

The movie opens with showing a typical Bollywood Item song and dance number, featuring Chandra prominently. Turns into a TV show about Bollywood stars and their destinies.

Commentator over the image of a house

"We all remember Chandra, the reigning star of Bollywood for more than a decade. Whenever people speak of him they discuss his comet like ascent... and his sudden and mysterious disappearance four years ago. Purti, the home Chandra vowed never to give up, was sold. Chandra, his wife and his three year old daughter disappeared and no careful investigation could reveal what has happened to them. Rumours are aplenty. Some claim Chandra died in an accident and the industry hushed it up to continue to capitalize on his name. Others claim he killed his wife in one of his famous fits of temper and the government hushed it all up."

Inset of a scene showing Chandra smashing the camera back into the face of a reporter. (Ronny, hardly visible)

"Whatever the case, Chandra still lives in the hearts of the people and whenever one of his movies is on air it can count on good spectator ratings."

1. Living room

Sushil watches the show. There is a sound from the door. Sushil turns, sees Chandra, seen in right profile, watch. He quickly turns off the TV. Chandra remains a moment motionless, then turns and leaves.

Sushil bites his lips and sighs.

2. Beach

A white beach. Gulls wheel above it. A few, down on the beach, peck on a dead fish, then, startled, fly away. Somebody comes walking up the beach, dripping wet. A few steps above the waterline the figure breaks into her knees, leans over, coughs. Throws back her hair

Trisha wears the remains of a summer dress over a bathing suit. The dress is torn and ripped. She gets back up on her feet, winces, pushes her dress away a little to reveal a long, vicious scratch along her thigh. More scratches are on her other leg and one of her arms. She takes gingerly stock of her body, bites her lips, looks around, up at the burning sun then along the beach

To the right in the distance a cliff grows out of the sweltering jungle, sending a spur down to the beach and far out into the sea, splitting its white flanks. There is clearly no way through there.

Trisha turns to the left, raises her hand to shield her eyes.

Palms hang over the beach which curves away to the right, hiding its expanse. Trisha sighs, squares her shoulders and starts walking along.

3. Forest

Trisha, exhausted, pushes her way through the forest, along a trickling ribbon of water. She pushes a few fronds away and stops. A waterfall cascades down the cliff, ending in a shallow pool. Trisha stumbles a few more steps until she reaches a big rock, and then takes a running leap into the water. She drinks thirstily then splashes water into her face.

A scarred left hand presses down a few fronds. Out of the obscuring dark a horribly scarred face, seen only from the left is faintly visible, watching Trisha's antics.

Trisha suddenly stops, listens, turns to look around. The fronds carefully slide back into place.

4. orchard

Trisha extends her hand towards a guave tree, plucks a ripe fruit. She looks around, frowns. She seems to be in a run down plantation. As she walks a little further, greedily devouring the fruit she comes to a small path. Hope kindles in her face. She follows it, walking faster.

5. House

The path leads out from the forest onto a clearing, at the foot of a towering cliff. To the left the clearing opens up onto a bay.

Built against the cliff is a fairly big house. A few side buildings form a yard, chicken scratch and cluck in the yard and an adjacent fenced in garden. On a nearby patch of grass a nanny goat is tethered to a pole by a long chain, a kid plays

around her. A second kid comes galloping across the yard, followed by a girl of about six years, chasing it, laughing.

The girl stops at the sight of Trisha, looking wide eyed. For a moment she seems to hesitate between curiosity and fear, but then curiosity wins out. She slowly draws closer, stops, eyes Trisha from big, dark eyes with an air of ready-to-bolt at the wrong move.

"Hello."

Trisha isn't quite sure how to treat the girl so after her greeting just smiles. Finally the girl smiles hesitantly back

"Hello." Silence as each tries to determine how to go on. Trisha looks around to see whether there is an adult around but there is nobody in sight.

"Who are you?" the girl finally asks.

"I'm T.. Tina. And who are you?"

"My name is Asha. I'm six."

Trisha smiles at the response.

"Hello Asha." Trisha's smile falters a little as she notices the guarded expression in Asha's eyes. The girl is looking at something behind her.

"What are you doing here?!"

Trisha turns. Sushil, a basket of guave in his hands looks at her with an expression that tries to be stern.

Trisha laughs shakily.

"You startled me!"

Sushil gives the basket to Asha

"Asha, bring the fruit into the kitchen." kindly. The little girl takes the basket and scurries away, across the yard and enters the house.

"You're on private property, Miss. You've got to leave."

"I'm sorry to intrude but I had no choice in the matter. I was--"

Trisha's voice catches in her throat. She looks a moment down. When she faces Sushil again her eyes are brining.

"Excuse me... it's been a -" She pushes her hand through her hair, catches her fingers on a tangle and winces. "Ouch!" She withdraws her hand in pain. The barely held back tears begin to overflow. For a moment she fights them then finally gives in, flops onto the ground and hides her face in her hands, crying.

"I thought I was going to die! I almost drowned before I reached the beach. I -" Hiccups a moment as tears spring back into her eyes.

Sushil shakes his head then looks closer at Trisha

"Goodness! What happened to you! Those scratches need seeing after!" Sushil clucks around Trisha like a concerned mother hen, ushering her towards the house, and into a kitchen, accessible from the yard.

6. Forest

From under the trees a shadowy figure watches Sushil escort Trisha into the house. The hand resting on the trunk of a tree slowly clenches into a fist.

7. kitchen

Sushil cleans the last scratch carefully, wincing every time Trisha winces.

"And nobody noticed you fall over board?" Sushil clucks disapprovingly.

Trisha looks a bit embarrassed.

"We've all had too much to drink. I'm lucky the water sobered me up enough to swim in the right direction. But when I hit the reef I thought that was the end of me. There are some nasty rocks out there." Trisha shudders and closes her eyes at the memory. She hugs herself a moment.

Sushil cuts off the last bit of Band-Aid.

"There... that's taken care off. You must be hungry. What would you like to eat?"

Trisha shivers then yawns

"Actually I'd just like to sleep." She shivers again.

"Of course. I'll make you a bed ready."

8. Sleeping room

Trisha, huddled into a blanket and curled up like a baby, sleeps in a room which looks like it was inhabited by a bear. Stark furniture, wardrobe, no mirror, no personal pictures, no ornaments.

Just within hearing range a hissed conversation is carrying on.

"I told you to get rid of her... and now she's in my bed!"

"Shsh... the poor thing is exhausted! You don't expect me to throw her out in her condition!"

Trisha frowns a moment, then blinks, slowly waking. The conversation carries on

"You're just too naïve, Sushil! You expect me to believe she swam a whole night?... That's rather unlikely!"

"Chandra! You haven't seen the state she's in! Those scratches aren't faked!"

There is a sullen silence then Sushil asks, concern in his voice.

"What's happening to you? Have you lost every sense of humanity? You never used to be like that before!"

"That's right... I wasn't like that before! But now I want her gone!"

"Then you tell her! Tell her to swim back the way she came! Because the boat isn't coming the next three days, you know that!"

The voices withdraw. Trisha smiles a moment, snuggles more deeply into her blanket and falls asleep again.

9. Kitchen

Trisha, swimsuit under a long kurta, walks down the stairs. From the kitchen she can hear the voices of Asha and Sushil. Their chattering silences as she enters. Sushil looks at her with a smile, Asha slightly wary.

"Good morning." The two chorus

"Good morning." Trisha points at the kurta.

"I'm sorry I just took this... but the dress - "

"-No problem! Don't worry about that!"

"I'm sorry to have taken your bed."

"Oh, that's no problem. Ch- I slept in the hummock. But how are you feeling?"

"Much better, thank you. Almost human again."

There is the rumble from her stomach and Trisha blushes. Sushil grins and Asha giggles. Sushil points to the table

"Sit... how about some Alo Paratha?" he takes a plate and slips a large patty on it, places it in front of Trisha. She inhales the smell.

"Thank you." Starts eating hungrily. Asha watches her from curious eyes, fidgets to ask a question. Trisha smiles at her. The little girl understands that as an invitation.

"Did you really swim here?"

Trisha nods, while chewing.

"Weren't you afraid?"

"Oh yes, I was."

"Are you going to stay?"

Trisha gives Sushil a look, swallows.

"I don't know. I don't know where I am so I don't know how to leave."

Sushil coughs a little.

"There is an island course running twice a week... for emergencies Omar also comes out of turn... but he can't. He's overhauling his engine and needs replacement. You're stuck with us for the next two-three days."

Trisha looks down on her plate, hiding a tiny smile. When she looks up again her face is full of concern.

"I'm sorry to be such a nuisance! I really don't want to be a bother."

Sushil looks up, seeming to focus on something behind Trisha's back, then looks at Trisha, smiles and says firmly

"You're not, don't worry."

There is a tiny sound from the door to the hall. Asha looks as if expecting somebody. Trisha turns, catches a pale form withdraw into the dark of the hall.

Sushil slaps a second patty onto Trisha's plate. Her protest is firmly silenced.

"You'll need the energy! Asha has already told me she intends to show you around. That might take some time."

Trisha smiles at Asha. The little girl beams back, slips from the chair and hurries over to Trisha to take her hand.

"First let her finish, Asha."

Sushil smiles indulgently. Trisha covertly takes another look at the doorway but it's empty.

10. In the yard

Trisha looks at the little kid in her lap as if it was an alien thing. Asha pets the kid goat

"That's Whitenose, and that over there is her sister, Brownface. And that is their mother, Cheeky."

Cheeky starts chewing Asha's T-shirt. Asha fights the goat but without success until Trisha intervenes, slapping the goat with an expression of extreme reluctance. Cheeky looks down her nose at Trisha, then lets go of the t-shirt. Asha rubs at the wet spot.

"Stupid goat... she'd eat everything! One day she ate a rubber glove!" Trisha and Asha look at each other and then start laughing.

Asha grabs Trisha by the hand and pulls her after her.

"Come... I'll show you the baby chickens."

They run across the yard, scattering chickens.

Asha puts a little chick into Trisha's hand.

"It's so soft!" Trisha marvels. Asha puts another one into Trisha's lap. They play with the chicks a moment.

"Do you live here all year?"

Asha shakes her head. She takes some food from a bucket and throws it across the yard. The chickens run after the grains. Asha laughs

"They look like old wives in dhotis." Trisha laughs.

"Yes, they look funny." Throws a handful of grain herself.

"So that's just for holiday?"

"Mhm... we come here during summer holiday. Normally we live in Mumbai. Then Papa never goes outside. I like it much better here."

Trisha looks over to Sushil who carries a bundle of grass to the goat.

"Sushil's your papa?"

"No, papa is..." Asha stops, and slaps her hands on her mouth.

"What's wrong, Asha?"

Asha looks chagrined, shakes her head

"I mustn't tell."

Trisha looks a moment at the little girl then smiles.

"Ok... secrets must be kept, or they aren't secrets anymore. But don't you want to show me the house?"

Trisha gets up and pretends to walk towards the house. Asha gets hold of her hand.

"No... you can't go in there!"

"But -"

Trisha stops as Asha's expression threatens pending rain. She shrugs and turns back to Asha

"Well, it's much nicer outside anyway."

Immediately the sun comes up in Asha's face again.

"Let's go and collect shells!" Asha skips towards the beach. Trisha throws a last glance towards the house then follows Asha.

11. Kitchen

Asha and Trisha empty their hands full of shells onto the table.

"Why don't you scrub them now and sort them?"

Trisha pumps some water into a bowl and puts it on the table. Asha nods and begins to wash her shells. Once Asha is absorbed in her task Trisha silently slips through the doorway to the hall.

12. Living room

Trisha pads silently into the living room. It is dark. A TV set is an incongruous piece of modernity among the traditional and slightly run down furniture. One wall is covered with a book shelf. Trisha looks around. The room is empty. She walks softly towards the library when there are footsteps above. She cranes her head.

"There you are."

Trisha turns sharply and looks in surprise at Sushil, then throws a glance back up at the ceiling.

"I was looking for something to read while Asha is busy."

Trisha smiles engagingly. Sushil nods

"Why don't you come outside onto the veranda. It's nice and shady and not as stuffy as in here. I'll make you a glass of chai. Take a book with you."

Shushil waits for Trisha to pick a book. She makes a random selection then follows Sushil. Under the door she throws another quick glance to the ceiling.

13. Veranda

Trisha lowers her book and looks across the yard. Asha plays with the kid goats and Sushil is walking away towards the orchard.

Trisha smiles, gets up from her chair and hurries into

14. the house.

Inside it is dark. Above she can hear somebody move around. She listens a moment then walks up the stairs.

Halfway up the stairs a step creaks loudly. Trisha frowns, continues more hurriedly up the stairs. The steps retreat towards the back of the house. As Trisha appears on top of the stairs she can see a door close at the far end of the hall.

She tiptoes over, opens it... it's a servant's staircase leading down. Trisha hurries down, emerges in the hall, looks around. Her prey has escaped.

Trisha shrugs, returns back to the veranda. She considers a moment and then walks across the yard, into the jungle.

15. At the pool

A shadowy figure hurries along a small path in the semi-darkness of the forest, stops a moment, looks back through the trees, continues

The path ends at a silent pond. The figure hugs himself a moment then kneels, extends the hands to scoop up water, hesitates. The face reflects in the water. For a moment he looks at himself, then he splashes his hand across the surface as if to efface the image. He throws some water into his face, closes his eyes, breathes deeply

As the surface quietens again the reflection of Trisha appears standing across the pond. The kneeling figure freezes.

Trisha looks wide-eyed at the reflection in the water then at the lowered head. Across from her the man's head drops a fraction in resignation as he seems to exhale. Finally he slowly raises the head.

Trisha involuntarily takes a step back and catches her breath. She looks with shock at the ruined face across from her.

Chandra's right side is unmarked but his left side is a web of welts and scar tissue from heavy burning.

Chandra holds her eyes for a moment, then he turns his head briskly, gets up and hurries away. Trisha sways a step back, bumps into a rock and sinks down on it with a small moan of distress.

16. Kitchen

Sushil is kneading dough on the table. Chandra throws the pearl curtain aside with such force that a string breaks. Pearls clatter across the floor.

Sushil looks up.

"Chandra?"

Chandra stops a moment, looks at Sushil with anguished eyes, then continues through the door to the hall.

Sushil picks up the pearls from the ground. A shadow darkens the door to the kitchen. Sushil looks up, into Trisha's face. She looks shaken.

"Could I have a glass of chai?"

Trisha sits at the table. Sushil hands her a glass of chai. She looks at him, a question in her eyes.

"What...?"

"Don't ask. Please."

17. Veranda

Evening. Sushil, Asha and Trisha play a card game. They are having a good time.

18. Yard

their laughter rings across the clearing.

Chandra is in the garden patch, digging with furious intensity into the hard soil of a weed covered piece.

Asha jumps up, crying out in triumph.

Chandra stops, looks over to the Veranda. He wipes his face, turns his back to the sound of laughter and stabs hard into the soil.

On the veranda Trisha watches the triumphant Asha, the laughing Sushil. She, looks across at the distant figure attacking the soil, sobers, then starts as Asha pokes her arm and points to the cards. Trisha smiles and picks up her cards.

Chandra looks at the broken soil at his feet, breathes deeply.

Behind him, on the veranda the game comes to an end. The voices fade as Sushil compliments Asha into the house.

"Time for bed, young lady."

"Just one more game, Sushil."

"That WAS one more game... off you go!"

Chandra closes his eyes a moment then continues to attack the soil.

"I'll sleep in the hammock on the veranda tonight."

Trisha appears out of the dark, looks at Chandra's back.

Chandra's rhythm breaks for a moment. He grunts an acknowledgement then continues without taking further notice of Trisha.

Trisha frowns a moment at his back, wanting to say something then sighs and heads back to the kitchen.

19. Morning kitchen

Trisha and Sushil are in the kitchen cleaning vegetables. Asha sits on a chair dicing a gourd.

"Next week we're going back home. School is starting. I'm starting school!"

"Looking forward to it?"

Asha nods

"I'm finished." looking proud at the massacred gourd. Trisha smiles at her, takes the pieces and scoops them into a pan.

Chandra enters, looks a moment at the three cooking companionably. His expression darkens.

"Is the boat coming today?"

Sushil shakes his head and washes his hands in a bucket.

"They need to get a replacement piece... might take a couple of days more."

Chandra growls under his breath

"Just my luck."

Trisha tilts her head.

"You can't get rid of me fast enough, isn't it?" Slightly offended

Chandra's lips curl into an ironic sneer.

"Well noticed. I'd have you gone sooner rather than later!"

Sushil looks up from drying his hands, scandalized at such crassness.

"Chandra! Trisha is a guest! How can you be so impolite!?"

"I didn't invite her!"

Chandra turns away and stalks out. Sushil throws down the cloth with some force and hurries after Chandra. Asha looks confused after her father, then as if looking for help to Trisha.

"Come... let's finish breakfast." Trisha's smile is falsely bright. Asha's lower lip wobbles a little.

20. Yard

Sushil hurries after Chandra, stops him by grabbing him by the shoulder and turns him around.

"What's wrong with you? Ever since Tina appeared you're behaving like a bear with a sore tooth!" Gives him a little shake.

Chandra drops his eyes from Sushil's questioning glance. He kicks a rock away, looks back at Sushil.

"Don't you understand what's going to happen? Haven't you noticed the look in her eyes?"

Chandra points back at the house.

"She knows who I am!"

Sushil looks a moment down at the ground, nods.

"Yes... I guess that was inevitable. But is that so bad? Don't you think it's time to stop pretending it didn't happen?"

"Didn't happen? You think that's what I do? Bloody hell! Every day when I shave the facts stare back into my face! Every time I try to LAUGH I'm reminded of it! I know exactly what happened... and why!"

Chandra's voice cracks a little. He turns away from Sushil to hide his face and continues less hotly.

"I just can't bear the world to know."

Sushil steps around Chandra, takes him by the shoulders.

"You can't hide forever!"

Chandra nods, unconvincingly.

"One of these days. I'm not ready yet."

Sushil gives him a stronger shake.

"When will you be ready? WHEN?"

Chandra looks a moment at Sushil, lost for an answer. He steps back, turns and walks away.

From somewhere under the trees somebody watches Chandra walk away through a telescopic lens

"You can't keep running, Chandra!"

Shushil's words carry over to the observer. Chandra falters a moment. The lens focuses on his anguished expression.

CLICK CLICK CLICK

21. Pool

Trisha stands by the pool, pulls a frond of fern down, looking around on the ground as if searching for something.

"Tina?"

Trisha turns around, startled

"Tina?" she repeats with a slightly confused expression on her face. Then she remembers. She smiles at Sushil

"Oh... You startled me."

"Did you lose something?"

"What?... no... no... I found a pretty rock and was just looking whether there were a few more of them around. But there aren't."

She quickly walks away. Sushil frowns a little, then follows her. As they reach the small path he falls in step next to her.

"Chandra is very unhappy to have me here."

Sushil stops, looks at Trisha questioningly as she turns to him. His intense look unsettles Trisha a little. She frowns.

"What?"

"You know who Chandra is."

Trisha's eyes flicker a moment as she tries to determine whether to admit the truth or not. Finally she nods.

"Yes. His face is well known enough."

"Not THIS face, though. What will you do when you're back home?"

Trisha looks a moment in incomprehension.

"Take a long bath?"

Sushil sighs, motions with his head in the direction of the house.

"I mean about Chandra. That's a big story. Chandra has done everything to keep the media from knowing... he doesn't want them to learn about it now."

Trisha tilts her head a little, waiting. Sushil shuffles his feet a little, finally takes a deep breath.

"Chandra is willing to pay you if you keep silent about this."

Trisha's look turns into a frown.

"He... wants to buy my silence? Is that what he did to disappear so completely?" There is a slight sneer in Trisha's voice. She turns to walk away.

"Tina?"

Trisha throws back over her shoulder

"I can't be bought."

22. Livingroom

Chandra sits in his dark living room, hands on the armrests, staring at nothing. Sushil comes in. Chandra looks up, a question in his eyes. Sushil shakes his head slightly and leaves again. Chandra looks back in front of him while his fingers slowly curl into fists. After a moment of absolute silence he gets up with sudden abruptness.

