

# **A GLIMPSE**

by

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FADE IN

INT. A WHITE ROOM IN THE SHAPE OF A HEXAGON

ALEX is a young man, mid-twenties, sitting in one of two chairs. The other is empty. The walls are in fact five mirrors, in which you can see ALEX's worried reflection. There are no sounds except for his breathing.

A white man, SIGMA, suddenly enters the room by passing through one of the mirrors and sits opposite ALEX. He has no hair, white eyes and a very calm demeanor.

SIGMA  
(flicks his right hand)  
Let's start with a refresher  
course.

Images flash over one of the mirrors as if it were a computer screen. ALEX recognizes them instantly as different moments of his life shown from his perspective. His immigrant parents. Memories of going to the mosque on Fridays. His first love, a boy. He's too scared to move.

The images stop. SIGMA flicks his left hand. Two spheres materialize and float in front of ALEX.

SIGMA  
You've been granted a favor. Pick  
the one on your left to get a  
glimpse, and the one on the right  
to commit.

ALEX looks at the spheres, then back at SIGMA. His emotions are a mix of fear and confusion.

ALEX  
How did I get here? Who are you?

SIGMA  
You asked to be here. I am an  
Overseer.

ALEX  
I never asked for anything. I have  
no idea where I am and how I got  
here!

SIGMA  
(nods to a mirror on  
ALEX's right)  
Here's another refresher.

The mirror flashes with new images. A small apartment. Broken furniture on the floor. Tears falling.

ALEX  
I remember this. It happened  
yesterday night.

SIGMA

That is correct.

ALEX

I was so angry. I broke some stuff.  
Some I'm actually still paying for.  
And then...

SIGMA

You called out.

ALEX

I felt so tired.

SIGMA

You wanted a favor.

ALEX

I wanted everything to change. I  
wanted to...

The mirror stops flashing, revealing ALEX's reflection. He's crying.

ALEX

I wanted to be someone else...

SIGMA

A thought you have had many times.  
Just think of someone else and  
touch the sphere on your left.

ALEX

(wiping away his tears)  
Is this some kind of cruel joke?  
Why are you doing this to me?

SIGMA does not answer.

ALEX gets up from his chair and starts pacing. After a few minutes, he sits back down.

ALEX

Tell me how this works again.

SIGMA

Imagine a new person: gender, sex,  
origin, religion for example.

SIGMA nods to one of the spheres.

SIGMA

Touch this one to get a glimpse at  
what life would look like after the  
change.

SIGMA nods to the other one.

SIGMA

Touch that one to commit to the change and leave this place.

ALEX

And that's it? No catch?

SIGMA's expression changes for the first time since entering the room. He smiles.

SIGMA

What do you mean?

ALEX

What happens if I change my mind? Actually, let's not even think about that. What happens to my current life, my parents, my friends?

SIGMA

I do not understand what you are asking.

ALEX

(getting frustrated)

What happens to my current life? Am I transported to a new dimension or something? Is all of time rebooted to accommodate my change? Do I wake up in someone else's body?

SIGMA's expression returns to what it was before.

SIGMA

Those details do not matter. Only the reason why you would like to change.

He flicks his right hand again. The mirror right behind SIGMA begins to flash through different images as his body becomes transparent. They show painful moments from ALEX's life.

ALEX

(looks down at the floor)

I don't need to see that again.

SIGMA

You would like to escape a life of discrimination. Is that statement still correct?

ALEX

I mean...that's what I said yesterday but-

SIGMA

I believe your exact thought was:  
"I can't do this anymore. I just  
can't...". Would you like to be  
reminded of what you were  
referencing?

ALEX

(angrily)

I remember perfectly well. The guys  
outside the mosque, what they told  
us as we were leaving after Friday  
prayer...

(softly)

Just like the other times and the  
other places it happened... When  
it's not my religion, it's my  
origins. And when it's not that...

SIGMA

You are not publicly homosexual, is  
that correct?

