

## Crackerstan

A script by Asad Raja

### Scene One

*A shared kitchen in a university hall. The tables and chairs are jarringly coloured. Haziq sits on a window ledge, wearing cargo pants and a freedom for Palestine t-shirt. His cup of noodles sits steaming on the table. His phone lies next to it face down. He glances over at it anxiously every few seconds.*

*Jeeta enters with a bowl of popcorn. She's wearing an oversized tracksuit.*

**Jeeta** Hey. Why do you look like you've shat yourself?  
**Haziq** Where were you today?  
**Jeeta** Thursday. My Jeet day. I've left my room once and that was just now. I'm living. Are you okay?  
**Haziq** A thing's happened. Like just now.

*Tries to take a forkful of noodles but it scalds his tongue – ends up with soup down his shirt*

**Jeeta** Was that the thing? I'm not sure whether to be impressed.  
**Haziq** Jeet it's not funny, I've just been racially... dissed.  
**Jeeta** Huh? Is this a scoop?  
**Haziq** Wow, so you don't care.  
**Jeeta** No, I'm sorry. As in no, I do care. I think at least, I dunno, was it garden-range racism or more interesting?  
**Haziq** Jeeta, Dr Gillman called me a paki.  
**Jeeta** Gillman?  
**Haziq** In the common room, in front of like twenty people.  
**Jeeta** What the fuck. This is a scoooooop.  
**Haziq** I filmed it even.  
**Jeeta** Damn this *Caprio* article's about to do numbers.  
**Haziq** No one looks at the shitty *Caprio*.  
**Jeeta** Wow, thanks for your support. I'll take your gently-put criticism though, it has become quite shitty. But tomorrow I officially take over as editor. Got a big comeback issue planned, lots of great articles. I've even confirmed a date for that interview with Steel Banglez, and you know I've been planning that forever. *Pause* This Gillman thing though – sounds like a close contender for front cover, you know! Let's see the video.

*Haziq frowns at her, jarred by her reaction to the news. He takes his phone and shows her the video. She takes a handful of popcorn and offer him some, he declines. The video's been taken covertly, the phone peaking at a standing Dr Gillman from behind Haziq's jacket as he sits with his group. Haziq's voice can be heard as he says, "Like a what sir, what did you mean?" Dr Gillman speaks through an incredulous grin. "Just look at the way you're sitting and the way you're getting all worked up. You're just proving my point."*

*Abbey and Ayaan walk in. Abbey wears an orange sundress. Ayaan is in a Patagonia top and jeans.*

**Jeeta** Abs, Ayaan, come watch this quick.

*The two of them join Haziq and Jeeta in watching the video, helping themselves to popcorn. Dr Gillman is scoffing as Haziq continues to probe him, his grin widening and his eyebrows rising, but*

*his ears red – “I’m just saying, you’re aware of the stereotype, Tower Hamlets council estates and all that, I know because I’ve lived there for years, sitting there with your rubbish spread everywhere getting all noisy, it’s what certain people are always saying when they see that, you know like certain people see that and say... ‘paki’”.*

*They all exclaim. Ayaan is laughing.*

**Abbey** Oh my god, how has he said that.  
**Ayaan** Did you not hear him, he’s lived in Tower Hamlets for years!  
**Jeeta** Oh wait, you’re getting up now.

*The video continues as Haziq stands up, holding the phone up in front of him now, shaking in his hand. “Yeah, that’s right.” He says as Dr Gillman registers it. Then, pushing past him, he says, “Get out my way, cracker.”*

*Ayaan hollers and snatches the phone. He starts playing back the final few seconds repeatedly.*

**Ayaan** Haziq man, you’re a legend.  
**Jeeta** Nahh, you didn’t mention that bit. That’s pretty hilarious. ‘Cracker’ man, who even says that?  
**Haziq** I don’t know, it was just the first thing I thought of. I couldn’t just sit there and not respond.  
**Abbey** What does cracker mean?  
**Haziq** It means white.  
**Jeeta** Well, more like whitey. Like you know how we say gora? Except gora is usually a compliment if anything.

*Abbey googles.*

**Abbey** Oh, so like the n-word but for white people?  
**Haziq** No.  
**Ayaan** Well, kind of. He said paki so Haziq said cracker. Same old story. But comedic timing is everything man.  
**Haziq** It’s not like the n-word. It’s not even close to that level.  
**Ayaan** Okay, so it’s like paki then.  
**Haziq** No, it’s not. And paki and the n-word are on the same level.  
**Ayaan** Nah you know that’s not true.  
**Haziq** Why is it not true?  
**Ayaan** It’s just not. Anyway, let me enjoy this.

