

FUNNY IN FARSI

“Pilot”

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Based on the book:
Funny In Farsi by Firoozeh Dumas

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

STOCK SHOT: An ANTIQUE MAP of the U.S.A.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

This country was built by
immigrants. We all came from
somewhere else or came from someone
who came from somewhere else.

AS THE CAMERA **ZOOMS DOWN INTO THE MAP**, the MAP BECOMES 3-D.
We're FLYING through a 3-D map of hills, valleys. WE **ZIP**
down to New York Harbor and FLY AROUND the Statue of Liberty.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And why did we all come here?
Because America was a place of
freedom where you could reach your
full potential. Even Lady Liberty
came over from France and got a job
her first day here.

As WE ZOOM BACK OUT and FLY WESTWARD over the map of America,
iconic landmarks POP UP: the man-made ERIE CANAL busts its
way to the Great Lakes, the SEARS TOWER sprouts up on
Chicago, the ARCH forms itself on St. Louis. Interstates
start CONNECTING the cities on the map.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Just look at all this! It's no
accident that people came to
America from every corner of the
world. They needed a canvas this
vast to fill with all their colors.

The CAMERA MOVES past MOUNT RUSHMORE.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Like this fantastic thing?
Designed and carved by the son of
Danish immigrants. And it was
immortalized in North by Northwest,
a great American movie directed by
a British guy and starring a Welsh
guy, both of whom had to come here
to make their mark in the world.
You see where I'm going with this?

THE CAMERA FLIES past the Golden Gate Bridge, down the
California coast. It flies over L.A. as the letters of the
Hollywood sign rise up. WE settle in on Newport Beach.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And it was in this spirit my family
 emigrated to the U.S. We hadn't
 contributed anything great yet, but
 that was the cool thing about
 America. The field was wide open.

The MAP-STYLE GRAPHICS FADE TO REALITY as the camera finds...

EXT. NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA - 1974

Out on the water, sailboats glide along the shoreline. On
 the boardwalk, the blonde, blue-eyed locals are fit and tan
 in their white sailing and tennis clothes.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 In 1974, my father's job as an
 engineer for an oil company took us
 from Iran to Newport Beach. You
 know Iran. Axis of Evil, crazy
 president with a nuclear fetish...

THE CAMERA MOVES out to a PICNIC AREA on the beach TO FIND
 OUR FAMILY (FATHER, MOTHER, DAUGHTER, SON) at a picnic bench.
 They are loud, warm, and boisterous. There are vats of stew,
 platters of rice, lamb, cooked tomatoes, etc.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But back then, nobody knew anything
 about that. We were just the
 exotic Persian family from a place
 known mostly for its cats and rugs.
 (then)
 Look at us. In a town where
 everyone was blond and sailed, we
 stood out like a living oil spill.

ANGLE ON Firoozeh's father, KAZEM (30's). **FREEZE FRAME** on
 Kazem. **A CHYRON SPELLS OUT his name, MOHAMMED SAYED KAZEM
 JAZAYERI, in ornate, Moorish script.**

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 That's my father, Mohammed Sayed
 Kazem Jazayeri. His name might as
 well have been Mr. Unpronounceable.
 So, we quickly learned to
 Americanize our names.

The chyron SIMPLIFIES the name to "KAZ" in block letters.
RESUME ACTION. Kaz enjoys his meal and his family.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 If there was ever a poster child
 for immigration, it was my father.
 His love for America came out even
 in the most ordinary circumstances.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - FLASHBACK

Kaz approaches the family in their booth.

KAZ
 Amazing. No matter which Denny's we
 go to, the bathrooms are always
 clean! This is the greatest country.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Kaz is on the couch with his wife, watching THE TONIGHT SHOW
 with Johnny Carson.

JOHNNY CARSON
 Did you know that Richard Nixon is
 the only president whose formal
 portrait was painted by a police
 sketch artist?

KAZ
 Amazing. Every night he makes a
 joke about the President, and no
 one drags him off and tortures him.
 It truly is the land of the free.

EXT. SEA WORLD - SHAMU STADIUM - FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON Kaz and the family as they watch the Shamu show. AN
 OFFSTAGE splash, then our family gets nailed with water.

KAZ
 (applauding)
 These American whales. So talented!

EXT. NEWPORT BEACH - PICNIC AREA - BACK TO SCENE

THE CAMERA PANS to Firoozeh's Mother, NAZIREH (30'S). **FREEZE
 FRAME** on Nazireh. **A CHYRON SPELLS OUT her name, NAZIREH
 JAZAYERI, in ornate, Moorish script.**

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 That's my mother, Nazireh Jazayeri.
 She also tried shortening her name.

The chyron changes the name to "NAZI", in block letters.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That didn't go over too well.

The chyron changes "Nazi" and replaces it with "NANCY".

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ah. Much better.

RESUME ACTION. Nancy lovingly serves the family their meal.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Unlike my father, my mother found
it harder to assimilate, so her
first few months in America were
filled with misunderstandings.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - LATER - *FLASHBACK*

Nancy scans the aisles of cleaning products, not finding what she's looking for. A STORE CLERK approaches.

