 14Conclusion (Optional)

The Grandmother continues

"\* Be not engrossed in things ephemeral, \*  
 To the neglect of higher things in life.  
 Life is but short and death will soon claim you.  
 Oh that men would only learn,  
 before it is too late,  
 the serious issues of the higher life!  
 They must taste the consequences of their neglect.  
 For every good enjoyed, they must  
 In the hereafter give a strict account..'"

*-THE END-*

\* Sura Takathur (Piling up) from The Holy Quran.  
 Translation commentary -Abdullah Yusuf Ali c.282.Pg.1777..cii 1-8

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Computer Graphics and  
 Manuscript Typing by  
 Najia & Mustafa Butt.  
 March 1997.