*Ayaan is overcome by a new wave of hysterics.*

**Ayaan** No way is this real man, this is too good to be true. Look at what Gillman drops at the end of the video.

*He shows them the last few seconds again, pausing on the final frame. As Haziq pushes past Dr Gillman, the camera points down to the floor at Dr Gillman’s dropped lunchbox. Its bottom compartment opens and a packet of Jacobs crackers jumps out.*

**Jeeta** Oh my god, that’s amazing.  
**Haziq** What kind of cracker has crackers for lunch?

*Abbey’s eyebrows perk up and Jeeta cringes slightly. Ayaan just keeps laughing.*

**Haziq** Come on, 'cracker' is not deep. There is no n-word equivalent for white people, that's an oxymoron.

**Abbey** Why's it an oxymoron.

**Haziq** Because of power dynamics. Like comparing misogyny and misandry. Right Jeet?

**Jeeta** I guess, yeah. It's all contextual, right. Like, I'm pretty sure cracker originally referred to lower class convicts arriving in Southern US from Britain. So, it was derogatory in that context.

**Abbey** But by that logic, I should be able to rap along when there's a song with the n-word, right? Because it's said in a different context to the original use?

**Ayaan** Ay she's got a point.

**Haziq** No, she doesn't.

**Abbey** Ayaan, I'm going to charge my phone.

**Ayaan** I'll catch you in a bit.

*Abbey leaves*

**Haziq** When did you become a linguist?

**Jeeta** I dunno, that usually helps. Hearing about a context where they might have been on the receiving end of something systemic can help white people feel... included?

**Haziq** Oh, so now we have to worry about making white people feel included in racism? Because racism is an in-joke between the ethnics?

**Ayaan** It kind of is though sometimes. I mean, I don't fuck with Twitter, but I've seen those Karen memes. And then there's all the damn hashtags. She showed me some pretty threatening DMs she got because she didn't post a stupid black square for BLM, it really upset her.

**Haziq** Wow. Okay, that particular trend was dumb.

**Ayaan** It's all kinda dumb to me. People have too much time on their hands. They need to get their money up. Speaking of which, I have an opportunity for you Jeet. You have a younger sister right?

**Jeeta** Yeah, why?

**Ayaan** So you have access to kids?

**Haziq** Woah woah woah

**Jeeta** Sometimes I think you're a videogame character being controlled by a white kid who's forgotten he's chosen the brown skin and big beard setting. What the fuck do you mean access to kids?

**Ayaan** Relax man I'm not a diddler, kids are weirdos.

**Jeeta** That's the reason you're not a diddler?

**Ayaan** Do you know about these Pop It Fidget Toys?

**Jeeta** Oh, like the rubber bubble wrap thing. Yeah Halima loves those.

**Ayaan** Of course she does. Kids shit themselves over these things. It's their crack. I don't get it. This is why I say kids are weirdos. Anyway, I have this cousin in Pakistan right. He knows a guy stocking special versions with transistors implanted in them. Bro, each of the poppy things makes a noise when you poke it and it's even responsive to the speed and softness of the poke. Are you in?

**Jeeta** What? I think you jumped a few steps.

**Ayaan** I'm getting my cousin to bring a shit tonne over for like, a hundred rupees.

**Haziq** One hundred rupees?

**Ayaan** Is that a lot? It doesn't matter, whatever, hardly any rupees is what I meant. We can flip them for like 40 quid each, easy. Kids will be lining up. I just need you to get the word out through your sister, there are some free samples in it for her. I can do the rest, just say the word and I'll get the ball rolling.

**Jeeta** Do you think my sister's like some child influencer or something?  
**Ayaan** Never underestimate word of mouth. Anyway, you're not the only one with a younger sibling I've proposed this to.  
**Jeeta** Oh, so you're running a pyramid scheme?  
**Ayaan** That's right. A pyramid built on the sturdy foundations of tiny-fingered fidgeting. You in?  
**Jeeta** You're so weird. Yeah, whatever. As long as it takes care of Halima's birthday present for me.  
**Ayaan** Sick. Now you'll have to excuse me, I have a cracker to bang.

