

## **A DEATH IN THE GUNJ**

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Additional Screenplay  
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Based on a short story by Mukul Sharma.

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ON BLACK

Super: McCluskiegunj, 1979.

FADE IN:

1 EXT. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION. DUSK

1

An old, blue Ambassador is parked in the middle of a stark and barren landscape. A shabby building stands at a distance. The camera is in the boot of the car and as the boot is lifted, we see Nandu (35) and Brian (34) silhouetted against a bright afternoon sky. Nandu has his hands on his hips and Brian is peering into the boot. They are both dressed in unkempt winter clothes and look dishevelled.

The camera is behind them now as Nandu and Brian awkwardly struggle to hoist a dead body wrapped in a sheet into the trunk. It does not fit. Nandu holds on to the feet that stick out in an awkward position.

BRIAN

(Holding onto the head)

Why don't you bend the knees, like  
in a foetal position?

They exchange a look. They put the body in a foetal position; it fits. They slam the boot shut. On black we hear,

BRIAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You're okay to drive?

NANDU (O.C.)

Ya. You got the papers right?

BRIAN (O.C.)

Yup.

The doors close and the ignition starts. As the blue ambassador drives away we see revealed the dilapidated sign: Ranchi Morgue, against a stark landscape.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK.

2

In a series of long shots we see the same ambassador on a lonely stretch of a highway.

CUT TO:

3 INT/EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK. 3

Through the window of the driver's seat we see Nandu driving. Brian is sitting in the passenger's seat. He lights two cigarettes and gives Nandu one.

CUT TO:

4 INT/EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK. 4

Through the windscreen we see a third passenger in the backseat: Shutu (23), wearing a green woollen sweater, sitting at the edge of his seat. He looks worried and scared. We move to an extreme close up.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK. 5

We are on a wide lens on the side of the road. Highway in the foreground and landscape at the back. The ambassador enters frame right and exits left. The title fades in as though floating on the landscape at the back: A DEATH IN THE GUNJ.

5.A The frame bleaches to day as the titles fade out and the ~~same~~ car, now quite dusty, passes left to right.

CUT TO:

6 INT/EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DAY. 6

Inside the car Bonnie, Nandu's wife, sleeps with her head lolled back.

Super: One week earlier. Day One/Monday (27th DECEMBER)

Bonnie (Barnali Bakshi) is about 34, has a quirky, pretty face and is wearing over-sized sunglasses with a scarf tied under her chin. Nandu and Bonnie's daughter, Tania Bakshi (7) is asleep on her mother's lap, clutching an old rag doll.

Their friend, Mimi (Mitali Basu) (34) is also in the back seat. Mimi is an abundantly sexy, well turned out woman. She has a book open on her lap, though they are all sleeping. They are wearing winter, travelling clothes.

Nandu sits in front, driving. His shirt sleeves rolled up and a lit cigarette in one hand. There are empty beer bottles clinking on the floor of the car.

Shutu sits in the front passenger seat. He has a Rubik's cube in his hands though he is surreptitiously looking at MIMI's reflection in the rear view mirror.

Nandu looks in the rear view mirror notices the girls huddled up in the cold, sleeping at the back.

NANDU  
All out.

Shutu looks behind and turns back at Nandu, smiles and goes back to his Rubik's cube.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY. 7

The ambassador drives past a rusty signboard that reads: 'McCluskiegunj: your visit will surprise you', with a map underneath. We stay on the board as the car drives by.

Shutu leans out of his window to get a better look.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. HIGHWAY. DUSK. 8

In a long shot we see the car turning off the highway.

As the car approaches the little town, the shops are closing. Bonnie wakes up with a start, smoothens out her clothes and ties her hair.

BONNIE  
We've almost reached na... Remember  
to stop at Curney's.

NANDU  
If it's still open.

A shutter comes down on a shop as Nandu slows the car down.

BONNIE  
No, no. It's up ahead.

TANI (O.C.)  
(whispers)  
Mama, susu.

Nandu pulls up to a small house. They all come out of the car, shaking off the stupor of the long ride and stretch their legs.

CUT TO:

9 INT. CURNEY HOUSE. DUSK 9

They enter a dilapidated house.

BONNIE

Mrs. Curney! Are you still open?

There is an old man, Mr. Curney, huddled up in the corner, who doesn't respond. Hearing a sound, Mrs. Curney pops her head out from behind a tatty lace curtain.

MRS CURNEY

Nandu! You'll are finally here!  
I was waiting for you folks.

Mrs Curney gives Tani a hug.

MRS CURNEY (CONT'D)

Hello deary!

Tani is stiff and looks away. Bonnie smiles apologetically.

BONNIE

She's been sleeping. Is there a bathroom we can use?

MRS CURNEY

Of course! Come, come.  
(Turning to the others)  
Go ahead and have a look.

Mrs Curney trails off as she takes Bonnie and Tani to the bathroom.

MRS CURNEY (CONT'D)

It's a bit of a mess, don't mind.

Mimi remains outside looking at an old picture of Mr. and Mrs. Curney with a little girl from a happier, more prosperous time. Mr. Curney watches her blankly.

CUT TO:

10

INT/EXT. CURNEY HOUSE - BAKERY. DUSK

10

Shutu is looking at patties and cakes under the old fashioned glass counter. Mrs Curney bursts back in startling Shutu in the process.

MRS CURNEY

Your mother mentioned you'll were coming today so I kept a loaf aside for you.

NANDU

Curney's special loaf!

Mrs Curney laughs, pleased.

MRS CURNEY

It gets sold out so soon. You know the holiday season?

NANDU

Of course. You remember my cousin, Shutu?

SHUTU

Shyamal. Hello.

Mrs Curney smiles vaguely at Nandu.

NANDU

He's not been in a while actually... (To shutu) When's the last time you were here?

SHUTU

Err... Just last year I think.

Bonnie and Tani come back out. Nandu takes out his wallet.

NANDU

We'd better hurry before it gets dark!

Mrs. Curney takes out a small Christmas cake and places it on the counter.

MRS CURNEY

Why don't you take this also? Your old man will love it. It's got rum in it.

Nandu agrees reluctantly.

MRS CURNEY (CONT'D)

That will be 9 rupees and 4 annas only.

CUT TO:

11 INT. MRS. CURNEY'S BAKERY. DUSK

11

Mrs. Curney hums a tune as she makes her way to the back of the shop. She reaches the kitchen and puts her apron on. She picks up a tied up, half-dead chicken and places it on a cutting block. With her back to camera, she raises her hand and brings it down on the block.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. NEAR THE HOUSE. DUSK 12

The car is going down a dirt road at the end of which is Nandu's parent's house. It is a lonely, isolated property with few neighbours. There are dense forests behind the house. The car reaches the worn wooden gate and honks loudly. There is a nameplate which reads 'COL. (Retd) O.P Bakshi.'

13 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. DUSK 13

Maniya (45), the Adivasi caretaker, comes out onto the driveway with a torch to open the gate with a shy smile. He is wearing a monkey cap and muffler. Nandu slows the car down and Maniya leans in.

NANDU

Kaisa hain Maniya? Mahua ka  
intezaam ho gaya?

MANIYA

Haan haan... Sabh taiyyaar hain!

As the car pulls into the red graveled driveway of the house, Maniya shuts the gate behind them. A couple of dogs run behind the car and bark, adding to the commotion.

We see the house lit up by the headlights of the car, there's no power.

Nandu's parents, in their late sixties come out to the verandah to greet them, holding hurricanes. They are blinded by the beam of light from the car.

Uncle is portly, balding with a slight paunch. Aunty looks frail but sturdy. She is wearing a sari with a sweater and a shawl.

AUNTY

Manjari, aa jao. Woh log aa gaye  
hain.

Tani runs to her grandparents with her rag doll in hand, followed by Bonnie. Mimi steps out with her vanity case in hand. Nandu throws the car keys to Shutu as he walks to the verandah with a bag in hand.

NANDU

Open the dicky for Maniya.

Shutu catches the keys. As he opens the boot, he stands alone and watches the family greet each other. From his POV, we see the house for the first time. It is a modest bungalow with a circuit house feel.

UNCLE (O.C.)

Arrey, bada time lag gaya tum logon  
ko.

AUNTY (O.C.)

Did you manage to leave at 5?

NANDU (O.C.)

By the time we left, it was almost 6. And then we had to pick up this Mimi also.

MIMI

Arrey I was ready and waiting for you guys for ages!

Maniya's wife, Manjari, (45) also their cook, comes to help Shutu with the luggage. Shutu picks up his backpack and proceeds to the verandah.

AUNTY

Ki re Shutu? Exams over?

SHUTU

(Bends down to touch her feet)

Yes, Mashi. Thanks.

AUNTY

Ma bhalo?

(How is your mother, all well?)

SHUTU

Shob bhalo.

(All well, thanks!)

They proceed into the house.

CUT TO:

14 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. DUSK

14

Shutu puts a few bags down near the round dining table on which lies Aunty's knitting kit. It is a combined living and dining room with a fireplace and a bar cabinet in a corner. A string of season's greetings cards hang over the mantelpiece. Above the fireplace is mounted a rifle, a .30 semi-automatic carbine.

Shutu pauses to look at a few family photographs mounted on the wall.

NANDU

Why hasn't the fire been lit yet?

UNCLE

Look at these city people!  
Arrey, yeh thand toh kuch bhi nahi hain. Abhi January aane do.

AUNTY

Don't worry, we'll put hot water bottles and extra blankets in your rooms. Maniya, lakdi leke aao.

NANDU

You locked it?

SHUTU

Uh.. No.

NANDU

Go and lock it Shutu. This is Bihar!

MIMI

And nobody ever steals anything in Cal na?

Mimi walks across with her bag.

AUNTY

Yes, please lock it. You remember when we found that man sleeping in the car? My God.

MIMI

What? Really?

Shutu looks surprised.

AUNTY

Why do you think we're raising the boundary wall?

UNCLE

10,000 rupees we're spending on it!

AUNTY

It's been very cold off late.

UNCLE

I don't care how cold, how drunk. Thand ho toh mere gaadi mein soyega kya? Kal bolenge mere verandah mein sona hain.

Nandu notices that Shutu is still standing there and listening.

NANDU

Just go and lock it up Shutu!

Shutu abruptly turns around to go outside.

CUT TO:

15 INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT

15

Bonnie is unpacking in the guest bedroom which is simple yet pretty with lace curtains and some basic furniture. Tani is jumping on the bed where some toiletries have been laid out.

BONNIE

Tani, get out of those filthy clothes first!

Aunty enters with blankets and places it down on the bed. Bonnie takes out few tins of condensed milk, some lace serviettes, a bottle of cream and 2 tins of Yardley's Talcum powder gives it to Aunty. Inside the suitcase we can see bottles of alcohol and cigarette supplies.

AUNTY

Shonamuni, khe cho?

BONNIE

Maa, tomar jeenish gulo.

AUNTY

Peyechish. Can't get anything in this godforsaken place. Cha khabi toh?

BONNIE

No, we'll have dinner soon na.

Aunty makes a move to go.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Oh and we've got some Christmas Cake also. Curney managed to palm it off to Nandu.

AUNTY

Uff Curney...

Aunty looks at Tani and smiles.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

Ek anna ka fika chai,  
Ek anna ka fulauri.

Tani joins in, jumping with glee.

BONNIE

Maa, you don't teach her these things.

Aunty walks away laughing.

CUT TO:

16

INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

16

Shutu is huddled at the fire that has just been lit. Nandu is pouring the drinks and looks anxiously at his father. Aunty walks in with serviettes.

NANDU

How is your knee Baba? Better?

UNCLE

(Grunts)

At my age nothing gets better.

NANDU

Face it Ma, you guys will have to move back to Cal sooner or later.

AUNTY

Oof! You've started already!

UNCLE

Arrey tumhe kis baat ki chinta hain? Doctor Goswami aata rehta hain na yaha.

AUNTY

Ha, ha aata rehta hain... Roj aata hain aur roj hamara ek bottle daru pee jata hain.

NANDU

(Laughing)

Baba, agar aapko peena hain toh Dr. Uncle ke saath piyo.

(To Aunty)

But if something happens, you're going to call Vikram only na to drive him to Maandar.

AUNTY

Not that Vikram is going to be any less drunk.

(Turning to Shutu)

Shutu go and put on a sweater.

The approaching headlights of a jeep shine into the living room from outside.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

Whose car is that?

CUT TO:

17

INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT

17

Nandu opens the front door. The jeep halts at the verandah. Their local friends Brian and Vikram step out of the jeep.

Vikramjit Choudhary (38), a moustached man wears a rugged leather jacket, faded jeans and boots. Brian McKenzie (34), a pleasant faced, burly Anglo-Indian man wears a hand knitted sweater and has a distinct small-town demeanor in comparison to Vikram's confident swagger.

NANDU

Arrey Jamai babu! Where's your ghodi?

Vikram laughs sheepishly and hugs Nandu. Vikram holds Nandu's face in both his hands and kisses his cheeks loudly.

BRIAN

Ghodi ya gaadi? Dekho jamai babu ko dowry mein kya mila.

Brian gestures to VIKRAM's new jeep.

VIKRAM

Kya mila? Yaha toh dena pada.

NANDU

Made a killing ha? What happened to Stella?

Nandu hugs Brian slapping him on his back. The three of them greet each other boisterously.

NANDU (CONT'D)

Brian! Good to see you man!

Nandu notices Vikram taking out a big box from the back seat of his jeep.

NANDU (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that?

VIKRAM

He he! Wait till Aunty sees this!

NANDU

So much maska you maaro na...

They laugh as they walk towards the main door from where Shutu watches their exchange shyly.

VIKRAM

You could use Stella while you're here.

Vikram notices Shutu. He points to something on Shutu's shirt. Shutu looks down and Vikram flicks him on his chin.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

How're you pehelwan? Dekh isko itna daadi aa gaya?

Shutu, somewhat irked, gives him a tight smile while Brian musses his hair. He watches as the three of them go inside to greet Aunty and Uncle.

UNCLE (O.C.)  
Arrey Vikram beta aa gaye? Bahu ko  
ghar lekar aa gaye?

CUT TO:

18 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

18

UNCLE  
Aur sabh kaisa raha? Sabh theek se  
ho gaya na shaadi mein?

Vikram and Brian hug Uncle and Aunty.

VIKRAM  
(Giving Aunty a kiss)  
Good good. Very hectic.

AUNTY  
What's this Vikram?

Vikram starts to open the box.

VIKRAM  
Tan-ta-da!

Vikram unwraps a shiny new cassette player. He places it on the coffee table.

AUNTY  
(Delighted but a little  
embarrassed)  
Beta, we should be giving you  
presents... You shouldn't have!

VIKRAM  
Arrey Aunty, I got two of these for  
the wedding. Besides, this is my  
second home isn't it!

AUNTY  
(While kissing him)  
What second home? We only see you  
when Nandu is in town.

UNCLE  
He's a busy man now Anu, very busy.  
Huh?

AUNTY  
Not too busy to see us. And when do  
we get to meet the missus? Why  
didn't you bring her?

VIKRAM

No, no, I just dropped in on my way back from work. Besides she's still recovering from the wedding!

BRIAN

So am I! We really missed you guys.

VIKRAM

(looking around for the others)

Ya, ya. We really did.

AUNTY

What to do beta, Uncle's knees you know na...

NANDU

Tch, Bonnie really wanted to make it... just couldn't get leave ya.

AUNTY

Anyway, this week we're doing dinner at home.

NANDU

You say when you are free? Tomorrow? Day after? Oh 31st!

UNCLE

Yes, done done. New Year party ghar pe hoga.

VIKRAM

Arrey I'm free only, ask this Brian fucker. He's a chupa rustom. Tell them your big news.

(Distracted)

Where are the girls?

Vikram walks away inside. Everyone turns to Brian curiously. Brian looks sheepish.

NANDU

What plans? You're also getting married?

BRIAN

Vikram man! Nothing yaa... I may finally have a job.

UNCLE (O.C.)

