

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

## Prakash and The Napkin Factory

Copyright (c) 2024

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

INT. PRAKASH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A small, cluttered room bathed in the grey light of dawn. The sound of distant traffic mingles with the occasional shout from the street below. PRRAKASH, 25, disheveled but with a determined look in his eye, sits at a makeshift desk littered with job applications, a cheap laptop, and a cup of cold coffee.

The room is stark, with posters of famous artworks and a few personal photos adorning the otherwise bare walls. A small bed is tucked into one corner, made with military precision.

Prakash stares at his laptop screen, scrolling through job listings with a sense of urgency. He pauses on one that reads, "Napkin Folder Apprentice Needed - Immediate Start." A flicker of hope crosses his face, quickly replaced by skepticism.

He clicks on the listing, reading the details. His expression shifts from disbelief to desperation. He looks over to a government-issued poster on the wall, **"Employment is Freedom. Unemployment is Imprisonment."**

He takes a deep breath, filling out the application with a shaky hand. Upon completion, he leans back, closing his eyes, grappling with the weight of his decision.

The silence is broken by the PING of the laptop, signaling a response to his application. Prakash opens his eyes and reads the screen.

He quickly changes into the best outfit he can muster, a slightly worn suit that's seen better days. Checking himself in a small mirror, he takes a deep breath, grabs his resume, and heads to the door.

PRAKASH  
(to himself)  
Let's fold some napkins.

EXT. PRAKASH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Prakash steps out into a bustling city. The skyline is a mix of futuristic buildings and dilapidated structures, a symbol of a society that has advanced technologically but declined humanely. Surveillance drones buzz overhead, scanning the faces of the city's inhabitants as they go about their day.

Prakash merges with the crowd, his expression one of determination masked with apprehension. He navigates through the sea of people, each person seemingly carrying their own burden of fears and aspirations.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Prakash stands at a bus stop, surrounded by advertisements proclaiming the virtues of employment and the vices of idleness. A digital screen displays the countdown to the next bus arrival while simultaneously flashing propaganda messages.

A bus arrives, and Prakash boards, swiping his ID card. The interior is cramped, filled with individuals from all walks of life, each absorbed in their thoughts or digital devices. Prakash finds a spot near a window and gazes out, lost in thought as the cityscape moves past him.

INT. BUS - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Prakash's reflection in the window merges with the scenes of the city outside. His eyes are drawn to a large, imposing building in the distance, marked with the logo of the napkin factory. His heart rate quickens as the bus approaches his destination.

EXT. NAPKIN FACTORY - DAY

The bus stops in front of the napkin factory, a colossal, bizarre structure that looks out of place amidst the urban decay. The building is an architectural wonder.

Prakash steps off the bus and stands before the factory. He takes a deep breath, adjusts his tie, and walks towards the entrance.

INT. NAPKIN FACTORY LOBBY - DAY

Prakash enters a lobby that is as unusual as the building's exterior. The walls are adorned with intricate napkin designs encased in glass, showcasing the artistry of napkin folding. A large fountain in the center of the lobby features water cascading over folded napkin sculptures.

At the reception desk, a ROBOTIC RECEPTIONIST greets him with a mechanical smile.

ROBOTIC RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to Napkin Corp., the world's  
premier napkin folding establishment.  
How may I assist you?

PRAKASH

I'm here for the interview.  
Prakash... Prakash Gupta.

The robotic receptionist scans him, and a panel on the desk lights up with Prakash's details.

ROBOTIC RECEPTIONIST

Ah, yes. Mr. Gupta. Please proceed to interview room 3B. Good luck.

Prakash nods, thanks the robot, and follows the signs to the interview room, his steps echoing in the vast, surreal lobby.

INT. NAPKIN FACTORY - CORRIDOR - DAY

Prakash walks down a corridor, passing doors with viewing windows that offer glimpses into various stages of napkin production and design. Workers and machines are in harmony, creating beautiful, intricate patterns with napkins.

He arrives at 3B and takes a moment to compose himself before entering.

INT. NAPKIN FACTORY - INTERVIEW ROOM 3B - DAY

The room is unlike any traditional interview setting Prakash has ever seen. The walls are adorned with the most intricate and beautiful napkin art. In the center, a large, round table made entirely of glass sits atop a pedestal, surrounded by chairs that look more like thrones than seating for a job interview.

DEVON, 50s, eccentric in appearance with an air of arrogance about him, stands by the window, gazing out. He turns as Prakash enters, his eyes sparkling with an intensity that immediately puts Prakash on edge.

DEVON

Ah, Prakash Gupta. The latest aspirant in the noble art of napkin folding. Please, have a seat.

Prakash nods, taking a seat at the table. The chair is surprisingly comfortable despite its intimidating appearance.

DEVON (cont'd)

(continuing)

Here at the Art of Napkin, we don't just fold napkins, Prakash. We fold dreams, ambitions, and sometimes, the very fabric of reality.

Prakash tries to hide his confusion and nerves with a polite nod, unsure how to respond to Devon's poetic introduction.

DEVON (cont'd)  
(leaning in)  
Tell me, Prakash, have you ever felt  
a connection to something so mundane,  
yet found profound beauty within it?

PRAKASH  
(stammering  
slightly)  
I... suppose so. I mean, I find  
certain simplicity in everyday  
objects... beautiful, in a way.

Devon smiles, seemingly pleased with the answer.

DEVON  
Excellent. That's the first step to  
becoming a great napkin artist—seeing  
the world not for what it is but for  
what it could be. But let me ask you  
something more personal. What are you  
willing to sacrifice for this job?

Prakash pauses, the weight of Devon's question sinking in. He thinks of the oppressive society outside, the threat of imprisonment for the unemployed, and the desperation that led him here.

PRAKASH  
(uncertainly)  
Everything... In a world that feels  
increasingly constricted, the chance  
to create something beautiful... it's  
worth any sacrifice.

Devon nods, seemingly satisfied with the answer. He stands, walking to a cabinet and pulling out a single, plain napkin.

DEVON  
Then let us begin the first test of  
your journey. This napkin represents  
your past, Prakash. Fold it in a way  
that it represents your hope for the  
future.

Prakash takes the napkin, his hands trembling slightly as he contemplates the task. The room is silent except for the soft rustling of the napkin as he folds it.

Prakash only folds the napkin a single time.

Devon examines the napkin art, a look of genuine admiration on his face.

DEVON (cont'd)  
Impressive, Prakash. You've just  
taken the first step into a larger  
world. Welcome to the Art of Napkin  
Folding.

Prakash's face lights up with a mixture of relief and disbelief.

Devon's expression shifts from admiration to a more serious, almost grave demeanor. He places the napkin art back on the table, folding his hands in front of him.

DEVON (cont'd)  
Your talent is undeniable, Prakash.  
But talent alone isn't enough here.  
To truly excel, to become one with  
the art of napkin folding, you must  
be free of all worldly distractions  
and attachments.

Prakash is dumbfounded.

DEVON (CONT'D)  
We have a procedure. It's...  
unconventional. But it allows our  
napkin artists to achieve a level of  
focus and creativity unparalleled in  
the outside world. You'll need to  
undergo this procedure to continue.

PRAKASH  
(stunned)  
Procedure? What kind of procedure?

DEVON  
It's a simple medical intervention.  
Nothing too invasive. But once  
complete, you'll find that your  
attachments to the material world,  
your... distractions, they'll fade  
away. You'll live for the art.

Prakash feels a cold dread wash over him. This was not what he signed up for.

PRAKASH  
(standing up)  
I... I need to think about this.

Devon stands as well, his eyes locking onto Prakash with an intensity that borders on fanaticism.

DEVON

There's nothing to think about, Prakash. This is your chance to escape the mundanity of existence, to embrace true freedom. The procedure is scheduled for today. Our staff is ready for you.

Panic sets in. Prakash backs away, shaking his head.

PRAKASH

No, I... I can't. I'm sorry.

Without waiting for a response, Prakash turns and rushes out the door.

EXT. NAPKIN FACTORY - DAY

Prakash bursts out of the factory doors and into the sunlight. He doesn't stop to think; his legs move on their own, propelling him away from the factory, away from the bizarre offer, and away from a future he can't accept.

As he runs, the first chords of "Wake Up" by Arcade Fire begin to play, the song building in intensity with each step he takes. The music fills the air, a soundtrack to his defiance, his refusal to give in to a system that demands he erase his humanity.

MONTAGE - PRAKASH RUNNING THROUGH THE CITY

Prakash dodges through crowded streets, the people around him blurs as he focuses solely on escape.

He passes by the oppressive symbols of the society he's fleeing from - surveillance cameras, propaganda posters, policing, and the busy faces of the city's inhabitants.

Memories flash before him - his graduation, moments of laughter and hope, the face of his sweetheart.

EXT. KARINA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Prakash finally stops, chest heaving, in front of an apartment building. He looks up, determination and fear mingling in his eyes. This is it.

INT. KARINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door swings open to reveal KARINA, an array of warm lights glow around her silhouette. She greets him with with a smile, one that speaks volumes.

EXT. AMERICAN WEST - REMOTE LOCATION - SUNSET

The landscape opens up around them as they drive, the vast expanse of the American West stretching out in all directions.

As the sun begins to dip below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of orange and pink, they find themselves at the edge of a lush forest, remote and untouched.

They exit the car. They begin to strip away their clothes.

Hand in hand, they disappear into the forest, the dense canopy above filtering the last light of day into a soft, ethereal glow.