

From the writer of KINKY BOOTS Geoff Deane

BOLLYVER



A reimagining of the Charles Dickens classic set in modern day India

Created by Chris O'Farrell, Nic Careem and
Geoff Deane

EVOLUTIONARY FILMS

A sassy, teenage orphan living on her wits in the slums of Dharavi must overcome the prejudice, poverty, and criminality that surround her to fulfil her dreams of making it big in India's male dominated rap scene.



Although only 15, **SARIKA**, has lived on the streets of Mumbai for six years since the death of her parents. Despite her youth and diminutive frame, you underestimate Sarika at your peril. She's sharp as a tack, quick on the uptake, with survival skills finely honed by virtue of lived experience.



For a time, she earned money working in a thriving backstreet bakery. But **KANHA**, the nice owner's creepy son started to make life difficult for the young, female employees and when his eye turned to Sarika, she spat in it, walked out and never returned. Since then, she's turned a dollar by acting as a guide for tourists and fleecing them for every dime she can. Which is how she meets **CALEB**, a visiting young African American writer from New York. After a bumpy start the two become friends, each gradually impacting on the life on the other.



Sarika learns that Caleb's first book which was published three years previous, had received a lot of attention and he was hailed as an important new black voice in American literature.

As his unofficial assistant the odd couple spend most days together. Caleb buys her a cheap mobile phone, but she is robbed by a young street gang, who fence their stolen goods to Kanha. He gives them money for drugs in return.

When Caleb sees how Sarika is living – in a makeshift tent beneath a railway bridge – he moves her into his apartment. Here he helps Sarika with her reading and introduces her to the classics. Her favourite is *Oliver Twist*, which she, of course, identifies with. He jokingly calls her Bollyver. Caleb's also a big hip-hop fan and via him Sarika gets into all the rap greats. This is the closest Sarika had had to a real home for a long time and she's the happiest she can remember being.



Caleb walks in on Sarika rapping along to Eminem's 'Lose Yourself'. She sounds good and he's impressed but suggests she start writing raps of her own, about her life and thoughts. The girl does not need telling twice.

Sarika has a friend, **NAVI**, who originally hails from a small village. She's forced to work as prostitute by the violent one-eyed pimp, **RUDRA**. Navi is desperate to return home but has no money and is terrified of him. Sarika tries to give her hope and swears she will help her escape one day. Rudra does not like Navi talking to Sarika. He is a bad dude.

Caleb and Sarika spend their days together. He works on ideas for his new book and she works on her raps. She performs in front of him and again, he's impressed with her skills as a rapper. But also, her lyrics and word play. She has a unique perspective, and he encourages her to develop it.



Caleb records her rapping on his phone and plays it back to her. She's surprised by how good she sounds.

They see a hand-made poster advertising a street rap battle, with all-comers welcome. Caleb encourages Sarika to enter. She agrees.

They go to the battle together, but it all goes horribly wrong. It's all boys and men much older than her, emulating the styles and clothes of US rappers. She isn't taken seriously as a young girl.



Worse, she is drawn against Khana, who is there backed up by the street gang that had stolen her phone.

Khana's rap mocks Sarika and people start to laugh at her. She turns and runs away before performing.

She is angry at Caleb for encouraging her to follow her dream. Dreams do not come true for people like her. He tells her she just got scared and that's okay. Everyone gets scared now and again.

He admits that the reason he has taking so long writing a sequel to his first novel is that he too has been frozen with fear. That is why he had to get away from the US.

He also confesses to feeling like a fraud. His first book tells of the struggle of a young American black man, yet Caleb has never had to struggle for anything in his life. He comes from a comfortable middle-class home and has had the best education money can buy.

He also tells Sarika that the girl he is due to get engaged to back home, is the daughter of a very wealthy black family. Once married, they will never want for anything. Sarika, asks Caleb if Dickens had even been poor, living on the street. He of course replies that he hadn't.

She says that Oliver twist is still a great novel. All that matters is the words you write, the truths you tell. She helps him feel better about himself and the work on his book begins to go better.