Arrey well done beta! Challo let's have some daaru shaaru!

CUT TO:

19 INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

19

Tani has changed and unenthusiastically eats an omelette.

BONNIE

You better finish that whole thing  
Tani.

TANI

I can't have anymore. I'm going to  
do ulti.

BONNIE

OK, OK leave it. Go and brush your  
teeth.

Bonnie hands her a toothbrush and starts to comb her own hair when she hears something from the corridor. Vikram walks in with a lantern.

VIKRAM

Fee Fi Fo Fum. I smell the blood of  
an English mem.

Vikram puts the lantern down and goes to tickle Tani. Tani squeals and hides behind a pillow as he attacks her.

BONNIE

(laughing)

Where's your wife? She's outside?

Bonnie peeks behind him expectantly.

VIKRAM

(Taking out a chocolate  
from his pocket)

No, no. I couldn't get her today.  
They are planning some dinner  
shinner outside. You'll see her  
soon. Where is Mimi?

Bonnie gives him a funny look and points to another room.

BONNIE

She's inside, in Uncle's study.

CUT TO:

20 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. NIGHT.

20

Shutu is alone in his poky little ante room rummaging through his backpack. He takes out a sweater and puts it on. He keeps a few books on the desk. He takes out his toothbrush, a few clothes and opens the cupboard.

Inside he finds a pile of warm clothes and some miscellaneous items.

He puts his clothes on a shelf and runs his hands through the woollens. He notices one he recognizes and pulls it out. He looks at it for a moment and then smells it. He quickly takes off the sweater he is wearing and puts on the other one. It is a hand knit, moth eaten, olive green sweater.

He hugs himself and is still for a moment, leaning into the open cupboard.

CUT TO:

21 INT. MIMI'S ROOM. NIGHT 21

Mimi has emptied her duffel bag. She is standing on a stool and attempting to store it away above the cupboard. As she raises her arms, her waist is exposed. Vikram sees this as he comes and leans at the door.

VIKRAM  
Need any help?

Mimi turns around and smiles.

MIMI  
Mr. Vikramjit Choudhury!

She jumps off the stool and comes across to hug him.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
Congratulations! How was the  
honeymoon?

She leans in to kiss him on the cheek. Vikram kisses Mimi on the lips, surprising her but she lets him.

CUT TO:

22 INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE MIMI'S ROOM. NIGHT 22

Shutu who was passing through the corridor happens to see the couple. He looks on intently.

CUT TO:

23 INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE MIMI'S ROOM. NIGHT. 23

Shutu's POV: As the couple kiss, the lights flicker a few times and the power comes back dimly. Shutu steps back into the shadow. There are cheers from outside.

AUNTY (O.C.)  
Batti aa gayi Manjari. Khana laga  
do.

From outside the door we see Vikram and Mimi kiss until Vikram reaches back to shut the door, without a sound.

CUT TO:

24 INT. DINING TABLE. NIGHT 24

As Shutu walks in, others have gathered around the dining table, sitting down for dinner.

BONNIE

So Australia. So far? You'll be taking Aunty with you?

BRIAN

Let's see once I get there.

NANDU

I'm glad you're getting out of here. When's your joining date?

BRIAN

Feb onwards, I think.

SHUTU

(sits down next to Brian)  
Congratulations Brian!

AUNTY

Arrey, eta Baba'r sweater na?  
(This is your father's sweater, isn't it?)

Shutu smiles at Aunty as she starts to serve him. Vikram walks in. Mimi follows. Shutu looks at them curiously. Vikram picks up some salad from Bonnie's plate. We pull back to a wider frame as all of them have dinner.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. GATE. NIGHT. 25

Exterior shot of the house at night taken from the gate. There are warm, yellow lights inside the house. We can hear cicadas. Even though it is a symmetrical frame, we get the feeling that something is amiss.

FADE OUT.

26 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - ORCHARDS - DAY. 26

Fade in.

Shutu and Tani walk down a path off the backyard, lined by a series of trees. He has a rope strung around his shoulder while he tries to roll a tire ahead of him. Tani helps him.

Shutu sets the tire down, jumps and tries to touch the branch of a tree. He can't reach it.

The super reads Day 2/Tuesday (28th DECEMBER)

TANI

Where's the family tree?

SHUTU

It's ahead.

She looks around and runs towards a tree with a large trunk. Some names have been scratched onto the bark. She runs around the trunk, reading the names aloud.

TANI

Anupama, O.P, Nandu, Bonnie, Tani.

Shutu goes towards a low lying branch. He jumps and hangs from it.

BONNIE (O.C.)

Tani! Come for a bath.

TANI

No Mamma, not now.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY

27

In the backyard, Bonnie picks up a tin bucket warming in the sun and goes inside through the back door of the kitchen.

BONNIE

I'm going in. You come in 5 minutes.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. ORCHARDS. DAY.

28

TANI

Where's your name?

SHUTU

Uh... It's not there?

Shutu is tying a knot around the tyre.

TANI

No.

Suddenly, there is a shriek from inside the house. They turn around to look.

CUT TO:

29

INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. DAY

29

Bonnie is terrified and is looking at something inside the bathroom from the door. Nandu rushes into the room. He has half his face covered in shaving foam and a brush in his hand.

NANDU

What? What happened?

BONNIE

Frog! Frog! There's a frog inside!

Aunty rushes into the room.

AUNTY

What happened? What happened!

NANDU

(Dismissively walking  
away)

Nothing! It's just a damn frog.  
Can't expect to come to  
McCluskiegunj and not find a frog.

AUNTY

(Alarmed)

Manjari! Jaldi aao! Yeh andar kaise  
aayaa?

Manjari walks in and stands there impassively. Tani and Shutu run in.

TANI

What happened Mama?

AUNTY

Arrey Manjari, khade khade kya dekh  
rahe ho? jhadu toh leke aao! Ye  
andar kaise aaya?

Manjari exits to get the broom. Shutu takes off his slipper and treads carefully into the bathroom in an attempt to chase it away.

BONNIE

Oh no! It's gone behind the commode  
now. (Yelps) It's looking straight  
at me!

Tani starts jumping adding to the chaos.

TANI

I saw it! There it is! I saw it!

Manjari comes back with a broom and goes into the bathroom. She makes a gesture for Shutu to leave. Shutu meekly steps outside.

AUNTY (O.C.)

Hum bole the na bada naali ko bandh  
rakhne ke liye, sabh bathroom mein.  
Kisne khola isko? Voh lakdi ka  
tukda kaha gaya?

TANI

Oh now it's gone behind the bucket!

Close shot of a large, ugly toad looking balefully into camera.

CUT TO:

30

INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. AFTERNOON.

30

Shutu is sitting at a desk by the window of his tiny room. He is wearing his moth eaten sweater. There are a couple of books in front of him, including a thick mathematics textbook, a collection of essays, a slim volume of poetry. He is drawing a frog over and over again in his journal when he takes out a folded sheet of paper from it. He stares at it first, then absentmindedly starts to doodle on it. We see that it is his mark sheet of his M.Sc. final year that he has failed. His elaborate doodle has engulfed his name, Shyamal Chatterjee, to a point that it is barely legible. Suddenly the door opens and Tani peeps in. Shutu looks at the door while folding the mark sheet away.

TANI

(making a sad face)  
I'm bored.

Tani comes in and lies down on his bed. Shutu closes his journal and looks at her seriously.

SHUTU

What happened?

TANI

I don't like it over here.

SHUTU

Why?

TANI

There are insects everywhere.  
There's no cement. No T.V

SHUTU  
No cement? Where's Bonnie di?

TANI  
Sleeping.

SHUTU  
Baba?

TANI  
Sleeping.

SHUTU  
Hmm.

TANI  
What were you doing?

SHUTU  
I was er...

Shutu flips his journal open. It is full of random scribbling and drawings. It opens on a page where Shutu has sketched many frogs.

SHUTU (CONT'D)  
I was trying to draw the frog, see?

Tani gets up and comes over to the desk, delighted.

TANI  
I like this one.

She looks at a few other drawings.

TANI (CONT'D)  
What's this?

She points to a list of words, all starting with the letter 'E'.

SHUTU  
Those are my e words. Words I like  
that start with 'E'.

Tani starts reading the words aloud as we pull back to see the two of them poring over the notebook together in a quiet corner of the room. Tani starts reading the words aloud, stumbling over the pronunciations. We can hear gentle snoring coming from one of the bedrooms.

TANI  
Entropy, Ersatz, Ennui...

CUT TO:

31 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

31

Uncle, Aunty, Brian and Bonnie are playing bluff at the table. Tani has fallen asleep on the sofa. Vikram, Mimi and Nandu are drinking and chatting. Uncle dramatically puts down his last four cards.

UNCLE

4 kings!

AUNTY

Arrey! What do you mean 4 kings?

BONNIE

You just put down 4 kings! Ma, he's lying! He's lying.

AUNTY

I know he's lying. Check those cards.

Bonnie goes to check the cards.

UNCLE

You can't touch those cards. Those are pass cards. Challenge karo! Utha ke dekh lo.

AUNTY

I challenge you. Challenge!

BRIAN

Aunty don't do it. I'm telling you!

Aunty turns over the cards which turn out to be 4 kings.

AUNTY

Well, at least I didn't cheat!

UNCLE

Who's cheating? I never cheat.

AUNTY

Chalo you guys carry on. I'm going to go to bed now. Good night!

BONNIE

Good night Ma.

Aunty gets up to go. Uncle follows.

BRIAN

See you at lunch tomorrow, Uncle!

UNCLE

Yes, yes. Good night Dylan!

Brian reacts, mildly amused at Uncle. Bonnie gets up to pick up the sleeping Tani. Seeing them Vikram takes his cue to leave.

VIKRAM

We should also be heading out now.

MIMI

Arrey it's only 10:30!

BONNIE

Don't you guys dare go anywhere, I'm just putting Tani to bed and coming back.

Bonnie exits carrying the sleeping child.

VIKRAM

Fine! Give me another drink in that case.

Mimi gladly gets up to make Vikram another drink.

CUT TO:

32 INT. BONNIE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

32

As Bonnie puts Tani down on her bed, she wakes up.

BONNIE

Shh... Go back to sleep.

TANI

Mama, don't go. Don't leave me.

Bonnie sits down next to her and strokes her hair.

BONNIE

Come on, you're almost 7 years old. Big girl!

TANI

(Clinging to Bonnie's neck)  
No, no, I'm not big.

BONNIE

But you're so brave at home! What are you so scared of?

TANI

(looks at the window)  
That window.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. OUTSIDE THE WINDOW. NIGHT

33

Shutu is out for a cigarette. From his POV we see Bonnie as she walks over to the window to close the curtains.

BONNIE  
(muffled)  
See, I'm drawing the curtains.  
Better?

CUT TO:

34 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

34

Vikram is in the midst of an anecdote with the others cosily sitting around the coffee table, the fire lit behind them. Mimi has a shawl wrapped around and her hair falls loosely over her shoulders. She sits cross-legged on the carpeted floor. Shutu, also sits on the floor and stares at Vikram with wide-eyed concentration.

VIKRAM  
I swear, it was a table like this one. It just went off the ground. Like so much. (Demonstrates with his hands)

NANDU  
Balls! How do you know someone wasn't lifting it with their knees?

BRIAN  
Even I was there! No one was lifting it for Christ's sake!

BONNIE  
(Walking into the room, interrupting)  
Who? Who? What happened?

MIMI  
So you're saying that your neighbor, Uncle Harris, re-established contact with the living world as a wooden table?

VIKRAM  
Well, Mrs. Harris continues to believe that. The other day she asked if I'd like to join "them" for tea.

BONNIE  
Are you serious? She and her dead husband!

Everyone laughs.

BRIAN

But it's true. These things happen... Sometimes spirits inhabit people or objects and just never ever leave.

SHUTU

Why would they come back at all?

VIKRAM

(Looks at Shutu teasingly)  
Unfinished business, I guess.

MIMI

Okay okay! Let's just start now.  
Nandu, come sit down here.

Mimi pats the carpet next to her. Nandu looks at her from his arm chair but doesn't budge.

BRIAN

Oh no let's not! I have to go back and sleep alone.

VIKRAM

You sleep with your mother tonight.

BONNIE

Do we have to make a chart with ABC and all?

BRIAN

You can do it through a medium also na? Like in Exorcist?

BONNIE

Fuck... That movie...

VIKRAM

(Interrupting)  
Okay okay... but who are we calling tonight?

NANDU

Ya, because I'm not doing a planchet for just anyone.

BONNIE

Should we call Elvis?

NANDU

Are we even sure he's really dead?

VIKRAM

Arrey let's call someone closer home man.

NANDU  
Okay, Nehru then?

MIMI  
Ya. Nehru really needs to have a  
chat with his daughter!

Everyone breaks into laughter except Shutu. Shutu looks uneasy.

VIKRAM  
Okay, so who will be the medium?

Everyone looks expectantly at each other. Vikram looks around but his gaze stops at Shutu. With him, everyone looks at Shutu. Shutu feels everyone's gaze upon him. Looks uncomfortable and laughs nervously.

SHUTU  
No, no I don't want to take part in  
all this.

BRIAN  
Chal, ok you don't have to be a  
medium...

BONNIE  
Shutuuu... Why?

SHUTU  
(hesitant)  
No no it... I believe it causes  
them a lot of pain or something.

The others laugh. Vikram and Nandu exchange a look.

BRIAN  
But they're dead ya. How can they  
feel pain?

SHUTU  
(While getting up)  
You all carry on I'm going, I'm  
quite sleepy.

VIKRAM  
Sleepy... or scared?

SHUTU  
No, no. Nothing like that...

MIMI  
Come on Shutu. Grow up!

Shutu smiles and sits back down reluctantly.

BRIAN  
But wait, do we have to make a  
chart and all now?

VIKRAM  
(Clearing the table)  
No, we'll do it like this. Let's  
all hold hands.

Everyone sits around the coffee table and holds hands.

BONNIE  
Okay! Eyes closed, Eyes closed!

There are some muffled giggles and whispers.

VIKRAM  
Shhh!  
(Clears his throat, after  
a few moments)  
Panditiji, are you here?

Everyone breaks into giggles which is interrupted by a sudden  
sound. Everybody startles and looks at the door. The main  
door is opened from outside. Maniya walks in with some  
firewood. He is surprised to find everyone's gaze on him.

NANDU  
Oh Maniya...

MANIYA  
Sahab, gate bandh kardein?

NANDU  
Chaabi rakh do, hum kar lenge.

VIKRAM  
Aur Maniya, mombatti leke aao.

Maniya exits from the back corridor.

BONNIE  
Mombatti?

VIKRAM  
If we're doing this, let's do this  
right. Put off the big light and  
let's sit around the dining table.

NANDU  
Hang on! Let's get our refills  
before starting.

Nandu, Mimi and Vikram go to the bar. Bonnie and Brian move  
to the dining table. Shutu doesn't move from the sofa.

BONNIE (O.C)  
Shutu, come na. Pull up that stool.

BRIAN  
Come on guys! Hurry up!

Maniya lights the candle at the table. Vikram is doing something at the bar.

VIKRAM  
(Whispering to Nandu and Mimi)  
You guys sit. I'm coming.

Nandu and Mimi walk towards the dining table, drinks in hand. Maniya walks in with the candles. Vikram comes and sits at the table as Maniya lights the last candle and leaves.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Maniya, woh light off kardo.

Maniya raises his hand to switch off the light and looks over his shoulder. From Maniya's POV: Everyone is settling down, holding hands around the table. Their faces only visible in the dim candle light as Maniya switches off the light.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. BACKYARD. NIGHT

35

Maniya makes his way through a dirt track leading to his hut. The torchlight illuminates the path in flashes; glimpses of the backyard, a mound of cement and a few bricks in a corner, dense forest cover beyond. The sound of cicadas grows gradually as he reaches his hut.