*Jeeta throws popcorn at him.*

## Scene Two

*Haziq and Aayan get into the backseats of a car.*

**Aayan** 40 bag please my guy.  
**Chris** *Taking the cash and getting the weed from the glove compartment, before passing it back* You better not smoke this before the lab.  
**Aayan** *Opening the baggie and sniffing* Wait what we have a lab today?  
**Chris** You idiot, yes, after the tutorial.  
**Haziq** This is your lab partner? Where's the lab partner discount man?  
**Chris** I should be charging him extra for the free ride I'm giving him in that module. Wait, you're crackerstan right?

*Aayan goes into stitches*

**Haziq** I'm what?  
**Chris** Hang on.

*Chris shows them the video of Haziq's interaction with Dr Gillman, which has been posted by the university's meme page on Twitter. The caption is: #crackerstan. It's been posted just a few hours previously but already has hundreds of likes and retweets.*

**Chris** That's you right? You sound like him.  
**Haziq** What the hell how did they get that video.  
**Ayaan** Oh shit man, you're a meme. 'Crackerstan', that's killing me, props to whoever came up with that. Can't lie, I think I know how it got out. I might have airdropped it to myself last night when you showed us. And then I might have forwarded it to a couple groupchats.  
**Haziq** What, why?  
**Ayaan** Because it's funny. I mean, why did you film it?  
**Haziq** I don't know, to make people aware that Gillman is a racist. But this includes the part at the end where I get mad.  
**Ayaan** So what man, you were right to get mad. And according to you, 'cracker' isn't deep anyway.  
**Haziq** It's still not a great a look.  
**Chris** Nah man, it's funny, you're funny. And this guy does seem like a cracker. I mean, he even has a lunchbox with crackers in it. Can't get more cracker than that.  
**Ayaan** *Rolling a joint* Bro I just figured it out. It's common for black people to call each other *Pause* the n-word, right. It's basically a term of endearment for them. With Desis, it's not so uncommon for us to call each other paki. I do know some pakis who might see

me and say, “what’s up my paki”, or something like that. But for white people, they never use cracker in that way. Chris, tell me, have you ever called one of your white buddies a cracker?

**Chris**

Nah man.

**Haziq**

What? What’s your point even?

**Ayaan**

I dunno man, just an observation. Maybe since cracker is an insult in every context, it’s worse than the other two? But then again, it is the most funny sounding, so maybe not.

**Haziq**

That’s such shit logic.

**Ayaan**

Why?

**Haziq**

Because... slavery??

**Ayaan**

You’re living in the past, crackerstan. *Goes to light the joint*

**Chris**

The fucking lab!

**Ayaan**

Oh right, yes, sorry. This can be our reward. *Laughs* Dangling carrot and all that. I’ll catch you later.

*Haziq and Ayaan step out the car. They’re stood in front of campus.*

**Haziq**

Do you get that the past informs the present? The people in the most fucked living situations are still disproportionately black and brown.

**Ayaan**

I’m not disagreeing with that, I’m just saying, a bit of entrepreneurial spirit could really help those black and brown people. It’s not like they have many other options anyway. And that involves not living in the past.

**Haziq**

We need to start monitoring your Joe Rogan consumption.

**Ayaan**

Joe Rogan is the most- wait that’s Jeet. Jeeta!

*Jeeta comes over to them from across the road*

**Haziq**

Why do you look like shit?

**Jeeta**

Is this how we greet each other now? Tell each other how we look in relation to shit?

**Haziq**

Yep. Look at Ayaan, he looks like he just got done chatting shit.

**Jeeta**

Unsurprising. I look like shit because I was getting all anxious last night about taking over *Caprio*. So I came over to the editing suite early today, thought I’d make a head start, tame the beast you know. Turns out I had way more reason to be anxious than I thought. The last editor left things in such an insane state. It’s non-stop. I have a to do list the length of an Indian embassy queue and I’m running on three coffees. I was meant to do a serious expose on your paki vs cracker thing until you went and became a meme, but at least that’s one less thing on the list. And I’m so worried about tomorrow’s Steel Banglez interview being boring. Am I boring? Nah, don’t answer that. I just need a thing. Like how Pitchfork does Over / Under. Or like Hot Ones with their spicy chicken wings.

**Ayaan**

You need a spicy zoot, Jeet. Come smoke up with me.

**Haziq**

Your lab man, what’s wrong with you.

**Jeeta**

Haziq, can you come up with something for the interview? And on a budget. You’re good at stuff like this.

**Haziq**

Because I’m creative, right?

**Jeeta**

Resourceful.

**Ayaan**

Yeah, you ain’t Riz, you’re Riz-ourceful. Oh also, Jeeta the goods have arrived. *Clapping and rubbing his hands together* Time to lure in the kids.

