

# THE OTHER ROOM

## CHARACTERS:

- 1) **SOHAM** - 16, a bright, intelligent teenager with fairly severe Autism. He speaks with a slight monotone and has some physical tics. ***Always wears a cap to hide his face.***
- 2) **SAAKSHI** - 16, another bright mind. Pretty, friendly and genuine, and secretly a nerd.
- 3) **ROCKY** - 16, Saakshi's boyfriend. Wears a jersey. He is a basketball player.

(each of the following characters may have varying accents. And each of the following characters are part of Soham's Autistic mind.)

- 4) **MR. VENT** - 40s-50s, a restless **Physics** Professor. Keeps trying to prove others wrong and himself correct. He is really intelligent and over the top. He uses a walking stick (like Sam Bahadur). He can also wear a **HAT**.
- 5) **ABHISHEK** - 30s, a clean-cut, intensely straightforward Movie Director (or Aircraft Pilot)
- 6) **GAUTAM** - 15, an outgoing, friendly, eager to learn everything type, kid.
- 7) **SAL (in short for Salman)** - 20s, a reserved, neatly dressed, well-mannered (neat rich kid vibes) Engineering student.

## SETTING:

The stage is divided into two parts - split by a door or something.

One part is the actual real world where Soham exists. This part is a classroom in a high school. There is a chalkboard with "CURRENT ELECTRICITY" written on it. There are a lot of tables and chairs. (If possible put a podium to indicate where the teacher stands inside the classroom). Characters in this room are not aware of the characters in the other room.

The other half of the stage is : **"THE OTHER ROOM"**. It is a giant cage to fit 4 people in it, who can comfortably walk inside. The floor is scattered with **books, charts, scientific instruments, stationary, papers etc.** There are also **chairs** in the room. We can keep **couches** as well.

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## **SCREENPLAY**

[Lights ON. Focus on "The Other Room". Mr. Vent and Abhishek are having a **heated** discussion about Current Electricity. There is a chalkboard here as well. These two are solving a problem on the board. Sal is pacing back and forth while reading a book (**DUNE**). Gautam is dozing.]

[Soham is reading a Physics textbook.]

**ABHISHEK:** So after getting this equivalent circuit, I should just apply a simple KCL and get my answer. So where did I go wrong?

**DONOVAN(changes the equivalent Capacitance (series instead of parallel)):** Abhi, you made a mistake long before you reached the final answer, when you decided

that Capacitors in Series get added. I guess you don't become a film star based on your quantitative reasoning skills, eh. (pinches his cheek) That pwetty face is aaaal you need.

[SAL looks up from his book.]

**SAL:** Oh knock it off, Mr Vent! He's worked so hard to get to this position in Bollywood. And besides, you're wrong as well. Those 2 capacitors are not in series! They're in Parallel.

[ABHISHEK looks surprised and begins to write in a note-book.]

**MR. VENT(intense):** Oh. You want to go against me, Salman?

**SAL:** Don't call me that--

**MR. VENT:** You know, I could start telling you one or two things about my new Wheatstone Algorithm that would knock the socks off your, smaller than a capacitor, brain.

[Everyone groans, including Gautam who is now awake.]

**GAUTAM:** Yo... Not that Wheatstone Algorithm again.

**MR. VENT:** Since when do you have any idea what I'm even talking about, Gautam? And since when did you start calling me "Yo"?

**GAUTAM:** Yo, listen -- (corrects himself) - Mr. Vent, listen, I don't really need to understand physics to tell that you are a (*crescendo*) selfish little prat, who only cares about yourself and would do anything to prove yourself right.

[Mr. Vent **SLAPS** Gautam. Gautam falls down. Sal helps him to stand up. Soham also slaps *himself* in the real world.]

**ABHISHEK** - Wow! I've never seen someone slap with that technique before. Was it effective, Gautam?

**GAUTAM(stands up)**: Yes. Clearly. (THEY FORGET EVERYTHING and behave as if nothing happened) Look! Someone's here!

[They all crowd each other against the bars to watch. The dialogues of the characters in each room is intermingled]

**SUMAN**: Oh! I didn't know there was anybody in here.

**MR. VENT\***: Who is she?

**SAL\***: What were we talking about, again?

**SUMAN**: Have you seen a red backpack?

[She looks under the desks for it, but doesn't see it. Gautam sees it next to Soham and points.]

