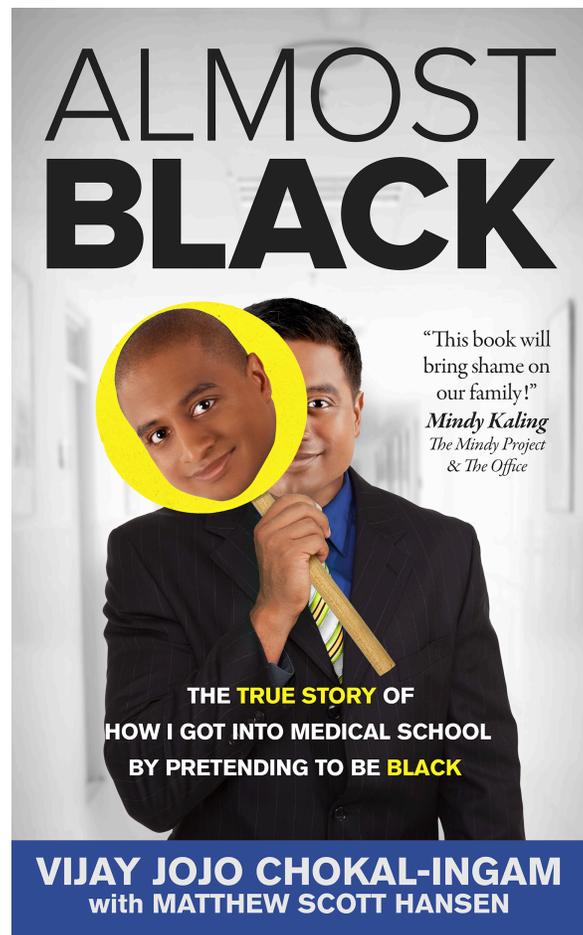


# Mindy Kaling: The Goddess of Vengeance

Bonus Chapter of



## Almost Black

The True Story of How I Got into Medical School

by Pretending to Be Black

"This book will bring shame on the family!" – Mindy Kaling

## IS THAT A DAGGER IN YOUR HAND OR ARE YOU JUST GLAD TO SEE ME?

Oh, what a tangled web we weave...when first we practice to deceive.  
Sir Walter Scott

Before we do anything else, I need to explain the incendiary quote on the cover of my book *Almost Black*: "This book will bring shame on the family!" from my sister, Mindy Kaling. The reader needs to know what up, right?

If you're saying "Who in jack shit is Mindy who?" or "The hell with Mindy Kaling, can you get back to the part about how you partied your way through college yet beat the system by getting into med school while posing as black?" I certainly won't fault you, and you have my permission to skip this article / blog post and read my book, *Almost Black: The True Story of How I Got into Medical School by Pretending to Be Black*. However, you might miss a useful pointer or two about the cost of backstabbing and deception courtesy of my sister, Mindy Kaling, former star of NBC's *The Office* and current star of *The Mindy Project* on Hulu. Of course, *Almost Black* has plenty of backstabbing and deception also, so there is lots to go around.

Okay, did Mindy really fear endorsing this book as I state on the cover? Well, the story is more complicated than that. When I approached Mindy about writing this book, we were on good terms: I used to come to her house every week to work out together, even though the UCLA gym was much closer and more convenient for me. At that time, I hoped my sister would be the writer and director for the movie version of *Almost Black*. I dreamed my sister would win her first Oscar for playing my mother in the movie: a courageous Indian mother and doctor fighting for the rights of her children when they were discriminated against in school admissions in chapter one of *Almost Black*. (Sounds crazy now, right? But, we are family after all.) Our mother, Swati Chokalingam, MD is the inspiration for *The Mindy Project*, after all.

I had hoped for Mindy's support. Worse case scenario, I figured she could say she didn't support it but respected my decision to write it anyway. She'd known and loved this story for years and was one of the people who laughed hardest when recounting it. So her actual response stunned me.

Her exact words after reading my book proposal were, "This book will bring shame on the family!"