23. Orchard evening

Trisha watches the sunset with an expression of absentmindedness.

"How much do you want?" o.s.

Trisha starts from her contemplation of the sunset. She turns her head a fraction.

"I told Sushil I can't be bought."

Chandra steps closer but remains behind Trisha under the darkness of the trees.

"Everybody can be bought... for the right kind of money. Protestations of your kind only serve to raise the price. I've seen it often enough."

Trisha frowns a little. She considers her answer carefully. Finally she says calmly.

"There is no price that could buy my silence. But a simple 'please' could do the trick."

Chandra frowns a moment in incomprehension. Then he laughs sarcastically.

"You'd keep silent just for the asking? Don't expect me to believe that! Why should you do that?"

Trisha smiles, unseen by Chandra.

"Don't they say 'please' is a magic word? Why don't you try it?"

Chandra's temper finally frays. He grabs Trisha by the shoulder and turns her around, roughly. In the darkness his eyes glitter like angry stars.

"Why don't you stop with your games! I want to be sure of your silence or ..." he allows the sentence to hang threateningly between them. Trisha seems unimpressed.

"Why don't YOU just stop with your games? Is it so hard to understand that somebody might do it for the mere liking?"

Chandra looks as if axed between the eyes. For a moment he is perfectly still, then he slowly eases the grip of his hands and drops them. Trisha stands a moment longer, waiting, but there is nothing forthcoming from Chandra. Finally she turns and walks away. Chandra watches her, motionless.

24. An uneasy truce

Breakfast time. Asha sits next to Trisha, chattering happily, eating. Sushil turns a roti.

"Morning."

There is a moment of surprised silence then Asha pips

"Morning, Papa" followed by quick 'mornings' from Sushil and Trisha.

"What's for breakfast?"

Chandra sits down over edge from Asha as if he'd been having breakfast with them all the time. Sushil, after a moment's surprise puts a plate in front of Chandra. When he turns away there is a faint smile on his face

25. The beach

Chandra sits under palm tree, watching Sushil and Asha play with a kite.

Trisha, hardly visible in the shadow of the palm trees, watches from a little further away to the left.

Sushil holds up a kite. Asha plays out the string.

"Run, Asha!" Sushil holds up the kite

CLICK

The little girl runs towards Chandra, the string tightens, the kite rises.

"Papa, look!"

Chandra smiles

CLICK

Asha looks up into the sky, laughs, winks to Chandra, he waves back.

CLICK

Asha's laugh turns into a sudden scream; she drops the string and falls into the sand, grabbing her foot.

Chandra is on his feet in a flash CLICK and runs across the beach. He drops into the sand beside his daughter and pulls the wailing girl into his arms. CLICK

26. Kitchen

Chandra enters the kitchen, a still screaming Asha in his arms, followed by Sushil and Trisha, who trails a little further back, looking helplessly from the screaming Asha to her concerned father.

Chandra sits, cradles Asha on his lap, whispers calmly to her. Asha still clutches her foot. Sushil, panting, hunkers down beside father and daughter.

Sushil tries to take a look at the foot but Asha screams bloody murder when he only tries to touch the foot.

"Shsh darling. Show Sushil your foot."

Asha buries her head in Chandra's neck and shakes her head.

"Ok... then Papa will take a look." Chandra heaves Asha over to Sushil who cradles her, then kneels to take a look. Asha whimpers when Chandra takes the foot. Blood drips onto the floor.

Chandra gives Sushil a concerned look. From the sole of the foot a long urchin spine protrudes. Chandra bites his lip. He runs to fetch a first aid kit, rummages around, finds tweezers. He looks up at Trisha

"Tina... come over... help me."

Trisha hurries over, relieved to be able to lend a hand in the drama.

"Hold her foot. Shshsh Asha... Tina won't hurt you... she's going to take a look at your toes. See whether they still work. First the big one..."

"Wiggle it... does it still work?"

Tina takes the big toe and moves it up and down. Chandra in the meantime tries to get a grip on the spine with the tweezers.

"There... that didn't hurt no? What about the next?" Asha snuffles a little, watching Trisha wiggle her toes. Chandra pulls... Asha whines.

Chandra drops the tweezers with the spine in it and cradles Asha.

"Shshsh... no need to cry anymore... it's over, honey." Chandra gives Trisha over Asha's shoulder a grateful look.

"Thank you."

Trisha nods as Chandra returns all his attention to his daughter.

After a moment Trisha slips outside.

27. Beach

"Papa... do we need to go back?"

Asha limps exaggeratedly on her bandaged foot towards Chandra who carries a bag down to the beach.

"Yes honey. I want a doctor to take a look at your foot... and since school starts next week it's not worth the trouble to come back."

Asha looks pouty.

"But papa, it doesn't hurt anymore. Look!" Asha hops around a bit. Chandra notes the sudden recovery with a tiny smile but stays firm.

"No butts Asha... I'm not a doctor... that foot needs seeing to. I'm really glad Omar finished repairing the boat!"

Chandra straightens, scans the path towards the house. Sushil comes along the path with another bag. Chandra frowns.

"Asha. Go... see whether you can find Tina."

"I've already looked everywhere. I can't find her."

Chandra puts the bag into the sand. Sushil arrives, notices Chandra's frown.

"What's the matter?"

"Tina. Have you seen her?"

Sushil drops the bag, scratches his neck, shakes his head.

"Not since after the accident."

The men exchange a worried glance.

"Omar is coming soon. We've got to find her. Asha, go sit under that tree. You watch for Omar. If Tina comes tell her to wait for us."

Asha looks a bit puzzled but sits down in the shade of a palm tree. Chandra and Sushil head back up the path and into the forest.

They search separately, calling occasionally 'Tina!'. Sushil reaches the pool. He looks around a bit, pushes his way through the fern, notices something on the ground. He picks up a credit card sized piece of plastic covered with dirt. He cleans the dirt away, looks at the plastic, curses. He starts running towards the house... fast.

Chandra is closing the shutters in the house.

"Chandra? Chandra!"

Sushil's urgent call brings Chandra running down into the kitchen. Sushil holds his side, breathing. He's got a stitch.

"What's the matter? Did anything happen to Tina?"

Sushil breathes deeply, unable to speak but he holds out the card to Chandra. Chandra takes it, studies it.

It's a Media pass from Channel Eight on the name of Trisha Balan. The picture is that of 'Tina'.

Chandra takes a moment to understand then he grabs a pewter cup from the table and throws it against the wall, roaring with fury. He props his hands onto the table, panting. After a moment he raises his head again, his face a demon's mask.

28. A fast boat

Trisha holds on to the rubber boat's side as it jumps across the waves. At her feet is a black bag. She bends down, rummages around, takes out a small digital camera.

Ronny, driving the boat peers over to have a look at the pictures she looks at. One of them is Chandra cradling Asha.

"You took pictures as well, Trisha?"

"I had some good opportunities, Ronny."

"So did I. I thought we had an agreement?" There is an undertone of distrust in Ronny's voice.

Trisha shrugs.

"I took them just in case."

The skirt blows up. Ronny, the type to take a dive into every crevice that offers notes the scratches on her legs.

"What happened to you? Did you get beaten up?"

Trisha looks a moment confused then laughs.

"No... but I seriously underestimated the current when I swam to the beach. I got thrown against some rocks... for a moment there I thought I was going to drown."

"I told you it was stupid to go back after we hid your things on the beach."

"Well... it had to look real. Those scratches sure helped make the story believable." Trisha playing at tough cookie. She grins at Ronny.

"It was worth the risk. I did it... I got the story of the year!"

Ronny frowns

"You got it?" Trisha doesn't notice it, as she bends down to put the digicam back. Ronny's frown deepens but when she looks up he smiles charmingly

"We ought to celebrate that. Care for a drink?"

"Not tonight. I've got other plans." Trisha smiles in anticipation.

"Oh... Your boyfriend?... what's his name?"

Trisha just gives Ronny a smile and waggles her finger. She wobbles towards the bow of the boat and looks ahead.

The view rises above the rubber boat, zooms across the sea to

29. Mumbai

Flight in from across the bay, over the gate of India and across the city.

30. Back home

Trisha, black bag on her shoulder, enters her apartment, drops her keys into a bowl and pads into the living room. She flops into an armchair, closes her eyes. After a moment she smiles, stretches to reach the phone on the side table. Dials

Abhai picks up the phone.

"I'm back. And I've got reason to celebrate!"

Abhai smiles.

31. Channel Eight morning

Mani bangs the receiver down on the phone and shouts out of his office

"Where the dickens is Trisha?"

Heads turn and then shake and shoulders are shrugged. Nobody has seen Trisha.

Ronny walks past.

"Ronny, where's Trisha?"

Ronny looks surprised. "How should I know? I got her back from the Island yesterday noon... haven't seen her since. We were supposed to meet today again here."

Mani growls

"Well... she isn't here yet... and if you weren't late as usual you'd noticed that."

"I'm not her keeper, Mani. I don't live in her back pocket, even if we were working on this project together."

Mani grumbles a little.

"Well... that may be as it is, but I want Trish here. I've tried to call her cell phone but she doesn't answer. She knows we're having an important meeting, I can't imagine what's keeping her. Look, go to her place and see whether she has fallen ill."

Mani disappears back into his office. Ronny scowls at his retreating back. One of his colleagues walks by and notices his angry scowl.

"Woa, Ronny, what an angry face. What's the matter?"

"Mani... he wants me to run after Trisha... just because she happens to be a little late. What am I?... an errant-boy?"

Ronny grumbles a little more but finally heads out of the offices.

32. On the drive

While he is driving he tries to call Trisha but the phone rings and rings in vain.

33. Trisha's apartment

In front of Trisha's door he rings. There is no answer.

"Trisha?" He knocks at the door and notices that it opens slightly.

He frowns, hesitates, then pushes the door open further.

"Trisha? Trisha!?" Making his way cautiously into the living room he stops, stunned.

The place is a mess. Ronny looks around in panic

"Trisha? Trisha!"

Ronny hurries through the apartment, looking for Trisha. He finds her in the bedroom, in a silk dressing gown that is hardly covering her nudity, hands above her head as if they had been held there, eyes staring, a pillow next to her head. The bed shows signs of a desperate struggle. A blue choke mark on her throat is clearly visible.

34. Later

Officer Omar Khan takes in the scene. He curls his lips in distaste. Two men bag the body and transfer it onto a gurney.

Outside the bedroom a younger officer interrogates Ronny.

"Well... I immediately called the police." Ronny watches as the gurney is carried past.

Omar walks into the living room, looks at a broken lamp standing incongruously on a side table, at the general mess in the room.

He turns to Ronny.

"Did Miss Balan have any enemies?"

Ronny shakes his head.

"Not that I know of... everybody likes... liked her at work."

He makes a weak gesture with his hand.

"I... I ought to call my boss. He needs to know..."

Takes out his cell phone.

35. Trisha becomes news

Mani lowers the receiver and sits down slowly. He rubs his face, looks stunned. From the receiver he hears Ronny's squawking

"Mani?"

He blinks a moment, then takes a deep breath, raises the receiver again

"Ronny? A camera team will be with you asap."

36. Interview with an officer

"Do you have any idea why Miss Balan might have been killed?"

Mani shakes his head. "Miss Balan wasn't a crime reporter... or dealt with the kind of issues one would expect to become dangerous. She and Ronny - the guy who found her - had been investigating the disappearance of Chandra Gupta."

"Chandra Gupta? I thought he was dead."

"Miss Balan was convinced he wasn't... and she found proof he is still alive."

The younger officer shakes his head and scribbles into a notebook. Omar frowns.

"You sure? I remember Chandra used to have quite a temper. Wasn't it you he once hit?"

Mani frowns a little.

"No... but he did have a fall out with one of our reporters."

"As I recall he was quite feared for his temper. Well..." The officer closes his notebook. "Is there anything else you can tell me? Any threats received? Any internal rivalries?"

Mani shakes his head.

"What about personal relationships?"

Mani shrugs.

"I don't enquire into the personal life of my journalists (pauses) but you might ask one of her colleagues outside... they're bound to know."

He gives a crooked smile. Khan nods.

"Well... if you think of something, please contact us."

The two officers turn to walk out. As the door closes behind them Mani sits down on the desk and buries his head in his hands. After a moment he picks up the phone.

"Tell Ronny to come to me... quickly!"

37. Newsflash

Ronny in front of Trisha's apartment, putting on a sufficiently shocked demeanour.

"We are here in front of Trisha Balan's apartment house. This morning it was the scene of a shocking discovery. Trisha Balan, channel eight news reporter, has been found dead in her flat. She was murdered sometime last night, within the privacy of her own home."

Picture of Trisha) then view of a crowd watching as police enter the building.

"Trisha Balan was Channel Eights best known journalist. Her serious and thorough investigations have earned her a name amongst the fraternity and her murder is a slap in the face of every journalist."

The view shifts to the TV set in Chandra's study. Chandra watches with a stony expression. He rubs his left hand, keeps it covered.

There is a short collage of reports Trisha had been doing. Back to Ronny who looks suitably outraged.

"Channel eight will set everything in motion to make sure that this heinous crime will not go unavenged. We are in a free country. It is inadmissible that reporters can only work under fear of life when doing their job!"

Chandra switches off the TV set and turns. Sushil stands behind him and looks at him with a strange expression. The two men exchange a long glance, then Chandra drops his eyes and walks past Sushil. Sushil turns to watch him with a worried frown.

38. At channel eight

Mani watches the newsflash. He turns to Ronny.

"Not bad... but there is more to this story. It's screaming for a statement from Chandra."

He drums his fingers in annoyance

"We need the material Trisha got on the island. Finding Chandra is sensational... but with only your pictures the story is bloody thin. Naturally it will be news... especially since Trisha found him... (Ronny's angry wince goes unnoticed) and now she is dead... but it's not enough!"

He throws up his hands.

"A statement from Chandra... some footage is what we need. Pictures are for tabloids! A pity we can't get at Trisha's notes! I don't even know where Chandra lives here in Mumbai."

Ronny frowns.

"Trisha and I were partners. I know what Trisha knew."

Mani looks a little surprised.

"Trisha usually wasn't that free with her sources."

Ronny shrugs.

"We had a deal. She couldn't do the job on the island alone."

Mani slaps his palm on the table.

"Right! Then what are you waiting for? Bring me some footage of Chandra!"

"That might not be that easy. Trisha didn't find a way in... so how do you expect me to do it?"

Mani gives Ronny a harsh glance

"Well... you've got a lucky break there, buddy. Don't mess it up now. If you can't get me some footage ..."

Ronny scowls a little.

"You'll get it! One way or another!"

39. Pathology

The pathologist puts a corps back into the cooler room and frowns as Trisha's body is rolled in. The assistant pulls the cover from the face.

"This one's got precedent. The journalist. They want your report as soon as possible. The press is already howling like a pack of wolves. "

"They'll get it when I can make it. I don't suppose they'd like me to do a sloppy job."

The assistant shrugs.

"It's your neck."

He leaves. The pathologist studies Trisha's face a moment then peels the sheet back further.

"Then let's see what story you got to tell me." He takes a camera, makes a picture of the neck.

40. Police office

Photograph of bruise on neck thrown onto the table.

Omar Khan "The bruise on her neck was caused several hours before she was killed. If we've got a hand they can decide whether it fits."

leaves through the report.

"We've got some skin from under the fingernails, blood group, no DNA yet. Testing will take much longer."

Khan reads further, grows silent, curses.

"The damn bastard raped her. He must have strangled her to subdue her then he raped her. And when he was done he stifled her with a pillow."

Khan's generally stony face grows stormy.

"He was at her for hours!" His eyes unfocus a little then he almost whispers

"Poor girl." Catches himself. More businesslike

"She didn't give in without a struggle though. He must have some nasty scratches somewhere. We can nail the bastard just with his blood.

Khan throws the report down. The younger officer pulls the report over and reads it.

"No sperm traces though...how sure is it then that she was raped?"

"The pathologist is firm about her having had intercourse that night." Omar suddenly looks a little fidgety.

"The lubricant. The bastard used a ... condom."

The younger officer hides a tiny smile at Khan's embarrassment and shakes his head.

"Doesn't make sense to me. Why use a condom?"

"To avoid any traces."

"But she'd also scratched him!"

"Nobody said the killer was that clever... he thought only of the obvious!"

"Well... using a condom looks like he was pretty calculating after all. How does that fit with him choking her first?"

Omar almost jumps up and walks towards the office door.

"I'll ask him when I get my hands on the bastard."

Omar leaves brusquely. The younger officer watches him with a slight frown then turns to a colleague nearby.

"I've never seen him so ... involved before."

The other takes the younger officer by the shoulder and leads him away from the others. He lowers his voice conspiratorially and leans a little closer

"It's not generally known... but his daughter was assaulted. The rapist got away... claimed she had been consenting." The officer shrugs. "The boy's father was a politician."

The younger officer looks in the direction Omar had disappeared.

"I'm surprised he -"

The other officer smiles a little grimly.

"-The boy had a fatal car accident... call it divine justice."

There is a moment of shared complicity.

Omar comes back. The other officer salutes and leaves.

"Back to work. We've got to talk to Chandra. I'm curious to meet the man."

41. cutting room

Ronny goes through the footage. A journalist interviews a neighbour. The woman is clearly relishing the attention. She smiles at the interviewer.

"Oh... I remember it quite clearly. It's not often you get such a start! He looked terrifying... really frightening! He had a horrible scar down his left side. I'm sure it must have been him! Such a face... definitely the face of a beast!"

Ronny's hand freezes. There is a moment of stunned surprise then he smiles grimly

"Have you seen him before?"

"Heavens no! He slipped in right behind me... I didn't stop him. God knows what he would have done to me if I had tried!" The woman puts her hand to her throat looking sufficiently scared.

Ronny smiles at the performance

"Now I've got you!" He removes the tape and gets up.

42. Abhay

Abhay downs a glass of alcohol.

"I'm in deep shit!"

His friend, Amir, takes the glass from Abhay's hand.

"It won't do Trisha any good if you drown your grief in alcohol, Abhai!"

Abhay makes a grab for the glass.

"Let me, Amir. Trisha is dead... and that's enough reason to drink!"

Abhay manages to wrest the glass from Amir's hand. He looks at the bottom of it and then whispers.

"I'm scared shitless! I don't want to think!"

Amir frowns. He allows Abhay to snatch the bottle and watches him refill the glass.

He leans a little forward.

"What are you afraid of?"

Abhay downs the glass... he is getting into his cups but he has still enough control to raise his finger to his mouth in a sign of keeping silent. Then he smiles glassily.

43. Omar faces Ronny

Omar bangs the phone down on the receiver.

"I can't believe it! Where the hell is that Chandra Gupta? Police should be able to find that guy without problems... but somebody is stonewalling here!"

There is a cough from the door. Omar turns to see Ronny leaning against the door jamb. Omar scowls.

"You're that reporter from Channel eight. How did you get in here? We're not commenting on any ongoing investigations right now!"

Ronny smiles

"Call me a concerned citizen for the moment."

Omar snorts.

"No... listen... I think I can help you. And you can help me. After all... we don't want the same to happen that happened with your daughter?"

Omar's expression freezes into icy coldness. After a moment he gets up threateningly.

"Wait!... I've got some information about Chandra that WILL interest you!"

Omar hesitates then scowls.

"If it's so exciting I'd expect to learn about it in the news. I know your kind... you never give anything for nothing."

Ronny shakes his head. He grins shyly.

"There you got me. I know where he lives... but what would be the good of that? He never goes outside. I could just show the outside of a house. I need more interesting footage!"

Ronny waits for Omar to comment and looks pointedly at the younger officer. Omar considers a moment. He looks over to his younger colleague and then signals him to leave the office. The colleague withdraws.

"So... what do you want?"

Ronny smiles and then closes the door.

"I told you... I need footage. A chance to get some decent minutes of film. I want to be there when you winkle the guy out of his shell. As a matter of chance."

Ronny smiles a little.