**GAUTAM\***: Yo!! YO!! There! Check it out! Red backpack! Right there bro!

[Soham silently holds up the backpack for SUMAN to see.]

**SUMAN**: Oh yes. There it is. Thanks! It's actually my boyfriend's, you know. I was holding on to it for him during his practice yesterday but I guess I left it in here somehow. How responsible of me, huh? He's been giving me the *third degree* about it.

**SAL\***: Third degree? The hell is that?

**MR. VENT\*:** No idea.

**GAUTAM\*:** Yo... is it like burns?... Or Drugs?... or Murder?!

**ABHISHEK\*:** It means he shouted at her. (everyone looks at him). What? I played the role of a Gangster boyfriend long ago.

**SOHAM:** Does your boyfriend hurt you?

**SUMAN:** Uhh... no?

**MR. VENT\*:** Then why on earth would she say third-degree? Even capacitors ain't that bad.

**ABHISHEK\*:** I guess she was lying.

**SAL\*:** I despise liars.

**GAUTAM\*:** But she smells really nice yo. She's the real bomb.

**ABHISHEK\*:** I agree. She smells like those flowers at the 7th Cross Street Park... the orange ones.

**SUMAN:** Can I have my backpack now?

**SOHAM:** But you said it's your boyfriend's.

**THE OTHER ROOM + SOHAM :** LIAR!

[Weird pause.]

**SOHAM:** I'm sorry about that. You should leave. You should stay away from me. I am harmful to you.

**SUMAN:** No... I'm sorry. (pause) Can I have my "boyfriend's" backpack now?

[The following dialogue is spoken simultaneously as the characters wander away from the bars.]

**SAL\*:** The park. Where the old men play chess. You once played chess at the park with your dad, he won and then you spilled your ice cream...

**ABHISHEK\*:** Flower in your mother's hair, summertime when you used to go to the movie theater together and

watch my epic movies... you miss her, you want to go home...

**MR. VENT\*:** 7th street. 7 is a prime number, atomic number of the nitrogen, smallest faces of a rectangular polygon not constructible by straightedge and compass...

[She moves to take the backpack from him. He pulls away, lets out a groan and starts to make *rocking motions* with his upper body.]

**SUMAN:** What's the matter? Is something... Ohhh! You're like... special needs? Yeah, I remember now, I've seen you around. I didn't mean... I didn't mean to scare you, I promise.

[Soham gradually stops rocking and looks at her as Mr. Vent, Sal, Abhishek slowly re-approach the bars.]

**SUMAN:** (nervous)What's... (confidently after a pause) What's your name?

**SAL\*:** Her eyes are so blue. Blue like an ocean. Look at those perfect radials extending from the pupil. How interesting!

**SUMAN:** You don't have to answer, if you don't want to.

[She sits at a desk next to him.]

**MR. VENT\*:** It's like a tiny polar coordinate system. Ha, if you didn't take into account the convexity of the eye, you could do all sorts of amusing conversions-

**SAL\*:** -between the polar and the Cartesian coordinates, hypothetically rearranging the elements of her eye into a rectangular system.

**MR. VENT\*:** That's what I was going to say, Salman.

**SAL\*:** Don't call me by that name! (Soham twitches a little)

**ABHISHEK\*:** She has the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen.

**SOHAM:** I like your eyes. (tries to make eye contact but fails.)

**SUMAN:** Thanks. You have nice eyes too.

**SOHAM:** My name is Soham.

**SUMAN:** I'm Suman.

**MR. VENT\*:** (to SAL) I wonder if that's why she smells like flowers, Salman? (Sal gets a bit triggered and Soham starts twitching.)

**GAUTAM\*:** DUDE! Why?

**SUMAN:** Are you okay? I'm sorry if I said anything wrong.

**GAUTAM\*:** No! You didn't say anything wrong. Please continue talking. Your voice is so beautiful.

[Pause. Suman gestures to Soham's books.]