CLERK
May I help you find something?

NANCY
Yes. I am looking for elbow grease.

The clerk looks at her, confused.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
She got the same look when she
tried to buy a birthday suit.

EXT. NEWPORT BEACH - PICNIC AREA - *BACK TO SCENE*

The CAMERA PANS to Firoozeh's older brother, FARSHID (16). Although darkly ethnic, he's always dressed to look as American as possible. He wears his high school football jersey.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
That's my older brother, Farshid.

FREEZE FRAME on Farshid. *A CHYRON SPELLS OUT his name, FARSHID, in ornate, Moorish script.*

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
American high school students
quickly figured out you could take
the name Farshid and turn each
syllable into a bodily function.

The chyron changes the name to "CHIP" in block letters.

RESUME ACTION - Nancy dumps more rice on Chip's plate.

CHIP

No, I have to keep my weight down
or Coach will cut me from the team.

FIROOZEH

But you're the equipment guy.

CHIP

Hey, they send me in if ten or more
players become incapacitated. Go
Badgers!

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

There are two kinds of people in
the world. Those who fit in and
those who think they fit in. Guess
which camp "Chip" belonged to?

Nancy pours tea from a *samovar* - a large, ornate silver tea
urn. Firoozeh and Chip look embarrassed.

FIROOZEH

Mom, did you have to bring that
thing? It just screams "fresh off
the boat".

Suddenly, a LOUD SQUAWK. Everyone reacts, disgusted.
Firoozeh pulls up a BIRD IN A CAGE.

CHIP

Did you have to bring *that* thing?
It screams, "I'm a weird little
girl with a bird".

FIROOZEH

Do you know how much Mrs. Marcus is
paying me to bird sit? I'm trying
to save enough to play the stock
market.

CHIP

Do you even know what that is?

FIROOZEH

No, but when I was cleaning Mr.
Franklin's golf clubs I heard him
say this is a bull market.
Whatever that is, it sounds good.

FREEZE FRAME on Firoozeh (13). *A chyron spells out FIROOZEH,
in ornate, Moorish script.*

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 That's me. Always looking to make a buck. Work the system. A 32-year-old car salesman in the body of a 12-year-old girl with a name no one could pronounce.

Resume action. Firoozeh feeds the bird lamb and rice.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 No point telling you my American name. I tried out a new one every week. I was Julie, Sally, Beth, and for a whole month, Jamie. As in Jamie Sommers, the Bionic Woman.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE- KITCHEN/DEN - NIGHT

Nancy makes an elaborate dinner as Chip does homework at the kitchen table. Firoozeh enters with her school bag.

NANCY
 Firoozeh, where were you?

FIROOZEH
 Sorry. I was consoling Mrs. Marcus. Her bird smacked into a window and died.
 (cheerfully)
 But she paid me two bucks to bury it.

CHIP
 Oh good. Now you can add pet mortician to your impressive resume.

NANCY
 Please set up the trays. You know it's Bowling for Bucks night and your father will be home any minute.

Firoozeh takes five TV TRAYS from a closet and puts them in a row in front of the television. As she sets them:

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 TV was my family's campfire. Every night we'd bask in its comforting glow. And with each game show, sitcom, and bologna commercial, we understood America just a little more.

SFX: The refrigerator SHUDDERS and GROANS loudly.

CHIP

What's wrong with the refrigerator?

NANCY

Same thing that is wrong with the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner. Your father refuses to buy anything new. It's all second-hand junk from garage sales.

EXT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON: A BLACK-FACED LAWN JOCKEY. Kaz and Nancy look on.

KAZ

What a majestic statue of a horseman. And only three dollars!

NEIGHBORS walk by, shooting the statue and Kaz a disgusted look.

NANCY

Everyone looks very offended.

KAZ

But the man I bought it from said it was "a great piece of Americana."

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - BACK TO SCENE

NANCY

Sometimes I think your father would be happier if he'd bought me half price from a family that was about to move.

Kaz and his jovial younger brother, UNCLE MANSOOR (early 30's), enter with a BUCKET of KFC and all the fixins.

KAZ

Look what your Uncle Mo and I brought. Kentucky Fried Chicken!

UNCLE MO

Yes sir. They say it is licking finger good and they do not lie.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

That's my Uncle Mansoor, Uncle Mo. He came for a three-week visit. Six months ago.

NANCY

But we just had fried chicken on Sonny and Cher night.

UNCLE MO

That was the Colonel's Original
recipe. *This* is extra crispy,
(like commercial)
with fourteen secret herbs and
spices cooked to crispy perfection.

Kaz and Uncle Mo begin unpacking their beloved take-out.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Like a culinary spelunker, Uncle Mo
explored American culture through
such delicacies as canned chili,
Chips Ahoy cookies, and the great
mystery that is Cheez Whiz.

NANCY

But I spent all day making
khoresteh bademjan.

KAZ

Just put the eggplant stew in the
refrigerator for tomorrow.