"I could just ask you to tell me... no deal."

Ronny grins.

"You could... but I would be seized by a sudden laps of memory... sorry... was just trying to get some information... don't know anything about it..."

He sobers

"Let's stop playing games. This guy's got money. If he as much as suspects the police is looking for him, you'll be called back like a dog. You don't want that. Nor do I. If that guy has anything to do with Trisha's murder... I want him to be charged and tried. I'm sick of bastards getting away with murder just because they're rich!"

Omar's face darkens.

"Don't play the righteous citizen with me... you just want your story!"

Ronny grins frankly

"That too... If I can get both... all the better."

He scrutinizes Omar's face and decides to sacrifice his queen.

"Look... I'll show you what you need to know... and then you decide. Allow me?"

Ronny inserts a disk into the computer. After a moment the interview plays out.

Omar watches. At the end he turns to Ronny.

"Why didn't our officers question her?"

"Because she was just visiting. Stroke of luck that she came back for another visit right as we were interviewing her friend. But that's not all... I know who he is."

Ronny takes a folded paper out of his pocket. Unfolds it. It's the picture of Chandra taken on the island as he storms away from Sushil. Ronny looks expectantly at Omar. Omar slowly takes it, studies it, looks at Ronny. His eyes narrow a little.

"You had that all along and didn't use it?"

"I told you - my boss wants footage, no photographs. And THAT... is a much bigger story. No use to upset the apple cart too early!"

Ronny holds out another piece of paper.

"He lives there under the name of Vikram Aditya... not a very clever name to use if you ask me. I guess the man just couldn't really let go of his past." Ronny sneers a little.

Omar takes the note and reads the address. He narrows his eyes, opens the door, calls his young colleague in.

"Our friend here is leaving."

Ronny smirks a little at the sour tone and follows the young officer out.

Omar slaps the note against his palm then walks out of the office.

44. Chandra's apartment

Sushil opens the door. At the sight of the two police officers he starts.

"We'd like to talk to Chandra Gupta."

Another shock. Sushil tries to bluff it out.

"I think you are mistaken. This is the flat of Mr. Vikram Aditya."

Omar smiles thinly. "Then we wish to speak to Mr. 'Aditya'."

Sushil shakes his head.

"Mr. Aditya doesn't see people."

"Well...we want to see him. We have a few questions for him about Trisha Balan. May we come in?"

Omar pulls out a paper, hands it to Sushil. Sushil looks at it then reluctantly opens the door.

He leads the two officers into Chandra's office.

The room is in semi-darkness, the heavy curtains drawn across. A desk lamp is turned on, lighting only Chandra's good side.

Chandra sits in his chair, his scarred left side hidden in the shadow.

"Sushil...something to sit for these gentlemen."

Omar sits down, while the younger wanders around the office, reading book titles in the bookshelf.

"What can I do for you?"

Chandra sounds suave and polite. Omar raises an eyebrow.

"Sir... do you know Miss Balan?"

Chandra hesitates a little, then frowns. Omar watches him fixedly.

"Miss Balan? Oh... the reporter from channel eight. No. I don't know her."

"And yet you spent several days in her company just before her murder."

Chandra looks surprised.

"I did? You surprise me. I ought to remember that."

Omar smiles grimly, takes a picture, holds it out. It is a picture of Chandra carrying Asha on his arms.

"You recognize that? Miss Balan took the picture on the island. We found it in her apartment."

This time Chandra is really surprised. He throws a look to Sushil, but then manages to rally.

"That was Miss Balan? I didn't know. She told me her name was Tina... claimed she'd fallen over board and swum to the island. I had no reason to disbelieve her."

He laughs as if to make light of his own silliness then looks at Sushil

"Sushil, the gentlemen must be thirsty. Gentlemen?"

"Thank you... I'm fine."

the younger officer too refuses with a shake of his head.

Omar continues fixing Chandra. Chandra inclines his head, accepting the refusal with a smile.

"So you didn't know Miss Balan was a reporter?"

"Not at all! I am completely surprised about it!"

Omar turns to Sushil

"What about you?"

Sushil is a worse liar than Chandra. He swallows a little, throws a look over to Chandra then shakes his head.

"We had no idea."

Omar nods.

"Tell me, do you always leave people alone on an island?"

Sushil looks confused. Omar smiles faintly. Chandra watches Sushil with a stony expression but his stance is tense.

The younger officer suddenly appears behind Sushil, startling him.

"Where was Miss Balan - or Tina - when you returned from the island? She wasn't with you on the boat."

Sushil licks his lips, gives Chandra a helpless look. Chandra steps in.

"She had disappeared without a trace. We searched the island closely. Finally we concluded she must have been able to leave

by herself. And frankly... I was too worried about my daughter to spend much time wondering about Tina."

There is a tiny spark of anger in Chandra's eyes. Omar notices it with a small raising of an eyebrow.

"So you didn't know Tina was Miss Balan. Why then did you go to her the evening she was killed?"

"What? That's ridiculous! "

Sushil protests. Chandra in turn reminds silent. Sushil looks at him in shock at his silence. Chandra looks away from Sushil. Sushil blinks, stunned then straightens.

"Chandra has been home the whole evening!"

The younger officer suddenly pulls back the curtain. Chandra turns his head away reflexively. The younger officer catches his breath and looks shocked as Chandra's scarred left is thrown into high relief. Omar gets up and walks around to take a look at Chandra's left side. Sushil hurries over and tries to position himself between Chandra and Omar.

Chandra quickly gets up and faces Omar.

"Leave! Immediately!"

Omar looks at Chandra's scarred side and notices several scratches on Chandra's neck and left hand. He smiles a little grimly

"I don't think so."

He continues to scrutinize Chandra. Chandra grinds his teeth under the scrutiny but faces Omar squarely. Omar looks pointedly at the scratches on Chandra's hand.

"How did you get these scratches, sir?"

Chandra reflexively covers his hand.

Sushil steps forwards, blurting out.

"That's preposterous! What are you suggesting?"

Omar holds out his hand sharply.

Chandra clasps his left hand, looks down at its scratched back then up at the police officer.

"Sir. I must ask you to accompany us to the police station for further clarification."

45. Outside the house

Ronny stands leaning against his motorbike across the apartment house in the shadow, a camera in his hands. He watches the police car standing down the road from Chandra's apartment house.

Omar comes out, looks around then across the street. Ronny quickly raises the camera. Omar turns. The younger officer escorts Chandra outside. A passers-by gives Chandra a long stare. Chandra cringes away from the look.

Ronny chuckles a little as he observes the three through the viewer walk down the road to the car.

Omar ushers Chandra into the car and they drive off.

Ronny kicks the bike into motion. On the drive he flips open his phone.

"Mani... I got you THE story. I've got Chandra... the police has arrested him! I got it on film!"

46. At Mani's office

Mani throws open the door to his office.

"I need a camera team. NOW! To the Khar police station... on the double. Ronny is expecting you there. Chandra Gupta has been arrested!"

There is a sudden hush as everybody tries to understand, then everybody seems to start talking at the same time. Mani puts his fingers into his mouth and whistles to quell the sudden noise.

"Shruti! Laxmi! Head over to this address. That's where Chandra lived the past three years. I want interviews with everybody in the neighbourhood. People must have noticed something.

Johnny, Bela... go back to Trisha's apartment house. Ask around. Ask again. Talk to everybody and his dog."

The called up journalists get up from their desks, looking surprised and excited. Mani faces them, brimming with energy.

"This is the story of the year! And WE are ahead of the game.. but only by a hair. Let's keep it that way! Go!"

The journalists scatter. Mani nabs an assistant.

"Go to the archive... find me the tape from... must be March 2001. Chandra's assault on a journalist from aaj tak. And if you can find some of the other footage where he lost his cool, all the better."

The assistant nods and trots off.

47. At the police station

Chandra has his fingerprints taken. Then the technician takes a print of his whole left hand. When he tries to take a DNA sample Chandra baulks. Omar puts a piece of paper on the table. Chandra checks it, looks at Omar then allows the technician to take the sample. The technician leaves.

Omar sits down opposite Chandra in the interrogation room.

"Let's talk about Tuesday night."

Chandra covers the scratches on his hand and looks at the officer mutely.

48. Newsbreak

Ronny appears

"We're here in front of the police station at Khar West, where we witnessed this man being led into the police station."

Shot of Chandra from his scarred side.

"We have good reason to believe that this man is connected to the murder of Trisha Balan."

Camera changes to the interview of the woman

"Oh... I remember it quite clearly. It's not often you get such a start! He looked terrifying... really frightening! He had a horrible scar down his left side. I'm sure it must have been him! Such a face... definitely the face of a beast!"

The interviewer looks impressed.

"Have you seen him before?"

"Heavens no! He slipped in right behind me... I didn't stop him. God knows what he would have done to me if I had tried!"

Back to Ronny

We asked the witness if this is the same man she saw enter the building of Trisha Balan, the murdered channel eight journalist, on Tuesday evening."

Ronny now shows the woman a picture. She nods excitedly.

"That's him... that's the man I saw!"

Ronny smiles into the camera.

"But who is this man? Is it just a small time criminal, who took his chance? Did Trisha Balan die because of a fluke? Could it have been mere chance that led her killer to her door?"

Ronny makes a pause and then smiles.

"Channel eight knows the truth about this person... a truth which will shock and stun the whole of India. Join us after the break..."

49. Switch to Amita

The TV screen turns to an ad for skin cleaner. Amita pads into the room, towelling her hair. She takes the remote and switches to another channel.

Sonia comes sprinting out of the kitchen and makes a grab for the remote.

"Don't change, Amita! I want to see the rest of the news!"

Amita draws the remote out of Sonia's reach

"Really, Sonia. That's not news... that's sensationalism! It's disgusting how Channel eight is turning one of their own into a mere object of public titillation!"

"Titiwhat?" "No matter..."

Sonia makes another pass for the remote,

"Give me that remote!"

Manages to snatch it from Amita's grasp. Sonia switches back and catches the channel eight jingle.

Ronny appears, now in front of Chandra's apartment house.

"Welcome back to Channel eight news. I am here standing in front of the house where Scarface lived the last four years... incognito, a recluse, hardly ever leaving the flat. But who... who IS Scarface? But watch..."

Ronny is replaced by a series of shots, showing Chandra being led out. First his scarred side is in evidence, then he turns and shows his right side. The picture is blown up and then superimposed by a still from a film. It turns into a clip of Chandra fighting the baddie high up on a cat walk, while the heroine hangs from the railing. Baddie takes a dive, Hero pulls heroine to safety, a near kiss before he turns his head slightly... the picture of the film is again replaced by the recent shot, left and right side clearly visible.

Sonia gives an ear-splitting shriek.

"The mystery around India's most famous actor, Chandra Gupta has finally been resolved... in the most astounding manner imaginable."

"It's Chandra! Chandra Gupta! I don't believe it! Look at him!"

Amita looks at the screen with a mixture of shock and disbelief. She snatches the remote and turns the TV off.

Sonia shrieks again.

"Amita! Turn it back on! Gimme the remote! Amita!"

Amita withdraws back to the door, Sonia running after her, wrestling the remote from her. She turns the TV on but the news jingle only shows the final credits. Sonia pouts

"Now I've missed it!"

Amita doesn't look at her but only mutters: "Poor man." and leaves.

50. At the police station

Omar throws a file onto the table.

"Your hand print matches the bruise at Miss Balan's throat, and your blood type matches the blood under her nails. It will be take time to prove that the DNA will also match. But we

don't really need that. What we have so far is enough to accuse you."

Omar pauses, relishing the moment watches Chandra's reaction. Chandra frowns slightly. Omar smiles coldly

"Mr. Gupta, you're under arrest for the rape and murder of Trisha Balan!"

Chandra freezes for a moment then he jumps up from the table. The guard raises his baton threateningly. Chandra shakes his head and withdraws away from the guard and the police officer.

"Rape? I didn't rape her!"

He pumps with his back into the wall, gasps.

Omar slaps his hand on the file.

"You choked her! She scratched you in her terror! She had intercourse that night. Do you deny raping her before you stifled her with a pillow?!"

Chandra shakes his head, fighting for breath. Omar finally notices his plight and watches him a moment, insecure how to react.

The guard steps forward

"Sir! Should I call a doctor?"

Omar watches a moment longer.

"The man is an actor! Don't get taken in by his antics."

Chandra sways then slowly collapses. His hands fumble in vain for hold on the wall.

Omar watches Chandra's anguished struggle for breath with cold eyes then his lips curl in distaste. He gives the guard a sign.

"Better call a doctor. I'd like to know where I am standing with him."

The guard hurries outside. Omar pulls out a chair and straddles it opposite of Chandra. He leans a little forward.

"You've gotten away with buying your way out before. But not this time!"

Chandra looks up at Omar. He shakes his head, finally manages to grind out roughly

"I didn't do it. I didn't rape her!"

51. news hubbub

Fans gather in front of the police station. Some are crying, some are shouting or throwing stones against the station.

Shruti stands in front of the station.

"chandra gupta's arrest has been officially confirmed. He is under suspicion of rape and murder of Trisha Balan, chanel eight's newsreporter."

Shruti turns towards the excited crowd.

"News of the arrest has led people to gather in front of the station."

Scenes of a few female fans, crying bitterly, screaming hysterically. A reporter tries to interview them.

"He's innocent. He would never do that! I love him! That's police brutality" and more.

"Even after his four years absence and after news of his horrible disfigurement reached the news his fans are not deterred."

There is a group of rather more hooligan looking young man. One bends down and picks up a rock, hurls it against the station.

"Do you think Chandra is innocent?"

There is a roar of enraged voices, "he did it, bastard, he should hang. They're never going to do it, even if he'd been caught red handed. There's no law for the rich!"

52. At the office

The view pulls back, revealing a TV set in a business like lounge. Several workers in suits are eating lunch, some watch the TV, others talk. Amita watches with a frown.

"The voice of the street is divided. And while Chandra can still count on a huge fan base there is a very large number of people who think that Chandra is guilty. And the ultimate penalty for a conviction of rape and murder is still hanging. But nobody can believe that India's most famous actor could

face that fate. Indeed there are already voices claiming that justice will not be done... cannot be done."

"What do you think, Amita? Did he do it?"

Amita turns away from the TV. Her boss, Mr. Malhotra, in company of Arjun walk towards her. She gives Arjun a quick, assessing glance then shrugs.

"I don't know the facts... or even all the evidence. And as a lawyer it's not my task to judge." She gives Arjun a quick, considering look.

Malhotra nods to Arjun

"Arjun is Chandra's civil lawyer. Arjun... Amita, one of our most promising defence lawyers."

They greet. Arjun nods at Amrita

"How do you evaluate his chances?"

"I don't. I don't know enough to make even an educated guess. Whatever the facts, however... the media have already condemned him. He'll be a hot iron for any lawyer who's going to be his defence."

"I'm thinking of offering you a chance there. It carries a lot of prestige."

Amita looks up at her boss then at Arjun. Her eyes narrow a little. After a moment she smiles sweetly.

"Is the case too hot for the more senior lawyers?"

Her boss blusters a little then smiles benignly.

"You've worked hard and you are one of my best."

Amita interrupts. "I'm your BEST lawyer."

Her boss suppresses a scowl and continues.

"I'm going against some more experienced partners, but if you're interested, it's yours."

Amita looks down to hide a sneer then back up at Arjun for a moment, smiles, takes the newspaper and her chai.

"Good. I'll take it."

53. At home

"Are you mad?!" Amita's friend almost shrieks.

Amita wiggles her finger in her ear and gives Sonia a pained look.

"Not at all."

"But look... the guy is guilty as hell! There's no way you can win this case! And if you lose... you'll be blamed for it. The man has still millions of fans! If you lose you can be lucky if they don't lynch you!"

Sonia flops into the leather arm chair and pulls her feet under. Amita smiles a little at her and sighs.

"Look. I know this is going to be difficult. But I can tell you one thing... I'll get him off the hook!"

"But you don't even believe he is innocent!"

Amita smiled a little at Sonia's plaintive exclamation.

"Why should I need to believe in his innocence? I will defend him to the utmost whether he's guilty or not. For that service he's going to pay a lot of money too."

Sonia puts her chin into her hand and watches Amita pull out a folder from her briefcase. She sighs.

"How can you be so cold?" Amita just gives her a short glance and then starts reading. Sonia pulls the newspaper to her and opens it. Chandra's picture glares at her. She shudders but then starts reading. After a time she folds the paper so that the picture is prominently displayed and holds it out to Amita.

"How will you be able to face... that! It makes my skin crawl to just look at it!"

Amita looks up from her reading. She studies the picture for a moment then shrugs.

"It's not all that bad. I guess after some time you'd get used to it. After all... look at him from the right side and you don't see a thing."

Sonia shudders. "Maybe... but I'd know it's there, that's enough. It's the face of a beast capable of anything."

Amita folds her hands and studies her friend for a moment.

"Have I ever told you that your superficial view of the world never ceases to surprise me?"

Sonia frowns a little, not sure if Amita has just insulted or complimented her. Finally she smiles.

"Mostly what you see is what you get. It's usually not worth digging any further. You get dirt on the surface... you get dirt below."

Amita shakes her head.

"My experience is that what you see is not what you get... dig a bit and you'll often hit gold... even if it's just a dirty little secret. Secrets are knowledge... and knowledge is power."

Sonia frowns a little, then shrugs and pulls a magazine to her.

"Well... hope you find your pay dirt."

"Tomorrow I will know. I'll tell you whether he is the beast you think he is."

Sonia smiles. "Cool... then you can get me an autograph of him."

Amita looks at Sonia, stunned. She closes her folder almost angrily.

"That's one thing I'll certainly not ask of him!"

54. Chandra being difficult

Amita fingers the briefcase on the table nervously. She looks up as the door opens and Chandra is led in. The guard removes his cuffs. Chandra faces her with a challenge in his eyes. He looks like something the cat dragged in.

Amita struggles to hide her shock. She quickly gets up and greets Chandra with a smile.

"Namaste, Chandraji. My name is Amita Khanna. I'm your lawyer."

Chandra disregards the greeting and sits down at the table. Amita takes position opposite him. Chandra studies the table, finally fixes her.

"Arjun sent you?"

"Yes."

Amita opens the briefcase and takes out a note pad. She suddenly feels awkward. Clears her throat.

"Well... maybe we ought to begin with you. What can you tell me about the situation?"

Across from her Chandra continues to fix her. Amita rights the notepad to avoid looking at his face.

"Tell me how you got these scratches, Mr. Gupta. They are the most incriminating thing against you."

Chandra gives a small shake of his head, rubs the scratch absentmindedly, notices his gesture and covers his left with his right. Amita looks at his bent head a moment.

"Look Mr. Gupta. I'm supposed to work for you in your defence. That means you've got to give me something to defend you with! If you don't even talk to me... how am I supposed to do my job?"

Chandra continues to look down at his hands on the table. He clenches and unclenches them. Amita gets up in exasperation.

"Mr. Gupta! You're paying a lot of money for my services... and trust me... I'll bill you every minute, whether you talk to me or not!"

Chandra gives a tiny shake of the head and his lips twist into a quick derisive sneer. Finally he looks up at Amita.

"Do you think I did it?"

Amita hesitates, considers the question, sits down again and puts her hand on the folder next to her.

"Whether I believe you did it or not is not really relevant... My task is to assure your defence with all possible means."

Chandra nods with a small sneer

"Spoken like a lawyer, Miss Amita. And how will you cope with having to face that every time?"

He points to his ruined side.

There is a quick moment of unease then Amita looks Chandra fully in the face. She takes her time studying the scars and

welts. Her scrutiny takes so long that Chandra begins to fidget under her clinical examination. When she looks Chandra in the eyes they both glower at her with open hostility. Amita holds his glance and shrugs a little.

"It's not a pretty sight. But it's not that bad either. It will certainly not influence my professional abilities, Mr. Gupta." She looks at him challengingly.

Chandra's eyes darken in sudden anger. He almost snarls.

"Glad you feel you can stand my face then, Miss Amita! But I'm not sure I can stand yours!"