ALEX

Of course I'm not. It already feels  
so horrible to just be the other  
parts of me. I can't imagine adding  
that on top of everything else. I  
got bullied as a kid, I'm getting  
abuse now. I get passed over for  
promotion, and God do I need the  
money. It's just...it's too much.  
It feels like too much for me. I  
can't bear it-

SIGMA

(cutting ALEX off)

Do you not wish to be granted a  
favor anymore?

ALEX

It's not a simple question to answ-

SIGMA

(cutting him off again)

Has your situation changed since  
yesterday?

ALEX

Well no but-

SIGMA

Why the hesitation?

ALEX suddenly gets up and shouts.

ALEX

Because I need to think about it!  
This isn't supposed to happen!  
Nobody gets do-overs! Nobody gets  
to pick who they are in life!

SIGMA flicks his left hand. The painful memories disappear  
and the mirror returns.

ALEX

(slumping on the chair)

Why me? Why are you letting me do  
this?

SIGMA

You feel the discriminations in  
your life are too much of a burden.  
You've tried to change your life  
already. You only use Alex on forms  
rather than your Arabic name. You  
don't mention your ethnicity on  
dating apps. You've also  
contemplated ending your life a few  
times-

ALEX

(cutting him off)

And? I know for a fact I'm not the  
first one to consider that. Many  
others have actually done it. So  
why me?

SIGMA

Many times you've thought that life  
would simply be better if you were  
from a different background. You  
seem to dislike living with your  
current identity because of all the  
pain it brings. Why not you?

ALEX

I...

ALEX is at a loss for words. He exhales deeply. A few  
seconds pass.

SIGMA

Take the time you need. Life is at  
a standstill in this room.

Minutes pass as ALEX alternates between pacing the room and  
sitting on the chair. He finally talks.

ALEX

What can I do during the glimpse?  
How long does it last?

SIGMA

There is no time limit. You are free to do anything. When you're ready to end the glimpse, just think of coming back and you'll return here.

ALEX

Can I also relive my current life? Talk to the people I know?

SIGMA

That is a possibility. The glimpse will act as a simulation of your current life.

ALEX

So all of this is a simulation, right?

SIGMA does not answer.

ALEX

Fine, don't tell me. I think I know who I want to live as. There's this friend from college. White, straight, handsome, from a rich family. Everybody loved that guy. I've always wondered what it would feel like to be in his shoes.

ALEX turns around, facing away from SIGMA.

ALEX

(under his breath)

This is crazy. This can't be happening.

He turns around.

ALEX

(takes a deep breath)

Okay, I'm ready. Let's do this.

ALEX grabs the floating sphere on his left. For a second, nothing happens. He then suddenly feels himself falling backward at incredible speed. The room disappears in a flash of white before he wakes up in a new place.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. BUSY CAFE - AFTERNOON (PRESENT DAY)

ALEX is sitting at a table, waiting for someone else. He's drinking a cup of coffee.

ALEX

(muttering)

Everything feels so real.

He looks at his hands, bewildered. He puts his hands in his pockets and pulls out a wallet and a cellphone. He opens the wallet to find an ID: Mark O'Reilly. He looks at the cellphone which unlocks after recognizing his face. He opens the camera app in selfie mode.

ALEX

I'm him. I'm really him. I'm in Mark's body!

CLAIRE is a blonde woman in her mid-twenties. She's wearing a business suit, carries a small purse and has a very energetic demeanor. She approaches the table, kisses ALEX on the forehead and sits opposite him.

CLAIRE

Hey, you. Hope you didn't wait too long. Did you order for me already?

ALEX

No, I didn't, sorry about that!

CLAIRE

It's okay, I'll do it myself.

CLAIRE calls over a waiter and orders a latte.

CLAIRE

I have half an hour before the next meeting. It's all hands on deck at the firm. The trial is starting soon. I'm not sure what's scarier: working on that or planning our wedding! Your mom called again about making it vegan-only.

ALEX

(laughs)

She did, huh?

CLAIRE

You know how she is. I told her I had a meeting and quickly ended the conversation. How's your afternoon going? How's the new office?

ALEX

(stuttering)

The new office? It's great! I love it.