NANCY

Who knows if that piece of garbage
will even be working tomorrow.

KAZ

That refrigerator will never die.
It's American-made.

Another LOUD GROAN from the fridge. Kaz notices his watch.

KAZ (CONT'D)

Two minutes to Bowling For Bucks!
(claps)
Let's go!

SERIES OF CUTS: With military precision, fried chicken,
biscuits, and mashed potatoes are laid out on the TV trays.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - SOON AFTER

WE PAN ACROSS the family at their TV trays, happily munching
away as they watch BOWLING FOR BUCK\$ on the second-hand TV.

KAZ

(to TV)
Straighten your arm... No, not
yet... Ah! You released the ball
too early, silly person!

SFX: FROM THE TV, the CRASH of pins.

KAZ (CONT'D)

Ah! He could've had a strike if he'd just listened to me.

FIROOZEH

Yes, he's stupid for not being able to hear you through the TV.

KAZ

Do you know what takes my goat? I am much better than all these bowlers. My bowling league from work calls me Kaz the Jazz. Because when I bowl, it's like music.

(to TV)

Your stride is too long, crazy man!

UNCLE MO

I don't know why they have not asked you to be on this show.

KAZ

I've sent in many self-addressed stamped envelopes. I even sent a box of Nancy's Persian cookies to entice Mister Rex Martinson.

CHIP

Dad, Rex Martinson's only the host. This isn't like Iran where you can bribe someone with cookies. These people are drowning in cookies.

KAZ

You're right, my son. I'll send him a nice picture frame.

SFX: The refrigerator shudders and GROANS worse than before. The family looks over at it with concern. But it's the second-hand TV for whom the bell tolls. The SCREEN FLICKERS and makes several sickening ZAPPING sounds. The screen FLARES UP, then GOES BLACK. The family looks stunned.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

And that was the first time my father swore in English.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - SHORTLY AFTER

Kaz has removed the back off the TV and is tinkering with it as the family looks on.

CHIP

Dad, let it go. It's dead.

KAZ

No. I have two degrees in engineering. I can fix this.

Kaz tries something with the pliers. There's a POPPING sound. He jumps back.

FIROOZEH

Did they tell you in engineering school to unplug stuff before you poke at it?

KAZ

Don't mock me, Firoozeh. I met Einstein once.

FIROOZEH/CHIP

(heard this before)

Yeah, we know.

CHIP

Even if you brought Einstein back from the dead, he couldn't bring this TV back from the dead.

UNCLE MO

We're going to miss Hawaii Five-0.

CHIP

And The Six Million Dollar Man.

FIROOZEH

And Happy Days.

NANCY

And The Carol Burnett Show.

The CAMERA PANS their mournful faces:

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

TV was our link to American culture, our Rosetta Stone.

(MORE)

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There was more sadness that night than back in Iran when my Mom's third cousin got dragged away by the secret police.

KAZ

Don't worry. This weekend, Uncle Mo and I will go to garage sales until we find a brand new used TV.

NANCY

No!

Everyone reacts. This open defiance is unusual for Nancy.

KAZ

What do you mean, "no"?

NANCY

I mean no more used anything. Everyone says, "You pay for what you get."

CHIP

It's "You get what you pay for".

NANCY

That also makes sense. Let's do that.

KAZ

I will never pay retail. Never.

NANCY

But you have a good job. You can afford it.

KAZ

I can afford it because I save for the days that rain. What if I can't work any more because my arms and legs suddenly fall off?

NANCY

Why, did you buy them at a garage sale?

KAZ

Listen, I once built my own radio and it only cost me twenty-five cents. A new TV probably costs ten dollars to make, but they charge an arm and a leg--

FIROOZEH

Which might fall off.

NANCY

But the used junk doesn't work!
 (waves TV Guide)
 And this is the week Mr. Grant
 moves into Rhoda's old apartment.
 We are getting a new TV.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Whoa. This was a whole new dynamic
 for my parents. Normally, my
 father would make a bad decision
 and my mother would just grumble
 about it behind his back.

FIROOZEH

Um... maybe we should vote on it.
 Who wants a brand new TV?

Everyone's hand shoots up. Kaz looks stunned.

KAZ

I don't care how you vote.

CHIP

But you're always saying democracy
 is the cornerstone of civilization.

FIROOZEH

Yeah, and the people have spoken.

KAZ

You're not people. You're family.
 I will not pay good money for a new
 TV. I am downing my foot! End of
 discussion!

NANCY

You can't say "end of discussion."
 We're in America now.

KAZ

I can say whatever I want. I met
 Einstein!!

Kaz turns on his heel and storms off.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - NEXT DAY

CLOSE ON a tray of CUT FRUIT. WIDEN TO REVEAL Firoozeh
 holding the tray outside the door. She knocks on the door
 and it opens, REVEALING A TANNED MAN IN A TENNIS SWEATER.

FIROOZEH

Good afternoon. Have you ever said, "Gee, I love fresh fruit, but I sure don't like cutting it myself." For a small fee, I can deliver freshly cut, nutritious fruit to your door.

