

'NEW DELI' – PITCH

By Jeff McMahon

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Logline: *An ingenuous Indian student, undaunted by the entrenched prejudice he encounters, saves a Brooklyn delicatessen from demolition by an unscrupulous developer ... and ultimately realises his American Dream.*

Aadi Ganguly honors his late parents' wish and accepts a scholarship to complete his architecture studies in Brooklyn, NY. But there's a catch – to stay in the US, he requires a stable roof over his head, so must reside with his uncle Rana Santoori, his only kin, and proprietor of a struggling delicatessen in a part of the city ripe for gentrification.

Early in the semester, Aadi befriends fellow student Vanessa Ephron (to the displeasure of Benjamin, who has designs on her.) All is well for Aadi – until Uncle Rana reveals that an upstart developer is finalizing a deal to take over the property and evict all the tenants, including their neighbor Roxy, whose 'jewelry store' is but a front for a warehouse.

Having severed all ties with India and (with limited finances) unable to secure other accommodation in the US, Aadi boldly proposes transforming the delicatessen into such an outrageously popular Brooklyn landmark that any landlord would be mad to consider demolishing. A bold plan – with Vanessa an enthusiastic accomplice.

But there's one minor obstacle – Money!

With limited options, Aadi contemplates dabbling in the drug trade – much to Vanessa's chagrin. When challenged for a better solution, Vanessa approaches her not-so-squeaky-clean father David who, curiously, agrees to broker a deal through an influential acquaintance – no questions asked!

However, when David learns of Aadi's ethnicity, he reneges and dissuades Vanessa from seeing the young Indian man again. Fearing possible deportation, these are desperate times for Aadi.

He needs a minor miracle – which comes, ironically, when Aadi uncovers David's indiscretions involving Roxy, the neighboring hooker.

With new-found cunning (let's face it, it's blackmail), Aadi procures the identity of the prospective savior, the attorney, Preston Ironseid Senior, "a man not to be messed with".

Undeterred by Ironseid's reputation, Aadi contrives a way into the attorney's inner sanctum, and with the exuberance of ambitious young start-ups, he and Vanessa pitch their project.

It's a pitch like no other, resurrecting memories of Ironseid's own struggles with prejudice as a young lawyer making his way in Brooklyn in the 1980s. Ironseid commits, and despite attempts to sabotage the project by the upstart developer (surprise, surprise, his own estranged son, Preston Ironseid Junior!), the deli undergoes its metamorphosis.

Aadi's residential status looks rosy. His emotional status, however, is a different matter.

The intimate relationship that has developed between Aadi and Vanessa turns sour when compromising photographs of Aadi confronting David outside Roxy's are anonymously forwarded to David's wife, Gloria. Aadi's mollifying explanation that perhaps David was negotiating with Roxy on behalf of Mister Ironseid does not sway Vanessa, and she rues the day she ever became involved with Aadi's 'kind'.

She turns to Benjamin, seeking sympathy and support, only to learn that it was he who took the photos in a petulant attempt to discredit Aadi and remove him from the scene.

Ashamed that, after having chided her father, she has succumbed to her own ethnic prejudices, Vanessa atones her sins by convincing her parents of Aadi's integrity.

As for the heart-broken young man, moping around the deli with the grand opening nigh, it takes a proverbial "kick up the butt" from an unlikely mentor for Aadi to realize his true need, and send him rushing to Vanessa's house to declare his love.

That done, and with Gloria forgiving David's 'indiscretion', the foursome make an eleventh hour dash to help Uncle Rana celebrate the renaissance of the '*New Taj Delicatessen*' where, amidst the multi-cultural Bollywood-esque music and dancing, Ironseid pronounces his intention to sponsor Aadi's future in the US, assuring him that his love affair with Brooklyn – and all that it offers – is about to blossom...

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