**Jeeta**

I swear I’m going to be arrested one day for associating with you.

### Scene Three

*A few hours later, Ayaan and Haziq meet on a corridor in campus. The corridor has a balcony that overlooks some academics' offices.*

**Haziq** Why have you brought me here? I was in the library.  
**Ayaan** I've had a brainwave man. You realise Gillman did you nicely when he called you a paki?  
**Haziq** How.  
**Ayaan** #crackerstan is buzzing man. Everyone I saw today was talking about it. The meme page has done well. It's fully a thing, they keep retweeting stuff. Like, look at this.

*Shows Haziq the most recent retweet.*

**Haziq** *Reading* Piccadilly Circus got upscaled rickshaws? Love to see a white man pedal for me. He just asked if I want to use the aux. #crackerstan *Asking Ayaan* Since when do you have Twitter?  
**Ayaan** Since I realised that this hashtag is a bag. We can really capitalise off this.  
**Haziq** I don't see how. And aren't you already in a scheme with Jeeta.  
**Ayaan** Nah, fuck that. This is a happening thing. We're going to sell merch. Look at this.

*Shows Haziq a mock up of a t-shirt with #crackerstan written across the chest, the 'cracker' in white and the 'stan' in green, resembling the Pakistan flag.*

**Haziq** I don't know man. You'd wear that?

*Ayaan lifts up his hoodie to show his shirt. The print job is botched.*

**Ayaan** I'm wearing it right now. This is a prototype I just made, I can get the print better when we start selling.  
**Haziq** When did you do that?  
**Ayaan** I skipped the lab. Chris had it all under control anyway. Decided to at least procrastinate productively.  
**Haziq** He must hate you. And you didn't say why we're here.  
**Ayaan** Oh, right, yeah. Before we start selling, I think the hashtag could do with one final big push. You're going to like this. *He takes a pack of crackers out from his bag and gestures to one of the offices* That's Gillman's office.  
**Haziq** What are you going to do?  
**Ayaan** Oh shit, he's coming out.

*Dr Gillman's door open. Ayaan rips open the packet and start recording. As Dr Gillman steps out, he flings crackers down onto him and yells 'crackerstan zindabad' in an accent. Gillman lets out a perplexed cry. They both duck back and start speed walking down the corridor, suppressing laughs.*

**Haziq** What the hell was that, that was brilliant.  
**Ayaan** Little publicity stunt. Went better than expected. I'm posting it anonymously, don't worry. That's my handle, @crackerstanzindabad.

### Scene Four

*Haziq sits on the steps to his halls the next morning, smoking. Abbey is getting back from a run and sees him. He initially tries to avoid eye contact but she comes up to him.*

**Haziq** Hey, Abbey, what's up.  
**Abbey** You tell me. What the hell have you put Ayaan up to.  
**Haziq** What, the merch? That was his idea.  
**Abbey** What merch? Listen, I don't know whether this is because of what I said. The rules are always different for white people. I can't keep up and I don't really care anyway. But this is just dumb. I woke up this morning with a cracker in my mouth and a camera in my face. You can tell him he won't hear from me again. Some primary school shit, honestly.  
**Haziq** Abbey, I don't know why he's done that.  
**Abbey** Whatever. Pair of losers.

*She goes inside. Haziq checks Ayaan's Twitter. We see his face reacting, and see a translucent display of what he sees on his screen next to him as he scrolls. Every post has #crackerstan tagged. The video of him flinging crackers at Dr Gillman is pinned and has close to a thousand retweets and likes. His other posts have had significantly less (but still some) attention and include un-witty comments dunking on white people (e.g. 'When goras make daal it's literally sweet???' #crackerstan') and about a dozen more videos of him obnoxiously pranking white people around campus using crackers. Haziq calls him.*

**Haziq** Hey man. What's going on? I just saw Abbey.  
**Ayaan** *Laughing* Was she pissed?  
**Haziq** Yeah, she said she doesn't want to see you anymore.  
**Ayaan** Crackers can't take a joke.  
**Haziq** I thought you were just going to do that one post as promo for your merch? What's with all these extra stunts on random white people?  
**Ayaan** The merch will come in time. I'm just riding the wave a little longer, that's all.  
**Haziq** Well, it's kind of lame. These videos feel really forced and dumb. These random people have nothing to do with the Gillman situation anyway.  
**Ayaan** Nah man, Twitter's loving it. I didn't realise how easy it is to get ratings. You just have to be rude to white people.  
**Haziq** Who cares about ratings? What happened to race stuff on social media being a stupid in-joke?  
**Ayaan** Well, now I'm in on the joke. And I'm telling the jokes. Do you realise that since yesterday when I made a Twitter, I've gained more than double your follower count?  
**Haziq** No one cares, I promise. This is stupid. And everyone's going to think I'm in on it too. Could you just leave it?  
**Ayaan** Wait shhh...