TANNED MAN

Is this for charity?

FIROOZEH

Well, my family needs a new TV and my father's too cheap to pay for it.

SLAM!

A DIFERENT DOOR - A NICE OLD LADY

OLD LADY

Fruit gives me gas.

A DIFFERENT DOOR - A SEVERE-LOOKING MAN

SEVERE-LOOKING MAN

I work for the health department. You're barking up the wrong tree, young lady.

ANGLE ON: The WILTED fruit now FLOATS in the MELTED water.

INT. HOUSE OF CLOTH FABRIC STORE - LATER THAT DAY

Nancy and Firoozeh look through a bin of fabric remnants.

FIROOZEH

I just need a piece of fabric big enough to write "Car Wash" on it.

NANCY

Firoozeh, I don't like you washing people's dirty cars.

FIROOZEH

I have to do something. The living conditions are unbearable. I've already missed an episode of The Brady Bunch and Love American Style.

NANCY

Well, you know how stubborn your father can be.

(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)

This is the same man who tripped over his shoelace, then complained to the city about the bumpy sidewalks.

(holds up remnant)

I think this piece is big enough.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Although it was just a hobby, my mother was a talented seamstress. When we moved here, she used her amazing skills to beautify our home.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - FLASHBACK

ANGLE ON: The family sofa with A SLIPCOVER on it.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Unfortunately, there was always some fabric left over.

MATCH CUT TO: Firoozeh APPEARS on the couch, wearing a DRESS made of the EXACT SAME FABRIC as the SLIPCOVER. She all but disappears into the pattern.

INT. HOUSE OF CLOTH FABRIC STORE - BACK TO SCENE

Nancy and Firoozeh stand in line as a nearby WOMAN consults with a SALES GIRL.

HOUSEWIFE

(holds up a picture)

How much fabric do I need for a blouse like this?

SALES GIRL

Um... I don't know. I'm new here.

Annoyed, Nancy leans over and peers at the woman's picture.

NANCY

With that collar, long sleeves, double cuff... two and a half yards.

WOMAN

My, you're good. Thank you.

Nancy and Firoozeh approach the counter where they meet CANDICE SMILEY (50's), the manager. Candice lives for fabric and sewing and true to her name, she's always smiling.

CANDICE SMILEY

I hope you don't think I was eavesdropping, but I was. Are you a professional seamstress?

NANCY

Not really. I learned to sew back
in my country.

CANDICE SMILEY

And where are you from?

NANCY

Iran.

CANDICE SMILEY

Hmm. Never heard of it.

NANCY

It's between Iraq and Afghanistan.

CANDICE SMILEY

Hmm. Never heard of them.

NANCY

You make a left turn at Asia.

CANDICE SMILEY

Oh. Listen, I want to lay it all
out. Straight up, thimbles off.
I'm Candice Smiley, the manager.
You obviously have a gift and I'd
like you to unwrap it right here.

NANCY

Excuse me?

FIROOZEH

Mom, she's offering you a job.

NANCY

Me? But I'm just a housewife.

CANDICE SMILEY

Well, if you think that then I guess
a fish really does need a bicycle.

Confused, Nancy looks to Firoozeh who shrugs.

NANCY

Oh, I don't know. My husband...

FIROOZEH

Mom, take the job! Then we can get
that new TV. And a David Cassidy
lunch box.

Nancy wrestles with this.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - LATER

Kaz enters and looks around. The house is oddly quiet. Chip enters, wearing football gear and heading out.

KAZ

Where are you going, *Cheep*?

CHIP

Chip has practice. Then I'm going to watch TV at Troy's house. Tonight's the night Colonel Steve Austin gets kidnapped by a robot.

Chip exits. Kaz heads to the kitchen to find Uncle Mo.

KAZ

Where is everyone? And why is there no dinner on the table?

UNCLE MO

I don't know. Anyway, I'm on a diet. Aunt Parvin called from Iran today. She has a friend who has a daughter who's sister-in-law has a cousin who lives in Anaheim they want to set me up with. I can't let my future wife see me like this.

Uncle Mo lifts his shirt TO REVEAL his hairy belly spilling over his belt. He indicates various DIET PILLS and POWDERS.

UNCLE MO (CONT'D)

I'm just going to have a nutritious diet shake for dinner.
(sips, then gags)
Awful!

He crosses to the freezer, takes out a container of ICE CREAM, and starts scooping it into his shake. Nancy enters THROUGH THE BACK with Firoozeh, carrying bags.

FIROOZEH

Guess what? *Maman* got a job! She's the new sales lady at the House of Cloth. And look.

Firoozeh holds up a David Cassidy lunch box.

KAZ

A job?! When did this happen?
(re: lunch box)
And who's that boy?

NANCY

Well... I was at the fabric store with Firoozeh, and the manager said something about bicycles and fish, and then she offered me a job.

KAZ

How could you take a job without consulting me? What is happening? Where is the woman I married?

NANCY

She's in America now. And here women work.