**SUMAN:** What are you reading about?

**GAUTAM\*:** Go on bro, tell her!

**MR. VENT\*:** I dunno about this...

**GAUTAM\*:** Shh!!

**SOHAM:** Physics. Current Electricity.

**SUMAN:** Current Electricity? Wow. Do you like Physics?

**SOHAM:** I used to want to be an engineer at an IIT, and my dad thought I could even do it even though I have *autism*, because I placed first in the Junior Physics Olympiad.

**SUMAN:** But you don't want to anymore?

**SOHAM:** IITs are great, the best in fact, when it comes to engineering. But as I slowly started to unravel the mystery of Science, and started to discover new

theories, especially in Physics, I knew that this is where I belong. With research papers, books, instruments. But I also have a keen interest in filmmaking.

[The following speech by Suman occurs at the same time as the conversation of Mr.Vent, Abhishek and Sal, causing an overwhelming effect. Gautam, on the other hand, is listening to Suman intently.]

**SUMAN:** That's really cool. But I can't stand the deep theories of Physics, it makes me so nervous. And you really know a lot about Physics and Math so it doesn't scare you at all... but whenever I see a big formula with god knows how many greek letters, my mind would always go crazy and I won't be able to remember those formulas ever.

**ABHISHEK\*:** The last time you went to a theater, which movie did you see?

[They again wander away from the bars and argue very rapidly, with lots of overlap. As the argument escalates, SOHAM begins to rock back and forth more and more violently.]

**MR. VENT\*:** Forrest Gump, of course.

**SAL\*:** I seem to recall that it was A Beautiful Mind.

**MR. VENT\*:** No way, I remember watching Tom Hanks running in the movie, which means it was obviously Forrest Gump.

**GAUTAM\*:** Yo! Guys, be quiet! I can't-

**SAL\*:** The protagonist has a mental illness in the movie, correct?



**ABHISHEK\*:** I think you are mistaking Tom Hanks with Tom Cruise, you know, the actor who "actually" runs in his movies.

**SAL\*:** Mr.Vent, I think you got it all wrong this time.

**MR.VENT\*:** No, No, NO! I remember watching Tom –

**GAUTAM\*:** – I can't hear shit –

[Abhishek takes a threatening stance.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** Who's the actor here, buddy, you or me?!

**GAUTAM\*(pressing his hands to his ears):** SHUT UP!!

[Gautam, overwhelmed, turns away from the classroom angrily. At the same time, SOHAM takes his head in his hands and shouts.]

**SOHAM:** Quiet Quiet QUIET!!

[Suman, jumps away in fright. Mr.Vent, Abhishek, Sal freeze.]

**SUMAN:** Oh!

**GAUTAM\*:** She's mad, bro! Say you're sorry! Say it!

[Soham draws deep breaths and eventually stops rocking.]

**SOHAM:** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you angry.

**SUMAN:** I'm not angry...

**SOHAM:** I make people angry a lot. Sometimes my mother says, "Soham if you don't cut it out right now I swear I will pack you off to the looney bin." At first I didn't know what "cut it out" meant because usually I can't have scissors or knives except when my dad and I do wood carvings–

**SUMAN(puts her hands on his lips):** Shh, it's okay. I'm not mad, I promise—

[Soham freezes. A girl touched him. Soham gets away from her and starts ticking. All the 4 in "the other room" start dancing and jumping in joy, but realize that Soham is ticking. ]

**SUMAN:** Are you okay?

**NICK\*:** Guys, CALM DOWN!!!

[Everyone calms down. Soham stops ticking.]

**SOHAM(continues as if nothing happened):** I'm sorry about that. As I was saying, I usually can't have scissors but then my mom said that "cut it out" means "stop doing that", usually when I'm yelling. She said people don't like it when I am yelling but usually it's because they touched me or something so it's not my fault but they make noise and laugh at me anyway—

**SUMAN:** I would never laugh at you, I think it's awful that people laugh at you.

[Soham avoids eye contact.]

**SUMAN:** Do you, umm, want me to go?

[Abhishek has movies to the other side of the cage, a little cranky.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** I wish she would go away so we could talk more. We never did finish our earlier conversation about *quarks*.

**MR.VENT\*:** But her eyes...

[Mr.Vent, Sal and Gautam are enchanted by Suman. *Soham makes eye contact with her for the first time.*]

**SOHAM:** No! Stay.

**SUMAN:** Okay...

[Suman smiles and sits down again.]

