INT-THEATRE-EVENING

BLACK SCREEN

(Footsteps and loud, short and frequent breathing noises are heard.)

The black cloth is ruffled and we see a woman opening and adjusting her eyes to the dim lights that hang on the stage. She is holding a big, beige handbag on her shoulders, pressing it close to her chest with both her arms. She is **SUJATHA**, a 25 year old acting student .

(She is the best actor of her batch. She comes from a small village in Andhra but her years in the city of Chennai as a B.A student taught her much. She remains calm when encountered with chaos but tends to burst later, much later the incident that affects her has happened. This is her last play in her alma-matter, hence she is performing exceptionally well.)
She gives a stern look to the man who stands up from the ground and keeps the gun in his back pocket. There is a man standing behind her with the black cloth that her face was covered in when she came there. She walks over to the third man who is lying down on a wooden plank, his hands tied up with handcuffs on to a pole. His eyes are red and swollen, his upper lip, eyebrow and forehead are bruised. Behind him, the set wall has a few windows. He is sweating and he seems to be shaking. Sujatha kneels down and firstly uncovers his torso by removing the dirty shirt fabric from there. The wound seems to be ripe with pus and blood, stitched with black thread running through the middle on his abdomen. The man moans as she caresses his skin near the wound. He grimaces in pain. He is **CHANDER**, a 25 year old acting student.

(He is dating Sujatha. He has been born and brought up in Chennai and he lives with his sister and her husband. He is in a habit of zoning out, which he developed after the death of his mother. He tends to observe things that are of no consequence to him and wants to remain unbothered. He reads books but loses out on the content due to his habit of staring into space. It is his last performance in his alma-matter as well.)

SUJATHA
(turning to the man who had the gun)

Did you give him all the antibiotic doses I prescribed?

MAN

We gave one four hours ago..

Sujatha picks up an empty vial from the ground.

SUJATHA
(annoyed)

This should be half-full. It’s completely empty.

The man purses his lips. The man tied up is wincing in pain and shaking. She turns back to him and strokes his hair.

SUJATHA

Don’t worry. You will be just fine.

He winces in pain as she leaves him for a moment to take out an injection from her bag. She pulls liquid out of a fresh vile from her bag into the needle and proceeds to take hold of Chander’s arm, making him moan and close his eyes shut. She pines the injection down his forearm, gently.

SUJATHA

I am sorry.

CHANDER
(feeble voice, eyes barely open; swollen Eyelids)

Don't go. Please don't go. Stay.

She strokes his hair a couple more times and starts to get up.

CHANDER
(loud, coarse whisper)

Don't go. Don't go.

CUT TO:

AUDIENCE

[Stage sounds continue]

We see **SIDDHARTA**, a 32 year old director who is in Delhi only to collect his national award for his first feature film. He looks moved, his eyes brimming with emotion. He is wearing a black blazer. His hair is black. He looks a little younger for his age. He is sitting in the best seat of the theatre.

(He was in a life-threatening accident with a close friend who happened to be infamous cricketer Ramanujan's son. The friend died in that accident. Books and films along with smoking weed helped him get out of his PTSD. Hence, he chooses to tell stories that bring him back to that moment of fragility of life and insignificance of death through his films. He is forgetful about things in personal life but amazingly precise about his work.)

SUJATHA
(heard but not seen)

I'm sorry. Everything will be fine.

CHANDER
(heard but not seen)

Don't go.

CUT TO:

STAGE

Sujatha's face seems to be ridden with guilt. She starts to walk towards the exit of the stage. The man who is carrying a gun comes in front of her and stops her. The man with the black sack bag is also standing there.

MAN

How long does he have?

SUJATHA

If he isn't sent to a hospital, ten hours. Listen, I couldn't sleep all night. Whatever you are doing is extremely inhuman,I operated on Him a day ago! He needs post-op! How can you treat someone like this?

MAN

The way he shot my brother in his own wedding is very human, is it?

Tell me, cousin. To make a woman a widow on the first night
Of hers as a wife. That's human?

The man with the black bag positions the bag on her head as she looks up and down the other man in curt anger. She snatches the black bag and puts it on her head herself. The man places his hand on the nape of her neck in a practiced motion and pushes her away.

CUT TO:

EXT- LE MERIDIAN KITCHEN, CHENNAI-NIGHT

(songs from a function can be heard)

A chef is smoking a cigarette right outside the kitchen. He looks like he is in his 20s. He is wearing the chef's white uniform and scrolling his phone screen. A video comes up.

(We see a slightly fat, dark skinned girl ranting, roaming around in her house. The decibel of her voice is quite high. The bar on the top of the video shows "Trending Now". There's two still pictures patched amateurishly on the video. One of a woman named SSP, another of cricketer Ramanujan)

GIRL

Enna Mister Ramanujan Iyer, vechanungala unnaku aapu? Otha nee unga amma vu ke mariyadhe kuduka matte nee ellam eppadi da ivalo periya cricketer aane??? Ange nee enna pudunge? match fixing. Asingam. kevalam. Enge ponalum fraud thanam. Unnaku vechala SSP aapu, you pedophile. Nee avaloda life destroy pannalum nu nenaichele. fucking sadist. Ava un motha kudumbathiye veral vittu nondunale. We all support the victim. SSP we love you for doing such a brave move.

(Hello Mr Ramanujan Iyer, did they fuck with you? You never respected your parents, you deserve this. You match fixed and brought shame to this country. All you did were heinous acts. Ssp caught you by the balls. And you thought you could destroy her dreams of becoming an actor. We all support the victim. SSP we love you for doing such a brave move.)

We see a tensed **RAMANUJAN** in his mid 60s walk fast by the chef into the kitchen followed by two younger men, his 30 years old son **ASHWIN** is one and the other is a 38 years old Siddharta. The chef looks at them pass by, his jaw drops a little. Ramanujan's forehead is sweating. All three of them open the huge door to enter the kitchen.
(Ramanujann has been on top of his game, his bank account and he has seen all of it slip and come back again. He rarely delves in his past and spends his time and energy thinking of what's gonna happen next. But since his first son's death and the age catching up, he gets dreams that wake him up at 2 am and make him miss his mother whom he didn't ever know as a person, just as a mother.)

(Ashwin graduated with Sujatha, his traumatic childhood shapes his worldview. He wants the truth but when he gets it, he doesn't know what to do with it, as if he has been handed a hot potato and he doesn't know how to hold it.)

INT-LE MERIDIAN KITCHEN, CHENNAI-NIGHT

The kitchen is filled with silver platforms and silverware. Two chefs are sizzling something in their respective utensils while two other chefs chop meat and vegetables. A waiter comes in, leaves a paper under the paperweight beside the pin holding several of them. One of the chefs comes around, checks the paper and starts giving instructions.

WAITER

Fish and chips!

In the corner, the three men are standing. Ashwin is holding a beer and Siddharta is holding a crystal glass filled with whiskey to 1/4th of its capacity. They have the door and a silver platform on either sides. On the silver platform, a big vessel is kept filled with edible, alive fish in water.

ASHWIN

At least don't lie to me now, dad. It is all out in public this moment, as we talk.

RAMANUJAN

I did not fuck her Ashwin!

SIDDHARTA

Uncle, the allegation is of sexual harassment, not rape. No one's saying anything about fucking.

RAMANUJAN
(doing elaborate hand actions)

She was wearing a metal belt covering her hole! How could I have fucked her!

ASHWIN

What?

SIDDHARTA
(toning himself down significantly, folding his arms as if investigative/thoughtful)

You mean a chastity belt?

ASHWIN

A what?

SIDDHARTA

Just google it.

Ashwin takes out his phone and googles images of chastity belt. We see the screen. Ashwin is standing opposite to his father, Siddharta is standing beside him.

SIDDHARTHA
(while Ashwin is googling, to Ramanujan)

So the entire allegation is a lie? Did she tempt you into something?

RAMANUJAN

Who cares? Nobody is ready to listen to that. They want to hear her version of it, so they can masturbate. Fuck talking. The press will twist my words. What happened was anything but me forcing myself on her. There's only one thing we can do. Siddharta, let's make a film. I want to tell this bitch's truth. People buy it, don't buy it-
I don't give a shit. I will bring everyone down with me. I will make the film. An intense motherfucking film.

The other two look at him wide-eyed, as if waiting for him to add more information.

RAMANUJAN

And of course, I will finance it, the whole thing.
I will empty my bank accounts. I don't give a shit.

ASHWIN
(After sipping his beer)

What are you blabbering? Do you know how difficult it is to get a release for a film?
Fuck recovering the money. No distributer will ever buy it. This hype will die down sooner than
you imagine.

RAMANUJAN

Fuck theatres, we'll put it on Netflix. Make it a web series, I don't care. We are releasing this in two months.
This spark will become a fire.

ASHWIN

Two months? It's not closing accounts for the year, dad. Do you
Even know how a film is made? What are you, a toddler? I know all this OTT shit.
I included them when I said distributors, you know.

SIDDHARTA
Alright Ashwin, shut up. Now, uncle you said you want to make an intense film, right?
For that I will need some brief immediately to start writing. Tell me.

One of the chefs walk over to the silver platform adjacent to them and digs in to grab fishes. He grabs one and starts cleaning the scales.

RAMANUJAN

Revenge. The most basic of natural emotions. You don't even have to be
A human being to feel it. She came to me when she wanted to be an actress. She didn't even know how
To speak English. I trained her and made sure she reaches the finals of Miss World.
Those fuckers- they fucked up the name slips. They announced the wrong winner. Who gives
A shit about a runner-up in this world? It is all about winning. She lost it by a hair's length. In her
Own right, she has a point. But what the fuck could I do? I cannot change reality. I gave her
The best next thing I could provide, a seat in my party. She had enough popularity and Tamil
Men dominate the voter's list. She aced as a politician. Anyway, you should start looking for actors,
Siddharta-

The chef fillets the fish.

ASHWIN

Dad, I think we should give Siddharta some time to think. You just
dumped everything on him.

SIDDHARTA

Ashwin, I already said yes.
(to Ramanujan)
I will do it uncle, for you. But you have to promise me you'll tell me your complete truth.
However ugly it is.

ASHWIN

You guys are fucking lunatics.

The chef digs in for another fish but it slips from his hand on to the floor. It wriggles in slimy water in front of the three.

RAMANUJAN

Ayye, can't you do one job properly?

CHEF

Sorry, sir.

The fish moves its body desperately for life.

Everything around the fish becomes a smokey white
CUT TO:

INT-DREAMY HOUSE-NIGHT

Sujatha walks in, picks the fish up and keeps it in a bowl near the kitchen sink. We hear an adult-sounding voice crying like a baby. Sujatha hurriedly picks up the milk bottle that's also kept on the platform.

SUJATHA

Don't cry Kutty, I am coming! Shh.

She walks through the smokey white and enters a room which is filled with white smoke as well. We see a crib in the room and nothing else. Chander, dressed like a child is inside the crib crying. He mellows down at her sight but continues to sob. Sujatha comes near him, smiles. She positions the bottle near her chest and aims at Chander's mouth, which is now open. She presses the bottle and milk falls into his mouth. A man enters the room and hugs Sujatha from behind her. *[The lights change from white to red as soon as this man enters]* Chander's tear stained cheeks are flooded with fresh tears but he can't seem to stop drinking the milk. The face of the man is revealed, and he is **Ashwin**. Just then, sounds of a water pump being pumped is heard. It is loud.

INT-CHANDER'S HOUSE-MORNING(5 am)

Chander wakes up abruptly, shouting and holds his head. The water pump sound is still heard. He is reeking with sweat. His sister **MALIKA**, who is in her late 30s comes in running and peeps her head inside while closing the rest of the door. She is wearing a nighty, her hair is wet and let down. Chander's is a middle class house. No more than 2 rooms and a hall that serves as kitchen as well as dining space. There is one bathroom to use.

MALIKA

Chander, don't shout. You're disturbing the class.
Go, get water.

She shuts the door. Chander gets off from the bed.

CUT TO:

EXT-STREET-MORNING
(Mellow music fills up)

(V.O. Imagine bouncing a ball. Say I drop it and it takes a second for it to bounce up. So in that second, the earth has moved about 80 miles or so in space around the sun.)

Chander, holding his brass vessel, is standing behind a nighty clad woman who seems to be the landlady. She fills four of her vessels. The people in the line behind Chander, who is first in line are cursing and shouting at her for taking more than half the water just for herself. Just then, the landlady starts talking and the non-diegetic voice over stops. Diegetic dialogues take over.

LANDLADY
(her voice reeking with sarcasm)

You guys empty the well without even waiting
for dawn to break!Can we even think of competing with you
here?

Then, it is Chander's turn so he puts his vessel and starts pumping the water tap. There is a pile of turd and shit right beside the vessel. An old woman comes and pushes his vessel and keeps her own there.

CHANDER
(mumbles)
We all know I came before you.

Chander pushes her vessel and puts his vessel back below the tap.

OLD WOMAN
(in a surprisingly loud decibel)

Sani! Move yours, I am old, can't you see?
You guys can wait for the tanker. How will I?

(Non-diegetic voiceover begins after the dialogue)
(V.O. So you could ask this question, whether the ball returned to the same place in space or not. And the answer is, you can't answer it.)

Chander seems to have lost his grip. He didn't expect the old woman to scold him this way.

CUT TO:

INT-CHANDER'S HOUSE-MORNING

Priya is seeing the kids out as the tuitions have ended. She holds back one chubby 14 year old kid, ADI.

MALIKA

Adi, pay attention to the lessons.
Otherwise exams will be very tough for you.
Do the homework and come tomorrow. Go now.

Adi nods at her and makes his way out of the door. Chander enters as his sister goes to change into a saree and get ready for school. He enters the kitchen and takes a slice of bread from the packet kept near the stove. He takes some pickle and spreads it over the bread and starts eating it. As he is almost done, Priya comes out, looking sharp in her saree.

MALIKA
(looking inside the vessel)

You got less water today? How am
I supposed to cook?

Chander gives her a look.

CUT TO:

INT-BUS-MORNING

Chander is inside the bus and a guy standing there with paint on his t-shirt and he is holding a paint can. The exterior has some paint on it and some of it grazes on Chander's pants.
So the point is you can't say this is a point in space, that it came back to the same place. That just depends on your perspective. Depends on whether you're on earth or watching it go around the sun or whatever it is; that's why Einstein said there's no such thing as absolute space.

(V.O continues as non-diegetic sound and ends in this scene)

CUT TO:

EXT-SHOOT-DAY

The sun seems to be high up in the sky, indicating the harshness of the afternoon Chennai sun. A woman, dressed sharply in a t-shirt and jeans is standing in front of a paan-cigarette shop. She is holding a walkie talkie up to her mouth and talking.

PRIYADARSHINI

Yes, I am on the way. 5 minutes sir, I will be there.

She holds it near her ear. She keeps the walkie talkie in the waist belt she has with a pocket to fit it in. She starts walking away from the paan shop when Chander touches her shoulder. She stops and turns.

CHANDER

Priya madam, I was called for a role today.
They said I have to come to you for the dialogue. What is it madam?

She takes out a pocket notebook from her jeans left pocket and a pen from her back pocket. She writes "OH!" filling up the entire page with those two letters.

PRIYADARSHINI
(She is an AD on the set. She tends to stutter in her speech)

You will be holding a a a lot of files in your hand. The hero will walk out of the car and looking at his face we know he is late for the meeting. He rushes and bangs into you and and and the files fall but the hero walks away without even looking at you. You will say OH! And start picking the files.

Chander looks at the sky. The sun looks like its got flames around it. He looks down.

CHANDER
This is a joke, right? So this is the so called speaking part is it?

PRIYADARSHINI
This is a very important part you're playing. It reveals the urgency of the situation and the hero's insensitivity to your character. Think about it!

CHANDER
When will the shot be taken?

PRIYADARSHINI
Not for another 40 minutes. Wait there.

A man holding a camera comes and calls her. She goes away with him.

CHANDER
I was called in at fucking 9 a.m.This industry is full

Of sadists and psychopaths.

The woman doesn't hear him. He mumbles to himself and takes a step back to the cigarette shop. Just then, his phone rings. He picks up the call. A split screen opens and we see Sujatha wearing a tight track suit sitting in the train, she has her earphones on. Her hair is tied in a plate behind her. The sounds of railway wheels on metal tracks and hustle of passengers is audible.

SUJATHA

How's the shoot going?

CHANDER
(passive-aggressive)

Like a shoot fucking goes, Sujatha. You see, there's a director, a bunch
Of fools thinking he'll notice them while they carry his orders and equipments
around and me.

SUJATHA
(her expression changes to something more perturbed/annoyed.)

I know why you are angry.

CHANDER

And why is that madam?

SUJATHA

You are still stuck with what happened yesterday. You were trying to kiss me
in the bus! What did you expect?

Sujatha starts getting another call, a beep is heard. Another split screen opens, an older woman is dialling Sujatha continuously. This woman is Sujatha's mother. She is standing behind the gas stove and there is rice cooking in a pot, a plate over it. As soon as the phone is getting cut, she is calling again.

CHANDER

I haven't seen anything below your neck since the time I came to Chennai. Are you telling me that I can't kiss you now? Fuck you and your righteous shit. In Delhi, you were always-

SUJATHA

Fuck it, shut up! Shut up and you listen to me, now. I have booked tickets for us for the 4 pm show. Come there, okay?

CHANDER

We should kiss only when you want to, is it? Fuck you. Take your Ashwin and go.

SUJATHA

Why the hell would I take him? I already did once, when we were studying together, and he stubbed a cigarette on my thigh. Why the fuck would I-

CHANDER

What? Wait wait. You know what dream I had last night?

We see Adi sitting on the dining table. He has a physics book in front of him and he has kept his phone in the crevice of the book. He unlocks the screen and we watch as the video loading sign does its rounds. It is a porn website with ads of tablets that'll grow one's penis pop up.

SUJATHA

I'm telling you such a traumatic incident in my life and and you are making it about yourself, as always.

CHANDER

You know what Sujatha? I would be happier if somebody offered me a role in porn film. I still prefer it over this fucking phone call.

SUJATHA

PODA!

Sujatha cuts the call and her mother calls again. Chander's split screen closes as he takes the phone off his ear, wiping his forehead sweat. Her mother is holding a cloth in her hand when she picks up the ringing phone with the other hand.

SUJATHA
(irritated)

What is it, mom? Why did you call me
a million times?

SUJATHA'S MOTHER

Who were you talking to?

Sujatha's mother picks up the hot rice handleless pot with the help of the cloth, craning her neck to one side holding her phone in between her shoulder and ear.

SUJATHA

Chander had a shoot today so I was asking him how it went.

SUJATHA'S MOTHER

That guy! You know what that guy's sister did to our Adi? She slapped him!
In front of his classmates! I am going to stop sending Adi to his house for tuition. I already called her and told her this. If you ever talk to Chander again I will kick you out of the house. Their entire family is like that, I am telling you.

She starts to pour the water out on the sink.

SUJATHA

Adi is stupid, mom. Even you hit him. He needs a strict hand
only then he might do something, can't you see that? Are you fucking blind? Let me go to work in peace!

Sujatha cuts the phone, her split screen closes. Sujatha's mother has dropped the rice all over the sink, as the plate slipped from her hand.

She looks back and sees her 14 year old chubby son Adi looking into his phone.

As she comes out into the dining space, Adi quickly keeps his phone down and picks up his book, starts reading. The phone receives a text message as she is staring at her son momentarily. She immediately picks it up and he is off guard. She unlocks the screen and a two legs entangled are seen. Moaning noises are heard.

CUT TO:

INT-SSP's BEDROOM-DAY

The room has whitewashed walls and is quite bright. There is a king sized bed and a bedside table in the room. Everything is made from mahogany wood. There is a mask hanging over the bed.
A woman dressed in nothing but sports bra and short knickers is lying on her back, her knees are pressed to her abdomen and she is wincing in slight pain while also enjoying it. Sujatha is pushing her legs back to their limits. She seems to know the rhythm of SSP's body. She stretches her legs out.
(SSP has lost her most important dream in life. She watched films when she is alone and fantasised being the actress instead of the heroine who is starring in it. She lives the reality she wanted to in her head, still eternally young when she closes her eyes thinking of herself dancing alongside the male star, all eyes on her. This reality hinders with her actual one, in which she impulsively takes action in a way to console herself and ends up being quite irrational. She is a successful politician and she does like the attention she gets because she is a well-maintained woman, ageing gracefully.)

SSP

I feel quite good since yesterday. People are very supportive. Of course online trolls are there, but in the larger picture I know I have the people on my side.

There is a slight emotion in SSP's tone. She turns around to lie on her stomach. Sujatha comes to the side of the bed and twists her arms till its limit.

SUJATHA

That man has already let the people down once. They know what he is capable of. I did not even know about his involvement in the beauty pageant! It was kept under wraps in such a vicious manner, I wonder how many women have gone through shit? It is very brave of you to create a space like this against an important person.

SSP

For generations men have been screwing us over. This had to happen. I knew I had to do this some day.

SUJATHA

Yeah, but some men are good, too. Some improve over time…

SSP

I know, you're dating Chander and all so you are bound to feel like that. Good and bad always co-exist, Sujatha. But I don't really give a shit about all that. So many good women have been sacrificed by the hands of treacherous men! Won't that be counted? In a war, blood is shed on both sides.

Collateral damage is a price to pay.

SUJATHA

Yes, you're right madam.

Sujatha gets on top of SSP, sitting on her back. She pulls both her arms to their limit. She pulls her legs from behind her again. SSP's groan is heard.

CUT TO:

INT-CHANGING ROOM-DAY

We see Sujatha through the ajar door, wearing on a light yellow coloured saree. She is tucking it in, her blouse and torso exposed. She is looking in the mirror. We see SSP walking stop and look at Sujatha through the doorway. She looks at her up and down.

SSP
(mumbles)

Fuck..

CUT TO:

INT-MOVIE THEATRE-EVENING

Chander and Sujatha are sitting inside the theatre on seats next to each other towards the isle. The images flash on both their faces. Chander is leaning forward, his elbows resting on his knees. He is pretending to watch the movie intently. Sujatha sees him by straining her eyes to the left of their sockets. She takes a deep breath herself. She is looking pretty in her yellow saree and small gold earrings. She touches Chander's arm gently, then grips her palm around his forearm. He seems to loosen up and finally collapses back into his seat. Chander inches his face towards Sujatha's and she does the same. When the inches in between them dissolve into centimetres and are finally reaching point 0, a light flashes on them, making Sujatha jump back into her seat. Chander is furious. He stands up in the middle of the film, angrily looking at the source of the menacing light. He singles out the worker-boy who is handing out popcorn and Pepsi to some people two rows ahead; wearing a white light on his head.

CHANDER

What the fuck are you doing? How can you just enter and flash light all over? Are you a fucking idiot? Where is your manager?

BOY

Sorry sir…calm down please..

Sujatha stands up to hold Chander.

SUJATHA

Chander, calm down. Chander, please.

CHANDER

How can you do this, motherfucker? How is this a rule? Call your damned manager!

SUJATHA

Chander, Chander. Calm down. Please, na!

Sujatha tries pulling him close to her as subtly she could, pinching the fabric of his shirt with her finger tips.

SUJATHA

Come, sit down. Let's not spoil it more-

He pushes her back violently, making her collapse back into her seat.

CHANDER

Shut up and come with me! Your manager won't come here, is it?
I will go to him! Fucker!

Chander holds the 20 year old boy by his collar and drags him out. For the rest of the spectators, this was more interesting than the film on the screen. The audience breaks into a layer of murmur while the action sequence in the film goes on. Sujatha gets up and goes out of the theatre hall. As she walks out, the lights come on in the theatre as the show breaks for interval.

CUT TO:

She finds Chander waiting to cross the jam packed road. She goes and stands beside him.

SUJATHA
Did you eat anything since morning?

Chander shakes his head.
They cross the road finding a window just then. They make their way over to the other side and now have one road of traffic between them and the other side, which is bustling with tired office-goers and excited students, all huddling over piping hot coffee, idli-chutney and other snacks.

SUJATHA

Is it fair to show your hunger on somebody like that?

CHANDER

Where are you going? Let's go home.

SUJATHA

Come, let's eat something here.

CHANDER

I am good.

SUJATHA

Just come. I will pay.

Both of them get inside the restaurant. It is densely packed in the heat. The fans look like they are exhausted of churning so much carbon dioxide around. They are full of dust. Chander walks up to the wash basin and washes his face and looks at Sujatha from the mirror in front of him. Sujatha is counting money and paying the bill. Just then, a familiar man enters the shop. It is none other than Ashwin, smartly dressed and frankly a little out of place in that small space.

ASHWIN

Sujatha! Is everything alright? I saw what happened.

Chander turns around with water dripping all over his face.

CUT TO:

(THE SAME SCENE FROM CINEMA THEATRE HAPPENS AGAIN, BUT FROM ASHWIN'S PERSPECTIVE)
[Soul-jazz music starts]

We see Ashwin sitting in the back row of the left aisle, diagonal to Sujatha and Chander who are sitting on the right aisle, three rows ahead of him. The screen of his phone kept on his thigh comes to life with a message from Siddharta: "Stayed up all night, wrote like crazy. Get me actors ASAP"
His passive body is threatened with heavy heartbeat as soon as Chander stands up and starts shouting. Ashwin is alert and hence moves away from the backrest. The film is at a dramatic point itself and just then, a beautiful woman in a flowing yellow saree stands up. Even though he is looking at her from this far away Ashwin knows who this is. Time slows down for him as Chander grabs the collar of the unfortunate boy and goes out. But, Chander's action isn't the reason. Ashwin looks at her walk out of the theatre.
Ashwin takes out his smartphone and dials 'Siddharta'. Siddharta doesn't pick up the call and Ashwin starts receiving another call. A split screen opens. Ramanujann is sitting on his bar, clearly drunk and in tears. There is a whiskey glass in front of him. He is dressed in a robe.
Ashwin picks up Ramanujan's call.

ASHWIN

Dad? Are you crying?

RAMANUJAN

I loved her. I really loved her dude. I would
Never do something to harm her this way.

ASHWIN

Till when will I have to keep putting up with his shit?

Ashwin keeps the phone and sees Siddharta's WhatsApp message displayed on his screen:
'Saw the missed call, what's up?'

Ashwin swipes right and fills in the reply field with:
'Coming to your place in 45 min with actors' and hits send.

CUT BACK TO RESTAURANT:

Chander wipes his face with his handkerchief and walks towards them.

ASHWIN

Are you alright bro?

SUJATHA

Yes yes, he is all alright. Clearly.

As Sujatha nods, Ashwin shakes Chander's hand and he gives him a half smile which Ashwin returns with a full one and grabs the seat next to Sujatha. Chander sits facing them.

SUJATHA

We came over to your office a couple of times.

ASHWIN

I am very sorry, but a lot of shit has been happening.
I am sure you have heard by now..

SUJATHA

Yes I did. How is uncle?

ASHWIN

He is stressed. But leave that.
I actually came up to you because a director has asked to meet Chander.
Siddharta. You know him?

SUJATHA
(glaring a little)

Are you fucking serious? If this is one of your pranks Ashwin, I will walk to the kitchen right now, pick up an *aruvamanai* and slit your throat with it and drink your blood.

ASHWIN

You. You're threatening me?

Sujatha looks him in the eye dead serious.

ASHWIN
You have to come and see, right now.
Both of you. Mr. Chander, today you are getting the break you deserve.

SUJATHA

Why both of us, just take him. I should head home.

ASHWIN

Look at this! After threatening me with murder,
You think I will go without you? You have to see it with your own eyes.
Sujatha laughs.

CHANDER

I didn't even shave today.

Sujatha digs out a small round box from her handbag and gives it to Chander. He opens the little makeup kit.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT-HALL-NIGHT

A man is setting up a camera and another, mic. There is a sofa kept which is lit from the lights in the hall. The woman from a TV channel is there, dressed in a pantsuit going over the paper she has in her hand. Then she walks into a room and

INT-SSP'S CHANGING ROOM-NIGHT

SSP is sitting at her dressing table. The tv reporter comes in

TV REPORTER
Ma'am, we are on in 5 minutes.

She smiles and closes the door. The make up girl continues putting make up on SSP. Just then, her iPhone springs to life with a call. SSP's eye catches the name on the screen.

SSP

Go out for a minute.

The girl goes out and SSP picks up the phone. She keeps it against her ear and keeps staring at herself in the mirror.
A split screen opens up as Ramanujan's drunken cry fills the frame. Ramanujann is sitting at his bar, his fancy crystal whiskey jug is empty and so is his glass.

RAMANUJAN

Why? Why now, why when I have nothing
to give you?

SSP's lips are pursed and she is still.

RAMANUJAN

Remember those days when you and your mother had nothing,
I promised her I would marry her daughter. She died believing me!
I didn't say a word about you and that north Indian guy, even though
I saw you kiss him. You very well know
Why I did not.

Silence prevails for a moment. SSP sighs a little.

Ramanujan

It is because I respected your devotion
To stay pure. You put on a chastity belt, so
You could stay pure for your husband! And I was to be
That husband!

SSP bursts out laughing.

RAMANUJAN

Why are you…what?

SSP

You think I am a virgin?

RAMANUJAN

What do you mean? Listen, I know someone is threatening you for this. That's it, right?
Tell me Thangam, who is it? You know you can tell me anything. In fact I will come over right now.
Okay? I will handle it.

SSP
Are you listening to me, Mr. Ramanujan? I am not a virgin.

RAMANUJAN

Don't take this blackmail to places where it'll get uglier. Just tell me this

Motherfucker of a blackmailer who is bothering you. I will finish him.

SSP

No, I will finish you. You are still as stupid as I found you. Listen,
I just did not want your dirty, filthy cock up my cunt. I have taken
A lot before and after you. In fact, I have taken some while
We were together. Pure, my ass. You wanted to marry me
just to rip my chastity belt apart. You never loved me.

Ramanujan throws the glass in his hand against the cabinet in front of him. SSP continues laughing.

RAMANUJAN

You fucking slut, I'll kill you.

SSP

Oh I'll tell you now. I was sixteen when I lost my virginity.

RAMANUJAN

Shut up!

Ramanujan walks with the support of his bar, dropping a couple of things down. He goes to his room, opens the cupboard and takes out a gun.

SSP

You know I am from a small village, right? So, one morning I went to this mechanic who
Used to own a shop down the street.

RAMANUJAN

I will fucking kill you.

CUT TO:

INT-CAR-NIGHT

Ramanujann is driving his Scorpio rashly. He is accelerating hard, almost hitting a flower pot in front of the house then turning it excessively to save it from happening.

He is still on the phone.

SSP

I did it with him everywhere, Ramanujan. The ground, the backseat of a motor car some
Rich customer had left to his care. Every fucking where. I can't even count how many places..

RAMANUJAN

Shut up, you whore! I am going to fucking kill you.

SSP

You are repeating the same shit over and over like
A lunatic. You are a retarded old loser, Ramanujan.
You were a disgrace to your country, the game of cricket and now
You are a disgrace again. I didn't tell them something too far off the truth,

Did I Ramanujan? Remember the nights you used to beg me to let you suck on my thumb
Just so you could fall asleep? That's who you are. A fucking overgrown child.
You deserve this shit.

RAMANUJAN

I-I- you wait. You fucking wait for your funeral now.
It's tonight, bitch-

Just then, his phone slips from his drunken hands down near his feet. He starts looking for it, exasperated, losing his field of view of the road.

A loud thud and we see a person on the windshield.

CUT TO:

INT- SIDDHARTA'S HOUSE- NIGHT

SIDDHARTA
(looking at Ashwin)

Um, what is he doing these days?

ASHWIN

This is Chander, the guy I told you about. A very fine actor. But he was getting bogged down in these small films which don't even release. If he was a little lucky, he would've reached the top by now.

SIDDHARTA

I see. And this lady?

ASHWIN

She was also in NSD. Another prolific actor who was just not that lucky.

SIDDHARTA

So, you also have a diploma in acting?

SUJATHA

Yes.

SIDDHARTA
(looks at her intently)

Aren't you Miss Sujatha Saketharaman?

SUJATHA
(Eyes Widening in surprise)

Yes.

SIDDHARTHA

You played Dr. Nasreen at NSD a few years ago, right?

SUJATHA

Yes.

SIDDHARTHA

My god! It was such an intense performance!
Do you know I have been looking for you everywhere since then?

SUJATHA

Looking for me?

SIDDHARTHA

Yes! That year I was in Delhi for the National Awards function. I had to return to Chennai the very next day, after your play at NSD. By the time I made inquiries at your institute, your batch had already left. I got your name only after I bribed your institute. Tell me would you have any objection to acting in films?

Sujatha coughs a couple of times then picks up her glass of water from the table.

ASHWIN

We came here for Mr. Chander. In fact, Sujatha wasn't even supposed to come.

SIDDHARTHA

Well it's great that she's come. I've been looking everywhere for her for two years. Miss Saketharaman, let me be honest with you, The film I'm currently writing is not aimed at the box-office, but it is sure to make noise.. from the moment I saw you, I knew you would be perfect for the role of SSP.

SUJATHA

Chander also performed in that play. He played Nalla.

SIDDHARTHA

Oh, of course. I remember his role. But now I'm talking about Ashwin's father's biopic.

ASHWIN

Her parents will never allow her to act in films.

SIDDHARTA

Did you live in a hostel when you were studying in NSD?

SUJATHA

Yes.

SIDDHARTHA

If her parents let her live in a hostel and mix with loafers who say they want to learn acting, they won't object to her being in films. Don't get me wrong but an opportunity like this comes only once in a lifetime. You get to play lead right away. This film will only take three months to complete, at most four. I give you my word. Four months is all I ask. After that, Miss Saketharaman, you'll be free to go back to cinema or drama or a kitchen nook, wherever you'd like to go.

All of them fall silent. Ashwin clears his throat. Chander has a smug expression on his face.

ASHWIN

`Our visit was for Mr Chander only.

SIDDHARTHA

Let's see. There is only one hero for this subject. You know how it is, Ashwin. I've already locked Vishal's dates for it. The other roles won't suit him. Never mind about this, I'll definitely use you in my next film. I hope you understand. Miss Sujatha, please think over the next couple of days and let me know your decision.

CUT TO:

INT-CAR-NIGHT

Chander is sitting in the passenger seat, Sujatha in the back. Ashwin is looking back and reversing the car. The car is slow till it reaches the front gate. Then, it zooms off. They are silent for a good minute in which Ashwin manages to cough.

SUJATHA

What do you think?

CHANDER

Let's see when he starts his next.

SUJATHA

No, about his offer to me.

CHANDER

I don't know…take it up if you want..

SUJATHA

But I don't like his offer at all.

ASHWIN

Sujatha, why won't you take up? He's a national award winning director after all. And Appa would appreciate it too…

Sujatha opens her mouth to answer but Chander speaks before she can.

CHANDER

Sujatha, is the mark that his cigarette left on your thigh gone?

ASHWIN

What? What?

CHANDER

What a fucked up day! You guys have made me roam around like Vikram from pithamagan. All of you sat in a room and made this plan to humiliate me is it? What a masterplan.

SUJATHA

Chee. Don't talk like a little child.

CHANDER

Well, I should've known, my dream clearly spoke to me. I was just a puppet.

SUJATHA

What has gotten into you? Shut your stinking mouth Chander!

The breaks screeched for the first time in that car today because Ashwin almost crossed the red signal. As soon as their car comes to a stop, Chander opens the car door and gets down. While Ashwin just looks in his direction, Sujatha responds. Chander walks in and out the other side of the puzzle of traffic.

SUJATHA

Chander!

ASHWIN

You still wanna go to him? Are you sure? He seems nuts to me.

She starts to open the door, but it is locked. She keeps trying noisily till Ashwin sighs and opens his door's lock, thus unlocking central lock of the car. Sujatha gets down and walks fast in the same direction. Chander is now crossing the second road, more cautiously as cars are going past him, in front as well as behind him.

SUJATHA

Chander! Chander!

CHANDER

(stopping to turn as he reaches the other side of the road. A honk is heard.)

Aren't you educated? Why are you shouting on the road?

Sujatha crosses the road, her eyes just on Chander. a car honks loudly and goes from behind her.

SUJATHA

Why are you running away like this? What's come over you?

CHANDER

Are you my damn mother? I'll break your fucking teeth.

Sujatha breaks out in tears. Chander gives her a disgusted look turns away and walks briskly. He reaches the pedestrian path and Sujatha runs ahead of him and stops him by standing in front of him with tears in her eyes. Behind them, a TV shop's television sets are showing music and sports channels.

SUJATHA
(crying)

I deserve this because I fell in love with you Chander. What the fuck can I do if Ashwin poked a cigarette into me? Should I just die? Tell me! Tell me now! Is it my fault that I was offered a job I don't even want?

CHANDER

A man has been looking for you for years and now you will turn him down too? Of course, that's what's expected of women like you. Go and fucking die.

Chander pushes Sujatha slightly off the curb. He is turning around but just then a loud thud is heard. Ramanujan's scorpio that's being driven haphazardly hits Sujatha, whose body is flung into the sky. The sky is dark blue and shimmering with white lines of light which are from a meteor shower taking place. The car hits two other pedestrians- both men before making its way on the road. They seem to be alive due to the angles they were in, sideways to the intruding car. Chander stands in front of the TV store with his mouth open. He is facing the accident scene in front of him. The TVs are flashed with Chander's life mixed with static imagery on the screens. The wind seems to be picking up as the garbage around Chander swirls and shifts. Sounds of repercussions by onlookers after such an incident come to life.

FADE TO BLACK

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