CLAIRE

I hope you're not getting too much slack from the others. Getting promoted that quickly can make some jealous.



ALEX  
(reacting)  
Yeah, you're right. I'll be careful.

The waiter returns and puts the latte on the table along with the bill. CLAIRE reaches over but ALEX is faster.

ALEX  
It's okay, I got it.

He opens his wallet to find three different credit cards: two gold ones and a platinum. He pauses for a second before picking one and putting it on top of the bill.

CLAIRE  
(smiles)  
Thanks, honey.

ALEX's phone starts buzzing.

CLAIRE  
(her smile disappears)  
The office, again? You really can't catch a break. We work a block apart but we never see each other!

ALEX  
Yeah I'm sure it's just the office. Let me just tell them I'll be back soon.

ALEX unlocks the phone and looks over at the notifications tab. It's not a message from work. It's from an app. He recognizes the name instantly: a popular gay dating app for men. He quickly puts the phone back in his pocket.

CLAIRE  
You're not going to reply?

ALEX  
(stressed)  
Nah it's okay. They can learn to be patient for once.

CLAIRE  
(surprised)  
Did you just say "nah"?

Her phone vibrates. She looks at it and suddenly gets up.

CLAIRE  
I'm sorry honey, I have to go. There's an emergency meeting happening right now.

She finishes the rest of her coffee in one go and runs out while shouting.

CLAIRE

See you at home for dinner!

ALEX waits for her to be gone before pulling out MARK's phone. He checks the notification again: it's definitely from a gay dating app. He opens it to find a conversation going on for days between MARK and another man.

ALEX

Mark is in the closet? I had no idea.

(he laughs)

Just my luck. He's gay too. This is like a cosmic joke. What's next, he's also secretly Muslim?

(he sighs)

I mean, his life still way easier than mine, that's for sure.

The phone vibrates again. It's a text from MARK's mother: heart emojis and a kissing emoji.

ALEX

(in his mind)

I miss you, mom... Would his accept him if he ever came out? I know you wouldn't...but I wish you would...

ALEX puts the cellphone back in his pocket.

ALEX

(in his mind)

It's like I'm on borrowed time until I inevitably come out and both you and dad reject me forever... And the community rejects me too...

ALEX reclines in the chair.

ALEX

(in his mind)

I wonder what Samir is up to...

SAMIR is ALEX's boyfriend, of similar age and situation: his religious family has also immigrated here. They met at the mosque they both frequent. Happy memories flash through his mind.

ALEX suddenly sits up. He notices SAMIR through the cafe windows, walking across the street.

ALEX

Samir! Ah but-

ALEX remembers he's in MARK's body.

ALEX

This is crazy. I don't actually want to live somebody else's life. I may not be completely fine with mine, but it's still mine and I care about the people in it, racism, homophobia and all. I just wish it were a little different.

ALEX gets up.

ALEX

(shouting)

Hey, Sigma, take me back or whatev-

Before ALEX can finish his sentence, the cafe disappears in a flash of white and he's back in the hexagonal room of mirrors.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. A WHITE ROOM IN THE SHAPE OF A HEXAGON

SIGMA

Will you commit to that glimpse?

ALEX

Nope, I won't. I guess that's the lesson, right? You wanted to teach me about life and how everybody has their fair share of problems? Because that's not why I'm returning to my life. Mark is still way more privileged than I'll ever be.

SIGMA

There is no lesson. Feel free to imagine your old life when touching the sphere on your left to return to it. You have two more tries left.

ALEX

(looks up to Sigma,  
frowning)

Two tries left? Why didn't you tell me before?

SIGMA

You never asked.

ALEX stares at SIGMA. He grows more suspicious of the white man with white eyes. He sighs and turns around.

ALEX

Look. I'm not going to change anything. I'm not God and I don't  
(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)  
 want to be. I have no right to  
 meddle in the lives of the people  
 around me, especially to make mine  
 easier.

ALEX walks around the room, examining the mirrors more  
 closely.

ALEX  
 But I am curious to use that  
 glimpse as you call it as a way to  
 try things out. Things I wouldn't  
 be able to just try in real life.