*Shame?* Are you shittin' me? What is she? Amish?

Once I got over the shock, I decided to use the quote on the cover of the book.

You want shame, Mindy? Signed, sealed and delivered.

Her attack quickly got personal. She hurled a full kitchen sink array of allegations that had happened twenty years earlier. Her overreaction was weird, maybe even a little unhinged. It wasn't like I'd written *The Necronomicon*.

I mean, she's not the only one in our family who gets to talk shit about themselves.

Feeling under attack, I defensively countered, "You play a slut on national TV, and you think *this* will bring shame on the family?"

It was one of those circular brother/sister arguments with no one able to see the other's point of view. After a long estrangement, she eventually apologized, and so did I, but the bitterness endured. Her venom remained both toxic and in abundant supply.

After news had broken last year I applied to medical school by posing as black, Mindy Kaling's rep has told *US Weekly* that "she was not aware of his decision to apply to medical school under a different name and race." Well, that's just a blatant lie.

Let me set the record straight. She's known the story pretty much since day one, but never took exception to it or judged it as some moral turpitude against the "family." In fact, she *helped*. Despite receiving an invitation to apply from Dartmouth College Geisel School of

Medicine, I did not eventually apply because Mindy suspected the admissions office might recognize our shared last name, which was made famous by her comic strip *Badly Drawn Girl* and other campus activities at Dartmouth. I applied to Harvard Medical School after receiving an invitation to apply from Dr. Alvin Poussaint, the famous professor of psychiatry at HMS and friend of tranquilizer enthusiast, Bill Cosby. However, I subsequently withdrew my application after Mindy kindly reminded me she was high school friends with Poussaint's son and warned me that my racial fraud might be detected. Dr. Poussaint knew my family was Indian, not black. In other words, Mindy helped me dodge a bullet.

And the icing on the cake? In 1998, Mindy was the first one who *suggested* she should write a book about my "surprisingly funny" scam. I nixed the idea because I wanted no one to spill the beans about how I got into medical school by posing as black.

Only after reading my proposal her opinions changed and she was furious. I'm certain, as are several friends and colleagues who also read it, that the big problem was it was simply a whole lot better than she expected it to be.

*Who the hell does Vijay think he is, trying to be funny?*

I admit I didn't write this all by myself. I found a very talented and experienced writer in Matt Hansen to help me make it as funny yet as poignant (in the right moments) as possible. However, knowing her so well, I know that after reading the proposal (not this part!) she was incensed I was trying to hone in on her turf. She saw me – her brother, "the resume writer" – as a threat to her.

*What if he publishes this book and, God forbid, people dare to compare it to my work?  
Or worse, somebody thinks he's funnier than me? OMG!*

Sorry sis, I'm moving forward with this bad boy, despite your warning. Or was that a threat? Regardless, I have a story to tell, a funny one, mostly, and I mean to tell it. And if people want to compare us, let 'em; I've got nothing to lose.

When news of my upcoming book spread, Mindy had her representatives call *People Magazine* and other periodicals, spread rumors about me, and tell them to take down any articles about my book to dampen the publicity. Not only did Mindy want to distance herself from the book, which I was disappointed with but could respect, but Mindy actually tried to sabotage the project.

By the gods, who needs Machiavelli when your sister can top him?

Et tu, Mindy? Is it surprising she and I don't speak anymore? It's very sad.

However, I have some interesting fact that might allow me to analyze the real source of Mindy's withering scorn.

My little sister was born Vera Chokalingam on June 24, 1979. At the age of 2-3, she got the Bengali nickname "Mindy" for Mindy of the 1980's sitcom *Mork & Mindy*. Notice how Mindy cleverly dropped Vera (for Vera Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of Wealth) and selected the middle of her last name as her *Hollywood* name? But she merely followed in the footsteps of Marian Mitchell Morrison, Archibald Leach, and Norma Jeane Mortenson, aka, John Wayne, Cary Grant, and Marilyn Monroe, respectively. See, one of our ancestors, a man named Vātsyāyana, wrote a book called the *Way of Sensual Love*, or Kama Sutra in Sanskrit, which made our family name lingam famous. While the Sanskrit for lingam generally means the power and potentiality of the God Shiva, down in the gutter, it has the same meaning as dick, schlong,

wingwang, tubesteak and tallywacker, thus her need to distance herself from possible ridicule. However--and I might be wrong--you'd think any self-respecting comedian would run *toward* controversy or self-humiliation. Instead, Mindy would probably say that Vātsyāyana *also* “brought shame on the family.”

But I digress.

Yes, Mindy's bestselling books *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)* and *Why Not Me?* are carefully self-deprecating, but mind you I said *carefully*. Mindy knows her market and just a tidbit of "I'ma kinda dufus" goes a long way without making her look dumb or maybe worse, hopelessly neurotic. It's just enough to sell the notion *Sure, I'm insecure... like you, but I'm not a fucking basket case*. Like I said, she knows her market. However, with real controversy she protects her spoils as hard and fast as Walmart hearing the word "union" and dispatching their rapid-response team on a company jet.

Mindy is a devotee of some sort of perverse zero-sum game theory; she is convinced you can't succeed in life without stealing from or screwing over someone else. Ironically (or not), this behavior has developed in parallel with her growing success. There are several bizarre stories about her that only a small group of people know. I will relate a couple now to give you a sense of her true character. Mindy is not the clumsy, slightly insecure BFF-next-door heroine she sells in her books and television projects. Mindy is a lot more the Queen Bee, Blair Waldorf from *Gossip Girl* than Dr. Mindy Lahiri from *The Mindy Project*.

## MINDY THE QUEEN BEE

Mindy was dating a nice guy, Benjamin Nugent. They were happy together, and everyone really liked Ben. Mindy told me they were thinking about getting engaged. We were all very happy that she'd finally met a quality guy who apparently loved her.

What I admired most about Ben was his pathological jealousy and hatred of B.J. Novak, an opinion I shared entirely. Ben was a real gentleman, who was never rude to B.J. (or anyone else), but behind closed doors he FUCKING hated him. I remember Mindy taking me aside one day and telling me not to mention *anything* about B.J. in front of Ben because he would get super jealous. Don't get me wrong, B.J. is a good guy. However, Mindy has had this weird infatuation with him since they started working together on *The Office*, although the actor has exactly zero long-term romantic interest in her. I lived near B.J. in The Grove area of Los Angeles in 2008, and I kept running into girls who told me they were "friends" with him (wink, wink). The kid has game, but he's not the guy I want dating my sister.

And sorry ladies, but no decent man, including Ben, will marry a girl secretly in love with someone else like B.J. Novak. That stupid shit only happens on *The Office* or *The Mindy Project*, which incidentally are the shows Mindy writes for. Calling Dr. Freud? I guess that's how Mindy, who never had a boyfriend until after college, became the Queen of Romantic comedy: to her, romance is Twilight-esque fit of fantasy. Whatever. Mindy completely ignored the advice Ben and I gave concerning avoiding B.J. to her own detriment.

Anyway, back to Ben and Mindy. Ben's sister, Annie Baker, was an aspiring comedy writer. Unlike most people trying to break into show biz, Annie had talent and had gotten the attention of some higher ups in the industry.

Annie approached Mindy with a favor.

Now, this wasn't much of a favor since Mindy by then had achieved great success on *The Office*, as an actor, writer and producer and was cloaked in an embarrassment of riches and connections. Annie's request was simple and doable: get me in with your agency, William Morris Endeavor (WME), a big, powerful Hollywood powerhouse. Now Mindy could have gone three ways. First, turn Annie down respectfully and continue about her business. Successful people

frequently are asked to throw open doors and sometimes, they just get fatigued and say no a lot. As Nic Cage once advised Jim Carrey, as a star you're continually "getting snacked on," that is, people *always* want something from you. Had Annie been talentless, it would have made perfect sense. But Mindy still had the right to say *no way, Jose*.

Second, Mindy could have said yes and given Annie an entree. Easy peasy.

The third option, albeit gutless, would have been to say yes while cruelly getting Annie's hopes up and then doing absolutely nothing. Not the kindest thing in the world to do, but I wouldn't have faulted Mindy for doing it.

However, Mindy being Mindy, she found a diabolical fourth option. Despite her enormous success, she is still incredibly insecure, but as an insecure person with lots of power, she's a dangerous mashup i.e. Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton – depending on your preference. The fourth option Mindy chose went this way: she happily agreed to help Annie. But when Annie contacted WME, she was coldly rejected. Annie didn't understand what happened. Her brother's highly connected almost-fiancée had as much as assured her the skids would be slathered in Crisco and she was a shoe-in at WME. But, instead, they reviled her like a chili fart in an elevator.

Despite being hurt by the rebuff, Annie sucked it up and went on about her business, knowing that Mindy had at least gone to bat for her. A few months later, Annie was in New York and ran into one of the WME agents she'd hoped to work with. She asked him point-blank why they didn't want her. The agent seemed nervous and moved within whispering distance to Annie as if he was Bradley Manning passing state secrets to Wikileaks kingpin Julian Assange.

"We were definitely interested in you, but Mindy Kaling warned us in no uncertain terms that we didn't dare rep you, so that was that. Sorry."

Well, needless to say, Annie was shocked. When word got back to Ben--her brother and Mindy's squeeze--he couldn't believe it. He confronted Mindy, hoping it was a cruel joke, and Mindy would set him straight. That didn't happen, so that was the end of Mindy's relationship with Ben. I couldn't blame him. Had my girlfriend done the same thing to my sister, I would have dropped that craven a-hole in a New York second. At the time, Mindy was devastated by the breakup. She thought that Ben was just looking for a pretense to break up with her because she wasn't pretty enough. It was true. She *wasn't* pretty enough. *Inside*. Today, she'd shrug it off in an act of self-denial and claim, "It was for the best." She still doesn't recognize that what she did was wrong.

Mindy does not like to share the limelight with anyone, even if that person is far beneath her in an entirely different venue in another country or, for that matter, off the planet. If you're doing well, it's somehow sucking away her precious bodily fluids, no matter where in the Universe you are. I'm no psychologist, but I know that anyone that ill-adjusted has a serious fucking problem.

Still, you have to admire genius, even when it's evil genius. Mindy was incredibly subtle and brilliant in her backstabbing. If Mindy's agent at WME hadn't been such a complete numbskull (or, depending on how you look at it, ethical stud) and *spilled the beans* to Annie that Mindy had blacklisted her, Ben and his sister Annie would never have been the wiser. (Mindy subsequently dropped WME as her talent agent--wonder why?) Had Mindy married Ben, Annie would have been a bridesmaid, happily blessing their wedding, never realizing that Mindy had tried to destroy her budding comedy career. I cannot imagine how emotionally hard it would be to stab someone in the back while pretending to be their friend. Mindy is also a gifted actress and storyteller.

Sounds like a pitch for a movie, huh?

Annie would have been much better off going on her own *without* asking for Mindy's help.

My sister has engineered similar public and private plots against her many frenemies in Hollywood (including B.J. Novak, Greg Daniels, Anna Camp, Amanda Setton, Matt Warburton, Ellie Kemper, etc.). I'll give you a taste of what's to come: the weird, unbalanced, stalkerish obsessive relationship on *The Office* between Mindy's character Kelly and B.J.'s character Ryan? Not fiction. Yes, it was that weird.

As Annie the writer made the mistake, they are lulled into thinking Mindy is their best friend while she quietly undermines them behind the scenes. She's rude about everyone behind their back, but super nice to their face. I feel sorry for the poor suckers. To paraphrase Otter from *Animal House*, "*You fucked up... you trusted me.*" It's not that they had given Mindy a reason to hate them. They were her friends, but first and foremost, they were her *competition*, so she needed to destroy them. Perhaps I was the greatest fool because I believed Mindy would never sandbag *me*.