Caleb sees an ad online for a grand hip-hop competition to take place in Mumbai. He enters Sarika sending off his iPhone recording of her rapping. He does not mention this to her. He uploads the entry under the name of Bolly.

Out of the blue, Caleb announces that he is returning to the US. His publishers like the new chapters he had sent them and also he is under pressure from his girlfriend. Sarika is heartbroken and angry at him. She begs him to take her with him but he explains that isn't possible. She tells him she wishes she had never met him and storms out.

He eventually finds her back under the railway bridge. They go for some food and talk more calmly. Caleb tells her that he has paid the rent on the apartment for a year, set her up a bank account with a little money and also arranged for her to complete her schooling. He is giving her a chance to make a life for herself.

Sarika hugs him and cries her eyes out when he leaves to catch his plane.

Her life now enters a whole new phase. She gets a part time job as a waitress and works and studies hard. No more scamming tourists.

For the first time Sarika has some money to buy new clothes. She even starts to look different.



But the street gang and Khana remain an ever-present bane of her existence and never miss the chance to bully her or make her life difficult.

Sarika visits Navi who has been badly beaten by Rudra. He sees them together and chases Sarika away, yelling that if she comes back again, he will put her on the streets too.

Sarika is desperate to help her friend. But Rudra never seems to let her out of his sight.

Back in the US Caleb has returned to his comfortable life. We see him with his girlfriend and her family. But he doesn't seem entirely happy.

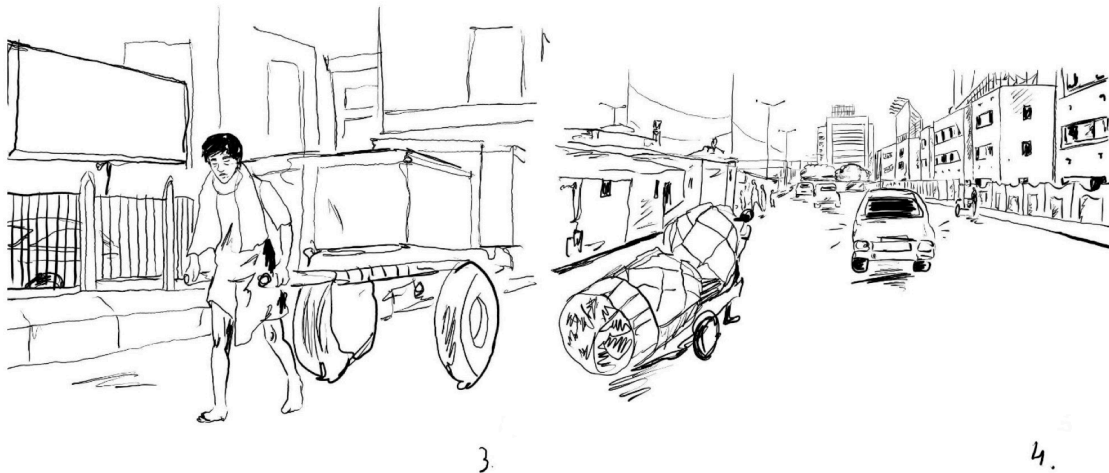
He had left Sarika a cheap laptop and the two of them talk online regularly. They miss each other.

Sarika receives notification that she has got through to the final of the rap competition. She immediately calls Caleb suspecting that he might be behind this. He admits that he is and congratulates her on the fantastic news. She says she has no intention of taking part. For one thing it is on the same day as a big school exam. And for another the last time she tried to rap in public she had run away. If that all wasn't bad enough Kanha had also qualified for the finals.

Caleb says the final is early evening so she can do both if she rushes from school to the venue. He also tells her she is the bravest person he knows. She lived and survived alone on the streets of Dharavi from the age of 9. A rap competition and Kanha are nothing compared to that.

Sarika says what the hell. She'll do it.