ALEX stops at the end of the room and puts his hands on the  
 mirror in front of him. He closes his eyes and takes a deep  
 breath.

ALEX  
 I know where I'm going next.

CUT TO:

INT. A LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ALEX is sitting at a dinner table. To his right is SAMIR,  
 his boyfriend, masquerading as his roommate. Across from him  
 are his parents, NADIA and MUSTAFA. They're eating tajine.

NADIA  
 Iskandar, could you pass the  
 harissa?

NADIA calls her son by his Arabic name: ISKANDAR.

ALEX  
 (smiling)  
 I love it when you call me  
 Iskandar. Here you go, mom.

ALEX grabs the harissa and hands it to her.

NADIA  
 Thanks, habibi. You know, everybody  
 could call you that if you asked  
 them to.

ALEX  
 Just to hear them say it wrong time  
 after time? And get weird looks  
 from customers? No thank you!

NADIA  
 But you don't even let your friends  
 call you that, except for Samir  
 here. Anyway...  
 (sighs, turns to SAMIR)  
 How's your family doing, Samir?

SAMIR

They are doing good, Mrs. Amari. My mom says hello, actually.

MUSTAFA

That's wonderful, Samir. You tell your parents we said hi too.

SAMIR

I will!

ALEX looks over at SAMIR who winks at him. He remembers this evening clearly. They had dinner, watched a movie all together, and then ALEX and SAMIR left for their apartment.

ALEX

(clearing his throat)

Mom, Dad, there's something I need to tell you.

SAMIR looks over at ALEX, confused.

ALEX

(stuttering a bit)

I'm gay.

The sounds of cutlery stop. SAMIR is shocked, his eyes growing wider and wider by the second.

MUSTAFA

(speaking overly calmly)

What did you just say?

NADIA

(her voice is trembling)

What do you mean, habibi?

ALEX sees the look of anger, fear and sorrow all appear on his parents' faces. They all mix into one: denial. Rejection. What he always thought would happen.

Suddenly, he feels a hand squeezing his under the table. It's SAMIR's. ALEX squeezes back but doesn't look at him as tears form in his eyes. He stares at his parents.

ALEX

I love you, mom, dad. I've always loved you. But it's been very painfu-

MUSTAFA

(cutting him off)

Painful? What about the pain you're causing us right now?

MUSTAFA gets up a bit violently, causing the whole table to shake. This causes NADIA to cry.

NADIA  
 (crying)  
 You're making a joke, right,  
 habibi?

MUSTAFA begins to speak in Arabic. He's reciting verses of the Quran. NADIA cries even more.

NADIA  
 You are not gay, my son. You are  
 Muslim!

ALEX  
 I'm both! I am still Muslim! I  
 still believ-

MUSTAFA  
 How can you dare call yourself a  
 Muslim while telling us this.

ALEX gets up. His hand lets go of SAMIR's who is still sitting silently.

ALEX  
 Nothing has changed! I am still  
 your son from just a minute ago.

NADIA gets up from the table and runs to the parents' bedroom.

MUSTAFA  
 You're not our son anymore.

MUSTAFA follows her there. As soon as they hear the sound of a door being slammed, ALEX breaks down and falls to the floor. SAMIR catches him in his arms just in time.

SAMIR  
 Iskandar...

SAMIR hugs him as ALEX cries in his arms.

Suddenly, the room flashes white and disappears.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. A WHITE ROOM IN THE SHAPE OF A HEXAGON

ALEX is back in the hexagonal room, alone except for SIGMA. He's not crying anymore. He gets up, dusts himself off and sits.

ALEX  
 This went exactly like I always  
 imagined it would.

SIGMA  
 You only have one try left. Will  
 you commit to this glimpse?

ALEX stares at SIGMA.

ALEX  
So what's your deal, exactly?

SIGMA  
What do you mean?

ALEX  
Do you feel pain? Have you ever  
been rejected?

SIGMA  
The answer to both your questions  
is no.

ALEX  
That must be nice.