**GAUTAM\*:** Yo, when she moves her face like that, it means she's happy.

**SUMAN:** What are you doing here all alone anyway?

**SOHAM:** My father always picks me up from school fifteen minutes late so that I can come here and read instead of sitting out front with all the other people. They're very loud and sometimes they touch me so I'd rather not be near them.

**ABHISHEK\*:** Remember the time that Mayur Singh's hand accidentally touched your neck on the steps and—

**ALL\*:** YES!!

[Soham twitches violently.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** Sheesh, sorry...

**SAL\*:** I really see no need to dwell on that experience.

**SUMAN:** Do people give you a hard time? You know, like bother you?

**SOHAM:** I... I don't...

**GAUTAM\*:** Just tell her the truth blud.

**SOHAM:** I mean yes.

**SUMAN:** What do they do? Do they laugh at you?

**MR.VENT\*(Through clenched teeth, sing-song):** Whyyy are we talking about thissss?

**SOHAM:** Yes.

**SUMAN:** That's terrible.

**SOHAM:** Well at first I didn't mind when they laughed. I thought laughing was good. I didn't know it was bad until the time when Gautam and Salman and I were playing a game where they kept throwing my rabbit keychain in the toilet and seeing how fast I could get it out and we were all laughing but then my dad came and yelled at them and said to me "They're only laughing in a mean way, and that's because you're Different." And I don't want to be "Different", so I don't laugh anymore.

**SUMAN:** People are so terrible.

**MR. VENT\*:** They are indeed.

**SAL\*:** She's not though... Why's she being so nice?

**GAUTAM\*:** Because she likes you, duh. Keep at it, yo!

**SUMAN:** Do you have any friends here?

**SAL\*:** This is hardly pleasant.

**MR. VENT\*:** Let's get out of here.

**SOHAM:** Sometimes I think of my books as friends.

[Abhishek draws everyone's attention by pulling out a *text-book*.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** Look everybody, Quarks! Little particles with funny names!

[Mr.Vent and Sal "ooh" and start towards him. They all begin to march and sing a little ditty to the words "*Up down charm strange top and bottom*" and Soham, muttering, joins in.]

**SOHAM:** -Up, down, charm, strange, top, bottom-

**SUMAN:** What? Oh wait, I know this! You're talking about quarks, aren't you, the... uh... different types of quarks.

[Mr.Vent and Sal stop in their tracks and turn back towards the action, totally impressed. Soham gives Suman a rather blank look.]

**SUMAN (blushing) :** Although I don't like Physics much, I do have a keen interest in quarks, but not much. I checked out some other books because I wanted to learn more...

[Mr.Vent and Sal elbow each other happily as she speaks.]

**MR.VENT\* (crying comically) :** It's a dream come true. A fellow quark lover!

**SAL\* :** I cannot believe this.

**SOHAM :** I taught myself too. There's a book I have...

[He rummages in his own bag, pulls out a worn book.]

**SOHAM :** It was the first thing I ever read on Physics, when I was Seven and Three-Quarters old.

**MR.VENT :** It's good when you give things to people, right?

[Soham shoves the book at Suman.]

**SOHAM :** You can have it if you want.

[Suman smiles and gently gives the book back to him.]

**GAUTAM\* :** She doesn't want it—

**ABHISHEK\* (Sad) :** Alright then, there goes that dream.  
**(serious, comical)** Let's move on!

**GAUTAM\* :** — but I don't think she's mad, either.

**SAL\* :** She's quite lovely, wouldn't you say, Mr.Vent?

**MR. VENT\*:** Hell if I know.

**GAUTAM\*:** I like her too, you know.

[Abhishek starts to enact an action scene from his movie where he plays a secret spy whose identity has been exposed to the enemy. He's doing this to draw the others' attention.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** Let's talk about movies. About how good my acting is!

**GAUTAM\*(looking at Suman):** We're busy talking about Quarks.

**SOHAM:** What do you- what do you-

[Soham makes an awkward gesture towards the book.]

**SUMAN:** ...Like to read about?

[Soham nods carefully.]

**SUMAN:** Oh, I dunno. Usually I just read novels but I've been reading non-fiction about astronomy lately. I just started reading Stephen Hawking, I bet you know all about him. You must have seen "The Theory of Everything" as well, I suppose. It's so interesting, don't you think?