A few days later she goes out with a little money she has saved up and buys herself a cool new outfit to wear for the competition. Unfortunately, Khana overhears her conversation with the sales lady. Later we see him talking in hushed tones to the street gang.



Back in the US Caleb's girlfriend tells him she has made arrangements for them to stay with friends at the Hamptons for a few weeks. He doesn't look enthused.

The night before the competition Sarika returns to the apartment to find some members of the gang trashing it. They have destroyed the place. Her laptop has been smashed and her clothes all cut up. She flies at them furiously. But they soon get the better of her and are beating her up.

The cavalry arrives. Caleb stands in the doorway. He flies into the room and lays into the gang. Hefty blows are thrown, and they run off.

She asks what he is doing here. He replies that he couldn't miss seeing his friend in the final.

SARIKA

But what about your girlfriend? Didn't she mind you coming back?

CALEB

That's over.

SARIKA

I'm sorry. But she wasn't for you, my friend.

CALEB

That's absolutely none of your business, Sarika. Though you might have a point.

Sarika surveys the mess. The laptop, her clothes. She cannot revise for her exams or enter of the competition now.

Caleb will not hear of it. They will tidy the place up and he will help her revise. And there is still one outfit of hers that hasn't been destroyed. The old torn jeans and t-shirt she had been wearing when he had first met her. She'd compete wearing them.

Sarika agrees. But she tells Caleb there is first a job he has to do for her. We do not hear what it is.

Later we see Rudra usher a client into Navi's room. As he leaves, she starts to undress. But he tells her not to. The 'client' is Caleb. He tells her he's a friend of Sarika's and she should listen carefully to what he has to say...

On the big day we see Sarika busy writing in her exam.

Navi approaches Rudra and tells him that her friend is in the finals of a big rap competition, and she has sent them over two tickets to attend. Rudra isn't initially interested. But Navi is smart. She tells him it will be a grand occasion with lots of wealthy record business people in attendance. It will be very good for business. He smiles and agrees.

Sarika completes her exam and rushes from the classroom. Caleb is waiting for her on a scooter, and they roar through the streets towards the competition.

The contest itself consists of 16 finalists, divided into eight two-handed battles. The judges panel will pick the winner from these. Sarika is the only female that has qualified for the final.

They arrive late and it has already started. Caleb looks at the draw for the final and sees that Sarika will go on stage last. Once again, against her nemesis Kanha.

Sarika sees that Navi is there with Rudra and the two of them exchange a discreet nod.

Sarika and Caleb watch the rappers perform. The competition's tough. There were some great artists.

Finally, it's Sarika's turn. She takes to the stage to confront Kanha. He wins the toss and goes first. Once he takes her down by mocking her poor background, her clothes, and the fact that she's a little girl. He gets some support from the crowd, especially from the street gang.

Sarika just stands there motionless. She does not react at all. Then a mic is handed to her. She lets the beat go round a few times. Caleb is just starting to worry that she's frozen, when she starts to rap.

And she is brilliant. Rather than rally against Kanha's put downs, she takes a leaf out of Eminem's book and puts herself down far more caustically and bluntly than he ever could. And her word play is sensational. Everyone is mesmerised by this tiny young girl. She raps about the death of her parents, living beneath the railway bridge, and how she used to scavenge from dustbins for food to survive. And then she hits Kanha with the killer punchline.

'And because of all this you think you're better than me.
But what you don't understand is I AM THE BEATING HEART OF DHARAVI.'

She thumps her chest to the final words and the crowd go insane.

She then moves on to Kanha...

'You talk like a gangster and walk like a baddie
But everyone knows you sell chapatis for your daddy.'

Still freestyling she dishes the full dirt on him. How he used to assault girls at the bakery, how he got the street gang to do his dirty work and would buy their stolen goods giving them money to buy drugs. People start to throw things at him and cheer her on.

This time it's Kanha who flees from the stage. His father is there and having seen and heard everything he proceeds to give him a beating in front of everyone. Much to the crowd's amusement.

The winner of the contest is announced. It's Sarika/Bolly. The crowd go crazy as she is presented with the cash prize.