There's a moment of shock and pain then Amita regains her composure. She picks up her pen.

"That will be your choice, Mr. Gupta."

Chandra gets up abruptly and walks to the door.

"I'm finished here," he calls to the guard.

"Mr. Gupta!"

Chandra stops looks hardly back

"Arjun will contact you should I decide to employ your services."

The guard opens the door. Chandra steps through. Amita calls after him.

"Mr. Gupta! You need somebody to assure your rights. I am the best you can get. Don't you want to be defended properly?"

Chandra hesitates a fraction under the door frame then continues without a further word or a glance back.

55. Back in his cell

The door closes with a clang behind Chandra. He stands right inside the door for a moment, motionless. He looks up at the ceiling, then drags himself over to the opposite side of the cell. He turns to look at the door. A guard peers in for a moment. Chandra shields his left side from the man's gaze. The man gone he slides down the wall, huddled into the corner and covers his head with his arms. His body starts shaking.

He hears again Amita's question. "Don't you want to be defended properly?"

In his mind he hears the screams of his wife, the flickering of flames... he covers his ears.

56. Amita goes to see Sushil

In Arjun's office Amita looks from Arjun to Sushil.

"I'm not sure we've hit it off right. He won't talk to me. He hasn't talked to the police either, which is good. But I'm his lawyer. I need his cooperation if I am to do my job properly."

She frowns a little.

"What's wrong with him? First I thought he objected to being defended by a woman."

She looks at Arjun then Sushil. Both frown in surprise. Arjun shakes his head

"I can't believe that. He's never had any problems with successful women."

Amita nods.

"Then why object to me? It's as if he doesn't care what happens to him! Even worse... he seems to be set on heading straight into disaster!"

Sushil looks at Arjun then Amita

"I don't know. I can hardly guess what is going on in his mind. "

Sushil sighs and twists his fingers together.

"Maybe this has finally broken his back."

Amita looks questioningly at Sushil.

"What do you mean by that?"

Sushil rubs his palms together, looks a moment into the distance, remembers an agonized Chandra clasp his hand and gasp

"Nobody must know! Promise!"

Sushil exchanges another look with Arjun. That one nods slightly. Sushil comes to a decision. He looks hard at Amita.

"I want everything I tell you to remain between us... no notes, no talking to your associates."

Amita frowned a little, nods.

"If you insist."

Sushil's eyes unfocus a little as his mind travels back into the past

"Four years ago Chandra was at the peak of his fame and fortunes. He had everything... money, success, hit after hit at the box office... fans in the billion... and a loving wife and daughter.

That night they had been to a party. I don't know exactly why but when it was time to drive home he asked Arjun to loan him his car.

On the drive back home he and his wife quarrelled."

57. Flashback.

Chandra comes out of the swanky club followed by his wife in a sari. Chandra stalks angrily towards the car park. It is raining.

"I don't have to take this kind of behaviour! Who does he think he is? Who does he think I AM!?"

Garima hurries after Chandra.

"Chandra! You were rude to him!"

Chandra gets into the car. Garima takes the passenger seat.

Chandra drives fast, aggressive. Garima gives him a look.

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill, Chandra."

Chandra drums his fingers, then honks the horn as he cuts in in front of another car. He fumbles for a pack of cigarettes.

Garima frowns. Chandra, disregarding her look, pulls a cigarette from the pack, and puts it between his lips.

"Chandra ... that's not your car. You know Arjun is a non-smoker!"

Chandra flips open the lighter and holds it to the cigarette.

"Will you stop nagging me! Do this, don't do that! Oh, damn!"

The cigarette has dropped from his lips. Chandra looks down to see where it is. Driving on the line at the median he is momentarily distracted.

"Chandra!"

Reflexively Chandra swerves to avoid a motorbike. The car crosses the median line, Chandra breaks but the car turns clockwise and the left side is hit by an oncoming truck. The truck swerves wildly, loses control and swings around before toppling over.

Chandra's car rocks from the impact, the airbags explode.

Chandra blinks and tries to focus.

At the overturned truck the driver struggles out of the cabin and drops down to the road. From a crack in the rusted through tank fuel starts to drip. The fuel's inching its way towards Chandra's car.

Chandra looks over to Garima. She lies slumped against the door. For a moment there is no sign of life then she groans.

Chandra almost falls out of the car and stumbles around it to the passenger side. The left front of the car is a crumbled up mess. Chandra tries to open the door but it is stuck.

On the floor the cigarette has come to rest on Garima's pallu. The fabric begins to smoulder.

Chandra finally wrenches open the door and tries to see how Garima is. There is the flicker of a flame as the fabric starts burning.

"Garima! Garima!" Chandra tries to drag her out of the car, but her legs have been crushed in. He reaches over her to slap at the fire.

Garima comes to and starts whimpering.

The fuel from the truck reaches Chandra's car. There is a WHOMP and fire shoots up. Chandra reels back, left arm and side of face scorched. The fabric of his clothes burns too. He falls to the ground, rolling, while Garima screams.

He stumbles up back to the car which is now burning, with Garima screaming and writhing. He tries to get to her, but the heat is too intense. His own screams mingle with those of his wife as he watches her burn helplessly.

Finally an ambulance appears. Chandra, charred and black of face faints.

58. Chandra wakes up in a hospital room.

His left side and face are covered with fine gauze. Sushil sits at the bedside on his right

Chandra is almost unable to focus and only after some time recognizes Sushil

"Sushil." He can only mumble. He tries to move but pain flashes through him.

He groans and blinks. "My eye?"

"Don't move. You've had an accident."

Chandra focuses on that. Memory dawns.

"Garima!"

Sushil takes Chandra's right hand and squeezes it.

"I'm sorry, Chandra."

Chandra closes his eye.

"My fault... Garima..." There is a long moment where his mind drifts in and out of focus. Finally he makes to move but the pain explodes and focuses his mind on his body.

"Hurts. Can't move."

"You've been severely burned. They've given you something to immobilize you."

Chandra manages to focus on Sushil.

"Bad?"

Sushil tries to smile.

"The doctors think that your hand will regain full mobility."

Chandra closes his eye, grips Sushil's hand hard

"Nobody... must know. Promise!"

Sushil looks down at Chandra's agonised face. He presses the good hand.

"I promise."

Sushil, Arjun and Arpana sit. Sushil picks up the thread.

"I held my promise. His money bought a lot of silence. So practically over night he disappeared. He knew he couldn't face the public any more.

You can imagine what it was like when he first understood just how badly he had been burned."

flashback

Chandra sits on his bed. A nurse removes the gauze from his hand. Chandra raises his hand to look at it. He can hardly bend the fingers and the back of his arm is a mass of scabs and welts and thin pink skin. Chandra shudders and then touches the gauze of his face.

When the nurse has left he goes into the bathroom. He looks at the gauze covered side of his face. After a moment he removes the gauze. He looks at his ravaged face. The shock is so profound that he feels woozy for a moment. He sags, hardly manages to steady himself on the basin edge. He gasps and clutches the rim until the dizziness passes. As he straightens his eyes fall on an old fashioned razor. He looks at the razor, takes it, and opens it. He looks back into the mirror.

The nurse comes back, finds the bed empty, looks for Chandra and finds him in the bathroom. She clucks at seeing that he has removed the gauze. The razor is back on the basin.

Evening. Chandra sits at the table, a tray of food next to him, untouched. The nurse comes in, sees the food and scolds him.

"You've got to eat something, Mr. Aditya."

"I'm not hungry."

"Your body needs energy to heal."

Chandra looks out the window. In the glass his face mirrors. He smiles bitterly. The nurse looks at the reflection, goes to the window, draws the curtain. She pushes the tray a little closer. Chandra shakes his head. She finally takes the untouched tray away.

The door opens as the nurse is about to go out. Sushil and three year old Asha enter. Sushil sees the untouched tray. He

looks at Chandra then takes the tray from the nurse and carries it back inside, puts it on the table.

"I said I'm not hungry!" Chandra looks up and sees Sushil then Asha.

He turns his face away from the little girl.

Sushil frowns.

"What are you trying to do? Starve yourself?"

There is a tell tale look from Chandra. Sushil sits down and takes Asha onto his lap.

"Asha... look... Papa hasn't eaten yet. I think he wants feeding."

Sushil gives her a bit of naan and daal and makes her offer it to Chandra. He withdraws a little, catches a scowl from Sushil leans forward to accept the morsel.

59. End of flashback

"I think without Asha he would have given up there and then. But Asha made all the difference. She... yes... she forced him to continue living because she needed him."

Amita blinks a little... it is as if she has seen it all herself.

"Then what is different now? Asha still needs him."

Sushil sighs.

"I don't really know. But I think he is really paralysed by fear. Whatever happens... he can't hide any more. He didn't kill himself four years back... it seems he's going to let the government do that for him now."

"What is he afraid of then?"

Sushil shakes his head.

"Pity? Disgust? That people can believe he did something like that? I'm not sure even Chandra knows what he is afraid of."

Sushil paces

"I thought it was a good thing when that reporter found out about his scarring. I thought it would force him to deal with

the situation, to start living again. But this... I don't know, I don't know."

Sushil makes a helpless gesture and looks desperately at Amita.

"He didn't do it! I don't care what the evidence says... I know Chandra! He didn't do it!"

"It's good that you believe in Chandra. He needs your faith. But faith won't win the case. Only Chandra himself can give me a way to prove that the evidence is wrong. And for that he's got to talk to me!"

Amita gets up and paces around, considering. Finally she stops and turns to Sushil and Arjun

"I might know how to get Chandra to talk. He will certainly try to dismiss me... you've got to prevent that!"

Sushil frowns. He slowly gets up.

"What are you going to do?"

Amita picks up her briefcase

"Make or break a man."

60. Amita faces Chandra again

Amita folds the newspaper in disgust and stuffs it under the files. She looks up when Chandra is led into the room and his cuffs removed. He stops inside the door, scowls.

"I didn't call you."

"No... you didn't. But I am still appointed your lawyer and as such I have to do my job."

Chandra looks almost sullenly at Amita. Amita shrugs and then takes out a notepad and a pencil.

"I think it would really help your case if you told me what happened that evening you went to see Miss Balan."

Chandra leans against the wall and crosses his arms in front of his chest.

Amita waits a moment. Finally she throws her pen onto the notepad and gets up in annoyance. She walks around the table and glares at Chandra.

"Mr. Gupta. You are certainly the most selfish and egocentric human being I've had the misfortune to meet so far! I don't know what game you are playing. But I can see that you have no care whatsoever about others who might suffer because of you!"

Amita's words shock Chandra out of his denial. He glares at her and drops his hands.

"A game? You think I am playing a game? What do you know? I'm being accused of rape and murder... that's a hanging offence! You think I'm looking forward to being hanged!?"

"That's exactly what I think! You were an actor... what better exit for somebody who's just a has-been?"

Chandra is so shocked at the accusation that he fails to find words to defend himself. Amita takes a deep breath and goes on.

"I can see your reasoning. Better be known in all eternity for a spectacular and possibly tragic death than just fade into oblivion, isn't it?"

"You're crazy! How dare you accuse me of such cheapness! I was a bloody good actor!"

Amita gives him a long look and smiles, not very nicely.

"That's the whole point isn't it? You can't be an actor any more so you're taking the easy way out."

Chandra gives a sound like a growl and moves towards her, now seized by furious anger. Amita continues, seemingly unconcerned.

"But what about your daughter? Are you egocentric enough to condemn her to live under this onus? Must she bear the shame of being the daughter of a man who was condemned for murder... even hanged?"

Chandra stops in his tracks. He shivers. The furious rage he had experienced just moments ago freezes over in an instant as Amita's words strike home. He stumbles towards the table and collapses onto a chair. He buries his face in his hands.

Amita watches and waits. Finally Chandra shakes his head into his hands. He can't look at Amita as he fights for words.

"I'm a terrible father. Asha would be better off without me. Don't you think I don't know how I'm depriving her of everything? Friends, fun, parties, invitations, just a day at

the beach like other families? If I'm gone she might at least lead a normal life."

Amita looks at Chandra's bent head. She feels a moment's pity for him but then her expression firms. She slaps the table.

"What sentimental rubbish is that? Asha needs a father who is there for her, loves her, gives her security! You're just trying to cover over your own self-pity! If you really cared for Asha you would not sit here and whine! You would fight!"

Chandra's neck stiffens. His hands slowly clench to fists as he tries to control a renewed wave of rage. Without looking up he says coldly

"You better leave now."

Amita looks down at the bent head. She wonders faintly whether she has gone too far. Chandra suddenly raises his head.

"Leave!"

The expression in his eyes shakes Amita, despite herself. She presses her lips together to hide her momentary fright and then collects her papers.

"I'll leave you to think about your future... and that of your daughter."

Amita stalks out.

61. Chandra's cell

Chandra paces the small space like a tiger, various expression chasing each other: anger, despair, frustration, denial. Finally he exclaims

"Damn woman... how dare she!"

He turns another round, then sits down on his bunk, buries his face in his hands, shakes his head.

Song

Images of Garima, smiling in his arms, angrily scolding him, making up again. Then the fire and her death.

"I'm still missing you, my heart.
Without your strength I fell apart.
Without your love I drifted loose

Without your light no way to choose

He runs over a wide, dry rocky wasteland, stumbles, turns
looks for some way out. Thunderstorm clouds hang low in the
dark sky

"I cannot, cannot, cannot"

Chandra stands on a high isolated cliff, buffeted by the wind.

I've killed what was most dear to me.
I hate myself; please set me free
look at my weakness with forgiving
for I'm alive... but I've stopped living.

"I cannot, cannot cannot"

Chandra turns his back to the sea, spreads his arms to let
himself fall back... then sees Garima smile and stretch her
arms out to him...She changes to Asha who runs towards him but
dark figures intervene, hold her back. She cries. Chandra
moves to run to her, but the walls of a prison close in around
him, and chains appear on his wrists, fettering him left and
right to the wall. He sinks to his knees, watches Asha
disappear as a crowd of people gathers outside his cage. Flash
lights go off and Chandra hunches over to hide his face.

"I am not strong enough to fight.
I cannot brave the glaring light!
I cannot move outside the dark,
reveal my shame, expose my mark!"

"Papa!"

Chandra looks up, sees Asha stretch her hands through the bars
at him. He moves to touch her but his arms are firmly tied.

Echoing " I cannot, cannot cannot"

Asha moves away, and is finally only a small silhouette under
the looming shape of the gallows. Her faint cries of 'Papa'
fade.

Chandra strains at the chains in vain. He looks at them.
Echoing again "I cannot, cannot cannot."

Chandra looks at the chains, then at the floor. It is highly
polished and reflects his face. It is first unblemished and
then turns into the scarred aspect. The reflection sneers at
him. He slowly gets up, straightens. He looks at Asha.

"Vanity has tied me down;

Guilt, and fear to look the clown.
For you, my child I choose to fight,
to face the crowd, to brave the light."
Echoing "for you, for you, for you"

He heaves again and the chains shatter like glass, but leave two long pieces hanging on his wrists. He walks through the bars and catches Asha in his arms. He cries... and wakes up with a jerk on his bunk, crying.

62. Chandra talks.

Amita doodles idly on a notepad as Chandra is led into the room, his cuffs removed. She quickly tears the top sheet off and crumbles it up.

Chandra looks for a moment down at Amita. She gets up to greet him, he disregards it, crosses his arms.

"You're a cruel woman, Amita. You kick when somebody is already down."

Amita raises an eyebrow.

"If that's what's needed to get them up again... yes."

"I don't like you, Amita. You're cold, brutally direct, pitiless. But I'm told you're the best."

Amita shrugs and turns away to sit down again. There is just the tiniest flicker in Amita's eyes before she answers.

"You don't need to like me, and you certainly don't need my pity... you're pitying yourself enough."

Amita gives Chandra a challenging look then goes on.

"It's enough if you trust me to do what's best for you. Trust me to do the job I'm paid for."

Chandra glares down at her. Amita sighs.

"Are you trying to play some game of intimidation or why don't you sit down?"

Chandra relaxes a little.

"I'm sorry... but I'm used to think on my feet. If you don't mind... I'll just walk around."

Amita shrugs.

"No problem."

She waits for Chandra to say something, finally prompts

"Now that we seem to have come to an understanding, why don't you tell me what happened the night Trisha was murdered?"

Chandra takes a deep breath, closes his eyes finally looks at Amita.

"I'm ashamed to talk about it. I've..." he shakes his head takes another deep breath.

"Do you know about the island?"

Amita nods.

"After Sushil found Trisha's credentials I understood how she had played us... me for a fool. I went to see her that night to talk to her... stop her."

Chandra paces. Amita just looks, waits. Chandra rubs his eyes, shakes his head.

"Things got out of control. I knocked at her door..."

flashback

Chandra rings insistently on Trisha's door. From inside one can hear Trisha call out faintly

"Abhay! You're too early..."

She opens, towel in hand, hair still damp, in a terry cloth robe. She exclaims, startled, as Chandra pushes the door violently inwards then catches herself

"You?"

Chandra pushes into the hall, closes the door.

"Yes, me!" Trisha frowns, then turns on her heels and walks into the living room. Chandra stomps after her. She drops the towel onto a chair, turns, arms akimbo

"What do you want?" Trisha manages to sound almost casual.

Chandra glowers at Trisha.

"You've broken into my private sphere, you've misused our trust, you're playing with my life and you ask what I want? I want to be left in peace!"

Trisha walks over to a jar and pours herself a glass of water.

"My goodness. Listen to yourself! You can't hide forever!"

After a studied moment she gestures to Chandra if he would like a glass too.

Chandra is with two steps in front of her, slaps the water out of her hand. Trisha suddenly realises that she has played with a tiger. Her supercilious expression changes to shock. She grabs a lamp and holds it out as a weak defence. Chandra swipes it away almost casually, grabs her by the throat with one hand and pushes her against the wall.

"Maybe I can't hide forever! But I can certainly keep you from exposing me now!" He shakes her and grips her a little harder.

Trisha claws at his hand then his face. Chandra flinches away a little and catches her flailing left hand by the wrist. He presses the hand against the wall. Trisha struggles for breath and looks with fearful eyes at Chandra.

"Yes... look at me! What do you see?! What am I for you? What do you know about me!? What do you care about me?"

Chandra watches Trisha's face for a moment, observing her struggle. He sneers

"I'm just a scoop... a bit of news! Big news for the day before you go on to the next sensation. You don't care what grief you cause... unless it adds human interest for your readers!" Shakes her

Trisha raises her knee and tries to knee Chandra in the groin but only catches the outside of his thigh. Chandra doesn't even notice.

"You don't have to live with this face! But what do you care? YOU... you'll get your five minutes of fame! I... I'll get a lifetime of hell!"

Trisha fights and struggles, pulls at the sweater and tries to kick Chandra. She gasps out

"You're already in hell... a hell of your own making. And you don't even know it!"

Chandra doesn't seem to hear her. He drops his voice to a low growl full of threat.

"I'm going to put a stop to it. Trust me!"

Trish sags.
End of flashback

"And what did you do then?" Amita looks slightly shaken

Chandra rubs his face

"When she sagged like that I thought I had killed her. My fury turned into panic. Like a coward I turned tail and fled."

Chandra smiles derisively at himself.

"She wasn't dead though... as I ran out I heard her shout after me."

"And then?" Amita leans a little forward.

"I got into my car and drove away... drove around for quite some time. Finally ended up at Bandra fort."

"How long?"

Chandra grips the back of the chair.

"I don't know."

"Did anybody see you when you left... or at Bandra fort?"

Chandra smiles weakly.

"I don't think so. I tried not to be seen."

Amita looks silently at him. Chandra tries to hold her glance, finally almost angrily gives the chair a push, walks away turns back and glares at Amita.

"I left... I was there hardly five minutes! I don't know what happened after that but when I left she was alive... and kicking! That's the truth!"

Amita looks down at her notepad, sighs.

"If you confess that you're going to put your neck into the noose!"

Chandra throws his hands up.

"All I can do is tell what happened!"

Amita sighs and gets up.

"Without an alibi for the time of Trisha's murder you're going to be easy prey for the prosecution! Is there nothing else you can tell me?"

Chandra turns in frustration and slaps the wall. For a moment he clenches his teeth, closes his eyes. Then he shakes his head

"Nothing."

"Nothing."

Amita drops the word like a tombstone. Chandra turns to her. There is a long silence until Amita sighs.

"You're not giving me much in your defence, Chandra. I will have to try and show that the evidence is not conclusive. But without an alibi that will be... very difficult, to say the least."

"You have a way of bolstering somebody's confidence, Miss Khanna!"

"I won't lie to you... you will need every bit of strength and then some. And I need your total cooperation. Whether you believe it or not... this is teamwork... you need to play your part as much as I do."

Chandra looks a moment at Amita, then sags slightly.

"I'm not sure I can."

Amita narrows her eyes at him. She knocks at the door then turns her head back to Chandra

"Are you going to tell that to your daughter?"

"That's a low blow!"

Amita looks silently at Chandra. A guard enters and handcuffs Chandra. He growls at her in a mixture of frustration and anger.

"I really don't like you!"

"You already said!"

When the door shuts her from Chandra's view Amita sags and rests her hands on the table, looking for a moment dejected. She breathes deeply then straightens.

63. Ronny milks the cow for what it's worth

Ronny looks at some of the interviews of Chandra's neighbours. He frowns as he fast forwards another neighbour then stops again.

"...you rather ought to find out about those assaults on women, instead of worrying about some actor!" An elderly matron huffs angrily and waggles a finger at the camera. "But nobody cares about us women! We can't go out in the dark for fear of being attacked by that beast!"

Ronny leans forward to press the button when the woman turns to her daughter who looks a little simple. "My daughter was attacked by that hideous beast!" Ronny hesitates, then rewinds... "was attacked by that hideous beast!"

Ronny presses the stop button and looks at the picture of the simpleton. He smiles

Dissolve to Ronny on TV

"During the last three years twelve women have been attacked under similar circumstances. At least one of them has seen her attacker and claims that it was a horribly disfigured man. It is the opinion of the people that the police is not doing enough to solve those crimes. Why is the police not following this trail? The women of Khar have a right to walk in security... but maybe by now they can? I have asked some of the people on the street."

Turns to a woman

"Are you still afraid to go outside at dusk?"

"Well... haven't they arrested the beast? That actor... He lived here in Khar..."

"So you think it might have been him?"

"Who else could it have been? Nobody knew about him. And that face sure can make one shiver! A person with such a face is capable of anything!"

Another interviewee, a young man.

"It's typical that the police isn't following up on this. Chandra is rich, we are just scum in the eyes of such like

them. You just look... he's going to buy his way out of this too. They will never accuse him of these attacks!" the young man spits

Mani looks at the reel.

"That's close to slander."

"Well... I didn't say it was him... you can't prohibit people from uttering their thoughts... making conjectures."

Ronny grins at Mani who slowly nods.

64. Amita reads the papers

Amita throws a newspaper onto the table. The headline screams 'Chandra the beast of Khar?'

Sonia comes padding into the living room, towelling her hair, wearing a bathrobe. She notices the newspaper.

"Did you read it? They say Chandra has assaulted several women up in Khar." She shudders dramatically. "But who wonders? You only have to look at that face! The man is a veritable demon!"

Amita frowns.

"Not you too! Do you leave your brains in a box when you read the papers?!"

"Woa... did I hit a nerve?"

Amita picks up the newspaper and weaves it under Sonia's nose

"The media can kill a person's good name with hardly a glance. Conjectures are enough to have everybody believe they are the truth. For the person concerned it is impossible to defend themselves... do it and everybody will say... aha... he's got something to hide why else comment?... don't do it and you leave yourself open for more slander! Do or don't... you're dead! And when the media have to print a repeal... where does it end up? As two lines you can hardly read on page three. Grrrah! It makes me so angry!"

She throws the newspaper across the room.

Sonia looks wide-eyed at the temper tantrum.

"Goodness, you're really taking this to heart!"

Amita manages to calm a little.

"Chandra has nothing to do with those attacks."

Sonia gives her a quick glance.

"How can you be so sure?"

Amita hesitates before answering.

"I just feel it would be out of character."

"You? Feel? What happened to fact? Amita, I never suspected! Is there a heart hidden somewhere down there?"

Amita reacts a little too strongly to that banter.

"Don't be ironic, Sonia. Sometimes you have to follow a hunch before you find solid facts! And in law there are hardly ever enough solid facts... or you wouldn't need lawyers if everything was cut and dried!"

Sonia shrugs, her expression showing Amita has really lost her. Amita notices her drifting interest and grumbles.

"Don't you have to get ready for ... who is it this time?... Rohan, Aamir...?"

"Ajay." Sonia rubs her hair dry and shrugs. "He'll wait."

Amita watches Sonia dry her hair then frowns.

"Something wrong?"

"No... no...there was... nothing. Go and get dressed and stop pestering me!" Amita watches Sonia sashay back into her room with an expression of trying hard to remember something.

65. Prosecution on the trail

The prosecutor slaps the newspaper onto Omar's desk.

"What do you know about that?"

Omar pulls the paper to him, studies it for a moment then pushes it away.

"Conjectures."

The prosecutor frowns.

"The media have been ahead of the police practically every step of the way. I don't like that. It makes us look bad!"

The prosecutor looks at Omar, waits for a reaction. Omar just continues to look at him. Frowning the prosecutor goes on

"So... have you looked into this? You know that the rape charge is standing on weak legs! Now that the media are picking on these cases, I want them solved... one way or another! And if we can stick one of those charges on Chandra that will definitely strengthen the case!"

The prosecutor gives Omar a meaningful look. It falls flat in the face of Omar's stony expression. The prosecutor puts his palm on the newspaper.

"Have I made myself clear?"

"Perfectly. Sir."

The prosecutor narrows his eyes at Omar, but then leaves well alone and stalks out of the office.

"Prick."

Omar pulls the newspaper to him again, studies it.

66. At the home of the half-wit woman

Omar talks to the mother of the half-wit woman.

"It makes her very upset to think about it. I always have to give her some sweets when she starts about it. They calm her."

Omar nods.

The half-wit woman sways forth and back, looks half anxious, half fascinated at Omar, then her eyes fasten on the bag of sweets in Omar's hand. Omar takes a sweet from the bag

"Tell me about what happened to you."

The woman hardly takes her eyes from the sweet.

"You mean when I saw the demon-angel?"

Omar nods encouragingly and hands her a sweet. "I was coming home at night. I was late so I took a short cut. There was a dark lane. Then somebody grabbed me from the back. I struggled but he dragged me into the lane and threw me on the ground. I hurt my head." She touches her forehead.

"What happened then?"

"I got up... I saw the demon-angel. He frightened me so I ran away."

Omar frowns.

"What did the demon-angel look like?"

The half-wit woman fixes the bag with sweets. Omar hands her another piece. She points to her left side.

"He was all ugly this side, all nice the other side."

"What did he do to you?" She looks a little confused.

"He dragged you into the lane... did he touch you somewhere?" She looks confused again. Omar takes out another sweet.

"Did he hurt you somewhere?" She touches her head again. Omar takes the sweet away a little.

"I am sure he touched you... maybe here?" He points to his chest. The woman looks at him in puzzlement, then nods. Omar smiles and hands her the sweet.

"Did he touch you somewhere else?" She points to her arms, looks at Omar who frowns slightly, then to her belly, checking with Omar, then to her crotch. Omar hands her a sweet.

"He did touch you there?" She nods emphatically, beams at Omar, who grimly smiles back.

67. Abhay

Abhay folds a newspaper. He sighs. Amir sits down beside him. He looks at the paper, notes another article dealing with Chandra and his connection to the Beast of Khar.

He points to the article

"Trisha wasn't the first, it seems."

Abhay looks at the newspaper. Chandra's image glares at him. He turns the paper around.

"I don't want to think about it."

"The bastard deserves to hang for what he's done! To think I once admired the man!" There is grief and frustrated anger in Amir's voice.

Abhay shakes his head.

"It wasn't like that."

Amir frowns

"What do you mean, it wasn't like that?"

"What?... I... nothing. Forget what I said. I've got to go."

Abhay gets up and leaves.

68. Interrogation

Chandra is brought into the interrogation room, hands cuffed behind his back. He waits for the guard to take them off but Omar just pulls the chair away from the table.

"Sit down."

Chandra after a moment's hesitation walks slowly over and sits, wary. The guard follows, takes up station behind Chandra's chair.

Omar studies him for a time.

"Did you think we wouldn't find out?"

Chandra frowns, puzzled.

"Find out what?"

Omar wanders away taking time to answer. He turns, watches Chandra

"Find out about your nightly excursions."

There is incomprehension in Chandra's eyes.

"What nightly excursions? I never leave the house these days."

"These days, but your manservant admits that you used to."

Chandra shifts a little uneasily with his manacled hands. Omar watches him closely.

"What about the third November?"

"How should I remember a particular day?"

"But you remember your attack on a half-wit woman?"

"What? What attack!?"

Chandra half raises in alarm. The guard brings down the baton on his shoulder. Chandra winces, sink back on the chair.

"What is this all about?" Chandra looks from Omar to the guard and back. Omar watches Chandra's alarm with a faint smile. He starts circling his prey.

"You know. I can almost understand you, Chandra. Barred from human company, no woman willing to look at you without repulsion. Were you too proud or too cowardly to go to a whore?"

Chandra shakes his head in protest.

"What are you saying there?!"

Omar stops, leans closer.

"I'm talking about your needs... needs that finally drove you out at dark of night, to find relief. So tell me about the women you assaulted."

Chandra half-raises again, then reconsiders with a glance at the guard.

"I demand my lawyer!"

Omar grins

"Hiding behind woman's skirts now? So you won't tell me about the 3rd of November? No matter."

Omar walks to the door where he turns back.

"I've got somebody here who might answer the question. The poor creature clearly remembers the incident."

He opens the door. The woman is led in. She looks around with wide eyes, then notices Chandra. At his sight she starts screaming hysterically and collapses.

Chandra looks shocked as she beats her head and her chest, howling. Omar drags her up and steadies her.

"Do you know him?"

She nods, looks at Omar, then nods again. "He hurt me!" She continues howling.

Omar gives Chandra a cold smile and signals the guard to escorts her out.

Omar walks around to place himself behind Chandra. Chandra tenses a little but refrains from turning his head. Omar leans down to Chandra's ear and almost whispers.

"What did you do to get her into such a state?"

"Do? I didn't do anything." Hotly. "She saw me ... screamed and ran away."

The officer suddenly pushes Chandra's head down onto the table.

"Oh... so you remember her! The woman claims she was attacked that evening! By you!"

Chandra struggles a moment then freezes at the officer's words

"That's not true!"

The officer almost grinds Chandra's head into the table then whispers into Chandra's ears.

"People like you think they can get away with everything. But I'll make sure that you'll hang, regardless of what it takes. Neither your money nor your fame will save you. And that's a promise!"

He grabs Chandra's collar and pulls him back up. He walks back to face Chandra. Chandra looks shaken.

"I never touched her!"

Omar smiles grimly.

"Like you never touched Trisha Balan?"

Chandra shakes his head mutely and swallows hard.

69. Prosecutor explains that the halfwit cannot be used as a witness

The prosecutor watches Chandra being led out, looks at the half-wit woman. She gives Chandra a passing glance while munching happily on some sweet. The prosecutor turns to Omar and says with some irony

"That was an impressive demonstration. Just too bad there was no judge to witness it."

The half-wit woman upturns the bag. Finding it empty she looks over to Omar with a smile. The prosecutor frowns.

"I have no idea what you've done... but the woman definitely is not a witness I want in my courtroom. Is that all you've got about that so called beast of Khar?"

Omar shakes his head.

"She's the only eyewitness."

The prosecutor frowns.

"What you mean is that you can't link Chandra to the attacks in Khar, right?"

Omar looks at the half-wit woman. There is a small smile then he sobers.

"Not legally, no."

70. Chandra gets a visit

A suit on the table.

Sushil stops his restless pacing, turns to look as Chandra is led in, his cuffs are removed. Chandra hesitates for a moment then slowly goes to the table and sits down.

"Sushil."

Sushil eyes Chandra for a moment.

"I brought you a suit. For the court appearance tomorrow."

Chandra nods. Sushil watches Chandra carefully. Finally

"How are you holding up?"

Chandra shrugs.

"Fine. No problem." He gets up. Sushil watches Chandra finger the suit's lapels. He notices the trembling of the hand.

"You don't look it. Are you eating?"

Chandra keeps his eyes on the suit as he smooths out a fold

"I'm not trying to starve myself, if that's what you're implying."

Silence. Sushil looks worried. Finally Chandra turns his attention from the suit, faces Sushil.

"How's Asha?"

Sushil sighs.

"She misses you. She knows something's terribly wrong. I put her into a private institution where she is protected from outside... but I can't protect her from the children in there. She knows what's going on and comes home crying every night."

Sushil takes out a folded paper, hands it to Chandra. He unfolds it. It's a child's drawing, a big, wobbly heart with 'papa' stencilled inside, and lots of flowers around it. Chandra traces the heart with a finger, covers his eyes for a moment.

"Tell Asha Papa misses her too."

Chandra carefully folds the drawing, hands it back to Sushil. Sushil frowns. Chandra looks at the stark surrounding, back at Sushil

"I don't want Asha to be touched by anything in this place. Not even her pictures. If the worst..."

Sushil stops him by gripping his shoulders. He shakes his head.

"That won't happen!"

Sushil's firm words are belied by the worried expression in his eyes.

Chandra looks hard at Sushil.

"Do you believe I did it?"

Sushil raises his hands in a warding off gesture.

"NO! No. I'd never believe such a thing! Never!"

It's a tad too forceful, trying too hard to be convincing.

Chandra gives a small nod. He turns away from Sushil, walks to the wall, bangs his fist once or twice against it then rests his forehead on his fist.

"I'm afraid... afraid to face all those gawking eyes tomorrow. I'm afraid I'll break down. I can live with their hatred... I couldn't live with their pity!"

Sushil grabs Chandra by the shoulder, turns him around. Chandra looks a moment at Sushil then he embraces him. It's a son seeking consolation and strength in the love of a father. After a moment they pull back a little without Sushil loosening his hold completely.

"Sushil... I'm scared. For four years I thought I'd rather be dead... but now..." Chandra shakes his head. "But nobody seems to believe me..."

Swallows hard.

"Do you..."

His voice catches. He takes a deep breath and rubs his throat

"Do you think I will... hang?"

Sushil laughs falsely.

"Don't be ridiculous! That won't happen! Trust me! Everything will be alright!"

Sushil gives Chandra a little shake. Chandra nods, laughs shakily

"Yes, sure. Everything will be alright."

71. song

(song) Chandra looks into the mirror. His face is whole. Behind him a dark shadow looms... it comes closer and reveals itself as Chandra too... but with an evil expression on his face. Flames flare up and Chandra's face disfigures. The mirror cracks and shatters. Chandra runs, covering his face. Suddenly there is a crowd of people. They stop him, gawk at him, sneer, point. Chandra flees from their prodding, flashing cameras. Things loom bigger and bigger then a picture appears of himself. It animates and snarls at him. Chandra shrinks even more and hides in a dark corner while his image goes up in flame. He looks down at himself and realises that he is turning transparent.

Then a hand comes out of the darkness, takes his hand. He solidifies again, looks up to find Amita hold him, pull him up.

He wakes, turns to the side, eyes wide open with fear.

Transition to

Amita. She sleeps on her side. The alarm clock goes off, she slaps it down... turns. She looks up to the ceiling. Sonia knocks at the door.

"It's seven o'clock. You told me to wake you up. It's your big day."

Amita pulls her pillow quickly over her face and gives it a hug but then throws it to the side and gets up quickly. A sequence of shots showing her getting ready for battle, severe dress, businesslike make up, ranging her weaponry (briefcase, folders, notepad, pens)

She picks up the briefcase

"Well... I'm ready for battle!"

72. Chandra in his cell

Chandra stands hands propped against the wall, his head drooping. He tries hard to keep control over his fear.

Behind him the door opens. Chandra doesn't move until one of the jailers puts his hand on his shoulder. He shivers and lets himself be cuffed. As he is led out he looks back at the cell as if wanting to go back

73. Going to court for the hearing

The police van drives up. Before the courthouse is the usual number of people waiting to go in, coming out. Chandra looks at the space to cross... not long... but a long way for him.

The police officer opens the back of the van, Chandra climbs awkwardly out with his hands cuffed.

The crowd seems to coalesce out of nowhere, reporters and cameramen, among them Ronny looking annoyed, on the fore. Flashlights go off.

The police officer quickly grabs Chandra by the elbow.

"Bloody hell...where do they come from?"

he mutters and tries to hurry Chandra into the building. The crowd solidifies around them. The driver comes running then a few more police officers open up a way.

Amita gets out of the car and hurries towards Chandra. More flashlights. One of the snaps turns into a newspaper picture. The title proclaims 'Bail set at 2 crore rp.!' Another headline 'Chandra to be tried for rape and murder'.

74. Waiting for trial

Chandra comes out of the gate of the prison. Outside several bodyguards await him, squirrel him into a car. Amita sits in the car, smiles at him.

Chandra leans back into the seat, closes his eyes. Amita looks at him for a moment with affection which immediately switches to a businesslike expression when he opens his eyes.

Ronny's channel eight van swings in behind the car, followed by several other news vans and a few reporters on motorbikes. Amita turns around and frowns.

"The hyenas are at our heels."

Arjun turns from the front passenger seat

"I've made provisions." He nods at a high wall. A gate, covered with panels to block out the view opens and admits the car then closes.

"Here you will be save from preying eyes."

The car stops in front of a house, set in a wide garden. The door is thrown open and Asha comes running out as Chandra steps out of the car.

He goes down on his knee and catches the girl. Daughter and father embrace for a moment then Chandra gets up, lifts Asha with him.

Amita watches as he goes into the house, carrying his daughter.

Arjun turns to Amita.

"Come... we have a lot to discuss." Amita follows Arjun inside.

75. War council

Arjun and Amita discuss how to proceed; Chandra looks out of the window, watches Asha run across the lawn, one of Arjun's pet dogs yapping after her. Asha's laughter is audible through the open window.

"The whole case rests on circumstantial evidence. We just need to break the chain of reasoning in one place and the whole case will come falling down like a house of cards."

"Chandra? We need to know what happened that night."

Chandra starts a little, turns to Amita.

"I've already told you."

Amita shakes her head. "I need you to tell us everything... not only what happened but also whether you noticed something yourself. Impressions, things that you might consider insignificant... you are our only source. If we just look close enough we will find something to lead us to the real murderer, I'm sure."

Chandra turns again to look out of the window. This hides the scarred side from Amita. When Chandra bites his lower lip she feels how her breath catches a little in her throat.

"I don't remember much aside from her face... her expression. I was very angry. And scared."

He gives an ironic laugh.

"I remember hearing her call something before she opened the door. She must have taken a shower. She wore a terry cloth robe, her hair was still damp and she held a towel in her hand."

He turns and pushes his hands into his pant pockets, hunches his shoulders.

"After that... I told you what happened... when I look back it's as if I saw everything through a long pipe... her face at the end of it. She sagged - I ran. After that everything is a bit hazy."

"And nobody saw you?"

Chandra shakes his head. "I made damn sure I wasn't seen."

"But you came home several hours later. What did you do during that time?"

Chandra crosses his arms and turns away from them. He hesitates, bites his lip ... then shrugs.

"I told you... I just drove around. Finally stopped somewhere. I don't even know where. I couldn't drive anymore... needed to think."

Amita sighs. "We need just one person who saw you... and the whole case would crumble!"

Chandra makes a face, unnoticed by Arjun or Amita. Amita drums her fingers.

"You say you heard her call something. Can you remember what it was?"

"It sounded like a name... but I really didn't understand it."

They fall silent for a moment. Arjun gets up.

"Look... I know you didn't kill that woman... which obviously means somebody else did it. I can't believe that he's left no trace."

Chandra laughs a little bitterly

"I doubt they even searched. Look at me! I'm cut out to be the bad guy now. With that face I fit the role perfectly! Why seek further? Everything fits."

Enumerates on his fingers.

"I have a motif, I was seen on the scene of crime, I've left skin and blood on the victim... nobody saw me leave... and let's not forget it... I'm pretty famous for my bad temper."

He turns away from them to hide his desperation.

"The case is pretty clear. I can't be innocent!"

Arjun and Amita look at each other. Chandra has just spoken out what they all have been thinking.

The door opens and Asha comes running in.

"Papa, papa, please come and play with me!"

Chandra fights to regain his composure, then turns, smiling and kneels down beside her, takes her into his arms. Against her neck he quickly closes his eyes.

"Certainly, my darlin'. Let's not waste any time." He gets up, throws a squealing Asha over his shoulder and then gallops out.

Amita watches the two leave and blinks a moment. Amita wanders to the window, watches Asha sprint out of the house, followed by Chandra. Arjun joins her. Chandra plays tag with Asha.

Amita

"He plays like there's no tomorrow."

"I don't think he believes that there is."

Arjun sighs.

"How do you consider his chances?"

Amita takes a deep breath. "We've got to find that second man... or he's dead."

76. Abhay

Amir punches Abhay in the shoulder. Abhay looks up from the newspaper article, featuring once more Chandra.

"You're getting rather more obsessed with this than is good for you, Abhay!"

Abhay turns the paper over and shakes his head.

"I don't know..." He gets briskly up.

"I need a drink." Amir looks at the two empty glasses.

"You've already had a few and it's only noon!"

Abhay returns with another glass and sits down again.

"Abhay... something is bugging you. I know that Trisha's murder is difficult to accept, but I have the impression that something else is worrying you."

Abhay downs the glass in one go, puts it down and rolls it between his palms. He shakes his head.

"Amir...What would you do if you knew something ... but if you talk about it you're going to be in deep shit yourself?"

"Is this a rhetorical question?... No... it isn't, I can see that. Maybe if you told me more?"

Abhay burps.

"I need another drink first."

77. Amita is attacked

"I'll drop you home."

"That won't be necessary."

"Not for you... but it's for me. You want me to go outside...I'm just trying to follow your advice."

Amita looks at Chandra and then smiles slightly.

"Well... in that case I accept. Your car is certainly more comfy than a taxi."

They drive in silence. Amita shuffles through documents, mutters irritably to herself.

"I'm overlooking something. I know it's there. Why can't I find it?"

Chandra occasionally looks over to her. Finally she sighs and closes the files because the light is too bad. The silence continues.

"I know nothing about you."

Amita looks in surprise at Chandra.

"Why would you want to know?"

Chandra gives her a long look.

"You know some of the most intimate things about my life... and I know nothing about you, your family, friends, likes and dislikes. Doesn't seem to be fair."

"I don't understand. I don't prey into your past for curiosity's sake. It's necessary to do my job well."

"You ask me to trust you with my life."

Amita looks at Chandra.

"Would knowing my favourite colour make you trust me more?"

"I don't know. What is your favourite colour?"

"You're very obstinate!"

Chandra raises an eyebrow at her. Amita sighs exaggeratedly.

"It's orange."

Chandra stops the car.

"There... wasn't that difficult."

Amita rolls her eyes at him then gets out. Chandra watches her walk towards her house. Suddenly she stops, clutches her chest, looks at her hand which is red as if from blood. She looks around confused.

Chandra is out of the car and at her side in a flash.

"What happened? Where are you hurt?!"

Amita looks down the front of her suit which is wet and stained red.

From the dark somebody shouts slightly slurred

"Lawyer whore! Don't defend that monster!" Another one cheers. Neither sounds sober.

Amita looks at her hand.

"It's just red wine."

Chandra swallows.

"Wine?" Amita nods. A bottle shatters on the pavement, next to Amita's feet. He gives Amita a push towards the door.

"Go inside!"

He runs towards the darkness. Amita hurries a few steps towards the door, then hesitates as she hears shouts. She runs towards the dark.

Chandra holds a drunk by the collar and beats him furiously. The second drunk staggers away a little, hefting a bottle. He regains some control, wobbles back, raises the bottle, aims it at Chandra's head.

Amita swings her briefcase, catches the second drunk square in the stomach. The man folds up and starts retching.

Chandra is still pounding down at the other man. Amita grabs him and tries to pull him back.

"Stop it! Stop it, Chandra! It's only a drunk! Stop it. Do you want to kill him too!?"

Chandra reels back as if struck. The drunk collapses and then crawls away. Chandra turns to Amita, eyes wide with shock.

Amita looks at him for a moment with a mixture of shock and disbelieve, gives a small shake of her head, then turns on her heels and stalks towards her apartment.

"Amita. Amita! Wait!" The door to the house closes. Chandra hesitates, then curses under his breath, kicks the second drunk's bottle away and returns to his car. He drives off, tires squealing.

78. Arjun thinks Amita should stay at the mansion.

Arjun drums his fingers on the desk. He looks at his wife, Lali. She puts her arm around Amita. Chandra, in the background looks like an avenging god.

"Chandra told us what happened yesterday night. Arjun and I discussed the matter. We think you should stay at our house, Amita. It is much safer for you and a lot more convenient too."

Amita wants to protest but Lali holds a hand up.

"We have several guest rooms, dear. It would be a pleasure to have you as our guest."

Amita smiles.

"Thank you, Lali. I must confess the attack has surprised me. I do feel a little uneasy about going home." Amita looks at Chandra then back at Lali.

Lali smiles.

"Then it is settled."

Arjun and Lali go out of the room. Amita watches them leave. After a moment she turns to Chandra, looks at him coldly.

"You told them everything?"

Chandra's jaw muscles work then he looks a moment to the side.

"That bottle could have seriously hurt you!" His voice is rough

"So?! They were drunks! You were like a madman beating at him!"

Chandra looks back at her.

"I'm not like that anymore! I've learnt to control my temper, believe me! It's just that I... when I thought..." Chandra shakes his head unable to explain.

Amita looks silently at him then turns to leave.

"Amita!"

Amita turns under the door.

"I didn't kill her." Chandra's voice is firm, sincere.

Amita hesitates a moment before answering.

"It' doesn't matter. I don't have to believe in your innocence to defend you." She leaves.

Chandra looks a moment after her then sits down and buries his face in his hands. (Not sure Amita should live at Arjun's house...)

79. Amita digs further

Amita throws the report down on the sofa beside her in frustration.

"I'm missing something...why am I so blind? I'm sure it's staring into my face!"

Sonia wanders in looking all decked out. She frowns.

"You're working? It's Friday evening! You ought to be enjoying yourself."

Amita looks quickly up. She shakes her head.

Sonia puts her arms akimbo and eyes Amita for a moment. Then she grabs her by the arm, pulls her off the sofa and drags her out into the bathroom.

"Come on... do your hair, put something on and then come with me!"

"Sonia! I really don't have time for that. The liberty and possibly the life of a man depends on me!"

Sonia opens her eyes wide.

"Wow! I'm impressed!"

Sonia grabs a brush and pulls a few needles from Amita's bun.

"But he won't go to court today or tomorrow! There's plenty of time for you yet... you know it takes ages for a case to go to court here in India! So come on, enjoy yourself. Live!"

Amita snatches the brush from Sonia and shakes her head.

"I can't enjoy myself with the knowledge that I'm unable to find a clue to the real murderer!"

Sonia throws her hands up.

"Very well... stay home and work! I intend to have a good time!"

She leaves the bathroom. Amita begins to redo her hair, then stops and looks at herself. She pulls the last needles out.

Sonia storms back into the bathroom.

"Almost forgot!" She rummages around until she finds a box of KamaSutra, slips two packets into her handbag and hurries out again, leaving the box on the washbasin.

"Sonia! Can't you put things away..." Amita falters, takes the box of condoms and looks at it. She frowns.

She hurries back into the living room, box still in hand, throws it onto the sofa and then starts frantically looking through the report.

Finally she picks up the phone.

"Arjun... There was a box of KamaSutra in Trisha Balan's bathroom. Was it dusted? I can't find any mention of it!"

"Amita... it's Friday evening!"

"This is important! I need to know whose fingerprints were on that box... if they even dusted it!"

Amita disconnects and starts scribbling on a notepad. Finally the phone rings. She picks it up quickly.

"Yes?"

"They did dust it... only Trisha's prints on it."

"Yes!"

"That's good?"

"Oh yes. It proves Chandra never touched the pack. They were Trisha's."

"Yea well... that's what the police said all along."

Amita jumps up from the sofa, starts pacing in excitement.

"But don't you see? Trisha must have had reason to keep a packet of KamaSutra handy. She probably had a lover!"

"There is no indication about that."

"That's exactly the point. Nobody has been looking for him! Chandra was just too handy!"

Amita pauses a moment, lining up her thoughts.

"Chandra said, she'd just taken a shower and wore a terry cloth. When she was found she had on a silk dressing gown. I'm sure she'd been expecting her lover, and that even after Chandra assaulted her!"

Amita pauses to take a breath.

"We must find that man."

Ronny denies knowing about a boyfriend.

Amita enters Ronny's office. He looks up, grins a little lopsidedly.

"Miss Lawyer. What a surprise. What brings you here?"

Amita frowns a little, then smiles politely. Holding her briefcase with both hands she avoids shaking hands with Ronny. He notices, turns his extended hand into a gesture to please sit down.

"What can I do for you?"

He smiles, crosses his hands over his belly and leans back.

"You worked closely with Trisha. I'm sure you must have known her personally as well."

Ronny tilts his head a little, raises his eyebrows then shakes his head.

"Not that well. Trisha always kept herself to herself. She said she didn't care to become part of the news."

Ronny's lips twitch a little at the irony in it.

"But what about her boyfriend?"

Ronny gives Amita an innocent look.

"Boyfriend? Why do you believe Trisha had a boyfriend?"
Ronny's innocent look is reflected by Amita's equally
innocence one.

"A woman as attractive as she was bound to have a boyfriend,
don't you think so?"

There is a tiny sneer on Ronny's lips then he smiles

"You're asking the wrong man. I didn't think her particularly
good-looking. Not like you, Miss Lawyer."

Ronny leans closer, drops his eyes into Amita's blouse. Amita
raises the briefcase as a barrier and gives Ronny a disgusted
look.

"Not? Well... but then Miss Balan had class." Amita gets up,
"Not like you." leaves without a bye or a look back. Ronny's
face turns dark with anger. (scene with his wife)

80. Ronny milks the cow for what it's worth.

Ronny sits across from a slightly faded woman. She flutters
her hands, and her whole body language is primed at flirting.

"Sunita, six years ago you were slated to act opposite Chandra
in one of his films and you even did several days of shooting
before you were suddenly replaced by Pramada Kapoor. It caused
quite a bit of speculation but you declined to comment on it
then. What caused you to talk about the reason now?"

Sunita smiles coyly.

"It was too painful to talk about what happened then. But time
has allowed me to get over the events."

"So tell me... why were you replaced?"

"Thrown out! I was thrown out like a common... like ..."
Sunita dabs her eyes and fights for control. Ronny makes a
comforting noise then smirks back at an assistant.

Sunita dries her tears and gives a brave smile into the
camera.

"I was thrown out because I refused to give in to certain
demands."

"Those demands... of what nature were they and who made them,
Sunita?"

"They were of a... sexual nature... made by Chandra. Everybody knew it... Chandra played the good husband but behind the scenes none of his heroines was safe from his... blandishments. And when I refused, he threw me out... bodily! I had bruises for days!"

Behind the camera a sound engineer rolls his eyes and mutters to a script girl.

"She's even worse in life than on screen! I truly hope Chandra never showed that much bad taste. 'Everybody' knows she's changing beds like other people change their clothes... only more so. But I bet... the audience is just going to lap it up."

The script girl presses her lips together.

"She's a disgusting old baggage ... I don't believe a word she says. It's a disgrace what they're doing to Chandra!"

"Shsh... Ronny's coming. Don't let him hear you!"

Ronny escorts Sunita towards an assistant who immediately takes charge of her, circling around her like a tug boat. Once Sunita is out of earshot Ronny sneers.

"Silly cow. But she's got business sense. I bet that will make her market value go up... at least for a moment."

81. Amita learns of Chandra's love

Amita watches Ronny smile at Sunita, as the end credits roll past. There is a small sound behind her. Turning she discovers Chandra leaning against the door jamb, looking at the TV his eyes filled with hot anger. Amita quickly turns the TV off.

Chandra pushes himself off and comes into the room. He nods at the TV.

"That woman is a vengeful bitch!"

Chandra controls himself. More calmly.

"You know why we threw her out? Because she had no discipline, her temper tantrums were severely disrupting the shooting schedules... and that cost us money... and then she tried to seduce me." He twists his lips in disgust

"I threw her out of the van. It got pretty ugly before we got rid of her."

Amrita tilts her head a little.

"Did you really hit her?"

Chandra bites his lips. "Well... she hit me first."

"That doesn't really explain your anger, though."

Chandra almost growls.

"She hurt my wife to get back at me. She told Garima I had forced her to have sex with me!"

Chandra laughs roughly.

"If a screenwriter had offered me that as a script I'd have told him to look for another job!" His laughter catches in his throat. For a moment he looks far into the past. A tender smile is quickly replaced by grief. He says almost without realising it.

"My wife always had faith in me. She was the greatest gift in my life." Focussing on Amita. "I never told her."

Amita looks away, touched by the raw grief in Chandra's eyes. She clears her throat, pulling Chandra out of his own grief stricken memories.

"You know...the media are just tearing your reputation to shreds with impunity. You should think about pulling some of those hyenas onto your side."

Chandra makes a warding off movement.

"I've never gotten along with the journalists!"

Amita smiles a little

"I know... one reason they're so after your blood... believe me. Tell me... which newspaper or news channel do you trust most? You should think about giving them an exclusive interview."

"No!"

Chandra is out of his chair like a flash. He turns away from Amita to hide the expression on his face.

"No... I won't give any interviews."

Amita gets up, walks over to Chandra. She hesitates then puts a hand on his shoulder. He looks around. At the fear and pain in his eyes Amita almost chokes.

"Chandra... this is a war... and you're leaving all the weapons in the enemy's hands."

Amita turns Chandra almost bodily around holding him by the shoulders

"You are intelligent, well spoken... and believe me... your charm still works. You were an actor... you ought to bloody well act in your own favour for once. Choose the journalist you consider fairest... and then blow him out off the chair!"

Chandra looks at Amita's face, the intense expression in her eyes. For a moment he loses himself in her eyes then he catches himself. He takes a deep breath.

"I'm not sure I can." He turns away.

Amita throws up her hands and yells.

"I can't, I can't! That's all I'm hearing from you! Sooner or later all choice will be removed! And THEN we no longer can dictate our terms!"

Chandra turns around and shouts back at Amita.

"Don't talk to me like that!"

Amita raises her chin and smiles

"That's much better."

Chandra blinks at the sudden mood shift. Then he smiles faintly.

"You're like my wife... she also used to yell at me as if I was a kid."

His eyes darken in memory. Asha comes in and Chandra turns to her, missing the fleeting expression of annoyance on Amita's face.

82. song

Amita watches Chandra run after Asha outside, laughing. She looks at Chandra wondering what it is she is feeling. What is that gut wrenching she gets when she looks in his fear filled eyes, that tingling in her hands when she sees him smile?

Asha looks up to her and winks her to come down. Chandra follows suit. Amita looks at his smiling face, and can see no scars. She withdraws from the window. Chandra's smile freezes a moment, then Asha claims his attention. He smiles and runs after her.

Amita sits at a desk, studying files. Asha comes running in and climbs onto her lap to look at the files. Chandra follows, wants to take her away, but Amita smiles, Asha is no problem. She talks to Asha.

Chandra looks at the two, laughing, Asha hugging Amita. He remembers his wife holding Asha as a baby. He remembers the fire and himself screaming at seeing her die in the flames. He flinches away.

Asha sees his darkening face. She grows cold. Giving Asha a kiss she sends her out and turns back to her work.

At her place Amita puts a file on her desk, opens a drawer, finds a diary, dated 15 years back. She opens it... it turns to a page covered with photographs of Chandra and a number of hearts drawn. She looks at it for a moment, looks at the file and then closes the diary firmly. She pushes it far back into the drawer.

Chandra brings Asha to bed. On the bedside table is a picture of Garima. Chandra takes it, looks at it. The pictures slowly changes into that of Amita. He puts it back quickly.

Amita, at her desk is reading in concentration. A strand from her bun has unravelled and falls into her face. Chandra watches her from the door. He goes to her, pushes the strand behind her ear. He caresses her cheek line with his finger. She smiles and turns her head. For a moment her smile holds, then she focuses on the destroyed face and her expression turns to disgust.

Chandra jerks back, finding himself still at the door. He scowls. Amita hears him, turns to look at him, sees his scowl. He walks away briskly. Amita bites her lip and turns back to read.

83. time is running out

There is a knock then Chandra enters. He drops an envelope onto the desk.

"The court notice. A date has been set for the trial."

Arjun and Amita look at each other, then at Chandra. Amita picks it up, opens it. She reads it and her expression freezes.

Dissolve

"You what?" Chandra almost shouts.

"I'm resigning from the case. I can recommend you another lawyer to take over, if you want."

"But why?" Chandra looks at Arjun.

"Because I'm endangering your chances."

Arjun puts a calming hand on Chandra's arm.

"I don't see why... and why now?"

Amita points to the court notice.

"Judge Khanna. He is my father in law."

Chandra's expression freezes. Finally he asks with a voice devoid of emotion.

"You're... married?"

Amita bites her lips. Chandra repeats his question more accusingly.

"You're married! Why did you never tell me?"

Amita looks confused then turns to Arjun because that one looks calmer.

"I didn't see the need for it. It doesn't matter. Anyway..."

Chandra looks furious.

"You didn't see the need for it!" He shakes his head, smiles a little bitterly. More silently

"Then it really doesn't matter."

Amita sighs, looks at Arjun

"I'm not married... I'm a widow." There is a momentary silence as the relevance sinks in. Finally Arjun nods

"I don't see why that is a problem."

Amita sighs, twists her fingers a moment together then looks at Chandra.

"I met my husband at law school. His father was not very keen on a daughter in law who wanted to practice law, but my husband supported me. But when he died his father expected me to give up working. I wouldn't... so his family cut all connections with me."

Amita sighs a little. "If I represent Chandra in this case Judge Khanna might hold it against me... and him."

There is a moment of silence then Chandra blurts out

"What a load of rubbish! Why don't you just admit it? You don't want to defend a loser's case! This is just a cheap way to chicken out!"

Amita whirls around.

"You accuse me of cowardice?! How dare you!"

"Oh... so you are entitled to call me coward, expect me to take it, but when the shoe is at the other foot you feel insulted? Why aren't you honest to me and to yourself!"

"I am honest! I believe that I can hurt your case so I prefer not to risk it!"

"What about me? Why don't you ask me whether I'm prepared to take that risk? Have I even lost the power to decide that much?"

Amita and Chandra glare at each other, each feeling unaccountably hurt. Arjun steps between the two and pushes them apart.

"Shut up, the two of you!"

Both open their mouths to retort.

"I said shut up! And now sit down!"

Amita and Chandra sit down meekly. Arjun remains standing, frowning at each for a moment.

"Right. Chandra. Would you really keep on Amita as your defence lawyer even if she could hurt your case?"

Chandra hesitates then nods.

"Why?"

"Because... because despite of everything she believes in my innocence."

Amita looks at Chandra then slowly nods. Chandra smiles and continues.

"This is a very prestigious case... and yet she was ready to give it up. Before anything else she has my own good in mind."

"But you..."

"Silence, I said!" Arjun looks stern. Amita pulls her head a little between the shoulders, looking like a school girl.

"Now, Amita. I am not a defence lawyer... but even I have heard about Judge Khanna. He is said to be absolutely fair and incorruptible. Do you think that is true?"

Amita nods slowly.

"Then tell me... did you ever hear that he has in any way spoken against you in professional matters?"

Amita frowns. Arjun continues

"His influence is great... do you really think you'd be working in the most prestigious law firm if he didn't want you to?"

Amita looks a moment thoughtful.

"Has he spoken for me then?"

Arjun laughs

"Oh no... he wouldn't go as far as that. He grudgingly admits that you're a good lawyer... that's as far as he will go. But coming from him that is high praise indeed. That's why I chose you."

Amita looks a moment stunned then she smiles.

"Thank you Arjun."

"Right... now that everything is cleared can we go back to work?!"

Amita and Chandra look at each other then nod.

84. The night before

Chandra comes out of Asha's room, closes it. He turns to come face to face with Amita.

"She didn't want to go to sleep. She knows something is up."

He turns away, pretending calmness. Amita falls in step beside him.

"We've gone through everything. I've tried to prepare you as well as possible... How do you feel?"

Chandra stops, finally turns to her.

"I'm fine. Don't worry!" He quickly walks towards his room, closes the door in front of Amita's face.

Amita looks at the closed door

"Oh damn!"

85. In Chandra's room

Chandra leans inside the door, eyes closed. Finally he walks deeper into the room, looks around. He takes a deep breath.

There is a sharp knock then the door opens.

"Chandra? I won't leave you alone tonight."

Chandra turns his head to look at Amita. His look cuts right through her. She impulsively makes a step forward. Chandra from a similar reflex moves towards her and throws his arms around her as if seeking hold. She hugs him... a mother's hug. Chandra lets himself fall into the embrace like a child seeking comfort.

"Don't be afraid... everything will be ok." Amita murmurs. For a moment Chandra just feels the comfort of her arms. Then he opens his eyes and breathes her scent. He stiffens.

She senses it and suddenly too grows aware of the situation. Chandra moves away first.

"I'm sorry."

"There's no need to be sorry. We all need comfort in difficult situations."

Chandra turns away. He shakes his head faintly, bites down on the words he wants to say.

He looks back at her, all the love, the yearning, the fear of rejection readable in his eyes.

"It's better you leave. Leave... please!"

Amita hesitates. Chandra turns sharply to her.

"Can't you just leave me alone? Go away! I just want to be alone tonight. Is that so hard to understand? The whole day you've told me what to do or not do... it's enough to drive anyone mad!"

Amita, caught completely by surprise can't help feeling shocked and steps back as if hit. Chandra turns away at the shock in her face.

There is the click of the door. At hearing it Chandra's rigid stance sags. He grabs hold of the bedstead and slowly slides down to sit on the floor. His hands comb through his hair, then cover his head. (shouldn't she stay there?... don't know yet)

86. Entering the courthouse

The Media have turned out in strength; the courtroom however has been barred to cameras. There is a huge crowd cordoned off by a large number of policemen. The media have managed to secure places close to the entrance.

The car, escorted by motorbikes drives up.

Chandra looks out of the window. As the car drives by the crowd surges forward, but is being held back by the police who does not hesitate to use their batons.

The car stops. Chandra's heart is in his throat. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. Arjun opens the door and several bodyguards immediately close around Chandra to plough a path through the pushing crowd.

Chandra is aware of the screaming, partly hysterical, partly hostile. Then a rotten tomato hits him in the face. He squares his shoulders a little more and continues. More rotten fruit hit his bodyguards.

Past the shouting journalists, the flash lights and greedy cameras he manages to guard his calm, but once inside the courthouse he stumbles a moment as his resolve falters. Then Amita appears at his side.

"You're doing fine." She steps in front of Chandra, takes a tissue from her bag and cleans Chandra's face and suit.

Chandra takes his place on the accused's bench. The spectators' faces start to swim in front of his eyes until he finds one he knows... Sushil. Sushil has secured himself a place in the front and he looks firmly at Chandra. Seeing Chandra take notice of him he nods encouragingly.

Chandra's mind unfocusses. He sees everything as through a fog and only jerks out of it when the Judge bangs his gavel.

87. Trial presentation of the prosecution and defense.

Chandra sits in the docks, feeling that every eye is glued to his maimed side, which, unfortunately is presenting itself every time he looks to the right. Looking at the audience would offer them a better view from his untouched side... but Chandra cannot bear to look at them. Amita, however, has told him not to eschew eye contact so he forces himself to look at the prosecutor... who seems to have an unholy joy in presenting his case.

The judge reads the accusation.

"Chandra Gupta, you are accused of the rape and murder of Trisha Balan on the night of the 14th of February, 2008. How do you plead?"

Chandra gets up. He manages to put his hands onto the railing in a relaxed way. He looks firmly at the audience, then at the judge.

"Not guilty, your honour."

The prosecutor struts up and down as he presents his case.

"Your honour. The prosecution will prove that the accused, Chandra Gupta, on the night of Valentine's day 2008 killed Trisha Balan by stifling her by means of a pillow. We will also prove that preceding that he first assaulted her, by throttling her and then repeatedly raped her. We will prove that his initial motivation was to keep his terrible disfigurement a secret, but that the act of raping and stifling his victim was done in cold blood and in full conscience of his act."

There is a swell of noise as people react diversely to the prosecution's opening speech.

Chandra's grip on the railing involuntarily tightens. The prosecution notices it and smiles.

The prosecutor sits down and looks over to Amita. She gets up and walks over to the docks. She looks up at Chandra, smiles then faces the audience.

"Chandra Gupta is innocent of the charge of rape and murder. We will prove that there is no evidence linking Chandra to the actual murder nor the rape of Trisha Balan. We will prove that Chandra is the victim of circumstances and that another person committed the murder of Trisha Balan."

There is another swelling of noise as the audience comments amongst each other. The prosecutor turns around and looks at Amita, smirking slightly. Amita smiles calmly back.

88. Omar gives evidence

"Officer Khan, please describe what you found when you arrived at the scene of the crime."

Omar: "The victim was on her bed, almost naked, and in a position that indicates that her hands had been restrained above her head. The linen of the bed was ruffled as if she had been flailing with her feet. A pillow was next to her head. Everything was indicative of a violent death."

Amita

"Officer Khan. Aside from the scene on the bed what other indications did you find for a violent struggle?"

Omar frowns a little.

"There was a broken lamp standing on one of the side tables in the living room." → check... scene initially says total mayhem... which is it?

"That was all?"

Omar grudgingly nods.

"Don't you find that surprising?"

Prosecutor raises his hand

"Objection. Leading question."

Amita smiles and raises her hand. "No further questions for the moment."

89. The pathologist's evidence

Prosecutor: "Can you tell me how Trisha Balan died?"

The pathologist pushes his glasses back on his nose and clears his throat.

"The victim was stifled by pressing a soft object, namely a pillow onto her face."

"But the victim had also a throttle mark around her throat. Couldn't she have died of this?"

"From the state of the bruising it can be deduced that the throttling occurred several hours previous to the victim's death. It was not fatal."

"Would it be possible to identify the person who throttled her?"

"The bruise shows the markings of a left hand. From that one can deduce the span and setting of the hand. This makes it able to include or exclude a person even though it will not allow a definitive identification."

"Does the accused's hand shape fit the bruising?"

"Yes."

"Your report states that the victim was raped before death."

The pathologist looks a little pained.

"Rape is a legal definition. The victim had intercourse. We secured traces of lubricant in the vagina. From that I can only say that penetration occurred."

The prosecutor frowns a little.

"What does that mean?"

"The man used a condom."

"Thank you." The prosecutor turns to Amita. "Your witness."

Amita walks up to the pathologist.

"You state that the victim had intercourse. Are there any signs of violence?"

"You mean aside from the fact she was throttled?"

"Let me phrase it differently. Could you, without any doubt, declare whether intercourse was voluntary or involuntary? Aside from the fact that she was throttled."

The pathologist hesitates.

"We need to consider circumstances too."

"So the answer is, you can't?"

"No... I can't say without a doubt whether the victim was consenting or not."

"Within which limits of time can you place when intercourse occurred? Or asked differently: Is it possible that intercourse happened before the initial throttling? Could, in other words, the victim have had sex before she was attacked and later killed?"

The pathologist looks a little uneasy.

"It is unlikely, but possible."

"Thank you." Amita smiles a little. "No further questions"

90. A crime technician's evidence

Prosecution

"You were in charge of analysing the samples from the crime scene."

"Yes."

"You were asked to analyse samples of skin, blood and fibre found under the victim's nails. In addition you also received some saliva from the suspect to analyse. Did you compare the samples?"

"Yes."

"What did you find?"

"The DNA from the skin and blood samples and those of the suspect are identical."

There is a murmur in the audience and a few heads nodding as if to say... that's sticking it to him. Chandra looks at Amita who smiles.

"Where there any further tests you were asked to perform?"

"Yes. There were some fibres taken from the victim's mouth and nose which are identical to the fibres from the pillow found next to her. We found saliva and tear fluid from the victim on the pillow which is proof that the victim was killed by means of the pillow. We also found skin traces of the victim and at least three different men on the same pillow.

"Were you able to identify some of the skin samples?"

"Yes. One of the samples concurs to the DNA we had from the suspect."

Chandra frowns. Amita starts scribbling furiously.

The prosecutor smiles. "Your witness."

Amita gets up.

"Mrs. Sharma. You say you found traces of skin from the accused on the pillow. Do you have a theory how they could have gotten there?"

"It's not our business to make theories. We are concerned with scientific facts."

"Then scientifically speaking, how do you explain their presence on the pillow?" Mrs. Sharma gives Amita a sharp glance, feeling she is being led by the nose.

"Obviously by touching the pillow."

"Is that the only way they could have gotten there?"

"No. Transfer is another possibility."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning the victim had skin under her nails... she must have clawed at the pillow which is likely, considering she had fibres of the pillow under her nails too... and some of the skin ended up on the pillow."

"And which explanation seems the more reasonable here?"

"Objection! She's asking for an opinion!"

Amita raises an eyebrow at the prosecutor.

"I am asking an expert her opinion about her field of expertise."

"Objection overruled." The judge frowns at the prosecutor.

"Please, Mrs. Sharma?"

"Considering the small amount of skin and that we found traces of blood as well I think transfer the more likely explanation."

Amita smiles at Chandra as if to say.. there..got that one out of the way.

"One last question, Mrs. Sharma. You also tested the sample taken from the victim's vagina. Could you secure any DNA?"

"No. The only foreign substance was some lubricant which is used for condoms."

"So it is not possible to identify the man who had intercourse with Trisha Balan?"

"No."

Amita smiles at the audience. "No further questions."

91. questioning the eyewitness

Prosecutor

"Mrs Dastur. On the night of the murder you saw a man enter the apartment house. Do you see that man here in this room?"

Mrs Dastur points to Chandra.

92. Ronny's evidence

Prosecutor

"Mr. Mathur... you were the one who found Trisha Balan. Were you in the habit of checking on her?"

"No."

"So why did you got to her apartment that particular day?"

"My boss asked me to go. Trisha didn't answer the phone and there was an important meeting she... we had to attend."

"Tell us what you found."

"I went up to her apartment and knocked when I discovered that the door was not closed. I went in, calling for Trisha. She was nowhere in the flat so I finally went to the bedroom ... where I found her. I immediately called the police."

"Mr. Mathur. Did you know what story Trisha was working on?"

"Yes."

"Is it correct, that you were also researching the same story?"

"Yes. We were working on it together as partners."

"What story were you both working on?"

"The mystery of Chandra Gupta's disappearance."

"Mr. Mathur, did you write about Chandra previously?"

Ronny smiles. It is a windfall for him that the prosecution has decided to use exactly him as witness.

"I am a journalist. Not writing about Chandra would have been difficult during his days of fame."

"Is it correct that you filed a law suit against Chandra a few years ago?"

"Yes."

"What was the reason?"

"Chandra smashed my camera back into my face and broke my nose."

"But you didn't go through with the suit. Why not?"

Ronny frowns

"I wouldn't have been bought off with just an interview... but my then employer ... convinced me to accept an out of court settlement."

Chandra turns his head to look at Ronny and frowns a little.

"What was the reason Chandra broke your nose?"

"He was unhappy with the way I was reporting on some... private matters."

"Do you think his reaction was out of proportion to the offence?"

"Objection! Opinion!"

The prosecutor raises his hand

"I withdraw the question." He smiles, having made his point. He nods at Amita who shakes her head.

The judge looks at the clock then bangs his gavel.

"Court is adjourned till tomorrow, nine o'clock." The people rise as he leaves.

Chandra and Amita walk out of the courtroom. Outside Ronny is watching from a corner. There is a sudden scream and the mad woman rushes forward towards Chandra. She raises a long knife and slashes at Chandra.

"You hurt me! Evil man! Demon! Demon! You must die!"

Chandra reels back then sees the woman swing her knife again. Amita is right in the path. He grabs Amita and turns his body to shield her. The knife slashes across his upper arm and back.

Several police officers grab the mad woman who continues to scream that Chandra is a demon and that he hurt her.

Amita exclaims in shock at seeing Chandra bleed. She tears at his sleeve to make a bandage.

The judge appears, looks at the scene.

"Who is this woman?"

Omar appears beside him.

"I'm sorry Sir. The poor creature is out of her mind. She claims Chandra raped her. Naturally her statement cannot be considered."

The judge looks at Chandra who holds his bleeding arm. Chandra looks up, catches the Judge's eyes.

Amita turns sharply to Omar then back to Chandra. Arjun and Sushil and two body guards appear as well, shield Chandra and escort him through the throng of onlookers.

At the corner Ronny turns away with a grin.

Sushil tries to urge Chandra into a chair. He winks him away impatiently.

"I don't want to sit down. I'm fine. Sushil! Will you stop fussing around! I'm not going to die!"

Sushil growls.

"You can't keep people from caring!"

"I'm sorry, Sushil. I know you mean well but..." he looks at Arjun then at Amita. He relieves the moment he saw the knife swing at Amita and closes his eyes.

Amita bites her lip

"There's nothing worse that could have happened. You must give that interview now. As quickly as possible!"

Sushil exclaims

"How can you think of something like that now! Don't you care he was almost stabbed?"

Amita looks at Chandra for a moment, then back to Sushil.

"MY job is to consider the wider implications. He only got a superficial cut... but his name got a horrible blackening! Don't you see! The court can't consider the gossip about the beast of Khar... there is no formal accusation. But even judges are people. Judge Khanna won't forget that mad woman so quickly. We can no longer allow to be attacked without counter action!"

Amita hides her agitation under a professional demeanour. Chandra grinds his teeth then takes a deep breath.

"Call Fatma Sayed from Aaj Tack."

93. The interview

The talkmaster, Fatma Syed, sits down at right angle from Chandra in a comfortable chair. One camera is situated directly opposite Chandra

An assistant puts two cups of coffee on a small table between the two chairs. Chandra covertly dries his palms on his pants.

A sound technician checks Chandra's clip on micro once more then gives a thumbs up into the darkness.

Chandra looks past the camera. Amita nods and smiles.

"Chandra? We will go on air in one minute."

He nods, closes his eyes. He hears Amita's voice

"Consider it a performance... and your character is Chandra Gupta... suave, charming, intelligent, well-spoken. He's got his problems but he can control them. He's witty, sparkly, but naturally also concerned about his future and that of his child. You're an actor... so ACT! Make this the performance of your life!"

The jingle starts.

The moderator smiles into the camera

"Welcome to 'Up close and personal'. My name is Fatma Sayed. Today is a very special edition for all of us here at Aaj Tak. After four years of silence 'Up close and personal' is the first show to bring you an interview with Chandra; today, live and undiluted."

She turns to Chandra and smiles.

"Welcome Chandra. It is a pleasure to have you with us once more after such a long time."

Chandra nods and smiles.

"How does it feel to be in front of the cameras again?"

Chandra coughs drops his eyes then looks back at Fatma.

"To be honest... I'm more scared than the first time I gave an interview. I thought I'd never see the inside of a studio again."

The moderator nods understandingly.

"I'm sure everybody knows by now the reason of your disappearance; the terrible accident, the death of your wife... your..."

She hesitates delicately.

Chandra nods.

"Go on... don't hesitate to say it... my disfigurement. No politically correct words or circumspection can take away the facts. (breathes) There were times I couldn't look out of the window for fear of catching a reflection of myself in the glass. You'll understand that I was not keen on seeing the same revulsion in other people's faces."

The moderator makes a becalming noise but Chandra raises his hand.

"Look... it has taken me four years and an accusation of rape and murder hanging over my head to finally accept the facts. I am past needing false politeness."

Chandra looks directly into the camera.

"I much prefer somebody to just say 'Yuck' and turn away than somebody pretending not to see me at all out of... I almost said politeness... but that would be wrong. It's the contrary. It's the kind of invisibility you see as people pass the poor and infirm in the street. An invisibility born from fear, guilt or indifference.

To Syed

So... don't pretend my face doesn't shock you. In your honesty you accept me at least as a human being, a person."

The moderator looks a moment stunned. Chandra takes a sip from his coffee and smiles at the moderator. She checks out a sheet invisible to the camera then takes it and crumbles it up.

"Very well. I had prepared carefully worded questions... but I think I will divest with them. Chandra, will you tell our audience about the accident?"

Chandra's face freezes a moment and pain is clearly visible in his eyes. Then he shakes his head.

"It's too horrible to remember. That is one part I will never get over..."

He closes his eyes for a moment, takes a deep breath and then smiles bitterly.

"I used to curse God for what he has done to me and my wife... but the fact is... I did it myself. I was driving the car... I was inattentive for a moment, I lost control. I was inattentive because I was arrogant... and my arrogance ultimately killed my wife and scarred my face. I am guilty... not God."

"Is that why you disappeared so completely?"

"Yes. And my guilt... and fear took away life from the one person I ought to have considered before everybody else."

"I don't understand."

"I'm talking about my daughter, Asha. I've lived like a recluse... forcing my child to live the same way. But Asha

shall no longer suffer for my own weakness. Once I am free of the charge I will try to be a better father to her."

"So you are confident about the outcome of the trial?"

Chandra smiles fully at the camera.

"Yes. I have every faith that my innocence will be proven."

"What about the attack today?"

"You are talking about the poor woman this afternoon?"

Chandra frowns and then shakes his head.

"I've been thinking hard about her. I cannot really recall her.

I used to go out at night because even I couldn't bear the confines of the flat all day long. I tried not to be seen... I think you know why... but I couldn't always avoid it. One night I happen to surprise a gunda dragging a woman into a side road. I scared him off... he ran at the mere sight of my face. When I tried to help the woman she too ran off, screaming. I don't know whether it was her... but after that I didn't go outside again."

Chandra shakes his head a little.

"The experience really threw me back. I couldn't leave my room for several days after that."

He smiles ruefully.

"My lawyer told me I was a selfish, egocentric person. It's not been easy to accept that she is right. Selfish, egocentric... and cowardly. I've always sought the love of my fans. I've needed it like others need food. When I felt I would certainly lose that love ... there was nothing left." **Not happy with it..**

Chandra turns again fully to the camera.

"The past weeks made me realise that I have wronged my fans.. and I want to apologize to you. I have received innumerable expressions of love and faith... for that I wish to thank you."

He places his palms together and bows at the camera.

"I've worked hard for that love... . I realise only today that I needed it because I don't like myself particularly. I couldn't give love... neither to my daughter, nor to myself.

And without love... I'm nothing. My face doesn't matter... my heart does."

Chandra takes a deep breath and blinks. Fatma seems a moment lost for words. Finally she coughs.

"Those are honest words, Chandra. I'm honoured you chose to be so open here on 'up close and personal'."

She turns to the camera.

"This will be all for tonight. Meet us again next week when my guest will be Salman Khan."

The jingle is audible. Fatma looks at Chandra, tilts her head a little.

"Good show. That was a convincing performance."

Chandra turns his head to look over to Amita then smiles a little bitterly.

"Who will believe in an actor's honesty? But thank you, Fatma for the chance to face my demons. It's not the same as coming face to face with people... but it's a step ahead."

The red light at the camera goes out. Chandra gets up and prepares to leave then hesitates and turns back to Fatma.