*We hear rustling on Ayaan's end followed by someone saying "what the hell".*

**Ayaan** CRACKERSTAN! *Hangs up*

*Haziq clenches his jaw. Jeeta come outside and spots him. She sits next to him and takes one of his cigarettes before he notices her.*

**Jeeta** You look like you're struggling to get a shit out.  
**Haziq** It's Ayaan.  
**Jeeta** Tell that guy to collect his shit from my room. He dumped five fat boxes of those stupid fidget things on me. Now I hear from him that he's doing a different thing with you and doesn't care about selling them anymore? Unbelievable. Don't even get me

started on the weird twelve-year-old's-favourite-YouTuber-style publicity campaign you're running on Twitter. It was funny for literally 10 seconds.

**Haziq** That's what I'm trying to tell him!

**Jeeta** Ah, I think you just have to wait that one out. When does he ever listen? He'll find a new thing to take more seriously than his degree eventually. Anyway, Steel Banglez this evening, do you have my thing.

**Haziq** Yeah... here I made a list.

*Sheepishly shows Jeeta the list he's made on his notes app.*

**Jeeta** *Reading* Get him to read tweets about himself, get him to react to other people's beats, get him to break down the making of one of his beats *To Haziq* Haziq, these are all cliches. I want to do something different!

**Haziq** *In thought* Hang on a second. I have an idea. It might be perfect.

### Scene Five

*That evening. Haziq and Ayaan sit in the kitchen. Jeeta comes in carrying her laptop.*

**Jeeta** Snippet's out already. It's just been posted on the *Caprio* website.

**Haziq** Ooh let's see!

*Jeeta sets the laptop down in front of them and they watch the snippet. She's sitting at a table with Steel Banglez:*

**Jeeta** Okay so, not to put you on the spot or anything, but I brought a toy which I thought you might want to have a play with. *She brings out one of the musical Pop It Fidgets*

**Ayaan** Oh shit, Jeeta you genius.

**Haziq** Actually-

**Jeeta** Shh, listen.

**Steel Banglez** My niece has one of these.

**Jeeta** Probably not like this though. *She pops a button and it makes a synth sound*

**Steel Banglez** No way, that's sick.

**Jeeta** So, you know what I'm going to ask you now right.

**Steel Banglez** You want a beat init. Oi that's pressure you know.

**Jeeta** No pressure! Take your time, have a play. It's just a toy so we're not expecting something JHus could jump on or anything.

*He starts playing with the toy. The noises are childish and playful: a race car zoom, kids cheering, a cow's moo. One of them sounds like bangles being shaken, which he comments on. He starts to piece together a beat, which is surprisingly catchy. He adds more layers to it, his fingers a blur. Eventually he quits.*

**Jeeta** That was mad!

**Steel Banglez** This thing is very fun. I need one for my niece, will keep me entertained when I'm with her as well. Where did you get it?

**Jeeta** I have a source. But he's not selling them anymore.

**Steel Banglez** Ah no, seriously? Well regardless, these things have my backing.

*Jeeta pauses the snippet and looks at Ayaan.*

**Ayaan** This is crazy. I was just looking at this thing wrong. It's not a toy, it's a beginners' producing hardware. And recommended by one of the UK's best producers too. I should be selling these for triple what I had planned, this is a huge bag.

**Haziq** *Eagerly encouraging* Yes, absolutely, you're right. And that means you're going to stop the crackerstan shit, right?

**Ayaan** Yeah, I'm done with that. I mean, I was kind of done with that anyway.

**Jeeta** Trying to get Abbey to unblock you?

**Ayaan** She blocked me? Nah it's because of Chris, actually. I threw a cracker at him earlier. It must have been the last straw for him because he's threatened to cut me off if I don't stop. I can't be bothered to find a new dealer. Twitter is weird anyway man.

**Haziq** As long as you're past it. You're still going to be seen as the 'cracker guy' by everyone though.

**Ayaan** Nah, I'm Steel Banglez' guy. Reload it!

*He rewinds the clip to the beat section and starts to milly rock.*

**End**