KAZ

This is all Mary Tyler Moore's fault!

NANCY

You should be happy. Now I can buy a new TV with *my* money.

Her money?! Kaz takes a deep breath. This is new territory.

KAZ

If anyone is going to provide a new TV for this family, it will be me. I'm the man of the house.

NANCY

Okay. Then go buy a new TV.

KAZ

No. Only I can tell me what to do. And I'm telling me not to listen to you. You know what this is? This is the battle of the sexes. I am Bobby Riggs and you are Billie Jean King.

FIROOZEH

You do know Billie Jean King beat Bobby Riggs, right?

KAZ

We'll just see about that!

Nancy and Firoozeh look at each other, confused.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. GARAGE SALE - NEXT DAY

Kaz and Uncle Mo browse a garage sale. Uncle Mo wears a jogging suit made of SILVERY SPACE-AGE material.

KAZ

You look like you're on your way to Mars. Everyone is staring.

UNCLE MO

This space age material melts away fat. The longer I wear it, the more fat I melt.

(steadies himself)

Oof. Everything's spinning. Can we go home now?

KAZ

No. Not without a TV. A used TV. It's my home, my decision, and I will not be shamed by women and children.

UNCLE MO

There's no shame in it, Kazem. Women are different here. So what if she has a job. Let her buy a new TV if she wants. How's it hurting you?

KAZ

I think that suit has melted off some of your manhood.

Kaz and Uncle Mo arrive at an ENORMOUS CONSOLE TV SET .

KAZ (CONT'D)

Ah, here it is! And only thirty dollars.

Kaz addresses a passing RED-HAIRED LADY carrying a cash box.

KAZ (CONT'D)

Excuse me, ma'am. I would like to buy this TV set.

(pointing)

And I will also take that big ceramic monkey. For fifty cents, I cannot pass it up.

EXT. GARAGE SALE - STREET - LATER

Kaz and Uncle Mo (still in his silver suit) struggle to CRAM the huge TV into the trunk of Kaz's car. Trying to force it, they GOUGE the side. The CERAMIC MONKEY is fine.

EXT. STREET - LATER

They drive home with the gigantic TV tied precariously to the roof. It gets BASHED by a low-slung traffic light, damaging it further. The monkey is fine.

EXT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Kaz and Uncle Mo struggle heroically to get the giant TV off the car, SCRATCHING THE HELL OUT OF IT with every tug.

EXT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

As they drag the large TV between the porch railing and the house, they SCRAPE OFF the knobs and buttons which FLY AWAY in all directions. The ceramic monkey is still fine.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Trying to JAM the TV through the front door, the battered frame finally CRACKS. The screen and circuits FALL OUT. Frustrated, Kaz sits with a sigh, accidentally KNOCKING over the ceramic MONKEY. The monkey SHATTERS. Uncle Mo sighs.

UNCLE MO

I'm going to get some Little
Debbies.

EXT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Trying to hide all signs of the TV debacle, Kaz finishes TOSSING chunks of his shattered TV into the trash can. As Nancy drives up he closes the lid, hiding the evidence. She walks up, carrying a BUCKET OF KFC.

KAZ

What's this?

NANCY

Dinner.

KAZ

You're not making anything?

NANCY

I didn't have time. I was working.

KAZ

Nazireh, when a man comes home, he wants his wife to make a nice dinner. Not some... food in a bucket.

NANCY

But you love this food. You bring it home almost every night.

KAZ

Well, tonight I'd like something... different. A nice *ghormeh sabzi* to remind me of the homeland.

NANCY

Right. Because in the homeland your wife didn't have a job. But here she does.

KAZ

I see. We're in America now so you think you're like all those working liberation women on TV.

NANCY

I wouldn't know. We don't have a TV!

She thrusts the bucket of chicken into Kaz's hands and exits triumphantly into the house.

STOCK SHOT: BILLIE JEAN-KING SMOKES THE BALL PAST BOBBY RIGGS.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - NEXT NIGHT

Kaz comes home from work to find a dark, empty house.

KAZ

Hello?

He goes to the kitchen. Nothing. He finds a note.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

My parents battle of the sexes had scattered us to the four winds. Mom was working late, Chip and I were out...

Kaz finds Uncle Mo's diet products on the counter.

ADULT FIROOZEH (CONT'D)

And the only trace of Uncle Mo was three cans of Metrocal and an exercise girdle.

Kaz opens the freezer and takes out a sad little TV DINNER.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Somehow the experience of moving
 halfway across the world hadn't
 held our family together as much as
 a 1968 RCA with a missing knob.

Just then, Kaz HEARS the THEME MUSIC for Bowling for Bucks.

KAZ'S POV: THROUGH THE WINDOW, he can see into the APPLEBY'S HOUSE next door. Inside, Firoozeh and her friend, DENISE, lie on their stomachs watching Bowling for Bucks on an unseen TV.