Amidst the mayhem Navi tells Rudra she needs to go to the toilet and slips away. In the toilet Sarika is waiting for her. She tells her Caleb is outside on the scooter waiting to take her to the train station. All she has to do is climb through the window and she is free. Sarika gives her the prize money to start a new life. Navi thanks and hugs her 'sister for a lifetime' and she is gone.

Rudra cannot find Navi and realises he has been tricked. He corners Sarika and tells her he is going to kill her for daring to mess with him.

But as he closes in all the other rappers from the contest come to her defence. Rudra is picked up and thrown out, straight into an open sewer.

The rappers and Sarika all high five.

Caleb sees Navi off at the station and then heads back.

We go out on a reprise of an earlier scene where Sarika says she's hungry and Caleb says he could eat too.

CALEB

Can you take us somewhere good?

SARIKA

Sure. But it will cost you ten rupees.

CALEB

Okay.

SARIKA

And you pay for dinner.

CALEB

Okay.

SARIKA

And a bottle of the finest champagne. Because I am a star now you know.

CALEB

Don't push it.

And our two heroes head off into the sunset....

THE END



Sample Pages

EXT. STREETS OF DHARAVI - DAY

CALEB SOLOMON - a well-educated, black writer from NYC in his late 20's - drives his hire car around the streets of Dharavi. It's his first time in Mumbai, first time in India. And he's regretting it already. The traffic, the crowds, the noise. OVERWHELMING. He's been going around in circles for over an hour looking for the place he'll be calling home for the next six months. If he can ever find it.

On a quieter street he sees SARIKA - a scrawny looking, young teenage street girl - leaning against a wall like she owns it, sipping on a coke through a straw.

He pulls over and lowers his window.

CALEB

Hey, do you speak English?

She keeps sucking on her coke.

I guess not, thinks Caleb.

Until she casually lowers the straw from her mouth.

SARIKA

No. Do you?

Off Caleb. Very funny.

He produces a piece of paper.

CALEB

I'm kinda lost. Do you know where this address is?

She walks over, in no rush. Looks down at the piece of paper.

CALEB (cont'd)

Can you read?

SARIKA

(snaps)

Of course I can read. I went to school up until the age of 9!

CALEB

Sorry. No offence intended.

SARIKA

I know this place.

CALEB

Great. Can you tell me where it is?

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

Yes. For ten Rupees.

CALEB

You want to charge me for giving me directions?

SARIKA

I don't give directions. I only sell them.

CALEB

Forget it. This is the most crowded place I've ever seen in my life. I'm sure I can find someone gracious enough to give me directions for free.

SARIKA

I'm sure you can, sahib.

He turns away, about to drive off.

SARIKA (cont'd)

But in Mumbai there are some terrible people who take great delight in sending tourists the wrong way. They find it amusing.

Off Caleb.

SARIKA (cont'd)

And there are others who will direct you to a quiet street where their friends will be waiting to beat and rob you. They will steal your money and your car. Maybe even your kidney.

Off Caleb.

SARIKA (cont'd)

Whereas for just ten Rupees I will personally deliver you to the door and guarantee that you will arrive safely.

Caleb knows when he's beaten.

CALEB

Hop in.

She does with a triumphant smile, revealing that the child inside her is still alive and well.

She holds out her hand.

CALEB (cont'd)

I'll pay you when we get there.

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

You pay me now. These are my terms.

He hands over the money.

SARIKA (cont'd)

Go that way.

He pulls away.

SARIKA (cont'd)

What is your name?

CALEB

Caleb. My name is Caleb.

SARIKA

I am Sarika. It means bird. My mother used to say that meant I had a free spirit.

CALEB

That's the only thing free about you.

SARIKA

Where are you from, Caleb?

CALEB

New York City.

She whistles. Impressed.

SARIKA

America. One day I will go to New York City.

CALEB

I'm sure you'll fit in just fine. You always lived in Mumbai?

She shakes her head.

SARIKA

I was born in Murbad.

CALEB

Your folks moved here?

SARIKA

No. I moved here after they died. Take a right.

He does. This street is much busier. Caleb's still trying to process this latest piece of information.

CALEB

So who do you live with now?

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

Look out the window.

He does. Sees the street teeming with people. He's confused.

SARIKA (cont'd)

That's who I live with.

Off Caleb.

SARIKA (cont'd)

Pull over.

CALEB

What?

SARIKA

Pull over.

He does.

CALEB

What's wrong?

SARIKA

We are here.

She points to an old building. They have travelled less than 500 yards all told.

CALEB

This is it?

SARIKA

Yes.

CALEB

It was just around the corner. You could have told me.

SARIKA

That would have been bad for business. Do you have luggage?

CALEB

Of course, I have luggage.

SARIKA

I'll help you carry it in and then for another ten Rupees I will show you a very good place to park the car. You should not leave it here.

CALEB

Thanks but no thanks. I have a strict rule never to be hustled more than once by the same person on any given day.

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

Are you sure about this, Caleb?

CALEB

Goodbye, Sarika.

She exits and walks away. Caleb gets out, takes out his cases from the trunk and enters the building.

INT. CALEB'S APARTMENT - DAY

Caleb enters with his luggage and sets it down. Looks around at the apartment. Plain but functional. It will do.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Caleb showers. The water suddenly slows to a trickle.

CALEB

Damnit.

He turns the taps. No change.

Without warning the water gushes out very hot.

CALEB (cont'd)

Ah.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caleb hangs the last of his clothes in the closet. It's been a long day. He yawns and climbs into bed. Asleep in seconds.

INT. CALEB'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Caleb wakes. Feeling much better after a good night's rest.

He gets up, walks over to the window, pulls back the curtain and looks down on the street below.

He sees his car. The tyres have all been removed and it sits on four piles of bricks.

CALEB

Oh shit!

He pulls on his sweatpants and rushes down stairs.

EXT. CALEB'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Caleb paces angrily around the car.

CALEB

Shit.....SHIT.

From nowhere Sarika appears. Sucking on her morning Coke through a straw.

SARIKA

Oh dear. It looks like someone has stolen your tyres, Caleb.

CALEB

Do you think?

SARIKA

Yes I do think. You should not have left your car on this street. I did tell you that.

CALEB

Can you take me to the nearest police station?

SARIKA

I am not going near any police station.

CALEB

Then tell me where it is. I'll give you ten rupees.

He pulls out the money. She ignores it.

SARIKA

Why do you want to go the police station, Caleb?

CALEB

There's been a crime committed, Sarika.

SARIKA

And what are you going to do? Give them a description of the tyres? You think they will send out their top detectives to hunt down your tyres?

He thinks about it. Now he feels stupid.

CALEB

So I do nothing?

SARIKA

It's a hire car.

CALEB

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

Call the company, tell them what happened and demand a new car.

CALEB

That makes sense.

SARIKA

But first you are going to use that ten Rupees to buy us both breakfast.

CALEB

I could use some food. You know somewhere good?

SARIKA

I know everywhere good. Follow me. I take you to the best dhaba in all of Mumbai.

He does. They walk together.

CALEB

I can't believe my tyres were jacked. I grew up on the streets. I always have an instinct for when things aren't right.

SARIKA

This is India. It is different. Be careful with your wallet, Caleb.

He reaches down to pat his pocket.

CALEB

Don't worry, that's safe... hey...

He stops. Pats all his pockets frantically.

CALEB (cont'd)

My damn wallet's gone too!

She casually hands it back to him, smiling.

SARIKA

You mean this wallet?

He snatches it back from her.

SARIKA (cont'd)

Luckily for you I am an honest girl.

They walk on.

CALEB

Stealing wallets isn't honest. It's theft.

(CONTINUED)

SARIKA

Except when you return it. Then it's a
life lesson.

CALEB

I don't think I like you.

SARIKA

I get grumpy when I'm hungry too. You'll
feel better after we've eaten.