

WHAT'S IN A NAME? /

NAAM ADA LIKHNA...

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FADE IN:

INT BATHROOM - shower cubicle: Time of day uncertain

The CAMERA flashes a running SHOWER, pouring water, a FACE looking into water, and therefore OBSCURED. More flashes, sunlight, "**piya haji ali**" playing in the background. Hair flying in the water, soap flying on walls. A HAND opens shower cubicle and reaches out for towel hanging on door, we still can't see a face. She wraps the towel around her face.

MERGE TO: MORNING - Scene at HAJI ALI, song continues. GIRL in flashes, different positions, serious, smiling, at the DURGAH, around the walk. Near the water. Song ends and camera pans to the ARABIAN SEA.

TITLE. Remaining titles roll across the screen during the next scene, at the bottom of the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT ROADS, flashes of a riot scene... people running in different directions, TELEVISION REPORTER in VOICE OVER, reporting most violent riot since 1993.

CAMERA pans to SUNLIGHT and then down again.

CUT TO:

EXT MUSLIM COLONY IN MUMBAI: -- MORNING.

Middle aged MUSLIM WOMAN leading ADA, 30 something, beautiful, radiant features, gorgeous smile, and visible effort to look Muslim. They walk to OLD MUSLIM MAN, sitting at a verandah outside a SMALL TWO STORIED, relatively run down home.

Muslim woman:

This is Ada, ABBAJAN. She wanted to meet you about some home arrangement. Says she's new to the city. Also, tell amijaan that we're waiting for her at the courtyard. We're laying the pickle, so we need her. No wait, I'll tell her.

Muslim woman disappears into house, and returns with old lady in traditional garb. Both wander off toward the courtyard. Man looks and smiles.

Man:

Tell me beta, what is the problem? Who are you?

Ada:

Abbajaan, May I call you that...?

Man:

Of course, tell me.

Ada:

Well, my maternal uncle, MOHD. MOINUDDIN KHAN SAAB told me about you.

Man:

Of course, how is Khan Saab?

Ada:

Very well.

CUT TO:

INT Large Mansion, bedroom - AFTERNOON.

MOINUDDIN KHAN being gagged by a group of five men.
Relative darkness. Quiet, brutal murder. Camera pans to only open window, through which riot scenes can be seen.
Near the mansion gate, a dead watchman.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- SAME.

Ada and old man CONTINUE THEIR CONVERSATION.

Ada:

So, chachaji told me that you would be able to provide me with a residence, at least for a while. You see, I'm new in the city, and I need a temporary residence. I've been living in small hotels for a week now, but have still not found a reasonable residence. He said that you would have at least one empty home in your colony. In fact, he insisted that the safest place for me would be in MOHD. SARDAR's colony.

She smiles.

Mohd. Sardar:

Of course, beta. Come, I'll show you around. You see, this colony was built and owned by my family for over 100 years.

Sharp camera angles show GLIMPSES of old styled buildings and two storied homes.

Mohd. Sardar: (contd.)

Nowadays, because of the money problems, we sold off that building.

He beckons towards a large building, and camera pans quickly toward the engraved name.

Mohd. Sardar: (contd.)

There are two houses I can show you.

CUT TO:

INT old building CONSERVATIVE and slightly spoiled interiors - no artificial light - CONTINUOUS.

Small one room kitchen apartment, with a COMMON BALCONY and a personal toilet. ADA shows no interest but looks beyond at the central courtyard, where (ADA'S POV :) the everyday scene is being displayed and nearly all the female residents are laying pickle.

CUT TO:

EXT another TWO STOREY HOME like that owned by SARDAR. The two enter. ADA immediately brightens up, and looks around happily.

Mohd. Sardar:

Beta, if you don't mind my asking, are you working in Mumbai, or are you still hunting for a job. Because, we actually have a prospective tenant for this house, and if you are going to need some time to pay your rent, well, as I said, no offence meant, but we rather need the money.

He looks up at ADA expecting her to be a little upset but she only smiles.

Ada:

Don't worry, abbajaan, I have the money for rent, you see. Abba and ami left a lot of money before their train accident. I can afford to pay the rent. I also have a job here actually.

CUT TO:

INT SOMEONE'S HOUSE: -- MORNING.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN sitting silent and upset next to a letter. Tail flutters in the wind and the camera captures last line... "Love, Dia."

CUT TO:

INT TWO STOREY HOME: -- SAME.

ADA and SARDAR in the bungalow.

Sardar:

What do you do, beta?

Ada:

I work with the times of India as a reporter. I did my MA in literature from the Bikaner University.

CUT TO:

DARK ROOM.

Female voice:

Bikaner University?

Rustling paper.

Male voice:

Yes.

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE: -- SAME.

ADA and SARDAR standing. Her POV: spacious house, slightly old and run down, but largely homely. SARDAR standing in the center, wandering into nostalgia, and somewhere, in a perfectly parental way, admiring ADA'S sheer beauty.

Ada:
So...?

Sardar:
Well, welcome to the colony bachcha. TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE:
Sakina, come here.

Small GIRL, about 14 appears at doorway.

Sardar:
Show Ada around the colony. Introduce her to everyone, and tell SHAHNAAZ to clean the house. From today onwards, Ada will live here. So, take care of her. TO ADA: Accha beta, I have to go for some work. Get your luggage here whenever and start feeling at home okay.

Ada:
Yea, Abbajaan. Thanks a lot. I really appreciate it.

Sardar:
Don't mention it.

CUT TO:

EXT COLONY: -- morning.

Ada's POV: Camera PANNING around the colony, soaking in the Muslim *muhalla* atmosphere as an excitable SAKINA laughs at ada (camera).

CUT TO:

EXT MUMBAI STREET: -- afternoon.

MAN ON STREET, torn shirt, and a dagger right near his eye. Blood on camera lens and scream.

CUT TO:

EXT MUMBAI SEAFACE: -- evening.

Arabian Sea, from bandstand. PAN TO: ada sitting on the rocks, hair flying in the wind, lost in thought, a pen in her hand and a writing pad on the rock beside her. A spray

comes really close to her, and a quiet tear runs down her eye.

CUT TO:

INT colony: -- Friday morning.

Empty courtyard, with everyone changing, bathing and getting ready for the day of *jumma*. The men appear in kurtas with traditional caps, and the women gather in the courtyard as the men disappear out the gate of the colony. Ada appears, a little harried, and joins the rest of the women. OS: clock strikes one. Camera pans from men in the mosque to women in the courtyard, everyone bowing their heads and saying the namaaz.

CUT TO:

INT TOI office: --day.

Ada sitting in a relatively large office for a reporter. Huddled in conversation at a desk is the SENIOR EDITOR of TOI. As we advance from the wide expanse of the reporting floor towards her corner office, we notice that Ada is being shown some broadsheets and she is shaking her head vehemently, and trying to talk him out of whatever he has planned. As we reach the door, it swings shut, and we see through the tiny clear section in the shadow glass door, Ada now standing up, and exclaiming. The senior editor gestures 1 with his hand, and she seems pretty unhappy, but apparently the meeting has come to a close, the door opens, and the editor hurries out, slightly hesitant in step, and very apprehensive. CLOSE IN ON: Ada, at her desk, her head buried in her arms, staring at what is obviously, a photo-frame. We never cross the desk to see the front of the frame.

CUT TO:

INT Muslim COLONY: -- late evening.

Ada walking in the colony, her handbag in one arm, and her portfolio in the other. She stops near the small park in the courtyard, and smiles at the kid. Sakina comes and gives Ada a flower from a basket dangling in her hands, and

runs away. Ada walks toward the women huddled in a corner, and seats herself on a water tank cover.

Lady1:

(Continuing the conversation that was going on before ada arrived) And so I told Miya Saab that if they want the pickle to taste good this year, they will have to help around the house. I mean, how much work can we do on our own?

Hello, ada bitiya. How was work?

Ada:

Oh, great, chachi. How are the pickles turning out?

Lady 2:

What should I say, bitiya... I think this year, everyone will be licking their fingertips for a long long time. The pickle is turning out so well, if the drying and roasting gets done soon, at least we'll be able to get back to the daily routine. Even my PAINTING work has stopped for this year's pickle.

They all laugh

Lady1:

MEHNAME, that is a very good thing, as anyone who has seen your painting will say. In my opinion, you should concentrate on the pickle only. At least that is pleasant.

They all LAUGH again.

Lady 2:

Laugh, laugh, when I have an exhibition of my paintings na, then we'll see who laughs.

TWO men arrive at the scene. One TALL AND SINISTER LOOKING, the other MILD AND ABSORBED.

Tall Man:

Yea, yea, have an exhibition, so that those kafirs can ogle at your work.

Tension in the air. Ada squirms a little and looks about her, sensing a scene.

Lady1:

Oh, bhaijaan, someday you'll wake up to the fact that the difference is only in your eyes. Khuda didn't call anyone a kafir. If only believers went to heaven, it would be an empty place. My grandmother used to say that when everyone died and went to heaven, god told them that it was his plan that there was no religion, he was only testing their resilience by donning different masks for different people.

Tall Man2:

Ahmed, come on, don't get started now. Come, lets go read NAMAZ. It's closing on seven o'clock.

Ahmed, and tall man2 leave, Ahmed angry, and the tall man2 tense.

Beat

Ada:

Chachi, so, tell me about the pickle.

They all laugh, relief spreads.

Lady1:

Don't worry bitiya. It's his habit to involve himself in all our discussions. I mean, how long will we distinguish between hindus and muslims. It's all the same to me. And most of us. But, Ahmed. Anyhow, let him be. Happens every day. But that doesn't mean that I'll give up my stand. If your chacha had any such issues, the NIKAAH could never have happened.

Ada:

Let that be, chachi. Tell me about the pickle.

Quiet chuckle.

CUT TO:

INT ADA'S HOUSE: -- night.

ADA, writing at table in her house, hand running through her hair. She writes furiously in what appears to be a diary. One side is raised, so the words are indistinguishable. However, papers lie on the table, in which the camera catches words like 'religious

intolerance'; 'liberal mindset'; '21st century'; fast movement of camera. Ada gets tired and rests her head against the book.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- morning.

ADA leaving the colony for work, much more friendly with everyone, waving out to the various people as she leaves. As she reaches the gate, LADY1, running behind her, hollers.

Lady1:

Ada, o Ada... wait up. (Reaches her, panting) Bitiya, on your way home, pick up some vegetables na, I barely have time today, what with the...

Ada:

... Pickle (finishing the sentence for her)

They both laugh. Ada has really warmed up to these people. She takes the list, waves a last goodbye, and rushes out toward an arriving bus.

Lady1:

Be careful. Hahaha... come soon. (Quietly, to herself) may god protect you. May he keep you safe.

CUT TO:

INT TOI office: -- day.

Ada enters from rear elevator, and takes a file from a sitting man's hand. She walks fast, enters her cabin, and immediately makes a phone-call. She then proceeds to set her table, and remove some papers from her portfolio. Diary falls down, and she reaches under to retrieve it. Senior editor ambles in at that time, and lifting one of the papers, swiftly scans it.

Senior editor:

You may want to lock your door when you leave your table unattended. These papers don't want to be read, do they?

Ada:

(Straightening up, and slipping the diary into a drawer next to her), hmm... Anyhow, these were meant for you. As usual, I don't want to keep them with me. They're dated. I haven't put any name at the bottom, hope that won't cause copyright issues.

Senior editor (SE) sits down. Average height. Broad shouldered, jovial looking, overweight, but doesn't care. Smiles.

SE:

Won't be an issue. It's been four months now. (Beat). I've got a file of stuff for you. (passes it). Here are, by the way, your articles for the week. Analyzing last week. We're giving you a special column, only you'll be slightly behind the time, in analysis. Hope you find them satisfactory. Hand them over, one by one, to the junior editor. Whilst you're here, you may wanna edit them, so you can do that. And take care, ok, I'm answerable.

Ada:

Hmm...

SE:

By the way the pickle you got us, just got over. Any more available?

Ada:

You finished a kilo of pickle in two months? Had it like a vegetable? I'll have to see. (Smiles). Eight more months. (Beat). Ok, I'll do the needful, thanks a lot. By the way, I'll be leaving a little early. Have to attend a SUFI singing show, don't want to be late.

SE:

(seriously). I think you should be late... last week, for the poetry session too, you left at four. People start wondering, and not just the employees. (looks at her), ok, five o'clock. Right? Submit your article before leaving. I rather like the one on the test match and the common person.

Ada:

wrote it yourself?

They both smile. Senior editor reaches the door, and looking back, smiles again. The smile is apprehensive. Looking at him, ada smiles too, but her smile reaches her eyes, more confident.

CUT TO:

INT ADA'S house: -- night.

ada on bed, looking up at the fan, as tears trickle down her face. She looks at the wall where she's scraped five. Camera zooms in on the scratches, and "five months" is subtitled on the screen in typewriter font.