INT. APPLEBY'S HOUSE - DEN - MOMENTS LATER

The Appleby home is completely different from the Jazayeri house -- every room has a theme. The den consists of plaid, duck decoys, and Kelly green. Firoozeh and DENISE APPLEBY (both wearing GIRL SCOUT UNIFORMS) watch Bowling for Bucks. Denise is Firoozeh's American ideal -- straight blonde hair, blue eyes, and a perfect button nose. Adorable.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 That's my best friend, Denise Appleby. Look at that nose. For Iranians, that's the Holy Grail of noses. My mother even sent pictures of Denise to cousins who were considering nose jobs.

DENISE
 So, you're still doing the car wash?

FIROOZEH
 Yes. Can't make a down payment on a house with Pixie Sticks.

DENISE
 You know a great way to make money? Ask your dad for an allowance.

FIROOZEH
 I tried that. He said, "Money is not the grass a bear eats."
 (off her confused look)
 It makes sense if you speak Farsi.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
 Denise wouldn't understand. I lived in a house where a new TV was a luxury. And she lived in a house where even her dog had its own house.

The DOORBELL RINGS. WE HEAR PAT APPLEBY, Denise's Mom, O.S.

PAT APPLEBY (O.S.)
I'll get it!

WE SEE PAT APPLEBY (30's) - tanned, attractive, in a tennis skirt - open the door TO REVEAL Kaz.

PAT APPLEBY (CONT'D)
Kaz. Hi, neighbor!

Kaz looks away. Pat always shows a little too much bosom.

KAZ
Hello, Mrs. Appleby. I was looking for Firoozeh.

PAT APPLEBY
Oh, for heaven's sakes. It's Pat.

She gives Kaz a friendly hug. He looks quite uncomfortable.

PAT APPLEBY (CONT'D)
Firoozeh's in the den with Denise.
(as they walk)
Listen, Paul and I are having our annual Fourth of July B-B-Q. Since it's your first year in America, we'd be thrilled if you'd join us.

KAZ
Thank you... Mrs. Pat. We would love to celebrate the birth of this great country with you.

PAT APPLEBY
Everyone from the neighborhood will be here. Except Jack and Sue Adams.
(whispering)
They're swingers.

KAZ
I thought he was an accountant.

They enter the den. Firoozeh notices and turns around.

FIROOZEH
Baba, what're you doing here?

KAZ
I thought... we could have dinner at the Ponderosa. Just you and me. It's ninety-nine cent steak night.

FIROOZEH

Mrs. Appleby already gave us dinner.

KAZ

(dejected)

Oh.

And for the first time, Kaz notices the Appleby's TV - a brand new 1974 ZENITH CONSOLE. Kaz's eyes widen in awe. THE CAMERA PANS LOVINGLY over the TV. WE SEE the fine-grained wood, the modern console buttons, the beautiful picture as WE HEAR the V.O. from an actual 1970's Zenith ad.

ZENITH ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

"Red. Green. Blue. This is the picture you've always wanted. Bright! Rich! Real! At Zenith. The quality goes in before the name goes on."

ANGLE ON Kaz, who's very close to salivating.

EXT. FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Kaz makes a bee-line for his car as Uncle Mo walks up the driveway, still in his space suit and munching on a corn dog.

UNCLE MO

You must try this. They put a Frankfurter inside corn batter and deep fried it! And they put a man on the moon. These Americans!

KAZ

Get in the car. We're going to Big Jimmy's Appliance Barn. Do you know what I saw at the neighbors?

UNCLE MO

Mrs. Appleby bending over to pick something up? She's another fine piece of American craftsmanship.

KAZ

I saw the most beautiful TV set God ever invented. Even more beautiful than Nancy on our wedding day.

UNCLE MO

I thought you were downing your foot.

KAZ

I give in. I give in to the vote.
I'm going to buy a new TV and get
my family back together. Let's go.

As they get in the car, a MAIL TRUCK pulls up, BLOCKING the driveway. Kaz gets out as the MAILMAN approaches.

MAILMAN

Got a registered letter. Just put
your John Hancock right there.

KAZ

John Hancock? But my name is Kazem
Jazayeri.

MAILMAN

Yeah... okay.

Kaz signs. As the mailman leaves, Kaz inspects the letter.

KAZ

It's from Bowling For Bucks!

Uncle Mo jumps out of the car as Kaz rips open the letter.

KAZ (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Thank you for your recent entry.
You have been accepted as a--

KAZ/UNCLE MO

Contestant on Bowling For Bucks!"

KAZ

Now I can buy a new TV with someone
else's money. I knew something good
like this would happen. This
morning, I woke up and my clock said
four forty-four. That was a sign!

UNCLE MO

This is wonderful. You're going to
be on Bowling for Bucks and I could
have a wife I haven't met yet!

As they head inside, WE:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kaz confronts Nancy as Firoozeh, Chip, and Uncle Mo look on.

KAZ

What do you mean you can't go? I will finally be on Bowling For Bucks. I want my whole family there.

NANCY

I have to work a double shift that day. One of my co-workers has a funeral. Her aunt died.

KAZ

Uch. Why does everything bad happen to me?

