

STREE

WRITTEN BY
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BASED ON A RIDICULOUSLY TRUE PHENOMENON

NARROW LANES OF A SMALL TOWN - NIGHT

HER POV

As She glides through the empty lanes of the eerily silent town -- in the dead of the night, everyone asleep inside the four walls of their homes -- glancing left and right at the walls of the houses.

Each of the houses has a strange inscription written in red paste on the wall: *O Stree, Kal Aana (Oh Lady, Come Tomorrow)*.

She pauses at the corner as She hears a rustle.

Beat.

Suddenly -- a howling dog darts across the street and scurries into the bushes.

She glides along.

She passes a house that seems to have no inscription. She does a double-take -- as if to make sure She's seeing it right. No inscription.

She lunges towards the gate.

BACKYARD - NIGHT

A SLEEPY GUY steps out to go to the loo located in the far corner of the yard.

As he sleepily wobbles across --

HER VOICE
(soft, hushed)
Prakash...

He stops dead in his tracks. WTF was that?!

Without daring to look back, he begins to walk briskly.

Again --

HER VOICE
(soft, but firmer)
Prakaaasshh...

He slows down and stops. Scared but curious. Should he turn around and see?

A third time -- seductive, irresistible --

HER VOICE
Prakaaaassshhhh...

Beat.

HER POV

Prakash slowly turns and looks at her (us).

At first he's scared. Then the fear turns into curiosity, which then melts away, like he is seeing a beautiful woman.

Beat.

Suddenly his expression turns into horror! And he lets out a bone-chilling cry, as She lunges at his horrified face!

CUT TO BLACK:

STREE

MORPH TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN A NARROW LANE - MORNING

The title morphs to the writing on a wall: *O Stree, Kal Aana*

SUPER: Based on a ridiculous phenomenon

The WATCHMAN -- an old man who has spent his life guarding the old town -- finishes writing the inscription on the compound wall with his worn-out brush.

Gets up -- drags his chair to the next house.

A line of houses behind him have freshly painted inscription.

OPENING TITLES APPEAR OVER --THE SMALL TOWN AND ITS ENVIRONMENT - DAY

The town is getting decked up. Banners go up announcing various activities for the *puja*. People are getting ready for the annual weeklong festivities for the *Gram Devta*.

CREEK - MORNING

Scenic. Serene.

A pair of Reebok sneakers pound the ground.

In complete contrast with the surroundings, dressed in fancy shorts and sporty tee, headphones pumping music in his ears, VICKY is out on his morning jog.

-- He jogs past buffaloes.

-- jumps expertly over chickens running helter-skelter.

-- dodges and avoids being splashed by a woman washing her front yard.

-- NCC Cadets are running/training in a ground, but nowhere close to his style.

-- He greets the bewildered townsfolk with 'What up!' or a 'Later Alligator' as they go about their daily grind.

All without breaking his style. In short -- he's too cool for this simple town!

OPENING TITLES COME TO AN END.

EXT. VICKY'S HOUSE

Vicky returns from his jog -- about to enter his gate, sees the Watchman approaching.

VICKY

Hello Chacha. You're at it again?
Going around town conning the
idiots?

WATCHMAN

Vicky-babu, it's not too late yet..
(points to the bucket of
red ink)

This ink has been made from bat's
bones and an albino crow's pee.
This time I have also mixed in some
ashes from devta's temple. She will
not dare enter any house with the
message written with this special
ink.

(beat)

Listen to me.. Let me write on your
wall.

VICKY

Don't you dare touch my wall!

WATCHMAN

Yours is the only house with no
inscription in this lane. You know
what that means, right?

(beat)

When She enters this lane, she will
have no choice but your house.
Guaranteed entry!

VICKY

Tell your bullshit stories to these
foolish people with small-town
mentality. You wondered why this
never happens in big cities?
Because it's just faltu
superstition!

WATCHMAN

So you are willing to risk your
life for a mere hundred rupees?

VICKY

No. I am willing to stand by my
belief and not let old men con me.

WATCHMAN

Your loss. Don't come running to me
when She takes you away!

Vicky scoffs.

NEIGHBOUR AUNTY calls out for the Watchman --

AUNTY

Chacha, don't forget my wall..
(pointing to the fading
inscription on her wall)
It's fading. I'm not sure she will
be able to read it.

WATCHMAN

Ji, madam.

Thw Watchman walks over. Aunty hands a cup of chai.

AUNTY

I have made some chai for you.

WATCHMAN

Arre no madam. I have had a dozen
teas since morning!

AUNTY

Arre have one more. And make sure
you have written it bold and clear.
(adds)
I want to make sure she gets the
message.

Vicky shakes his head at this charade and enters his house.

The wall of his house remains blank. *An Eerie feel.*

EXT. TAILORING SHOP - DAY

Board proclaims: *MODREN LADIES TAILOR.*
Styling independent women. Since independence (1947).

Women of various sizes and ages are milling about the shop.
It's rush hour at the shop. In contrast, the other shops
around the area are dead.

Vicky cycles up to his shop. Sees the rush -- a few women
light up at his sight -- he expertly turns the cycle, peddles
around the block and gets to the back entrance.

INT. TAILORING SHOP

The shop is even more crowded with customers. There are tailors tucked away in corners and narrow nooks.

As Vicky enters the chaotic shop, his DAD, spots him.

DAD

Why the hell are you so late!? It's Puja season. Look! Look at the orders we have to finish!!

VICKY

Arre, most of them are all alterations. I told you we should exclusively deal only in new dresses..

DAD

Then for the rest of the year we will be swatting flies and all the business will go away to the other tailors!

VICKY

But Dad, this is chillar kaam..

DAD

This is not the time to discuss the manifesto of the shop. We have been doing this for decades and-

VICKY

Haan haan.. From independence to the end of time!

DAD

(shakes his head)

Why are you late? And why don't you take this seriously??

VICKY

I went for jogging in the morning.

DAD

What! What the hell for??

VICKY

That's what cool people do! Cardio is important to counter all the trans fat we eat all day--

DAD

Oh God! Can you please get to work, don't get the ladies worked up. There's nothing worse than a pissed-off woman.

(adds)

We should be grateful for the amount of business we get! I am thinking of even opening a branch..

VICKY

You do what you want.. I am getting the hell out of this place very very soon.

DAD

Why do you give emotional threats to me on every important day? You will kill me with this.

VICKY

Nothing will happen to you. You will live 100 years doing blouse alternations. I.. I am meant for bigger things.

DAD

Like what?

Vicky has no words. Dad stares him down for an answer.

VICKY

I will figure it out.
(beat)
Soon.

DAD

Till then, my dear son.. get on that bloody tailoring machine, and show them whose son you are!

SHOT OF --

-- Vicky slowly takes off his shirt and hangs it on the nail. Wearing just a vest, he takes his time as he puts a cushion on his seat -- squeezes some oil into the machine -- does a customary pai-lagu to the machine -- flexes his neck, rotates his shoulders, cracks his knuckles.

An OLD CASHIER and the Dad watch with bated breath.

CONTINUING EARLIER CONVERSATION --

DAD

You have a gift my son! A rare gift! Not everybody is born with such talents!

SHOT OF --

-- Then Vicky nods ever so subtly at the assistant.

Aaaaand the work starts. In full glory!

INTERCUTTING EARLIER AND NOW --

DAD
I've stitched thousands of dresses
but the way you handle that
machine, those scissors, that
needle.. aahahaha..

-- Vicky is stitching, checking, cutting cloth, marking and peddling that machine like a genius at work.

DAD
It's purva janam ka phal.. That
someone is born with a gift!

-- A bunch of ladies are standing in a line in front of Vicky's station. Some are holding new cloth pieces and some, older clothes.

Vicky studies the first woman for just a second and --

VICKY
(rattles off)
38.. 3 inseam, 12 arms, 30 waist,
40 hips.. 82 length..
(asks)
Medium or deep?

WOMAN 1
(awkwardly)
Err.. Medium is ok I think.. ummm..

VICKY
Deep. Deep will suit you.

The woman is happy. Next.

-- The next one dumps a bunch of blouses to the assistant.

VICKY
You can do these alterations after
the Puja season no? Why does it
have to be now??
(cuts her off before she
answers)
Blouse loosen by.. 1.5..

WOMAN 2
No no.. 1 inch is ok..

VICKY
(doesn't even react)
Actually 2 inch rakho. Also add
extra hook in the back. Do double
stitching this time. Ok next.

Woman smiles, embarrassed, but knows the genius is right.

DAD
(overflowing with love)
Haraami.. Bastard.. Tu na.. genius
hai re!
(adds)

Never in my life have I ever seen
anyone stitch a lehenga in 21
minutes flat!

-- Vicky is moving at blazing speeds and finishing off a
lehenga while everyone around is watching in amazement.

Snips the last thread and chucks the finished lehenga with
elan. Takes a breather and shakes his head.

VICKY
Is this even a bloody talent that
one should be proud of!

But dad has tears in his eyes. He smiles proudly at the Old
Cashier, and turns to the altar and does pranaam to the Gods.

EXT. A PEACEFUL SPOT - DAY

Vicky is taking a breather. This is Vicky's favorite spot --
where he steals a smoke during his break time.

Vicky puts his legs up, lost in thought -- daydreaming.

MOMENTS LATER

She glides towards Vicky. Unreal feeling!

Just like a dream, a beautiful girl -- *let's call her GAYATRI
since nobody really knows her name* -- walks towards him. She
looks enchanting.

Without realizing, Vicky gets to his feet, jaw slowly
dropping.

GAYATRI
Hi!

VICKY
Hi!
(a squeaky version of his
voice comes out)

GAYATRI
Vicky, right?

VICKY
(nods. And keeps nodding)
Yeah..

GAYATRI
I saw you last year during the
puja.

VICKY
Yeah..

GAYATRI
I heard so much about you!

He's suddenly awkwardly aware that he's still in a vest.

GAYATRI
I am from the next town.. I come
for the puja every year..

VICKY
Yeah?

GAYATRI
Can you please stitch a ghagra for
me? (hands him the cloth)

VICKY
(automatically but still
lost)
2 weeks.

GAYATRI
What! No..
(reaches out and touches
his hand)
Vicky Please! I need it for the
final night. For the Mangal Aarti!

Beat. Waits for his answer.

VICKY
10 days?

GAYATRI
Oh. (mood drops) Ok.. It's ok then.
(adds)
Thanks..

And starts to walk away.

Vicky snaps out of it and runs up to her --

VICKY
Hello hello..
(she turns)
Day after is ok?

She switches on a bewitching smile like she expected this.

GAYATRI
Thank you!

Vicky also smiles bashfully.

GAYATRI
Oh.. my measurements? You want to
take my..

Vicky comes into his own. He interrupts her.

Then as she just stands there, Vicky 'scans' her from top to
bottom. Gestures her to turn around. She tentatively turns
around. He checks her behind.

She turns back, unsure as to what happened.

VICKY
(taps his temple)
Le liya.

She chuckles. She's impressed. He's impressed at himself too for playing it cool.

Then as she walks away, in an old-school fashion, Gayatri half turns to say--

GAYATRI
I am going to the temple for aarti tonight.

VICKY
Ok.

GAYATRI
For the aarti.

VICKY
Ok.

Gayatri smiles and walks away.

After a long hold, Vicky gets it!

VICKY
Oh!

No sooner than she leaves, the assistant comes --

ASSISTANT
Vicky bhai..

Vicky looks at him, super irritated.

ASSISTANT
Daddy is saying 10 mins were over 10 mins ago.

EXT. SARASWAT FAST FOOD CENTRE (SFC) - EVENING

It's a local joint that serves fancy city items like burgers, pizzas etc. BITTU and JANA are one of the few customers lounging outside in the metal chairs. Bittu spots a group of girls approaching down the road.

BITTU
Oh they are coming..

-- and puts on his shades -- and poses coolly.

JANA
Seriously?

BITTU
That girl in the white dress always
looks at me when I drive down on my
bike.

JANA
That's because you stare at her
like a bloody stalker.

Just then Vicky comes plops noisily next to them.

He's suppressing a grin. Both of them look at him
suspiciously.

BITTU
What the hell happened to you?

Vicky smiles and nods like -- 'kuch hua hai.'

JANA
(mocks)
You finished all Puja orders?

VICKY
Screw you.

BITTU
Say what happened??

VICKY
Love at first sight!

BITTU
Matlab?

VICKY
That girl from last year puja..

BITTU
Oh the one you made up!?

VICKY
(ignores the comment)
She came up and said 'Hi!' to me.

JANA
Wow!

BITTU
And?

VICKY
And said 'Vicky Please..'

JANA
Are you serious?

BITTU
Arre, phек raha hai yeh..

VICKY
Sachchi! She even held my hand.

BITTU
Screw you! Abhi chada raha hai..

VICKY
Arre I am telling you. You can ask anyone at the shop.

BITTU
She must have come to you to stitch some petticoat or something.

VICKY
Tsk!
(beat)
I mean.. She came to get something stitched but--

BITTU
See, I told you.

VICKY
But she held my hand and said 'Vicky please..' (emotes exaggeratedly).

JANA
You kidding me!

BITTU
She said Vicky Please?

VICKY
No.. Vicky pleeease (with love)

BITTU
That's what I said - Vicky please (dry, no love)

VICKY
No.. Vicky Pleeeeease (with love)

Bittu gives up. Then --

BITTU
Why did she even go to a tailor shop? When she can come to our readymade shop! We have latest designs and fashions.
(shakes his head)

But the other two friends are not really listening to Bittu.

JANA
This is so cool man! Tu toh set hai matlab!

VICKY
(shy)
I think so.

(then)
I think I will start loving her
from today.

Breaking the moment, Bittu decides --

BITTU
So today you're paying for the
burgers and cokes.

Vicky shrugs. He's just happy.

JANA
Ok guys, so what's the plan for
tonight?

BITTU
Yes. So. It's going to be hectic 4
nights of partying starting today.

JANA
Yes!

BITTU
Tonight's party is at the
farmhouse.
(adds)
Jana, I am telling you again..
don't breathe a word to that
Narendra. That horny ass is always
looking for a place to boink.

The others agree.

BITTU
We will have biryani there only.
Music and videos are set. After
that..

All three shout in unison.

ALL THREE
Raat bhar. PARTY!!!!

A short funky SONG starts --

TOWN - LATE EVENING

-- The town is abuzz with excitement of the annual Puja.
-- Pretty lights liven up some of the streets.
-- People start to pour out to the mela around the temple.

STREETS - LATE EVENING

Vicky, Bittu and Jana are going triples on a bike. All 3 are
dressed up for the night. Bittu is driving.

They cruise around the town, checking out the sights - mainly girl groups and the special decorations at rich people's houses.

EXT. JANA'S HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Jana's mother catches them passing. She calls out --

MOTHER
Don't stay out too long!

JANA
Arre ma, it's Puja! We are going to be out all night!

MOTHER
Go to the temple and come back.
Don't do dirty things! It's Puja time!
(adds)
And be careful that Stree is back it seems!

They just laugh and rush away from there.

JAYBHARAT THEATER - NIGHT

The poster outside is of a random English film - 'Bedroom Eyes 4.' Hand painted comment says 'Puja Special XX.' There's a Houseful board outside the gate.

A huge crowd is making their way inside. Among them are our boys. Bittu gives tickets to the usher--

BITTU
(proudly)
Balcony!
(to his friends)
Told you I have connections at very high places!

VICKY
(jibes)
Yeah man! You are truly connected.
To be able to get tickets for dirty pictures!

Bittu ignores the comment. They proceed towards their seats, wading through the crowd.

INSIDE

The movie starts abruptly, sending a ring of chaotic excitement through the hall. Everybody hurries to take their seats amidst whistles and cat calls.

OUTSIDE

The place is completely empty now. Everybody's inside. Faint sounds of the movie wafts out.

Time flies and the ambience gets spooky.