[Abhishek talks over her throughout.]

**ABHISHEK\*(acting , while on cover):** Boss! My cover's blown. They know who I am. I have to go inside their secret base and stop them from launching the biggest ever missile mankind has ever seen. Only I can save this planet. Me. (sadly) And boss, If I don't make it

out alive, tell my wife I love her. See you on the other side.

**GAUTAM\*:** Shut up, Yo! You're distracting our boy!

[Soham looks away from Suman and starts to fidget.]

**GAUTAM\*:** Soham, focus, my brother! She's talking about that wheelchair guy. Our man Stephen. The Black holes guy! Come on, You know this!

**SOHAM:** I like Stephen Hawking too. "When I hear of Schrodinger's cat, I reach for my pistol."

**SUMAN:** What?

[Abhishek approaches the other characters, in hope to distract them with gun sound effects from his mouth. They all swat him away.]

**SOHAM:** It was a joke he made. I don't really understand it because I never understand jokes. But I do know about Schrodinger's cat, so I like to tell the joke because it reminds me.

**SUMAN:** Oh right, where the cat is alive and dead at the same time?

**SOHAM:** It's a mind game designed to criticize the strangeness of superposition, or the combination of all the possible positions of a subatomic particle. Specifically it's a criticism of the Copenhagen interpretation, which implies that-

**SUMAN:** Whoa, slow down cowboy. You're so literal about everything.

**SOHAM:** I can't help it.

**SUMAN:** I know. It's okay. You're obviously really smart. You're just hard to follow sometimes.

**SOHAM:** But I'm not going anywhere. I'm sitting here, and you're sitting-

[Suman giggles.]

**SOHAM:** What is it?

**SUMAN (smiling):** Nothing. (pause). You know, I've seen you at lunch before. Maybe we could sit together sometime, if you want.

**MR. VENT\*:** But... But...

**SAL\*:** If they sat together at lunch, he might have to sit with her at a different table.

[Soham starts to wring his hands.]

**MR. VENT\*:** And even if she sat with *him*, she still might eat something purple like cabbage or beets!

**ABHISHEK\*:** Or her food might touch him!

**SAL\*:** Wiser to avoid it.

**MR. VENT\*:** Let's not think about this right now.

[Abhishek starts to act again.]

**GAUTAM\*:** Yo! No more of your acting. Do Something new! A new thought.

**MR. VENT\*:** Uh...

**SUMAN:** What's the matter? You look like a deer in the headlights!

[Soham is confused. He touches his face.]

**SOHAM:** A deer?

[She smiles warmly.]

**SUMAN:** No, it's just an expression... obviously you don't have antlers or anything...



**MR. VENT\*:** She's moving her face like she's happy again!

**ABHISHEK\*:** What does it mean?

**SAL\*:** Perhaps she would like to be friends.

**GAUTAM\*:** That would be awesome.

**SAL\*:** Look at how her eyes sparkle...

[Soham makes eye contact, entranced.]

**SUMAN:** What are you thinking about?

**SOHAM(lost in her eyes):** Stars.

**SUMAN:** Really?

**SOHAM:** Why did you say "really"?

**SUMAN(shyly):** Oh nothing, it's just... Well, I never told anyone this, because it's a little silly, but I'm kind of obsessed with stars. Every night I take a blanket outside and just watch them hanging there in the sky. Some nights I'm out there for hours you know, just looking up. Sometimes my mom and dad... Well, I guess it's a lot peaceful outside in the dark with the stars.

[Everyone is listening to Suman keenly.]

**SOHAM:** I have a telescope that I use every night, after I play Mahjong with my dad and before I feed Newton. That's at 8:15.

**SUMAN:** So we're looking at the stars at the same time!

[Abhishek jumps to his feet. The others immediately try to calm him down, not wanting to ruin this moment for Soham. Soham tics for a few seconds but stops.]

[Abhishek is still restless.]

**SOHAM:** Well not necessarily, because sometimes I do it earlier or... later like when I'm studying a particular astral event. And whenever I explore a field of study I like to immerse myself in its conventions which means when I'm stargazing I use Local Mean Time rather than Eastern Standard Time because Local Mean Time historically governs the planispheres, and by that standard every 13 square miles is a- (Soham stops)

**SUMAN(listening keenly):** What happened? Why did you stop?

**SOHAM:** I don't think you are interested in this.

**SUMAN:** Of course I am. It's just that... You know what I say?

**SOHAM:** What?

**SUMAN:** I say we are looking at the stars together.

[She holds out her hand to Soham for him to touch.]

**GAUTAM\*:** What are you waiting for?! Touch her hand.

**ABHISHEK(in pain)\*:** Call an Ambulance!! Call an Ambulance!! (takes out a fake/imaginary gun) But not for me.

[Soham starts to tick. Suman pulls her hand away. The others try to calm down Abhishek.]

**SUMAN(clears throat):** I'm sorry about that. It's just that, I never talk about these things to anyone else. You're like the first person who is interested in what I talk about.

**SOHAM:** There are so many things as a person that I want to understand and knowing that I might not ever find the answers is very very frustrating.

**SUMAN:** What that happens to me, you know what I do?

**SOHAM:** No.

[LIGHTING CHANGE - The lights dim to near black with spots of white light to indicate stars in a dark dark sky. Mr.Vent, Gautam and Sal are in awe. Abhishek, at first not impressed, also joins the other 3 in admiring the beauty of nature. They move slower than usual.]

**SUMAN:** I just try to stop thinking and- this sounds dumb- let it wash over me. The way it looks out there. The razor-sharp blackness punctured by little pricks of light made of every single color you could imagine.. those shapes you see in the nebulas, you know, that are completely alien but also seem totally, oh, I dunno...

**SOHAM:** *Intuitive.*

**SUMAN:** Exactly.

**GAUTAM\*:** We've been here before.

**SUMAN:** See, Soham? You see the beauty too.

**SAL\*:** It never seemed quite so real before, though, did it?

**SOHAM:** What I like to think about is how quiet and still it must be out there with no gravity and no molecules for sound to travel through. Just you, your body and your soul. Floating through the fabric of space-time.

**SUMAN:** Wow. (Pause) The whole thing seems like a paradox, doesn't it? Maybe that's why it creeps some people out. All this stuff, it doesn't feel like it could exist in the same reality as us. And knowing that you, lying in your dinky backyard, are just another part of the same whole... It's pretty unbelievable. And in a way, it's also kind of comforting, because-

**SOHAM:** - because it means that anything is possible.

[She nods. Soham holds her hands. Everyone in the Other Room also holds hands.]

Sometimes I go back to Schrodinger's cat but take it even further and imagine that at every moment the universe splits into an infinite number of parallel universes where anything could happen and everything could be completely different from this one... like shrimp wouldn't exist and you would be a professional ping pong player and I wouldn't- I would be...

[Pause. There is deep gravity in the room.]

But most people are afraid of infinity. They think space is empty and distant because it doesn't make sense to them and it seems so different from what they're used to. They don't see space as a possibility, they see it as an empty void and that's what I don't understand.

[Beat.]

Because for me it's different because space is where I would feel comfortable. It's here that is a void.

[Suman is deeply moved.]

**SUMAN:** Soham, it doesn't have to be like that anymore. We'll make them see, we'll make them see how beautiful space really is. I promise. Okay?

**GAUTAM\*:** She is absolutely, without a doubt, the best thing that has ever happened in the history of this world.

**MR. VENT\*:** She's like quarks-

**ABHISHEK\*:** -and supernovas-

**SAL\*:** - and parallel universes and fractals-

**GAUTAM\*:** -all combined and multiplied by a billion and sprinkled with puppies and Christmas!

**SOHAM:** I think you're the best person I've ever seen!

**SUMAN:** Oh Soham!

[Suman is so emotionally affected that she throws her arms around him. Immediately a deafening warning siren begins to blare. The beautiful star world is replaced by harsh bright light. Soham violently yanks backward.]

**MR. VENT:** WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON!

**SAL\*(pacing back and forth):** I can't handle this.

**GAUTAM\*:** Oh man oh man oh man... okay, yo.. Everybody stay calm.

**SUMAN:** Soham, what is it, what did I do??

[Soham rocks and moans out of control.]

**MR. VENT\*:** No touching, hate touching, hate skin, stop, go away, uh, uh...

[Abhishek again starts to act in his action scene. Mr.Vent and Sal start arguing about the capacitor problem again.]

**MR. VENT\*:** The capacitors are clearly in parallel with each other.

**SAL\*:** They are not Mr.Vent!

**SUMAN:** Please! I'm sorry if I did anything wrong!

**MR. VENT\*:** The voltages across all the capacitors are the same, Salman!

**SAL\*(grabs collar):** How dare you call me by that name!!

**GAUTAM\*:** Everyone be quiet, please!!

**ABHISHEK\*:** You fat villain, I'm coming for your Nazi balls. Attack!!

**SAL\*:** I'm going to hurt you!

**MR. VENT\*:** You're only going to hurt yourself. Stop this nonsense.

[Sal punches Mr.Vent. He falls down.]

**GAUTAM\*:** Stop it!! Soham, yo COME ON! Please, just look at her, look at her eyes. The beautiful blue eyes. Look at how perfect she is, don't do this to me, my man!

[Soham continues to rock and wring his hands, more and more violently.]

**SUMAN:** Soham... please... I'm sorry.

[She reaches out to put a hand on his shoulder and he scrambles away, ending up on the floor in the corner of the classroom.]

**SUMAN:** What can I do?

[She hurries over to him. His rocking and moaning gets more and more out of control. Suman continues to implore him throughout the following dialogue.]

**MR. VENT\*:** How dare you punch me! I ought to teach you a lesson.

**SAL\*:** You don't know the basics of Capacitors and you're gonna teach me a lesson?

**GAUTAM\* (in tears):** Please, please, goddammit, don't scare her away, she's like the first person who ever ever liked you and you're scaring her...

**ABHISHEK\*:** I've diffused the bomb, I need Evac ASAP!!  
They're right up my ass.

**SUMAN(helpless):** Soham? I don't know what to do!

**GAUTAM\*:** STOP! EVERYBODY STOP!

**MR.VENT\*:** Is that how you treat people older than you,  
you arrogant twat?

**SUMAN:** Shh, shh, it's okay!

**SAL\*:** Washed-out old pedant!

[Suman reaches out to stroke his face.]

**ABHISHEK\*:** NOT THE FACE! NEVER- THE - FACE!!!

[Mr.Vent punches Sal as Soham flails, accidentally *punching* Suman hard in the face. She falls backward across a desk and onto the floor, crying in pain. She gets up, looks at him in horror, and runs out of the classroom limping, holding her face. A stunned silence from the other.]

**GAUTAM\*:** Oh no, oh no! [shouting at Soham] Why can't you ever do anything right, you stupid slob?

[Soham's rocking gradually subsides as everyone in the other room, dazed, returns to their original seats. Austin shakily stands, leaning against the wall.]

[After a few moments, ROCKY, Suman's boyfriend, enters.]

**ROCKY:** What's going on?

[Soham looks at him with teary eyes, totally lost.]

**ROCKY:** Hey! My girlfriend's out in the hall with a bloody lip. Now she won't tell me what happened but I know that she came running out of this room, crying. So it looks like you're the jerk who did it to her. Look at me!

[Soham obsessively wrings his hands.]

**ROCKY:** Oh, I get it. "Special needs", huh? You're lucky, I'd kick the crap out of you if you knew what you were doing. Nobody touches my girl.

[He starts to leave and stops at the desk where the textbook and backpack are.]

**ROCKY:** Been looking for this.

[He shoulders it, then picks up the textbook.]

**ROCKY:** "Experimental Techniques in Condensed Matter Physics", I'm guessing *this* isn't yours. I bet you don't even know what a plus sign is.

[Soham opens his mouth but can't respond. Suman appears at the side of the doorway. Rocky drops the book and walks away.]

**ROCKY:** How pathetic. Come on, Suman.

[Soham notices her there. Rocky Exits. Suman lingers at the door a moment. She opens her mouth as if to say something, then shakes her head warily and walks away. Suman exits and Soham slowly sinks back down to the floor.]



[A long pause.]

**MR. VENT\*:** So what do you want to talk about?

**SAL\*:** String theory?

[Silence. LIGHTS OUT.]

**END OF PLAY**