(then)

Just quit this job. I'll win enough money to buy a new television and a new refrigerator. And maybe even a bicycle for Firoozeh. No, bikes are expensive. She can walk. It's good exercise.

NANCY

But I don't want to quit.

KAZ

Okay. You wanted to prove you could make your own money and you did. You're a liberated lady. Now let's stop this charade so you can make dinner while I practice bowling.

At this, Firoozeh angrily narrows her eyes at Kaz.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Attica! Attica!

NANCY

It's not just the money. I like working.

(beat)

Since we came to America, I feel... what's the word? *Joda shodeh.*

CHIP

Disconnected.

NANCY

Yes.

(to Kaz)

The children have school, you have your work, Mo has his hobby of gaining and losing weight. Because of this job, I've met new people. We talk in the break room, we go to lunch, we complain about male chauvinist pigs. I don't even know what that means, but now I feel more... connected.

Kaz takes this in.

KAZ

Well, at least you can watch me on TV.
(realizing)

Oh.

INT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - MONTAGE

-- Kaz lays out bowling shirts, holds them against himself in the mirror, and pretends to bowl.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Like a bride preparing to walk down the aisle, my father got ready for his big day.

-- Kaz addresses himself in the bathroom mirror.

KAZ

Hello, I am Kazem. Hi, I'm Kaz. I am Kazem Jazayeri! My name is Kaz. I'm Kaz. Kaz, Kaz, Kazzzzzzzzz...

INT. BURBANK STUDIO OF BOWLING FOR BUCK\$ - DAYS LATER

To one side, WE SEE 70's-era TV cameras, crews, lights... Nearby, Kaz paces, surrounded by the family minus Nancy.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

The big day had finally arrived and my father was more amped up than Nixon in front of the House subcommittee.

UNCLE MO

You seem nervous.

KAZ

I'm not nervous! I'm Kaz the Jazz!

Agitated, Kaz sits and hefts the bowling ball between his hands. Firoozeh takes out a folded square of paper and passes it over Kaz's ball in little circles.

FIROOZEH

Just a prayer for good luck. Mom usually does this kind of thing, but...

This hangs in the air. Kaz sighs.

CHIP

(indicates something O.S.)
Then maybe you should let Mom do it.

ANGLE ON: Nancy, out of breath. She spots her family and runs to them. Kaz brightens and rises to meet her.

KAZ

What're you doing here? I...
thought you had to work.

NANCY

(smiling)
I got sick.

INT. HOUSE OF CLOTH - EARLIER - *FLASHBACK*

Nancy glumly sorts fabric remnants. Candice approaches.

CANDICE SMILEY

All right, Nancy. Girl to girl,
thimbles off. What's wrong?

NANCY

I'm sorry. My husband is going to
be on Bowling For Bucks today and I
feel bad I'm not with him.

CANDICE SMILEY

Why didn't you just call in sick?

NANCY

Because I'm not sick.

CANDICE SMILEY

You don't have to be sick to call
in sick. Wink, wink.
(off Nancy's confused look)
Sweetie, cloth may be life, but
life is more important than cloth.
Now go.

INT. BURBANK STUDIO OF BOWLING FOR BUCK\$ - BACK TO SCENE

Nancy and Kaz smile at each other.

KAZ

Thank you... for being sick.

NANCY

You're welcome. Now go win some money. The taxi ride here was not cheap.

KAZ

A taxi?! What're we, royalty?

WE HEAR the THEME MUSIC for Bowling for Bucks. ANGLE ON: REX MARTINSON, the host, as the LIGHTS flare up.

REX MARTINSON

(into camera)

Hi, I'm your host Rex Martinson.
And welcome back to...

STUDIO AUDIENCE

Bowling for Bucks!

REX MARTINSON

Let's start our qualifying round
with our next bowler,
(off index card)
Ka-- [like Shazam] Kazaam
Jizn...berry.

Kaz nervously steps up, squinting into the lights.

KAZ

Kazem. My name... is.

The family winces. Bad sign.

REX MARTINSON

Okay... Kevin, let's bowl!

Through a **SERIES OF CUTS** WE SEE Kaz's disintegration:

- He releases the ball too early with a THUD.
- He falls off balance, HURLING the ball into the gutter.
- He releases the ball early, almost hitting the on-lookers.
- The ball nicks a pin. The pin wobbles but doesn't fall.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
And these were the high points.

INT. CAR - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

A sad car ride as the family drives home in silence.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)
My father's Waterloo in Burbank particularly stung because he'd begun to think like an American. It never occurred to him he could fail.

NANCY
Maybe we can stop at Denny's. You love the food. And the bathrooms.

KAZ
(sadly)
They are incredibly clean. But no.

Silence.

CHIP
Actually, *Baba's* a genius. He found a way we could all watch Bowling for Bucks without a TV.

Firoozeh giggles at this. Uncle Mo cracks up. Nancy then bursts out laughing. Kaz looks around at his family. For the first time in a while, they're all together. He smiles.