INSIDE

The film playing is harshly interrupted -- and a different film starts rolling. The 'bit' everyone was waiting for.

The hall erupts for a brief moment.

It's a full-figured, out-of-shape Mallu 'aunty' getting ready to take a bath.

The hall quickly goes silent and gets immersed in the activity on the screen.

The aunty continues to bathe herself with generous amounts of water from the bucket, while still clothed of course. In a stunning surprise, another girl joins the bath.

An audible gasp goes through the theatre. All the three friends are watching the ongoings with their mouths open in varying degrees.

The spell is finally broken when the 'Interval' card comes on the screen.

JANA
Highlight hai!

BITTU
That's possibly the best bit ever!

VICKY
Truly an achievement in cinematic history!

CONCESSION STAND

The three boys are standing at the over-crowded concession stand. Everybody is clamouring for the stale food that's being sold like hot cakes.

A mini riot is almost breaking out over who needs to be serviced first.

Suddenly Jana notices.

JANA
Vicky! Your dad!

VICKY
What!
(instinctively hides)
Where? Where?

BITTU

There.. He was in the lower stall..

Sure enough Vicky's Dad is emerging out of the Stalls area.

VICKY

Shit! Are you kidding me!

Vicky makes best efforts to hide and dodge as the Dad starts heading towards them.

Vicky starts to wade his way through the crowd but it's proving very difficult.

It's a tense moment as Vicky barely manages to escape his dad. He sneaks around to go behind his dad, out of his sight.

He beckons his friends to get out of there too. But Bittu wants his food first.

Thankfully food is thrust into their hands and they retreat from there. But not before Vicky's dad sees them.

Long beat.

Vicky's dad's face turns into disapproval and shakes his head at them - like 'Shame on you'.

JANA

(mutters)

Sorry Uncle.

Vicky's dad spits in disgust.

Thankfully Vicky has escaped the scene.

Almost.

Suddenly there's loud shout across the lobby.

VOICE

Ey.. Vicky!!

WTF! Vicky turns to see. It's that bloody NARENDRA!

At the same time everyone concerned turns to see too. Including his dad.

Vicky is caught just a few feet away from his dad.

They both stare at each other.

For a long time.

Then slowly both of them walk away from each other.

Vicky walks towards the balcony -- realizes that's not where he should go and starts to walk out of the theatre.

OUTSIDE

The three friends walk out.

BITTU
Let's go back in. Your dad won't know!

JANA
I didn't know your dad is fan of these films!

BITTU
Let's quietly go back in. He won't be able to see us in the dark!

VICKY
Shut the hell up! Are you kidding me!? I am already screwed.

BITTU
Come on, I got these tickets with great difficulty.

VICKY
Listen. All the good bits are over. They rarely play any good ones in second half.

JANA
True. He has a point. They don't usually mess with the storyline in the second half. That's when movies take off.

VICKY
Plus it's getting late for Aarti.

BITTU
What's with you and aarti!!

VICKY
Chal na.. Chalo. Baat khatam.

Narendra interrupts them --

NARENDRA
What's up, guys? Not watching the second half?

VICKY
Hi Narendra.

BITTU
See, I told you!

NARENDRA
Supposed to be a group shower in the second half.

BITTU
I knew it!

VICKY
It's alright.. We have other things
to do..

NARENDRA
Party no?

JANA
(nods his head)
Yeah--

VICKY
No no.. It's not a party..
It's just--

NARENDRA
I am coming.. I have some
'friendship' to do.. (winks) You
want to see the 'girlfriend?'

-- and without waiting for their reaction, he pulls out his
phone and shows a picture.

JANA
Super!

NARENDRA
Hai na!

JANA
Mind-blowing!

Vicky and Bittu look at each other like WTF!

NARENDRA
So, where's the party?

VICKY
It's not really--

JANA
At the MLA farmhouse..

NARENDRA
Super! I'll see you there! Now I
have to go watch second half.

-- and leaves.

Bittu slaps Jana on the head --

BITTU
Why don't you put a red carpet out
for him!

VICKY
Jana, you're an idiot, man!

JANA
I had no choice! He already knows.

TEMPLE - LATE EVENING

A long of line of devotees are in the queue to have darshan. All of them are craning their necks to get a teaser look at the God before they reach the deity.

Except the three boys. They are checking out the girls coming back from darshan on the other side.

BITTU

I still don't understand why we have to come to temple. We are going to be late to the party.

JANA

Well.. At least the girls are good today. Some paisa vasool, at least.

VICKY

Have some shame and stop thinking dirty things. Bhagwan ka smaran kar.

(adds)

Look, God is watching.

MOMENTS LATER

They reach the deity. Each one suddenly becomes all religious and sincere as they pray.

VICKY (V.O.)

Hey Bhagwan, thank you so much for sending a girl to me.. erm.. for sending a gorgeous, beautiful, unbelievable, out-of-this-world, super-cool girl to me. Please help a little more and solidify this deal.

BITTU (V.O.)

Hey Bhagwan please send a girl to me.. Umm.. a sexy, hot babe to me. Why should Vicky get a girl first? Readymade shop is better than Tailor shop no?

(adds hastily)

By the way, my shop is: Sanandan Readymade Showroom. Gandhi Road. Opposite Agarwal Sweets. I am there between 1pm to 4pm.

JANA (V.O.)

Hey Bhagwan, these two don't have a clue how to treat a girl.. why do they get all the chances? Please send a nice homely, sweet, mere-bachon-ki-ma kind of girl to me. You usually never give me a chance, but see, if you can give me--

Bittu yanks Jana out of there.

BITTU
Chal chal, enough praying! Party
time now.

And Jana is pulled off before he can finish praying.

MOMENTS LATER

As the three walk out of the temple, Vicky is looking around for someone.

JANA
What are you looking for?

VICKY
What? Nothing.

BITTU
Chalo chalo.. Enough time wasted.
Already ate into party time..
(turns to Vicky)
What?

VICKY
You guys go ahead, I will catch up.

VICKY
Nothing.. (looking around) I will
just sit for a bit and peacefully
meditate--

BITTU
What!??

VICKY
They will start giving Prasad soon.
I will bring some for everyone.

BITTU
What? What for?!

BITTU
Who the hell wants to eat Prasad
now.. We have chicken lollipops and
kheema patties waiting there!

JANA
Kya hogaya tujhe aaj? Bhagwan ka
bhoot chad gaya?

BITTU
Wait a minute! You fuckers are
waiting for that girl to show up!!

JANA
Really? She's coming to meet you
here.

VICKY

Arre nahi yaar.. I just want to get prasad-

BITTU

Prasad my foot.

(shakes head in disgust)

Look what has become of you!

Unbelievable! You are ditching your friends for a girl??

VICKY

Don't get dramatic now. Shut up and go. Isko lekeja.. I will be there in 5 minutes. Go!

BITTU

(overacts)

For a girl!??

JANA

Ey.. Chal na overaction.

-- and drags Bittu out.

OUTSIDE TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

Bittu and Jana get on the bike. Bittu kickstarts it. Doesn't start.

BITTU

What the...

(checks)

Oh, no petrol.

JANA

Why the hell do you not put more than two points at a time?! You're always running out of petrol!

BITTU

Tell my baap that! He gives me just enough money for two points!

(gives up)

What now?

JANA

Useless bike.

(kicks it)

Let's walk. We have to buy the alcohol first.

-- and they leave.

CONTINUOUS

As soon as they leave, Vicky steps out of the temple. And waits by the side.

She glides towards Vicky. Unreal.

Then --

VOICE

Hi!

Vicky turns around and -- it's the ethereal vision of Gayatri!

VICKY

(squeaky voice)

Hi!

GAYATRI

You came here a while back?

VICKY

(mumbles)

Yeah..

GAYATRI

You have some kind of a speech problem or something?

Vicky snaps out of it.

VICKY

What!? No! I was just.. I was.. You.. I.. I am only.. Was..

GAYATRI

Oh.. So sorry! I didn't know you had a problem..

VICKY

Nahi yaar.. Hi!Howareyou?All well?Haddinner?Iamgladyoucameto meetme.Youarelookingsofine.

(beat)

Sorry..

GAYATRI

(smiles)

All well. How are you?

VICKY

All well all well..

Beat.

VICKY

Sorry, I haven't started on your lehenga yet.

GAYATRI

That's ok..

VICKY

Will start first thing tomorrow morning.

GAYATRI
Oh great.. Thank you.

VICKY
Welcome.

Beat.

VICKY
You missed the aarti by the way.

GAYATRI
I know! I got stuck..

Vicky tries to get a bit shaana --

VICKY
Next time I can call you.. And tell
you when to start..

GAYATRI
I don't use mobile phone.

VICKY
Oh. Then.. How do I get in.. How
does one get in touch with you?

GAYATRI
(smiles)
Just think of me. And I'll be
there.

Oh.

Vicky tries again --

VICKY
Tomorrow also I am coming for
aarti.

GAYATRI
Ok.
(gets it. Smiles)
Aah!

Long beat. They don't know what else to talk.

VICKY
You want some prasad? I think today
is jalebi.

GAYATRI
Sure.

VICKY
Yeah? Great, I will--
(checks)
Oh.. Prasad counter hasn't opened
yet.

GAYATRI
That's ok.

VICKY
Sorry.

Awkward silence again.

PEHLI RAAT

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Eerie. Silent.

The camera hovers above the woods.

EXT. WOODED LANE IN THE OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Heavy woods line the narrow dirt path that leads to the farmhouse. Bittu and Jana walk, carrying clinking bottles of alcohol in some makeshift bags.

BITTU
That fucker is definitely hiding something.

JANA
Like what?!

BITTU
Girl stuff obviously! He stayed back to line-fy that girl.
(turns to Jana)
How many years have we known him? Has he ever wanted to go to the temple? Ever?

JANA
Hmmm. Have you seen the girl?

BITTU
(shakes his head)
No. Fucker doesn't even show a picture. Maybe she's ugly.
(convinces himself)
Yeah that's it! I bet she's ugly.

A rustle.

They both stop.

JANA
Did you hear that?

They realize they are all alone in the middle of nowhere.

Tension.

They slowly walk along, looking over their shoulders -- is someone watching them?

Tension builds.

It crescendoes -- and is cut by the sound of --

A old scooter. Which pulls up next to them. It's RUDRA -- a weird man in his late 30s -- with a strange drawl.

RUDRA
Eyy.. What are you two doing here
all alone?!

BITTU
Kya hua?

RUDRA
Haven't you heard?! She is out on
the prowl. Making her rounds.

JANA
Who?

RUDRA
Who else?
(leans forward)
Stree.

JANA
(also leans forward)
The Stree?

BITTU
Arre Rudra-bhai. Stop scaring him
unnecessarily--

RUDRA
I'm warning you, not scaring you!
It is not safe for men to venture
out alone at night! If you have
some work, send a female in your
family out. And when you do go out,
cover your body well.

They both look at him, bewildered.

RUDRA
Because once she takes you, she
only leaves your clothes behind!

JANA
What does she do with the men she
takes?

RUDRA
Who knows! Has anyone come back to
tell?

BITTU
Rudra-bhai, is she really for real?
I'm not sure if the whole thing is--

JANA

Bittu, then how do you explain all the men that have gone missing?

RUDRA

Exactly! How do you explain that?!

BITTU

I don't know--

RUDRA

Listen, my friends, she is for real. And she is angry.

Jana is visibly scared. Darts looks on both sides anxiously. Bittu is getting uncomfortable.

An creepy atmosphere builds up, as Rudra explains --

RUDRA

Never venture out alone. The safest place is inside your four walls, with the message written by your front door.

(beat)

If you have to be out, beware of crossroads. Those are her favourite haunts. Try to be as quiet as possible. Remove your slippers, the noise attracts her.

(beat)

When she sees you, she will first call you by your name. Very sweetly...

(chilling pause)

DO NOT look back. If you do, she will think you've given her consent and..

(Jana and Bittu shudder)

She'll call your name again. Even sweeter. Closer. But my friends, just keep walking. Don't run, just walk.

(they're getting spooked)

She'll call your name a third time. It will be irresistible.

BITTU

(anxiously adds)

But we never turn back.

RUDRA

Aaj tak aisa mard paida nahi hua, who can resist her voice. Everybody turns back.

BITTU

Oh! Shit.

JANA

Then?! How do we escape?

RUDRA

There is only way to avoid being taken. Remember this - this is most important - whatever happens--

-- his phone rings, shattering the quiet! He answers, as Bittu and Jana look about, scared --

RUDRA

Haan ji. -- Haan. -- Ok. -- Haan abhi ho jaayega. -- Pahunch hi raha hoon.

-- and as abruptly as he came, he zooms off on the scooter.

BITTU

He didn't finish the sentence.

JANA

What?

BITTU

He said: remember this - this is most important - whatever happens. And he left.

JANA

Oh! Shit. We need to find out.

They look around. They are alone in the middle of the woods.

An eerie silence.

BITTU

We should go.

And they start walking.

The bottles start clinking again. Jana holds the bag tight to stop the noise. They walk quietly.

Neither looking at the other, both acting normal, but shitting bricks inside.

Eeriness builds up.

In the far distance, they can see the light of the farmhouse.

Long beat, as they silently walk, trying not to act scared.

CRACK! A twig snaps somewhere!

Bittu and Jana both scream and run the Lady out of there.

FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

An old ill-maintained bungalow primarily used by the local MLA for weekend retreats and bringing prostitutes over.

His nephew Lokesh now has the keys, and this is where the party is! There are about a dozen hyper young guys, with Lokesh playing host --

LOKESH
Ok guys, first we play antakshari..
Then I have organized a music quiz--

VICKY
Aur uske baad rangoli competition..
(everybody laughs)
Chup baith aur daaru pee. Gaana
bajaate hai!

GUY
Phir late night Sunny ka videos
dekhte hai..

A cheer goes up.

MUSIC starts --

Lokesh tries to maintain some order --

LOKESH
Guys, don't make a big mess. My
uncle has a party meeting tomorrow.
He'll be pissed if the place is not
clean..

-- but nobody is listening. The guys are crowding the portable cooler to pick up beers.

Bittu and Jana enter -- Vicky greets them at the door.

VICKY
What happened? Why did you guys
take so long?

BITTU
Nothing.

JANA
Yeah we were walking slowly.

BITTU
We were just enjoying nature.

Vicky looks at them --

VICKY
Why are you both sweaty? Did you
run here?

BITTU
No.

JANA
No.

Vicky looks at them suspiciously. They're interrupted by a commotion -- Narendra has arrived.

NARENDRA
I'm ready to party, bitches!! Who's
ready to party?

-- *MUSIC picks up* --

Vicky, Bittu and Jana join the commotion.

A *FUN PARTY SONG*.

-- Lots of daaru flowing.

-- One guy puts on a sari and pretends to be a girl, others dance around him.

-- Bittu is hogging the snack counter.

-- Jana is ribbing with a bunch of friends.

-- Narendra is going berserk with his crazy dance moves.

-- Lokesh is trying to maintain some semblance of order.

-- Vicky is enjoying himself -- drinking and dancing

As the *SONG* begins to end --

Vicky needs to pee. The line to the bathroom is rather long. Instead of waiting, he decides to --

EXT. FARMHOUSE

Vicky positions himself outside the gate -- tipsy and bladder bursting -- starts to pee.

Relief.

He notices he's peeing right next to the ominous message on the wall. Playfully he repositions himself and starts to pee on the message.

Done peeing, he looks at the message. With a satisfied chuckle he leaves.

The message on the wall reads: *O Stree ... Aana*

Hold.

Long hold.

A really long fucking hold.

BAM!! Suddenly a shadowy figure swishes past!

A moment later -- a sari pallu -- attached to the shadow.

The sudden power cut results in a BLACKOUT!

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Undeterred the party goes on. With boys swinging with their mobile phone flashlights in hand.

The doorbell rings.

A drunk GUY, closest to the door -- turns to look. Nobody else is paying attention.

He slowly teeters towards the door. *Tension.*

Peeks through the glass panel in the door.

In the darkness we see the outline of a woman standing outside.

More tension.

Too drunk to really think much, the guy opens the door.

The lady is motionless.

The shadowy lady lifts her head and looks at him. He just stares back.

NARENDRA (O.S.)

Oh you're here?

(tells a guy next to him)

She's a 'girlfriend.' Called her for 'friendship.'

Narendra comes to the door to get her in.

LADY

You didn't tell me there will be so many guys.

It's a woman, well into her 30s.

NARENDRA

(tells his friend)

You go in, I got this.

(to the lady)

I told you it's a party. What difference does it make? I'll find a room for us upstairs.

-- as they enter --

LADY

Well, I could have brought some of my friends for 'friendship' with your friends.

NARENDRA

Nah, they're all useless. They just want to watch Sunny do it.

HER POV

Narendra and Lady walk away, leaving the door ajar.

Beat.

She glides towards the door -- enters --

INSIDE --

She stays in the shadows -- observing the boys being boys -- loud and rowdy.

She sees Narendra whisking his lady friend away and going upstairs.

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Narendra and Lady in bed.

LADY
What happened?

NARENDRA
I don't know. Is it important?

-- leans in to kiss her -- she pushes him back --

LADY
This place is creepy. Go check what happened to the lights.

Narendra reluctantly gets up --

HER POV

She emerges from behind the pillar and looks at the posse of boys. Holding phone flashlights. Looks like a buffet laid out for her! *Eeni meeni myni mo..* She looks at each of the boys.

JANA, looks directly at Her.

Beat.

He can see a shadowy figure in the darkness, but not entirely sure.

The moment he looks away, She moves behind a pillar.

Jana decides to investigate. He slowly walks towards the corner -- towards her.

Tension.

JANA
Hello..

He slowly approaches the dark corner.

She moves around the pillar -- eyes on him -- gets ready to pounce on him --

NARENDRA (O.S.)
Eyy Jana--

Jana turns around.

Watching her prey recede, She slinks back into her dark corner.

LIVING ROOM

The room is flooded with light.

The boys cheer.

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Beaming from ear to ear, Narendra enters the bedroom.

Sees the lady standing in the shadows in a corner of the room.

NARENDRA
The fuse is back on. Come on, now.

The lady at the window doesn't move.

Tension.

UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

The door opens. Lady steps out. She walks up to the bedroom.

Obviously she's not the woman in the bedroom!

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

More Tension.

Narendra is surprised, realizing it is not the Lady.

NARENDRA
Hello..

The woman at the window comes closer to Narendra -- and he sees her face (we don't). His expression changes to terror!

Boom.

He falls to the ground -- like somebody pulled his feet from under him -- and he gets dragged along the floor, very fast -- smashes the window pane and disappears outside.

At that moment Lady enters -- sees the window shattering -- maybe she catches a glimpse of a body flying out, can't really tell.

And screams.

LIVING ROOM

Vicky is the first to react. He jumps and runs up the stairs. Everybody in the hall is startled. Scared even.

BEDROOM

Vicky, followed by others, enters the room.

Lady is staring out the window, screaming. She points at something.

LADY
There.. There.. Oh my god!
(sheer terror in her eyes)

Vicky tries to spot what she is showing, but can't. It's too dark.

VICKY
What? Where?

LADY
There he is.. There he is.. Oh my
god!

He grabs her --

VICKY
What happened?

LADY
(gasping)
Stree.. Stree..

VICKY
Stree what?

LADY
She took your friend!

What?!

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

They all walk around the house in groups -- shining flashlights -- calling out for Narendra.

Vicky, Bittu, Jana form one posse. Other such groups.

They look into shrubs, inside sheds..

Finally they all converge again at the front of the house.

No sign of Narendra. But Vicky spots something in the bushes. Narendra's clothes.

VICKY
These are Narendra's clothes.

BITTU
His underwear is also here.

JANA
What is he doing roaming around naked?

BITTU
Shit! Stree got him.

VICKY
What the hell?

BITTU
Guys, let's analyze this logically. Narendra is gone. His clothes are here.
(beat)
Stree got him. What else could have happened? That's the only explanation.

VICKY
(glares at him)
Or.. The moron did some shitty drugs, jumped out of the window, and is roaming around naked somewhere.
(adds)
How about that for an explanation?

Beat.

BITTU
I like my story better.

The other guys also all nod in agreement.

They all look at the clothes lying on the ground.

BALA
Actually I agree with Vicky. I don't think Stree would have come into the house. There is the inscription on the wall.

Everybody nods.

VICKY
Well..

AT THE WALL

On Bala, as he stares. From behind him Bittu peeks in. Followed by Jana. And others.

BALA
How the fuck did this happen?

BITTU
(reads aloud)
O stree.. Aana.

The message on the wall is an unmistakable invitation.

BITTU
Who did this?

Vicky is guilty.

BITTU
The fuck is wrong with you!

BALA
So you basically put a red carpet
out for her to come inside.

VICKY
Guys, you don't really believe all
this--

A squabble breaks out. Ending in nothing.

TOWN - DAY

It's a bright day. Laidback streets of the town.

INT. TAILORING SHOP - DAY

Women try on clothes.

A hungover Vicky pedalling the sewing machine at a lower
pace.

Disturbing the peace --

EXT. TAILOR SHOP LANE - DAY

3 sporty bikes, the inexpensive ones with cool contours, roar
into the lane and pull up in front of the shop. Three 'cool
dudes' are on them. Followed by a sad-ass bike with Jana and
Bittu.

The women outside throw nasty glances at the dudes.

Vicky's father shakes his head.

DAD
Jobless buffalos!

Vicky looks outside. Curious at the visitors, he steps out.
Bittu and Jana quickly come to Vicky --

JANA
Narendra's gang.

Narendra's friends put their shades on, walk up to Vicky and stare at him.

It's face-off of sorts as the three taller, cooler gang line up a foot away from the faces of Vicky, Bittu and Jana. The leader of the DURGA PRASAD starts Vicky down.

DURGA PRASAD
Where's our friend?

Vicky matches up to the coolness, even if dressed in a vest.

VICKY
Which one?

COOL GUY 2
You know which one.

COOL GUY 3
The one that came to your party.

DURGA PRASAD
The one that-

VICKY
Arre direct naam bolo na. Yeh kyun
KBC khel raha hai..

DURGA PRASAD
(beat)
Narendra.

VICKY
(quickly)
No idea. He came. He made noise.
And he left.

DURGA PRASAD
But you. You let Stree inside.

VICKY
What!?

COOL GUY 2
You peed on the writing! And
invited her in.

VICKY
You guys are crazy. I have work to
do. (adds) How do you know all this
shit anyway?

They look at Bittu.

Vicky stares at Bittu - 'What the hell!'

One of the cool guys gets a call and nods to others.

DURGA PRASAD
You better hope we find him. Or
else..

Vicky gestures like - 'Or else what?'

He thinks for a second. Doesn't have an answer. They just get
on their bikes to go.

COOL GUY 2
You have no idea how high our
connections go!

They drive away loudly.

VICKY
So then ask the connections to find
your friend.
(adds)
It's my pee. I will pee wherever
the hell I want.

Vicky then slowly turns to Bittu and stares at him.

BITTU
They tortured me. And threatened to
hurt me.

JANA
Bullshit. They didn't even finish
asking their question and this
bugger blurted out everything.

VICKY
(shakes his head)
I sometimes wonder how you are my
best friend!

Just then an auto pulls up -- Lady from last night emerges.

VICKY
What the hell is she doing here??

JANA
Oh yeah.. She wants to get paid.

VICKY
For what?

Lady comes up --

LADY
Your friend never paid me.

VICKY
So how's that our problem!

LADY
It was your party.

VICKY
Says who! It wasn't even my house.

LADY
But you peed on it.

VICKY
What the hell! Why is everyone
after my pee!??

LADY
Just give me my money that was
promised.

BITTU
But he didn't even do friendship.
He didn't have time for friendship!

JANA
Yeah, he's probably doing
friendship with Stree right now!

LADY
I don't care. You better pay me..

VICKY
Why me??

INSIDE THE SHOP

Old Cashier beckons Dad --'psst'. Dad looks up.

He nods -- pointing outside. They both curiously watch.

DAD'S POV - Vicky shakes his head, looks around and pays cash
to the Lady.

Old Cashier shakes his head disapprovingly at Dad.

INT. TAILOR SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Vicky is going back to his station when his Dad catches his
eye. He beckons his son, with a very subtle gesture.

Vicky is unsure. Dad gestures to him again and points to the
other room.

Cautiously, Vicky enters the store room.

Dad comes and closes the door behind them.

DAD
Son, I need to tell you something.
(Vicky's bracing)
Your mother was an angel. May God
bless her soul wherever she is.

VICKY
Matlab, she's alive somewhere!?

DAD
(shakes his head)

VICKY
Tsk! Father, why do you keep
changing the backstory every time!

DAD
Son.. Son.. Listen. Before you were
born even I did friendship with
your mother.

VICKY
What!?? You don't know what that
word means..

DAD
Listen to me please.
(shushes Vicky)
Purush aur aurat ka milan hota
hai.. It's of very high importance!
The union of the two bodies is
embodiment of heaven and earth
coming together. Of shakti and
shiv. Of Pran shakti and-

VICKY
Why are you getting granthik on me
now!??

DAD
I don't know what you guys are up
to these days with friendship and
girlfriends.. But the union of man
and woman is sacred, my son.
(adds)
And you can choose a more deserving
lady to share your male-energy with-

VICKY
(fully awkward)
Aaah! Dad stop it!
(realizes)
Oh you saw me giving money to that
woman outside??

DAD
Even though I shouldn't be advising
this, I don't mind you discovering
yourself by yourself than with
women of the night.

VICKY
Are you serious!?

DAD
 I can buy 10GB data on your phone
 so you can indulge once a week or
 preferably once a month.. in self-
 discovery.

Vicky cannot control his father anymore. He walks out on him abruptly.

PEACEFUL SPOT

Vicky takes a break, a breather to clear his head. Smoking.

On cue the assistant comes out to call him in, but Vicky is too quick to shush him and shunt him back in.

Vicky inhales his smoke and takes a deep breath.

Suddenly he smells this bewitchingly familiar smell. He turns around and --

Nothing.

But something catches his eye. It's a letter. Fluttering, placed under a stone.

Curious, he picks it up.

And opens it --

EXT. SARASWAT FAST FOOD CENTRE - DAY

BITTU
 My dear Vicky..

All three friends are reading the letter.

JANA
 Done! Right there.. 'My dear!' It's
 all set my friend! Badhaai ho!

Vicky nods bashfully.

BITTU
 'My dear Vicky, How are you?'
 (adds)
 That's dumb. She knows how you are
 but still asking how you are.

JANA
 Abey.. Tu bus padh na. Side
 commentary kyun?

BITTU
 'I am glad I met you. I cherish
 every meeting of ours.'

-- looks at Vicky, who grins --

BITTU
 'And I relish our deep
 conversations that we share.'

-- Vicky is not sure about that, but still takes it --

BITTU
 'I hope we can meet again and
 again. One more thing. Can you
 please get me the following?'

JANA
 Kya!??

Everyone reacts similarly.

BITTU
 '1 quarter brandy, 1/2 kg mutton, a
 kilo of ground glass, matchbox,
 wild flowers, safed billi ki baal,
 tail of a lizard'.

WTF!!

BITTU
 'Thanking you. Affectionately.'

A moment of silent bewilderment, as everybody tries to
 comprehend the strange letter.

BITTU
 What the fuck! It's a mental
 shopping list!

JANA
 Why does she need these weird
 stuff?

They ponder for a second.

JANA
 So what are you going to do?

VICKY
 (beat)
 I mean, pyaar se poochi hai toh..

JANA
 Toh??

VICKY
 (hesitantly)
 Laane padenge na..

BITTU
 Are you serious??

VICKY
 Listen.. If a girl comes up to you
 and asks for something, whatever
 the hell it is.. will you do it or
 not??

Long beat.

QUIRKY MUSIC starts --

AROUND TOWN - DAY

Vicky mainly, and his weirded out friends go around town and buy the stuff from the shopping list --

-- Liquor shop
 -- Meat shop
 -- Raddi shop to buy broken glass
 -- Machinist to ground the glass into powder
 -- Florist for some roses
 -- Wooded area for wild flowers
 -- Vicky diligently checks each item off the list.
 Couple more items left --

BACKYARD

Vicky, Bittu and jana are staring at what seems like a ridiculous task.

They are looking at -- a fierce looking cat.

Vicky is a little unsure.

JANA
 Go for it.
 (beat)
 Ab iss mein sharmaana kya hai?

BITTU
 Yeah go go..

CUT TO:

Vicky is running around the cat. And it's not a friendly one. It's actually turning and snarling at its pursuer.

Vicky's Dad is also watching at this strange visual from inside the shop.

CUT TO:

Vicky is triumphant as he spits out some of the hair.

Jana pats him for a job well done. Then points to --
A lizard on the roof.

CUT TO:

Bittu and Jana are chilling and sipping tea, while in the background Vicky is running after the jumpy lizard.

They are lost in existential discussion --

BITTU
You think this is normal?

JANA
Define normal.

BITTU
Abey.. Don't get philosophical now.
Does this look normal to you.

JANA
Maybe not the lizard part. Other
stuff I kinda understand I guess.

BITTU
How?

JANA
(casually)
The girl likes her meat. And can
handle her drink.
(beat)
I actually dig her. I think she's
quite cool.

BITTU
You idiot. These are not normal
stuff anyone would do. There's
something weird about her. I can
feel it.

The lizard falls on Vicky. He yelps and jumps around.

BITTU
Definitely something strange.

VICKY (O.S.)
I am ok! Got it!

JANA
(casually nods)
Yeah.

EXT. TOWN - CUTAWAY

Life goes on in the town.

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Vicky is getting ready in a hurry. He's trying to look as cool as possible.

He realizes his dad is perambulating outside his room. He quickly shuts the door.

Vicky puts on final touches, sprays perfume liberally on himself.

And steps out.

Of course, his dad is across the hall. They stare at each other.

Dad beckons him with his head. Vicky shakes his head like - 'No it's ok.'

Dad persists. Vicky goes up to him.

Dad can smell his son's perfume. He then gives Vicky a small plastic cover.

Vicky dreads opening it. But is forced to check the contents.

It's got some cash, Hanuman Chalisa, a new SIM card --

DAD

10GB..

-- And a condom.

Shit! Akward!

DAD

Har option tere haath mein hain.

Hold on Vicky.

SARASWAT FAST FOOD CENTRE

Bittu and Jana are nicely dressed up too. Bittu is on the phone. Hangs up.

BITTU

Vicky is not answering the phone.

JANA

I wonder why.

BITTU

100% he has gone to meet that girl.
And he is totally avoiding us.

JANA

And we must not let him?

BITTU

Exactly.
 (then)
 Are you not seeing what I am
 saying?

JANA

Which is what exactly?

BITTU

This girl.. She appears only once a
 year in this town. Exactly during
 the puja time - same as our Stree.
 And then she disappears.

(adds)

Then she asks for scary bizarre
 shopping list that is sounding like
 the shit used in black magic.

(adds)

Nobody knows much about her. Nobody
 has seen her I am sure except our
 friend!

JANA

So what are you saying?

BITTU

She is the Stree!!

They silently ponder this petrifying thought.

EXT. TEMPLE - EVENING

Vicky is waiting. Fidgety. Making sure he looks dashing.

She's nowhere in sight.

He hears aarti bells from inside. So he decides to make a
 dash for it and quickly prays to the Gods and rushes back.

Still no sign of her.

Some random person gives him prasad also. He takes it
 hesitantly. On second thoughts he asks for an extra peda.

BIKE ON TOWN STREETS - EVENING

JANA

Shit!

BITTU

Exactly.

JANA

This is the shit men get into when
 they fall into the web of women..

BITTU
Especially when they ditch their
friends!

Jana tries Vicky's number again. It's still switched off.

JANA
We must get to Vicky before she
does!

EXT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

As Vicky waits, he pulls out his cool headphones and tries to act like he's chilling. He switches on his phone to play a song but it immediately rings - it's Jana. And he immediately shuts it down.

But still acts like music is playing on his headphones, and bobs his head, like he's lost in some cool music.

Tension slowly builds up. Crescendoes until --

VOICE
Hi!

Vicky puts on an act like he can't hear because of the music.

Gayatri comes close. Vicky takes his headphones off.

VICKY
Oh hey! Sorry I was kinda.. lost in
music.

GAYATRI
Cool!

VICKY
You just got here?
(off of her nod)
You missed the aarti again!

GAYATRI
Oh no! I missed it again!

BIKE ON STREETS - SAME TIME

BITTU
I am sure he's not seeing any of
the signs!

JANA
He's blinded by the lure of a
woman!

EXT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

VICKY
 (sweetly)
 Here's some Prasad for you.
 (gives her the peda)

GAYATRI
 Oh.. So sweet. But.. It's ok. I am
 fasting today.

VICKY
 Oh ok..
 (pops that sweet into his
 mouth too)
 We can go in now if you want. I
 know the assistant priest. I can
 get him to do a small aarti for you-

GAYATRI
 Is that for me?
 (points to the bag)

VICKY
 Yes! (proudly) I.. I got all the
 stuff you asked for! Umm.. I hope
 goat's mutton is ok. You didn't
 tell me which brand of brandy, so I
 got 3-4 kinds. You can have
 whatever you like. Also the billi
 na.. poor a safed nahi mila. Matlab
 it was white in patches. Hope
 that's ok..
 (then)
 Anyway.. Why do you need all these--

Gayatri places her hand in his shoulder --

GAYATRI
 Let's go somewhere na.

VICKY
 (oh!)

GAYATRI
 Let's go somewhere quiet and sit.
 And talk.
 (adds)
 Do you know of any place?

Vicky thinks --

BIKE ON STREETS - SAME TIME

BITTU
 I know all the lovers spots that he
 can go to. Let's check all of them!

EXT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

Vicky is still thinking --

VICKY
Shit! They know all the spots.

Gayatri smiles at Vicky muttering. She takes charge--

GAYATRI
Come.

She takes his hand. And pulls him along with her.

The world slows down for Vicky.

A SWEET BUT HAUNTING MELODY plays over --

Sweet visuals of them walking away in slow motion. She leads him out of the area. And he lets her lead him.

They go through the streets dressed in pretty lights and through people, dressed up for the temple.

They also walk through guys dressed up in drag.

She hails a shared tempo.

And they get on it.

BIKE

Bittu and Jana reach the temple.

No sign of Vicky.

BITTU
They're not here. Let's go.

TEMPO

The song continues as Gayatri and Vicky travel in shared tempo.

Gayatri finally lets go of Vicky's hand.

It's a sweet, shy moment for Vicky as they travel with others. It's a slightly intimate moment in a crowded tempo.

Their shoulders rub. They sneak looks at each other. Of course, some co-passengers also sneak a look at them.

To add to it all, the brandy bottles clink in the bag.

MEANWHILE

His friends are trying to look for him at various places.

As the *MUSIC COMES TO AN END* --

DOOSRI RAAT

LONE SPOT - OUTSKIRTS

Vicky and Gayatri get off at the outskirts. There's no soul around.

Gayatri leads him to an isolated spot.

It's romantic if you are in that mood. Or it's bloody scary if you are not.

The full moon is the only light source.

Gayatri beckons Vicky to sit next to her. He complies.

She smiles at him. He smiles back. Except he's also a bit nervous. Then --

VICKY
How do you know this place?

She shrugs.

He then sees at a distance -- a burning pyre. It's a burial ground close by!

VICKY
(worried)
Why this place?

She looks at him blankly.

GAYATRI
It's peaceful.

Wtf! Vicky is spooked. Then she suddenly smiles. Vicky is relieved.

She drops her smile abruptly. Vicky's relief freezes too.

GAYATRI
So what all do you stitch in your shop? Mainly lehengas and stuff?

VICKY
No no. We do complete ladies fashions and stylings.
(adds)
Ghagra, Lehenga, Chudidaar, Patiala, Anarkali, Classic Salwaars, Pakistani Salwaars, Long Kurti, Short Kurti, Garara, Sharara.. Of course blouses are my speciality. Deep neck, back deep, designer blouse, model blouse katori blouse--

OUTSKIRTS

Bittu and Jana have now come out of town and looking around if they should venture more.

BITTU
I think we should just head home.

JANA
Why? You getting scared?

BITTU
No! I am just like.. Now tired of looking for this.. this selfish guy..

It's eerily quiet. They both feel it.

JANA
Yeah.. I think we should go bac--

Suddenly the bike dies.

That freaks them out.

LONE SPOT

VICKY
We also do western suits, tops, skirts, frocks, gowns, housecoats, embroidery, stone work, mirror work, darning, nighties, falls..
(beat)
That's it I think.

GAYATRI
(beat)
When are you going to give me my lehenga?

VICKY
Oh.. Sorry, I got busy with your.. shopping..

GAYATRI
I am sorry that I made you..

VICKY
No no.. It's ok.

He gets distracted by Gayatri's beauty in the moonlight.

VICKY
Actually I didn't take your measurements properly.

GAYATRI
I thought.. (she taps her forehead)

VICKY
 (smiles)
 Yeah, I always get it right. But
 for the first time, just in your
 case, I think I got the
 measurements wrong.

Gayatri looks at him. Smiles. Then drops the smile.

GAYATRI
 Toh ab le lo.

What!

VICKY
 Umm.. I don't have a tape..

GAYATRI
 Do you need a tape?

Vicky smiles. Shyly.

Gayatri gestures like - 'I am serious.'

The SONG restarts --

Vicky tentatively gets up and slowly starts off measuring her hands first - using his fingers and hands.

It turns into an intimate moment as he measures her all around.

Suddenly, the cloud around the moon clears off.

Gayatri looks up. Then she turns to Vicky -- picks up the shopping bag -- gestures to him that she'll be back. And takes off.

Vicky is clueless as to what just happened.

All he knows is he's suddenly all alone in the middle of nowhere, with a burial ground around.

LANE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Bittu kicks the starter of his bike. No use.

BITTU
 Shit!

JANA
 How can you not put petrol again?!
 You and your dad -- want to hoard
 every penny.

BITTU
 I didn't think we would roam so
 much on it.

JANA

Shit!

They look around -- they are all alone in this sinister night.

JANA

What do we do now?

BITTU

(thinks)

Go to the petrol bunk in town and get some petrol.

JANA

What do you mean go? Both of us, right?

BITTU

Who'll look after the bike?

JANA

We can push the bike and go.

BITTU

It's 5 KM to town by the main road! We'll die pushing. You go by this shortcut, it'll be faster.

JANA

I'm not going alone.

BITTU

Then you stay here, I'll go.

Beat.

Jana looks at the woods around.

Scary. Eerie.

JANA

Uh.. I'll go.

BITTU

OK, come back soon.

Jana starts to walk.

LONE SPOT

Vicky patiently waits. It's been a while. Everything around him looks terrifying.

He gently calls out --

VICKY

Hello..

(realizes, mutters)

Shit, I don't even know her name!

Beat.

Suddenly a flutter -- as a bunch of birds flee their coop.

Startling Vicky.

Shit!

The howl of a dog in the distance.

He walks in the direction Gayatri went.

A few metres, and he sees a broken gate leading to --

SHAMSHAAN

Quite scared now, he enters the gate.

VICKY
(softly)
Hello...

-- no response.

He walks on through the graves.

There's a burning pyre in the distance.

DESERTED ROAD

Jana walks -- scared shitless. Looking around him for anything suspicious.

A rustle in the woods -- startles him -- he jumps out of his skin.

Nothing. Must be some wild animal.

He walks on.

PARKED BIKE

Bittu is scared too. Tries hard to peer into the woods -- to see if anyone -- anything -- is lurking around.

A hum.

Thoroughly scared, he trains his ear.

The hum intensifies.

It's getting closer.

Tension.

The hum is getting really close now. Bittu anxiously has his eyes peeled in the direction of the sound.

Suddenly a light -- around the corner -- heading towards him.

It's a scooter.

Bittu is relieved. Thank God!

He waves to the guy to stop.

The scooter drives right by him -- the driver is just fixated on the road -- doesn't even blink. Doesn't even acknowledge Bittu and his bike by the roadside.

He just drives on. Like nothing.

Like he's a ghost. Or Bittu is a ghost!

Bittu is more scared now! Rudra's warning from last night --

RUDRA (V.O.)
Never venture out alone. The safest
place for a man is inside your four
walls.

Bittu shudders.

DESERTED ROAD

Jana walks briskly, jumping at every noise and rustle.

And suddenly finds himself at --

CROSSROADS - NIGHT

Jana remembers Rudra's warning from last night.

RUDRA (V.O.)
Beware of crossroads. Those are her
favourite haunts.

He feels a chill.

RUDRA (V.O.)
Try to be as quiet as possible.
Remove your slippers, the noise
attracts her.

Jana quickly removes his footwear. Starts tiptoeing.

Tension.

He takes a few steps, when --

HER VOICE
Janaaa..

He stops. A chill runs up his spine.

RUDRA (V.O.)
DO NOT look back.

He takes a deep breath and starts to walk.

HER VOICE
Janaaaaaa...

-- it's sweeter this time. More sensual.

Jana is on the verge of tears.

RUDRA (V.O.)
Keep walking. Don't run, just walk.

Jana starts to recite the Hanuman Chalisa, as he picks up pace and walks. Gets stuck after the first stanza. Starts repeating the same lines.

HER VOICE
Janaaaaaaaaaaaa..

-- this time it's practically in his ears. Like she is right next to him.

Fuck!

He slowly starts to turn back --

RUDRA (V.O.)
Aaj tak aisa mard paida nahi hua,
who can resist her voice. Everybody
turns back.

-- he turns to face her.

In the middle of the crossroads, Jana stands facing Her.

This is the first time we see her.

A quiet, shy bride draped in a sari, head bent, ghunghat down, covering her eyes. She is demure and scary at the same time.

Gingerly, he slowly tries to bend to see her face, her eyes. And she too reciprocates by slowly lifting her bent head.

Intercut between the two, as they try to look at each other. Her POV and his POV.

Anticipation. Tension.

And finally we see her face! In the shadowy darkness. The outline of a pretty girl's face.

Jana's expression softens.

Boom!

Suddenly the face turns ghostly! And lets out a piercing sound as she pounces on Jana.

Jana is dragged along the ground by his legs -- very fast, like a bullet. He screams in pain.

And a moment later, they're gone.

Beat.

Along the path, further down -- Jana's clothes lie, including his undies.

INTERVAL

EXT. TOWN ROADS - DAY

A rickshaw fitted with loudspeakers makes its rounds.

ANNOUNCER

All the townsfolk are hereby warned. Men are not safe on the streets after dark. They are advised to stay indoors at night and not venture outside. We repeat, men are not safe at nights.

(adds)

Stree is on the prowl!

Inside the rickshaw are the Announcer and Rudra.

ANNOUNCER

Here are some of the rules by the resident expert on Stree.

He hands over the mic noisily. Rudra proudly takes the mic -- clears his throat into the mic itself -- taps on it -- does a mic check and everything. Then, he reads out of a paper that is titled 'Rules of Stree.'

RUDRA

To be safe from Stree, please follow the following rules. Otherwise she will take you away and suck you bloody dry and shit--

Announcer asks him to go easy --

ANNOUNCER

Please don't get emotional. This is for family audience.

RUDRA

(nods and continues)

Rule number 1. Write on the walls - O Stree, Kal Aana. Don't get cute with variations. Stick to exactly that. Don't be stingy, pay the watchmen to write with their special mixture.

2. If you have to go out in the nights, go in groups, or go with a female escort.. and avoid crossroads.

3. The most important rule!

In case you encounter Stree, one
 thing you must never ever do is--
 (voice becomes inaudible)

Rudra taps the mike -- it has stopped working.

And no one gets to hear this main rule again!

INT. JANA'S HOUSE

Loud wailing of JANA'S MOM submerges Rudra's announcements.

JANA'S MOM
 ..that bloody Stree has taken my
 kid. And he's still a virgin. He
 won't even be able to stand her
 ferocity!

Not everyone's crying as much as her. They are a little
 dumbfounded by the happenings. She then eyes Vicky and Bittu--

JANA'S MOM
 It's all because of these idiot
 friends. My dear Jana doesn't even
 look at a girl with buri nazar.
 They spoiled him completely with
 drinks and night-shows and dirty
 pictures.. and.. and friendships!
 (adds)
 Did you even go to the temple??

Bittu is directly in her line of sight. And Vicky is trying
 to hide his face next to Jana's Dad.

JANA'S DAD
 (in low tones to Vicky)
 Tell me the truth. Why were his
 clothes left behind? What is this
 friendship you guys are into these
 days??

Vicky doesn't know what to say. He diverts --

VICKY
 Uncle.. All this Stree stuff is
 nonsense. I think we should
 register a police complaint that
 Jana's missing.

A couple of others around them nod their head in agreement.
 But a couple are pessimistic.

VISITOR 1
 Once Stree gets you, there's no
 coming back. (shakes his head
 hopelessly) Woh toh gaya.

Dad and Vicky look at the guy like - 'Are you serious?' The
 visitor bites his tongue and shuts up.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Prominent sign says 'POLICE STATION'. Equally prominently, written on the wall below is: *O Stree Kal Aana*.

INSIDE

CONSTABLE
What's your complaint?

VICKY
Sir, our friend.. Actually two friends.. are missing.

CONSTABLE
Achcha.. What are their names?

BITTU
Sir, Stree took them.

The cop stares at them. Then he shakes his head like there's no hope and gets up.

CONSTABLE
Stree abductions are handled by head constable.

Vicky is dismayed.

WIPE TO:

The HEAD CONSTABLE is looking at Bittu and Vicky.

HEAD CONSTABLE
Why were you guys wandering around in the middle of the night?? And why the hell didn't you write on the walls?

VICKY
Sir, how can you guys believe in all this shit--

BITTU
It was written sir. But he wiped it off.
(points to Vicky)

The constable pipes in --

CONSTABLE
Why the hell??

BITTU
He peed on it.

HEAD CONSTABLE
Wtf!

BITTU
 He actually peed only on one word
 deliberately and wiped it off with
 all the beer-piss. Just one word -
 Kal.

CONSTABLE
 (puts it together)
 So it then read - O Stree.. Aana???

BITTU
 You are correct, Sir.

Constable holds up his finger for Bittu to pause and shouts
 across to his colleagues.

CUT TO:

All the cops in the station are now staring at these two. And
 they can't contain their laughs.

CONSTABLE
 (elaborates)
 ..so it read - 'O stree.. *piss piss*
piss.. Aana!'

They all laugh.

HEAD CONSTABLE
 What death wish do you have? Why
 the hell did you screw with the
 writing?!!

CONSTABLE
 He basically invited her into the
 house.. Rose water daal ke.
 (corrects)
 Matlab, pee water daal ke.

VICKY
 (shakes his head)
 I can't believe that everyone
 believes in this cock and bull
 legend!
 (turns to Bittu)
 Then what about Jana?? He wasn't
 even in the house.

BITTU
 (beat)
 Mistaken identity. I think she was
 looking for you!

Vicky raps him on his head --

VICKY
 Sometimes I wonder how are you even
 my friend!?

BITTU
 (is sorry)
 I am just.. giving all the facts so
 it will help in the investigation.

VICKY
 Yeah right. (gestures - Let's get
 out of here)

AROUND TOWN - DAY

MUSIC DRIVEN SHOTS of Stree related frenzy in the town --

-- Rudra goes around in an auto-rickshaw, distributing pamphlets with rules of Stree on them. Kids run after it.

-- People have gathered in groups, discussing the horrors of the night.

GUY 1
 When will men be safe in this
 country!?
 (what?)
 Matlab.. In this town!

GUY 2
 I heard that Stree is especially
 ferocious this time. I heard it's
 looking for something specific.
 Maybe it's found a scent.

GUY 3
 But one thing I believe is that the
 guy who she takes, gets maximum
 pleasure before of course she
 devours him.

GUY 2
 You mean like scorpions? Where the
 female kills and eats the male
 after having sex.

GUY 1
 Wah bhai.. Agar jaana hai toh aise
 jaana hai!

GUY 3
 Are you crazy, at the end of it you
 die, you idiot!

OUTSIDE TEMPLE

There's a board that says 'Special Puja for protection from Stree Rs 150/-'.

PRIEST
 She's nothing but the ansh of the
 Goddess herself!
 (does namaskaar to the
 heavens)

TOWN SQUARE

A crowd has gathered to listen to a very enthused MLA.

MLA
 ..I will personally award 10,000
 rupees for every person found..
 (round of applause)
 And I will award 10 lakh rupees to
 whoever gets rid of Stree itself!
 (louder applause)
 And I will name this chowk with his
 name.
 (bigger applause, he's
 even more fired up)
 and I will--

-- the Secretary interrupts and tells him to control himself.

MLA
 (calms down)
 Ok that's it. Those are all the
 things I will do. Thank you.

Vicky and Bittu are also watching this.

ONLOOKER
 (shakes his head)
 Paagal hai! Once She's taken them,
 there's no coming back!

ONLOOKER 2
 Where do you think she's storing
 all those people??

ONLOOKER 3
 How does she know everyone's names?

ONLOOKER
 Maybe everyone's tracked.*

ONLOOKER 2
 Who is she exactly?

ONLOOKER
 Arre.. It's a very long story.

ANOTHER GUY
 She was a witch!

ANOTHER GUY
 No no.. She was a queen..

ANOTHER GUY
 Bullshit.. She's not from this
 world.

Vicky and Bittu decide enough is enough and leave.

BIKE ON ROAD

Bittu drives, Vicky rides behind him.

BITTU
Tell me again, exactly where were
you yesterday?

VICKY
By the old bridge.

BITTU
Oh! At the shamshan?

VICKY
No. At the bridge.

BITTU
The bridge by the shamshan.

VICKY
Yes..

BITTU
Hmmm.. Was she with you all the
time?

VICKY
Yeah..
(then slowly concedes)
Actually she left suddenly. And..
never came back.

BITTU
What! Around what time??

VICKY
Around 1030.. 11.. I think..

Bittu stops the bike and --

BITTU
(emphatically shouts)
I knew it!!

VICKY
What!?

BITTU
Don't you get it?? She comes at
exactly the same time as Stree
roams the streets. She asks for
black magic shit. She doesn't even
have a mobile phone yaar! Who
doesn't these days?!
(beat)
And last night she went off into
the shamsham to do God knows what..
(shushing Vicky's protest)
..at exactly the same time Jana
went missing!
(adds coyly)

And some weird shit was happening
around me and spooked the hell out
of me.

(beat)

You see what I am seeing?

VICKY

That you're jealous that I have a
girlfriend and you don't?

BITTU

(rubbishes it, presses on)

Tell me something. Has anyone else
besides you even seen this girl? I
know I haven't.

Vicky ponders briefly --

FLASHBACK: HIS PEACEFUL SPOT --

-- Gayatri leaves and instantly the assistant comes beckoning
him.

FLASHBACK: OUTSIDE TEMPLE --

-- He's with Gayatri. A GUY entering the temple nods to
Vicky, and enters the temple -- without so much as a glance
at Gayatri.

BACK --

On Vicky. Shit.

Bittu raises his arms like he won.

BITTU

I knew it!

(beat)

She is Stree!!

Beat.

Vicky is lost in thought.

BITTU

But the only thing I don't
understand is, how come she comes
to the temple? Aren't bhooth-pret
supposed to be afraid of God and
stuff?

Vicky looks up, already given up, sad.

VICKY

Actually she never entered the
temple. We always stayed outside.
And she didn't take the prasad.

Bittu nods sympathetically, softens his tone.

BITTU
Think about it, Vicky. I know you
don't believe in all this. But you
fell in love.. with a bloody ghost!
(chokes)
And she took our poor Jana!
(beat)
If she's really your lover, why
don't you go and ask her to give
our Jana back.
(beat)
And don't tell her I told you all
this! Then she might come after me
too!

Long hold on a disturbed Vicky.

ENERGETIC MUSIC starts --

TAILOR SHOP - DAY

Still disturbed, Vicky hits the pedal on the tailoring machine like a possessed man. He's lost in deep thought.

Oblivious to him, Vicky's father, Old Cashier and others stop their work, transfixed at the incredible talent at play!

Vicky is going at it full speed, like a machine.

Then he cuts and snips and twirls and folds and.. The outfit is done.

The assistant checks his watch. Vicky just set a new record!

Dad is overcome with pride. Everyone is stunned.

But Vicky is not aware of any of this.

He takes a plastic bag, flicks it open in style, shoves the outfit in and gets out of there.

HIS PEACEFUL SPOT

As the ENERGETIC MUSIC ends --

Vicky finds himself at his peaceful spot. He sits with the garment bag placed next to him.

A sense of unease comes over him.

The atmosphere slowly turns eerie.

As if on cue the sun goes behind the clouds suddenly it's much darker now.

Vicky finds this unnerving.

Rather suddenly --

GAYATRI
You finished it!

Vicky is startled. He jumps.

GAYATRI
(surprised, suspicious)
What happened?

VICKY
Er.. Um.. Nothing.. I just..

-- his gaze shifts to her feet.

And he notices for the first time. Her feet have unusually bloody veins, almost like cracks running along her legs.

Looks scary!

He slowly lifts his gaze from her feet to her face.

And guess what! She's staring at him with intense eyes.

He almost jumps at the scary visual.

Her lips part in a smile -- an evil smile. And the smile becomes wider and wider - unnaturally wide.

Then her face begins to turn. It turns into something grotesque. An evil beast.

And she lunges at him.

Vicky screams as he falls back.

GAYATRI
You finished it!

Instantly everything snaps back to normal. Not dark any more.

And there she is -- Gayatri standing sweetly.

Vicky realizes he's lying weirdly on the bench. He forces a weird smile at her.

GAYATRI
What happened?

VICKY
Er.. Um.. Nothing.

GAYATRI
You look like you saw a ghost.

VICKY
What?... No.. No..

She picks up the garment bag.

GAYATRI
Thank you so much! How much--

VICKY
(still nervous)
It's free.

GAYATRI
Really?

VICKY
Yes yes.. Free for you.

GAYATRI
But your dad--

VICKY
Kya karlega? I'll figure something.

GAYATRI
Wow.. Thank you for the gift then!
(Pats his arm. Then-)
You want to go out somewhere and--

VICKY
Yahin par theek hai.

GAYATRI
Ok!

And she sits next to him. She takes out the dress and starts marveling at it while Vicky is looking at her very closely.

Checking her eyes, ears, hair.. And especially the feet, which for some reason are again completely covered by her long skirt.

GAYATRI
I like your clothes.

VICKY
What?

GAYATRI
Your clothes. What you're wearing.
Did you stitch them yourself too?

Vicky instinctively holds his shirt together -- like she will snatch it from his body any time --

VICKY
No. Readymade.

GAYATRI
(now fully suspicious)
Is something the matter?

Beat. Vicky shakes his head. She stares.

Then -- he calms himself down, musters courage.

VICKY

Actually, Umm.. Actually I don't know if you've heard but there's a woman supposed to be going around at night. Stree. And for some odd reason she's like snatching up people it seems.

(feels low)

In fact my friend Jana is missing since last night. Narendra went missing the night before. I mean, I don't care about Narendra, but I care about Jana.. People are saying Stree took him.

(struggles)

Can I ask you something?

Gayatri is curious -- and suspicious.

VICKY

Don't take it personally please. But I have to ask.. Are you.. Are you by any chance.. Stree??

(off of her angry stare)

I mean.. I just.. want to know. So I thought I'll ask you. Even if you are, it's ok.. I'll just mentally prepare myself for it.. That's all.

Gayatri is getting angrier.

VICKY

Please don't get angry.. I am just.. Oh God!

Vicky is disturbed. Gayatri not reacting is making him more unnerved.

He suddenly sees a guy cycling at a distance.

Instinctively he runs up to the guy.

VICKY

Oh helloo... one second..

That guy stops.

VICKY

(hushed tone)

Brother, just tell me something. Do you see that girl sitting there?

(pointing in Gayatri's direction)

That guy looks for a long moment in that direction. Then--

BIKE GUY

Which girl?

Vicky sharply turns his head to look at Gayatri.

But she's not there!

What the actual fuck!

BANG CUT TO:

TEESRI RAAT

TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A lot of people have gathered and there's a lot of excitement in the air.

Led by Narendra's friends, a vigil is forming, with mashaals and everything.

Narendra's friends are revving their bikes to add to the energy of the scene. The leader of the gang, Durga Prasad, is yelling out instructions.

DURGA
(yells out)
We are going to go through each
lane of the town and look for that
Stree!

Everyone agrees.

DURGA
But We need a slogan. We can't just
walk around quietly. We need a
couple of slogans.

FRIEND
Oh! (scratches his head)

Friend 1 spots Vicky and Bittu a little far.

DURGA
Hey! We are trying to rescue your
friend too. So you better join and
get your families too.

BITTU
Yeah yeah.. Of course.

VICKY
So what's the plan exactly?

DURGA
Well, we will go around shouting
out for Stree.

VICKY
And if she does show up? Then what?

Beat.

DURGA
Behenchod.. we will figure
something on the way. Chalo!

ANOTHER STREET

The crowd passes through, waving mashaals and chanting.

CROWD
Kal nahi parson nahi.. O stree
kabhi nahi.. Aana nahi aana nahi..

At the end of the crowd, Vicky and Bittu are reluctantly walking and shouting along most unenthusiastically.

Then --

VICKY
This shit is useless. We need to
find out more about Stree. Who she
is, what she wants.

BITTU
You didn't ask your girlfriend?

VICKY
(glares at him)
We need to talk to someone who
knows this shit!

Beat.

BITTU
I know exactly the guy.

RUDRA'S BOOKSTORE

It's an old bookstore-cum-lending library. Random paperbacks and magazines line the shelves in the cramped room.

Rudra leads them through a narrow corridor --

RUDRA
Nobody knows shit.

BITTU
Except you!

RUDRA
Except me!

And they enter --

BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shelves line the walls, filled with dusty old books.

RUDRA
Now I have been doing some research
of my own. And I found something
very interesting.

Rudra pulls out an old, crumbling, cheap book.

RUDRA
This town ka puraan!

VICKY
This town has a puraan also?!

RUDRA
Yeah. Written by Shankar Shastri.

-- Rudra flips through the book --

VICKY
That senile old writer who used to
live by the creek?

Rudra stares Vicky down.

RUDRA
Before he lost his marbles, he was
a vidhwan.

Vicky nods.

Rudra sifts through the book -- filled with sketches along
with prose.

SHOTS OF the corresponding sketches as he reads in a sing
song tone --

RUDRA
*"Many years ago.. blah blah blah..
a beautiful prostitute decided to
marry her lover.. blah blah.. Whole
town was furious and jealous at
this decision.."*
Yeah, sure!

*"they banished her and decided to
punished her and treated her like
she was a witch.."*
Oh God.. these humans! Such brutal
creatures!

*"She loved him with all her heart..
Blah blah.. And married him against
all resistance."*
Way to go girl!

*"But in a tragic turn of events,
the people of the town hunted her
down.."*
Bloody bastards..

"And before they could consummate their union.."
That's so sad! They didn't even make love!

"They cut off the head of her husband.."
Bastards! Bloody animals!!

"Ever since she roams the area.. Blah blah.. looking for her lost love.. blah blah.. And to consummate their love.."
That is so sad..

VICKY
Rudra-bhai.. If you don't mind, will you please stop your side commentary and read ahead to the solution part.

RUDRA
Fine.. Ok here it is! "The only way the town can find mukti from her is..
(flips to next page)

-- looks at the two, nodding excitedly, at the suspense --

RUDRA
"the main occupation of the town used to be paddy and the main caste.." What!??

He turns the pages back and forth and realizes --

RUDRA
What the hell is the senile old fool rambling about?

Vicky snatches the book from him and checks it.

VICKY
It jumps from page 66 to page 73.
It's missing pages!

RUDRA
(miffed)
That's why I don't let anyone in this room! Nobody respects books these days! Ungrateful kids, tearing pages from my books.

Beat.

BITTU
Shit! What do we do now?

VICKY
Do you have any idea where she comes from, where we can find her?

She must be resting somewhere in
between?!

Rudra shrugs.

Vicky flips a couple of pages back. FOCUS ON an illustration depicting a bride and a headless groom.

VICKY
I think I have seen this somewhere.

RUDRA
(thinks)
I know that place!

Vicky and Bittu look at him, like - 'Yes?'

RUDRA
(beat)
You want to go there?
(off of Vicky's nod)
Now?
(off of another nod)
Like now now??

Vicky stares at him, like - 'Of course!'

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Vicky, Bittu, Rudra go triples on Rudra's scooter.

As they cross one of the lanes, they see the vigil crowd pass. It has substantially dwindled and the energy is halved.

CROWD
Sona nahi chandi nahi.. humara dost
lauta abhi!

The three are glad they are not part of that moronic bunch.

BITTU
What shit are they saying!

RUDRA
This is the problem of today's
youth. Lack of education.

They drive away.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The three arrive at the edge of some woods. They park their bike and start walking inside.

They soon arrive at --

The ruins of what was a temple a few hundred years ago.
Basking in the moonlight. *Eerily unwelcoming.*

They look around at the scary surroundings -- conscious of the hair-raising atmosphere that has engulfed the whole place now.

BITTU

You sure we should go in now?

RUDRA

We could come back tomorrow during the day. I think that'd be better..

VICKY

Come on, guys. If Jana is in there somewhere we have to find him tonight. Tomorrow will be too late.

And starts walking. Reluctantly Rudra and Bittu follow.

RUINS

Monstrous cobwebs run from wall to wall, amidst scarred and deformed figures of local deities. A strange energy field can be felt at certain spots of the temple. It's a scary place.

They come to a place that appears to have many pronged corridors staring back at them.

Vicky silently signals to Bittu 'you go that way' and to Rudra 'you go this way' and 'I'll go this way.'

Bittu signals back energetically: 'what?!! Why the fuck are we splitting up?'

Not really acknowledging him, Vicky and Rudra go two separate ways. Bittu stands there undecided which way to go. Heads in Vicky's direction, changes his mind, heads towards Rudra.

Except he can't see him any more. Panicky he turns -- and can't see Vicky either!

Shit!

He heads inside, shitting bricks.

VICKY

Vicky follows the weird and sometimes grotesque wall carvings, shining his tiny flashlight.

He starts going through what soon turns into a maze of passages.

A scare. As a bevy of bats noisily leave their perch and fly past him -- almost knocking him off.

He recovers. Moves on.

He arrives at a junction, but has no clue which way he came in from.

Prods on.

And arrives at the same scary sculpture.

WTF!

Now he is thoroughly lost.

BITTU

Bittu is scared out of his wits. Slowly prods on.

A scare. BAM! As a shadowy figure goes past!

Bittu falls, scrambles, curses. This causes a few stones come rolling down from the ceiling and walls.

Bittu crawls on all fours out of that area.

He's on the verge of tears now.

BITTU
(softly)
Vicky.. Rudra..

A scare. As the shadowy figure passes again!

Bittu loses it. He begins running -- to get the hell out of there.

Slips.

Falls.

Rolls.

Rubble falls on him.

Bats fly past him.

All these only make him scamper and run faster!

RUDRA

Rudra -- more excited than afraid -- walks through the narrow passages.

RUDRA
(softly)
Stree.. er.. Stree-ji.. Are you
here?

He hears a rumble. He goes quiet.

The rumble starts getting closer. He realizes it's coming from a certain passage in the maze.

He picks up a rod/stone/log. Waits by the corner.

The rumble -- kind of like laboured breathing -- starts getting close.

Closer.

Very close.

Just feet away.

Right there.

And Rudra swings the weapon.

Catches the approaching figure bang in the middle of the torso.

THUD!

Bittu doesn't know what hit him! He flips in mid-air and falls hard on the ground.

Moans.

Rudra realizes it's Bittu. Helps him up.

BITTU
(in pain)
What the hell is wrong with you?

RUDRA
What the hell is wrong with you?
You're running like you saw a
ghost!

BITTU
(irony)
Right.

VICKY

Vicky arrives at a sculpture of the bride and headless groom.
Same as the illustration in the book.

Next to it, he notices a crevice in the wall, with a large block blocking it partly.

Strange wind and sounds seem to come from the crevice.

Should he dare to go in?

And then he hears!

HER VOICE
(softly)
Vickyyy...

The hair on his neck stands up. He stands, frozen in place.

Behind him, barely visible, the shadowy figure of a woman in a red sari.

VICKY
(mutters)
I'm not turning around.*

HER VOICE
Vickyyyyyy...

Shit! She's close.

As she's about to say it for the third time, he tries to overpower her voice by trying to talk over her, so she can't be heard.

VICKY
No way! I will not turn around!..
Do what you want.. call however
many time.. I am not turning! I can
do this all day --

HER VOICE
Vickyyyyyy...

Fuck! It didn't matter. He heard her call anyway!

WE SEE -- Stree! Literally off the ground by a foot or so, right behind Vicky -- so close that she's whispering lovingly right into his ear!

Tension.

Vicky grits his teeth. It takes all his restraint and control to not turn around. He can literally feel her presence any more.

A long tense beat, as the music crescendos.

And it stops. As abruptly as it started. He doesn't seem to feel her presence any more.

Vicky stands there. Has she left?

Beat.

He reaches into his pocket -- pulls out his mobile -- brings it up to his face -- closes his eyes -- and clicks a selfie.

Click!

He looks at the picture. He is alone.

He heaves a sigh of relief and turns.

BAM!

There she is -- right in front of him.

The demure bride. Ghoonghat covering her eyes. Bright red lips visible under the edge of the ghoonghat.

Shocked witless, he is petrified.

She slowly starts to lift her head. He finds himself staring back at her.

Intercut between the two, as they try to look at each other. Her POV and his POV.

Anticipation. Tension.

And finally we see her face! In the shadowy darkness. The outline of a pretty girl's face.

And then, he looks directly into her eyes!

Soft, sweet eyes. Vicky's expression mellows. And suddenly the face starts to turn ghostly and evil - Vicky is shocked and immobile out of fear.

Stree starts to let out a scream -- pounces on him --

HER POV

-- and for one inexplicable moment stops -- tilts her head sideways -- like baffled, checking out --

Just a brief moment. Then --

Abruptly out of nowhere, an axe comes hurling -- cuts the air in between her and Vicky -- and lodges in the wall!

She and Vicky both look at the source.

It's Gayatri!

Carrying an entire cornucopia of weird stuff on her. She has come fully equipped.

A bizarre fight sequence ensues --

Stree lets out an ear-exploding scream. But Gayatri holds her own. She starts hurling strange stuff at Stree -- also chanting weird mantras.

A sort of energy field forms around them -- as opposing forces collide.

Vicky is knocked to the ground by this.

He watches Gayatri take on Stree. Stree tries to dodge the holy powders that Gayatri is throwing at her.

The sheer amount of smoke and dust and the energy field that has swamped the atmosphere makes visibility poor. It is hard for Vicky to see what is really going on.

Stree's face looks terrified as she works up a storm -- the place starts swirling like it's caught in a typhoon --

Gayatri does something with her hands -- desperately trying to summon up some powers -- doesn't look like she is succeeding --

-- Stree rushes at her, takes a swipe, throwing Gayatri a few feet away -- and in a blinding flash, She vanishes.

Beat.

Suddenly, silence.

Is she gone?

VICKY
Oh my God Oh my God! What the hell
was that! What just happened!?

He then rushes up to the fallen Gayatri -- weakened a little bit by the blow.

VICKY
Are you ok?

He helps her up.

GAYATRI
Are you ok?

VICKY
(nods, then)
Well.. I guess that proves you are
not her.

GAYATRI
You want to go down that road
again??

VICKY
Sorry.. I didn't mean it..
(then)
Thanks.. You saved my life.

-- and goes for a hug. She doesn't reciprocate. It turns into an awkward one way hug.

Once he recovers from the hug, he looks around scarily.

VICKY
Have we.. is she.. finished?

-- Gayatri takes in the ghostly place --

GAYATRI
I don't think so.
(beat)
She'll be back.

OUTSIDE THE RUINS - NIGHT

Bittu is sitting on a rock -- trembling in fear -- all muddled from the fall. Rudra is pacing back and forth thinking hard. They hear footsteps.

Vicky emerges.

Bittu gets up and runs to him, ready to hug --

BITTU
Oh my god Vicky! You're safe! I
thought--

-- sees Gayatri emerge from behind him --

BITTU
--eek!

-- abruptly turns around and runs the other way --

BITTU
She has taken him hostage. Run!

VICKY
Bittu. Stop. Calm down.

Bittu stops -- in a combat pose -- stands there staring at
Gayatri. Who is party baffled, partly irritated!

GAYATRI
He also thinks I am..?

VICKY
Bittu. Calm down. She's not it. She
saved my life.

Oh!

WOODS - A LITTLE LATER

They all slowly walk out, pushing Rudra's scooter along --

VICKY
--you should have seen it.. The way
she fought that -- that -- bhoot..
Straight out of a bhoot film.

-- starts explaining moving his arms energetically with
actions as he can't find words --

Rudra and Bittu listen in awe.

RUDRA
How did you.. Where did you learn..
I mean.. Why are you..?
(can't figure what
question to frame)

They all look at Gayatri. She's put in a spot.

GAYATRI
A few years ago someone close to me
was taken by her. Since then I have
been looking for him.

Vicky reacts sympathetically.

GAYATRI

I started learning whatever I can
that can help me connect with him.
And started teaching myself a lot
of techniques to fight that woman.

BITTU

(mutters)

That explains all that black magic
Billi-ka-baal stuff..

GAYATRI

I have made it my mission to see
the end of her.

(gets reflective)

I tried really hard today to use
whatever I knew.. but it wasn't
enough. I thought I could..

(gets passionate)

Do more.. do something stronger to
vanquish her!

They're in awe again! They walk in silence, checking this
cool girl. Then --

RUDRA

Umm.. Miss.. Miss-ji.. I have
learnt some of this stuff myself
from the secret books in my
library. So if you need someone to
help you.. please let me know..

BITTU

My dad owns the big ready-made shop
in town. You should come by some
time. We carry all kinds of latest
ladies fashions and stylings.

As they continue walking -- a rustle, as a figure moves in
the shrubs.

Brief momentary tension.

They turn around and look. Far from them, a figure emerges.

Vicky's and Bittu's eyes light up! OMG!

TOWN - NIGHT

The five of them amble into town.

VICKY

I am so happy we found you man!

BITTU

You've been naked since 2 days??

(beat)

Kuch hua kya? Uske saath.

Vicky shushes him.

VICKY
What happened Jana? What exactly
happened?

JANA
I don't remember anything.

RUDRA
Unbelievable times we live in!

They turn a corner --

CROWD
Kal nahi parson nahi.. O stree
kabhi nahi.. Aana nahi aana nahi..

-- a meagre crowd of very few people chanting weakly. They
stop on seeing these people.

Beat.

EXT. JANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vicky without shirt, Bittu without pants and the third guy
dressed in their clothes, enter the house.

A loud shriek of happiness comes from inside the house.

CUT TO:

COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Wrapped in blanket and sitting dazed, is Jana!

A size-able crowd has gathered -- excitement in the air --
everyone amazed and shocked at the return of Jana.

The mother is being over-dramatic and fussing over Jana --
giving him food and drink etc.

Vicky and Bittu are very happy their friend is back.

VICKY
What happened Jana? What exactly
happened?

JANA
I don't remember anything.

Dad stares at him suspiciously, passes the stare on to Bittu,
who tries to evade.

Durga Prasad and co also around.

DURGA
Did you see Narendra on the way
somewhere?

Jana looks at him blankly.

TIME LAPSE:

JANA'S HOUSE, TERRACE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jana is fast asleep. Next to him on another mattress is Bittu.

Quiet. Peaceful.

Hold.

SUDDENLY -- Jana opens his eyes. Stares right ahead. He looks scarily zoned out.

He gets up. Stands next to Bittu's bed.

Stares at Bittu.

A long hold. *As the MUSIC crescendos.*

TOWN - MORNING

The town. Asleep. Quiet.

A STREET

A scream cuts through the silence. A mother has discovered her son is missing.

ANOTHER STREET

Another scream. A husband has gone missing.

YET ANOTHER STREET

Yet another scream. A man has gone missing.

TOWN

Chaos reigns over the town, as a lot of screams coming from various parts merge.

STREET CORNER

Gayatri watches at a distance --

Groups of people have gathered outside a smattering of houses. Cries can be heard from inside.

Vicky runs up and joins Gayatri.

VICKY
How could this happen? What do you
think happened?

Gayatri looks at him -- points to the houses.

GAYATRI
The inscriptions on the walls..

SHOTS OF --

-- various houses.

-- The inscription has been messily wiped out. Like somebody
hastily went around town wiping major parts of the message.
Rendering it useless.

GAYATRI
Someone wiped out the inscriptions!

EXT. ONE HOUSE

Gayatri touches the wall -- and comes off with some red --

GAYATRI
Blood.

VICKY
Oh!

Beat.

GAYATRI
Is there any street here that has
CCTV camera?

VICKY
CCTV camera?! In our town?! Are you
ma--
(remembers)
Actually..

JANA'S TERRACE

Jana and Bittu both stare at Jana's hands. They're dirty --
and he palms are all scratched up and bloody

BITTU
Was it like this last night?

JANA
I don't remember.

BITTU
Shit, we need to go to a doctor.

EXT. BITTU'S READYMADE SHOP

A few CCTV cameras are out front pointed at the street, in a couple of angles.

CCTV ROOM

A screens plays the footage from a camera mounted outside. Vicky and Gayatri are watching it carefully.

CCTV FOOTAGE:

Playing in fast forward. Empty street. An occasional passerby. A stray dog.

At around 3 AM, a lone figure enters the street. Goes to the first wall. And starts wiping off.

GAYATRI

There!

The video plays at normal speed.

The figure in the frame rubs wall after wall, as Vicky and Gayatri stare, still unable to make out who it is.

Finally the guy comes close enough and turns this side.

VICKY

Pause.

Video pauses.

VICKY

Shit!

The figure in the video is Jana.

SHARE AUTO, OUTSKIRTS ROAD - DAY

A large share auto -- the kind of rickshaw that can squeeze in about six or seven people chugs along the road.

Jana's hands are bandaged now. Bittu rambles on --

BITTU

Shit, what's happening in this town! It's weird that you came back.. And now two dozen people have gone overnight!

Jana is not listening. He seems lost.

BITTU

That Stree has gone mental! And how come as soon as you came back, so many are missing??
(then)

Do you remember anything?
 (hushed)
 Uske saath kuch hua kya? You know..
 Friendship types.. Rumors are that
 she gives excellent --

-- and Bittu looks at Jana. Jana suddenly stares back at him.
 With deadly eyes.

Bittu is a little scared --

BITTU
 Jana.. Jana..

The PASSENGER ahead of him, looks at Jana --

PASSENGER
 Hello..

-- and tries to touch Jana.

Jana grabs the guy -- and physically throws him out of the tempo. The guy goes flying out of the moving vehicle on to the road.

The Passengers are all scared now.

An intense quick skirmish ensues.

Bittu tries to stop Jana, but he is too strong -- Bittu is shoved to the back of the tempo.

Another passenger, seeing this, voluntarily jumps off the moving vehicle -- and rolls on the road.

Next is the driver -- Jana tries to grab the driver, the other passengers try to stop him.

The driver loses control and the tempo veers off the road -- and crashes into a tree in a ditch.

Bittu is sent rolling into the ditch, along with others.

The momentum sends Jana crashing through the windshield -- he flies ahead and lands in the ditch.

And in a continuous move he stands up.

WTF!

Bittu is scared.

Jana looks listlessly at all the people around. And as suddenly as it all started, he comes out of the trance. His eye roll up, and he faints.

As soon as he hits the ground, Bittu runs to him and pins him down. Others come to help too -- all wounded.

But Jana is passed out.

Hold on Bittu.

JANA'S HOUSE

Jana is on the bed -- both his hands tied to the bed post. He's passed out. Bittu is sitting next to him, keeping a watchful eye on him.

VICKY
Looks like Jana is still her prisoner.

GAYATRI
(agrees)
The Stree has control over his mind.

BITTU
(mutter)
Makes sense why Stree didn't finish up Jana and instead chose him to do the dirty work. Idiot can easily be manipulated.*

GAYATRI
We must get rid of Stree or else Jana will be her prisoner forever.

RUDRA
Tonight is the last night of puja. After this, she will vanish and not come back till next year.

VICKY
Whatever we do, we have to do it tonight.
(beat)
So.

GAYATRI
So.

VICKY
The Stree expert is sitting here.
(pointing to Rudra)
And that's all he knows too.
(Rudra shrugs)
That one book that had stuff about Stree is missing pages!

GAYATRI
(thinking)
Who else might know?

RUDRA
More than me?!

GAYATRI
What about the author of the book?

Beat.

VICKY
He's a senile old man.

RUDRA
He's lost his marbles.

GAYATRI
He's still around?

RUDRA
(hesitantly)
Well.. Kinda..*emergency

Jana stirs -- wakes up -- takes in the situation.

JANA
What happened here? Why am I tied
up like this?

They all exchange looks.

WRITER'S HOUSE - DAY

A senile old man, SHANKAR SHASTRI, in desperate need of a shave and shower, with a perennially lost-in-thought expression is at the moment.. lost in thought.

Almost frozen.

Across from him all 5 of them are crowded on a diwan. Staring at him expectantly.

Shastri. Still frozen. Deep in thought.

Vicky starts to say something, Rudra quietly shushes him.

Then --

SHASTRI
Which book??

Everyone grunts out loudly like - 'After all this??'

Rudra doesn't give up.

RUDRA
We just now mentioned, sir. The
town gaatha.

SHASTRI
Oh that one!
(beat)
I wrote it?

Vicky is restless.

RUDRA
Yes. Remember? You came to my store
also.. Actually many times..

SHASTRI

Oh yes. You were selling porn. I remember.

RUDRA

(little embarrassed but-)
Yes yes! So your book.. We finally read it.. and it's missing pages. We wondered if you have the original--

SHASTRI

What original.

-- looks around the house -- fairly sparse. Doesn't look like there's anything here.

SHASTRI

This is all I have now. Baaki sab gaya.. After Stree took me..

What!??

They all jump up with questions.

GAYATRI

Stree took you??

RUDRA

He remembers!

BITTU

How did you come back?

VICKY

Do you remember the prophecy.. as to who can save the town from Stree..

GAYATRI

..who can destroy Stree??

SHASTRI

Where have I seen you before?

VICKY

I doubt you have seen her.

SHASTRI

She reminds me of this beautiful girl I met in Meerut once. I think I married her.

RUDRA

You don't remember your wife?

BITTU

Is he even talking sense?

Vicky stands up noisily.

VICKY

This is a waste of time. We have to find another way.

SHASTRI

Why is this man so rude?? You come to my place and behave so rudely to me?

GAYATRI

(intervenes)

Very sorry sir. He's a very rude, uncouth man.

Mock-ches Vicky, who goes sullen a bit.

GAYATRI

Please continue sir.

Beat. Shastri is lost on thought. Snaps out of it.

SHASTRI

Oh hi! When did you all come here? Welcome. Would you like some chai?

All jaws drop.

OUTSIDE - MINUTES LATER

VICKY

The old man is no help.

GAYATRI

Do you have any other books?

RUDRA

I don't know.. This I found with great difficulty--

A voice cuts through their conversation --

SHASTRI

The fate of the town lies in the hands of this one man, the saviour of the town.

-- they all listen in rapt attention, as Shastri rattles from the doorway.

SHASTRI

A man who is the only son; A handsome man, dark like the clouds; Born under a banyan tree; Love in his eyes; An artist who brings joy to many.

(beat)

And the son of a whore.

And Shastri promptly walks back inside muttering --

SHASTRI

Tum logon ne uske saath aacha nahi
kiya hai.. sabo leke jayegi! Saalo,
maroge tum log.. Kisi ko nahi
chodegi woh!

Hold on all of them.

JANA'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Jana is still tied to the bed. He's awake now, albeit a
little sedate, listening to them speak.

VICKY

What does he even mean? Can we
believe anything he says?

GAYATRI

He sounded focused enough when he
said these lines. A rare moment of
clarity.

RUDRA

I agree. It looked like he
remembered what he wrote in those
pages.

VICKY

Even if we assume what he said is
true, where are we going to find
the guy with all these
qualifications now?

BITTU

Tough.

Beat. All a bit dejected.

Still tied to the bed, Jana pipes in, sounding like he's now
used to the position he's in.

JANA

Vicky, weren't you born at your
Grandma's village?
(off of Vicky's nod)
It had that huge banyan tree behind
their house, right?

VICKY

Oh yeah..

Everybody is curious now.

JANA

And you are an only son.

RUDRA

That's two out of three
requirements.

GAYATRI
He's also a handsome guy!

VICKY
(blushes)
Thank you.

BITTU
(mutters)
Yeah right!

JANA
And dark..

VICKY
(scoffs)

GAYATRI
And hey!
(everyone looks at her)
You are an artist!

BITTU
How the hell!?!

JANA
He creates the best ladies fashions
across the three towns!

BITTU
Best blouses you mean?

GAYATRI
And look at the women rushing to
you for their dresses.. for the art
you created! You bring joy to them!

-- Bittu rolls his eyes further, Vicky blushes further --

VICKY
Well, if you say so.

JANA
An artist who brings joy to people!

Beat.

VICKY
I must say it's quite a
coincidence.. that I match 4 out of
5 requirements at least. But..
What's the use..

The three guys look at each other.

BITTU
(tentatively)
So.. We actually have a match??

Everyone's almost elated at the discovery. Almost.

VICKY
What about the last requirement?

Long beat.

Vicky looks at them all. Then --

RUDRA
(tentatively)
Oh. You don't know?

VICKY
I don't know what??

JANA
(to Rudra, softly)
No one told him.

Everyone looks at each other.

RUDRA
You see Vicky.. there's nothing
wrong in doing a job-

VICKY
What the fuck are you guys saying??

RUDRA
About your mother.. Everyone in
town knows..

BITTU
(gently)
Yeah..

Vicky is lost!

RUDRA
..that she was a.. Ahem..

VICKY
What the hell!?? How dare you guys
talk shit about my mother?? What's
wrong with you people?

Gayatri doesn't know what to say.

VICKY
It's not funny. Don't joke about
these--
(sees they're serious)
Are you all serious?!! How can you--
Screw you all!!

Seething with anger, he stares at them. They all look away.

QUIRKY SAD MUSIC starts --

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

A disturbed Vicky walks alone through the streets -- as the townspeople get on with their daily grind.

The Watchman is busy rewriting the wiped out messages, with a few others helping him.

A sense of gloom has fallen over the town.

INT. TAILORING SHOP - EVENING

Vicky enters the shop -- sees his father alone on the sewing machine in a corner working his ass off on a dress. A large pile of dresses lie by his side.

Vicky ponders for a minute. He's not looking forward to the awkward conversation about to ensue. Firming his resolve he walks up to him.

VICKY

Pa.

Dad, without looking up --

DAD

Dinner is set at home. Go eat. I will take a while. I have to finish this pile.

Vicky doesn't move. He just stands there.

Dad looks up.

VICKY

Pa.. I wanted to ask you something.

DAD

Yes.

Beat. As Vicky hesitates. Dad waits.

Then --

VICKY

Do you need help.. with this pile..

DAD

No it's ok. You go eat dinner. We'll start early tomorrow.

Vicky nods and quietly leaves.

VICKY'S TERRACE - LATE EVENING

Vicky goes up to the terrace. Crestfallen.

MOMENTS LATER

Gayatri comes up to the terrace.

Vicky acknowledges her but is not in a good mood obviously.

A moment later --

GAYATRI

I am sorry about your mother..

VICKY

Why are you sorry? It's not your fault that she's--

(beat)

Now that I think about it each time my father told me stories about my mother, it was always a little different. Something was different each time. I should've guessed then only that something was fishy.

She nods sympathetically.

GAYATRI

You talked to your father?

VICKY

(shakes his head)

What's the point? He is working day and night to put food on the table. He hasn't wanted anything except a good life for me. What's the point of raking up something that happened decades ago?

GAYATRI

It's ok. It's all in the past. It doesn't matter.

(adds)

Plus I think your father must've been cool. And way ahead of his time.

Vicky stares at her like - 'it's not helping.'

GAYATRI

I am just trying to cheer you up.

Gayatri feels sorry for him, takes his hand in hers. Vicky is conscious of her hand touching his.

GAYATRI

You have a good heart. And I'd happy to do friendship with you.

Vicky's heart skips a beat. Then --

VICKY

Oh you mean, you want to be my friend?

GAYATRI
(puzzled)
Yeah..

VICKY
Ok. But please don't use that word
friendship around people here.

GAYATRI
Friendship? Why not?

VICKY
Please.. Just.. Don't.

A quiet moment.

GAYATRI
Whatever the prophecy might be one
thing I saw that was unbelievable!
(Vicky's curious)
You saw directly into her eyes! And
you are still here. No one who has
ever looked at her eyes has been
left behind!
(beat)
There is something about you for
sure. Maybe you are the one!
(adds)
You must face your destiny, Vicky.

VICKY
What destiny? My destiny is to get
the hell out of this godforsaken
town!

Gayatri looks at him --

GAYATRI
This town has been nothing but good
to you. Everyone in this town has
known about your past, and yet they
sheltered you from it. Nobody
ridiculed you, or even revealed the
truth to you.

Slowly Vicky nods -- as he sees the point.

He turns around to see Bittu and Rudra have also come up. And
Jana. Vicky looks curiously at Bittu.

BITTU
It's ok. He's under control.. for
now.

Then to Vicky --

JANA
Sorry yaar..

BITTU
..about your mother.

JANA
Everyone knew. But they just didn't
want you to feel any lesser. So..

Long beat.

Vicky looks at everyone and takes a moment. Everyone looks at him expectantly.

Vicky walks up to them and gets a bit reflective --

VICKY
I guess I do owe this town one.
(starts getting emo)
And if I am the chosen one, so be
it!
(adds)
This town did give me a great
childhood and youth.. And protected
me. And I am going to save all
those poor bastards who were
nabbed. And above all, I am going
to save our friend Jana!
(beat)
If I am the one, then I am bloody
well am going to fight Stree!
(beat)
This is my fucking town!

They are all happy!

RUDRA
You are the chosen one, all right!

BITTU
The savior!

RUDRA
(claps in joy)
Yes! The proud son of a whore.

Face palm.

ENERGETIC MUSIC starts --

RUDRA'S LIBRARY

Everyone's assembled there. Including Jana, whose hands are tied up, of course.

VICKY
What do we know? And what have we
learnt? About Stree?

They all think for a brief second --

RUDRA
Well.. She is scary and --

VICKY
 She can read!
 (off of their reaction)
 Which bloody ghost-ghoul-spirit-
 demon can read??

True. Everyone nods.

RUDRA
 True. We are dealing with an
 modern, educated woman here.

Vicky is not really listening, but talking.

VICKY
 No 2. She can follow instructions.
 She's haunting this town and she
 wants to pick up a guy and then
 she's reading 'O Stree Kal Aana'.
 And she's like 'Oh ok no problem, I
 will come and check on you
 tomorrow' and goes away!

Makes sense.

VICKY
 And No 3. She's being quite dumb,
 no? Think about it. Every night
 she's coming and seeing the same
 inscription written from last time
 and she's like 'Oh no, they wrote
 it again! They wrote it today also!
 Now I can't go in again!!' But
 doesn't realize that we are messing
 with her by keeping the same
 inscription every day, every year!

Everybody nods. Except Gayatri, who's a tad more serious.

RUDRA
 Her IQ seems to be quite low I must
 say.

VICKY
 Well, my friends, we are definitely
 smarter than her. And I am sure we
 can see the end of her.. Send her
 back to where she came from!

Everybody is charged up.

ENERGETIC MUSIC starts --

TOWN - VARIOUS SPOTS - LATE EVENING

The final and most important night of puja now. But there
 seems to be a gloom that has set in over the town.

The town is buzzing in festive colours and decorations, but
 the people don't seem to be happy.

More importantly it is only women on the street. Not a single man. They've all shut themselves in. Unless you count the handful of men dressed up as women to be part of the puja ritual.

OLD OUTHOUSE NEAR THE RUINS

Vicky, Bittu, Rudra and Gayatri are doing their prep at the lone spot.

-- Bunch of stuff is spread around the area. Gayatri is prepping with that stuff.

-- She's busy fashioning some weapons, tying sacred threads around them, and smearing them with holy powders.

-- Rudra is concocting strange mixtures in containers. Bittu is heling him - eggs, bhasm, sindoor etc.

-- Gayatri is also going over strange mantras.

-- The boys start to make the bed for Vicky's suhaag rat.

-- They start writing something on the wall.

-- Putting candles all around.

-- They start helping Vicky get ready.

Finally we see what the prep was about.

-- Vicky is dressed like a groom!

-- And on the front wall of the old outhouse is written a message, large and clear: O Stree, Aana.

INT. OUTHOUSE- NIGHT

On Vicky. Dressed like a groom. Sitting and biting his nails nervously. Place is lit up with candles.

-- Rudra gets a box of sindoor and offers it to Vicky.

-- Bittu gives him a packet of condoms. Just in case!

Rudra hands over a kajal dibbi to Gayatri who tries to put a kajal mark on his cheek. Vicky resists.

VICKY
(little irritated)
Is this level of detailing
necessary?

Gayatri backs off.

VICKY
That bloody Shastri better be
right! Or I am literally screwed!

RUDRA

Think about it.. it's your destiny!
You are getting a great opportunity
to save this town! You're the
chosen one. The saviour. The son of
a--

BITTU

Yes.. think about the fact that you
are doing a great service to the
town!

(off of his reaction)

And why are you turning into a
pussy when earlier you roared like
a lion! Be a man!

VICKY

(stressed)

Bittu.. *Phakyu!*

Vicky is getting pretty nervous.

VICKY

What is the plan exactly! Tell me
again.

Gayatri lowers herself in front of him. And holds his hand.

GAYATRI

Vicky listen. Stree will come for
you. We have made sure of that. And
when she looks into your eyes, you
look back. And I have a mantr that
will bound her and.. (little
unsurely) probably finish her.

BITTU

(looking at his watch)

Let's go. It's time!

As Gayatri gets ready to go and hide, Vicky doesn't let go
of her hand. He pulls her back.

VICKY

Will your plan work?

Beat.

She nods her head. But it's not a very confident nod.

GAYATRI

90%.

VICKY

90??

GAYATRI

99.. I guess.

VICKY

So there's a 1% chance that I'll
be.. (gestures)

Gayatri puts her hand on his shoulder.

GAYATRI
I'll be right behind you. I will
fight stree. I will not let
anything happen to you.

BITTU
We will be hiding nearby. We got
your back, bro.

Gayatri shows the stuff she's armed with -- a bunch of
weaponry and kaala jaadu stuff.

And hands him a dagger.

VICKY
What's this for??

GAYATRI
When the time comes-

BITTU
We have to go!! Let's go!
(to Vicky)
Don't worry. Be like a Rajput!

They all head out, leaving Vicky behind.

Vicky calms down. Takes a deep breath --

VICKY
(poignantly)
If I don't come back, don't come
looking for me.

Beat.

BITTU
Sure. That's common sense.

Vicky stares at him.

RUDRA
Be positive!

AAKHRI RAAT

EXT. RUINS - NIGHT

Eerie. Quiet. Just the howl of the wind.

And then --

HER POV

She emerges from the temple. And gently glides through the woods.

Tension builds.

She sees a flickering light in the near distance. She glides closer to it.

A signboard with a thick arrow points to the light - 'This Way'.

She heads to the light. Which is coming from the outhouse.

JANA'S HOUSE

Suddenly Jana wakes up. Still tied to the bed, he starts convulsing. Staring straight ahead. Possessed.

INNER ROOM IN THE OUTHOUSE

Bittu, Rudra and Gayatri -- fully armed -- wait in a dark corner of the house. They hear a faint rustle.

BITTU
(shit scared)
I think it's her.

Gayatri peeks out. Sees a shadowy figure in the darkness in the shrubbery outside.

Turns to them and puts her finger to her lips.

Fucking tense.

JANA'S HOUSE

Jana is calm. His mother is feeding him food.

JANA
Ma.. My hands are hurting, ma! Can
you please untie me.

She is unsure.

JANA
Please, ma. I am fine now. See..

HALL

Vicky is sitting, dressed up like a groom, on the bed. Rather stoic. Like he's totally given up.

OUTSIDE - HER POV

She glides to the entryway.
 More arrows point to the entrance.
 A big sign reads - '*O Stree, Aana*' welcomes her.
 She tilts her head for a moment as she ponders.
 Long beat.
 She then goes around the house.

INNER ROOM

They are surprised.

GAYATRI
 She is not entering!

BITTU
 Does she suspect something?

RUDRA
 I guess she's not as obedient as we
 thought!
 (in awe)
 Too good too good!
 (adds)
 Never underestimate Stree!

BITTU
 Whose side are you on?!

OUTSIDE - HER POV

She goes through the overgrown wild shrubbery, around the outhouse.

INNER ROOM

Gayatri anxiously keeps peeking out to see any movement --
 focused on the outside.

OUTSIDE - HER POV

She is checking out the house from all directions! And then
 she focuses on one room.

Inside that room is Vicky.

She takes a moment, and rushes towards that room.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

HALL

Vicky. Waiting. Anxious.

He hears a rustle. His antennae perk up. candles are blown off.

He gets up and slowly goes to the back room like possessed man. The same doorway where Stree just rushed in through.

MUSIC begins to crescendo. He reaches the back room -- holding his breath -- cautiously peeks outside.

MUSIC stops.

INNER ROOM

They are focussed on the main door.

GAYATRI

I don't think she will come through there!

BITTU

But what if --
(almost shrieks)

Standing right there is Jana. Looking completely expressionless.

BITTU

Jana.. How did you..?

Beat.

Suddenly Jana grabs Bittu and throws him against the wall.

Jana is back to being super strong again. Gayatri and Rudra jump in and try to subdue him.

A skirmish ensues.

BACK ROOM

Vicky looks around the back room. There are no doors or windows. And there's no one there.

He is a tad relieved. He turns, and --

BAM!

There she is. In his room.

Vicky stumbles and falls backwards in fear.

INNER ROOM

Suddenly Gayatri hears Vicky's scream.

Gayatri throws a rope, she had carried along with other stuff, to Bittu.

GAYATRI
(to Bittu)
Stay with him.

BITTU
Me?
(adds)
Shit!

Bittu and Rudra together try to manage Jana as Gayatri runs out of there.

BACK ROOM

Gayatri runs through the passages and towards the back room. She reaches the room -- sees it's empty. Her heart drops. Very soon Bittu and Rudra catch up to her in the back room.

GAYATRI
He's not there!

BITTU
Where did he go!? But there's only one entrance to this place.

RUDRA
Streeji has come. And she has taken away her man.

Gayatri spots something. She goes to the wall and finds a -- hidden passage!

BITTU
Shit!

All three peer into the dark deep passage.

RUDRA
Stree is smarter than all the men!
She fooled all of us!

BITTU
Will you stop praising her! Where the hell did she take Vicky!??

GAYATRI
(beat)
I think I know where.

They hear Jana yelling.

JANA (O.S.)
Hello! Bittu!! Come here..

Bittu shakes his head to them, like ignore him.

JANA (O.S.)
Come here. I have to tell you
something.

INNER ROOM

Bittu goes up to Jana.

JANA
I am fine! Take me with you.

BITTU
No! You stay put here. We'll be
back.

JANA
What do you mean? You can't leave
me here!

BITTU
I can't keep up with your mood
swings, Jana! Stay right here for a
few minutes and we'll be back.

JANA
No no no no... Don't leave me alone
here!

Suddenly Jana turns 'on'. He growls and screams.

They all turn to see him.

BITTU
I knew it.
(to the others)
Let's go. Let him keep growling.

And they get out of there.

Jana goes 'off' again.

JANA
(yells)
Bittu, fucker! Take me with you. Or
at least untie me! What if she
comes back for me?

As they walk away --

BITTU
(yells back)
I don't think so. I think she's had
her fill of you.

JANA
What if she comes back for
seconds??

-- but they're gone.

PASSAGE

It's pitch black. We can't see anything. Sounds of Vicky's screams and sounds off falling.

We then hear frantic breathing of a trapped man.

Vicky turns on the phone, looks around, shitting bricks. Visibility is poor.

He turns all around to see where he is.

He pulls out his phone and looks around.

He then gets an idea. Quickly he grapples with the phone to text.

He then enters a cellar.

EXT. OUTHOUSE - NIGHT

Gayatri, Rurda and Bittu take a moment outside the spooky structure.

Gayatri then starts prepping.

GAYATRI
I am going in.

BITTU
Really?

Before they can react, she jumps into it and disappears.

Long beat. As the two stare into the passage in shock. Then --

BITTU
We should also go no?

RUDRA
I guess so.

Beat.

RUDRA
But she looks like an expert.

BITTU
That's also true.

Beat.

RUDRA
Maybe we just wait here and make
sure they come back safe.

BITTU
Plus Jana is also here alone.

BITTU
Sahi hai.

CELLAR

Vicky looks around the strange place. Walks ahead -- looks around and suddenly sees --

Stree standing at a distance, near the water body -- making growling noises.

Startled, Vicky stumbles back and falls onto a stone bed. The growling stops.

He recovers and looks at Stree but she's not there. He slowly gets up to look around. The growling restarts. He jumps back onto the stone and the growling stops.

He tries again to get off the plank, and the growling restarts -- this time louder. He jumps back on to the stone.

Long beat.

Vicky then realizes and looks at the stone, which suspiciously looks like a rocky bed.

He looks around. There are no noises now.

Vicky suddenly realizes.

VICKY
(mumbles)
Oh *phuck*!

He knows what he has to do. He takes a deep breath, and announces --

VICKY
(trembling voice)
Main ready hoon.

He pats on the bed. Like he's calling her over to sit next to him.

Growling starts. From the darkness, two glowing eyes appear.

Vicky swallows hard.

The eyes keep watching but she doesn't come over.

He tries a couple of ways of calling her over in sign-language.

VICKY
(tentatively)
Stree-ji.. Stree-madam..
(clears his throat)
O Stree.. Aaana..

No movement from her. But the growling increases.

Vicky closes his eyes like -- Shit, I will have to do this!

Vicky takes his turban and puts it down. And looks at her. Growling increases.

He quickly takes off his kurta and stands there, a bit shy. Still no movement.

He decides to remove other accessories.

Growling is not reducing.

He finally resigns to the whole thing. Fuck it. And takes off his pants.

As soon as the pants drop --

Stree suddenly lets out an angry growl. Rushes towards him and before he can realize, and knocks him over, like she's slapped him hard.

And disappears into darkness.

The growling is crazy now and is echoing from all directions.

Vicky recovers and starts screaming apologies --

VICKY
 Sorry sorry! I misread your
 signals!! So sorry!!
 (scrambles for clothes)
 See see.. I am wearing my clothes
 back. Those bastards.. my bastard
 friends told you wanted suhaag
 raat.. So sorry! See.. See.. I am
 pulling up my pants!

He quickly pulls up his pants.

The growling reduces a bit.

And suddenly he can see her slowly emerge from the darkness. She's calmer but the low growls continue.

Slowly she starts coming towards Vicky. Vicky is transfixed.

She comes and stands in front of him and looks into Vicky's eyes. Vicky stares back into her.

A moment.

Suddenly loud chants break the silence.

CONTINUOUS

Stree and Vicky both turn to see -- Gayatri shouting out a strange mantra.

Before Stree can react, Gayatri throws a big puff of powder. The throw seems so powerful that Stree is sent flying!

She hits a wall and slumps down.

Vicky is amazed and shocked at the intervention.

Vicky and Gayatri rush to each other.

VICKY
Oh my God! Wow! Is she dead??
(adds)
Thank you!

GAYATRI
I don't think so. But she is under
a bind. Quick come. We have to
finish her.

Vicky scrambles up. Gayatri looks at him.

GAYATRI
Why the hell are you naked??

VICKY
Oh.. Sorry.

He's embarassed and quickly puts on his kurta.

VICKY
I.. I was getting ready to take one
for the village. And..

GAYATRI
Oh God, you were trying to sleep
with her!?

VICKY
Well.. That's what Rudra deduced
she wanted!

GAYATRI
You men!

VICKY
What men! I wasn't doing this for
pleasure.. I was ready to die!
Isn't that what she's supposed to
do after sambhog? Devour the
victim?

Gayatri shakes her head. Pulls out a dagger from her bag. It
looks sanctified.

GAYATRI
We have to drive this into her
heart to finish her.

VICKY
What!?

GAYATRI
You have to do it. You are the
chosen one.

VICKY

No no no..

They both go up to the fallen Stree. Look at her. She looks like a regular woman who's slumped on the floor.

Gayatri gives him the dagger. And gestures what he has to do.

Vicky gets ready. Looks at Gayatri and then looks at Stree.

GAYATRI

This is exactly what the town did back then to her.

Vicky stops. Looks at her.

VICKY

So we are doing the same thing to her again? We are again giving her the same treatment?

Long beat. They look at the motionless Stree.

VICKY

Chhod dete hai kya?

Gayatri is also having second thoughts.

Suddenly Stree comes to life and stands up in full force throwing them both off. The dagger goes flying.

Stree goes after Vicky and Gayatri rushes towards where the dagger flew.

Vicky braces for Stree attack. Gayatri yells out to him.

GAYATRI

Look her in the eye! Look her in the eye.

Stree comes to Vicky's face. Vicky musters courage and flings the veil open revealing her deadly eyes.

She screams. He screams.

GAYATRI

Look her in the eye and you can hold her at bay!

He looks her in the eye with great difficulty. Stree continues to scream and threaten.

VICKY

I don't think this is working!

GAYATRI

It is working. Show her love in your eyes. Just show her a lot of love.

Vicky struggles to show love in his eyes.

GAYATRI
Just keep doing what you are doing.
Show more love! Come on! More
pyaar!!

VICKY
Are you kidding me!? I am shitting
bricks here.. And you want me to
show love!?

Gayatri frantically looks for the dagger.

Vicky meanwhile is trying his best to show love in his eyes.
It's damn hard task. He tries his best. And to us, it is
hilarious!

Gayatri spots the dagger but it's stuck somewhere hard to
reach.

VICKY
How long do I have to do this???
Plan kya hai??

GAYATRI
I have to somehow cut her choti..

VICKY
Choti??

Gayatri struggles for the dagger.

GAYATRI
I cannot reach the dagger!

Vicky takes his eyes off Stree for just a second.

VICKY
What!??

Stree tries to lunge. Vicky quickly turns back and looks into
her eyes and tries to show lot of love.

GAYATRI
Just hold her off for a few more
seconds..

The moment builds up as Stree continues to scream.

Vicky has had enough.

VICKY
Stop it! What is this you are
doing!! Not everyone you are taking
is a bad guy! You are being a bad
person by doing this shit to this
sweet town!
(yells louder)
I am the chosen one and I demand
you stop this nonsense. Stop it!

She stops.

Vicky lowers his voice.

VICKY
 Sorry yaar.. I am apologizing
 nicely.. from me, from the entire
 village..

Stree has become quiet now. Vicky is elated. He turns to look at Gayatri!

GAYATRI
 No!! Don't look away!

Stree lunges at Vicky. He falls down backwards.

GAYATRI
 Run!!

Vicky scrambles and runs.

Gayatri throws more mixture at Stree. But she's only stopped for a moment this time.

Stree starts chasing Gayatri.

A chase ensues.

SHOT OF -- dagger being picked up.

And then Gayatri hits a dead end.

She turns back to look at Stree.

Stree is rushing towards her in a glorious fury. Her ghoonghat has come off exposing a scarier face.

Gayatri braces for the final onslaught.

Stree, in her most ferocious form, lunges towards her.

Gayatri shuts his eyes.

A huge roar and monstrous screams are heard. Loud noises follow.

And then --

All quite. Gayatri opens his eyes.

There is no Stree. Vicky stands there with Stree's ponytail in her hand.

The whole place is smoldering with dust and smoke.

Long beat.

They look at each other - has she gone?

EXT. FACADE - NIGHT

Bittu is untying Jana's hands.

BITTU
 So you had a chance and you didn't
 take it??
 (off of their look)
 Which means she will again be back
 next year!? And start hunting
 again??

Beat. Gayatri and Vicky look at each other.

GAYATRI
 I think the one thing the town
 never gave her..

VICKY
 Was respect! Which the town never
 gave her. And we were about to do
 the same!

GAYATRI
 If the town can only give her the
 respect that she never had.. then
 maybe--

A rustle in the shrubs. They stop and turn around.

More rustles. It's coming from all around them.

A few feet emerge from the ruins.

Their faces light up.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The five weary warriors walk back victorious. Following them
 are a bunch of disoriented men. All naked. Almost like a walk
 of shame.

FADE OUT:

EXT. TOWN CENTRE - DAY

All rescued men are sitting on the stage, dressed in new
 clothes -- sponsored by Bittu's readymade shop -- as
 displayed on the banners.

Vicky and friends are in a special row of seats.

MLA
 This... is a... historic day for us.
 A historic day.. for our town. A
 historic day.. for our district. A
 historic day.. for our great state.
 A historic day for..

(beat)
A historic day.

Everyone cheers.

MLA
I am a man of my.. word. I
declared.. that I would.. from my
own pocket.. award those who will
get our... young men back. And I..
intend to keep.. my promise!
(claps)
For every young man.. returned.. I
promised.. 10,000 rupees.
(claps)
For thirteen people returned, that
is one lakh thirty thousand
rupees.. To Vicky!

Bittu whispers to Vicky --

BITTU
He promised some 10 lakhs to
whoever finishes Stree no?

JANA
Doubt we are getting that!

Vicky goes up to collect the check.

Vicky's Dad is in full costume. He claps proudly and loudly.
People around him pat him and nod at him with respect. He is
beaming, points them towards his son. They all nod in
respect.

MLA
Ladies and gentleman, let's get to
the main reason we have all
gathered today. To celebrate the
victory of this town and to honour
the youth who has brought this
victory. Come let's unveil.

Secretary nods at a local band on standby. And they jump
start fanfare music.

MLA goes near the chowk. And unveils the cornerstone amidst
cheers. The inscription of course is more prominent in its
proclamation about the MLA than the actual matter --

Son Of The Town
Vikramarthanda Narayan Borkakoty Vimuhale
And friends.

Everyone cheers. Vicky proudly smiles -- at first, until --

BITTU
Vi-kra-maa-aarthaa.. Narayana..
Borka..
(gives up)
Yeh kaun hai?

Vicky's face drops. He leans towards the MLA --

VICKY
(low tone)
Sir, I had put in a request with
your secretary to just spell my
name as Vicky. They put the full
length name!
(off of his reaction)
Sir nobody knows that name. They
won't know it's me!

MLA pats the shoulder of a disappointed Vicky --

MLA
Look at your dad.

The father is super proud. Tears run down his cheek.

MLA
Your name, my son.. has the name of
your father and the town!
(off of Vicky's look)
Be proud of it!

And pats him even more vigorously, almost shaking up Vicky
out of the dispiritedness.

Vicky gets it. And grins with pride.

Bittu meanwhile is whining to Jana --

BITTU
Friends?? They didn't put our
names! They just said friends!??

The band takes off to a higher note.

MOMENTS LATER

Vicky looks beyond the crowd, and sees --

Gayatri. She smiles at him.

He slowly heads towards her, as the proceedings continue in
the backdrop.

MLA
And now we unveil the statue of the
protector of the town.

He goes near a covered statue and starts to unveil it.

Just as the covers comes off the statue, Vicky turns a
corner.

CONTINUOUS

Nobody. No Gayatri.

He stand there -- looks around for her.

A flutter.

His eye catches a letter, with a stone on it, flttering in the wind.

He picks up and reads --

GAYATRI (V.O.)
 'Dear Vicky, I am glad I met you.
 And have known you for a full four
 days. I wish I can stay back to do
 friendship with you.'

Vicky's eyes light up for a moment.

GAYATRI (V.O.)
 (beat)
 I am glad you have realized the
 purpose of your life. You always
 knew you were meant for greater
 things, and now you have fulfilled
 your destiny. I am happy I could be
 a part of that and I hope one day I
 will see you again.
 (beat)
 'I think.. I too am clear now of
 what the purpose of my life is.'

BUS ON A LONE ROAD - DUSK

A bus steadily drives away.

Gayatri is traveling in the scantily crowded bus. In the last row.

She is lost in making various mudras with her fingers and hands.

Everyone's asleep except for a little boy who is looking at her curiously.

Then from her bag, she removes the choti of Stree. Looks at it.

Then she slowly attaches the choti to her own hair. And it starts to merge into her hair.

The boy's jaw drops. Gayatri catches him looking at her. And stares blankly at him.

Now the choti has merged into her completely.

FADE TO BLACK:

EK SAAL BAAD

OUTSKIRTS - LATE NIGHT

It's the dead of night.

HER POV

Glides along the road, leading into town.

Eerie.

She arrives at the town entrance.

And sees --

A statue. Of Stree. Complete with ghungat covering her eyes. And labeled as '*Protector of the Town*'.

Under it is the inscription: '*O Stree, Raksha Karo!*'

She stares at it for a long moment -- pondering.

Then, in her signature move, tilts her head to the side with a sigh.

END CREDITS

TITLES appear over real-life footage of this phenomenon --

- Inscriptions on walls around small town. Ranging from '*O Stree Kal Aana*' to '*Kal Aana*'.
- Similar writings on the walls from various states across the country, in different languages.
- A real-life town chowk stone with inscription to commemorate local town heroes.
- Old-school, single screen theatre playing a shady film as Puja Special.
- Shots of crazy, true Puja - where men are dressed in drag.
- Real temple ruins with beheaded man and a woman dressed as a bride.
- A statue of a veiled woman.