CUT TO:

36 INT. MANIYA'S HUT. NIGHT.

36

Manjari has worn a bright sari and is putting flowers in her hair. Maniya switches off the torch in the hut that is dimly lit by a kerosene lamp.

MANJARI  
Sab sueet gele hai?

MANIYA  
(while locking his door)  
Kaha sutle... Daaru piyat hain.  
Bhoot bulawat hain.

CUT TO:

37 INT. BUNGALOW - DINING ROOM. NIGHT

37

Everyone is seated around the dining table, their grim and serious faces illuminated only by candle light.

Everyone's eyes are closed, holding hands. Vikram and Nandu are sitting beside each other.

VIKRAM  
Is anybody here?

Silence. A beat later...

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Any spirit passing by?

BRIAN  
(whispering)  
Ask if any good spirit is passing  
by?

NANDU  
Good spirits don't come so easily.  
It's the evil ones who are  
restless, wanting to communicate.

Nandu looks at Shutu, who looks spooked. A prolonged silence.

VIKRAM  
Is any spirit, good or evil,  
passing by?

A longer interval and then a sudden knocking sound. Everyone opens their eyes in a start. Shutu looks alarmed. Brian looks accusingly at Vikram first and then Nandu.

BRIAN  
Aye Bugger, you made that noise!

Nandu raises his hands to show Brian. Brian looks around and checks under the table.

NANDU  
I'm not doing anything!

Vikram gives Brian a look. Brian catches on and plays along.

SHUTU  
Somebody made that sound right?

VIKRAM  
The sound didn't even come from  
here.

BONNIE  
Ya, the sound came from that side.

MIMI  
Wait, wait. Let's try again.

NANDU  
Shh... Concentrate now.

VIKRAM

Don't break the circle, otherwise  
the spirit can get trapped here.

(Pause)

Everyone close your eyes.

Everyone closes their eyes again. After a few moments,

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Any spirit passing by? Please  
communicate with us.

A beat. A continuous knocking sound. Everyone opens their  
eyes and looks at each other alarmed.

NANDU

(Urgently)

Someone's come.

BONNIE

They're trying to communicate!

The knocking sound stops.

VIKRAM

Is a spirit present?

There is a single, definite sharp knock.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Is that a 'YES'?

Another sharp knock.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Are you a man?

NANDU

(Looking at VIKRAM)

WERE you a man.

VIKRAM

Okay ya... Were you a man?

A beat and two knocks indicating a no.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Is that a 'NO'?

One sharp knock indicating yes.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Were you a woman?

A definite knock indicating a yes.

Under the table, the camera follows the string from VIKRAM'S little finger till across the hallway, down on the floor, wedged behind a door we see the cigarette tin. On these visuals we hear the ongoing conversation with the spirit.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Did you die of natural causes?

A beat and two knocks indicating no.

BONNIE  
That's a no right?

VIKRAM  
How did you die?

A prolonged silence.

MIMI  
That's not a yes or no question!

NANDU  
Shhhhh!

VIKRAM  
Okay, okay. Were you killed?

The tin is tugged twice indicating no.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Did you kill yourself?

The tin is tugged once indicating yes.

Gasps from the table. There is an uncomfortable silence as Bonnie exchanges a suspicious look with Brian.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Have you been watching us?

Silence. A definite knock indicating a yes.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Who in this room will die first?  
(PAUSE)  
Will it be me?

Two knocks indicating a no.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Nandu?

Two knocks. Nandu and Vikram exchange a look.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Brian?

Two knocks.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Mimi?

Two knocks.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Bonnie ?

Shutu, who is sitting next to Bonnie breaks into a sweat as he realizes he is the last one left. His face is tense.

Two knocks indicating a no.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

Shutu?

A prolonged silence. A single knock indicating yes.

Shutu gets up immediately, pushing his chair back with a loud sound.

SHUTU

(In a strangled voice)  
I'm going to bed.

As Shutu exits, Bonnie realizes it's a prank as they all start laughing.

CUT TO:

38 INT. BUNGALOW - CORRIDOR. NIGHT. 38

A visibly disturbed Shutu leaves the room with an urgency and goes into his room. He gets under the mosquito net and hides under the blanket.

38. A INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT 38. A

Tani is asleep. We track back from her to include the window. There is muffled laughter from out side.

CUT TO:

39 OMITTED 39

40 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 40

Brian has picked a couple of stones and is aiming at a window.

BONNIE

(In a panic)  
What are you doing?!  
Tani will wake up!

Vikram sniggers and goes ahead. Brian guffaws at his mistake.

VIKRAM  
 (pointing to another  
 window)  
 Guys, it's this one here.

BONNIE  
 Shh... Guys stop it now!

Brian listens to Bonnie and throws his stone away but Vikram throws a stone at Shutu's window and misses. Nandu and Mimi are a few steps ahead. They hear faint singing from afar accompanied by a Maadol (native drum).

MIMI  
 Wow! It's a full moon night.  
 (Pause)  
 Hey, what's that sound?

NANDU  
 Arrey Maniya and all are awake!  
 Come guys, let's crash Maniya's  
 party!

Nandu and Mimi walk ahead with Brian and Bonnie following. Vikram takes aim at Shutu's window once again.

CUT TO:

41 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. NIGHT. 41

Shutu watches the strange pattern of shadows on the ceiling. His eyes widen with alarm as he hears a sharp sound from his window. He stares ahead, rigid with fear.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. MANIYA'S HUT. NIGHT. 42

Maniya, Manjari and some of their friends are drinking Mahua. They are dancing around a bonfire, with their arms linked. Nandu and Mimi, their cheeks flushed from the cold and the alcohol, grin widely and clap along. Vikram, Brian and Bonnie catch up with Nandu and Mimi.

BONNIE  
 (Going up to the circle of  
 dancers )  
 Oh wow!

Manjari offers her arm to include Bonnie. She joins them enthusiastically.

They all join the circle, trying to learn the song: "Toot Gachhe Bhoot Nache" and match steps.

Some of them are smoking ganja. Unnoticed by others, Mimi and Vikram have an intimate moment. Maniya passes them Mahua with some coarse salt and chilli on a Saal leaf. Nandu takes out his own bottle from deep within his jacket and offers it to them.

The dancing and chanting reaches a frenzied pitch.

In a wide shot, we see the dark house, the drunken whirling and the quiet forest beyond.

CUT TO:

43 INT. BUNGALOW - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 43

The fire is out. The sound of a heartbeat gradually increases in intensity. On the mantle piece we see dusty memorabilia like army medals, photographs and a plaque. Above that is mounted the Rifle. A hand enters frame and plucks the rifle off the wall. We follow the hand through the corridor into Shutu's room. One hand holds the rifle, the other lifts the mosquito net. The hand pulls down the blanket from Shutu's face. It turns Shutu's face towards camera with the barrel of the rifle. Shutu's face lolls back in such a way, we realize he is already dead.

CUT TO:

44 INT. BUNGALOW - SHUTU'S ROOM. NIGHT 44

From outside the mosquito net, we see Shutu enter frame as he sits up sweating and panting. The sound of the heartbeat is mixed with the chanting outside.

CUT TO:

45 EXT. GATE. NIGHT. 45

SHOT of the Bungalow from the gate. Full Moon.

FADE OUT.

46 INT. BUNGALOW - LIVING ROOM. DAY 46

Fade in. Nandu dismounts the rifle from the wall. He blows away the dust from it.

The super reads Day 3/Wednesday (29th DECEMBER)

NANDU (O.C.)

Look at the state of this rifle,  
Baba. Kaise pada hua hain?

UNCLE (O.C.)  
 (Interjecting, taking the  
 rifle back from Nandu)  
 Kahe ka working rifle? Poora jung  
 lag chuka hain. Ammunition bhi pata  
 nahi kaha hain.

Shutu follows the action closely.

NANDU (O.C.)  
 Main saaf kar deta hoon na?

UNCLE (O.C.)  
 Nahi, nahi. Leave it. These things  
 let me only do.  
 (Keeping the rifle away)  
 Aur kis ke liye use karenge isko?  
 Murgi maarne ke liye?

Shutu looks up as Mimi walks in, wearing a tight turtle neck  
 and a pair of fitted bell bottom jeans. Mimi picks up a  
 cigarette and looks for a lighter. Shutu eagerly removes a  
 matchbox from his pocket and lights Mimi's cigarette.

MIMI  
 Why? Vikram and his gang go for  
 shikaar quite often. They hunt for  
 wild boar and all.

Aunty comes out of her bedroom, hurriedly putting on her  
 watch.

AUNTY  
 Everyone ready? Manjari! E ki  
 Shutu, shave korbi na? (Aren't you  
 going to shave?)

Shutu who is still wearing his green sweater, smiles  
 sheepishly.

NANDU  
 (Yelling out)  
 Bonnie! How much longer?

Tani runs out and Bonnie follows, flustered.

BONNIE  
 Some of us believe in having a  
 bath, you know?

NANDU  
 Even in winter?

CUT TO:

47 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY

47

Aunty and Manjari are in the verandah. Bonnie and Mimi have walked ahead on the driveway.

AUNTY

Dekho yeh majdoor log aaj bhi late aaye hain. Manjari, kaam late tak chalega toh, tala laga dena kidhar bhi jaao. Hum shaam tak aa jayenge.

Manjari is silent.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

Kya hua? Sir abhi bhi dukh raha hain? Dawa de du?

Manjari shakes her head and leaves. Aunty looks exasperatedly at Tani who holds her hand and walks down the steps.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

You just never know what these people are thinking.

Aunty goes up to the car in which Nandu and Uncle are already seated.

NANDU

Come on Ma!

AUNTY

I'm coming! I'm going to drive. You sit at the back.

NANDU

But you haven't driven in so long, Ma.

AUNTY

So what? You never forget how to drive.

Nandu and Uncle exchange a look.

47. A EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. DAY.

47. A

The car drives off as Shutu closes the gate behind it.

48 EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - STREAM. DAY

48

Brian, Vikram, Nandu and Mimi are horsing around at the stream. Vikram and Nandu are trying to get Brian wet and take off his shirt which happens to rip apart.

MRS. MCKENZIE (O.C)

Kitty!

CUT TO:

49 EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE. DAY

49

Mrs. McKenzie, Brian's widowed mother is a lady in her late sixties. She is a bit of a memsahib, who is fussily arranging napkins at the makeshift dining tables set up in their front lawn.

MRS. MCKENZIE

We'll serve the mulligatawny first.  
I need one more soup spoon  
please.

Kitty is the capable, catholic house help who is hovering around Mrs. McKenzie, awaiting instruction.

KITTY

What you want to put the chicken  
in?

MRS. MCKENZIE

I've put out the Doulton casserole.  
Bring it in that.

49. A EXT. LAWN. DAY.

49. A

Bonnie walks up to Shutu and watches the others over at the stream.

BONNIE

(Shouting out)  
Isn't the water too cold?

MIMI

It's fun! Come na Bonnie!

BONNIE

(To Shutu)  
Aashbi?

Shutu smiles and shakes his head.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Tani ke dekhish toh.

Bonnie joins the others in the stream. Shutu looks over at Tani, absorbed with the puppies.

49. B EXT. LAWN. DAY.

49. B

Brian is in the lawn where Tani is playing with a few puppies in a basket. Mrs. McKenzie, Uncle and Auntie are sitting on white cane chairs and chatting. There is a bowl of chips, a peeled, half eaten orange and a few glasses of juice in front of them.

TANI

Brian uncle, what are their names?

BRIAN

They don't have names. We are giving them away.

TANI

You won't keep even one of them?

BRIAN

This one hasn't found a home yet, so I guess he can stay here with us.

Brian notices Tani's sympathetic face.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Unless... you want to keep him?

TANI

(Breaking into a shy grin)  
Can I? Shutu? Shutu!

Shutu doesn't hear her and is still looking at the others.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. STREAM - DAY

50

Bonnie is ankle deep in the water near Mimi, contemplating whether she should go in further.

VIKRAM

Arrey come on in Bonnie!

BONNIE

No baba. It's too cold. Earlier we've gone in even till here also.  
(Indicating her hip)  
Ask him.

NANDU

Ya and she swam to Chatti Nadi.

MIMI  
 (Teeth chattering)  
 I can't feel my feet anymore! I'm  
 going back now.

VIKRAM  
 Oh yeah?!

Vikram turns to Mimi and scoops her up in his arms swiftly. Mimi bursts into giggles and squeals while she clings to Vikram's neck. They all laugh and Nandu and Bonnie exchange a look.

CUT TO:

51 OMITTED 51

52 EXT. STREAM - DAY. 52

Nandu and Vikram wear their shoes, drying themselves in the sun. They are watching Bonnie and Mimi walking in the distance. Vikram's gaze is fixed on Mimi. Nandu notices him.

NANDU  
 Nice view huh?

VIKRAM  
 Ya, it's nice.

NANDU  
 (Looking pointedly at  
 VIKRAM)  
 So... When do we get to meet... the  
 Mrs?

VIKRAM  
 (Looks at Nandu sharply)  
 Purnima?  
 (Looking back at the  
 girls)  
 I'll get her along one of these  
 days.

NANDU  
 Question is why didn't you get her  
 along today?

MRS MCKENZIE (O.C.)  
 Lunch is ready!

VIKRAM  
 Lunch is ready! I'm hungry.

Vikram smiles at Nandu.

CUT TO:

53

EXT. LAWN - DAY

53

The food has been laid out on the dining table. Bonnie, Tani, Uncle and Aunty are already seated.

MRS MCKENZIE

Hurry up! Hurry up! Before the soup gets cold! Brian pull up a chair.

AUNTY

Brian, you're really going to miss your mom's cooking over there. Think about it.

TANI

Please Mama! All my friends have pets.

BONNIE

First you tell me what you want to eat. I'll give you chicken and rice?

Nandu, Mimi and Shutu are joining the others as Vikram talks to Uncle.

MIMI

Umm. Pepper chicken, coconut rice...

NANDU

Cutlets!

Nandu reaches out to pick up a cutlet and sits down next to Mimi. Shutu is about to sit on the other side of Mimi.

BONNIE

Shutu just get my shawl na. It's on that chair.

Shutu who was about to sit down, goes to get the shawl. Vikram casually sits down next to Mimi. Mrs McKenzie continues to serve others with the help of Kitty.

TANI

(Turning Bonnie's face)  
Please mama! I'll take him to do susu, potty everything. Shutu will help me. Na Shutu?

Shutu hands Bonnie the shawl and gets pulled into this conversation.

SHUTU

Ya. I'll help you. Come on Bonnie di.

Bonnie rolls her eyes at Shutu.

BONNIE

Now you don't start.

TANI

But you only keep saying I'm an only child.

BONNIE

Oof! This girl won't leave me in peace.  
Okay. Maybe. We'll see.

Tani considers this an approval and gets up. Shutu smiles looking at Tani.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Arrey I didn't say yes! First come back here and finish your food.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. LAWN - DAY

54

In the foreground, we see a glass of juice knocked over on the rug, flies hovering around a half eaten orange, the pages of Shutu's novel flutter in the breeze. In the background, we see the dining table in a blur, Tani and the dogs running around it with abandon.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. LAWN. DAY.

55

Post lunch, Uncle has nodded off in his arm chair. The others are sitting around and having desert on the chairs. Shutu is lying on the rug, reading 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne. Mimi notices his book as she takes out cream from her handbag.

MIMI

What are you reading?

Shutu shows her the book.

SHUTU

I'm just reading it again.

MIMI

You should have really studied Literature. You're what, third year now?

SHUTU

(laughs)

No, no. I just finished my M.Sc. I'll be applying for a Ph.D. soon.

MIMI

You're toh always first class first na? Weren't you planning to go abroad or something?

SHUTU

Ya. I'll be applying for a scholarship.

MIMI

And if you don't get that?

Shutu smiles and shrugs.

MIMI (CONT'D)

(teasingly)

Does that leave you much time for a girlfriend?

Shutu laughs sheepishly.

MIMI (CONT'D)

Come on, a handsome boy like you!

At this point Aunty calls out to Shutu, holding out her desert dish.

AUNTY

Shutu, get me a second helping please.

SHUTU

(to MIMI)

I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

56

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE. DAY

56

Shutu enters a long, gloomy corridor. The walls have old family photographs hanging. As he turns into the kitchen, Vikram comes out from an inner bathroom into the corridor. A muted flush is heard. Vikram hears a sound from the kitchen and goes in that direction. He stands at the door of the kitchen and watches Shutu taking out some desert. With a mischievous glint in his eye, Vikram picks up an empty glass from the side board and rolls it across the kitchen floor.

Shutu reacts to the eerie sound with fear. As the glass touches Shutu's feet, he almost trips and drops the desert bowl. Vikram laughs loudly as he slaps Shutu on the back and walks down the corridor into the burnt out exterior.

Shutu bends down to pick up the broken bowl.

The camera lingers on the glass; still rolling gently on the sloping kitchen floor.

CUT TO:

57 OMITTED 57

58 EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE. DAY 58

Tani is sitting behind the wheel of Nandu's car, parked near the gate. Shutu gets in the passenger seat.

SHUTU

Lets go home Tani.

Shutu slides down on the seat, almost lying down.

TANI

Come on, let's go Baba!

She blares the horn loudly as she calls out to her father from the window. Nandu comes up to the car with a drink in his hand, amused at Tani behind the wheel. He leans in at her window.

NANDU

They're still saying bye. (He opens the door) Move in. Unless you want to drive us home?

Tani giggles at the suggestion as she sidles up to Shutu to make space for her father.

NANDU (CONT'D)

No? What about you Shutu? Hmm? Its a short distance.

Shutu brushes off the suggestion with a smile.

SHUTU

Oh no, I've not had any practice since...

NANDU

Well it's about time you did!

Shutu looks unsure. Tani climbs over to the backseat, very excited.

TANI  
Come on Shutu!

Nandu and Shutu get out and cross over to exchange places. Nandu hands him the keys as they cross. Shutu gets in the driver's seat.

NANDU  
Let's back it out of the gate.  
We'll take a quick chakker.

Shutu fiddles with the gear, trying all the other gear positions before getting into reverse. As soon as he starts the car and begins to reverse, the engine goes off. He nervously starts the car again. Nandu and Tani both look at him apprehensively. Nandu looks behind to try to direct him.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Ok, easy now. Watch out for that rock.

The car moves back jerkily with a loud noise of the accelerator being pushed too hard.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Stop. Stop. Relax. Start again.  
Adjust the rear view mirror. Side view mirror? Hand brake?

Shutu is beginning to sweat. He adjusts the mirrors. He starts the car again but the engine goes off.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Put the gear in neutral Shutu!

Shutu fumbles with the gear. He is about to start again.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
10 and 2.

Shutu looks at him blankly. Nandu gets more exasperated.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Hand position Shutu! 10 and 2.

Nandu places Shutu's hands in the correct position.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Come on come on! Be grateful my dad isn't teaching you. You know what he did when I made a mistake?

Nandu raps Shutu on the back of his head, lightly.

TANI  
Baba!

Shutu summons up his last shred of confidence and jerkily reverses the car. Nandu quickly takes the glass back from the dash board.

NANDU  
Relax Tani, this is how you learn.  
Hey!

Nandu looks alarmed as the car moves unsteadily towards the gate.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Slow down, slow down! Stay left,  
left! Brake! Brake!

Everyone at the lawn reacts to the crashing sound. In a wide shot we see Shutu has lost control of the car. The left tail light breaks and the car comes to an abrupt halt. Nandu gets out and slams the door in irritation.

NANDU (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Jesus Shutu! Get out of the car.

CUT TO:

58.A EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ STREETS. DAY 58.A

Nandu drives disdainfully with Uncle, Aunty and Tani in the back seat. Tani is holding a basket with the puppy in it. At one point they over take Bonnie, Mimi and Shutu who are walking back home.

59 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT. 59

Tani is sitting on the bed like a proud mother with the puppy asleep on her lap. Aunty sits behind her, combing her long hair. Tani is trying hard to stay still so that the puppy doesn't wake up. Mimi is lying on the bed as Bonnie tidies up the room.

MIMI  
I hope this one has better luck  
than your previous pets.

BONNIE  
(Frowning at MIMI)  
Chico is very happy in doggy  
heaven, thank you!

MIMI  
Of course! Along with Wolfie,  
Sheeba and what was the name of  
that tortoise?

BONNIE  
They're keeping each other company!

AUNTY

Kalidas! Poor fellow, he must still  
be wandering around these parts!

Tani follows the conversation suspiciously.

TANI

Why? What happened to Kalidas?

BONNIE

Nothing. He just went for a walk  
and never came back!

MIMI

Ya because we all forgot to bring  
him back!

TANI

(deeply disapproving)  
You forgot to bring him back?

AUNTY

Don't worry, he's alive. Tortoises  
live to be more than a hundred  
years. Maybe he'll come back one  
day!

MIMI

Come back? I'm sure the adivasis  
have eaten him by now!

Tani looks horrified.

BONNIE

Never mind! So what are we naming  
this one?!

TANI

Fluffy!

BONNIE

(making a face)  
Fluffy?

MIMI

And who's going to look after him  
once we go back?

BONNIE

(shrugs with a grin)  
Shutu.

They break into laughter.

TANI

Oh Mama he's done susu on me!

BONNIE

This is why I'd said not on the bed!

Bonnie gives the puppy to Mimi.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Get up. Let's get you changed.

AUNTY

Wait, I'll organize some bedding.

MIMI (FRENCH)

Who's going to stay with you now? I have to go work now.

Aunty gets up. Bonnie and Tani go into the bathroom. Mimi lies down on the bed with the puppy curled up on her chest.

CUT TO:

60 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - BONNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 60

Tani is fast asleep as Bonnie tosses and turns beside her. The puppy's whimpers are relentless and grow in desperation. At one point, Bonnie sits up and looks at the pup with exasperation.

CUT TO:

61 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT (~~LOAD SHEDDING~~)

In the dimly lit room, Shutu sits on a stool and Nandu on his arm chair. They are absorbed in a game of chess with just a few chessmen remaining. Nandu sips his drink and observes Shutu's move.

NANDU

Hmm... at least your chess is better than your driving.

They hear footsteps from the corridor. Uncle walks into the living room wearing his flannel dressing gown and a miner's helmet with a torch. He goes up to a cabinet, opens a drawer and looks for something.

NANDU (CONT'D)

Kya hua Baba? Can't sleep?

UNCLE

No, no nothing. I just came to get my...

Uncle looks vaguely at the shelf as if he can't quite remember.

NANDU  
What? What do you need?

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Go to sleep Baba. We'll look for it  
in the morning.

Uncle shuffles off towards his own room. Nandu looks back at the board and is just about to make his next move when he hears footsteps again. His concentration is broken.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
Tch...!

Bonnie walks in holding the bedding with the puppy in it.

BONNIE  
(Handing over the bedding  
to Shutu)  
Here. I've had enough! Now you deal  
with this.

Bonnie walks away. Nandu is clearly annoyed. He goes back and completes his move. Shutu, stroking the puppy gently, concentrates on the board.

The loud sound of a sputtering bike rings through the night. Nandu sits up erect on his arm chair and looks in that direction.

NANDU  
Stella!

CUT TO:

62 INT. MIMI'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 62

Mimi is in her room alone, working. She is writing something at her desk when she suddenly hears the motorcycle and turns to the window. She sees Vikram zipping across on the bike.

62. A EXT. FRONT VERANDAH. NIGHT 62. A

The bike passes across the front verandah.

62. B EXT. SIDE CORRIDOR. NIGHT 62. B

Vikram zips across on his bike.

62. C EXT. BACK CORRIDOR. NIGHT 62. C

The bike passes across the back corridor.

63

EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE- GATE. NIGHT.

63

Vikram is circling the garden area, on his motorcycle. He is clearly inebriated. Nandu comes down the verandah steps followed by Shutu.

NANDU  
(delighted)  
Fuck, everyone will wake up.

Vikram stops the bike at the verandah.

VIKRAM  
(To Nandu)  
Come on! Let's take her for a spin!

NANDU  
It's freezing!

VIKRAM  
Don't be a pussy. Stella is nice  
and warm for you.

Shutu looks at the bike curiously. Vikram pulls out a hip flask and gives it to Nandu.

NANDU  
Fuck off man.

VIKRAM  
Take a sip, you won't feel so cold.

Nandu takes a sip and grimaces.

NANDU  
Ahh! Let me get my jacket.

Nandu goes in, passing Mimi who has come out wearing a jacket. Vikram starts the engine.

VIKRAM  
Ah, see how she purrs for me.  
Have you ever ridden one?

Shutu smiles shyly, he reaches out to touch the handlebars. Vikram flicks his hand away.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
Aye, don't touch her.

Mimi comes and sits on the bike and holds Vikram.

MIMI  
You never minded me touching her.

Vikram laughs and revs the engine. Nandu comes back out and raises his eyebrows at the sight of Mimi on the bike holding Vikram. Vikram looks a little uncomfortable.

VIKRAM  
 (in a low voice)  
 Come on Mimi, get off.

Mimi looks at Vikram but he doesn't meet her eyes. Mimi gets off.

NANDU  
 Move back.

Vikram moves back as Nandu sits in front.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
 Shutu lock the door. I have the keys.

SHUTU  
 Oh. Okay Dada.

As Nandu rides the bike out of the driveway. Mimi goes into the house past Shutu as he watches the gate.

CUT TO:

64 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

64

Mimi pours herself a drink at the bar. Shutu is clearing up the chess pieces near a dying fire. Mimi sits down in an armchair.

MIMI  
 So who was winning?

SHUTU  
 Me!

Shutu smiles at her and goes back to putting the pieces away. Mimi looks at Shutu moodily for a few moments.

MIMI  
 You're so pretty, you could be a girl.

Shutu looks at her with an unsure smile.

CUT TO:

64. A INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - SHUTU'S ROOM . NIGHT

64. A

Shutu is unable to sleep while a train rushes by in the distance.

65 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 65

Exterior shot of the house at night from the gate. A dog howls in the distance.

65. A EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - GATE. DAY 65. A

FADE OUT:

In a long shot, Maniya enters the gate on his cycle.

65. B INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - DINING ROOM. DAY 65. B

Maniya keeps a few letters on the dining table.

66 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - BACKYARD. DAY 66

Fade in. Shutu and Tani sits inside an old bathtub, reading a book.

The super reads Day 4/Thursday (30th DECEMBER)

In a corner is Maniya's hut, in front of it, a vegetable patch and some chickens. Manjari is filling out the buckets. The clothes on the line, gently flutter in the breeze. The two dogs are sleeping curled up in the sun. Maniya enters the backyard and resumes his work.

Suddenly, the mesh door opens and Brian comes out from the kitchen explaining something with a lot of enthusiasm. He is followed by Mimi, Vikram, Nandu and Bonnie who come out with a great deal of energy and bustle.

BRIAN

But there is so much space! We'll just draw two lines here.. There is 1, 2, 3...

MIMI

I'm telling you there's not enough people for kabaddi.

BRIAN

Why? Shutu will also play with us.

VIKRAM

Challo, then we might as well take Tani also to play.

Tani and Shutu exchange a look.

NANDU

Arrey Maniya can also play. Maniya, kabhi khela hain kabaddi?

MANIYA

Haa khela hain.

NANDU  
Challo good. Aa jao. Manjari tum  
bhi.

MANIYA  
Lekin ee lakdi...

NANDU  
Arrey chodo lakdi yaar.

MIMI  
Bonnie, you and I can't be in the  
same team.

BONNIE  
Ya all bad players can't be on one  
side. Vikram, you and Brian be  
captains.

VIKRAM  
Okay. I choose Nandu.

BRIAN  
Hang on! Let's flip a coin.

VIKRAM  
Heads.

Nandu flips the coin and its lands on heads.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
I choose Nandu.

BRIAN  
Maniya, mere team mein.

VIKRAM  
MIMI, come over here.

BRIAN  
Bonnie, you come over here!

Vikram looks between Shutu and Manjari, the two players left, planning his strategy. Shutu makes a move to get up. Tani gives him an apprehensive look. Shutu winks at her.

VIKRAM  
I choose Manjari.

The others laugh at Vikram's choice. Shutu, realizing that he hasn't been chosen by Vikram, walks towards Brian. Brian puts his arm around Shutu.

BRIAN  
Come on Shutu... You can play na?

A line is drawn and game begins in a fun and playful mood. Tani gets into the bathtub and pretends to be the referee.

Brian is the first player to raid Vikram's court. Brian begins chanting "kabaddi-kabaddi" and moves rapidly towards their baulk line. At one point Brian swiftly touches Mimi and runs toward the mid line. Mimi manages to grab him by his shirt, clings on to his neck and hangs off his back. Brian walks back into his court seemingly oblivious.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

What? What! Something on me?

Everyone laughs. Shutu starts playing really well. He is cheered on by everyone, particularly by Mimi and Bonnie.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Well done Shuts!

BONNIE

(Rubbing VIKRAM's slight belly)

Ooh Vikram, losing your touch huh!

This makes Shutu a little cocky and he provokes Vikram with his tactics. Vikram notices this and tries to ignore it but when it is his turn to raid Brian's team he becomes fiercely competitive. Vikram commits a minor foul against Shutu but aggressively convinces others through sheer volume that he isn't in the wrong. The mood of the game becomes very tense.

CUT TO:

67 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - CORRIDOR. DAY 67

Aunty comes out from her bath and finds mail kept on the dining table. She picks up the mail and goes through them, walking back.

67. A INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - AUNTY'S ROOM . DAY 67. A

She sits at her desk and picks up the letter opener to open a letter. She settles down to read.

68 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY 68

It is Shutu's turn to tackle VIKRAM's team. Shutu touches Vikram and leaps ahead toward the mid line. Vikram tackles him with all his force.

CUT TO:

69 INT. AUNTY'S ROOM. DAY. 69

Aunty is disturbed by what she is reading. The noises from outside gradually increase, distracting her.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY

70

Vikram has Shutu pinned down. In an effort to get away Shutu hits Vikram's face. This sets Vikram off and the tackle gets out of hand. The scuffle causes the dogs to start barking. Tani starts crying. Shutu splits his lip in the midst of this.

NANDU

What is going on! Break it up now!

MIMI

VIKRAM, stop it!

CUT TO:

71 INT. AUNTY'S ROOM. DAY.

71

Aunty walks out with an urgency because of the loud commotion from outside.

CUT TO:

72 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY

72

Brian tries to break up the fight but Shutu somehow manages to wriggle out of Vikram's vice like grip, tries to kick him in the groin but misses. Furious with Shutu's audacity, Vikram comes back after him in a fit of rage.

Aunty walks out into the backyard from the mesh door.

Shutu's lip bleeds profusely and everyone goes over to him. Mimi is the only one who rushes to Vikram.

AUNTY

What is going on over here?  
Maniya! Kya ho raha hain yaha?

Maniya goes back to his work. Manjari follows suit giving Vikram a dirty look. Bonnie goes to comfort Tani and takes her inside.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

(Looking accusingly at  
Nandu)

Oh God look at how much he's  
bleeding! Come, come inside. Let me  
have a look.

She ushers Shutu in, glances back at Vikram and shakes her head disapprovingly.

We stay with the group outside. Nandu takes in the scene and walks back inside, spitting.

Vikram notices this as he breathes heavily, trying to get a grip on himself. He dismissively brushes Mimi's hand off.

CUT TO:

73

INT. AUNTY'S BATHROOM. DAY

73

Shutu is sitting on the commode with the lid on, next to the sink. He is frowning and panting with a fixed, faraway look. Aunty opens a cabinet placed over the white enamel sink. She takes out a bottle of Dettol and some cotton as she observes Shutu.

AUNTY

Aaj ke ma'r kaaj teke chiti  
peyechi.  
I got your mother's letter today.

Shutu breathes heavy and doesn't react.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

Kal ke post office giye, maa ke  
ekta phone korish.  
Go to the post office and call her  
tomorrow.

SHUTU

(Distractedly)

Keno?  
Why?

Aunty bends down to dress the wound, takes her time to answer. Shutu winces in pain as the Dettol stings him.

AUNTY

Dara, ek minute...  
Hold still...

CUT TO:

74

INT. DINING TABLE. DAY

74

Nandu, Bonnie, Mimi, Shutu and Tani sit at the dining table silently eating their lunch. Manjari brings in more rotis and Aunty serves it to them. Uncle saunters in wearing a hat and joins them at the table.

UNCLE

Arrey. Brian aur Vikram kaha gaye?

AUNTY

They had to leave.

UNCLE

Oh.

Uncle stretches across to take some salad and notices Shutu.

UNCLE (CONT'D)  
Shutu! Yeh kya hua?

Everyone remains silent. Shutu looks up for a moment but doesn't respond.

TANI  
They were playing Kabbadi...

AUNTY  
You know how it is. Boys will be boys!

Tani looks at her grandmother curiously. Everyone eats in uncomfortable silence.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. VERANDAH STEPS. NIGHT (LOAD SHEDDING)

75

Nandu sits on the verandah steps, smoking a cigarette. Bonnie walks out with a lantern. She sits beside Nandu and holds out her hand for the cigarette.

NANDU  
(Passing the cigarette)  
She's asleep?

BONNIE  
Hmm.  
(Taking a drag)  
Vikram's one hot headed guy.

NANDU  
He's always been like that.

BONNIE  
Ya but he needs to pick on people his own size you know. Not a kid like Shutu.

NANDU  
Please, 23 is hardly a kid! We got married at that age.

BONNIE  
But the problem is that Vikram behaves like he's 23! And always gets away with it.

They smoke in silence as Bonnie swats bugs away. The lights go off inside the house.

NANDU  
He does tend to get carried away.

BONNIE

Even that day during the planchet,  
you guys took it too far. It was  
quite cruel.

NANDU

(Looks back at her  
sharply)  
You were also a part of it.

BONNIE

Ya, but it was your plan... You  
know, he's such a sensitive boy.

Nandu rolls his eyes.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

How he's been wearing mesho's  
sweater everyday.

NANDU

Kids lose their parents when they  
are 7,8,9... He's a full grown man  
now.

BONNIE

But give him some time...

NANDU

He needs to toughen up now and take  
care of his mother.

Nandu gets up, stubs out the cigarette.

NANDU (CONT'D)

Trust me.

Nandu walks off leaving Bonnie outside, he bangs the door as  
he goes in.

CUT TO:

76

INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT

76

Bonnie, Nandu and Tani are asleep. There is a sudden sound.  
Nandu wakes up with a frown. He looks over at Bonnie who is  
fast asleep. Hearing the sound again he goes towards the  
bathroom. He finds Shutu inside, wedged in a corner, stuck  
between a cupboard, a door and the wall. Shutu looks ahead,  
scared and disoriented.

NANDU

(Whispers)  
Shutu, what happened?

Shutu stares at him blankly.

NANDU (CONT'D)  
It's okay, come.

Nandu puts his arm around Shutu's shoulder and leads him back to his bed. He tucks the mosquito net back in.

Nandu goes through the bathroom towards his own room when he spots the frog under the sink. He registers this with a frown and walks away, carefully shutting the door behind him.

A close shot of the frog staring balefully into the camera.

CUT TO:

77 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 77

Exterior shot of the house taken from the gate. Fireflies hover in the distance.

FADE OUT:

78 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ RAILWAY STATION MARKET. DAY 78

Fade in. On music we see the following visuals.

Shutu rides through the quiet, early morning roads of McCluskiegunj on a cycle. Tani sits in front of him. The landscape progresses from stark to the busier market area near the Railway Station. They pass by the market and stop at the Post office around the bend.

The super reads Day 5/Friday (31st DECEMBER)

78. A INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ POST OFFICE. DAY 78. A

Tani sits on a bench and watches Shutu as he talks to the post man at a counter. Shutu removes a small phone book and shows a number to the post man.

SHUTU  
Yeh number pe phone lagana hain.

POSTMAN  
Theek hain. Baitho.

He comes to Tani and waits with her until the postman calls him back.

POSTMAN (CONT'D)  
Bardhaman ka number. Aaj jao!

The post man hands Shutu the phone. On his face, the phone rings twice and he keeps the receiver back down. The post man gives him a puzzled look.

CUT TO:

79 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - CORRIDOR. DAY. 79

Shutu walks through the corridor leading to the kitchen, carrying the shopping bags. Tani runs ahead of him.

TANI

Mama, we've come back! Where are you?

BONNIE

Hi baby! Had fun in the market?

Tani goes to her mother while Shutu goes on into the kitchen.

79. A INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - KITCHEN. DAY. 79. A

Shutu places the shopping bags down on the counter.

AUNTY

Ma'ke phone korli?  
Called your mother?

SHUTU

Connect holo na. Phoneta monehoy kharaap.  
It didn't. The phone must be dead.

Aunty gives Shutu a suspicious look.

AUNTY

Kaal ke aar ek baar cheshta korish.  
Try once again tomorrow.

Bonnie enters. She looks into the bag to take the mutton out.

BONNIE

Maa, should we start with the mutton?

AUNTY

Yes. You know where everything is na? Otherwise ask Manjari. I'm going in for a bath.

(Opening the mesh door to the backyard)

Manjari paani de do andar.

CUT TO:

80 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY 80

Manjari hangs the clothes on the line when she hears Aunty call out to her. Maniya goes to pick up a bucket of water from the under the sun.

MANJARI  
E sab ja payega kha?

CUT TO:

81 OMITTED 81

82 EXT. FRONT LAWNS. DAY 82

Shutu and Tani are lying on their stomachs, on the grass outside. Shutu is focusing a point of light through a magnifying glass on a piece of paper. A couple of ants crawl across it. Shutu chases a big ant with the magnifying glass, trying to focus the point of light on it. Tani watches, fascinated. The puppy is playing near them.

CUT TO:

83 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - KITCHEN. DAY. 83

Bonnie is frying the spices and onions in a large wok on the stove. Mimi is chopping potatoes at the counter.

MIMI  
So who's this slut Vikram has  
married?

Bonnie rolls her eyes.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
Isn't she much younger than him?

BONNIE  
Ma was saying that she is from some  
small town. And you know the small  
town mentality na... they get their  
girls married off really young.

MIMI  
What's her name?

BONNIE  
Pratima? No Purnima.

MIMI  
Khasi?

BONNIE  
I don't know. From that side only.

MIMI  
You saw the new jeep?

BONNIE  
For them Vikram is royalty!

MIMI  
Royalty my ass.  
(Pause)  
What time are they coming tonight?

BONNIE  
Uh. 7, 7:30 I think. Pass the tomatoes.

MIMI  
I haven't cut it yet. I'm still on the aloo.

BONNIE  
Why have you cut them so small? They'll melt in the gravy.

MIMI  
But you didn't say! We can always fry it separately and add it in the end.

BONNIE  
But then it doesn't absorb any flavor! Anyway, leave it now. Chop the tomatoes for me fast.

MIMI  
(Iratly)  
Fine. How do you want it?

BONNIE  
Well ideally I'd like it pureed.

MIMI  
Well obviously I can't puree it for you now.

BONNIE  
Just chop it finely. Hurry up.

CUT TO:

84

EXT. FRONT LAWN. DAY

84

The paper catches fire and with it so does the grass and the ant on it. Shutu and Tani watch the ant burn to a crisp curiously. Tani and Shutu exchange a look.

TANI  
It's dead na?

SHUTU

I guess.

TANI

What do we do?

Shutu collects the ant and the burnt debris and pretends to bury it. Tani does the sign of a cross. Shutu also does it, to humour her. Tani arranges a few wild flowers on the pile.

TANI (CONT'D)

Should I say a poem?

SHUTU

Sure.

Tani folds her hands together in an elocution pose and recites an unrelated, pithy poem.

TANI

When I was one,  
I had just begun.  
When I was two,  
I was nearly new.  
When I was three,  
I was hardly me.  
When I was four,  
I was not much more.  
When I was five,  
I was just alive.  
But now I am six,  
I'm as clever as clever.  
So I think I'll be six  
now and forever.

CUT TO:

85

INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

85

PURNIMA (25), Vikram's Assamese wife, confidently sings a beautiful Bihu song oblivious to her surroundings. She looks like a new bride; wearing a mekhla chador, wedding bangles and a thick line of sindoor. She's unsophisticated, yet sexy.

Tani sits next to her, watching her adoringly and occasionally touching her chador. Bonnie motions Tani not to disturb Purnima. Tani flatly refuses.

Over Purnima's shoulder, we see Nandu, Shutu, Mrs McKenzie and Uncle who is smoking a cigar. Everyone is sitting around her, immersed in the song.

Aunty is pleasantly surprised, she exchanges an approving look with Bonnie. Vikram accompanies Purnima on a guitar. Mimi is sizing her up, while sipping her third drink. Purnima finishes the song, everyone starts to clap.

BONNIE

Wow! We had no idea you sing so well?

MRS MCKENZIE

Have you been learning for long love?

AUNTY

(To VIKRAM)

Why have you been hiding her all this time?

UNCLE

Challo ek aur gaana ho jaye. Purnima, come on!

VIKRAM

Sing that one na...

PURNIMA

No thank you! Abh koi aur gao.

MIMI

Ya, let's have a faster song! A fun one we can dance to!

Bonnie sings 'Dhitang Dhitang Bole' with others joining in. Brian joins along on his harmonica. Vikram plays the drums on a table. Nandu picks up Tani and dances with her. Uncle and Aunty try a jive; Vikram and Purnima do a twist. Shutu sits alone on the sofa, trying to look busy with a magazine. Mimi pulls him up. She dances provocatively and being a little high, trips on her sari twisting her ankle.

CUT TO:

85. A INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 85. A

Vikram puts a cassette in the player and presses play.

86 INT. DINING TABLE. MOMENTS LATER. 86

Aunty and Bonnie arrange the mats and cutlery on the table. Manjari brings in a casserole and places it down. In the background, the music continues.

AUNTY

Manjari, mutton ke liye bada chamach leke aao.

BONNIE

Ma should we serve Tani here...

Bonnie looks at Aunty who is looking at Mimi across the room. She looks in that direction as well.

Mimi is leaning over and talking to Vikram, while casually touching his thigh. Purnima is next to Vikram, but is talking to Uncle. Mimi giggles, unaware that her pallu has slipped off.

AUNTY  
Just look at how she carries on.

BONNIE  
Ma, she's just talking...

Vikram looks uncomfortable and gets up. Mimi continues to sip her drink alone.

AUNTY  
Yes. With her sari hanging off? No wonder that boy didn't marry her.

BONNIE  
Well, she can't help it if men are attracted to her.

AUNTY  
But you can't deny that she enjoys the attention.

MRS MCKENZIE  
(walking up to them)  
Everything smells so lovely Anu.

BONNIE  
(Handing her a plate)  
Please start Aunty Gwen.  
Guys, dinner is ready!

CUT TO:

87 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

87

The older people and Tani are seated at the dining table while Nandu, Shutu, Mimi, Vikram and Purnima sit on the sofa with their plates. Bonnie is serving herself at the table.

MRS MCKENZIE  
I just love this typical Bengali mutton curry!

AUNTY  
It's the potatoes, they soak up the flavour. Bonnie made it, you know!

BONNIE  
Thank you! Actually, Mimi and I made it together.

MIMI  
 (Giving a drunken salute)  
 Oh please! I was just following  
 orders.

Bonnie gives Mimi a look. Tani leaves her half eaten food and goes and sits on Purnima's lap. Purnima is talking to Shutu. Vikram is sitting opposite them.

PURNIMA  
 Yahan pe kya hua?

Vikram looks up sharply from his plate.

TANI  
 You know they were fighting?

Tani looks at Vikram.

SHUTU  
 (Laughs awkwardly)  
 Oh yeh? Kuch nahi, kuch nahi.

Purnima turns his face with her hand to get a better look at the wound. Mimi gets up to put her plate away.

PURNIMA  
 Dikhao toh? Tch tch. Yeh toh ghaav  
 ho gaya hain.

SHUTU  
 Nahii... Woh khelte khelte lag gaya.

PURNIMA  
 Cold compress lagana chahiye.  
 Pata hain, usse bahut help hota  
 hain.

Vikram coughs, uneasy at this exchange.

BONNIE  
 (Interrupts them)  
 So pretty your payals are Purnima!  
 Sone ke payal bahut kum dekhe hain  
 humne.

Vikram notices as Mimi returns and perches herself on the arm of the sofa next to Shutu. Purnima speaks a mix of Hindi and broken English.

PURNIMA  
 Hain na? Vikram ke naani ke the.  
 Aaj kal yeh design nahi milte hain.

BONNIE  
 Really! Wow.

PURNIMA (HINDI)

Hajoor ke yaha, sone ke payal ka rivaaj hain.

TANI

What is rivaaj?

BONNIE

Oh I didn't know that. How interesting.

TANI

Mama, what is rivaaj??

BONNIE

Shh... grown ups are talking.

SHUTU

Tani, it's a practice.

NANDU

Obviously, gold is so expensive that once only royalty could afford it.

SHUTU

Even the men used to wear jewelry, earrings for example.

MIMI

(Touching Shutu's shoulder)

I think earrings will really suit you VIKRAM.

NANDU

Yeah. He looks like a bandit already.

VIKRAM

Ma got so excited that I was finally getting her a bahuri that she's giving away whatever little family jewels are left also!

MIMI

Well, it seems you're not taking very good care of YOUR family jewels, VIKRAM.

BRIAN

Ya! Wasn't it just yesterday that you were close to losing your manhood, bugger?

(Turning to Purnima)

I'm sorry ha.. I know we've just met, but I'm saying for your sake only.

NANDU

We're just concerned about the royal heir. We don't want the family to go into further decline.

MIMI

What Vikram really needs is a chastity belt. At least Purnima can breathe easy when she's away.

BONNIE

MIMI!

Everyone laughs. Purnima hasn't followed the conversation completely but laughs sportingly.

BRIAN

Ya! Plus it'll protect the family jewels!

NANDU

Perfect! A golden chastity belt for Vikram!

MIMI

Hear! Hear!

Everyone raises their glasses, laughing. Bonnie notices as Mimi, laughing helplessly, slips off the arm of the sofa and collapses on Shutu's shoulder.

CUT TO:

88

INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

88

Bonnie places a beautiful caramel custard on the table and clears away other dishes. Tani, by now cranky and sleepy, hangs on to her mother's palloo.

TANI

No, you come. You come with me.

BONNIE

Uff Tani. I'm doing some work.

Tani continues whining and being clingy as Shutu and Purnima come with their empty plates.

PURNIMA

Kaha pe rakhein?

BONNIE

Arrey, ho gaya? Tum ne toh kuch khaya hi nahi. Yaha par rakh do.

SHUTU

Tani, come with me. I'll show you something.

BONNIE

Go na! Go with Shutu.

Shutu takes Tani out of the room. Vikram, meanwhile, comes up to Purnima and wipes his wet hands on her chador.

PURNIMA

Arrey, towel nahi mila bathroom mein?

Vikram walks away, laughing. Mimi notices this resentfully.

PURNIMA (CONT'D)

Sure kuch help nahi chahiye?

BONNIE

No, no don't worry. It's nothing. Sit na. Mimi will help me. Mimi?

Mimi walks over to Bonnie. They step outside the room.

CUT TO:

89

INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

89

In the corridor, Bonnie pulls Mimi aside and whispers.

BONNIE

Just what do you think you're doing?

MIMI

Why? What's wrong?

BONNIE

Can you be a little more dignified?

MIMI

Excuse me?

BONNIE

He's a married man now.

MIMI

So tell him. I'm not the one who's married.

BONNIE

How many drinks have you had?

Mimi gives her look.

BONNIE (CONT'D)  
Have you had dinner?

MIMI  
I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

Mimi makes a move to go. They hear Nandu.

NANDU (O.C.)  
Bonnie! Where are you?

Mimi uses this moment to get away. Bonnie follows her.

CUT TO:

90 INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT 90

Tani has fallen asleep with her doll clutched in one hand. Shutu, too, has nodded off beside her but is suddenly woken up by loud cheering and a countdown to midnight. He walks to the door and finds everyone hugging and wishing each other Happy New Year. Aunty sees Shutu at the corridor.

AUNTY  
Where were you? Happy New Year  
beta!

91 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 91

Everyone is wishing each other. Mrs. McKenzie hugs Brian.

MRS MCKENZIE  
(Wiping away a tear)  
Happy New Year dear. God knows  
where you'll be next year...

AUNTY  
Everyone is going away Gwen... Only  
we oldies are left. (hugging Gwen)

PURNIMA  
Happy New Year Uncle!

UNCLE  
(To Purnima)  
Happy New Year bahuri! Yeh badmash  
pareshan kare toh batana, tight kar  
denge usko.

They all break into Auld Lang Syne.

Vikram laughs, turns away and has an awkward exchange with Mimi. Making sure Vikram is watching, Mimi gives Shutu an overly intimate embrace.

DISSOLVE TO:

92 INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT 92

Auld Lang Syne continues - Shot of Tani sleeping.

DISSOLVE TO:

93 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT 93

Auld Lang Syne continues - Maniya and Manjari eat, sitting on the floor. Manjari shares her food with the puppy.

DISSOLVE TO:

94 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 94

Auld Lang Syne continues - A shot of left over caramel custard, empty glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

95 OMITTED 95

96 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 96

Shutu is alone in the darkened room, locking the door. He turns around at a sudden movement. Mimi has come and stood behind the sofa.

MIMI

Arrey! Party's over?

She makes her way to the armchair and sits down with a groan and opens her hair.

SHUTU

Can I get you some water?

MIMI

Can you get me another drink instead?

SHUTU

(Laughs)

Of course! You were having Rum?

As Shutu walks over to the bar, Mimi massages her ankle. Shutu watches her as he makes her drink. Mimi doesn't take the glass, so Shutu puts it down on the table next to her.

MIMI

I think I may have twisted my ankle. See?

Shutu tries to hold her ankle gently but hurts her inadvertently.

MIMI (CONT'D)

Ow!

SHUTU

Oh! Sorry, sorry.

MIMI

(Laughs)

It's okay, Shutu!

An awkward silence.

SHUTU

You have beautiful feet!

MIMI

(Making a sad face)

But I don't have any golden payals!

Mimi looks at him contemplatively as he attempts to rotate her ankle. She takes a moment before she makes a move to get up.

MIMI (CONT'D)

I better go to bed.

SHUTU

Oh okay.

Shutu makes a move to help her get up.

CUT TO:

97 INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT

97

Mimi and Shutu walk down the corridor. She is a little unsteady on her feet and has her arm around Shutu's shoulder. Shutu's arm is around her waist. He is holding her shoes in his other hand.

MIMI

(Squeals)

You have such cold hands Shutu!

SHUTU

I know. I'm sorry.

They proceed awkwardly, shuffling and giggling as they head to Mimi's room.

CUT TO:

98 INT. MIMI'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

98

Shutu looks at the bed but chooses to sit her down on Uncle's chair instead. As he reaches the chair, she deliberately stops and turns to look at him.

Mimi locks eyes with Shutu for a moment before pushing him down on to the chair. Shutu sits down, stunned. She lifts her sari a little and sits astride him. Lowering her face to Shutu's, she kisses him and then starts opening his belt. Shutu's hands grip the arms of the chair tightly, his knuckles whitening. He starts breathing heavily as he closes his eyes and kisses her back.

We move behind the chair and see the back of Shutu's head and Mimi's hair cascading down. She grips the back of the chair firmly with one hand.

The camera pans down the length of the chair as it starts to rock gently. There is a bit of folded newspaper wedged under one of the legs. As the chair starts to move faster, the paper slips out. The sound of the wooden leg against the floor becomes faster and louder.

CUT TO:

98. A OMITTED

98. A

98. B OMITTED

98. B

98. C INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT

98. C

Shutu walks across the corridor to his room. There is gentle snoring from the other rooms.

99 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. NIGHT.

99

Shutu reaches his room, shuts the door behind him and gets into bed. The puppy tries to jump on to the bed. Shutu scoops him up under the blanket. His eyes shine brightly as he cuddles the puppy.

CUT TO:

100 EXT. GATE. NIGHT.

100

Exterior shot of the house at night.

FADE OUT:

101 INT. MIMI'S BEDROOM. DAY. 101

Fade in. There is bright sunlight on Mimi's face as she opens her heavily kohl smudged eyes. She sees the time on the wall clock: 11:45.

The super reads Day 6/Saturday (1st JANUARY)

MIMI's hair is dishevelled and she is still wearing last night's clothes. She is severely hung over as she sits up disoriented, holding her head. She sees her sari on the study chair and cringes, suddenly remembering everything with a groan.

CUT TO:

102 INT. CORRIDOR. DAY. 102

Mimi opens her door a crack and peeps out apprehensively. She is wearing fresh clothes and her face is scrubbed clean of last night's makeup. Her hair is pulled back into a sober ponytail. She walks gingerly down the corridor and goes to the kitchen.

CUT TO:

103 INT. KITCHEN. DAY. 103

Mimi pours and drinks a whole glass of water. She notices empty breakfast plates in the sink. She walks over to the gas stove, lifts the lid off the wok and picks up remnants of egg bhurji to eat.

Bonnie walks in, notices Mimi.

BONNIE

There's more kept on the counter.

MIMI

Oh, okay.

BONNIE

Happy New Year!

MIMI

Happy New Year!

CUT TO:

104 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY 104

Uncle sits on a rocking chair, holding a transistor to his ear as he follows a cricket match. Tani is sitting and coloring on the floor. Fluffy is attacking the crayons.

NANDU (O.C.)

Okay, 20 across, actress in a best-selling swimsuit poster. 7 letters. Shutu?

Shutu, with a prominent black eye, is rapidly solving the Rubik's cube with clicking sounds. He stops and looks up as Mimi walks out with a cup of tea and her book. He has finally changed out of the green sweater he has been wearing everyday.

NANDU (CONT'D)

Well. Good afternoon Mimi!

Mimi gives him a withering look and plants a kiss on Uncle's forehead.

MIMI

Happy New Year Uncle!

Mimi happens to sit down next to Shutu on the cane two seater.

UNCLE

Good morning. Happy New Year!

NANDU

Slept well?

MIMI

Not really.

NANDU

Really? It's only 12. You want to go sleep some more?

Mimi ignores Nandu's remark. Mimi meanwhile takes out a cigarette from the box lying on the table. The matchbox is a little further away, towards Shutu. Mimi looks at Shutu expectantly. Shutu looks back at Mimi; nervous and uncomprehending. Over these visuals Nandu and Uncle's conversation continues.

UNCLE (O.C.)

Sophia Loren!

NANDU (O.C.)

Noooo... that's too long. 7 letters. Aah! Bo Derek.

MIMI

(Raising her eyebrows to signal)  
Match?

Shutu stares at her blankly. Mimi is amused. In the background, Tani's eyes dart between the two. Mimi leans across Shutu to pick up the matchbox herself.

NANDU

Oh Shutu you'll know this one!  
The high pitch of a loud siren  
drops as it moves past it's  
observer. This is the dash effect.

Shutu who was staring at mimi, turns almost by reflex.

SHUTU

Doppler.

NANDU

Yes!

Mimi raises her eyebrows at Shutu and smiles, impressed.

UNCLE (O.C.)

(Cheers loudly)  
Yes! Out!

CUT TO:

105 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - BACK CORRIDOR. DAY 105

Shutu anxiously fidgets with the rubik's cube. He notices Mimi who walks out to the verandah with her writing material and sits. Shutu's gaze follows her.

CUT TO:

106 EXT. BACKYARD. DAY 106

Shutu walks purposefully across the backyard and goes towards the motorcycle. He walks the bike across towards the front lawns. Tani runs towards him.

TANI

Shutu! Shutu!

Shutu pretends not to hear her. She comes up to him.

TANI (CONT'D)

(Out of the breath)  
Shutu!

SHUTU

Tani!

TANI

What are you doing?

Shutu is silent.

TANI (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

Shutu is still walking quietly as Tani prattles on.

TANI (CONT'D)

You know how to drive a motor cycle?

SHUTU

Ya. I know how to ride a motor cycle.

TANI

But you can't drive a car!

Shutu laughs. Tani walks along.

TANI (CONT'D)

I will sit in the front. You sit behind me because baba said that if I sit behind, I'll fall off.

SHUTU

I can't ride as well as your baba. I'm only practicing. When I learn properly then you come with me.

TANI

Baba allowed you?

SHUTU

(Stops and turns to her)  
Tani where's Fluffy gone?

TANI

I don't know. He must be inside.

SHUTU

Go look for him. Bonnie di will get angry if he runs off again.

TANI

Okay, I'll go and get him. You wait for me haan? Don't go without me, okay?

SHUTU

Ya.

Tani runs off inside while Shutu makes off hurriedly in the other direction.

CUT TO:

107

EXT. ORCHARD. DAY

107

Mimi uses her book to shade her eyes from the sun. She is almost asleep. A sudden movement makes Mimi open her eyes. She lifts the book a little and squints into the distance.

With Mimi's brightly painted toenails in the foreground, we see Shutu approaching, awkwardly walking the bike. Mimi looks amused.

As he comes closer, Shutu gives her a shy smile and looks away as he keeps walking determinedly. His hair falls over his black eye that has now turned an ugly purple. He tries to move it with a jerk of his head. He comes up to her and stands there, slightly out of breath.

SHUTU

Hi.

Mimi smiles at him.

SHUTU (CONT'D)

Want to go for a ride?

MIMI

Only if you let me ride it.

CUT TO:

108 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. DAY.

108

Tani walks into Shutu's room. It is a small room with his things strewn around. The room is dark, the curtains are drawn. Shutu's books, his clothes, a pack of cigarettes, his shaving kit are lying messily on the bed. Tani rifles through his things, picks up his shaving brush and strokes it thoughtfully on her chin. The puppy squiggles out from the basket and comes near Tani's feet. She scoops up the puppy, placing the brush back exactly as it was and runs back out.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY

109

Tani comes out of the front door and walks into the verandah talking all the while.

TANI

Shutu see I found him! He was under your bed. Should we take him also?

Tani doesn't see Shutu. She walks down the verandah steps, looks around for him. She finds Shutu and Mimi walking the motorcycle out of the driveway and looks on disbelievingly.

TANI (CONT'D)

Shutu! Shutu! Wait...

Tani runs down the driveway, with the puppy in her arms.

TANI (CONT'D)  
 (On the verge of tears)  
 Shutu!

Tani sets the puppy down. On her face, we hear the motorcycle speed away. A labourer, working on the boundary wall, turns around in the direction of the sound.

CUT TO:

110 EXT. ROAD. DAY

110

Shutu looks a little distracted as Mimi rides the bike. Shutu awkwardly holds the seat for support. Mimi is enjoying the wind in her hair. They ride through the lonely lanes of the Gunj. She stops the bike, gets off and enters the gate of the McCluskiegunj cemetery.

SHUTU  
 Wait, where are you going?

Mimi turns around shading her eyes from the sun with her hand.

MIMI  
 (With a smile)  
 Come?

Without waiting for a response, Mimi goes inside.

CUT TO:

111 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ CEMETERY. DAY.

111

Shutu catches up with Mimi who has stopped at a gravestone.

MIMI  
 Mrs. Gladys McGowan. Arrived on  
 18th July 1897. Departed on 12th  
 August 1958. She left even as she  
 had tried to live in grace and  
 beauty.

SHUTU  
 (Slightly out of breath)  
 Why are we here?

Mimi looks at him and smiles.

SHUTU (CONT'D)  
 I thought we could go to the stream  
 up ahead.

MIMI  
 We could...  
 (Distracted by something)  
 Isn't that Curney?

Shutu squints into the distance.

In a long shot, Mrs. Curney is kneeling at a grave further away.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
 Mrs. Curney!

The woman turns her face to them partially, then gets up and walks away.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
 Mrs. Curney?  
 (Turning back)  
 Is she ignoring us?

SHUTU  
 Mimi, Mimi...  
 Let her be...(Following Mimi)  
 Is that even her?

Mimi approaches the grave Mrs. Curney was at. She finds a lit candle, flowers arranged in the shape of a heart and something wrapped in a paper napkin.

MIMI  
 Elizabeth Curney. Born 1959 - Died  
 1965.  
 (Gasps)  
 Only 6 years old!

Mimi's eyes travel down to the candle. She runs her hands over the flower arrangement. Lifting the napkin, she finds a slice of cake and looks delighted.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
 Want?

SHUTU  
 (Horrorified)  
 NO!

MIMI  
 Why?

SHUTU  
 How can you eat it? It was lying...  
 there!

MIMI  
 She just left it! You're always so  
 proper Shutu. It's very boring.

SHUTU

But it's not meant for us!

MIMI

Who is it meant for? Elizabeth  
Curney?

Mimi breaks off a bit of the cake and forces a little into Shutu's mouth. He tries to resist but ends up eating a bit of it. Mimi laughs mischievously.

MIMI (CONT'D)

(Walking away)

Delicious, isn't it?

Shutu spits and wipes his mouth. He looks further ahead to check if Mrs. Curney is still there.

SHUTU

What if she comes back?

Shutu doesn't get a response. He turns around but can't see Mimi. From between a tree and the back of some gravestones, we see Shutu as he looks around apprehensively.

SHUTU (CONT'D)

MIMI?

(Looks around)

MIMI?

Shutu walks away from the gravestone and looks further in the distance. He stands alone for a few chilling moments.

SHUTU (CONT'D)

Mimi, we have to return  
Vikram's bike also.

Mimi suddenly jumps out from behind the tree and pounces on him.

MIMI

(Covering his eyes,  
Exorcist voice)

I'm the ghost of Elizabeth Curney.  
I suck cock in hell!

Shutu jumps out of his skin. Mimi collapses into giggles. Suddenly, Shutu pins her against the tree and aggressively starts to kiss her.

CUT TO:

113 EXT. VERANDAH STEPS. DAY 113

Tani has curled up in the cane chair. She is sulking. Manjari passes by with a pile of clothes in her hands - a blur in the background. Tani notices the crayons rolling around. She frowns and sits up.

TANI

Fluffy?

CUT TO:

114 INT. KITCHEN. DAY. 114

A long shot of Manjari folding clothes in a quiet corner of the kitchen. We follow her as she takes the pile of folded laundry from room to room.

Manjari goes to Mimi's room first. The door is ajar, the room is empty. She enters and keeps the pile down on the bed.

Next she comes to Aunty's room and finds the door left open. She walks in and finds Aunty sleeping alone, in the same position as we saw her last. She leaves a few clothes on the dresser and exits.

Finally, Manjari comes to Bonnie's room and knocks on the door. There's no response.

CUT TO:

115 INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. DAY 115

Nandu is sitting on the bed with his eyes closed. He hears the knock and opens his eyes in alarm. He hears the knock again and there's a sound as a hand tries to open the door. He freezes.

MANJARI (O.C.)

Didi Kapde!

Bonnie who was going down on Nandu under a sheet, pops her head out for a moment.

BONNIE

Bahar rakhdo.

She goes back under the sheet.

CUT TO:

116 INT. VERANDAH. DAY. 116

Uncle opens the tool box and systematically lays out all its components.

He sets down the bottle of linseed oil and on a leather cloth begins to dismantle the rifle. Maniya walks up to Uncle, holding a rusty, battered drum cover with a few old bullet holes and a thick layer of dust on it.

MANIYA

Yeh wala?

UNCLE

(Inspecting it)

Kya haal bana ke rakha  
hain iska. Saaf karo!

Vikram pulls up on the jeep.

CUT TO:

117 INT. INSIDE BONNIE'S ROOM. DAY 117

Hearing Vikram's jeep, Nandu gets up and buckles his belt. Bonnie snuggles under the sheet and curls up for a snooze. Nandu burps loudly and goes into the bathroom.

118 EXT. CEMETERY. DAY 118

Shutu is blissfully lying on the grass, half asleep. Mimi hooks her bra strap shut from under her sweater. She frowns into the distance to check if anyone has seen them.

MIMI

(brusquely)

Hurry up! Let's get back before it  
gets dark.

As they walk away, we tilt down to see that he has written:  
'Shutu + Mimi'

CUT TO:

119 EXT. ROADS. DAY 119

In a series of a fast paced shots we see Shutu riding the motorcycle, Mimi sitting behind him. Shutu wobbles a little on the bike while Mimi laughs at his struggle. They look relaxed and happy. This is intercut with Tani's running feet. We hear her call out to Fluffy.

CUT TO:

120 INT. BONNIE'S ROOM. DAY 120

Bonnie opens her eyes with a start. She sits up and feels a chill in the air.

CUT TO:

121 OMITTED 121

122 INT. KITCHEN. DAY. 122

Manjari is putting away dishes in the cabinet. Bonnie walks in and fills a kettle with water at the sink.

BONNIE

Manjari, Tani kahan hain?

MANJARI

Bahar pilla ke saath khel raha tha.

Bonnie puts the kettle on the stove.

BONNIE

Chai bahar bhej dena. Vikram bhi aaye huye hai. Aur Tani ke liye bournvita.

CUT TO:

123 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY 123

Nandu and Vikram are with Uncle at the verandah. Vikram stands next to Uncle and observes Uncle's elaborate ritual.

VIKRAM

Smithandweson ka 32. It's a snubnose uncle. Kal leke aaye? Target practice ke liye.

UNCLE

Good idea. Leke aao. Waise uska range 10 meter se zyaada nahi hoga.

NANDU

Uska 10 meter range hain aur aapka pata nahi chalege ke bhi nahi. Kar lo target practice.

124 OMITTED123 CONTINUES INTO 125. 124

125 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY

125

Aunty comes up to the verandah after talking to the labourers.

AUNTY

Vikram beta! Good you're here. Yeh majdoor log mujhe pagal kar rahe hain. Everyday they come late, if they come at all.

VIKRAM

They are all like this Aunty. I'll have a word with the thekedar.

Bonnie comes out to the verandah and holds the mesh door open for Manjari.

BONNIE

Baaki sab ko bulaado. Chai thanda ho jayega.

Manjari sets the tea tray down on the table and goes inside. Everyone picks up a cup of tea.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

This is the tea that Purnima got last night. Such a lovely aroma...

AUNTY

(noticing Brian walking in through the gate)  
Isn't that Brian? Manjari ek aur chai!

BONNIE

What's that in his hand? Isn't that Fluffy?

Brian comes up to the verandah steps with Fluffy in his arms. His own dog, Fluffy's mother, follows at his heels.

BRIAN

Hey! You guys want to keep this bugger or not? This fellow keeps coming back to his mom all the time...

BONNIE

But I thought Tani was playing with Fluffy. She's not with you?

BRIAN

No. I found him in the garden with his mother.

Manjari comes and stands at the door.

MANJARI  
Ghar pe aur koi nahi hain.

BONNIE  
(Getting up)  
Koi nahi hain matlab? Mimi room  
mein nahi hain?  
Tani?

Bonnie goes inside to check. Maniya cycles in from the gate.

NANDU  
Arrey she must be with Shutu.

UNCLE  
Abh thand bhi lag rahi hain.

AUNTY  
Maniya! Shutu aur Tani ko dekha  
hain?

MANIYA  
Nahi.

AUNTY  
Usko jaake puchon kuch dekha hain  
ki nahi.  
(Indicating a passing  
labourer)

CUT TO:

125.Pt EXT. DRIVEWAY. DAY

125.Pt 1

Maniya goes up to the labourer.

MANIYA  
Yaha se koi gaya tha?

The labourer gives a vague look.

MANIYA (CONT'D)  
Kisi ko dekha gate se nikalte hue?

LABOURER  
Ek motorcycle gaya tha.

CUT TO:

125.Pt EXT. VERANDAH. DAY

125.Pt 2

Bonnie has come back out.

AUNTY  
Motorcycle pe?

BONNIE  
Motorcycle pe kaun gaya? Tani saath  
mein thi?

Nandu looks at him surprised, gets up and goes to check.

VIKRAM  
Mimi has also gone with them?

BONNIE  
She's nowhere to be seen either.

125. A EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - SIDE . DUSK 125. A

We follow Nandu to the side of the house. He finds the  
motorcycle is missing.

AUNTY (O.C.)  
They're here!

125. B EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - DRIVEWAY. DUSK 125. B

Nandu runs back to see the motorcycle entering the driveway  
with Shutu riding and Mimi's arms around him. They look  
dishevelled and relaxed, till they realize that everyone's  
attention is on them.

Shutu halts the motorcycle a little away from them and Mimi  
gets off.

NANDU  
Where were you guys?

BONNIE  
Tani is not with you?

Shutu looks around and takes it all in.

SHUTU  
(In a small voice)  
No.

BONNIE  
You didn't take Tani with you?

SHUTU  
(Scared)  
No.

MIMI  
What happened?

Bonnie ignores Mimi.

BONNIE  
Then where is she?

NANDU  
Did you see her before leaving?  
Where was she?

Mimi walks towards the verandah.

125 c EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - VERANDAH. DUSK

125 c

Brian comes out from inside the house.

BRIAN  
Listen Vikram, she's not in the  
house.

MIMI  
(To Vikram)  
What happened? Where's Tani?

Vikram ignores her.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
You guys checked the whole house?

VIKRAM  
Obviously, we've checked the whole  
fucking house. I can't believe  
Shutu and you just went off with my  
bike.

MIMI  
I wanted to ride the bike, Vikram.

AUNTY  
You could've just informed us if  
you two wanted to go out.

125 . D EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - DRIVEWAY. DUSK

125 . D

BONNIE  
(Hysterical)  
Why didn't you take her with you?

SHUTU  
No... we, I mean... I didn't want  
to take her without asking you  
so...

NANDU  
Shutu. Where did you see her last?

SHUTU  
She... she was at home. Playing  
with Fluffy.

NANDU  
Okay but where?

SHUTU  
Towards the back.

Shutu puts the bike stand, struggling with it a little.

125 . E EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - VERANDAH. DUSK

125 . E

AUNTY  
(To Uncle)  
Aap toh yahi the na? Aapne dekha  
nahi?

Uncle gives Aunty a vague look.

NANDU  
Maniya, pichein theek se jaakar  
dekho. Tub ke pass.

Maniya goes off to check the backyard.

AUNTY  
(To Uncle)  
Come let's go inside, it's getting  
dark now. You can do this tomorrow.

Uncle starts to pack his tool kit and Aunty goes to help him. As they proceed, the verandah is getting dark. The lights have been switched on inside. We can hear voices calling out for Tani. Two cups of tea and a glass of Bournvita remain untouched. The coloring paper flies away from the edge of the verandah in the background.

CUT TO:

126 INT/EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT.

126

Shutu looks under the bed in his own room.

Mimi opens a cupboard and looks inside.

Brian searches the front lawns with a torch.

Manjari shines the lantern on the abandoned bathtub.

Maniya looks inside the store room.

CUT TO:

127 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

127

Bonnie enters from the corridor and frantically searches the room before going outside again. Uncle sits at the dining table, putting his tool kit away while observing the frenzy around him.

UNCLE

Iss ghar mein itne logon ke beech  
mein, ek bachchi gayab ho jaati  
hain, aur kisi ko pata bhi nahi  
chalta!

Nandu enters the room to change the batteries of the torch.  
Bonnie comes back in and looks behind the cabinets, under the  
tables and in the process almost knocks off a vase.

CUT TO:

128 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. NIGHT. 128

Shutu goes to check the bathroom and sees the frog. The frog  
is now closer to the door. On Shutu's face, we hear a sudden  
loud crash.

NANDU (O.C)

What the hell are you doing Bonnie?

CUT TO:

129 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. 129

NANDU

You're just adding to the chaos.  
Sit still in one place.

BONNIE

Shit, shit... I just didn't see  
it... I... I don't know how..

Bonnie bends down to pick up the broken pieces of a vase.  
Aunty gets up to help. Nandu gets increasingly frustrated as  
the torch doesn't work even with the new batteries.

AUNTY

It's okay. Let it be. Don't worry.  
Just sit down.

(Picking up the pieces)

If only you had told me once, I  
would have kept an eye on her.

BONNIE

But Ma, you were sleeping yourself!

AUNTY

Yes! Because no body told me the  
poor girl was going to be left  
alone.

BONNIE

I don't understand. After lunch, we  
came in to lie down... she went off  
looking for Shutu...

(MORE)

BONNIE (CONT'D)

I thought he'll be with her. He didn't even tell me before going!

NANDU

Shutu is a kid, okay? You can't be counting on him to do your job.

BONNIE

My job? He's been with her every day and nobody's ever had a problem with it before!

NANDU

Bonnie, just shut up and let me think!

Brian and Vikram come inside and try to break up the fight.

BRIAN

Guys, guys.

AUNTY

Nandu! Calm down.

(Turning to Bonnie)

Bonnie, Nandu's right you know. Shutu's not been himself lately. He never used to get into fights... You know he's failed his final exams?

Bonnie looks up aghast.

BONNIE

(Whispers)  
Failed?

AUNTY

He's been thrown out of the hostel, he's lied to his mother...

Bonnie and Nandu exchange a look.

CUT TO:

130	OMITTED	130
131	OMITTED	131
132	INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT	132

Shutu stands alone in the corridor outside, with his head hung low, listening.

AUNTY (O.C.)

Left her alone in Bardhaman and he's come on this holiday. And now this. Tell me, is this responsible behavior?

VIKRAM (O.C.)

Guys, guys. Let's think clearly.

CUT TO:

133 INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

133

VIKRAM

She's obviously not in the house. Let's not waste anymore time.

BONNIE

We have to tell the police.

NANDU

You can't file a police complaint so soon? Can you Baba?

UNCLE

Minimum 24 hours, I think.

VIKRAM

Don't worry! I'll talk to Shrivastav. He may be able to help us. Who saw her last?

BONNIE

(Turns to Manjari)  
Manjari. Manjari, kitne baje dekha last?

MANJARI

Pata nahi...  
(Turns to Bonnie )  
O, kapde dene ke liye aaya tha na? Uss se pehle.

Bonnie and Nandu exchange a look.

NANDU

(To VIKRAM)  
Must be around 4. Just before you came.

BRIAN

I only came at 4:30 and now it's almost 6!

VIKRAM

Listen she's a little girl. It's been under two hours.

(MORE)

VIKRAM (CONT'D)  
 She couldn't have gone beyond a two  
 kilometer radius. You guys search  
 the grounds, I'll go get Ganghju  
 and Khushia na?

BRIAN  
 Ya. And I'll go check at my place  
 first.

Brian puts on his jacket and leaves.

MIMI  
 I'll come with you VIKRAM.

Vikram ignores her and exits from the front door. Mimi  
 follows him.

Nandu picks up his car keys. Bonnie comes up to Nandu at the  
 front door.

BONNIE  
 I'm coming with you.

NANDU  
 No. You stay here.

BONNIE  
 (Crying)  
 I'll just go mad sitting here and  
 waiting Nandu, please!

NANDU  
 (Turning around and holding her  
 shoulders)  
 Baby, please stay here with Ma  
 Baba. She might come back on her  
 own and she'll want you here. We  
 will find her, okay?

Bonnie nods dumbly. She stands at the doorway as everyone  
 leaves.

NANDU (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 Shutu, come on. Get into the car.

CUT TO:

134 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ STREETS. NIGHT

134

Outside the gate, Vikram's car speeds off into the distance.  
 As the tail lights disappear, darkness closes in once again.

CUT TO:

135 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT

135

The headlights of Nandu's car light up the misty orchard. The trees get more dense. As the car slows down, Nandu and Shutu roll down their windows and call out for Tani.

They get out of the car. Nandu leaves the headlights on, jumps on to the hood of the car to get to a better vantage point. He shines the torch on the thick foliage.

NANDU

(Jumping off the car)

You go in that direction, I'll take this side.

They set off in different directions. The headlights remain on, lighting up the misty landscape.

CUT TO:

136 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT

136

Manjari and a couple of other Adivasi women search the grounds, calling out to each other in their own language. Holding a lantern, Manjari stomps her stick on the ground as she searches for Tani.

MANJARI

Main bole khojat rahi, lekin nahi bol rahi.

MANJARI'S FRIEND

Ka?

MANJARI

Raat ke lombad nikle lani.

MANJARI'S FRIEND

Ek baar fash gelak rahi jaal main se la dubara nahi aawi.

They exchange a look.

CUT TO:

137 EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

137

Brian is at the stream running by his house. He shines the torch onto the rocks and running water. His voice echoes eerily over the water as he shouts out Tani's name.

Dogs howl as Mrs. McKenzie and Kitty stand at the verandah, bundled up in their night clothes.

CUT TO:

138 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT

138

Shutu follows a dirt track in the wilderness. He's panting and his nose starts to run in the cold. There is a rustling of dry leaves and broken twigs as he makes his way through the forest. Eerie bird calls pierce the night. Nandu's voice wafts through the distance: 'Taaa-ni!'

There is a sudden movement. Shutu goes in that direction. He comes across a little clearing and decides to explore further. He starts walking faster but stops as the torch light illuminates Tani's discarded belt lying on the forest floor. Shutu stares at it in horror and quickly picks it up. He thinks Tani must be nearby. He calls out her name repeatedly. In his excitement he trips over a rock and falls into an underground animal trap, letting out a shout.

In a wide shot, we see the still forest, nobody is around. We hear Shutu's muffled, underground struggle.

SHUTU

Dada!... Dada!

CUT TO:

139 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

139

Uncle pours brandy into three glasses. Bonnie paces around the room, she opens the front door and hunches up her shoulders to the chilly air.

BONNIE

(Shutting the door)

I don't even know if she was wearing a sweater.

Uncle gives Bonnie a glass. She gulps down in one sip and looks at him gratefully. Aunty is knitting and muttering a prayer under her breath. Uncle sits down on the arm chair and sips his brandy looking relatively relaxed.

UNCLE

Arrey kitna tension lete ho tum log! Relax karo. Kalidas wapas nahi aane wala hain.

(muttering, O.C)

Ek kachua ke piche itna hangama.

Bonnie stops pacing, looks at him incredulously and then at Aunty. Aunty is acutely embarrassed.

AUNTY

O.P! You've had too much to drink.

CUT TO:

140 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT 140

Shutu is sitting still inside the trap. In one hand he has the torch and in the other, Tani's belt. There is a sudden rustling sound. Shutu looks up and flashes the torch. The light catches the eyes of a wild cat, staring down at Shutu. Shutu looks back alert. The cat twitches and walks away. Shutu slowly lets out his breath.

CUT TO:

141 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - GROUNDS. NIGHT 141

Dogs bark as the moon rises in the forest. Suddenly we hear a jeep's horn blaring jubilantly "Pa-pa-pa-pa!"

CUT TO:

142 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT 142

Nandu stops in his tracks as the horn rings through the silence. He looks back in the direction of the house where the sound seems to be coming from.

NANDU  
Shutu! Shutu!

CUT TO:

143 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT 143

Maniya reacts to the blaring horns and heads back.

CUT TO:

144 EXT. GROUNDS. NIGHT 144

Nandu gets no response from Shutu. He jumps into the car, lowers his window and yells out.

NANDU  
Maniya! Chalho vapas!

CUT TO:

145 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ GROUNDS. NIGHT. 145

Inside the trap, Shutu's crouched in a corner. He hears the blaring horns and Nandu's calls.

SHUTU  
Dada! I'm here. Dada!

His voice gets drowned out by the sound of the horns. Helplessly, he realizes that he can't be heard as the car drives away.

Above the ground, we track away from the spot as Shutu's voice becomes faint.

CUT TO:

146 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 146

Nandu's car screeches to a halt as he parks it haphazardly near verandah. He runs in, leaving the car door open.

CUT TO:

147 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 147

Nandu finds Bonnie carrying Tani in her arms and kissing her repeatedly. Tani is wearing VIKRAM's jacket. Her dress is torn, her hair is an unruly mess, she has scraped her knees and is bare feet.

MIMI (O.C.)

We were coming back from  
Shrivastav's house and thank god  
Vikram decided to check the back  
road...

Nandu grabs Tani in his arms and kisses her.

NANDU

Thank God you're safe! You are NOT  
to leave the house again!

BONNIE

Let it be now.

NANDU

Where did you find her?

VIKRAM

I don't know why but I just thought  
we should check the area near  
Siyartoli. It is pretty deserted  
back there. And guess what? We find  
Bahadur carrying Tani in his arms.

NANDU

Who's Bahadur?

VIKRAM

He works for Goswami. He was going  
home after work and found her.

MIMI

He said he was taking her to the doctor's house.

AUNTY

But Goswami and all are in Cal.

VIKRAM

She had wandered onto their grounds apparently. Main thing is that we found her.

UNCLE

We'll talk to Goswami.

AUNTY

Just do that... Tch. Bechara, Khide peyeche nishchoi? Manjari!  
(Turning to Manjari)  
Khana laga do sabh ke liye. Ho jayega na?

Aunty is about to turn away.

MANJARI

Par Shutu Bhaiya toh nahi aaya.

AUNTY

(Irritated)  
Nahi aaya matlab? Maniya ko bhejo bulaane.

CUT TO:

147 . A EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ GROUNDS - UNDERGROUND. NIGHT. 147 . A

Shutu, still trapped in the pit, hears Maniya call out to him.

MANIYA (O.C.)

Shutu! Shutu bhaiya!

148 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ GROUNDS. NIGHT. 148

Maniya, flashes his torch and makes his way through with a stick.

SHUTU (O.C.)

(Muffled)  
Maniya! Maniya! Idhar.

Maniya looks around but can't see anyone. He goes in the direction of the sound.

MANIYA

Kahaan?

SHUTU  
Maniya, neeche!

Maniya points the torch down, walks slowly until he comes upon the hole. He kneels down and sees Shutu. Maniya giggles with surprise.

MANIYA  
Arrey! Aap ko sabh dhoondh rahe  
hain aur aap yaha gir gaye. Vikram  
bhaiya ko mil gaya baby.

Shutu stares back at Maniya as Maniya extends his hand to Shutu.

MANIYA (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Challo!

CUT TO:

149 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. NIGHT. 149

Shutu stands at the verandah, watching the family inside. His clothes are soiled, his face muddy and bruised. A few wild burrs stick to his jeans and shoes.

From Shutu's POV, we see Tani is sitting on Vikram's lap with Bonnie feeding her some hot soup. The rest are around them.

150 INT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE - BONNIE'S ROOM. NIGHT 150

Shutu stands at the doorway of Bonnie's room. Tani is lying in bed with Bonnie. There is a thermometer in Tani's mouth and Bonnie is putting a cold wash cloth on her forehead. They notice him.

Shutu limps over to the bed and kneels next to Tani. He reaches out to her but she gives him a scornful look.

TANI  
No! You left me and went.

She turns around and buries her face in Bonnie's shoulder. Shutu looks devastated.

CUT TO:

151 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ GATE. NIGHT 151

Exterior shot of the house from the gate. Some leaves rustle and smoke blows into the air. Shutu stubs his cigarette and walks away.

FADE OUT.

152 EXT. VERANDAH. DAY 152

Fade in. Manjari sweeps the verandah.

The super reads Day 7/Sunday (2nd JANUARY)

CUT TO:

153 EXT. BONNIE'S ROOM. DAY 153

Bonnie wakes up, hugs Tani and goes back to sleep.

CUT TO:

154 EXT. MIMI'S BEDROOM. DAY 154

Mimi is fast asleep in her room.

CUT TO:

155 OMITTED 155

155. A INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. DAY 155. A

Shutu's room is empty.

CUT TO:

156 INT. CORRIDOR. DAY 156

Maniya washes the lid of the drum with a spray of water from a hose. Shutu watches him from the corridor. Shutu is unslept, has big dark circles and his black eye is deeper than before.

CUT TO:

157 INT. AUNTY'S ROOM. DAY 157

Uncle is searching for something among Aunty's things at the dressing table. One drawer is locked. Aunty enters with clothes under her arm and is heading to the bathroom.

AUNTY  
Abh kya hua?  
(Irritated)

UNCLE  
Kuch time pe nahi milta hain.  
Hamesha mera samaan idhar udhar  
karti rehti ho.

AUNTY

(Muttering while walking to the bathroom) You leave my things alone.

Uncle turns to see aunty go into the bathroom. He picks up her keys from the bedside table and goes to open the locked drawer. Among a bunch of rollers and other things, he finds a small box of ammunition.

CUT TO:

158 OMITTED 158

159 INT. BACK CORRIDOR. DAY. 159

A close shot of Shutu's morose face. Aunty is sitting opposite him at the table with her tea in front of her.

AUNTY

Tui ekhunu Ma'ke phone korli na, na?  
Tin din hoye gelo kintu chiti peye.

Mimi walks in, freshly bathed, with a damp towel in her hand. She looks over at the kitchen table. Shutu, who all this while was fidgeting with crumbs, notices Mimi from the corner of his eye. Mimi awkwardly looks away while making her coffee.

AUNTY (CONT'D)

You should go back home Shutu. And better buy your ticket today. First go to the post office and give her a call, then go the station and buy your ticket. Dekh kothaye confirmed seat paash.

Shutu looks up at Aunty slowly, glancing at MIMI.

SHUTU

(low voice)  
Kintu taka poysha toh neyi...  
But I don't have any money.

Aunty's face softens.

AUNTY

Aami diye debo. Tor chokh ta toh roj roj bediye jaache! Ma'r heart fail hoye jaabe. Bhebhe dekhechish? Shekh ta kothai gelo?

Aunty picks up the hot compress, touches her tea cup with it and puts it to his eye. As Aunty tends to his black eye, with his other eye Shutu watches Mimi silently leave the kitchen.

CUT TO:

160 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ STREETS. DAY. 160

Shutu wanders the roads of McCluskiegunj, alone on a cycle. He reaches the post office, lost in his own world.

CUT TO:

161 INT. POST OFFICE. DAY. 161

Shutu is at the counter, listening to his mother as she weeps on the phone. His eyes are vacant and fixed far away.

SHUTU'S MOTHER (O.C.)(BENGALI)  
We can easily get you a teaching position here in Bardhaman. What to do Shutu, we really can't afford anything else.

We track away from the door.

161 A OMITTED 161 A

162 EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ RAILWAY STATION. DAY 162

Shutu comes up to a small ticket window.

SHUTU  
Howrah ka next train?

Shutu takes out his wallet. There is a faded black and white picture of a man with a child smiling, tucked inside.

TICKET VENDOR (O.C.)  
Howrah? Chopan se Gomoh lijiye.  
Barkhakana mein Howrah ka bogie lagega.

CUT TO:

163 INT. SHUTU'S ROOM. DAY 163

Shutu is packing away his meagre belongings into his back pack. He picks up his books strewn over the bed and puts them in. From under his books, he finds the magnifying glass. He looks at it for a moment and puts it inside his bag.

CUT TO:

164 INT. AUNTY'S ROOM. DAY

164

Aunty sits at a writing desk near the window in her room. She has filled thin sheets of air mail paper with delicate, neat handwriting. She folds the letter carefully, blows open the envelope and puts the letter in. She puts a couple of hundred rupees in as well. As she licks the envelope shut, she hears a sound at the door.

AUNTY  
(Without looking)  
Manjari...

She turns around and her expression changes as she finds Shutu standing at the door way.

AUNTY (CONT'D)  
Ticket peli?

Shutu walks up to her, handing her the change.

SHUTU  
Yes. Here.

AUNTY  
(Handing the envelope to Shutu)  
Eta Maa ke diye dish.

CUT TO:

165 INT. CORRIDOR. DAY

165

Shutu comes out of Aunty's room. He walks down the corridor and comes across Mimi who is coming out of the kitchen with an orange. They pass each other awkwardly searching for something to say.

MIMI  
You're leaving?

Shutu nods.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
Bardhaman?

SHUTU  
But I'll be coming to Cal soon. So  
I'll see you?

Mimi looks at him for a moment.

MIMI  
Shutu I... I think you should be  
concentrating on your studies a  
little more.

She turns and heads out of the door. Shutu takes a moment to collect himself as he watches her leave through the mesh door.

CUT TO:

166 EXT. VERANDAH . DAY

166

Uncle spills a little linseed oil as he reaches for the cloth.

UNCLE

Bhenchod!

He notices Shutu's shadowy figure standing behind the mesh door.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Shutu beta, idhar aao.

Shutu joins Uncle outside.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Zara isko ponch do.

Shutu wipes as he watches Mimi ahead.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Abh dikhaenge Nandu ko.  
Box leke aana. Maniya!

CUT TO:

167 EXT. FRONT LAWNS. DAY/DUSK.

167

Shutu and Uncle are in the front lawns. Maniya is holding the drum lid against the tree.

UNCLE

Aur upar. Arrey itna nahi.  
Neechein! Sunai nahi deta kya?

Shutu is uninterested.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Aim kabhi aise havein mein nahi  
karna chahiye, kya pata civillian  
ko lag jaaye. Box do.

Shutu looks around to notice Vikram and Brian enter on the bike from the side of the house. Nandu comes out of the house and Tani runs to him. Bonnie and Mimi join them near the verandah.

UNCLE (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 Pehle isme mag chadhate hain. Phir  
 safety catch ko ready position mein  
 laate hain. Phir cock karke...

The loud cocking sound brings Shutu back to the moment. Uncle is ready to aim.

UNCLE (CONT'D)  
 Foresight ko aperture ke beech mein  
 rakh ke, shifth ko target pe milate  
 hain.

SHUTU  
 (pleadingly)  
 Uncle, ek baar please...mujhe. Let  
 me hold it na.  
 (PAUSE)  
 Aap fire karein usse pehle.

Uncle gives him a look and goes back to the rifle.

UNCLE  
 No, no Shutu. Not now.

SHUTU  
 I just want to hold it once, just  
 to see how it feels.

UNCLE  
 (Without looking at Shutu)  
 You want to hold it haan?

SHUTU  
 You show me how to hold it Uncle.  
 Aap nahi dikhayenge toh...

UNCLE  
 Okay. Just to hold it. Wait.

Uncle carefully puts the safety catch back on. With one arm still holding the rifle, Uncle lets Shutu hold it; Shutu closes in. He tightens his grip on the rifle and in one swift movement scampers off to a distance.

UNCLE (CONT'D)  
 Wapas karo Shutu. Kya kar rahe ho?

Shutu backs away unsteadily.

UNCLE (CONT'D)  
 Nandu!

Nandu and the others turn around to see Shutu pointing the rifle at Uncle. Vikram hurriedly takes a few steps towards Shutu.

NANDU

Shutu!

Shutu reacts to Nandu's voice. His hands shake as he moves the rifle ever so slightly. Vikram is now in the direct line of fire.

NANDU (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Bonnie take Tani inside!

Uncle turns back from Vikram to see that the rifle is no longer aimed at him. He takes a step forward.

UNCLE

Shutu, don't do this.

Shutu continues backing away until he hits a tree. He panics as Vikram is fast approaching him.

Shutu feeling cornered, removes the safety lock with trembling fingers. Uncle freezes. Shutu puts his finger on the trigger.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Beta kya kar rahe ho?

Bonnie hugs Tani to shield her from the scene.

BONNIE

(desperately)

Shutu please!

With one arm outstretched to reason with Shutu, Vikram walks slowly and deliberately towards him. With his other hand Vikram reaches for his own gun.

VIKRAM

(In a steady voice)

Shutu put that gun down now.

There's a moment of fevered panic in Shutu's eyes as Vikram comes even closer to him. Shutu grips the rifle tighter, aiming straight at Vikram.

Vikram, unafraid, continues to approach Shutu.

VIKRAM (CONT'D)

You don't need to do this, Shutu.

Shutu's eyes well up. He lowers his rifle. The others start to come closer.

SHUTU

(Under his breath)

Sorry.

There is a certain calm in his eyes now. Suddenly, with lightening speed, he turns the barrel to the base of his chin and fires.

Vikram freezes in shock as a few drops of blood splatter on his face. We hear Bonnie's anguished cry. Uncle rushes towards the house.

UNCLE

Shutu goli kha gaya! Shutu goli kha gaya!

**High Speed:** In the foreground, a eucalyptus tree stands with a fresh stain of blood as the smoke curls into the frame.

Bonnie collapses with Tani on the grass. Mimi covers her face with both hands in shock. Nandu holds his head in his hands and falls to his knees. Brian's face is white as a sheet.

In a low angle from Shutu's POV, Vikram rushes to the tree. Brian helps Nandu as he stumbles and falls. Mimi stands rooted to the spot in horror.

We dissolve to the same shot at dusk as Bonnie, Nandu, Brian, Mimi and Vikram slowly disappear from the frame.

A police siren is heard in the distance.

CUT TO:

168

INT/EXT. MCCLUSKIEGUNJ HOUSE. INDETERMINATE HOUR

168

It is the same frame as in the previous shot, only a little darker. A steady cam rises and languidly weaves it's way into the house, starting from the verandah steps. The house is dimly lit. We catch a glimpse of Uncle, Vikram and Nandu at the dinning table with a police officer who is taking notes. The rifle lies on the table.

We pan from them to the mantle piece where the missing rifle is marked by a dusty outline. As we move to the next room, the lights die down. It is night, in their bedroom, Uncle sits still while Aunty lies awake next to him.

As we move further through the door into Mimi's room which is empty, the bed is unmade and her article remains incomplete. Moving further into the kitchen through the corridor, light changes to day. We see Manjari working absentmindedly. As we move away, early morning light fills the corridor. Aunty stares at her cup of tea, sitting still.

Day turns to night as we weave through the living room in darkness and see Nandu sitting at a distance in the verandah, smoking a cigarette.

At a crack of dawn, we move into Bonnie's room and see her sitting in front of an open suitcase, looking blankly ahead.

We leave her as the camera travels through the bathroom as daylight floods in, a closed door opens into Shutu's room. His backpack has been emptied of his clothes, books and toiletries as they lie strewn on the bed. We stop at his desk where his journal lies open. A few pages flutter in the breeze and peeking out from one of the pages is the envelope addressed to his mother. Mimi is standing at a window of Shutu's room, smoking a cigarette, looking out. As the light bleaches to white at the window.

Outside the window, we see Tani on the tyre swing. As she moves eerily in slow motion, we pan to see scratched into the tree trunk is Shutu's name in childish writing. Beneath it, in a more adult hand are his dates: [1956 - 1979].

The camera moves through the trees till it comes to the road adjoining the orchard. Nandu's ambassador whizzes past.

CUT TO:

169 EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK. 169

We are back to the present, the opening sequence. In a series of long shots we see the same ambassador on a lonely stretch of highway.

CUT TO:

170 EXT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. DUSK. 170

Through the window of the driver's seat we see Nandu in the foreground in profile, driving and smoking. In the background we see a grim Brian sitting in the front passenger seat with a hanky to his mouth.

Through the front windscreen we see Shutu wearing the same clothes as the last time we saw him. He sits in the middle in the backseat, looking worried, scared and sad. We move to an extreme close up.

170. A INT. RANCHI HIGHWAY. NIGHT. 170. A

They leave behind McCluskeigunj as we see dense forest closing in behind the speeding car.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.

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