EXT. JAZAYERI HOUSE - JULY 4TH - NEXT DAY

Kaz is on a ladder, putting up an American Flag over the front porch. Nancy, Uncle Mo, Firoozeh, and Chip emerge from the house, each carrying a large platter of Persian food.

CHIP
Do we have to go to the Appleby's with all this Persian stuff? It's embarrassing. I mean, I'm on the football team. That's a cat-tail in the locker room for sure.

NANCY
It may be America's birthday, but we should not ignore our own culture. Besides, everyone loves *noon nokhochi* and *noon berenji*.

FIROOZEH
If they don't choke to death saying it.

Kaz steps off the ladder and looks up, admiring the flag.

KAZ
 Beautiful. Long may it wave. And
 because one of the stars is missing,
 I didn't have to pay full price.

EXT. APPLEBY'S HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Classic July 4th BBQ. Flags everywhere, kids running around with sparklers, PAUL APPLEBY manning the grill.

SERIES OF CUTS

ANGLE ON: Chip, eating a hot dog as a football lands at his feet. Two boys motion him to throw it back. Chip's face lights up. He picks up the ball and spastically throws it wild. It BASHES into the grill, sending sparks and burgers flying.

ANGLE ON: Kaz and Nancy with some NEIGHBORS.

KAZ
 Did you know July 4th was not celebrated until after the War of 1812?

NEIGHBOR #1
 Huh. This potato salad is so good!

ANGLE ON: KAZ with a DIFFERENT NEIGHBOR COUPLE.

KAZ
 Without France, the Americans couldn't have won the Revolutionary War.

NEIGHBOR #2
 Mmm. Flakiest crust ever!

ANGLE ON: Mo chatting up a CUTE WOMAN and sucking in his stomach. When she crosses off, Mo looks around, loosens a MAN GIRDLE beneath his shirt, and breathes a sigh of relief.

ANGLE ON: KAZ with yet ANOTHER NEIGHBOR.

KAZ
 Actually, most of the delegates signed the Declaration of Independence on August second, not July fourth. Isn't that fascinating?

NEIGHBOR #3
 (re: Nancy's Persian food)
 Man, this foreign stuff's delicious!

NANCY

It is from my country. Iran.
 (off his look)
 It's between Iraq and Afghanistan.
 (off his look)
 You know, Persia? The cats and the
 rugs? That's us.

NEIGHBOR #3

(re: food)
 Yummy.

ANGLE ON: a buffet table. Firoozeh and Denise load their American flag plates with potato chips. Nearby, A BLONDE WOMAN tries to peel an orange.

BLONDE WOMAN

I love fresh fruit, but I just hate
 having to peel and cut it.

FIROOZEH

(light bulb)
 Hi, I'm Firoozeh. We should talk.

INT. APPLEBY'S HOUSE - DEN - A LITTLE LATER

Kaz and Uncle Mo admiring the majesty that is the Zenith console. Paul Appleby (late 30's), tan and fit, approaches.

PAUL

She's a beaut, isn't she?

KAZ

I was going to buy this very model.

PAUL

Yeah, I'm still kicking myself for
 not waiting until the July 4th sale.

KAZ

The what sale?

PAUL

You know, July 4th, big holiday
 sale, everything must go. They're
 selling this model for fifty
 percent off.

Kaz's expression lights up with joy. WE HEAR the sound of FIREWORKS as he breaks into a grin.

STOCK FOOTAGE OF A FIREWORKS DISPLAY

The SOUND OF FIREWORKS continues We PULL BACK to see the fireworks display is playing on a BANK OF TVs IN:

INT. BIG JIMMY'S APPLIANCE BARN - LATER

GIANT BANNERS all over the store announce the big sale.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

That day, my father learned his most important fact about July 4th -
- that Americans honor their country by slashing prices.

Kaz proudly stands at the register with the whole family.

SALEMAN

The Zenith Color Sentry. Top notch.
And how will you be paying for that?

As Kaz reaches for his wallet, Nancy slides an envelope to him.

NANCY

It's my first paycheck.
(softly)
It's not a competition. I only want to help.

Kaz looks at Nancy, who's made so many sacrifices, including leaving a job she loved to be with him in Burbank.

KAZ

My wife and I will each pay half.

The sun seems to break out on Nancy's face.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

And that was the first thing my parents ever bought together.

STOCK SHOT: Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King shake hands.

SERIES OF CUTS

-- WE SEE Nancy working at the HOUSE OF CLOTH, chatting with co-workers and helping customers.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.)

Our first July fourth was also Independence Day for my mother, who became a more equal partner in her marriage.

-- WE SEE Kaz plug in a vacuum cleaner.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And for my father, who broke free a
little of his Old World way of
seeing things.

Kaz vacuums for two seconds, then hands it over to Firoozeh.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I said "a little."

-- The family watches fireworks on TV, talking, laughing, a
happy and boisterous family together again.

ADULT FIROOZEH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Bit by bit, America began to change
us all. Or maybe it was just
allowing us to become the best of
ourselves. After all, isn't that
what you do with freedom?

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW