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FADE IN:

INT. GULATI & SONS DEALERSHIP – MR.GULATI’S OFFICE – DAY

NARAIN GULATI (65) is walking in his office with a folder in his hand. He is a plump and good looking man beginning to show telltale signs of age. His trousers are a little loose and held together by a fold under the belt, his shirt a little off his shoulders. He comes and sits down on the chair behind his desk. He stops reading abruptly and slams the folder shut. He puts it on the table and gets up and starts walking in the office. Looks at the time and awkwardly straightens the office. It is clear that he has never done this before. He is avoiding the table with the folder. He finally comes back to his desk but continues to avoid the folder.

MR. GULATI  
(Knock on the door. He exhales and smiles politely)

Come in.

A poised and proper KAVITA GULATI (25) walks straight into the room. MR. GULATI crosses the desk to meet her half way. He walks onwards to sit on the sofa only to turn around and find KAVITA has walked on to sit in front of his desk facing his empty chair and looking straight ahead to read a motivational poster on the wall.

Kaavey.

(KAVITA revolves with the chair to look at him. He looks pointedly at the seat next to him. His polite smile is still in place. She gives a small smile and closes the short distance on her chair, but doesn’t join him on the sofa.)

Bitiya (endearment for a daughter), have something? Tea?

(KAVITA shakes her head no. There is awkward silence broken by both of them speaking together.MR. GULATI speaks with fake enthusiasm.)

So.

KAVITA

Where do I put my hands today?

MR. GULATI  
(Slightly puzzled.)

Hands?

KAVITA

Yes. Hands. My lucky hands. Isn’t that why I am here?

(PAUSE.)

Every time I have come to The Office it has been to bless or inaugurate something with my lucky hands.

(Her last two words come out a little bitter.)

MR. GULATI  
(soft genuine smile)

The photographs are still on the wall outside. Have you seen them?

KAVITA

Do you need me to sign something?

MR. GULATI

You wore a pink frock.

KAVITA

Am I still an employee “on the books”?

MR. GULATI

Your mum used to always say daughters are God’s blessing.

KAVITA

Should have just sent someone with the cheque book like always.

MR. GULATI

Whatever they bless grows.

KAVITA  
(voice raised. First sign of emotion from her)

Then let’s get on with it. That’s all daughters are good for, I get it.

MR. GULATI  
 (haunted, looking away)

Your Mum would have known what to say to you.

KAVITA  
 (sharply)

Don’t do this.

MR. GULATI  
 (His voice sounds tired.)

Don’t you see? You can make this office grow now.

(PAUSE.)

I’m trying to give you what you… what she would have wanted…

KAVITA  
(barely restrained voice)

I don’t want to talk about her. You always bring her in when you think you are…losing!

MR. GULATI  
 (angrily)

Losing?! You think this is losing?! Ha. I already lost everything.

KAVITA  
 (contempt in her voice)

Here it comes!

MR. GULATI

I had to make sure you both would be safe! You don’t know what it was like. Everything changed overnight. You don’t understand.

KAVITA

I WAS THERE.

(Pause.)

I was there. It changed for me too. You just lost your wife. I lost… Everyone.

MR. GULATI  
(still frustrated at her lack of understanding).

Because I wasn’t home to put you to sleep?! You were 18 and conversations are a luxury I couldn’t afford. They tell you “Life is short”, “Make it count” and all that. But when it really hits you…when you realize just how short… you don’t… It isn’t regret about not taking enough vacations… You don’t think oh I should have had fun… No! You get scared. Not for yourself. But for the people you love. I had to keep you safe then… And now I have to…

KAVITA  
(she is trying to go back to the indifference she began the conversation with.)

Can I go now, please?

MR. GULATI  
(Straightening himself, he stands to his full height. Pulling his shoulders back and trying to appear calm. He walks to his desk)

This is not how I thought it would go. I wanted us to talk. I wanted to show you. Anyway.   
Ms. Gulati, I want you to think about running our dealership.

(He hands her the file)

I thought that was what you wanted.

KAVITA  
 (bitterly almost on reflex)   
Oh! NOW you know what I want.

(She still takes the file and quickly opens the first page. Mr. Gulati looks like he’s going to reply but thinks better of it.)

“Gulati and Sons”. SONS! I don’t think this concerns me…Sir.  
 (She shuts the file.)

MR. GULATI

We can change the name.

KAVITA

It is not the name that needs to be changed.

(PAUSE.)

Why now?

MR. GULATI

Do you remember Buzo, Kaave?

KAVITA

What happened to your previous MD, Mr Gulati?

MR. GULATI

Buzo was 12 and he got sick. You were so sad. The vet said 12 was a good age to go. But you cried and cried.

KAVITA

Are you sure have the correct skill set or the gender for this?

MR. GULATI

“Buzo! Catch!” You would run around pretending to play with him when he couldn’t move anymore. He knew it was his time to go. He wanted the family safe before he went though. I can tell.

KAVITA

I thought you were going to…what was it…teach my son everything I know, before I go!

MR. GULATI

There isn’t enough time.

KAVITA  
 (suddenly not so sure)   
Dad?! What…

MR. GULATI

All the details are in the file, Ms Gulati. Please look over them in your own time and get back to me.

KAVITA

It was never Mom.

PAUSE.

Mom never knew what to say to me. It was you. She used to say that all the time. “Only you can talk sense into her.”

MR. GULATI  
(almost as if he’s realized something for the first time)

Kaave, my clever little crow. Will you keep adding stones till everyone can get water?

KAVITA

1. I don’t know. I have to go.

With that Kavita runs out of the room.