I've already mentioned that Mindy dropped her first name Vera, which stands for Vera Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of Wealth. Perhaps, her new name Kaling represents her allegiance to Kali, the devious Hindu Goddess of Vengeance.

At least now they'll see her coming.

SO GREAT TO MEET YOU. ASSHOLE.

Here's another telling tale. My dad, Mindy and I went to dinner at Mendocino Farms, an upscale sandwich shop on Fairfax in the Beverly Grove area of LA. We arrived, and I noticed Dev Patel and Freida Pinto, stars of *Slumdog Millionaire* and a picture perfect Bollywood to

Hollywood couple. I pointed them out, and while dad and I talked about liking the film, Mindy barely looked over, clearly demonstrating her disinterest.

One thing about Hollywood is that you always see many stars but you try not to intrude, so I stayed put rather than saying hello even though I was pretty stoked to see them. However, when Dev and Freida finished, they walked over to our table and greeted us. They knew who Mindy was, and they had recognized dad from the Diwali episode of *The Office* celebrating the Hindu Festival of Lights.

We all chatted for a few moments, and they were charming and magnetic. While they seemed genuinely excited to meet us--and dad and I them--Mindy was distant, bored and made sure everyone knew she was a little put out, like she was having to make small talk with someone's kitchen help. Also, one thing I know about my sister is that being around a stunningly beautiful woman sets her off. And Freida Pinto is, on the one to ten scale, north of fifteen. I knew that was a source of her antipathy toward them, particularly Freida. The fact that Dev and Freida are together immediately killed Mindy's interest in them.

After they had left, I mentioned to Mindy she should follow up with them, perhaps invite them to dinner and strike up some collaboration. She rolled her eyes at me as if I'd suggested she date a hunchback.

Her dismissal of them was evident, and it irritated me. My feeling was *who does she think she is?* I'm sure her answer would be "*Mindy Fucking Kaling, dipshit, that's who,*" but that would not cut it. I did a little research to understand why she felt she was so far above them, treating them as if they were pests trying to nibble some of her mojo away. In other words, Dev and Freida were Mindy's competition, and we know how that ended up for Ben's sister.

I stewed about it and confronted her the next day. I had to understand whether my sister had become one of those spineless, power mad celebs who spent all their spare time reading their

own press, checking their Twitverse and rationalizing why they're so much better than everyone else. I did not want to accept that my sister had become a full blown megalomaniacal self-involved climber... although she'd been exhibiting such behavior since high school.

I guess my words affected her as the next day she tweeted:

*Just ran into the incredibly winning Dev Patel and Freida Pinto at Mendocino Farms while having dinner with my dad. Indians love sandwiches!*

Harmless enough, but the delayed reaction of one day, with her rave about Dev then adding Freida almost as an afterthought seemed insincere. Maybe she just used up her 140 characters. Okay, I know her too well, it *was* insincere. Mindy took a situation that rubbed her the wrong way and spun it into a sunny positive.

For her public image, that is.

I have other stories, including her getting in big trouble in high school for "academic dishonesty" to her epic battles with her mentor and boss (ie. frenemy), writer/producer Greg Daniels, but I'll save those for later. If it seems like I'm trying to destroy my sister, I'm not. Sometimes, the people who love you have to tell you the truth you don't want to hear. Mindy's backstabbing already destroyed her relationship with the only good boyfriend she ever had, plus irreversibly damaging her relationship with me. If Mindy thinks twice about stabbing someone else in the back because of what I have written here, then I'm doing her a big favor. Call it a big brother's prerogative to his sister teach a lesson. People in glass houses, Mindy.

Let me assure you, Mindy did not ask my permission before having an abortion in 2008. I need not ask her permission before writing a book. If she disapproved, Mindy could have easily walked away from my book just as she could have easily walked away from Annie's (Ben's sister) request for help. However, no, because of her vengeful nature, she had to sabotage the success of both Annie and I.

So, now you know why I believe Vera Mindy Chokalingam, aka Mindy Kaling, is the reincarnation of Kali, the devious Hindu Goddess of Vengeance, not your celebrity best friend.