ALEX covers his face in his hands. He thinks about what he just experienced. He's not sure what to do.

SIGMA  
I sense that you are stuck. I will  
change my appearance to something  
more familiar.

ALEX  
What do you mean-

ALEX looks up and sees SAMIR sitting on the chair opposite to him, instead of SIGMA.

ALEX  
(angrily)  
What the fuck are you doing? I  
never asked for this!

SIGMA AS SAMIR  
(in Samir's voice)  
Talk to me, Iskandar. What's up?

ALEX  
I...

ALEX gets up, slowly moving away from SAMIR.

ALEX  
I...

ALEX stops, his back against a mirror.

ALEX  
I want to change them, Sam.

ALEX gives in and talks to SIGMA as if he's SAMIR.

ALEX

It's not fair. Why not change that one thing about them? Keep everything the same, but make them accept me for who I am?

SAMIR

That sounds reasonable to me.

ALEX

Then why do I feel like a monster for thinking that...

SAMIR

Because you care about them. You love them.

Tears form again in ALEX's eyes.

ALEX

I love you, Sam.

SAMIR

I love you too, Iskandar.

Minutes pass. ALEX is standing up, his back against a mirror. SIGMA as SAMIR is sitting, motionless.

ALEX finally walks back to the two spheres.

ALEX

This has gone long enough. I want to go back home. I'm ready.

SAMIR dissolves into SIGMA.

SIGMA

Just hold the sphere on your left when you're ready.

ALEX reaches over to it.

SIGMA

This moment has been interesting. Good luck in your future, whatever you choose it to be.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, whatev-

ALEX stops. His hand is right over the sphere. He turns to SIGMA.

ALEX

What did you just say?

SIGMA

What do you mean?



SIGMA's expression does not change. ALEX smiles.

ALEX

Did you just say "good luck"?  
Matter of fact, didn't you smile  
earlier?

SIGMA's expression changes ever so slightly as if he's a tiny bit unnerved.

ALEX

You can feel emotions. I don't know  
what you are, but you're not that  
alien to me.

SIGMA

What I am is irrelevant to your  
situation.

ALEX

Is it, though? What's stopping me  
from wishing to be you, or even  
your boss? To have your powers?

SIGMA's shoulder muscles clench.

SIGMA

Nothing can prevent you from doing  
that.

ALEX pulls back his hand.

ALEX

Okay, this is interesting.

He paces back and forth in front of the spheres.

ALEX

I could do a lot with your powers.  
I could decide to end  
discrimination for everybody. I  
could make it so every parent loves  
their children no matter their  
orientation.

(more excitedly)

I could make it so racism isn't a  
thing anymore! I've been trying to  
change myself, instead of changing  
the whole world. Making it a better  
place.

ALEX looks at SIGMA triumphantly.

ALEX

Oh, I've made my choice, alright.

Suddenly an unknown voice can be heard, booming.

VOICE

Sigma, end this. Stop him from reaching the sphere.

SIGMA vaults up. Both him and ALEX reach over to the sphere at the same time, grabbing it together.

The room flashes through hundreds of different colors. The mirrors show images from many different lifetimes of many different people. A powerful force begins to rip everything apart but ALEX is not letting go.

SIGMA

(panicking)

Stop this! You will doom us all!

ALEX

I AM NOT LETTING GO! If my life has taught me anything, it's to always keep going and never stop chasing what you want!

SIGMA's hand begins to slip away.

SIGMA

You have no idea what this will cause!

ALEX

Well, let's find out together!

SIGMA's hand finally lets go of the sphere. A huge force like a gust of wind propels him against one of the mirrors behind him, knocking him out.

ALEX holds on to the sphere with both hands, his mind focused on one thought. Suddenly, the room flashes black.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BEAUTIFUL PARK - MORNING

ALEX is holding SAMIR's hand. They're sitting on a picnic blanket. Opposite him are his parents, laughing in the sun. He looks around: the park is full of immigrant families. The trees are decorated with Pride flags and Pride ornaments.

He looks back at SAMIR and smiles.

FADE OUT

THE END