"It was the truth, Fatma ... and I am the most surprised by it... believe me."

Fatma gets up too. She steps forward, puts her hands on Chandra's shoulders and kisses him lightly on his marred side.

"I think you've got the love... now you just need to tell her."

She walks out, leaving a puzzled Chandra.

94. Amir calls

Amita and Chandra sit in the car, silently. Amita occasionally looks over to Chandra. Finally she says

"That was an excellent interview. I am sure you've won many sympathies with your frankness. Good show."

Chandra turns his face away and nods. Amita frowns a little when the cellphone rings.

"Yes. Amita speaking." She listens a moment, frowns then starts digging for a notepad in her briefcase.

"What's the address?"

She scribbles something, then leans over to the driver giving him the note

"Please drop me there."

"What's the problem?"

Chandra looks at Amita

"No problem... I just need to talk to somebody urgently. I'll tell you if he's of any help... don't want your hopes going up needlessly."

The driver stops. Amita gets out.

95. At Abhay's place

Amita knocks. The door opens. Amir looks out. Seeing her he smiles and opens the door wider.

"Hello... I'm Amir... and that's Abhay." He pushes the door wide to reveal Abhay who looks slightly sulky.

96. Ronny slips

Ronny and a friend enter the toilets.

"I have to go back to testify... cross examination. Don't know what she wants to cross examine me about..." Ronny smirks. His friend laughs.

"I just found Trisha... that's all there is."

"Well... you have to admit... it sure was a windfall for you. I hear she pretty much got all the chestnuts before Chandra killed her."

"What windfall? We were partners... she tried to cheat me!"

Laughs "It's really ironic. She had an interview with Chandra lined up... positively crowed about how she would be making headlines with it... you should have seen her smirk at me!"

Ronny laughs a little

"And then she ends up being headlines herself. I just wish... I just wish she'd know about it. Stuck up little bitch." The two men laugh and leave the toilet.

Chandra comes out of a stall, goes to wash his hands. He frowns a little.

In the hall he stops Amita. He pulls her into a silent corner.

Sushil comes walking along the hall. He sees Chandra talk to Amita. At one point Chandra crosses his arms, looks down, talks some more. Amita suddenly looks angry.

"I believed in you!" She turns and stalks away, past Sushil.

97. Ronny is cross examined.

Amita looks at Ronny. He gives her a smirk, unnoticed by public or judge.

"Tell me... the day before Chandra broke your nose... a story of yours appeared in one of the yellow rags, is that correct?"

"Yes."

"Is it correct, that in that article you insinuated that Chandra's wife had a lover?"

Ronny frowns a little.

"That is not quite..."

Chandra clutches the railing of the docks and half raises. Amita sees his angry glance, but keeps her focus on Ronny and interrupts him sharply

"Could it be read that way!? Just answer yes, or no."

Ronny presses his lips together

"Yes."

"And was it true?" Amita ignores another angry glance from Chandra

Grudgingly

"No."

"Would you say that Chandra had good reason to break your nose for slandering his wife?"

"Objection!"

Amita smiles excusingly.

The judge bangs the gavel

"Mrs. Khanna. Control yourself!"

"No further questions, Sir."

The Judge shuffles through his papers.

"We come now to the presentation of witnesses of the defense. Mrs. Khanna..."

Amita gives Chandra a small smile.

Abhay enters.

"What is your name?"

"My name is Abhay Parekh."

"Did you know Miss Balan?"

"Yes." Abhay gives Chandra a quick, dark look.

"What was your relationship with Miss Balan?"

"I wanted to marry her." There are a few murmurs in the audience.

"Please tell us what you did on the night of Valentine's day, Mr. Parekh."

"I went to see Trisha. We had a date and I arrived at about 9:30 that evening." This causes another stir in the audience. Amita smiles with some triumph at the prosecution.

"Was Trisha still alive at that time?"

Abhay frowns over to Chandra, then looks back at Amita and nods.

"Yes."

This time the audience reacts with one huge outcry. The judge bangs the gavel repeatedly

"Order! ORDER!" The audience settles a little. Trisha flashes a smile over to Chandra then controls herself

"So Miss Balan was alive... and well?"

Abhay nods. "Yes... she was in fact almost crowing with triumph, but she wouldn't tell me why. Just said it had something to do with her work."

"Tell us how the evening proceeded."

"We had a meal... and then we..." Abhay flushes. Amita takes pity on him.

"Did you have sex?"

"We made love!"

"Did you use a condom?"

Again Abhay flushes then nods.

"And then?"

"I asked her whether she wanted to marry me. She said no."

"So you two had a fight, and you finally killed her by stifling her with a pillow." Amita states calmly.

Abhay looks at Amita in shock.

"No. NO! I would never have hurt her!" Abhay shakes his head emphatically.

"There was no reason to be angry! I knew that Trisha would need some time to think about it... she always does... did. She'd eventually agree. She just didn't like to be put under pressure.

So I left her, because she insisted. She didn't want anybody to see me."

Amita turns with a smile first to Chandra, then to the Judge.

Chandra sags a little, sensing tension drain away.

"Your honour... I think it is clear that the case must be dismissed."

Another rumour runs through the audience.

The Judge turns to Abhay with a frown on his face.

"Mr. Parekh. Why did you not come forward to testify before?"

Abhay looks a moment at the judge, then at Chandra.

"And become a suspect myself? When I know exactly well that he DID it?"

Abhay turns to Chandra and glowers at him with hatred. More exclamations from the audience

The judge bangs his gavel again then leans a little forward.

"Mister Parekh... you just testified that Trisha Balan was alive and well when you came... which is well after Mr. Gupta attacked her. So how can you say you know that he killed her?"

"Because he was there when I came out. He was looking up to Trisha's flat."

The Judge bangs his gavel several times over the noise of the audience. Amita turns angrily towards Abhay.

"You're just trying to turn suspicion away with your ridiculous statement!"

"ORDER! I WILL HAVE ORDER!" the Judge booms. Slowly the noise subsides. The judge turns to Amita.

"It seems that the case cannot be so easily dismissed."

"Your honour! The witness's statement cannot be considered unbiased. He has every interest to throw suspicion onto somebody else!"

Abhay looks furiously at Chandra, points at him and shouts

"Ask him! Ask him whether he saw me! He turned his face away when I walked past!"

All eyes seem to turn to Chandra. Amita hurries to him and hisses

"Don't say a word!"

Chandra smiles faintly at her then gets up from his bench.

"Your honour... I think it is time to tell my side of the story."

"That night, after I left Trisha Balan I drove around for some time... how long I cannot exactly say. I was slowly getting back to my senses and I realised that I had to go back. I couldn't be sure that I had not seriously hurt Miss Balan ... and then..." Chandra sighs and looks down for a moment "I needed to come to an understanding with her. I really wanted to avoid that Miss Balan went to pose a complaint. So with a lot of reluctance I went back to talk to her."

Flashback

Chandra gets out of the car. The road is silent except for a dog trotting past and a distant drunk kicking unsteadily a beer can ahead. Chandra looks up the apartment house. Most windows are dark. He sighs. Abhay comes out of the house. Chandra hurries over, turns his head away and pushes in before the door closes. Abhay continues without a reaction.

Chandra knocks hesitantly at the door. After a moment it opens. Trisha looks out, frowns.

"What's the matter? Did you forget something?" Trisha notices Chandra and tries to close the door. Chandra blocks the door by putting his hand against it but does not try to push it open. He almost whispers.

"Please... I need to talk to you." Trisha looks at him with narrow eyes, then steps back. Chandra hesitates a little, then pushes the door open and enters. Trisha, in her silken robe pads down the hall.

In the living room she selects a chair and curls up in it. Chandra looks down at her, notices the purplish traces at her throat. Trisha finally nods her head at an armchair.

"Sit down."

Chandra sits, perched on the edge of the chair then gets up again. He sees the broken lamp on the table.

"I'm sorry about it."

Trisha looks up at him. She tilts her head, feeling that she is really the one in power and smiles a little, triumph evident.

"Just saying sorry won't do." Chandra shrugs.

"I didn't think it would. Name your price."

At that Trisha looks annoyed.

"I told you before, I can't be bought!"

Chandra, surprisingly, finds himself reassured by her anger. Here is a woman who doesn't seem to see his face... but will deal with him as she feels fit. He smiles a little ironically

"Getting insulted by an offer of money? You surprise me, Miss Balan. What scruples from a woman who does not hesitate to violate the privacy of a home! Vah vah... what moral standards!"

Trisha actually looks a moment discomfited but then she rallies marvellously. She shrugs

"Money is of no use to me. What I want cannot be bought with money." She gives Chandra a challenging look

"What do you want?"

"You... your time... your story. In short... an interview."

Chandra shrinks back a little and shakes his head.

Trisha walks over to a small table, takes a magazine, leaves through it then holds it out to Chandra. He gives it a short glance. His own face, unmarred, smiles at him. She throws the magazine at him

"How long do you want to run away from this? When will you finally begin to live again? You can't hide forever. I found you... others will too. Give me an interview and I will make sure that you can control how you will appear in the news... the next time you might not get that offer!"

Chandra looks down at the magazine. He rubs his eyes.

"I could have you indicted for breach of peace on the island."

"And I could have you accused for attempted murder. So stop playing games. You know you've got to give me that interview!"

"What? Now?"

Trisha laughs. "Naturally not. You'll have to come to the studio for it... unless you prefer to do it at your home."

"You mean... an interview on TV? But..." Chandra catches himself. The momentary flash of panic subsides a little... but only a little. He takes a deep breath.

"I need some time to prepare."

"Ok... then we will do it tomorrow afternoon." Trisha looks like she is enjoying Chandra's discomfort. He gives her a black look.

"With time I meant a bit more than just a few hours."

"Tomorrow. At five at Channel eight."

Chandra gets up and stalks out, wordlessly. Behind him Trisha laughs.

End of flashback.

Chandra looks at Abhay.

"She was alive when I left."

Abhay shakes his head.

"That's a lie... that's a lie! Who else could have killed her!"

The judge bangs his gavel.

"Mr. Parekh... please calm down."

Amita walks over to the Judge.

"Your honour I wish to call as next witness Indranil Banerjee.

"Call your witness."

Ronny's toilet partner enters. He looks slightly confused, and excited. He is sworn in then Amita smiles at him.

"Your name, Sir?"

"Indranil Banerjee."

"Sir, do you know Rohan Mathur?"

"Yes. He and I work at channel eight."

"Today, you talked to Mr. Mathur, is that correct?"

Banerjee looks puzzled then nods, slightly embarrassed

"Could you repeat the contents of that exchange?"

Indranil flushes a little.

"Ronny told me that the last time he saw Trisha Balan she was almost crowing with triumph about the big scoop she was going to make. He laughed about how ironic it was that Trisha had now become headlines herself."

"Can you tell me of the nature of that scoop, Mr. Banerjee?"

"Yes. Ronny mentioned that Trisha Balan had arranged an interview with Chandra Gupta."

"How could he have learned about it?"

"I had the impression she told him so herself."

"What gave you that impression, Mr. Banerjee?"

"He said she was smirking at him."

There is a sudden deadly silence as everybody seems to hold their breath.

"Your honour, we wish to call Rohan Mathur again." The judge nods.

Ronny enters, looking a little puzzled, but gives Amita a grin. She answers him with a cold look.

"Mr. Mathur. You told us previously that you had been researching Chandra Gupta together with Trisha Balan. I expect Trisha shared her knowledge with you then."

Ronny smiles a little.

"So were you also aware that Trisha had arranged for an interview with Chandra Gupta?"

Ronny hesitates a moment.

"Of that I was not aware. No."

The judge bangs his gavel to silence the muttering audience.

"You were not, Mr. Mathur? However, Mr. Banerjee here claims you told him about it this morning."

Ronny glowers at Banerjee.

"So looks like I did know. What about it?"

"How could you, Mr Mathur, know about an agreement Miss Balan had made with Chandra Gupta only hours before she was found dead? In the middle of the night? Could you please explain this to us?"

Ronny's eyes flicker for a moment then he grins boyishly.

"I fear you've caught me out. I must confess I went through her papers after I found her dead. I know... it's not very moral... but... we were partners... and she had no more use for all that information."

"But you said she was smirking at you as she told you about it. I don't think notes can smirk, Mr. Mathur."

In the total silence Amita's next words ring out like a bell

"Mr. Mathur. Did you go and see Miss Balan on the night of the 14th to the 15th of February?"

Ronny suddenly jumps up.

"Yes... yes I went to see her. The bitch intended to cheat me out of the story. She...she had the gall to laugh at me and called me a fool. So ... I killed her! I pressed that pillow on her face and wiped that smirk off it!"

He giggles a little madly

"She became part of her own story... and he" Ronny's hate filled eyes look at Chandra "he only got what he deserved! He broke my nose!"

Through the noise of the excited audience the banging of the gavel can hardly be heard. Two police officers make their way over to Ronny and lead him away.

The noise subsides a little. The judge turns to Chandra

"Mr. Gupta. I think proof of your innocence has been supplied beyond a doubt. The case is dismissed."

There is a general shout in the audience. Amita turns to Chandra and beams at him. Chandra grips the rails for a moment as the realisation of the end of his nightmare dawns on him. He steps down from the docks. Arjun and Sushil fight their way to him up to him, shake hands and embrace him. Amita hesitates a moment then turns to put her files into her briefcase.

98. Outside the courthouse

Chandra's bodyguards plough a path through the journalists outside the courthouse. Amita walks a little ahead of him.

"Amita!"

She turns, waits. The bodyguards manage to make a little room.

"Amita. I..." Chandra looks at all the journalists, the pointing cameras, the flash lights. He hesitates a moment, then holds out his hand.

"Thank you, Amita. Thanks to you this nightmare is over."

"God has smiled down at you. I've only done my job."

Amita shakes hands, smiles professionally at the cameras then disengages her hand. Immediately the journalists press forward and push their micros into Chandra's face, shouting questions at him. Amita is pushed to the side like a cork on the eddy. For a moment she watches Chandra. He handles the press with professional acumen. She turns to walk away.

99. A future

"I owe you an apology."

Amita shivers a little but doesn't take her eyes away from the Arabian Sea's dirty waves on the rocks below Bandra fort.

Chandra waits for her to say something. Finally he sighs.

"I should have told you about going back."

"Yes, you should have. You don't deserve to be out and about. If God didn't have a funny sense of humour... you might be facing the gallows!"

"I'm really sorry. But what would you have thought about it if I told you? I..

Amita swallows hard. She finally turns to face Chandra with angry eyes.

"It's over. You've said you're sorry... and for all the rest you'll get the bill."

Chandra faces her a moment silently then shakes his head.

"It's not over yet. I..."

He tries to find the words.

A couple, orbiting a noisy swarm of kids, walks past. One of the kids, about four years old, bumps into Chandra. He turns, looks at the boy. There is a moment of silence then the child screams shrilly. The mother, alarmed, hurries closer, sees Chandra's face, snatches her child up and herds her brood quickly away.

Chandra fades a little into the shadow, trying not to let on how the reaction has hurt him. He smiles a little crookedly.

"Better get used to it."

Amita raises an eyebrow.

"Still vain I see."

"Vain?! How could I be vain?"

Chandra exclaims angrily

"Because you only care how people react to your scar! That's vanity... of a negative sort! If you cannot treat people normally, how should they treat you normally?!"

Chandra scowls a moment, then he relaxes.

"You're like my wife, Garima. She always told me what I was doing wrong."

"I'm not Garima!"

Amita looks annoyed. Chandra frowns at her angry tone, then a faint smile spreads

"No. You're certainly not Garima. But you could be what she was... be my wife."

Amita scowls a moment before the words sink in then she looks in surprise at Chandra.

"Be your wife? Be the wife of a vain, egocentric, bad-tempered, impatient... mpfh."

Chandra stifles her last word by grabbing her close and putting his hand over her mouth. Amita glowers angrily at him.

"I know I know... you could go on with the list. But you'd still forget the most important point. I love you."

Amita grows silent. Chandra removes his hand from her mouth, looks at her expectantly. Amita steps out of his hold, turns away. She swallows hard, closes her eyes then shakes her head.

"No. You don't love me. You've gone through a difficult period and you needed to form an emotional bond to survive the ordeal. It's called the Stockholm syndrome. Now it's time to separate that bond."

She turns to look at Chandra. He shakes his head.

"That's rubbish! I know-!"

"No! You don't! That's part of it! Every psychologist will tell you that your emotions are just a kind of protection. They are not true! You'll find out as time goes on."

Chandra looks like protesting again. Amita takes a deep breath.

"Besides... I don't love you! You were a job and that job is over now. I'm sorry to sound cruel... but it's time for you to find your own life again. I wish you all the best with it."

Amita turns away, leaving a shattered Chandra behind. She hurries to the mainroad, hails a tuctuc. As she sinks into the seat a tear trickles down her cheek. She wipes it away impatiently.

100. Finale

A flickering light bulb. Steps in the distance. The bulb zaps out. Darkness. The steps break rhythm.

"Damn. I told the guard to exchange it!" Amita exclaims. There is a sudden commotion, a stifled scream, muffled calls "help" then silence.

A light comes on, flickers, illuminates a small space in the darkness. A chair, Amita, tied to it, blindfolded, gagged. She breathes hard, pulls at the ties.

Silence. Amita turns her head, listening. She makes a questioning sound then a more desperate one and pulls on her bonds again.

"Are you ready for trial?"

The voice is distorted, seems to echo around the darkness, has a tombstone quality to it. Amita freezes.

"You're accused of misrepresenting the truth."

Amita shakes her head. From the dark two hands untie the gag.

"What do you have to say?" Amita spits the gag out

"What are you talking about?! Who is there? Why am I here?!"

A dark shadow circles her chair.

"You're here because you're accused of lying, or maliciously keeping facts from me."

The voice slips a little, loses some of its threatening quality. Amita perks up, turns her head again. Somewhere in the background there is a childish giggle then some hushed whispering

"Chandra?"

"Silence, woman!" the booming is back but the giggle destroys all pretence. Amita sags in her chair, turns her head towards the giggle.

"Asha? What's this nonsense?"

There is a deep sigh from the dark.

"Asha. I told you to be silent. Now you've spoilt the game!"

Light filters in as heavy curtains are pulled back. Amita sits in the middle of a living room. Chandra removes the blindfold. Amita scowls at him.

Chandra pulls a stool towards Amita's chair, sits down. Asha appears, leans against Chandra.

Amita pulls a little at the bonds.

"Untie me!"

Chandra shakes his head.

"Not until you've heard what I have to tell you. You have a habit of walking off before everything is said."

He looks down a moment.

"You were wrong that day at Bandra fort. You know, I actually went to a shrink, told him what you said that day. He asked me to describe you. I told him you were the most stubborn, opinionated female I'd ever met."

Amita wants to say something, but Chandra puts a finger across her lips."

"Hear me out... you owe me that much for the heartbreak you caused me that day!" He smiles a little crookedly.

"You've got the tact of a sledgehammer and the finesse of a street vendor. And the worst... you bristle like a cactus with thorns the moment somebody gets too close to you."

Another exclamation is stifled by Chandra's finger.

"After I finished describing you the shrink told me that I definitely didn't suffer from Stockholm syndrome. If I knew that much about you and still loved you then I was certifiably mad."

Amita gives a shriek of outrage and pulls at her bonds. Chandra laughs, then pulls a string. The bonds fall away, Amita wants to get up.

Chandra gets hold of her hand pulls her back down.

"Amita... please listen. I am a difficult man, but then you are a difficult woman. My accident hasn't made things better... but I am working on it. We know the worst of each other... but also the best. Why can't you just accept the truth of my feelings?"

Amita looks at Chandra then at Asha, hugging her father, watching the exchange earnestly.

"I believe that you lied to me that day. You said this was just a job for you. Is that true?"

Amita gets up and looks down at Chandra and Asha. Finally she smiles and shakes her head, looks at Asha and extends her hands to her.

"It's no merit of you... but I've fallen in love with Asha. I've always wanted a little girl like her."

Asha smiles and throws herself into Amita's arms. Amita smiles and extends a hand to Chandra.