CUT TO:

INT TOI BUILDING: -- evening.

A typist typing away at an old Remington, in a corner of the now-familiar TOI office, reporting floor. As paper after paper passes through the REMINGTON, the camera catches the TITLE 'Are we Lost In a Bush? The Iran crisis, an Indian eye' by ADA PARVEZ, senior correspondent, Political News.

CUT TO:

EXT MUSLIM COLONY: -- evening.

ADA, sitting on her usual tank cover, in happy banter with the Muslim ladies of the colony. There's a lot of teasing and leg-pulling, with everyone squealing and laughing in turn. An incredible amount of familiarity surrounds the place.

Lady1:

Accha, this is all ok, but ada bitiya, it's been nearly a month since your promotion, and you still haven't treated us. You've been with us for six months, call me chachi, and still, no treat. At least, **sewaiya** or something.

Ada:

Accha chachi, I'll give you a treat, but on one condition. In return, you need to give me some pickle. The senior editor loved it. He asked for some more.

Everyone laughs again.

Lady1:

Third time, is he a man or a tank. Tell him it's pickle. Once a man didn't want to make food so he survived on my pickle for a year. Didn't lose weight also. It's very nutritious. Does this man also...?

CAMERA pans to:

A few men amble around, laughing and joking, happy to see the infectious happiness in that group and especially ada, children play CRICKET next to them. ZOOM IN on children playing cricket. Boy SMASHES a full toss straight at LADY1, who gets up shouting.

Lady1:

Oh, god, this incorrigible child. What have I done to you? Today, you watch if I don't beat you to pulp.

She runs after them, the camera pans back to ada, who laughs heartily with the rest of the group.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS.

Female Voice:

One year?

Male Voice:

1 year

CUT TO:

EXT STREET: -- day.

Scenes of riot again. HINDUS raiding a MUSLIM dairy, milk falling all over everyone. Outside On The Street: a HINDU GROUP, with fire laden sticks, running toward the MUSLIM LOCALITY. Everyone starts to DOWN their shutters.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET: -- SAME.

Dairy again. The old MUSLIM OWNER lies down, his throat slashed, blood all over him. ZOOM IN: MURDERER'S EYE.

ZOOM OUT: EXT BANDSTAND -- SAME.

ADA at BANDSTAND again, on the rocks, this time writing on the paper, there is a certain sorrow about her, but a quiet happiness, a feeling of success mingled with deep longing. She stops writing, and tucks her writing pad into her JHOLA and walks on the rocks, dangerously close to the sea, and gets sprayed by the water. She is trying to display her RESISTANCE, her RESILIENCE, her INSISTENCE, and her DEFIANCE. There is a quiet rage in blazing eyes.

ZOOM IN: ADA'S EYES, flame within.

Camera WAITS at her eyes until the flame dies out, nearly SEVEN SECONDS. **Explosive background score** during the whole frame. From zoom in to death of the fire.

As soon as fire dies down, ZOOM out to ADA'S POV:
EXT Muslim COLONY: -- LATE EVENING.

Everyone in the colony doing their own thing, tired from the day, making a community meal, on the LAST DAY of the month of RAMADAN.

ADA smiles, but this time it is not genuine. Too strained and almost tired.

Lady1:

Tomorrow, wake up early. Ada bitiya, you'll have to take tomorrow off from office. CHISTI SAAB is going to be coming.

Ada:

Chisti Saab?

Lady2:

O Ms. Reporter, you should know more na. Our MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, from this constituency. He comes once in a year, to see if we are ok. (to herself, in an undertone) even just alive.

Lady1:

It's for election purposes. Next year is re-election. He needs to show his regular visits, and they usually end up worthless. This time, he'll probably bring a large entourage with him. It'll be a whole day thing. But we've had a lot of problems this year. Especially in the buildings. The bungalows had their own water tanks and so there wasn't a problem, but the buildings had so many water cuts...

CUT TO:

INT COLONY - MORNING.

People shouting out, man coming out on a building balcony COVERED IN SOAP.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- LATE EVENING.

Lady2 speaking

Lady2: (contd.)
And light everyone knows about...

CUT TO:

INT ADA'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

ADA sitting near a window, night time, writing with a candle illuminating her face. Through the window, courtyard, and nearly entire colony looks black.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- LATE EVENING.

Lady2 speaking.

Lady2: (contd.)
So we've decided to get our own delegation and raise our voice. But none of us our educated like you. We think it would make a better impression if you raised our

complaints. Don't worry, Ada, this won't be difficult. We'll talk about it in the night.

CUT TO:

EXT COLONY: -- NIGHT.

Flashes of people eating in a large circle, full moon shining down, everyone very happy. Pan at high speed different facial expressions, vague sounds of voices and merriment. Pan faster and faster, until a visible blur, then focus on the darkness. Sound of window latch being undone, and window being thrown open. Focus on Ada in bed, staring up at the ceiling fan, almost in a reverie. Ada's POV: fan rotating, slowly, slowly, until each rotation is clearly visible.

CUT TO:

INT TOI BUILDING: -- MORNING.

ADA, in her office, walks across to a chart that covers ONE WALL, with large numbers 1 to 12 written. She walks to it, with a large marker, and cuts out the number 9.

SUBTITLE at the bottom of the screen: 9 months, in typewriter font.

INT senior editor's office: -- SAME.

Ada walks into the office and throws down a copy of that morning's newspaper. It lands on the front page, which was largely empty, save for a tiny script note at one end.

Ada:
What's this all about?

SE:
Well, what's the problem? 'saved for the biggest news story of the year, in about three months from now!' perfectly fair, huh?

Ada:
How so? You should've consulted me. This is ridiculous.

SE:

Public memory is short-lived. Anyhow, you don't worry. Just carry on. Have you got more stuff? It's all here.

(Opens a drawer stacked with papers)

Ada:

I hope you know what you're doing. (She puts a tape on the table.) Have been thinking about this for ages. I can't keep this with me any longer, so lock it up. The article is through. Oh yeah, what've you been writing this week?

He hands her a sheave of papers, but she puts them back on the table.

Ada:

Pick three, I've written a little something myself too.

They smile. He picks three out of the pile and gives it to her. She stuffs it in her bag, and walks out.

ZOOM IN ON door spinning after impact.

CUT TO:

INT Muslim COLONY: -- EVENING.

Ada cooking at home. She puts a hot stove on the gas, and starts stirring whatever she has made. Lady1 enters the house, and sees Ada in the kitchen. She walks towards her, slowly. Camera pans between Ada and Lady1.

Lady 1:

Ada beti, what's being made?

Suddenly aware of her presence, ada nearly jumps and drops the large stirrer she held in her hand with a clang onto the ground.

Ada:

Oh, chachi, I had no clue there was anyone in the house. Just give me one second.

Lady1:

No, no... What is being made? Secret, secret, something very nice huh? Let me taste.

Ada:
Nothing chachi, just rice... Chinese.

INT Ada's bedroom: -- SAME.

Sounds of laughter. ADA and LADY2, sitting beside the bed on the floor, LADY2 drawing *MEHNDI* on ADA'S hand. There is a sense of warmth and familiarity, and a deep fondness with it. ADA'S smile is genuine, and LADY2 is happy to have found a companion as well. FREEZE on ada laughing.

CLOSE UP on FREEZE FRAME, MERGE with black background, making it stark.

CUT TO:

EXT main road, near playground: -- DAY.

HINDU EXTREMIST LEADERS are gathered in a large playground, making provocative speeches, and conducting a RECRUITING drive to fight the Muslims, and bad Hindu's.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET: -- AFTERNOON.

Woman, running on the street, holding a lifeless infant in her arms. She has evidently lost her emotional balance, and she screams and runs. This is supposed to be a very VISUALLY DISTURBING IMAGE, to show the intensity and effect of riots. She runs really close to the camera which captures every tear running down her face, and she falls with the child on the ground, and bangs her head on the ground. Pieces of glass, stones and pebbles lie all over the street. All this while, the **background score** plays LOUDLY. When she finally looks up, the camera captures a completely bloody face in close up.

VO: I, Ada Parvez have a confession to make. This last year has been one of most important, life changing, defining, and unfortunately cruel years of my life.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- MIDNIGHT.

Black. Lantern flickering, a silhouette SPRINTING through the muhalla, carrying a large bag, roughly packed. As the person exits the gate,

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN.

Ada (VO) (Contd.):

Certain decisions have been made that have made a vast difference to a few people, but I am confident will remain a part of public memory for years to come. They will impact every sphere of life, touched and untouched by me, and will have ramifications that will stretch for a long period of time. I want to qualify, that my intent was not to make a name for myself.

CUT TO:

INT TOI BUILDING: -- MORNING.

Ada in SE's office.

Ada: I need four dummy front pages, delivered to Chachi, Abba, Mehnaaz and Ira, before dawn.

SE:

Will do.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- POST MIDNIGHT.

Darkness. Small messenger boy, carrying four large manila envelopes, walks to the respective houses that Ada mentioned, and quietly leaves the envelopes, and turns around. (Subtle note: he wears gloves)

Ada (VO) (contd.):

I want to thank a few people for giving me one year that will be truly unforgettable. Chachi, Henna Bukharia, for reminding me of my mother, and doing so much for me. Abba, Mohd. Sardar for giving me a house to stay, and Ira, Mehnaaz and Sakina, for being so sweet for so long. And I want to apologize to them.

CUT TO:

EXT MUSLIM COLONY: -- MIDNIGHT.

Lady2 (Henna Bukharia) watching Ada leave the premise. She doesn't know it is Ada, but her face shows fear, and worry, and uncertainty. She turns around and goes inside, and stares up at the ceiling, knowing that the storm is on its way.

Ada (VO) (contd.):

Very often, we put up a farce to make people like us more. Call it congeniality if you will. But a farce so big, that it borders a deception, was not to make new friends. I Ada Parvez, have a confession to make.. I am not an Islamic.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

ADA, sitting next to a window, in a large house, wearing slightly more western clothes for the first time in the movie. Rain pours outside, and as the camera moves out of the window and changes direction, there is lightning, and ADA'S (?) stricken face is lit up.

Ada (contd. saying it out aloud):
My name is Dia Malhotra.

CUT TO:

(Flashback) INT TOI BUILDING: Daytime.

SE's office.

Ada:

I want Arjun and Ma moved out to safe houses before the news reaches the street, and I want all my friends notified.

SE:

Done.

Ada:

And I think the building should deploy extra security, and important positions be provided cover for a while.

SE:

Stop getting paranoid. It's gonna be fine. You're over-reacting, and in fact, you're more than...

Ada (cutting him off):

Over-reacting. I gave an entire year of my life to this, and you call this over-reacting. I've seen the people, and I know how much they can be influenced. I don't want to be hurt, or anyone I know to be hurt, because you wanted an effing story published in your newspaper.

Even though the room is sound-proof, the sheer anger being displayed by ada is attracting a small crowd outside the office. One worker wonders aloud if she's being sacked.

Ada (contd.):

And I don't give a damn if you...

SE:

Shut up. You're attracting people. And for Christ's sake quit acting like a three year old. You were... (Raising his voice as Ada starts to interrupt) ...well aware of the consequences and ramifications of this story. You were enthused about it, and now don't you dare start shoving the blame on me because you're getting cold feet. Now I **am** trying to take every measure in the book, in fact, every one possible, to make sure that you and your family are safe, but I am not sitting here to take your shit. Now get out of my office.

As Ada, completely dumbfounded by this outburst begins to leave,

SE:

Wait. Okay, look, I'm sorry. This isn't easy on me. And obviously on you either. I just wish you'd start trusting me, like I trust you, because you're all I've got, and whether you want to believe it or not, I'm all you've got. (Beat). Arjun wasn't too happy about the translocation idea. He said he's not gonna stop going to work.

Ada: (expecting this)

He'll realize the enormity by the morning. How do I reach my safe house? And why can't Arjun and ma come to where I am?

SE:

Four car transfers. Two men, discreet, armed. And the second question, it's too dangerous. That's putting three of you in equal risk. I mean, it may sound cruel, but we've got to keep as many, hopefully all alive, and different places makes it harder to find you.

Ada:

Hmm... um, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said what I did.

SE:

Don't think about it.

Ada exits. (Subtle note: Ada will be called DIA from now on.)

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- NIGHT.

DIA in the safe-house, different places in the house, background music playing loudly. Different times of the night. CUT between DIA and her POV: large wall clock, hanging in the room. Show time travel with clock.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

three o'clock. DIA near window. Background: front page of times of India.

CUT TO:

EXT BUILDING: -- NIGHT.

ARJUN MALHOTRA, 38, tall, wheatish, good looking, very professional demeanor. Being led by two men into a large apartment building, black outside. Embroiled in a heated discussion on his phone.

Arjun:

What the hell's going on? First you place me under some goddamn protection where two trail dogs follow me when I go to take a piss, now you tell me I can't go back home, and book me into god-knows-who's apartment, indefinitely. I need to speak to Dia. Now get her on the effing phone for me.

He gets into the elevator, followed by two men, dressed in plain clothes, with their hands in their pocket, around a gun.

Arjun (contd.):

I don't give a rat's ass about this enterprise that the two of you have set out on. Dia comes home one day and informs me that it's gonna be a whole year before I see my wife. And I've gone through the year. I know you don't care about the details of my year, but I ain't gonna let you walk in at the end of the year and tell me my entire family is under threat...

Arjun (contd.):

No, no, no... that's not how it works. I need to speak with Dia, and now. (shouting) you don't need to listen to my shit, and I'm not interested in yours. Get my wife on the phone to me, and while you're at it, I want to speak with ma too, that's Dia's mum. And I'm going to work.

We hear a buzz, meaning the phone has been hung up at the other end, but ARJUN continues shouting...

Arjun (contd.):

And I'm going to work, try and stop me.

He exits the elevator, and one of the men, well built but not very conspicuous, perfect detective type bodyguard

opens the door to the apartment. He hands ARJUN a cell phone, not as flashy as his (Arjun's) own, but functional.

Arjun:

What the hell's this for?

The man silently takes the phone from his hand and the CAMERA ZOOMS in to the PHONE DISPLAY. We see the phone book open, and the first number appearing on it is DIA. ARJUN just stares.

Arjun:

Couldn't have told me before, huh? Like your bloody boss...

He feels like an ass, but doesn't admit it, as these stoic men take their place in the house, one combing it to make sure it's secure, and the other assuring the door is locked properly. Arjun dials Dia's number and waits. A second later we split the screen to show Dia and Arjun. The phone next to Dia's bed starts ringing and vibrating, flashing "private number". She hesitatingly answers it after about five rings.

Arjun:

Hello.

Dia:

Arjun?

You can see involuntary TEARS immediately starting to roll down her face as she covers her mouth to stifle a sob.

Arjun:

Where are you? What's going on? Where, what the...

Dia:

Are you okay?

Arjun:

(getting a little emotional himself.)

Yea, but what happened. (Sensing she's crying). Why, listen, where are you? I'll come right away. This shit's sent me two burly men, we'll be okay.

Dia:

Silent sobs. Hmmm... I'm sorry.

Arjun: (he can't control himself any more)
It's been a year, dammit, a year. You didn't call even once.

Dia:
I couldn't, I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

INT TOI BUILDING: -- DAY.

FLASHBACK, DIA in TOI office, SE in her OFFICE.

Dia:
I want to call him, just once, it's been ages...

SE:
He's fine, I've spoken to him, he screamed the pants off me, but he's fine. It's going to be over soon. We can't risk a phone call right now.

CUT TO:

PRESENT.

SPLITSCREEN, DIA and ARJUN'S conversation.

Dia:
Listen, I'm okay. Just please, (beat as she stifles another sob with her tee-shirt) please just do me a favor and don't try and leave before tomorrow. You'll see why. Arjun, I'm really sorry, but I had to do this. You'll understand. I hope you do. I love you.

She hangs up the PHONE, and it rings almost immediately. She answers this time unhesitatingly.

Dia:
He called me. He's not okay.

SE: (VO)
It's okay. He's going to be fine, and proud of you. Give it a while, please. Tomorrow morning, everyone's going to be proud of you.

CUT TO:

EXT Street: -- EARLY MORNING.

Newspaper vendors start to set up shop, lining every street.

SE (VO): (contd.)

I want you to know you did great. You were brave, and courageous, and strong. You did the most awesome, selfless thing, and I'm proud of you. It's gonna be a happy tomorrow.

It's getting light, and sleepy morning walkers start entering a park. We see a newspaper stall at the outside. One man, we notice ritually, picks up the Times Of India, and oblivious to the news, first ambles into the park to find himself a seat. We do not follow him beyond the gate, (so that we don't see a reaction).

SE (VO): (contd.)

Stop crying, Dia, listen to me. First thing in the morning, I'm getting ma to call you, alright. In fact, I'm on my way there. And listen bachcha, thanks. The Times Group CEO was over to congratulate me. You helped me do what every journalist wants to.

Dia (VO):

I left a man I love lonely for an entire year. I made friends and left them forever, I betrayed people, I left my mum with no support... I mean, I left without calling also, just mailed that letter, and now, you never know. With every passing moment, I'm hating myself. I need ma; I need to talk to her.

CUT TO:

INT RAI RESIDENCE: -- DAY.

(flashback) MIRA RAI, DIA'S mother, opens the door, and signs the courier slip, and then walks inside. She opens a letter, and we see it from her POV. We pan to her face, following her facial expressions, as DIA reads out the letter in VO.

Dia: (VO)

Ma, I know this is weird, we live in the same city, and I'm writing you a letter. Actually, I made a decision recently, and it's hard to explain to you guys. It took me a week, and lots of energy to explain it to Arjun, and I couldn't face you with it. Ma, I'm going to be away for a year. I can't tell you where, and I can't tell you why. This is one of the biggest decisions I've made. Papa always said to do what you needed to, to prove yourself, to leave a mark. Ma, I think I have that chance. This is the biggest and most important decision I've made alone. It's going to be one year from now when you hear my voice next, a long, and painful one year, and not only for you. I can't ask you to support me, but I hope you always bless me. Please take care of Arjun, and tell him I love him. You know I love you, and always will. Sorry.

P.S: Someone will call you from time to time to tell you I'm okay.

By the end of the letter, MRS. RAI is in tears, and she immediately grabs the phone and frantically dials DIA'S cell phone number which, as we hear on speaker is unavailable. She then calls home, but only gets the machine, and finally calls ARJUN in his office. We hear both sides of the conversation as she's on speaker.

Mira:
Arjun?

Arjun:
Yes ma? (Hesitatingly) is everything okay?

Mira:
I want to talk to Dia. I don't think there's anyone at home. And her cell phone's temporarily out of order. (Hesitant herself). Do you know where she is, beta?

Arjun:
Ma, I thought she'd have called you...

Mira (cutting him short):
It's true then?

Arjun:
What ma?

Mira:

She sent... oh my god... (Crying again)

Arjun:

Ma, don't cry... I'm there, and I'm sure she's ok, don't worry. She loves us, ma, too much. She'll be back.

MIRA can't stop crying...

Arjun:

Ma, I'll be there soon. I'm leaving straight after this meeting. Just please calm down. This Dia also na. Just gimme an hour and some. I'll be there soon. Please take care.

MIRA manages to sniffle an okay but is obviously distraught, and more than anything, completely confused.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- MORNING.

Present. Dia in bed, it's near six now. She's staring at the window, but is too afraid to approach it.

CUT TO:

EXT STREETS: -- SAME.

Newspaper vendors cycling streets dropping papers at people's doors (merge different images). One BOY enters a building, and we see the paper he's carrying is a TOI. But his arm tucks it, so we can't see the headline.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

the SE enters dia's apartment, and hands her a cell phone. She's a little lost.

SE:

Moment of truth.

Dia:
Now or never.

Se:
Let's go with the flow.

Dia:
A rolling stone gathers no moss.

SE:
A single match brings the haystack down.

Dia:
It ain't over till the fat lady sings.

SE:
I'm glad you're okay. Wait. Let's get this synchronized. It's turning seven in forty five seconds. I'll run you upto date. Papers are out. People will start reading in the next... um, 40 seconds. Reactions will be recorded by people in all parts of the town. We'll get reports every five minutes. And in the next thirty seconds, the first morning news show ought to bring out the report to a larger audience. In twenty seconds, the people in the *muhalla* will know the truth, and um, in ten seconds, no wait (beat) five seconds,...

The phone he handed her starts ringing.

SE: (contd.)
Ma will call.

Dia, shocked at first, fumbles with the buttons, and when she finally gets it right, holds the phone to her hear.

Dia:
Ma?

Split-screen.

Mira:
It's been more than a year, and still I had to call...

Tears on both sides, and we turn the sounds of the conversation really low and fleet between watermarked

images of streets with people reading the TOI. Everyone seems surprised, and we slowly fade into the background images and turn sound on. In the voice over, dia reads the rest of the article.

Dia: (ada?) (VO)

In one year, you get to know a lot about somebody. People mostly get married after knowing each other that long. So we decided that a year was long enough a duration to form a study. I lived a year with nearly a hundred Muslim people and got to know them. They got to know me. It was nearly identical to a meeting we would've had in a park, if we stayed there long enough, or met frequently enough. Yet, there was a difference. My name, as they knew it, was Ada Parvez. Through the Times Of India, my name, as a large number of Muslim readers knew it, was Ada Parvez. But that didn't change me. What I wrote was what I felt, and I hope, at least by the large number of messages and letters I received from readers, that what you connected to, was not my name, but my words, and those, as much as fundamentalists reading this may insist, will never change. I spent a year in isolation from the people I grew up with, I spent a year in isolation from those I was used to, to prove to you, that all you ever thought, all you ever believed, all the differences you ever imagined, were all in your head. Different strokes for different folks they say. And what's wrong with that? Living with these people, I can safely say, that I have never felt more secure in my life. They were warm, generous and giving. And they were accepting too. They let me be myself, and never made me feel like an outsider. Sure, they read the namaaz five times a day, and they wore clothes in a certain way, but that difference is they same as that between us and say, Americans. Yet, we don't call them our enemies. In fact, after seeing these people so closely, I realized how much like them I really was. During the next eight weeks, in this weekly column, I will tell you about life in a different world, and try and tell you why there are differences, with whom there are differences and perhaps intellectualize this issue a little more. I've given this a lot of me, and I ask you to trust me, I ask you to trust both Ada Parvez and Dia Malhotra, because they both are the same person, albeit with a small difference. What's in a name, said Shakespeare. I sincerely hope you don't reply: a lot.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

Split screen again, Dia and her mother continue their conversation

Mira:

I read the article, it was nice... Dia beta, why couldn't you tell me... I would've liked to know.

Dia:

(In between tears)

I'm sorry ma, I know, but this is how it had to be.

Mira:

Come and meet me. Please.

Dia:

Yea ma, in a little while...I can't right now, but I love you. I've wanted you to tell me you loved me for so long ma, please say it.

Mira:

I can't Dia. Not right now... I'm sorry, but I was away from my only source of love for more than a year. Don't ask me to love so soon. I can't...

Mira abruptly hangs up the phone.

Dia, sobbing falls on the floor and her phone, in her hand starts to ring. In anger she flings the phone, but the SE, ready, expertly catches it, and answers. He puts it on speaker, as Dia refuses to hold it.

SE:

Yes?

Caller:

Sir, I was in the 6:40 local and people were quite happy. Everyone was talking about it, but there was some displeasure. Mostly positive, sir. I've thought up my article, I'll have it mailed by noon.

SE:

Do that. And add, with your name, the designation, junior political correspondent, hope you don't mind the promotion.

Caller:

Thanks sir. I'll report to base... if Dia ma'am is there, could you thank her on my behalf. She lived with my people for a year, and didn't call them bad. Hope this doesn't sound corny, but I really appreciate that.

He hangs up. SE looks happily at Dia. She's barely consoled but is putting up a brave front.

SE:

Borivali to Churchgate. Earliest readers. That was Imtiaz Hassan, very important new journalist. He is real crisp. Wrote an article on the Indo-Paki nuclear tussle. Sharp and very well researched. And yea, he's not the fake type. I really think people are gonna appreciate what you did today.

Dia:

Today. Yeah, hmmm... listen, can I kinda meet ma sometime today?

Dia looks down, convinced of a no, but she at least tried.

SE:

I'll call you in an hour. You can't budge from here. There's a lot of technology around here. Not to mention the incredible amount of red tape. I'm trying to keep you out of all that. The phone I gave you is a sterile phone. Chuck your old phone, and call Arjun from this one. Bring him up to date, and keep this number saved on his phone. Tell him his usual phone may be tapped, not to call you from there, and take care. Don't answer doors, answer any calls on this phone, it's untraceable, and yea, I'll be back in a few hours with a little surprise.

Before Dia could respond, SE walks out the door, and it slams.

DIA'S POV: the door left shut, and the two burly men standing outside, and no one to talk to. She turns on the TV.

CUT TO:

TV SCREEN:

Channel#1 newscaster: (Rajdeep Sardesai)
Good morning and welcome back to the early morning news on *****. Like we said before the commercial, let's scan the morning dailies for the headlines. (Beat) in what is perhaps the biggest news story of the day, a young lady named Dia Malhotra, working with the Times Of India, spent the whole of last year, in a Muslim colony, in a Times Group funded research project. The name she assumed there was Ada Parvez, and this morning, the Times has come out with a full page article in which Dia Malhotra recounts this experience. There will be more such articles in the next eight weeks. While the ramifications of this disclosure are uncertain, ***** (channel name) has asked Mumbai correspondents to scout the city and look for reactions. All this and more will be discussed, in a ***** exclusive program at 9:30 this evening, titled, from that eloquent article itself, "What's In A Name?"
(Beat) in other news...

Dia flips the channel, to see...

Channel#2 newscaster: (Barkha Dutt)
Its seven twenty seven on the clock. Coming back to our main focus this morning, a young Hindu lady in a Muslim farce, is this morally justifiable, or is it an outrage? As we heard from our Mumbai correspondent, people are divided. We have with us, a cultural head of St. Xavier's college, and a Muslim scholar. We were going to discuss the Muslim outrage in Lebanon, but before that, very quickly, I want to get in an opinion from the both of them. Sir, do you, as a Muslim feel violated or betrayed in any way by what Dia Malhotra did?

Muslim scholar:

Barkha, this isn't a simple issue. From where I see it, if living in that colony and writing about it can clear misconceptions about Muslims, then that's fine. But as I'm sure a lot of people will tell you, the openness that she probably felt there wasn't for her. So, those people may feel duped. The bottom-line, Barkha, is that this isn't a personalities issue. This is about the media diving too deep into people's lives.

Barkha:

Ok, very quickly, what would a cultural head say to this mixing of cultures?

Cultural head:

See, I agree with both sides of the equation. As Elahim Khan said, it isn't easy to live your life on candid camera. But, the intent is important here. She did it, in the face of even the current nuclear tussle, and certain sections of Muslim society all over the world, even in India, have begun saying that India is out to subdue or put down, we could say, Islam in a big way. What, I think, from this article, the girl is trying to say, is that if we try, we can at least remove this bigotry in Indian society. After all, we're all Indians, and for the first time, someone's exhibited that, but for minor differences, we're all of the same fiber.

Barkha:

Thanks very much. What I found interesting there, was that you used the word "exhibited", because, we all have been told that Hindu Muslim *bhai bhai* and stuff down that line, but nobody before, has actually proved it. So the big question here is, was it actually deception, or the disappearance of religion in the face of humanity? We're going to go in for a short commercial break, and we'll return with that story from Lebanon. But this is one story we're going to stay with for a long time. Perhaps the eight weeks that Dia Malhotra promised. Stay tuned, you're on a special edition Good Morning India.

DIA mutes the TV and calls ARJUN from her cell phone.
(subtle note: the number was saved in the phone).

CUT TO:

SPLIT-SCREEN

Dia:
Hi baby.

Arjun:
Hey, so, you okay now?

Dia:

Uh-huh... and you?

Arjun:

Yea, working on my comp. At least trying to, with the Hounds of Baskervilles on my trail.

Dia:

Hmmm... We're supposed to switch off our usual phone, cause they may be tapped. So, we're supposed to make use of the phones we've been given, they're sterile, both private numbers with a lot of other techno jargon behind them.

Arjun:

So, um... I guess you want to know what I thought about the article?

Dia:

You thought it wasn't worth a year?

Arjun:

No, I didn't. It was well written. So maybe you had a fruitful year, but I guess I'm a little selfish... what about my year? Was this worth my year? I stayed apart from you for a whole year and now this. We're in two overly guarded bull houses, neither of us happy, and we apparently are supposed to have finally met.

Dia:

I know. I'm sorry... but it's only eight weeks. And this arrangement too is just temporary. Let the fire die down.

Arjun:

Dia, were you in the army ever?

Dia:

No. Why?

Arjun:

What happens after the eight weeks? (Beat). People die everyday because fires don't die down. I've seen it in the three years I put in the forces. And the match you just lit, is going to burn the town Dia, and it's gonna go on to get larger and stronger and fiercer. (Beat) This is not fair, and I'm sorry. I mean, I want to be proud of you for every word in that article, but I'm angry for every moment you left me alone. It's just so effing complex, I can't

figure it out. For me, as a husband, at least until I meet you, this is galactically stupid. I love you. Hell, this is so hard.

Dia:

Please, this means a lot to me. I may not have spent three years in the forces, but I've had my father killed while he was traveling in a train, simply because he was a Hindu. I may not have seen war, but I've cried to lose my father because someone else was so ignorant and asinine as to... to believe that my father was worthy of getting killed. I've seen galactic stupidity, and this isn't it. It's time someone proved that there isn't a difference...

Arjun:

Na...

Dia: (contd.)

Let me finish please. It's easy for you and me to sit back and pontificate about the loss of life in Godhra and everywhere else. I wanted to tell them that it was unnecessary. I wanted to stimulate a change, so I did. I make choices, and sometimes they're wrong, but this time, irrespective of what happens eight weeks from now, I'm proud of the choice I made. Because, irrespective of what happens eight weeks from now, everyone's going to know that there isn't a difference, and Dia Arjun Malhotra just proved it to them. (Beat). I can't ask you to understand. I can only ask you to not give up on me. I love you, and this is the last time I left you. I'm sorry.

ZOOM in on ARJUN. He is clutching the phone, but doesn't know what to say.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY.

SE enters DIA'S safe house with MIRA. Hold on DIA and MIRA, FREEZE the embrace.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- next morning.

She reads the paper's out aloud.

Dia: (looking up at Mira)

So ma, people on the street are confused, journalists are supporting and fundamentalists are strongly opposing.

SE:

You forgot, liberals are supporting, CNN is doing an exclusive, so international media is supporting, and capitalist countries will probably support.

Dia: (ironical)

Syria and Beirut have probably got *fatwas* ready...

SE:

Don't count on that. We've given Muslims a positive light, so that's not reasonable. They may even support it.

Mira:

We'll know one way or the other by today.

Dia:

I guess.

SE:

Now or never.

Dia:

Let's face the music.

SE:

Take the bull by the horns.

Dia:

Walk into the lion's den.

SE:

Play with fire. Ok, got to push off. I'll catch you guys soon.

CUT TO:

EXT DIA and ARJUN'S small beach-house: -- DAY.

A large crowd of MUSLIMS gathering outside. Intersperse, and fade into, a large and sinister looking MUSLIM LEADER MOHD. CHISTI, wearing TRADITIONAL GARB with the CAP et all, in the colony DIA lived. Making a speech to a large audience, and as fade in completes, turn off the mob sounds.

Muslim leader:

I have come here to ask you to stand up. Against the brutality of the majority community, at the mockery of our faith, and at the audacity of that Dia Malhotra. It was right here that she spoke to me, at your behest, and I saw the awe in your eyes. You thought she was better than Chisti Saab, she would make a plea for our rights, she would fulfill our requirements. Women broke the norm that we have followed because of that thing. Look where she brought you. I ask you today, are you going to sit and wear bangles, or stand up for the insult you faced, and shut her up forever. I ask you, are you going to draw strength or weakness from this. I ask you, are you going to show those kafirs that we will not subjugated, subdued, and derided. Stand up my brothers, and show them you are men. And Muslim men take every challenge, and make it their own. Show them that you are such men.

CROWD disperses as CHISTI gets off the podium.
Focus on : HENNA BUKHARIA, and a few of her FRIENDS.

Lady3: who knew?

Lady2:

I don't care, and I don't believe. (indicating towards the exiting CHISTI) That man was...

AHMED walks from the back and pushes her roughly on a car bonnet and clutches her neck.

Ahmed:

Enough. We have tolerated enough. First you talk about kafirs and show them your paintings, now this. Enough, I said. If you don't shut up now, I'll kill you, I swear. Chisti Saab is right, you women are crossing your limits.

LADY3 and HENNA start pulling him off, and a FEW MEN come and help but the atmosphere doesn't ease out into the laughter when DIA was around. Everyone is tense. Close up on HENNA. The matchstick has dropped, the storm has arrived.

CUT TO:

EXT DIA and ARJUN'S BEACH HOUSE: -- DAY.

ANGRY MUSLIMS outside DIA'S house, throwing stones at the windows. Lots of shouting of protests against DIA, and one MAN tries to climb the wall and aims a fire laden stick through a broken window. It misses and a POLICE VAN arrives. Some men run off, but a LARGE CROWD still remains. A fight ensues and the sounds of the RIOT are interspersed with heavy background music.

CUT TO:

EXT AZAD MAIDAN: -- DAY.

Hindu leaders are starting their protests to Muslim initiation against Hindu's in their speeches. Focus on: one man, with severe contortions of his face, rousing up communal feelings, and condemning dia at the same time. Large crowd of young activists and rowdies gathered around.

Leader:

Brothers and sisters. I can't see any of them, but... (some laugh feebly, leader is quite proud of his sense of humour)... we have gathered here to ask ourselves whether we will sit down and allow men we do not know to abuse us? Will we sit down and ask to be whipped? Will we allow our men and women, those we know and love, to be treated like vermin? And on top of that, will we behave like that brat girl, dia, and live with these monsters, and then come home, to tell our own, that we were wrong? Were we wrong? Did we ask for Pakistan? For years, our party has been saying, the more power you give these Muslims, the more they will try and overpower you. India is a Hindu state and so it will remain. Jai Shivaji. Jai Maharashtra. Jai Hindustan.

He exits the podium and joins his rally. We here cries of, "find dia and burn her." "save our pride, save our nation." "long live ***** (party name)" "Hindustan is for hindus" and the like.

CUT TO:

INT MOHD. CHISTI'S HOUSE: -- AFTERNOON.

Sitting on the verandah, sipping tea. In intense discussion with a small group of perhaps key members of his party.

Mohd. Chisti:

That day, when I first saw her, I knew there was something wrong. A Muslim girl, behaving like that? And those women. Khalid, go make sure they're quiet. Pick someone up and explain you're serious. In your way. (indicating toward the gate, and a bearded tall member of the congregation exits). Ahmed, make sure every kafir understands that we mean what we say. Burn the streets. Huh... if only I had known. It would have finished that day. Should have gang-raped that girl and thrown her in a well. Ended that story there. There wouldn't have been these repercussions.

Pan to: woman in a Muslim garb, with her entire body, save her face covered, standing just behind the curtain in one corner of the room, listening, shocked.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN.

Mohd. Chisti: (Vo)
Find her.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET: -- DAY.

Top of a mounded (flyover type) road. People running up from both sides, carrying an assortment of objects they plan to use as weapons, right from real swords, to hockey sticks, to kitchen knives, and (in one man's hand) a badminton racquet.

Voice over of newscasters relaying latest statistics of death, and people's cries, interspersed with voices of people. These sounds go from distinctive to completely merged such that they sound nonsensical. As both factions reach the top of the road, the camera angles toward the side with the nonsensical sound getting louder, and as they reach and blend,...

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- AFTERNOON.

dia sitting on one corner of the bed in the large expanse of the room in the safe house. On con-call with arjun and SE. Mira sitting in background.

SPLIT SCREEN

Dia:
the deal was that we would meet in a few days.

SE:
C'mon you two, grow up. We've got riots here. Unprecedented. We can't go on rendezvous' with that kind of danger. And you, dia, you're being hunted. Don't be ridiculous, and hold me to ransom like this.

Arjun:
I'd like to be heard here, especially since I've been muted for well over a year.

SE:
Don't taunt at such a time, at least.

Arjun (heating up):
Don't you dare "such a time" me... I don't give a rat's ass about your time or misery. I don't give a damn about your project. I want to meet dia, now. If ma can be there, why can't I? I can't go to office, okay. I can't go out, okay. I can't even meet my wife, no thank you. I'm not ready for that.

SE:
Fine, fine, fine. We can't come there, it's too dangerous. You head out with the guards to the docks, they'll be empty

now. I'll reach there with dia. Mira will stay at home. We'll leave four guards here, and I'll come with a couple there. We'll meet there, and decide further. I can't promise that we'll go back the same place, it's just too risky, so well, I'll hang up. You guys carry on, I'll arrange it with your guard and dia's. see you in the afternoon. Dia, I'll be coming to your place soon, don't budge until then.

He hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- EVENING.

Dia, leaving the apartment, kissing Mira. SE follows. As they walk down the stairs, led by one guard with his gun out this time, and followed by another, his gun pointing in the opposite direction as he walked backward downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT CAR, BLACK HONDA CITY: -- SAME.

Dia and SE sitting in the car, both a little way away from the windows, dark tinted, rolled up all the way.

Dia:
The car bullet-proof?

SE:
We're running a private organization, Dia.

Dia:
Hmmm...
Can I make a call?

SE:
I think you'd better. We can't afford to wait too long. Anyhow, we're breaching protocol.

Dia (into phone):
Arjun? You out yet?

Arjun: (VO)
Yea, been five minutes. Nice car (sarcastic) barely take a bullet to get it down. Hope you're better.

Dia:
Don't worry, we're gonna be okay...

CUT TO:

INT CAR: -- SAME.

Dia and Arjun, conversation, after a while...

Dia:
Have you reached?

Arjun:
Just about. You?

Dia:
(to SE) have we reached?

SE:
Five minutes.

Dia: (into phone)
Five minutes. God, I can't wait. Listen, I know you're still angry, but lets enjoy these moments of freedom that we have, they're barely gonna last. It's probably wiser to go home different places. So I don't want to waste these few and far between moments. God knows how long this shit will last...

Kicks the front seat in frustration. Suddenly, the car bucks. Dia, thinking it's because of her kick turns to SE to apologize, but he's pulling her down way before that.

Sounds of bullets ripping past, as the car swerves and turns. Dia, glancing into the rear view mirror from her position on the car floor, notices, through the clear rear windscreen, a loaded car with armed men, some rifles, some shotguns, and some pistols in hot pursuit.

CUT TO:

EXT JETTY: -- SAME.

Arjun, at the docks, standing outside the car, getting a panic attack from the sounds coming from the phone. After shouting out "Dia" several times, he resigns to severe swearing and clutches onto the phone for dear life, sweating all the while in anxiety.

CUT TO:

INT CAR: -- SAME.

Dia in the car. We follow the scene from Dia's pov. An engaged shootout occurs in which the men in Dia's guard return fire, one of them, driving, getting shot in the shoulder, as a result of which the car goes dangerously close to the divider, nearly out of control. We see Dia's face from time to time in the mirror, interspersing in with the fight images. Finally, the second guard gets a series of shots into the rear car's front tires, both, and the drivers chest, as a result of which the car behind overturns, and topples, stopping the fight. Return to camera inside the car, as we see Dia, doing all she can to stay calm still clutching the phone in her hand. She quickly restores it to her ear, and breathes heavily, as she says...

SPLIT-SCREEN

Dia:
Arjun?

Arjun:
Yea, are you okay? God, where are you?

Dia:
I think we retraced a bit, (seeing SE mouthing 1 minute)
but we'll be there in a minute.

Arjun:
Yea... (slowly) okay. Love you. (as he sees her
approaching) Black City?

Dia:

Yea. (she moves to turn down the window, but he SE stops her)

CUT TO:

EXT JETTY: -- SAME.

Dia getting out of the car, and stumbling out, tripping over her dress in excitement. Arjun moves to catch her, but she regains control before he can reach. Standing about three feet apart, they stare at each other and share a moment. There is sorrow and gratitude. Sorrow of a year's worth of separation, gratitude at having been able to meet, after that incredibly close call.

Pan to:

SE standing on the jetty, shouting into the phone.

SE:

How the hell were we traced? I've got an injured man here. It's severe. (More quietly) don't know if he'll pull through. Don't effing shout instructions at me, get me protection at the address I gave you. I want that lady under complete protection. I'm reaching there in a bit. Wait for me, and remember, this is your ass on the line, and I don't give a damn about it. So watch yourself.

Hangs up abruptly and turns to the embracing couple.

SE:

We gotta leave.

Dia:

That's ridiculous. I thought we'd be able to spend at least half an hour on our own.

Arjun starts to protest too, but se cuts him short.

SE:

You'll get a lot more. We're going back home, together.

The three of them get into one car, with the two whole men of the guard, and the others get into the other car. The car with the wounded man lead the way, and this time, the guard had all their guns out, at the ready

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- LATE EVENING.

Dia on a couch, Mira sitting on the window ledge, SE standing near the door, and arjun pacing. There is a lot of tension in the room.

Dia:

It's been four hours. They still don't know how secure I am. The government doesn't want to offend public sentiment, so I'm not about to be supported, and this riot is gonna be attributed to me. Is that all you have to tell me?

Mira:

Dia, control your temper. We're all on edge.

Dia:

Sorry ma.

Walks to her, and rests her head on her shoulder. There's fatigue and intense pressure in her eyes.

SE:

There's something else.

Arjun:

Aren't you the messenger of good fortune? (slumps into an easy chair and throws back his head). What now?

SE:

I know this is gonna be hard for the both of you, but yesterday the mob got down to your house, and there was a showdown with the police.

Dia: (interjecting)

I saw that on TV. They said the police stopped them. Not even a stone got into the house.

SE:

That was in the day. They got back in the night. (beat)

Arjun:

No. How bad?

Se:

Well, from what I've heard. They burnt it down to the ground. Police are trying to downplay it. That's why it wasn't on the news.

Dia:

Will this ever stop?

SE:

We've got to show them intention.

Arjun:

You mean?

SE:

They think Dia went there as a troublemaker. We need to convince the mob that she went to prove that people were being misled, just like now.

Arjun:

And how do we do that? Send Father Christmas to each of their lovely houses to whisper it to them while they sleep?

Dia: (slowly)

No. (Looking at SE) The tape. You think?

SE:

Only way. I could talk with the Times Channel and figure out a date and time for it to come out. We'll do it at primetime.

Dia is frozen.

SE (contd.):

It's the only way, trust me. There needs to be a change in people's way of thinking. This will be a realization.

Dia still doesn't say anything. He picks up his cell phone and begins to dial. Dia gets up and shuts his flip top.

Dia:

Not only the Times Channel.

SE:

What do you mean?

Arjun:

Yea, read my mind. What's going on here? What tape, what realization?

Dia (looking straight at SE):

We've got to send it to all broadcasting networks, Hindi and English, and bring this out simultaneously.

SE:

Won't work, you know that. This is a Times project.

Dia:

This is a riot. And Times Now has 3% of the market. We have to tell people the truth, and we need to work with all broadcasting networks. We need a larger reach to make this reasonable. You know that.

Arjun:

Ok, mind telling me.

Dia:

It's a tape of...

SE: (cutting her short)

No, this is not going to work. No, no, no.

Dia:

My way... (Beat) ...or the highway.

She stares resolutely at SE and we know who's going to win.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY

SUBTITLE: Dia's apartment, two weeks later.

DIA and ARJUN sitting alone on the couch in the living room. There is still a lack of complete comfort, but they're trying hard. DIA'S snuggling up to ARJUN, and they seem intimate. They're watching TV. We pan to DIA'S POV: on TV screen:

Rajdeep Sardesai:

In a first of its kind, the times group has come forward with evidence of the misleading of the larger public by certain leaders for personal gains and political ends. We at ***** call this disgusting and are therefore very happy to be a part of this one of a kind historic simulcast.

Flip channel.

Dia: (VO)

Ma, the telecast is starting. She straightens up as Mira comes out of the bedroom and joins them on the couch.

Barkha dutt:

It takes courage to forget rivalries to meet a common end, common values and a common purpose, to show the truth. I, as the managing editor of NDTV would like to thank the Times Of India, and most importantly, one courageous girl named Dia. Ladies and gentlemen, what you will hear in a second is the voice of member of parliament from a Bombay constituency, Mohd. Chisti. This has been fearlessly recorded by the other voice you hear, that of Dia Malhotra. We will go straight into that tape, subtitled, on the other side of this commercial break.

Flip channel

Arnab goswami:

I take great pleasure in saying I am a part of an organization serviced by the likes of dia, and am proud to be sharing this historic telecast with two former colleagues, rajdeep and barkha, who have been actively involved with this issue since its inception. Our aim is a larger audience, such that all of you, see for yourselves, who the villain is, and who the victim is.

Dia: (from TV) (VO)

Chisti saab, my name is Ada Parvez. I'm a new member of this colony, and I am acceding to the requests of a few of us women in this colony to express our dissatisfaction with the provision (or the lack of it) of basic amenities. These include water, power and even, sometimes rations. These problems are hurting us severely. We would like you to comment on them, and make very clear what means are being employed to help us.

Chisti:

What did you say your name was, bachchi?

Dia:

Ada, Ada Parvez.

Chisti:

And what do you do?

Ada:

I'm a news reporter, with the Times Of India.

Chisti:

Hmmm... Shouldn't you then know that I cannot be held responsible for the lack of basic amenities to you people? In a country like India, until we get Muslim governance, our voices will be muted. Our raised hands ignored, our complaints forgotten, and our religion abused. It is these Hindus who use every opportunity to malign us, and deride us. The water supply problem is a direct result of a Hindu board being elected in the municipal elections, and how will the power problem be solved unless a Muslim member is elected to the legislative assemblies. The current MLA is doing everything in his power to assure that all power is diverted to the Hindu neighboring colonies, even the slums, since they are Hindu. Being a member of parliament, my voice is limited in such routine affairs, and I can't really do much, but I promise you, all of you, that I will raise my voice, if you raise yours. Show our power and be a true Muslim.

Dia:

Sir isn't it true that the MLA was elected from your party, and you yourself were here campaigning for his election to the assembly? And according to the records, the Hindu colonies are suffering the same power crisis as us. In fact, they have entire days without power. Isn't it also true that the power is being diverted under an order signed by your party coordinator, Mufti Saab, who wants to use it for the upcoming party headquarters that your party is setting up?

Chisti:

You have clearly been misguided... what name did you say?

Dia:

Ada. Sir, these are verifiable facts from the news bureaus, and sir, isn't it also true that your guest house, three blocks down, has constant supply of power and water, even though nobody lives there?

Chisti:

The bureaus are sold to those *kafirs*, and my guest house requires light because of... (Pause) frequent party meetings held there. Humph! Do you want the decisions of your life to be made in the dark? And why are you supporting those Hindus. They are the ones who drove your ancestors away, killed a few of them, and now routinely abuse them. We have been used, abused and thrown out by them. They burnt down our Babri Mazjid, and they try everyday to subjugate us. They are not our brothers, and they do not share our pain, so don't delude yourself and others. And your problems, they are not new. For years, every MP has had to face them, and nearly every one could not push back the Hindus, because you did not protest with us. And you say it is my fault. (Beat) and before you teach me governance, ask someone to help you with your *pardah*. Khuda hafiz!

Dia: (VO) (from TV)

What you just heard was the biggest hypocrite. Not only was his every justification holed, but his very claim to his post in the legislative process is an insult to our intelligence. Besides every question I asked him that day, there were several others left unanswered, that I unfortunately could not broach, for fear of blasting my identity into the open.

CUT TO:

CONTINUOUS: -- DAY AND NIGHT.

Dia in the TOI office, and at the colony, writing and recording the speech. Intersperse with present day images.

Dia (VO):

He claimed to have no control over the local issues as he was in the higher legislative process, yet in fact, there are records to prove that not only is it possible, but also one of the largest responsibilities of an MP to raise

issues pertaining to constituency based problems in the parliament house. It is also the responsibility of the MP to raise issues by summoning municipality authorities and following up on all implemented programs. The double standards of a man, who leans on some of the most important Hindus in the country to simply have a political existence, are just so in your face that it is despicable. He had the audacity to comment on my style of dressing, when in fact, the largest duty of a good Islamic is to show compassion and love towards one's fellow beings, not to drive one against the other. It has become a one point agenda for this man to blame everything from the power crisis out here to even deaths by natural calamities onto Hindus. I am not saying Hindus are perfect or saints, in fact, everyone knows that there are men as bad, if not worse than Mohd. Chisti who are Hindus. All I'm saying is that it has become a common political refrain to recall Babri Mazjid and its demolition and the war of '61, in fact, as we heard, even partition, to get out of a problem. No issue can be resolved if this were to go on. The truth, which some will believe, and some deride, is simply that to a man like Mohd. Chisti, there is no religion. For him, life is politics, and other humans are simply stones to be trod upon to reach his destination, of power and material. I have tried to show this as much as possible, and expose the reality behind the layers of politicized make up. Now every one of you listening can make your choice, whether to believe or not. I'm Dia Malhotra, in a Times Of India effort.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY.

Continuous.

Dark room, Dia pacing the floor, background score playing, Arjun sitting at his laptop, on screen we see, "Dia Malhotra, a lone voice...", a blog Arjun is reading. We continue to follow Dia walking up and down, while in the OS, we hear TV reporters reporting that the carnage though visibly reduced has not been able to put off a large number of fanatical people who continue to fight a pseudo religious war and continue to use Dia Malhotra as their effigy to burn. We see, as a background image to Dia pacing, people running in the streets, people being pulled

out of shops, men downing their shutters in the middle of the afternoon and other graphic images of times of civil war. Subtitle on screen, Four weeks after the incident, Dia pacing, fade slowly to black.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- EVENING.

Dia, fast asleep in an easy chair. Focus on her, and dissolve to:

EXT COLONY: -- NIGHT.

Dia in the colony, sitting with Sakina, the small Muslim orphan. Dia is combing her hair. In the dark, they sit on Dia's verandah, and talk by the candle light.

Dia:
Stop shouting, you'll wake the whole world up. And you know what Ira will do to you if she wakes up.

Sakina giggles.

Dia:
Tell me, Sakina, when did you come to live here?

Sakina:
Aapa, I came here... (Giggles) I came here so long ago, that even I can't remember. Sometimes at night, I remember abu and ami sitting with me, and then suddenly I remember being brought here. Henna Chachi only looked after me.

Dia:
Ok, tell me, how old are you?

Sakina:
I don't know.

Dia:
What do you mean, I don't know. I know how old I am. Didn't you ever ask Henna Chachi how old you are?

SAKINA screams where the comb tugs at her hair, and DIA, reflexively covers her mouth to cup the scream.

Sakina:

How would she know? Nobody here knows me.

Dia:

They must have known your abba and ami no silly?

Sakina:

No.

Dia:

No?

Sakina:

I came here because henna chachi saw me when they were taking us to the police station.

Dia:

Why were they taking you to the police station?

Sakina:

They said my abba was a terrorist. They came to our house, those people... (suddenly, she covers her ears and starts crying.)

Dia is concerned but can't help being curious. She lifts Sakina in her arms and seats her on her lap. After about twenty seconds, Sakina speaks again...

Sakina:

Nobody ever asked me where I came from before.

Dia:

Let me be the first then. Don't worry Sakina, your abu wasn't a terrorist.

Sakina:

Sometimes I think so too, and then sometimes...

From her voice, we can make out a child woman, growing up, and facing life, much earlier than her age warrants.

Dia:

What do you mean?

Sakina:

Promise me you won't tell?

Dia:
Promise.

Sakina:
There used to be men. I was about five years old I think, when they used to come home. They would be dressed in black, most of them, and... (whispers) they sometimes carried guns, big guns.

She looks at Dia for a reaction, and then continues.

Sakina (contd.):
They would sit for hours, and abu would keep the guns when they left. Ami would sometimes fight with abu, but it never changed him. He would come and whisper in my ear that Allah was with him, but I felt afraid of him...

Dia holds her tight.

Sakina (contd.):
Aapa, I sometimes saw a glint in his eyes, when he would come back in the nights, and I was scared. Ami used to know something terrible had happened, but she never said anything. I think she was scared too. But she never told me. I was her only child, and she would cry when she thought I was asleep. Abu would be awake too, but he would never comfort ami. He was consumed in those men, and those guns and...

Dia:
Sakina, let it be. Forget about it.

Sakina:
Why aapa? Even you don't want to hear? Nobody ever asked me...

Dia:
Sakina, if telling it hurts you, don't tell, but if you feel you must... I won't stop you.

Sakina:
I always wanted to tell someone. Especially about that night, when everything happened.

Dia doesn't know if this is good for the child, but is intensely curious to know what happened. Torn between the two, she remains silent, so sakina continues.

Sakina:

That night, about seven men came into the house. They sat nearly all night, and they had small bombs with them too. Ami made me sit at the corner of the hut, and she herself sat with me, moving only to pass the food.

Dia:

What happened then?

Sakina:

They said something... (focus on her eyes, and show backdrop images of men laughing with guns spread around), they said that the jihad would come to a close the next night. They seemed very celebratory. They even tried to make me hold the bomb, but ami wouldn't allow them to. And then, at nearly twelve o'clock, some policemen came quietly from the back. They entered the house, and shot everything they could see (images of sakina screaming as she saw the gunfire). Even ami was shot, but she kept me safe as she fell sideways with me in her arms. Sometimes I think she had prepared herself for such an eventuality.

Dia:

And then...

Sakina (crying now):

Then they took me to the police station where all the other children were taken and kept me in the cell for two days. I heard the policemen talk and they called my father a jihadi.

Dia:

And then henna chachi came and got you?

Sakina:

Uh-huh. She had come to identify someone, I think her brother, and she was told about me, and she brought me with her. And I spent eight years here, thinking everyday about those words they used for abu, the look on ami's face when they were shot, that day, and I kept asking myself if abu was wrong.

Dia:

You don't need to. You're still a child, and you were never at fault either.

Sakina:

I know, but every time I ask myself, I seem more and more convinced that ami did not agree with abu. I know ami was closest to allah, so I think maybe abu was wrong. I know he killed people, I saw them in his eyes, and that scared me. I think it scared him too, which is why they lingered, for me to see. I think he used to tell me that allah was by his side to convince himself and maybe even allah, that he was right. Ada aapa, you wanted to know how old I was. I'm fifteen, but if anyone asks, I always say I can't remember, and I pray to the same allah who stole my parents that I forget, because what I saw in his eyes will never let me be a child again.

Dia hugs the child, and we watch sakina fall asleep in her arms.

CUT TO:

PRESENT.

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- EVENING.

Dia, awake in the easy chair, staring at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

EXT STREETS: -- DAY.

people walking in the streets, there is tension but the major riot has seemed to have seized. Students are seen in college, but barely anyone is around. We cut from image to image of a quiet Mumbai, a fearful Mumbai. In the background, we here a newscaster's in voice over...

Newscaster (VO):

And until further notice, we find the most active city in the world in a state of emergency. Nearly five weeks after the spectacular news of Dia Malhotra came out, Mumbai will sleep at seven pm, when the official curfew time begins. In Mumbai...

CUT TO:

INT COLLEGE CAMPUS: -- DAY.

College campus, people are subdued as they walk about, but we hear them talk amongst themselves in the canteen area. At one table,

Student 1:

Sometimes I wish we could change this system, and we could show these criminals what we thought.

Student 2:

Yea, I wish I could grab that Chisti by his collar and ask him what he was thinking...

Student 1:

I hate this bloody curfew, its so irritating. I have to be home by seven. Why? Because some asshole decided to let loose his goons and burn the town.

Student 3:

I feel even worse for that poor girl. She went through all that effort, and now she can't even step out of her house.

Student 4:

It's useless to even bother to do anything for this country. It's run by goons.

Student 1:

You know, I'm worried even about the markets; they've been going down continuously, even after the riots ended. And something tells me this isn't the end.

Student 4:

Why should it be the end? There are three articles left, and then I think we should all do something by then.

Student 2:

I'd rather not say this out loud, but I've got a petition on my blog, to support Dia. And I'm writing constantly too, and we've got others writing too. I've done some research, and we're petitioning for the known rioters to be arrested, and Chisti and Khorpadkar to be arrested too, for abetting the riots and fueling them.

Student 1:

Last week, they had a protests march, with candle lighting to call for peace and unity. About 8,000 Hindus and Muslims took part and sat near India gate. We should replicate it somehow.

Student 3:

You forget that immediately after the candle lighting, the fundamentalists had such a ravage that they're thinking of calling a national emergency. That's the last thing we need. Our GDP will show a definite and sizable decline if we don't start working normally once again.

Student 1:

This issue goes way beyond the economy.

Student 3:

But this is our last chance to make it big. We have to make a decision, fast.

Bell rings and students disperse.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY.

dia and arjun, sitting on the balcony, looking out at the city they haven't seen in ages. Rapid images of dia running on a treadmill, a look of intense concentration on her face, and exhausted falling off, of dia sitting alone by the window, of Mira and arjun cooking for dia, of the threesome, joined by the SE eating at a table.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE - SAME.

Dia sitting on a table, hitting away at a typewriter.

At the bottom of the screen, the subtitle SIX WEEKS in typewriter font.

Dia wipes her brow, and we pan to the ceiling fan, this time not even switched on. We dissolve to:

EXT Muslim COLONY: -- LATE EVENING.

Dia sitting on the water tank alone, lying on her back, looking up at the stars.

Dia's POV: the stars and constellations, each one moving about, as we try to keep up with them and organize them, rapid movement of camera (Dia's eyes) to follow each constellation. Resume normal: Dia smiles. She is quite invisible to most people around unless they climb on top of the water tank. She looks radiant. Suddenly, we hear footsteps and voices off screen.

Henna (OS):

Wait Ashfaq, where are you going? Abba said there isn't any need to go right away. This isn't a jihad, this is stupidity.

Ashfaq (OS):

You will never understand, henna, go away.

Henna (OS):

Understand? What shall I understand? That my husband is going to listen to a mad man who understands only the language of money. You think he cares about our future, our attaining heaven?

Ashfaq (OS):

I have some responsibilities on earth before I go to heaven, and I must fulfill them.

Henna (OS):

I am your responsibility on earth. Why don't you ever think of me?

Ashfaq (OS):

There is a higher responsibility, you won't understand, now leave my way.

Henna (OS):

Not today, ashfaq. You heard how he spoke that day, even with ada bitiya. He hasn't done one thing for us, yet everytime he calls you, you go.

Ashfaq (OS):

Stop presuming you know everything, will you? You don't even know me, how will you know him? And about ada? Why did she have to open her mouth? It is not our tradition for girls to question the acts of men older and wiser than them.

Henna (OS):

Ashfaq, when you said I don't know you, you didn't mean...

Ashfaq (OS):

Henna, I have to go.

Henna (OS):

You allowed another man's blood to fill your hands, didn't you?

Ashfaq is silent.

Dia wants to move away, she doesn't like the eavesdropping, but she knows if she moves, she will be discovered.

Henna (OS):

You touched me and my children... you touched us... ashfaq, you... Allah!
More than one?

Ashfaq is still silent.

Henna (OS):

Allah! And you can sleep at nights?

Ashfaq (OS):

There are causes you do not understand.

Henna (more quietly) (OS):

maybe not, but I do understand that allah will never pardon you. And neither will I. you spoiled my body, ashfaq, it's in the Koran. We aren't supposed to go against allah's motives.

Ashfaq (OS):
He made me do it.

Henna (OS):
Don't say that. Don't blame him for your cowardice. I live my life with a man whose own life is cursed.

Sounds of feet dragging and a thump. Dia nearly gets up, but stops herself, and bites her lip.

Ashfaq (OS):
Go home.

Quiet sobs, and sounds of a man walking fast. Dia's POV: ashfaq crosses the gate without looking back, and is gone.

Henna's feet drag along until they are no longer audible.

Dia sits up, and is visibly shaken.

Dia (VO):
Everyone's life was touched, and I saw it everyday. There was fear, lack of understanding and manipulation. Everyone was manipulated, and violated...

CUT TO:

PRESENT: -- SAME.

Arjun enters the room to find Dia shaking and sweating heavily, sitting still on the table with the typewriter. He turns on the fan and rushes to her side. Dia shakes out of her nightmare, and hugs Arjun and starts weeping.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY.

SE sits opposite Dia. His face is buried in his hands. Arjun and Mira sit on the empty couch, Mira knitting, and Arjun looking apprehensively at Dia.

TV NEWS REPORTER (VO):

in another crucial setback to the Times Project led by Dia Malhotra and the times senior editor Neal Prakash, we have received news that moinuddin khan, a popular Muslim poet, and a part of this project from its inception was today found dead in his bungalow in versova. The autopsy reports suggests that this was a riot killing, which happened five to ten days ago, by strangling. Moinuddin khan, interestingly, was Dia's reference to enter the society. He posed as the fictitious ada's maternal uncle. His death, mourned by all, is a loss not only to literary world, but also humanity. This sparks off another debate, if a man as learned about islam as Mr. khan should support this operation from the start, is it time the common Muslims rose to themselves and accepted the noble intention. In Mumbai, with cameraperson...

Dia:

It's not your fault.

Neal (SE):

I can't believe it.

Arjun:

You couldn't have stopped it. It was a bolt from the blue.

Neal:

I should've protected him. It should've been obvious.

Dia:

I'm the reason. (Beat) I want to know how come Abbajaan allowed them to know about him.

CUT TO:

EXT Muslim colony: -- EVENING.

Sardar and Ashfaq sitting outside Sardar's house.

Ashfaq:

Henna was saying some new girl had come to stay.

Sardar:

Yea, she's Moinuddin Saab's niece. Very nice girl...

Dissolve to:

INT HENNA'S house: -- LATE NIGHT.

Henna:
Ashfaq.

Ashfaq is crying as he enters.

Henna:
What's the matter?

Ashfaq:
You were right. Take the children and go away from me,
otherwise you will go to the same hell I am destined for.

Henna:
Again? Ashfaq...

She holds him as he falls on the ground.

Henna (contd.):
What happened?

Ashfaq:
I killed a Muslim god fearing man today.

Henna falls back, but quickly recovers.

Ashfaq:
I killed Moinuddin khan. He was Ada's source here.

Henna:
Ashfaq?

Ashfaq:
You know what he said to me, while he was dying?

Henna:
Ashfaq...

Ashfaq (not listening):
He said, "at least now I'll go to heaven. Pray to Allah
that you aren't called there, because your decision too
will be made," and then he closed his eyes, called out to

Allah and died. He wouldn't even meet my eyes. And when I opened his eyes, I couldn't see my face. I think I saw the gate of heaven, and on the other side, I saw you and him and others, but I couldn't find me. I think Allah was telling me that my decision has been made. I think it's all getting over henna. Please hold me, please save me...

Henna now starts crying as she hugs him.

Ashfaq:

I'm scared henna. Will I be left alone? Will he forfeit me?

Henna:

Shhh... (Crying and simultaneously rocking Ashfaq who is weeping like a baby...)shhh..., it'll be okay. (looking up at the camera) Allah, please...

CUT TO:

Present. INT SAFE HOUSE - afternoon.

Dia and Neal, sitting at the table, going over Dia's latest article, Arjun is working on his laptop in the background, and Mira comes out with tea for all of them. Dia taking her tea, smiles at her mother, and the voice over starts...

Dia:

Unknowingly, unintentionally, even unwillingly, I've altered so many lives, all for my sake. Arjun (focus on ARJUN, engrossed in his laptop) whom I say I love so much, has gotten nothing but pain. He can't even go to work to forget all of this. Ma, who loved me unconditionally, only wanting to know I'm okay... she never says anything, but I know what she goes through (focus on MIRA) everyday, to see us like that. Neal, my editor (focus on NEAL) who gave me my chance to do what I wanted to, I put through hell everyday, never once considering that he was as much under pressure, if not more, than me. I've been selfish several times, but it's not what I meant to be. (focus on Dia, staring at everyone around her.) I wanted to do something good, to finally make a difference to everyone around me, and to make an attempt to bridge a rift, and bring people closer. When I see the deaths on TV, (background, on Dia's foreground, of people dying, fire, riot type) somehow I feel a little responsible for them, and to them. These

people, they weren't even involved. The people at the colony, who I'll never be able to meet again, suddenly everything seems so different, like life is giving me a new perspective. It's got to end now. Tomorrow the last article will come out, and yet there is so much uncertainty. Till when will we live in this protected jail? Till when will my decisions be imposed on everyone around? It's time to go back to the start, because that's where it will end.

Resume regular sound. Fade into black screen

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE:

Dia is writing on a pad of paper while Mira is reading the paper and Arjun is flipping through mindless TV. Everyone is trying to absorb themselves into something, yet everyone is dying to do something else. Suddenly Dia gets up, seeming very happy.

Dia:
Five days?

Mira:
Hmmm...

Dia:
Ma, Arjun, five days.

Mira:
One second Dia, I'm reading. (shuts the newspaper.)
Ok, now say.

Dia looks at Arjun, who grudgingly peels his eyes off the TV set.

Dia:
In five days, this will end.

Mira: (not very optimistic)
And how?

Arjun:
I've been thinking about something too...

Dia:
What've you been thinking about?

Arjun:
Well, actually, see, I've been consulting over the internet with my company, and since everything is basically electronic, I've been looking into organizational changes too. There's a new opening, for a CEO of a steel business of the conglomerate, in Boston.

Dia:
That's perfect.

Arjun:
You're serious? You want to move?

Mira silently stares at them.

Dia:
What choice do we have? Arjun, it's been two months, and I know that even in the next few years, if I go out, either a Hindu fundamentalist, or a Muslim fanatic is dying to take revenge. A sniper is always going to be looking for me, as long as we're here. What do you say, ma?

Mira:
Don't run away. If we must go, I want this to have a conclusion. I want you to have your say, give your reasons... on national television. Only then will I go anywhere.

Dia:
That's what I thought too.

Neal enters the house.

Neal:
Chinese food. What's up? Intense family discussion? Have I interrupted something?

Dia:
You seem happy. What's up with you?

Neal:
Dia, I kind of heard what you guys were saying, and...

Dia:
No, don't worry, you're coming with us.

Neal:
No I'm not.

Dia:
What're you going to do here?

Neal:
Not here...

Dia:
Then where?

Neal:
I didn't want to tell you until you'd made up your mind. I got an offer from the New York Times. They feel an Indian columnist would be just right in present political and economic circumstances.

Dia:
Wow. I'm seriously impressed.

CUT TO:

EXT SAFE HOUSE: -- DAY.

We see from DIA'S POV the Mumbai skyline. All the four are on the balcony. Neal and arjun are poring over a spreadsheet, dia is staring into space, and Mira is looking from one person to the other.

Dia:
Okay, so tomorrow we start the end.

Neal:
Like you said, we go back to the start.

Mira:
Protection?

Dia:
Ma, I think you oughtn't to come with us.

Neal:
Taken care of.

Arjun:
Yea ma, we may be protected with all the artillery in the army, but there's always a chink in the armor.

Mira:
Fix it then. I'm coming.

Neal:
Okay, that's settled. The agency's providing full security cover. Nobody even right next to you will be able to see you, we're going to be so secure. There'll be a circle of security. We walk the whole way, covered live and simulacast. I think we've made the fastest negotiations ever on this deal. Nobody uttered a word and the contracts were signed.

Dia:
Do we go in daylight, or daybreak?

Neal:
Daylight. No fear.

CUT TO:

EXT HAJI ALI DURGAH: -- morning.

Dia, Arjun, Neal and Mira, get out onto the long walkway from the car, immediately surrounded by the greatest amount of security, fully armored.

Neal (VO):
We go all the way to the durgah and Dia does to the Samadhi and touches it, for full public view.

A large group of people gather to see Dia, all pushed a reasonable distance away from Dia by the security agencies employed for the task.

Dia touches the tomb, and piya haji ali starts again. We show the quartet walk all around haji ali, surrounded by security until the song ends. Shoot in different camera angles, intersperse close ups with long shots, and merge all the four faces, until a new face is formed. Transform

into dia, and continue the tour. In glimpses, show the other three in turn touching the tomb, and the water rising dangerously with its sprays hitting dia who seems genuinely happy to be in the open again. Finally, the song ends where the titles had started to roll, but this time, we linger on dia's face, and merge to the quartet making its way off the walk until they reach the car. The crowd gathered is getting substantially larger as time passes, everyone desperate to catch a glimpse of this person, this new celebrity. Dia looks at them through the gaps between security.

Dia:

Do you think any of these people care about what I did? Do you think that's why they came here. To show me they cared.

Neal (simply):

Well... no.

Dia:

And those at India gate?

Arjun:

Perhaps. Mostly they do it for the thrill, it's like a fad, keeps changing.

CUT TO:

EXT PARLIAMENT HOUSE: -- EVENING.

TV REPORTER interviewing Prime Minister after a session. Small Press Conference is being convened.

TV Reporter:

Sir, MPs are discussing the necessity of a national emergency. Would you like to comment on this speculation?

Prime Minister:

I would prefer to not comment on any kind of speculation, whether this or any other.

TV reporter:

Okay sir, could you then tell us, if in your personal opinion, a national emergency is an appropriate step at the present time?

Prime Minister:

Well, considering what you people have been saying about me, do you really care for my personal opinion?

This gets a few laughs.

TV Reporter:

Well sir, this time, for once, well, I think that you're the only person who matters much.

Prime Minister:

I'll tell you so much. If in fact, parliament decides to pass the ordinance and it gets presidential approval, it will be one time that a national emergency cannot be attributed to some politician messing up. Thank you very much.

TV Reporter:

Sir, one last question. It is rumored that Dia Malhotra is finally making that long awaited visit to the capital. Any words of advice, caution or suggestion?

Prime minister:

Aren't there a lot of rumors floating around? Well, if it's true, then I wish any person arriving at the capital to have a safe journey.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- DAY.

TV Reporter 2:

Well, in a subtle way, the Prime minister has sort of given Dia Malhotra the thumbs up. Let me ask you, Raghav Rathod, as our political editor, what connotation exactly can "have a safe flight" have?

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

Dia packing bags. Arjun gathering his laptop, Mira standing outside near the balcony, looking out the window.

Dia:
Ma, are you packed? The force is on its way.

No reply.

Dia goes to look for Mira. She finds her and approaches her slowly.

Dia:
Ma, you okay?

Mira:
Hmmm...

Dia:
Aren't you happy? We're finally going to have our say. And then we can make the final decision. (beat) it had to happen, it's going to happen.

Mira:
Yea, I know. And I'm happy, of course I'm happy. It's just that I wanted to look at this sky one last time.

Dia: (softly, to herself)
The sky's always the same, it's the ground that changes.

Dia hugs her mother and imperceptibly, wiping a tear, runs back inside.

CUT TO:

INT SAFE HOUSE: -- SAME.

Dia sitting on top of some bags, looking ready to leave. She seems happy and confident, more resilient than ever before.

Arjun ambles out with a laptop bag on his shoulder, and crosses over to kiss Dia. He lingers near her ear, and they share a moment of comfort and assurance.

Mira comes out, on the phone.

Mira: (into phone)
Yea, yea... all packed. How much time? Yes. I'll do that. I need some avomine please, even Dia. We get airsick.

Arjun:
Dia, you get airsick?

Dia:
When I'm tense.

Mira: (off the phone)
It has nothing to do with tension. You get airsick and seasick.

Dia:
No ma.

Mira (ignoring the insistence):
Neal's on his way. Carry some water for the plane.

Dia:
They give that on the plane ma.

Arjun:
This is it.

Dia:
I guess. Last moments in the city.

Arjun:
Hmmm...

He sits on the other suitcase.

CUT TO:

EXT CAR: -- AFTERNOON.

CONTINUOUS. Images of travel, four car entourage. They reach the airport, and Neal rushes ahead.

Neal:
It's chartered. Gimme a second, alright? And Dia, the avomine's in the handbag next to you. Mira said you would need some. Take it immediately.

Dia:
I don't get airsick.

Mira:
Yes you do.

CUT TO:

EXT SMALL CHARTERED AIRPLANE, taking off.

CAMERA PANS across the sky, and slowly descends onto...

EXT Busy street: -- MID AFTERNOON.

CAMERA SEARCHES THE STREET for something, and as the noisy bustle of the market place reduces, we hear off screen,

Henna:
Hello. Is this the NDTV Channel? May I speak with barkha dutt please?

CAMERA locates henna Bukharia standing back to camera, in a closed booth of a PCO. ZOOM into the glass of the cubicle.

Henna (contd.):
Yes please. She had called me. (listens). Tell her it's Henna Bukharia, from Ada's colony.

She turns apprehensively to look around, and we FADE TO:

Black Screen.

Pastor (voice over):
The lord will look down on us! There shall be justice. Where there was subterfuge, he shall send the forces of vigilance, where there was murk, truth shall be served. The lord is always watching, and he shall have justice upon earth.

CUT TO:

EXT BUSY STREET: -- MID AFTERNOON.

Henna exits the cubicle, and we watch as she makes her way, looking back, every now and then. CAMERA follows her through the crowd, and finally lose her in the milieu of people gathered around a fruit seller.

CUT TO:

EXT DELHI DOMESTIC AIRPORT: -- MID AFTERNOON.

Dia, Arjun, Neal, and Mira slowly exit the runway, a large group of security members surrounding them.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO:

Barkha Dutt, Rajdeep Sardesai and Arnab Goswami sit together on one side of the table, and on the other side, Dia, Mira, Arjun, and Neal. The background sound sets in and the TV director yells instructions. We see a hand in the foreground counting down from five to one. As he reaches one, we zoom in to the group at the table.

Barkha Dutt (B.D):

Welcome back. It has been written about in the papers for days, and even the Prime Minister has been questioned about the likeliness of its occurrence. It has finally happened.

Pan to Rajdeep Sardesai (R.S).

R.S:

In a historic move, nearly fourteen and a half months after Dia Malhotra went into a life of obscurity, she is back to face the nation. In this exclusive programme, simulcast on all three news channels, and scheduled to be repeated on most other news programmes, we have Dia Malhotra exclusively chatting with us, after which she will directly address the nation.

Arnab Goswami (A.G):

Welcome to the show Dia. I'd also like to welcome the other unsung heroes of this piece. The director, so to speak, Neal Prakash, Dia's husband, Arjun Malhotra, and her mother, Mira Rai. Welcome, all of you.

Dia and the rest murmur a thank you.

R.S:

Dia, the world at large wants to know, and I don't think we are in doubt about your answer, but you might as well give

it. Did you at any point in time, do this as a publicity stunt, or to gain public attention?

Dia:

Rajdeep, like you said, my answer is pretty obvious. If I wanted to get attention, I'd have simply gone ahead and done a strip tease in front of some camera and manipulated it for everyone to see. This was a genuine effort.

B.D:

Dia, the next most obvious question is, did you ever think that it would work? Did you pre-empt such a huge reaction?

Dia:

I guess that's where we were at fault. Sometimes, when something is so completely unprecedented, you can't think forward enough to pre-empt it. We did want to elicit a reaction, and we did assume there'd be opposition, but this was, well, for lack of another word, completely overwhelming.

B.D:

Dia, we're going to take a very short break, but we will return immediately to continue in this final explanation.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- LATER.

B.D:

This question is actually for Mrs. Rai. Ma'am, this has obviously not been the easiest time for you. To know that there are, like Dia herself said, snipers all around town waiting to get a shot at your daughter, do you feel upset at the lack of understanding of people, or do you feel that your daughter had it coming?

Mira:

That's an awkward question, because no mother ever feels her daughter "had it coming", no matter what. But yes, sometimes, perhaps in more vulnerable moments, especially when I watch shots of people dying on TV, I do realize that it can't be helped. There's always an opposition, and you have to accept that not all people can be changed. What Dia and Neal did, in my opinion, elicited an appropriate response. I'm not saying it was fair, and I definitely

don't enjoy sitting in a closed house all day, but the magnanimity of the situation needs to be considered.

A.G:

A very fair and rational outlook there. I'd like to get in a word from Arjun as well. You must feel proud that your wife did something that stirred a national consciousness?

Arjun:

Well, at most times I resent her for what she did, not because she did it, but because of the way she did it. But she made her choice, and she is my choice, so there. (BEAT) And yea, if you ask me, perhaps if not Dia, if someone else had done what she did, I'd have said it was praiseworthy, and I want Dia to know that I really, as an Indian, appreciate what she did.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- LATER.

R.S:

Welcome back. In our penultimate segment in this hour and a half long chat with perhaps, if I may use the words that most young bloggers are using, a revolutionary, we go straight to the point. Times had an operation that affected us all. Well, what do we all feel about it? The audience is going to ask Dia Malhotra some questions.

Audience Member (girl):

Dia, do you, as a woman feel that this is a message to men that women are taking over, and even in taking the initiative to bridge the gap, it takes a woman to show the necessary bravado to make a difference?

Dia:

No, absolutely not. This is... wait, let me emphasize, reemphasize and reiterate over and over that this is not a gender issue. And with all due respect to women libbers, to bring up my gender right now, would be to completely sidestep the issue which we absolutely cannot afford to do. And to answer your question directly, well, it can't be a message to men, because, truly, the person behind this is a man, Neal, and the person behind me is also a man, Arjun. So I can't be complacent enough to take credit where it's

not even due. And I sincerely want to thank both Neal and Arjun for being more responsible than me for this.

Audience Member 2:

This is for Mr. Arjun. Do you feel insecure that your wife has the limelight?

R.S (interjecting):

You don't need to answer that Arjun. Next question please.

Arjun seems pensive and then cutting R.S short, says...

Arjun:

No, I think that's a perfectly fair question, and a very plausible scenario too. And no, I don't feel insecure because you see, I still wear the pants at home, and (smiling a little) I do make a lot of money more than Dia.

Everyone laughs at his jovial nature.

Arjun (contd.):

And so I'm happy that Dia gets the limelight, because she's sweet enough to drag me to interviews like these, where people seem to notice me.

B.D:

That was very sporting of you Arjun, and very witty, might I add. We're going to get in the last couple of questions before we move into our final break. Yes, you, in the red shirt with the black tie. Yes sir, could you pass him the mike please?

Audience member 3:

Okay, Mr. Prakash, how was Dia as an employee during these times? Especially with all the pressure on her head?

Arjun (interjecting):

You guys sure ask all the right questions. So Neal...?

Neal:

Oh well, with all due respect to Dia, and I love for all she's done for me, I have to say this. She was an absolute nightmare. She was missing her family, and she was much attached to the people there, so she had a guilt complex, that she'd leave them someday. So she insisted we write them explanations. Added to that, she was intensely short

tempered, so well, generally, quite a hurricane. What do you think Dia?

Dia:

I think you're just being nice to me, but I'll take that. Thank you!

B.D:

Okay, I'm gonna go in for a break right now, but when we return, we have a little something for Dia, and something more for you. Stay tuned for the other side of the commercials.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- AFTER THE BREAK.

A.S:

Well, Dia, Barkha did some early shopping for you, and she turned up a surprise. Do you want to know what it is?

Dia is completely clueless, and she looks it.

B.D:

Hmmm... I had this conversation actually, and someone recorded a message for you, and for a lot of people out there. So, should we hear it?

Dia:

Of course. I just hope it isn't someone wanting to kill me.

Henna (VO):

Ada, is she there?

B.D (VO):

No, she's not here right now, but she will be. Pretend she's here and listening to you.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK.

EXT BUSY MARKET PLACE: -- MID AFTERNOON.

Henna in the phone booth, talking on the phone.

Henna:

Ada, first I want to thank you for that letter you sent me. Thanks for thinking of me and telling me about this before hand. It made me realize that you didn't have any malice, and more importantly, that you didn't fake the fondness and love that you showed.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK:

INT HENNA'S HOUSE: -- EARLY MORNING.

She opens the door and lifts the manila envelope left there the night before.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- PRESENT.

Dia listening intently.

Henna (VO) (contd.):

It wasn't easy to accept that you weren't a Muslim, because mainly, the thought process of us Muslims. To digest that someone, so much an outsider, can be so exactly like us, is a little hard. But when it came down to that, I wondered why I was surprised in the first place. There was no difference, and I believed that always. After you left, quite a few people were affected. Shehnaaz, I hate to say this, but that Chisti's man, he came, and picked up shehnaaz, and (voice breaking), he...

We found her outside your house the next day, completely unclothed. They wrote, next to her body, "this will be you if you support Dia Malhotra or any other *kafir*." That is why I couldn't say anything earlier. Everyone was scared. Shehnaaz hasn't uttered a word since. I am not proud to have kept quiet, when in fact, I was supportive of what you were doing. But then, I just had to. (hesitates) Barkha ji, have I got any time left.

B.D (VO):

Take your time. There isn't a limit. Don't worry. Dia will hear everything. Just be calm.

Henna (VO) (contd.):

That night, when we were having dinner, Ashfaq said to me...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK:

INT HENNA'S HOUSE: -- NIGHT.

Ashfaq:

Promise me you'll always take care of the children!

Henna:

Ashfaq. What's the problem? Why suddenly?

Ashfaq (standing up):

Let's say, if suppose, some time down the line, I am no longer around, for whatever reason, you will always take care of your children.

Henna:

Our children, Ashfaq. And of course, but what happened? Why are you sweating?

Ashfaq:

I need to go out.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- SAME.

Henna (VO) (contd.):

He left me a letter that night.

Ashfaq (VO):

It is khuda's decision that he should run our lives. We make plans, and he makes decisions. I am not blaming my decisions on him, but rather accepting his decision for me. That night, when I came home, and told you about Moinuddin saab, I knew my decision was made. I had killed other men, but I never told you. I think Allah made me start my confession. And when it starts, it can never have an end. Perhaps it's time to confess before him, if at all I get to meet him, that is. I still hear that man's words, but now I'm not scared. You drove the fear out of me. Thank you for that. Thank you for everything you gave me, and everything

you did that I never appreciated. If I don't see Allah, and go to the hell I am damned for, I'll always remember your face as that of Allah, because it comforted me, and gave me peace. Do me one last favour and never call the children mine, because they say that the children follow after their father, and I would never want that for them.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK:

EXT COLONY: -- NIGHT.

Ashfaq makes his way to the water tank, and opens the cover. He struggles, in silence, resolute and decisive. At last he manages to open it. He stares inside as we dissolve to:

BLACK SCREEN

Ashfaq (VO):

I need you to be their father and mother. I need you to teach them about love, I need you to save them. I need you to give them the love I always felt but never expressed. You have to show them the liberty in your eyes, and the life in your veins. I hope you do that for me. I know I can't demand, but from you I can expect. If you ever meet that girl again, tell her I'm sorry, for all I ever believed in. You were right. Allah was always watching. I just wish I'd known before. Don't mourn for me. I needed to go. Yours, even when I didn't acknowledge it, Ashfaq.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

EXT COLONY:

AHFAQ looks up at heaven, and then jumps into the water tank.

CUT TO:

INT TV STUDIO: -- SAME.

Everyone is silent. Dia is pale, and her eyes seem moist, but she's being stoic about everything.

Henna (OS):

I no longer fear anyone, because if Allah is looking, he won't orphan my children, and if he isn't, then what is such a life worth anyways. I want you to know, that irrespective of what anyone ever says, you will always be the Ada I knew, and the Dia you are. I hope you continue to light the path, and may Allah keep you happy. I must go now, but if you hear this, remember someone whose life you changed, and feel the satisfaction that someone appreciates your efforts. That's all, Barkha ji.

ZOOM IN ON DIA. She smiles, and looks up.

Dia: (quietly)
Amazing woman.

B.D:

Dia, here is a woman who is the strictest of Islamics. Yet she embraced you, and insisted that Allah decide she must. That must reignite faith not only in you, but in all those people who believe.

B.D (contd.):

Which leads me to my last and final question. Any regrets Dia?

Dia:

Hmmm... regrets? Logically a lot, but in all, when I look at it after all this time, not really. A for one, I don't think what I did was great enough for a regret per se.

CUT TO:

Final sequence begins.

INT TV STUDIO: -- SAME.

DIA looking straight into the camera, connecting with the audience.

Dia:

Sometimes I wonder how I would've been today if I hadn't done what I did. Sometimes I feel guilty about leaving the way I did.

CUT TO:

EXT TV STUDIO: -- SAME.

DIA, ARJUN, NEAL and MIRA exit the studio and run to the waiting car, all the while surrounded by security.

Dia (VO):

Everyday when I wake up, when I look at the sun, I don't get blinded. I see an image of one more person dying before me. I wonder if that was my fault. Somewhere down the line, I feel a little responsible for them. They didn't care to make a difference to the world. They just wanted to live. Logically, I would regret things at such times. And yet, I hear someone say that they understood life a little better and I feel happy. I've seen numerous blog sites, where people support what I did. Young people, especially, because they understand what to them was an enigma for so long. That makes me lose regret. I hear Henna chachi's voice, and that makes me lose regret.

CUT TO:

EXT AIRPORT:

THE ENTOURAGE ARRIVES WITH THE CARS, STRAIGHT ON THE RUNWAY. The prime minister, in a highly guarded, no frills visit, makes his way over to Dia's car, and Dia gets out.

Dia (VO) (contd.):

I don't know if I'll ever be able to come back to this country. Logically, I would regret this, but even while leaving, I feel, that perhaps, my not being here, will help people to look at this issue with a little more heart and I lose regret. I hear people petition for Mohd. Chisti and Vijayendra Khorpadkar to be arrested and I lose regret. Somehow, in a small way, a few people will be saved from ending like Ashfaq chacha without these men. At such times I lose regret.

CUT TO:

INT AIRPLANE: -- SAME.

Dia enters the chartered plane last.

Dia (VO) (contd.):

Logically, I would regret having lived two and a half months of my life in a closed house, and having subjected three other people to that life because of my decisions, and I would feel regret. But I know I have a husband, and a mother, who love me so much that I lose all regret.

CUT TO:

INT Muslim COLONY: -- SAME.

HENNA and SHEHNAAZ and SAKINA sit inside Henna's house and see Dia on TV. A tear drop runs down Shehnaaz's eye and we hear...

Dia (VO):

Ordinarily, I would regret having to face life in a new land, start all over. Yet, just before leaving, I got to finally speak to all the millions of people in India who were watching this telecast and I lose all regret.

CUT TO:

INT AIRPLANE: -- SAME.

Dia looks out of the window of the airplane at the expanse of the land she was leaving forever.

Dia:

Ordinarily, I would regret poor Shehnaaz, who had nothing to do with this, getting raped by an animal, but then I hear Henna Chachi say that there is a god watching and I know that Shehnaaz will get her due, and there I lose regret.

CUT TO:

INT HENNA'S HOUSE: -- SAME.

SHEHNAAZ after ages, cries and hugs Henna,

Dia (VO):

Ordinarily, I would regret that children during the riot got orphaned like Sakina did, but then, I remember that child's eyes, and I know that she wouldn't have changed anything, simply because, she was stronger and greater than me, for what she knew that you and I would never know...

No, sometimes I still do regret things. I regret never being able to say good-bye to her, never being able to apologize to Shehnaaz, never being able to tell Henna chachi that I was so grateful, never being able to go back and save Moinuddin Khan saab from the fury that I had caused.

We hear Dia sniffle, and we know she's crying from her shaky voice.

Dia (VO) (contd.):

Barkha, I'm an ordinary human, and I can't change that. So as much as I may wish I didn't, I do regret some stuff.

CUT TO:

EXT RUNWAY: -- SAME.

The plane finally takes off, and we see Dia's face, watermarked in the background. EVA CASSIDY'S "**FIELDS OF GOLD**" starts and we FADE TO BLACK SCREEN.

SUBTITLE ON BLACK SCREEN:

"The question remains...

FADE,

"And it's time you made your choices..."

CREDITS ROLL.

END.